

THE

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PEDAGOGICS.

No. II.

The second circumstance that strikes us as a characteristic of too many recent theories, is an apparent misconception of what education is. There are some, very many, who appear to think that they have gained a great advantage, when they have excluded from their course of elementary instruction whatever does not bear directly upon some form of active business. The cant phrase with theorists of this class is "practical utility." We need scarcely say, that the expression, thus applied, is grossly perverted, or at least unfairly limited. Until it can be proved, that a foundation must consist of the same materials and be constructed in the same way as the superstructure, we shall maintain that this confounding of professional with preparatory studies has as little pretensions to practical utility as it has to philosophical exactness and consistency. Such as have had it in their power to compare this mushroom vegetation with that sure, though tedious growth, which has a sound root to depend upon, need not be told where lies the difference.

Of this mistake the practical result is rather felt than seen. It is felt by the community, when it finds men pressing into

**By the shrieks of your wives, by the blood of your sires,  
That hath clotted your hearths, by the demon-lit fires  
That have levelled your homes, that have shrouded your  
    spires,**

**When the cheek of the boldest shall pale with affright,  
Need I urge you? be firm to the death in the fight.  
When Horror glooms dark o'er the lengthening line,  
Where the Foe at the mandate of vengeance combine,  
When the iron-mailed hoof of the charger is press'd  
With an infinite stress on the passionless breast,  
When the cannon's hot lips send a gleam through the rift  
Of vibrating rack which the thunder winds lift,  
In the raining of blood, in the dashing of plumes,  
In the meeting of blades, in the crashing of drums,  
Fear not, tremble not, falter not, for the Lord  
Of armies is with you—your shield and your sword.  
The day to his couch of soft amber is creeping,  
Long shadows across our encampment are sweeping  
A balm for the hearts that forever shall mourn,  
The forms from this sod that shall never return;  
And a crown for the head that uncoffined shall lie  
Ere the sun of to-morrow rolls low in the sky!  
Farewell, when the rattle, the crimson and roar  
Of battle are ended, its terrors, no more,  
Again should we meet on this scene, may it be  
In the temple of Peace, in the land of the Free.**

T. B.

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## THE ODYSSEY.

### No. I.

How few do justice to this noble poem! Nay, how few know any thing about it! We remember, when we were a

boy, how skeptical we felt about the primacy of Homer, and how secretly we set him down, at different times, below Burns and Byron. We doubt whether boys, big or little, ever do believe *ex animo* in Homer or any other master-mind. They may take the truth on trust, and even think that they believe it, but they never do. They may have the Iliad, and Paradise Lost, and if ambitious to be scholars, the Divina Commedia on their table, to be seen by company; but in that very table-drawer lies Moore or Scott or Thomson for private use. It is not till one has worked his way through half a dozen stages of absurdity, the measles, chicken-pox, and whooping-cough of intellect, that such a form as that of Homer becomes visible. When we read him now, it is with wonder at the puerile delusion which prevented us of old from seeing that unique combination of simplicity and grandeur which stamps him as the prince of poets. The plainest things related in the plainest manner, but with such an exquisite felicity of diction and such magnificence of versification, that it seems like Polyphemus milking his goats, a combination which would be absurd if it were not sublime.

It is also perhaps an effect of age, that while we still admire the battles of the Iliad, we prefer the narratives and landscapes of the Odyssey. The views of society presented are so natural and life-like, though inserted in a super-human or heroic frame, that we are constantly astonished and yet always feel at home. We have known Eumæus all our life, and can remember seeing old Laertes hoeing in his vineyard when we were in petticoats. The art by which Homer has contrived to impart dignity to all that is most homely and familiar is the very thing which forces us to own his supremacy.

In reperusing this delightful poem, after five and twenty years of almost total neglect, we are startled to observe how many of the fictions we have read in the long interval, may here be traced in their germ, and sometimes in the bud or flower. After all that has been pilfered from the Odyssey

already, it still contains materials, both plots and incidents, for many a stout novel or romantic poem, just as the Coliseum, after furnishing the stone for all the modern palaces of Rome, has still enough of itself left to constitute the grandest monument and ruin of the Eternal City.

