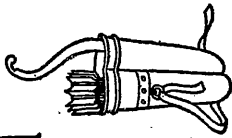


# BOOK XVIII



And now there arrived a public beggar, who used to go begging through the town of Ithaka, known to fame for his ravenous belly and appetite for eating and drinking. There was no real strength in him, nor any force, but his build was big to look at.

5 He had the name Arnaïos, for thus the lady his mother called him from birth, but all the young men used to call him Iros, because he would run and give messages when anyone told him.

This man had come to chase Odysseus out of his own house and now he spoke, insulting him, and addressed him in winged words:

10 'Give way, old sir, from the forecourt, before you are taken and dragged out

by the foot. Do you see how all of them are giving the signal and telling me to drag you. Still, I am ashamed to do it. So up, before it comes to a battle of hands between us.'

15 Then looking at him darkly resourceful Odysseus answered: 'Strange man, I am doing you no harm, nor speaking any, nor am I jealous, if someone takes plenty and gives it to you. This doorsill is big enough for both of us, nor have you any need to be jealous of others. I think you are a vagabond as I am too. Prosperity is in the gods' giving.

20 Leave blows alone, do not press me too hard, or you may make me angry so that, old as I am, I may give you a bloody chest and mouth. Then I could have peace, and still more of it tomorrow, for I do not think you will make your way back here

a second time to the house of Odysseus, son of Laertes.'

25 'Then in anger Iros the vagabond said to him: 'Shame on how the old hulk rolls along in his speech, like an old woman at the oven. I have some bad plans for him: hit him with both hands, and spatter all of the teeth out from his jaws on the ground, as if he were a wild pig rooting the crops. Come, tuck up, so all these people can see us do battle. But how can you fight against a man who is younger?'

30 So, in front of the towering doors, and upon the threshold polished smooth, these two hurled jagged words at each other; and Antinoös, the sacred prince, stirred them on to battle, and laughing sweetly he spoke aloud to the rest of the suitors: 'Friends, in the past nothing has ever happened to match this entertainment that the god has now brought to the palace; for the stranger and Iros are now making ready for battle with their fists. Come, let the rest of us speed the encounter.'

40 So he spoke, and the rest of them all sprang up, laughing, and gathered all in a group around the two ragged beggars. It was Antinoös the son of Eupheithes who spoke to them: 'Listen to me, you haughty suitors, while I say something. Here are some goat paunches set on the fire; we filled them with blood and fat, and set them there, to eat after supper.

45 Whichever of these men wins the contest, and is proved better, let him come up, and help himself to whichever he likes best; and he shall always have dinner with us, nor shall we ever admit any other beggar to join us inside, and beg from us.'

50 So Antinoös spoke, and what he had said was pleasing. But now resourceful Odysseus, with crafty thoughts, said to him: 'Friends, it is not possible for a man who is older and worn with sorrow to fight with a younger man, but my villainous belly drives me to do it, and fall to his fists. Therefore,

55 come, swear me a strong oath all of you, that no one will take the side of Iros and lightheartedly strike me down with a heavy hand, and make me fall to his onset.'

So he spoke, and they all swore him the oath as he asked it. But when all had sworn the oath and made an end of their swearing, the hallowed prince Telemachos now spoke out among them: 'Stranger, if your heart and spirit are urgent with you to defend yourself against this man, then fear no other

Achaian. The man who strikes you shall have to fight against numbers.  
I myself am your host, with the assent of the two kings

65

Antinoös and Eurymachos, both men of prudence.  
So he spoke, and they all applauded him. But Odysseus

girded up his rags about his body, displaying

his thighs, splendid and large, and one could see the wide shoulders;

his chest showed, and his ponderous arms; and also Athene

standing close beside the shepherd of the people magnified

his limbs, and the suitors all in their insolence were astonished,

and thus would one of them speak, looking over at his next neighbor:

'Iros will soon be Iros no more, with himself to thank for

the evil. See what limbs the old man's rags have uncovered.'

So he spoke, and the heart in Iros was stirred with trouble,

but even so the thralls girt him forcibly up, and dragged him

there. He was frightened, and the flesh shook all over his body.

Antinoös scolded him with a word and spoke out and named him:

'I do not care if you live or die, you great ox, nor what happens

to you, when you are afraid of this man, and tremble before him,

an old man, and worn with the sorrows that have come upon him.

But I tell you this straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished.

