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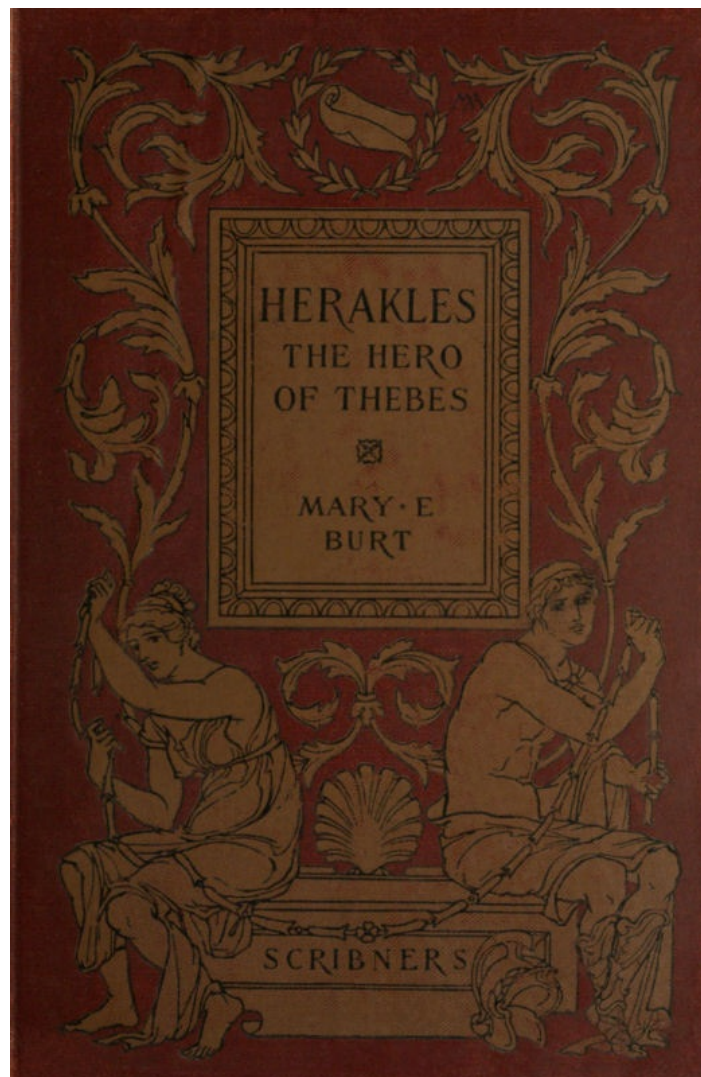
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HERAKLES, THE HERO OF THEBES, AND OTHER HEROES OF THE MYTH ***



HERAKLES
THE HERO OF THEBES
AND OTHER HEROES OF THE MYTH

ADAPTED FROM THE SECOND BOOK OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF ATHENS, GREECE

BY

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HERAKLES SLAYING A CENTAUR.
(Giovanni Bologna.)

To

SEVEN

LITTLE GENTLEMEN

WILLIE

MACY

REGGIE

CHARLES

LOUIS

OLIVER

GRISWOLD

PREFACE

THE child's heart goes out to the man of action, the man who makes short work of things and gets directly at a result. He responds to life, to energy, quick wit, the blow that hits the nail on the head at the first stroke.

The rapidity of action in the stories of Herakles, Jason, and other Heroes of the Myth, the prowess and courage and untiring endurance of the men, render the characters worthy subjects of thought to young minds, and have secured the stories a permanent place in educational literature. It is not elegant literature alone that boys need, but inspiring ideals which will impel them to stand fearlessly to their guns, to do the hard thing with untiring perseverance, to reach the result with unerring insight.

It is exactly this unbending courage in Herakles and his comrade heroes, that has made them the backbone of literature for ages, holding their own in spite of the sapless literary fungus crowding our book-shelves.

While travelling in Greece I found the children of the primary schools reading these stories in the lower grades, the book being the one used next above the primer. The interest was enthusiastic, and I brought home a copy of the book, which, with Madame Ragozin's collaboration, I have arranged as a first or second book of reading for our own schools.