No English reader can excuse himself for not enjoying nearly all this, while he has access to Cowper's version. But the merits of this wonderful performance are as little known as those of the original. It is only those who, like ourself within a few days, patiently compare a passage of some length in the translation and the Greek, that can believe what better judges have so often said as to the astonishing fidelity with which the thoughts of Homer are transferred into the purest English, with scarcely an addition, an omission, or a substitution. The minuter beauties of the phraseology, and the majestic thunder of the epic rhythm, must of course be lost in all translations; but the thoughts, the images, the action, the costume of this sublime and beautiful romance, are all preserved in pure, clear, strong, and double-refined English, by an exquisitely delicate and discriminating critic, as well as an original writer of consummate merit.'

The unity of the poem and the personality of Homer are proved by the extraordinary art with which it is constructed. The most perfect of modern romances cannot boast of a plot more skilfully contrived or more completely carried out. The interruptions and transitions of the narrative, the interweaving of the several distinct threads which compose it, are more perfect than in any novel that we ever read, although composed with all the advantage of copying this faultless model. The effect of this consummate structure is enhanced by a rhetorical merit often wanting in later works of high pretension. We mean the constant increase in the interest of the story to the end, notwithstanding the gradual disappearance of the supernatural and even the adventurous, to make room for events and scenes entirely domestic. The

romantic interest attached to these is still more striking as a proof of transcendent genius, because the only love which they involve is that of a married pair, whose reunion, after twenty years of separation, constitutes the dénouement of the whole story. Out of such a love-tale what could even a French novel writer hope to make?

Next to the structure of the poem, it may be advantageously compared with any other epic or romance in the essential quality of moral painting or delineation of character. Its characteristic qualities in this respect are distinctness, variety, truthfulness, and indirectness, i. e. the suggestion of character by incident and action, rather than formal and express description. As to all these points, the greatness of the poem may be staked upon a few of the more prominent figures. It may even be left to rest upon the family portraits of Ulysses, Penelope, and Telemachus. The generous but unformed son, the high-spirited but feminine mother, are no less true to nature in the slighter strokes by which they are portayed, than the strongly marked and deeply chiseled limbs and features of the husband and the father. Strange to say, there is a kind of charm even in the hero's harmless mendacity, his fondness for hoaxing his best friends, even under the most trying circumstances, but always with a view to their greater delight afterwards. Nowhere throughout the two poems is the master's hand more visible than in the recognition of Ulysses by Penelope, the provoking but most natural reserve and hesitation upon her part, and the no less natural resentment upon his, serving however to enhance the rapture of the reconciliation: The same thing may be said of the consummate skill with which Telemachus is painted, on the verge of manhood, eager to act a manly part, but not yet free from the capricious tenderness of childhood.

The same power of delineation may be traced even in the minor characters, which strike us less because they are less prominent and have less influence upon the progress

of the story. It is no proof of deficiency, but rather of the contrary, that Homer's least attractive pictures are the pictures of his gods, who, notwithstanding their affirmed superiority, are vastly inferior in grace and dignity to his men and women. This is not the poet's fault, but that of his religion, and may even be rejoiced in, as diminishing the meretricious charms of heathenism, even when adorned and recommended by the most stupendous genius of the heathen world.

The only other attribute of this great masterpiece which we can afford to specify is the extraordinary power of description where the subject is material and local, or derived from the habits of inferior animals. Apart from the exactness of detail which is attested by topographers, zoologists and painters, the selection of particulars is so judicious, and their presentation so artistical and graphic, that the least imaginative reader may without extravagance be said to see them. No one who has lately read the poem with attention, even in a version, can forget the splendid pictures of the islands of Calypso, Circe, and the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, the escape from shipwreck on the coast of Phœacia, the landing in Ithaca, the cottage of Eumæus, and a dozen other landscapes, to which may be added all the similes, not one of which perhaps is without some indication of exact acquaintance with external nature and the characteristic habits of the lower animals.

With these views of the merit of the *Odyssey*, we cannot but wonder at two facts, over and above the apparent oblivion of the poem, both by Greek and English readers. In the first place, we wonder that historical painters are content to draw subjects from the turbid streams instead of ascending to the fountain head. Some of the finest scenes in history or fiction, for the purpose indicated, may be found in this forgotten poem. In the next place, we wonder that the new and adventurous order of itinerant lecturers have never struck upon this vein or rather this exhaustless mine most attractive of metal and peculiarly adapted ad captan-

dum vulgus. The two suggestions may be happily reduced to one, namely, that of a Homeric Panorama, in which the untaught ear might be accustomed to the sound of the original, by the occasional declamation of a line or two, and the whole made intelligible by a running narrative, interspersed with some of the most striking passages from Cowper's version.

