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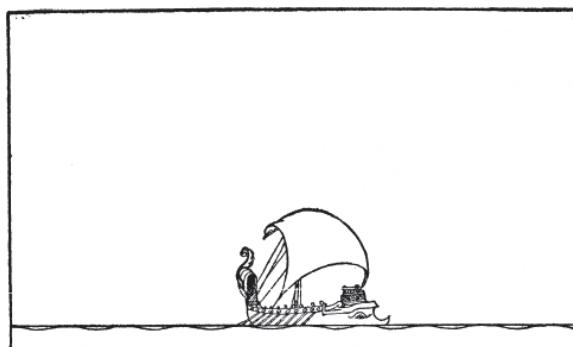
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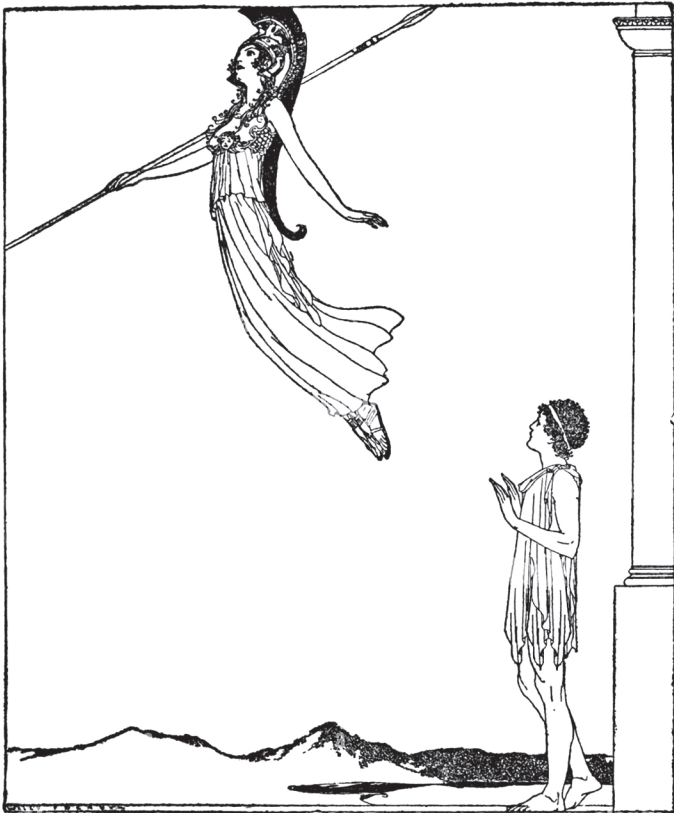
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# PART I

How Telemachus the son of Odysseus was moved  
to go on a voyage in search of his father and how  
he heard from Menelaus and Helen the tale of Troy

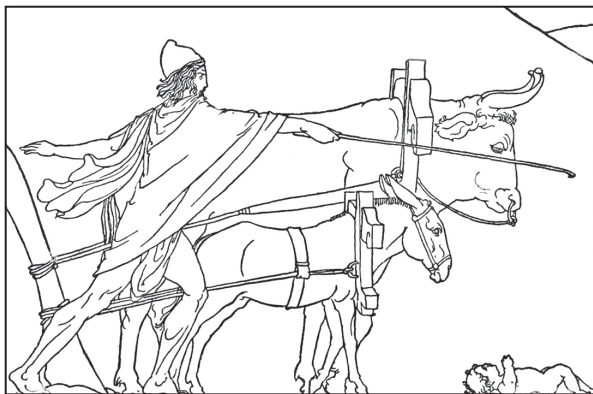


## I



**T**his is the story of Odysseus, the most renowned of all the heroes the Greek poets have told us of—of Odysseus, his wars and his wanderings. And this story of Odysseus begins with his son, the youth who was called Telemachus.