MARY E. BURT.

THE JOHN A. BROWNING SCHOOL,
NEW YORK, March 15, 1900.

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INTRODUCTION

THE LAND OF THE HEROES

ONE look at the map of Greece will show us that it is the smallest of European countries. For many hundreds of years it was inhabited by the handsomest, bravest, and most intelligent people in the world. But these people, the Greeks, or Hellenes, as they called themselves, had not always lived in the country.

Thousands of years before the Hellenes came to Greece it was a perfect wilderness of mountains, narrow valleys, torrents, and tangled forests. It was a land of wild beasts, and they were so numerous and fierce that there was almost no room for men.

Yet men did live there, but we know nothing about them or what they were like, except that they hid in caves and had hardly got beyond the art of making fire, trapping and killing the less dangerous animals with sticks or little arrows pointed with stones, and using their meat for food and hides for clothing.

Then the new people, the Greeks, began to come into the country. They came in boats from across the sea and on foot from the north, through numberless mountain-passes. They did not come all at once, but in small detachments, in single tribes, so that it took them many years to spread over the country.

The new race was nobler than the old, more advanced in knowledge and in the arts of civilized life. It was not a race to be content with caves and forest-dens, but each tribe, after it had chosen a district and taken possession of it, selected some high hill, built rude dwellings upon it and temples to its patron gods, a public treasure-house also, and enclosed the hill with strong walls. It had become a fortress, and was called Acropolis, in their language.

Each tribe, of course, had its leaders, usually belonging to some family which had earned the gratitude and loyalty of the people by brave and affectionate service, and the leadership descended from father to son. These were the kings and they resided within the Acropolis.

Around it and under the protection of its walls the people built their own huts and began to clear the land. They sowed various crops, planted the vine and the olive, and raised herds of sheep and goats. There was room enough within the walls for all the families, with their herds, to find shelter in the Acropolis in times of danger, from the attacks of the wild natives or of the still wilder beasts of the forests and fields.

Now these latter were by far the most dangerous enemies of the new settlers, who soon found that they could venture but a few miles from their small home-farms without encountering huge and ferocious animals which the increased herds attracted and which their miserable weapons were utterly insufficient to slay or even put to flight.

Each small district had its particular terror, just as many districts of India now have a man-eating tiger, which makes miles and miles of country around unsafe for man or beast.

It became a question which of the two, the men or the wild animals, would remain in possession. Then young and courageous men, sons of the ruling families, athletes in strength, practised in the arts of war, commanding through their greater wealth the use of better weapons, felt it their duty to their people to do for them what the poor herdsmen and laborers had neither the strength nor the skill to do for themselves.

From all the central royal cities they started singly or in small troops, a bevy of young heroes, as eager for the delights of adventure as for the public good. Year after year they wandered across country seeking the most impassable wildernesses, directed by the stories they heard on their way to the dens of the cruel monsters, which they usually overcame by force or cunning.

Then they would return to their homes triumphant, bearing the proof of their incredible prowess, the hides, or horns, or heads of the monsters they had slain. Thus they put new heart into their people. Their trophies seemed to say: "You see these creatures were not so terrible as they might have been; what we have done others can do." So they did a double good—one immediate by the destruction of the dreaded foes and by the opening of the land to the planters and the tillers; the other even more far-reaching and more beneficent in its results by raising men's spirits, inspiring them with confidence and with the ambition to show that they were not mere helpless boors, cowed and dependent on their betters.

The Greek nation in years to come proved itself a nation of heroes and was so called by fame. But who can tell how much these heroes were indebted for this honorable distinction which has remained by them to this day, to the early vigorous education which those doughty champions of old imparted to them, not by preaching or advice, but by their own dauntless example.

Can we wonder if their people's passionate gratitude and unselfish admiration survived those glorious men through ages? Can we wonder if after centuries had come and gone the memory of their deeds and persons appeared to later generations through a halo of wonder and awe?