This leads us in conclusion to repeat, or rather to supply a previous omission by remarking, that the translation of the great Greek poet by a writer noted for his mastery of English, no less than for poetical genius, has enriched the language, not with new works but with new combinations, some of which are not the less striking because seldom quoted and we fear too little read. This is not a thing to be exemplified or proved by mere quotation. The felicitous expression is in many cases a short phrase which cannot well be severed from its context. The utmost that we can undertake in this way is to copy a few passages, which would, in our opinion, be entitled to the highest admiration, as samples of original composition, while at the same time they are strictly faithful to the substance of the Greek text, and may also serve as illustrations of some previous observations as to the peculiar power of Homer himself.

The pathos which attaches to the trying situation of Telemachus is beautifully brought out in the following description of the way in which he closed an expostulation to the suitors :

He spake impassioned, and to earth cast down  
His sceptre weeping. Pity at that sight  
Seized all the people; mute the assembly sat  
Long time, nor dared with answer rough to greet  
Telemachus.

The same thing reappears in the effect produced upon him by the narrative of Menelaus :

So saying, he kindled in him strong desire  
To mourn his father. At his father's name



Fast fell his tears to ground, and with both hands  
He spread his purple cloak before his eyes ;  
Which Menelaus marking doubtful sat,  
If he should leave him to lament his sire,  
Or question him, and tell him all at large.

This is immediately followed by an exquisite but altogether different description, that of Helen and her work-table :

While thus he doubted, Helen, as it chanced,  
Leaving her fragrant chamber, came, august  
As Dian, goddess of the golden bow.  
Abrasta, for her use, set forth a throne,  
Alcippe with soft arras covered it ;  
And Philo brought her silver basket, gift  
Of fair Alcandra, wife of Polybus,  
Whose mansion in Egyptian Thebes is rich  
In untold treasure, and who gave himself  
Ten golden talents, and two silver baths,  
With two bright tripods to the Spartan prince,  
Besides what Helen from his spouse received ;  
A golden spindle and a basket wheeled,  
Itself of silver and its lip of gold.  
That basket Philo, her own handmaid, placed  
At Helen's side, with slenderest thread replete,  
On which infolded thick with purple wool  
The spindle lay.

With this may be contrasted the inimitable picture of Calypso's grotto, which may safely challenge a comparison with any passage of the same kind, Greek or English :

A fire on all the hearth  
Blazed sprightly, and afar diffused the scent  
Of smooth-split cedar and of cypress-wood,  
Odorous, burning, cheered the happy isle.  
She, busied at the loom and plying fast  
Her golden shuttle, with melodious voice  
Sat chanting there. A grove on either side,  
Alder and poplar, and the redolent branch  
Of cypress, hemmed the dark retreat around.  
There many a bird of broadest pinion built  
Secure her nest, the owl, the kite, the daw.  
A garden-vine luxuriant on all sides  
Mantled the spacious cavern, cluster-hung

Profuse. Four fountains of serenest lymph,  
 Their sinuous course pursuing side by side,  
 Strayed all around, and everywhere appeared  
 Meadows of softest verdure, purpled o'er  
 With violets. It was a scene to fill  
 A god from heaven with wonder and delight.

The same hand, but with a different pencil and a stronger  
 touch, painted the shipwreck of Ulysses :

A billow, at that word, with dreadful sweep  
 Rolled o'er his head and whirled the raft around,  
 Dashed from the steerage o'er the vessel's side,  
 He plunged remote. The gust of mingling winds  
 Snapped short the mast, and sail and sail-yard bore  
 Afar into the deep. Long time beneath  
 The whelming waves he lay, nor could emerge  
 With sudden force, for furious was the shock,  
 And his apparel, fair Calypso's gift,  
 Oppressed him sorely. But at length he rose,  
 And rising spattered from his lips the brine,  
 Which trickling left his brow in many a stream.  
 Nor, though distressed, unmindful to regain  
 His raft was he, but buffeting the waves  
 Pursued and, well nigh at his dying gasp,  
 Recovered it and in the centre sat.  
 She, by the billows tost, at random rolled.  
 As when in autumn Boreas o'er the plain  
 Before him drives a mass of matted thorns,  
 They tangled to each other close adhere ;  
 So her the winds drove wild about the deep.  
 By turns the South consigned her, as in sport,  
 To the rude North-wind, and the West by turns  
 Received her from the intermitting East.  
 . . . . . As when the wind,  
 Tempestuous falling on a stubble-heap,  
 The arid straws disperses every way,  
 So flew the timbers.