If this man wins the fight with you, and is proved the better,

I will throw you into a black ship, and send you across to the mainland,

to Echetos, who preys on all men, and who is king there,

and he with the pitiless bronze will cut off your nose and ears,

and tear off your privates and give them raw for the dogs to feed on.'

So he spoke, and the trembling even more took hold of

his limbs, but they pulled him on, and both men put their hands up.

At that time, much-enduring great Odysseus pondered

whether to hit him so that the life would go out of him, as he

went down, or only to stretch him out by hitting him lightly.

And in the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,

to hit him lightly, so the Achaians would not be suspicious.

They put up their hands, and Iros hit him on the right shoulder,

but Odysseus struck the neck underneath the ear, and shattered

the bones within, and the red blood came in his mouth, filling it.

He dropped, bleating, in the dust, with teeth set in a grimace,

and kicking at the ground with his feet, and the haughty suitors

held up their hands and died with laughing. Meanwhile, Odysseus

dragged him by the foot through the porch, till he came to the courtyard

and the portico doors, and propped him against the courtyard  
wall, sitting up, and stuck the staff in his hand, to hold it.

Then he spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words:

'Sit there now, and scare away the dogs and the stray pigs.

But you must no longer try to be king of the strangers and beggars,

being such a wretch, or you may win yourself still more evil.'

He spoke, and threw across his shoulders his ugly wallet

that was full of holes, with a twist of rope attached to dangle it.

He went back to the sill again and sat down, but the others

went inside again, laughing sweetly, and drank to him, saying:

'May Zeus, stranger, and all the other immortals give you

what you want most of all and what is dear to your spirit,

for having stopped the wandering of this greedy creature

in our neighborhood. Soon we will take him across to the mainland,

to Echetos, who preys on all men, and who is king there.'

So they spoke, and great Odysseus was pleased at the omen.

Now Antinoös set before him the great paunch-pudding

that was all filled with fat and blood. Amphinomos, taking

two loaves of bread out of the basket, set them before him,

and drank his health in a golden cup and spoke to him, saying:

'Your health, father and stranger; may prosperous days befall you

hereafter; but now you are held in the grip of many misfortunes.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

'Amphinomos, you seem to me very prudent, being

the son of such a father, whose excellent fame I have heard of,

Nisos, that is, of Doulichion, both strong and prosperous;

they say you are his son, and you seem like a man well-spoken.

So I will tell you, and you in turn understand and listen.

Of all creatures that breathe and walk on the earth there is nothing

more helpless than a man is, of all that the earth fosters;

for he thinks that he will never suffer misfortune in future

days, while the gods grant him courage, and his knees have spring

in them. But when the blessed gods bring sad days upon him,

against his will he must suffer it with enduring spirit.

For the mind in men upon earth goes according to the fortunes

the Father of Gods and Men, day by day, bestows upon them.

For I myself once promised to be a man of prosperity,

but, giving way to force and violence, did many reckless

things, because I relied on my father and brothers. Therefore,

- 145 let no man be altogether without the sense of righteousness, but take in silence the gifts of the gods, whatever they give him. Even so, now, I see the suitors, their reckless devisings, how they show no respect to the wife, and despoil the possessions of a man who, I think, will not for long be far from his country and friends. He is very close by. But I hope your destiny takes you home, out of his way. I hope you never will face him, at the time he comes back to the beloved land of his fathers.
- 145 For I believe that, once he enters his halls, there will be a reckoning, not without blood, between that man and the suitors.' So he spoke, and poured, and drank the honey-sweet wine, then put the cup back into the hands of the lord of the people; but the other went back across the room, heart saddened within him, shaking his head, for in his spirit he saw the evil, but still could not escape his doom, for Athene had bound him fast, to be strongly killed by the hands and spear of Telemachos. He went back and sat down on the chair from which he had risen.
- 155 But now the goddess, gray-eyed Athene, put it in the mind of the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope, to show herself to the suitors, so that she might all the more open their hearts, and so that she might seem all the more precious in the eyes of her husband and son even than she had been before this. She laughed, in an idle way, and spoke to her nurse and named her:
- 165 'Eurynome, my heart desires, though before it did not, to show myself to the suitors, although I still hate them. Also, I would speak a word to my son, and that would be for the better, that he should not always go among the insolent suitors, who speak him well, but are plotting evil things for the future.'
- 170 Eurynome the housekeeper said to her in answer: 'Now all this you have said, my child, was fair and orderly. Go then, and speak a word to your son, hide nothing. Only first you should wash your body and anoint your face. Do not go down with a face so ravaged all over by tears, as it now is, since nothing is gained by indiscriminate sorrowing always.
- 175 For now your son is come of age, and you know you always prayed the immortals, beyond all else, to see him bearded.'
- Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer: 'Eurynome, though you care for me, do not speak of such matters as washing my body and anointing myself with unguents,