Deeds of a remote past always assume gigantic proportions. "Surely," men would say, "surely, those heroes were more than ordinary mortals! They had more than human strength, endurance, wisdom. Neither iron fang nor claw of steel could harm them. They died, indeed, but of their nature they must have been half divine; their mothers were human, but surely the gods themselves were their fathers."

And thus it was settled, and for many, many hundreds of years the Greeks continued to honor their ancient heroes as half-divine men, or demi-gods, and to erect altars to them and come to them with prayers and offerings. The Greek had to grow in mind and soul high enough to grasp the truth that there can be only one God, and that no man, high as he may tower above his kind, can be more than human.

But it was a beautiful and ennobling belief, and at first sight it seems a pity that it was ever lost, yet in reality it was

a great gain, for men may think they have an excuse for not putting forth their bravest efforts if they believe that the gods only can achieve deeds of courage. There is no reason why men may not aspire to any height of bravery which has been gained by other men.

The undying energy embodied in the characters of these old heroes is the inheritance of every child. The children of America are not born the sons of ruling houses. But they are destined to be the guardians and rulers of their native land. And if the children take into their future lives the heroism they first realize in ancient story, they will find themselves, when the time comes, armed with the same courage, endurance, and love of human beings which have made the heroes of all lands and ages.

HERAKLES

AND OTHER HEROES OF THE MYTH

CHAPTER I

THE BABE HERAKLES

FAR away in the land of Argos there once lived a beautiful maiden, the daughter of a brave king. She was tall and fair and her name was Alkmene. Her father was rich in the possession of many oxen.

Her husband also owned great herds of oxen. He had so many that he could not tell them from those of the king. So he quarrelled with the king and slew him. Then he took Alkmene and fled from his native land. They came to Thebes and made it their home.

Here Herakles was born, the babe who was stronger than the strongest of men. The goddess, Hera, hated Herakles. She was the wife of Zeus, the Lord of Thunder and King of Heaven. Hera was angry because Zeus loved him, and she was jealous because Zeus had foretold that Herakles would become the greatest of men. More than that Zeus had deceived Hera and sent the infant Herakles to her to be nursed that he might be made strong and god-like by tasting divine milk.

So Hera sent two large snakes to devour the babe when she found out what child it was that she had fed. Herakles lay asleep in the great brazen shield which his father carried in battle, for he had no other cradle. The fearful serpents crept up with open mouths into the shield with the sleeping babe.

As soon as Alkmene saw them she was terribly frightened and called in a loud voice for help. His father, hearing the outcry of Alkmene, ran into the house with his sword drawn and a great many warriors came with weapons in their hands.

Herakles was only eight months old, but before his father could reach him he sat up in his bed and seized the serpents by their necks with his little hands. He squeezed and choked them with such force that they died.

When Alkmene saw that the two snakes were dead and that Herakles was safe, she rejoiced greatly. But Hera's heart was filled with wrath and she began to plan more mischief against the child.

Herakles had his free will as long as he was a boy. His teachers were celebrated heroes who taught him boxing, wrestling, riding, and all kinds of games. He learned to read and write and to hurl the spear and shoot with bows and arrows. Linos taught him music.

Herakles had a violent temper, and one day as Linos was teaching him to play the lute, the good teacher had reason to punish him. Herakles flew into a rage at this and struck Linos and killed him. Then his father sent him to the hills and left him to the care of herdsmen.

The boy grew to be very large and strong. While he was yet a youth he slew a lion of great size that had killed many of his father's cattle. He went home wearing the lion's skin as a sign of his victory.

Because he was so brave the King of Thebes gave his daughter to him in marriage and he lived happily with her for many years. But a sudden insanity came upon him during which he mistook his wife and children for wild beasts and shot them down with his bow and arrows. When Herakles recovered from his insanity and saw what he had done his grief was boundless.

CHAPTER II

HERAKLES IS DOOMED TO SERVE EURYSTHEUS

THE wrath of Hera followed Herakles. When Zeus saw that Hera's heart was filled with anger toward Herakles, he mused within his own mind how he might best appease her resentment and protect the young man.