The rescue is, if possible, still finer.

Two nights of terror and two dreadful days  
 Bewildered in the deep, and many a time,  
 Foreboding death, he roamed. But when at length  
 The third bright morn appeared, the wind assuaged

Blow softly and a breathless calm ensued.  
Then casting from a billow's height a look  
Of anxious heed, he saw Phaeacia nigh.  
Precious as to his children seems the life  
Of some fond father, who hath long endured  
An adverse demon's rage, by slow disease  
And ceaseless anguish wasted, till the Gods  
Dispel at length their fears and he revives—  
So grateful to Ulysses' sight appeared  
Forests and hills. Impatient with his feet  
To press the shore, he swam; but when within  
Such distance as a shout may reach he came,  
The thunder of the sea against the rocks  
Then smote his ear.

With both hands suddenly he seized the rock  
And foaming clenched it till the billow past.  
So baffled he that wave, but yet again  
The reflux wave rushed on him, and with force  
Relentless dashed him far into the sea.  
As when the polypus enforced forsakes  
His rough recess, in his contracted claws  
He gripes the pebbles still, to which he clung—  
So he within his lacerated grasp  
The crumbled stone retained, when from his hold  
The huge wave forced him and he sank again.

After his final rescue, what a feeling of comfort is awakened by seeing him ensconced between two olive trees!

A covert which nor rough winds blowing moist  
Could penetrate, nor could the noon-day sun  
Smite through it, or unceasing showers pervade,  
So thick a roof the ample branches formed  
Close interwoven. Under these the chief  
Retiring, with industrious hands amassed  
An ample couch, for fallen leaves he found  
Abundant there, such store as had sufficed  
Two travellers or three for covering warm,  
Though winters roughest blasts had raged the while.  
That bed with joy the suffering dirge renowned  
Contemplated and occupying soon  
The middle space, heaped higher still the leaves.  
As when some swain hath hidden deep his torch  
Beneath the embers at the verge extreme

Of all his farm, where, having neighbours none,  
 He saves a seed or two of future flame  
 Alive, doomed else to fetch it from afar—  
 So with dry leaves Ulysses overspread  
 His body, on whose eyes Minerva poured  
 The balm of sleep, and eager to restore  
 His wasted strength, soon closed their weary lids.

We see no trace of foreign idiom in any of these passages, and if they were original, we have no doubt they would be regarded by the best judges as entitled to the highest praise. How much more when they reproduce so perfectly the meaning of another! The same thing is emphatically true of the following sublime but horrible description, which is one of Homer's strongest passages, and one of Cowper's most felicitous translations. Ulysses is relating how he and his companions blinded Polyphemus.

They, grasping the sharp stake of olive wood,  
 Infix'd it in his eye; myself advanc'd  
 To a superior stand, twirl'd it about,  
 As when a shipwright with his wimble bores  
 Through oaken timber, plac'd on either side  
 Below, his fellow artists strain the thong  
 Alternate, and the restless iron spins,  
 So, grasping hard the fiery-pointed stake,  
 We twirl'd it in his eye; the bubbling blood  
 Boil'd round about the brand; his pupil sent  
 A scalding vapour forth, that sing'd his brow,  
 And all his eye-roots crackled in the flame.  
 As when the smith, a hatchet or large axe  
 Temp'ring immerses all the hissing blade  
 Deep in cold water (whence the strength of steel,)  
 So hiss'd his eye around the olive wood.  
 The howling monster with his outcry fill'd  
 The hollow rock, and I, with all my aids,  
 Fled terrified. He, plucking forth the spike  
 From his burnt socket, mad with anguish, cast  
 The implement all bloody far away.  
 Then bellowing, he sounded forth the name  
 Of ev'ry Cyclops dwelling in the caves  
 Around him, on the wind-swept mountain-tops.

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BATTLE OF THRASIMENE.

On the evening before the legions of Rome encountered their terrible enemy for the third time since his descent from the Alps, the sun, as it seemed, sunk down in a sea of blood.