It was when Telemachus was a child of a month old that a messenger came from Agamemnon, the Great King, bidding Odysseus betake himself to the war against Troy that the Kings and Princes of Greece were about to wage. The wise Odysseus, foreseeing the disasters that would befall all that entered that war, was loth to go. And so when Agamemnon's messenger came to the island of Ithaka where he was King, Odysseus pretended to be mad. And that the messenger, Palamedes, might believe he was mad indeed, he did a thing that no man ever saw being done before—he took an ass and an ox and yoked them together to the same plough and began to plough a field. And when he had ploughed a furrow he sowed it, not with seeds that would grow, but with salt. When Palamedes saw him doing this he was nearly persuaded that Odysseus was mad. But to test him he took the child Telemachus and laid him down in the field in the way of the plough. Odysseus, when he



came near to where the child lay, turned the plough aside and thereby showed that he was not a mad man. Then had he to take King Agamemnon's summons. And Agamemnon's word was that Odysseus should go to Aulis where the ships of the Kings and Princes of Greece were being gathered. But first he was to go into another country to seek the hero Achilles and persuade him also to enter the war against Troy.

And so Odysseus bade good-bye to his infant son, Telemachus, and to his young wife, Penelope, and to his father, old Laertes. And he bade good-bye to his house and his lands and to the island of Ithaka where he was King. He summoned a council of the chief men of Ithaka and commended to their care his wife and his child and all his household, and thereafter he took his sailors and his fighting men with him and he sailed away. The years went by and Odysseus did not return. After ten years the City was taken by the Kings and Princes of Greece and the thread of war was wound up. But still Odysseus did not return. And now minstrels came to Ithaka with word of the deaths or the homecomings of the heroes who had fought in the war against Troy. But no minstrel brought any word of Odysseus, of his death or of his appearance in any land known to men. Ten years more went by. And now that infant son whom he had left behind, Telemachus, had grown up and was a young man of strength and purpose.

## II



One day, as he sat sad and disconsolate in the house of his father, the youth Telemachus saw a stranger come to the outer gate. There were many in the court outside, but no one went to receive the newcomer. Then, because he would never let a stranger stand at the gate without hurrying out to welcome him, and because, too, he had hopes that some day such a one would bring him

tidings of his father, Telemachus rose up from where he was sitting and went down the hall and through the court and to the gate at which the stranger stood.

"Welcome to the house of Odysseus," said Telemachus giving him his hand. The stranger clasped it with a friendly clasp. "I thank you, Telemachus," he said, "for your welcome, and glad I am to enter the house of your father, the renowned Odysseus."

The stranger looked like one who would be a captain amongst soldiers. His eyes were grey and clear and shone wonderfully. In his hand he carried a great bronze spear. He and Telemachus went together through the court and into the hall. And when the stranger left his spear within the spearstand Telemachus took him to a high chair and put a footstool under his feet.

He had brought him to a place in the hall where the crowd would not come. There were many in the court outside and Telemachus would not have his guest disturbed by questions or clamours. A handmaid brought water for the washing of his hands, and poured it over them from a golden ewer into a silver basin. A polished table was left at his side. Then the housedame brought wheaten bread and many dainties. Other servants set down dishes of meat with golden cups, and afterwards the maids came into the hall and filled up the cups with wine.

But the servants who waited on Telemachus and his guest were disturbed by the crowd of men who now came into the hall. They seated themselves at tables and shouted out their orders. Great dishes of meat were brought to them and bowls of wine, and the men ate and drank and talked loudly to each other and did not refrain even from staring at the stranger who sat with Telemachus.

"Is there a wedding-feast in the house?" the stranger asked, "or do the men of your clan meet here to drink with each other?"

A flush of shame came to the face of Telemachus. "There is no wedding-feast here," he said, "nor do the men of our clan

meet here to drink with each other. Listen to me, my guest. Because you look so wise and because you seem so friendly to my father's name I will tell you who these men are and why they trouble this house."