So he called the gods together in council and they advised that Herakles be placed in bondage to his uncle Eurystheus, to serve him as a slave, and they ordained that he should perform twelve hard tasks, after which he would be numbered among the gods.

Eurystheus was a mean fellow, stupid and cowardly. He was glad enough to have a chance to bully a man wiser and stronger than himself. He was born in Tiryns, a great fortress with many castles, built upon a large rock, but he had been made King of Argos and lived in the capital, Mykenæ, and he resolved to keep Herakles as far away from the kingdom as possible, for in his heart he was afraid of him.

Herakles was grieved at being compelled to serve a man so much below him in strength and character, so he consulted the oracle at Delphi to see if there was any escape, but he did not murmur, for he was willing to obey the law of the gods.

The oracle of Delphi was a mysterious influence, a divine spirit which expressed itself through a priestess living in a sacred temple. It was supposed to be the voice of the god Apollo using this human agency for making known his will to men. The priestess became inspired to utter Apollo's holy laws by sitting on a golden tripod (or stool with three legs) over a chasm in the rock, from whence arose a sacred, sulphurous vapor which she breathed in as the breath of the god, and which caused her to breathe out his commands in wonderful sayings.

The chasm from which the vapor issued was called The Chasm of the Oracle, and was in a large apartment or room in the temple. This celebrated temple had many columns of marble and splendid rooms made beautiful with thousands of marble statues. It stood on the side of Mount Parnassos, whose snow-covered head reaches into the clouds and looks down into the blue Gulf of Corinth below it to the south.

It was here that Apollo killed the great dragon, Pytho, which had been the scourge of the land for many years, and the grateful people built the temple in his honor. The oracle bade Herakles go forth to be the slave of Eurystheus and so atone for all his sins, but it gave him as a compensation a dear friend, Iolaos, who was also his young nephew. Wherever Herakles went Iolaos went with him and helped him.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST LABOR—THE NEMEAN LION

It happened that a fearful lion lived in Nemea, a wild district in upper Argolis, and it devastated all the land and was the terror of the inhabitants. Eurystheus ordered Herakles to bring him the skin of this lion. So Herakles took his bow, his quiver, and heavy club and started out in search of the beast.

When he had reached a little town which is in the neighborhood of Nemea he was kindly received by a good countryman, who promised to put him on the track of the lion if he would sacrifice the animal to Zeus.



THE PRIESTESS OF APOLLO AT DELPHI.
(Michael Angelo.)

Herakles promised, and the countryman went with him to show him the way. When they reached the place where traces of the lion were seen, Herakles said to his guide: "Remain here thirty days. If I return safely from the lion-hunt you must sacrifice a sheep to Zeus, for he is the god who will have saved me. But if I am slain by the lion you must sacrifice the sheep to me, for after my death I shall be honored as a hero." Having said this, Herakles went his way.

He reached the wilderness of Nemea, where he spent several days in looking for the lion, but without success. Not a trace of him could be found, nor did he fall in with any human being, for there was no one bold enough to wander around in that wilderness. Finally he spied the lion as he was about to crawl into his den.

The lion was indeed worthy of his terrible fame. His size was prodigious, his eyes shot forth flames of fire, and his tongue licked his bloody chops. When he roared, the whole desert resounded.

But Herakles stood fearlessly near a grove from whence he might approach the lion, and suddenly shot at him with his bow and arrow, hitting him squarely in the breast. The arrow glanced aside, and slipping around the lion's neck, fell on a rock behind him. When Herakles saw this he knew that the lion was proof against arrows and must be killed in some other way, and seizing his club, he gave chase to him.

The lion made for a cave which had two mouths. Herakles closed up one of the entrances with heavy rocks and entered the other. He seized the lion by the throat and then came a terrible struggle, but Herakles squeezed him in his mighty arms until he gasped for breath, and at last lay dead.