Wearily, from the first streakings of the morning, had the legionaries toiled on through dust and fatigue and thirst, and all the while the sun shot down his fervours upon them un-pityingly. The heavens were remarkably free from clouds, not a speck dotted the solemn blue that stretched and gleamed above—not a fragment of straggling vapour could the eye detect on the deep, still surface that overhung them through all that weary day. Upon the villages through which their march lay, there seemed to have settled a mysterious dread of the coming. The awful scene which was so soon to follow upon the footsteps of the night had thrown out its ominous shadow before it, threatening and cold, and shut up men's hearts and mouths. The warm sunlight had no power to dispel it—it was there—it was a shadow to be felt, it lay upon men's souls; it was the shadow of Death. Both animate and inanimate nature seemed to have inhaled the infection of the hour; the invisible terror which hung like lead upon the air; the incipient rush of blood, the precursive crash of ruin. It seized upon the birds among the branches

from a neighbouring liquor store with a faint attempt at sandy whiskers, who seems to think that the perfection of dining consists in tasting every thing upon the table or the bill of fare.

Just at this interesting point of the discourse, my communicative *convive* suddenly arose, threw down his napkin, and without bidding me adieu, joined a gentleman who was going out. As my late companion pressed his hand in cordial salutation and then went out with him arm in arm, I recognized, in spite of a sudden paleness and a smile expressing any thing but pleasure, the distinguished looking gentleman who had been presiding at the head of the long table.

ÆGIO.

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## THE ODYSSEY.

### No. II.

We shall merely mention as we pass the interview between Ulysses and his mother in the lower world, as a specimen of simple and unlaboured pathos. But we must make room for another sea-scene.

For here stood Scylla, while Charybdis there,  
With hoarse throat deep absorbed the briny flood  
Oft as she vomited the deluge forth,  
Like water caldron'd o'er a furious fire  
The whirling Deep all murmur'd, and the spray  
On both those rocky summits fell in showers,  
But when she sucked the salt wave down again,  
Then all the pool appeared wheeling about  
Within, the rock rebellowed, and the sea,  
Drawn off into the gulf, disclosed to view  
The oozy bottom. Us pale horror seized.  
Thus dreading death, with fast set eyes we watched  
Charybdis; mean time Scylla from the bank  
Caught six away, the bravest of my friends;  
And, as I watching stood the galleys course

And them within, uplifted high in air  
 Their legs and arms I saw. My name aloud  
 Pronouncing in their agony, they went,  
 My name, and never to pronounce it more.  
 As when from some bold point among the rocks  
 The angler, with his taper rod in hand  
 Casts forth his bait to scare the smaller fry,  
 He swings away remote his guarded line,  
 Thence jerks aground at once the struggling prey,  
 So Scylla them raised struggling to the rock,  
 And at her cavern's mouth devoured them all,  
 Shrieking and stretching forth to me their arms  
 In sign of hopeless misery.

The next sample is the exquisite description of the spot in Ithaca, where the Phocacians landed Ulysses.

Vexed and harassed oft  
 In stormy battles and tempestuous seas,  
 But sleeping now serenely and resigned  
 To sweet oblivion of all sorrow past.  
 In Ithaca, but from the public view  
 Sequestered far, there is a certain port  
 Sacred to Phorcys, ancient of the deep,  
 Formed by converging shores, abrupt alike  
 And prominent, which from the spacious bay  
 Exclude all boisterous winds; within it ships  
 The port once gained, uncabled ride secure.  
 An olive at the haven's head expands  
 Her branches wide, near to a pleasant cave  
 Umbrageous, to the nymphs' devoted named  
 The Naiads. Beakers in that cave and jars  
 Of stone are found; bees lodge their honey there;  
 And there on slender spindles of the rock  
 The nymphs of rivers weave their wondrous robes.  
 Perennial springs rise in it, and it shows  
 A twofold entrance; ingress one affords  
 To man and fronts the North; but holier far,  
 The Southern opens to the Gods above.  
 Then, knowing well the port, they boldly thrust  
 The vessel in; she rapid ploughed the sands  
 With half her keel, such rowers urged her on.  
 The benches left, and leaping all ashore,

Ulysses first they gently lifted forth  
With the whole splendid couch whereon he lay,  
And placed him, still fast sleeping, on the sands.

