

never a fight about the fair queen disturbed their life of mirth. They appeared well satisfied with everything around them, and especially with the bounty of their festive board. Nor is it unlikely that to some the good cheer they found in the palace proved a greater attraction than the hand of the fair queen itself. Yet, with all their large number and extensive influence, the wealth and splendor of some and the noble lineage of others, and above all, the unfeigned admiration which all show to the object of their quest, prove beyond peradventure that to their eyes the noble spouse of Ulysses, irrespective of her wealth and regal dignity, was a prize such as could not be found throughout the land.

The incredulity with which Penelope receives any tidings of the hero forms a peculiar trait in her character. She is always ready to listen to any news of him, but if the news should point to his early return, she discredits it. She is afraid to express any hope of Ulysses' returning, lest she should be disappointed, and cast into deeper gloom than before. She deceives herself about her own feelings. Though she would persuade herself that all hope of his return is in vain, down at the bottom of her heart a lingering ray still survives. She will credit neither Telemachus, nor the old beggar (Ulysses), nor even her old and trusted servant Euryclea, when they bid her hope, or tell her that her long-lost lord is actually present. When Euryclea informs her of Ulysses' return, and of his slaying of the suitors, she tells her it cannot be he, but that it must be a god who has assumed his form. Even when placed face to face with the returned hero, resplendent in that godlike beauty bestowed upon him by Minerva, her greeting is cooler than we expect. Some critics hold that this interview lacks the fire and interest that should characterize it. But this is an injudicious contention. It must be borne in mind that, though love is the dominant sentiment in the heroine, it is controlled by a noble prudence, and a lofty dignity.

She had been so long separated from Ulysses, that she had grown to think it impossible that he should ever return: her mind was thrown into such a turmoil by the late events in the palace that she could not at once collect her thoughts; her love prompted her to rush into the arms of him who claimed her as his own, and there in a few moments live all the joys of the twenty lost years; but her prudence held her back, reminding her of Helen's fate on account of her want of caution.

She had no tangible proof of Ulysses' identity. She had not seen the scar on his leg, as had Euryclea. She had been told that he had slain all the suitors, and sent their souls to Hades. How could any but a god perform such a mighty deed? Homer would not have been true to the character had he made her at once throw down that prudent reserve which through her long trial had so nobly sustained her. But when at last the evidence is forced upon her yearning heart, that it is really Ulysses, her long-lost lord who stands before her, she gives full scope to her pent-up love, and from the excess of joy, she swoons away on his breast.

And in the radiance of that sacred hour she stands before us as the noblest type of her sex that pagan antiquity has bequeathed to us. Through the mist of ages her gentleness, her purity, her unalterable affection, and, more than all, her unswerving fidelity to duty, stand out from the pages of that marvellous book, as anticipations of that still brighter and loftier ideal of womanhood Christianity was to reveal to the world.

It, furthermore, gives evidence, that these elements of life and character that come nearest to our christian ideal, are the ones that furnish art with its noblest conceptions; and Homer's creations throughout bear witness that true genius when left to its own natural guidance, unbiassed by the cavilling sophistries of warring schools, will only among such find food for its inspiration.

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