- 180 seeing that the gods, they who possess Olympos, ruined my glory, from that time when he went away in the hollow ships. But tell Autonoe and Hippodameia to come, so that they can stand at my side in the great hall. I will not go alone among men. I think that immodest.'
- 185 So she spoke, and the old woman went away through the palace, and brought the word to the women, and urged them to go to their mistress.
- Then the goddess gray-eyed Athene thought what to do next. She drifted a sweet sleep over Ikarios' daughter, and all her joints were relaxed so that she slumbered, reclining there on the couch. Meanwhile she, shining among goddesses, endowed her with gifts immortal, to make the Achaians admire her. First, for her beauty's sake, she freshened all her fine features with ambrosia, such as fair-garlanded Kythereia uses for salve, whenever she joins the lovely dance of the Graces.
- 195 She made her taller for the eye to behold, and thicker, and she made her whiter than sawn ivory. After so doing, she, Athene, shining among goddesses, departed, and the white-armed handmaidens came running in from the great hall, with clamor, about Penelope, and the sweet sleep released her.
- 200 She rubbed her cheeks with both her hands and spoke aloud, saying: 'That was a strange thing, that soft sleep that shrouded me. How I wish chaste Artemis would give me a death so soft, and now, so I would not go on in my heart grieving all my life, and longing for love of a husband excellent in every virtue, since he stood out among the Achaians.'
- 205 So she spoke, and made her descent from her shining chamber, not all alone, since two handmaidens went to attend her. When she, shining among women, came near the suitors, she stood by the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery, holding her shining veil in front of her face, to shield it, and a devoted attendant was stationed on either side of her. Their knees gave way, and the hearts in them were bemused with passion, and each one prayed for the privilege of lying beside her; but she spoke rather to her beloved son, Telemachos:
- 215 'Telemachos, your mind and thoughts are no longer steadfast. When you were a child still, you had better thoughts in mind. Now, when you are big, and come to the measure of maturity, and one

*Penelope hints at marriage*

220 who saw you, some outsider, viewing your size and beauty,  
 would say you were the son born of a prosperous man;  
 your thoughts are no longer righteous, nor your perception;  
 such a thing has been done now, here in our palace, and you  
 permitted our stranger guest to be so outrageously handled.  
 How must it be now, if the stranger who sits in our household  
 is to be made to suffer so from bitter brutality?  
 225 That must be your outrage and shame as people see it.  
 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
 'My mother, I cannot complain of your anger. I myself  
 notice all these things in my heart and know of them, better  
 and worse alike, but before now I was only an infant;  
 230 but still I cannot see my way to the wise course always,  
 for these men come from one place or another, and sit beside me  
 with their evil thoughts, and distract me, and there are none here to help  
 me.  
 Yet it was not by the will of the suitors that this struggle took place  
 between Iros and the stranger, and he was stronger than Iros  
 235 in battle. O father Zeus, and Athene, and Apollo,  
 if only in our house, in such a manner, the suitors  
 could be defeated and bow their heads, some in the courtyard  
 and some inside of the house, and the limbs be unstrung in each of them;  
 as now for Iros, as he sits over there by the courtyard  
 240 gates, lolling his head like a drunken man, and unable  
 to stand upright on his feet again and make his way homeward  
 to wherever he makes his home, since there is no strength in his body.'  
 So these two were conversing in this way with each other;  
 but Eurymachos now spoke out and addressed Penelope:  
 245 'Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
 if only all the Achaians in Iad Argos could see you,  
 at dawn of day tomorrow there would be even more suitors  
 come to feast in your house, since you surpass all women  
 for beauty and stature and for the mind well balanced within you.'  
 250 Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:  
 'Eurymachos, all my excellence, my beauty and figure,  
 were ruined by the immortals at that time when the Argives took ship  
 for Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus.  
 If he were to come back to me and take care of my life, then  
 255 my reputation would be more great and splendid. As it is