The double transformation of Ulysses is inimitable, both in Greek and English :

So saying, the Goddess touched him with a wand—  
At once, o'er all his agile limbs she parched  
The polished skin : she withered to the root  
His wavy locks, and clothed him with the hide  
Deformed of wrinkled age ; she charged with rheums  
His eyes before so vivid, and a cloak  
And kirtle gave him, tattered both, and foul,  
And smutched with smoke ; then casting over all  
A huge old hairless deer skin, with a staff  
She filled his shrivelled hand, and gave him, last,  
A wallet patched all over, and that, strung  
With twisted tackle, dangled at his side.

Minerva spake, and with her rod of gold  
Touched him ; his mantle first and vest she made  
Pure as new blanched ; dilating next his form,  
She gave dimensions ampler to his limbs ;  
Swarthy again his manly hue became,  
Round his full face, and black his bushy chin.  
The change performed, Minerva disappeared,  
And the illustrious hero turned again  
Into the cottage ; wonder at that sight  
Seized on Telemachus ; askance he looked,  
Awe struck, not unsuspecting of a God.

The picture of Eumæus in his fourfold character of swine-herd, butcher, cook, and carver, is one which could only have been drawn from the life.

So saying his wood for fuel he prepared,  
And dragging thither a well fattened brawn  
Of the fifth year, his servants held him fast  
At the hearth side. Nor failed the master swain  
To adore the Gods, (for wise and good was he)  
But consecration of the victim first  
Himself performing, cast into the fire  
The forehead bristles of the tusky boar,  
And prayed to all above that safe at length



Ulysses might regain his native home.  
 Then with an oaken shive, which he had left  
 Beside the fire, he smote him, and he fell.  
 Next piercing him, and scorching close his hair,  
 The joints they parted, and with slices crude,  
 Cut neatly from the separated limbs,  
 Eumœus spread the caul, which sprinkled o'er  
 With purest meal, he cast into the fire.  
 The remnant slashed, and spitted, and prepared,  
 They placed, heaped high in chargers, on the board—  
 Then rose the good Eumœas to his task  
 Of distribution, for by none excelled  
 In all the duties of a host was he  
 Seven fold partition of the banquet made,  
 He gave with precious prayer to Maia's son  
 And to the nymphs one portion, and the guests  
 Served next, but honouring Ulysses most  
 On him the long unsevered chine bestowed.

No one can think of making extracts from the *Odyssey*  
 without including the death of Argus.

Thus they conversed, when, lying near, his head  
 Ulysses dog, the faithful Argus, heaved,  
 And set his ears erect. The chief himself  
 Had reared him, but, departing to the shores  
 Of Ilium, left the trial of his worth  
 To youths oft'times indebted to his speed  
 For wild goat, hart, and hare. Forlorn he lay,  
 A poor unheeded cast-off, on the ground,  
 Where mules and oxen had before the gate  
 Much ordure left, with which Ulysses' hinds  
 Should, in due time, manure his spacious fields  
 There lay, by vermine worried to the bone,  
 The wretched Argus; soon as he perceived  
 Long-lost Ulysses nigh, down fell his ears  
 Clapped close, and with his tail glad sign he gave  
 Of gratulation, impotent to rise,  
 And to approach his master. At that sight  
 Ulysses, unperceived, a starting tear  
 Wiped off, and of Eumœus thus inquired :

I can but wonder, seeing such a dog  
 Thus lodged Eumœus ! beautiful he seems

But wanted, I suspect, due speed to match  
His comely shape; a table guard belike,  
And for his looks prized more than for his use.

To whom Eumœus, then didst thus reply:  
He is the dog of one far hence deceased.  
But had he now such body, plight, and strength,  
As when his lord departing to the shores  
Of Ilium left him, thou should'st view, at once,  
With wonder his agility and force.  
He never in the sylvan deep recess  
The wild beast saw, that scap'd him, and he tracked  
Their steps infallible; but comfort none  
Enjoys he now; for distant far from home  
His lord hath died, and, heedless of his dog,  
The women neither house nor give him food.  
For whom Jove dooms to servitude he takes  
At once the half of that man's worth away.

He spake; and, passing the wide portal, came  
Where the imperious suitors feasting sat.  
And Argus, soon as in the twentieth year  
He had beheld once more with sparkling eyes  
His lord Ulysses, closed them, and expired.

The whole of the fight between the beggars might be quoted  
but we must content ourselves with the conclusion.