Then Herakles took up the huge body and, throwing it easily over his shoulder, returned to the place where he had left the countryman. It was on the last of the thirty appointed days, and the rustic, supposing that Herakles had come to his death through the lion, was about to offer up a sheep as a sacrifice in his honor.

He rejoiced greatly when he saw Herakles alive and victorious, and the sheep was offered up to Zeus. Herakles left the little town and went to Mykenæ to the house of his uncle and showed him the dead body of the terrible lion. Eurystheus was so greatly frightened at the sight that he hid himself within a tower whose walls were built of solid brass.

And he ordered Herakles not to enter the city again, but to stay outside of its gates until he had performed the other labors.

Herakles stripped the skin from the lion with his fingers, although it was so tough, and knowing it to be arrow-proof, took it for a cloak and wore it as long as he lived.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND LABOR—HERAKLES KILLS THE WATER-SNAKE OF LAKE LERNA

Not far from Mykenæ is a small lake called Lerna. It is formed from a large spring at the foot of a hill. In this lake there lived a water-snake called the Hydra. It was a snake of uncommon size, with nine heads. Eight of the heads were mortal, but the one in the middle was immortal.

The Hydra frequently came out of the water and swallowed up herds of cattle, laying waste the surrounding country. Eurystheus ordered Herakles to kill the snake, so he put on his lion's skin, and taking his club, started out. He mounted his chariot and took his faithful friend Iolaos, who acted as charioteer.

Every warrior had to have a charioteer to drive the horses, leaving him free to use both of his hands. But driving was by no means the charioteer's only duty; he had also to look out for danger and protect the warrior with his shield as well as to supply him with arrows from the quiver suspended at the side of every chariot, and with reserve spears when his own was broken in the fray.

It is clear, therefore, that the warrior's life was entirely in the hands of his charioteer, so it is no wonder that only the hero's dearest and most trusted friends were allowed to serve him in this way.

After driving along for a while through groves of olive-trees and past pleasant vineyards, they came to wild places and saw Lake Lerna gleaming through the trees. Having reached the lake, Herakles descended from the chariot, left the horses in care of Iolaos, and went to hunt for the snake.

He found it in a swampy place where it was hiding. Herakles shot some burning arrows at the Hydra and forced it to come out. It darted furiously at him, but he met it fearlessly, put his foot upon its tail, and with his club began to strike off its heads. He could not accomplish anything in this way, for as fast as he knocked off one head two others grew in its place.

The snake coiled itself so firmly around one of Herakles' legs that he was no longer able to stir from the place. Added to all this there came a huge crab to the assistance of the snake. It crept up to Herakles' foot, and seizing it with its sharp claws, inflicted painful wounds. Herakles killed the crab with his club and called Iolaos to help him.

Under Herakles' directions Iolaos produced a fire-brand which he applied to the neck as fast as Herakles cut off one of the snake's heads, in this way preventing them from growing again. Finally it came the turn of the head which could not die. Cutting it off Herakles buried it in the ground, placing a heavy stone over it.

Then he dipped some arrows into the Hydra's blood, which was poisonous, so that whoever was wounded by one of them could not be healed. The least scratch inflicted by such an arrow was incurable.

Eurystheus, of course, had no word of praise for his great bondsman, but the people, knowing that the place was now safe, flocked to the land in great numbers and drained the lake, which was really not much more than a big marshy pond, and in their new homes they blessed the hero's name forever. That was the prize for which Herakles cared the most.

If you should go to-day to that old battle-field of Herakles you would still find the spring flowing from the rocks, but Lake Lerna exists only in story.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD LABOR—THE GOLDEN-HORNED HIND

THE lower part of Greece is a most peculiar-looking bit of country. You would think it had been torn off from the bulk of the land but kept hanging on to it by a small narrow strip. Then, too, its shape is so queer that it has been compared to all sorts of things; sometimes to a mulberry leaf, sometimes to an open hand.

If we keep to the latter comparison, we will find that the part which answers to the palm of the hand is a large and intricate knot of high wooded mountains which shoot out spurs in all directions. These spurs with the land attached to them stretch out into the sea as so many small peninsulas and not badly represent the fingers of the hand. The central knot of mountains is even now different from the country all around.