**T**hereupon, Telemachus told the stranger how his father had not returned from the war of Troy although it was now ten years since the City was taken by those with whom he went. "Alas," Telemachus said, "he must have died on his way back to us, and I must think that his bones lie under some nameless strait or channel of the ocean. Would he had died in the fight at Troy! Then the Kings and Princes would have made him a burial-mound worthy of his name and his deeds. His memory would have been revered amongst men, and I, his son, would have a name, and would not be imposed upon by such men as you see here—men who are feasting and giving orders in my father's house and wasting the substance that he gathered."

"How come they to be here?" asked the stranger. Telemachus told him about this also. When seven years had gone by from the fall of Troy and still Odysseus did not return there were those who thought he was dead and would never be seen more in the land of Ithaka. Then many of the young lords of the land wanted Penelope, Telemachus' mother, to marry one of them. They came to the house to woo her for marriage. But she, mourning for the absence of Odysseus and ever hoping that he would return, would give no answer to them. For three years now they were coming to the house of Odysseus to woo the wife whom he had left behind him. "They want to put my lady-mother between two dread difficulties," said Telemachus, "either to promise to wed one of them or to see the substance of our house wasted by them. Here they come and eat the bread of our fields, and slay the beasts of our

flocks and herds, and drink the wine that in the old days my father laid up, and weary our servants with their orders."

When he had told him all this Telemachus raised his head and looked at the stranger: "O my guest," he said, "wisdom and power shine out of your eyes. Speak now to me and tell me what I should do to save the house of Odysseus from ruin. And tell me too if you think it possible that my father should still be in life."

The stranger looked at him with his grey, clear, wonderfully-shining eyes. "Art thou verily the son of Odysseus?" said he.

"Verily, I am the son of Odysseus," said Telemachus.

"As I look at you," said the stranger, "I mark your head and eyes, and I know they are such a head and such eyes as Odysseus had. Well, being the son of such a man, and of such a woman as the lady Penelope, your spirit surely shall find a way of destroying those wooers who would destroy your house."

"Already," said Telemachus, "your gaze and your speech make me feel equal to the task of dealing with them."

"I think," said the stranger, "that Odysseus, your father, has not perished from the earth. He may yet win home through labors and perils. But you should seek for tidings of him. Harken to me now and I shall tell you what to do.

"To-morrow summon a council of all the chief men of the land of Ithaka, and stand up in that council and declare that the time has come for the wooers who waste your substance to scatter, each man to his own home. And after the council has been held I would have you voyage to find out tidings of your father, whether he still lives and where he might be. Go to Pylos first, to the home of Nestor, that old King who was with your father in the war of Troy. Beg Nestor to give you whatever tidings he has of Odysseus. And from Pylos go to Sparta, to the home of Menelaus and Helen, and beg tidings of your father from them too. And if you get news of his being alive, return: It will be easy for you then to endure for another year the wasting

of your substance by those wooers. But if you learn that your father, the renowned Odysseus, is indeed dead and gone, then come back, and in your own country raise a great funeral mound to his memory, and over it pay all funeral rites. Then let your mother choose a good man to be her husband and let her marry him, knowing for a certainty that Odysseus will never come back to his own house. After that something will remain for you to do: You will have to punish those wooers who destroy the goods your father gathered and who insult his house by their presence. And when all these things have been done, you, Telemachus, will be free to seek out your own fortune: you will rise to fame, for I mark that you are handsome and strong and most likely to be a wise and valiant man. But now I must fare on my journey."

The stranger rose up from where he sat and went with Telemachus from the hall and through the court and to the outer gate. Telemachus said: "What you have told me I shall not forget. I know you have spoken out of a wise and a friendly heart, and as a father to his son."

The stranger clasped his hands and went through the gate. And then, as he looked after him Telemachus saw the stranger change in his form. He became first as a woman, tall, with fair hair and a spear of bronze in her hand. And then the form of a woman changed too. It changed into a great sea-eagle that on wide wings rose up and flew high through the air. Telemachus knew then that his visitor was an immortal and no other than the goddess Athene who had been his father's friend.

### III



When Telemachus went back to the hall those who were feasting there had put the wine-cups from them and were calling out for Phemius, the minstrel, to come and sing some tale to delight them. And as he went amongst them one of the wooers said