He ended, and still more the trembler's limbs  
Shook under him; into the middle space  
They led him, and each raised his hands on high.  
Then stood Ulysses musing and in doubt,  
Whether to strike him lifeless to the ground  
At once, or fell him with a managed blow.  
To smite with managed force at length he chose  
As wisest, lest, betrayed by his own strength  
He should be known. Each raised his fist and each  
Assailed his opposite. Him Irus struck  
On the right shoulder; but Laertes' son  
Smote Irus with a force that snapped the bones.  
He spouting through his lips a crimson stream,  
With chattering teeth and hideous outcry fell,  
And with his heels, recumbent, thumped the ground.

Loud laughed the suitors, lifting each his hands,  
As they would die; when seizing fast his heels,  
Ulysses dragged him through the palace door.

The effect of Ulysses' stories on his wife before the recognition may be compared with that of Othello's upon Desdemona :

With many a specious fiction, thus he soothed  
Her listening ear; she melting at the sound  
With drops of tenderest grief her cheeks bedewed;  
And as the snow, by Zephyrus diffused,  
Melts on the mountain tops, when Eurus breathes  
And fills the channels of the running streams,  
So melted she, and down her lovely cheeks  
Poured fast the tears, him mourning as remote  
Who sat beside her. Soft compassion touched  
Ulysses of his consort's silent wo;  
Yet wept not he, but well-dissembling still,  
Suppressed his grief, fast rivetting his eyes,  
As they were each of horn or hammered steel,  
Till she, with overflowing tears at length  
Satiated, replied, and thus inquired again.

When the old nurse recognized Ulysses by a well remembered scar, and seemed about to make him known :

Then seizing fast  
Her throat with his right hand, and with his left  
Pressing her nearer on himself, he said :  
Nurse! why wouldst thou destroy me? From thy breast  
The milk that fed me flowed. Much grief, much toil,  
Have I sustained, and in the twentieth year  
Regain my country. Thou hast learned the truth;  
Such was the will of Heaven. But hush—be still—  
Lest others also learn it from thy lips.  
For this I say, nor shall the threat be vain;  
If God, propitious, grant me to destroy  
Those suitors, when I shall my wrong, avenge  
On all these worthless ones who serve the queen,  
Although my nurse thyself shalt also die.

We know of nothing finer even than the English account of Ulysses feelings when he saw the suitors and their orgies.

As growls the mastiff standing on the start

For battle, if a stranger's foot approach  
 Her 'cubs new-whelped—so growled Ulysses' heart  
 While wonder filled him at their impious deeds  
 But, smiting on his breast, he thus reproved  
 The mutinous inhabitant within,  
 Heart! bear it. Worse than this thou didst endure,  
 What time, invincible by force of man,  
 The Cyclops on thy brave companions fed.  
 Then thou wast patient, though a thousand fears  
 Possessed thee, till thy wisdom set thee free.

His own heart thus he disciplined which bore  
 With firmness the restraint, and in his breast  
 Rebelled not, yet he turned from side to side  
 As when some hungry swain o'er glowing coals  
 A paunch for food prepares, from side to side  
 He turns it oft, and scarce abstains the while;  
 So he from side to side rolled, pondering deep,  
 How likeliest with success he might assail  
 Those shameless suitors.

Nothing can be finer than the uniformity with which Tele-  
 machus is represented :

Nurse! have ye with respectful notice served  
 Our guest? or hath he found a sordid couch  
 E'en where he might? for prudent though she be,  
 Sometimes my mother errs; with kindness treats  
 The worthless, and the worthy with neglect.

Again when he addresses the guest himself.

Hail, hoary guest! hereafter mayst thou share  
 Delights not fewer than thy present pains!  
 Oh Jove! of all the Gods the most severe!  
 Kings reign by thee; yet through Thee they reign,  
 Thou sparest not even kings, whom oft we see  
 Plunged by thyself in gulfs of deepest wo.  
 Soon, as I saw thee sir! tears dimmed my sight,  
 And sweat bedewed my forehead, at the thought,  
 Of dear Ulysses.

Again when the great decisive trial is approaching

Thrice with full force he strove to bend the bow,  
 And thrice he paused, but still with hope to draw  
 The bow string home, and pass his arrow through.

And now the fourth time straining tight the cord,  
 He should have hitched it, but his father's looks  
 Repulsed his eager efforts, and he ceased.

There is something truly noble in the way the hero makes himself known at the critical moment to his faithful servants :

Herdsmen! and, Eumæus! shall I keep  
 A certain secret close, or shall I speak  
 Outright? I burn to impart it, and I will.  
 What welcome should Ulysses at your hands  
 Receive, arriving sudden at his home,  
 Some God his guide? would ye the suitors aid,  
 Or aid Ulysses rather? answer true.