The people there are wilder, very much given to robbery and violence and very slow to accept new ways of life or improvements of any kind. In the old heroic times of several thousand years ago that country was simply an impassable wilderness.

It was overcrowded with wild beasts, among which the bear must have been the most plentiful since the land was named after him, Arcadia—the land of Bears. Wolves were known also to abound.

The men who had their villages in the narrow valleys by the mountain-streams were fierce and lawless. There was nothing for them to do but to keep goats and hunt all day long. Arcadia was truly the paradise of hunters and therefore held as specially sacred to the beautiful huntress, the goddess, Artemis—the Lady of the Chase. She roamed over hills and valleys and through woods and groves by moonlight to protect the herds and flocks, this beautiful daughter of Zeus.

In these same mountains of Arcadia there roamed a lovely Hind sacred to Queen Artemis, who gave her golden horns so that she might be known from other deer by the huntsmen. Thus they might be saved from the crime of slaying what was sacred to the gods. Eurystheus ordered Herakles to bring him the Hind alive, for he did not dare to have her killed.

Herakles spent a whole year seeking her from the mountain-tops down to the valleys, through tangles of brush, over streams and in forests, but he was not able to catch her. After a long chase he forced her at last to take refuge on the side of a mountain and from that place to go down to a river to drink.

In order that he might prevent the deer from crossing the water, Herakles was obliged slightly to wound one of her legs. Not till then was he able to secure his game and carry it to Eurystheus.

On his way to Mykenæ Herakles was met by Artemis, who upbraided him for having captured the Hind belonging to her. Herakles made answer: "Great Goddess, if I have chased and caught thy deer, I did it out of necessity, not impiety; for thou well knowest that the gods ordered me to be a servant to Eurystheus and he commanded me to catch the Hind."

With these words he soothed the anger of the goddess and brought the golden-horned Hind to Mykenæ.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOURTH LABOR—THE ERYMANTHIAN BOAR

ELIS is a beautiful plain lying to the north and west of Arcadia. Here once in five years there was a great festival in honor of Zeus, when all the men and boys ran races, wrestled, boxed and played all sorts of games. Between Arcadia and Elis there is a high mountain-range, called Erymanthos. There a terrible Boar had its lair.

The Boar frequently left its den and came down into the plains and killed cattle, destroyed fields of grain and attacked people. Eurystheus, having heard of this Boar, made up his mind that he wanted the beast alive, and so ordered Herakles to bring it to him.

The hero put on his lion skin once more and started for the mountain. On his way he stopped at a little town where the Centaurs had their home. These strange people were half man and half horse. We have heard that they were really men, but such good riders that they seemed to be one with their mountain ponies.

Their home was just on the edge of a high plain, covered with oak-trees and looking down across a wild valley, through which flowed the Erymanthos River. There were many forests and little streams and dreadful gorges in the valley, where these horsemen used to hunt and fish.

The Centaur Chief, Pholos, received Herakles as a guest and gave him cooked meat to eat, while he ate it raw himself, after the Centaurs' custom.

When Herakles had eaten his fill, he said to Pholos: "Thy food is indeed good and tasteful. But I should enjoy it still more if I could have a sip of wine, for I am very thirsty." To which Pholos replied: "My dear guest, we have very fine and fragrant wine in this mountain, and I should like nothing better than to give thee some of it. But I am afraid to do so, because it has a strong aroma, and the other Centaurs, if they smelt it, might come to my cave and want some. They are very fierce and lawless, and might do thee great harm."

"Let not that trouble thee," said Herakles. "I am not afraid of the Centaurs." So the wine was placed before him and he drank of it. In a little while a great noise was heard outside of the cave, a shouting of many wild voices and a stamping of many horses' feet. What Pholos feared had come to pass.