*but also at presents*

now, I grieve; such evils the god has let loose upon me.  
 When he went and left me behind in the land of his fathers,  
 he took me by the right hand at the wrist, and then said to me:  
 260 "Dear wife, since I do not think the strong-greaved Achaians  
 will all come safely home from Troy without hurt, seeing  
 that people say the Trojans are men who can fight in battle,  
 and that they are throwers of the spear, and shooters of arrows,  
 and riders with fast-footed horses, who with the greatest  
 speed settle the great and hateful issue of common battle,  
 265 I do not know if the god will spare me, or if I must be lost  
 there in Troy; here let everything be in your charge.  
 You must take thought for my father and mother here in our palace,  
 as you do now, or even more, since I shall be absent.  
 But when you see our son grown up and bearded, then you may  
 270 marry whatever man you please, forsaking your household."  
 So he spoke then; and now all this is being accomplished.  
 And there will come that night when a hateful marriage is given  
 to wretched me, for Zeus has taken my happiness from me.  
 275 But this thing comes as a bitter distress to my heart and spirit:  
 the behavior of these suitors is not as it was in time past  
 when suitors desired to pay their court to a noble woman  
 and daughter of a rich man, and rival each other. Such men  
 themselves bring in their own cattle and fat sheep, to feast  
 the family of the bride, and offer glorious presents.  
 280 They do not eat up another's livelihood, without payment.'  
 She spoke, and much-enduring great Odysseus was happy  
 because she beguiled gifts out of them, and enchanted their spirits  
 with blandishing words, while her own mind had other intentions.  
 Then Antinoös the son of Eupetheas answered:  
 285 'Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
 whatever gift any Achaian wishes to bring here,  
 take it; it is not honorable to refuse the giving.  
 We will not go back to our own estates, nor will we go elsewhere,  
 until you marry whichever Achaian you fancy.'  
 290 So spoke Antinoös, and his word pleased the rest of them.  
 Each man sent his herald off to bring back the presents.  
 Antinoös' herald brought in a great robe, beautiful  
 and elaborate, and in it were twelve double pins, golden  
 all through, and fitted with bars that opened and closed easily.

*Odysseus is scolded by Melantho*

- 295 Eurymachos' man came back with an elaborate necklace  
of gold, strung with bits of amber, and bright as sunshine.  
Eurydamas' servants came back bringing a pair of earrings  
with triple drops in mulberry clusters, and there was radiant  
charm in them. From the house of the lord Peisandros, Polyktor's  
son, his servant brought a necklace, a wonderful offering.  
Each of the Achaians brought a different beautiful  
present; and she, shining among women, went back to her upper  
room, and her maidservants carried the beautiful presents for her.  
But now the suitors, turning to the dance and delightful  
song, took their pleasure and awaited the coming of evening,  
and the black night came on as they were taking their pleasure.  
Accordingly, they set up three cressets about the palace,  
to give them light, and about them they laid piles of firewood  
pieces, long dried and seasoned, but lately split with the brazen  
ax; and put kindling in with it, and the maids of enduring  
Odysseus were ready to take turns keeping them burning,  
when illustrious resourceful Odysseus himself spoke to them:  
'You maids of Odysseus, whose master has long been absent,  
go back into the house where the respected queen is,  
and in her presence turn your distaffs, and sit beside her  
in the halls, and comfort her, or comb your wool in your hands there.  
But I myself will provide the light for all of these people.  
And even if they wish to keep at it until the high-throned  
dawn, they will not wear me out. I am very enduring.'  
320 So he spoke, and they burst out laughing and looked at each other;  
but Melantho of the lovely face shamefully scolded him.  
Dolios was her father, but Penelope had taken  
her in, and cared for her like a daughter, and cheered her with presents;  
but even so her heart had no sorrow for Penelope,  
but she used to sleep with Eurymachos, and she was his sweetheart.  
325 Now she spoke to Odysseus and gave him a scolding:  
'Wretched stranger, you must be one whose wits are distracted,  
when you will not go where the smith is at work, and sleep there,  
or to some public gathering place, but staying here speak out  
boldly and at length among many men, and your spirit  
330 knows no fear. The wine must have your brains; or else always  
you are such a man in your mind, a babbler of nonsense.  
Are you so brave because you beat the vagabond Iros?