Behold him! I am he myself, arrived  
 After long sufferings in the twentieth year!  
 I know how welcome to yourselves alone  
 Of all my train I come, for I have heard  
 None others praying for my safe return.  
 I therefore tell you truth; should Heaven subdue  
 The suitors under me, ye shall receive  
 Each, by my gift a bride, with lands and house  
 Near neighbouring mine, and thenceforth shall be, both  
 Dear friends and brothers of the prince my son.

The close of the trial with the bow is rendered more sublime by contrast—

He now with busy look and curious touch  
 Explored the bow, now viewing it remote,  
 Now near at hand, aware that, haply worms  
 Had in his absence, drilled the solid horn.  
 A suitor noticed him and thus remarked :

He hath an eye, methinks, exactly skilled  
 In bows, and steals them; or perhaps at home,  
 Hath such himself, or feels a strong desire  
 To make them; mark, with what address the rogue  
 Adept in mischief shifts it to and fro!

To whom another, insolent replied:  
 Such fortune crown his efforts whatsoever  
 He purpose, as attends his efforts made  
 On this same bow, which he shall never bend.

So they ; but when the wary hero wise  
Hath made his hand familiar with the bow,  
Poising it and examining—at once—  
As when in harp and song adept, a bard  
Strings a new lyre, extending first the chords,  
He knits them to the frame at either end,  
With promptest ease ! with such Ulysses strung  
His own huge bow, and with his right hand trilled  
The nerve, which it its quick vibration sang  
As with a swallow's voice. Then anguish turned  
The suitors pale, and in that moment, Jove  
Gave his rolling thunder for a sign.  
Such most propitious notice from the son  
Of wily Saturn hearing with delight,  
He seized a shaft, which at the table's side  
Lay ready drawn ; but in his quiver's womb  
The rest yet slept, though destined soon to steep  
Their points in Grecian blood. He the reed  
Full on the bow string, drew the parted head  
Home to his breast, and aiming as he sat,  
At once dismissed it. Through the numerous rings  
Swift flew the gliding steel, and, issuing, sped  
Beyond them ; when his son he thus bespake :

Thou needst not blush young prince, to have received  
A guest like me ; for neither swerved my shaft,  
Nor laboured I long time to draw the bow ;  
My strength is unimpaired, not such as these  
In scorn affirm it. But the waning day  
Calls us to supper, after which succeeds  
Jocund variety, the song, the lyre,  
With all that heightens and adorns the feast.

He said, and gave him with his brows, the sign :  
At once the son of the illustrious chief  
Slung his keen falchion, grasped his spear, and stood  
Armed bright for battle at his father's side.  
Then girding up his rags, Ulysses sprang  
With bow and full charged quiver to the door ;  
Loose on the broad stone at his feet he poured  
His arrows, and the suitors thus bespake :

This prize though difficult, hath been achieved.  
Now for another mark, which never man

Struck yet ; but I will strike it, if I may,  
And if Apollo make that glory mine.

The hero spake, and at Antinous aimed  
A bitter shaft ; he purposing to drink,  
Both hands advanced toward a golden cup  
Twin-eared, nor aught suspected death so nigh.  
For who could, at a public feast, suspect,  
That one alone would dare, however bold,  
Design his death, and execute the deed ?  
Yet him Ulysses with an arrow pierced  
Full in the throat, and through his neck behind  
Sprang forth the arrow's point. Aslant he drooped ;  
Down fell the goblets, through his nostrils flew  
The spouted blood, and spurning with his foot  
The board, he spread his viands in the dust.

Another terrible description of the same kind is the death  
of Eurymachus :

Thus saying, he drew his brazen falchion keen  
Of double edge, and with a dreadful shout  
Assailed him. But Ulysses with his shaft  
In that same moment through his bosom driven  
Transfixed his liver, and down dropped his sword.  
Sprinkling the table from his wound, he fell  
Convolved in agonies, and overturned  
Both food and wine ; his forehead smote the floor ;  
Wo filled his heart, and spurning with his heels  
His vacant seat, he shook it till he died.

These extracts, fragmentary as they are, may serve to justify what we have said of Cowper's Ulysses, considered merely as an English poem, and of the great original as not only the first but by far the finest of poetical romances.