The Centaurs had smelt the fragrance of the wine and in full armor had made for the cave of Pholos. Then began a terrible fight. The Centaurs fell upon Herakles with pine-branches, rocks, axes, and fire-brands, and the clouds, their mothers, poured a flood of water on him. But Herakles was too clever for them. He put two to flight, prevented others from entering the cave, and shot the rest down with his arrows.

Pholos was a kind-hearted chief, and hearing one of the Centaurs crying for help outside of his cave, went out to him and tried to pull the arrow from his wound, wondering at the same time that so slight a weapon could cause his death. But the arrow slipped out of his hand and struck his own foot. It made only a scratch, but it could not be healed, for the arrow was one of those which Herakles had dipped in the blood of the Hydra, and poor Pholos breathed his last.

The death of his kind host was a great sorrow to Herakles, for in those times, when there was so little safety in travelling, the bond of kindness and gratitude between host and guest was one of the closest and most sacred, often more so than that between members of the same family. In all their later lives, host and guest could never meet as enemies, and if the chances of war brought them face to face as foes, they were not expected to fight. They exchanged greetings and gifts and drove off in different directions.

Herakles therefore sincerely mourned his friend, performed over him the proper funeral rites, and buried him with all due honors in the side of the mountain. There he left him, sore at heart, but comforted by knowing that he had done all he could do to reconcile the shade of Pholos, and that his soul would bear him no grudge in Spirit Land.

Then Herakles went on his way in search of the Boar. He soon spied him in a dense thicket and chased him to the very top of the mountain. The mountain-top was covered with deep snow, which prevented the Boar from running fast enough to escape. So Herakles ran up to him, caught him in a net, threw him over his shoulder and carried him off alive to Mykenæ.

It is said that Eurystheus hid himself in a large brazen bowl when he heard Herakles approaching the city, and that Herakles threw the Boar into the same brazen bowl as the safest place in which to keep him. How astonished Eurystheus must have been to find himself in such terrible company! And we can fancy that he scrambled out with all possible haste.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIFTH LABOR—HERAKLES CLEANS THE AUGEIAN STABLES

WE have already read about Elis, a plain in the southwestern part of Greece, where all the people used to worship Zeus and where they built a wonderful temple in his honor. They built a temple to Hera, his wife, also, and many other temples which were filled with statues. What a fine time you would have if you could only go and see this beautiful land. Perhaps you will some time.

The temples are in ruins now, and they cover enough ground for a small town. The huge blocks of marble lie on the ground just as they fell, and there are the marble floors as people used to see them two thousand years ago. There is a high hill close to the ruins. It is called the mountain of Kronos, "Old Father Time." Kronos is said to have been one of the early kings of Elis and he was the father of Zeus. He swallowed up his children when they were babes, if we care to believe what is said of him, and the story could easily be true, for Time swallows everything if he is only long enough about it.

The strong men and the boys used to come to Elis to have athletic games in honor of Zeus. They ran races, they boxed, they shot arrows and did all sorts of things to show how strong they were. There are two rivers at the foot of Mount Kronos, and beyond the rivers are many low hills where people used to sit and watch the games.

There was at one time a king of Elis, Augeias, who was so rich in cattle that he hardly knew what to do with them and consequently he built a stable miles long and drove his cows into it. He did this year after year and the herds kept growing larger. He could not get men enough to take care of his stables and the cows could hardly get into them on account of the filth; or if they did get in they were never sure of getting out again because the dirt was piled so high.

Eurystheus thought he had found a disagreeable and impossible task for Herakles, and so he ordered him to clean out the stables in one day. Herakles told Augeias that he must clean the barns and promised to do it in one day if he would give him one-tenth of all his cows. The king thought Herakles would never be able to do it in one day and readily promised him in the presence of his son one-tenth of the cows.

The king's stables were close to the two rivers, near Mount Kronos. Herakles cut channels and sent the rivers running into the stables. They rushed along and carried the dirt out so quickly that the king was astonished. He did not intend to pay the promised reward and pretended that he never made any such promise.