*and taunted by Eurymachos*

- 335 Take care lest a better man than Iros stand up against you,  
one who can pummel you about the head with his heavy  
hands, beat you, draw blood, and chase you out of the palace.  
Then looking at her darkly resourceful Odysseus answered:  
'I think I will go to Telemachos, you bitch, and tell him  
how you are talking, so that he will cut you to pieces.'  
340 Speaking in words like this he fluttered the women. They went  
on their way back into the house, and the knees of each one  
went loose with fear. They thought he was speaking the truth. He then  
took his place by the burning cressets, and kept them lighted,  
looking after them all himself, but the heart within him  
was pondering other thoughts, which were not to go unaccomplished.  
345 But Athene did not altogether permit the haughty  
suitors to forgo their hard insolence, so that still more  
grief would invade the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes.  
Eurymachos, son of Polybos, began speaking among them,  
350 taunting Odysseus, and started up laughter among his companions:  
'Hear me, all you suitors of the glorious queen, hear me  
while I speak out what the heart within my breast urges.  
This man comes as gift of the gods to the house of Odysseus.  
It is my thought that he can give us illumination  
355 from his bald head, which has no hair, not even a little.'  
So he spoke, and addressed Odysseus, sacker of cities:  
'Stranger, if I were to take you up, would you be willing  
to work for me on my outer estate—I would give you adequate  
pay—assembling stones for fences, and growing the tall trees?  
360 There I would provide you with an allowance of victuals,  
and give you shoes to wear on your feet, and clothing to put on.  
But since all the work you have learned is bad, you will not be willing  
to go off and work hard; no, you would rather beg where the people  
are, and so be able to feed that ravenous belly.'  
365 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Eurymachos, I wish there could be a working contest  
between us, in the spring season when the days are lengthening,  
out in the meadow, with myself holding a well-curved sickle,  
and you one like it, so to test our endurance for labor,  
without food, from dawn till dark, with plenty of grass for our mowing.  
370 Or if it were oxen to be driven, those of the best sort,  
large ones and ruddy, both well fed with grass, of an equal

age and carrying power, and their strength is not contemptible, and there were four acres to plow, with the glebe giving to the plowshare. There you would see if I could carve a continuous furrow.

375 Or again, if this day the son of Kronos should bring on a battle, and I were given a great shield and two spears, and a helmet all of bronze well fitted over my temples, so you would see me taking my place as one of the foremost fighters, and you could not speak so in scorn of my belly.

380 But now you are very insulting, and think to be short with me; also, as I suppose, you think you are a tall man and powerful, because you have dealings with few men and no brave ones; surely, if Odysseus were to come back to the land of his fathers, the gates of the house, although they are very wide, would suddenly be too narrow as you took flight to escape from the forecourt.

385 He spoke, and the anger mounted in the heart of Eurymachos, and looking darkly at him he addressed him in winged words:

390 'Wretch, I will do you an injury for the way you are talking, boldly and at length among many men, and your spirit knows no fear. The wine must have your brains; or else always you are such a man in your mind, a babbler of nonsense. Are you so brave because you defeated the vagabond Iros?'

395 So he spoke, and caught up a footstool; but Odysseus crouched against the knees of Doulichian Amphinomos in fear of Eurymachos, who threw, and hit the cupbearer in the right hand. The pitcher fell to the ground, clashing, but the cupbearer fell on his back in the dust, groaning.

400 But the suitors all through the shadowy halls were raising a tumult, and thus they would speak, each man looking at the man next him: 'How I wish this stranger could have gone to perdition somewhere else, before he came here; he has raised such a tumult, and now we are fighting over beggars; there will be no pleasure in the stately feast at all, since vile things will be uppermost.'

405 Now the hallowed prince Telemachos spoke a word to them: 'Fools, you are out of your minds and no longer conceal inside you what you have eaten and drunk. It must be some god who troubles you. You have feasted well; go to your homes and sleep, whenever,

that is, anyone desires to go home; I drive away no man.'

410 So he spoke, and all of them bit their lips in amazement at Telemachos, and the daring way he had spoken to them.

Now they were addressed and spoken to by Amphinomos, the glorious son of Nisos, son of the lord Aretios:

415 'Dear friends, no man must be angry, nor yet with violent answers attack what has been spoken in justice. And do not strike the stranger, as you have done, nor yet any other serving man who is in the house of godlike Odysseus. Come now, let the cupbearer pour wine in our goblets,

420 so we can pour a libation and then retire to our houses; and in the halls of Odysseus we shall let Telemachos look after the stranger, since it is his house that he came to.'

So he spoke, and the word he spoke was pleasing to all of them. The hero Moullos, the Doulichian herald, mixed them wine in the bowl. He was the henchman of Amphinomos.

425 He passed it around to all in order, and they, pouring a libation to the blessed gods, drank the honey-sweet wine.

But when they had made libation and drunk as much as they wanted, then they went home to go to bed, each man to his own house.