And he said he would have the matter come before a court and the judges should decide it. Then Herakles called the little prince as a witness before the judges, and the boy told the truth about it, which caused the king to fall into such a rage that he sent both his son and Herakles out of the country. Herakles left the land of Elis and went back to Mykenæ. But his heart was filled with contempt for the faithless king.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIXTH LABOR—THE BIRDS OF STYMPHALOS

ON the northern limit of Arcadia is a huge cliff, over which pours a black ribbon of water. At the bottom of the cliff it is lost among piles of rocks. The water itself is not black, but it appears so because the rock is covered with black moss, and so the stream is called the Styx or Black Water.

The Styx is icy cold and it runs along under the ground so that it seems to belong to the dead, and is called the River of Death. When the gods used to make a promise which they did not dare to break they said, "I promise by the Styx." This promise was called "the Great Oath of the Gods."

Farther on in the land of Arcadia there is a vale called Stymphalos. It lies among the mountains and is open to the storms of winter and the floods of spring. And there are a lake and a city both called Stymphalos. The people of Athens hope to carry the water of this lake to Athens by means of an underground channel. All about the lake are hills covered with firs and plane-trees.

Lake Stymphalos was the home of a countless number of birds which held noisy meetings in the woods. They had iron claws and their feathers were sharper than arrows. They were so strong and fierce that they dared attack men, and would tear them to pieces that they might feast upon human flesh. They bore a striking resemblance to the Harpies, and were the terror of all the people who lived near Stymphalos.

Eurystheus ordered Herakles to drive the birds away. So Herakles took his bow and quiver and went to the lake. But the forests were so dense that he could not see the birds, and he sat down to think of the best way to drive them out. Suddenly the goddess of wisdom came to him to help him.

The goddess gave him a huge rattle and told him how to use it. Herakles went up on to the highest mountain that lies near the lake and shook the rattle with a will. The birds were so frightened by the noise that they came out of the thick wood where their nests were and flew high up into the air.

Their heavy feathers fell like flakes in a driving snow-storm. Herakles shot at the birds with his arrows. He killed a great many of them and the rest were so scared that they flew away and were never seen again at Stymphalos.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTH LABOR—HERAKLES CATCHES THE MAD BULL OF CRETE

THERE is an island south of Greece which is so large that it would take you from early morning until late at night to sail past it. There are high mountains all along the shore and they look as if they were covered with snow. There is a cave in one of the mountains where Zeus was hidden when he was a babe so that his father, Kronos, should not swallow him. The nymphs fed him on honey and a famous goat gave him milk.

The name of this island was Crete, and Minos ruled there as king. It was his duty to sacrifice to Poseidon, the God of the Sea, whatever came up out of the water.

Minos was rich and greedy. He loved his cattle better than the will of the gods. It came to pass that a wonderful Bull rose from the sea while Minos was king. When Minos saw him he admired the beauty of the animal so much that he resolved to keep him. He drove the Bull into his barn and sacrificed another to the God of the Sea.

Poseidon grew angry with him and caused the Bull to become mad so that no one dared to approach him. Eurystheus ordered Herakles to catch him and bring him to Mykenæ.

So Herakles went to Crete and begged Minos to give him the Bull. The king told him that he was entirely welcome to the Bull if he could catch him. Herakles seized him by the horns and bound his feet together and carried him off to Mykenæ.

There he showed the mad animal to Eurystheus and then set him free. The Bull wandered off to Sparta and over the hills of Arcadia and crossing the Isthmus, he reached Marathon, where he left the land and swam off into the sea.

CHAPTER X

THE EIGHTH LABOR—THE HORSES OF DIOMEDES

GREECE was bounded on the north by a wild and mountainous land, called Thrace. The natives were not of Greek stock and remained fierce, lawless, and cruel for a long time after Greece had become the most civilized of countries. They were so quarrelsome and such desperate fighters that their country was supposed to be the favorite residence of the war god, Ares.

The king who reigned in Thrace at the time of Herakles was so much worse than the rest of the people that he was said to be Ares' own son, and he was called the storm king. He was very fond of horses and kept a breed of them after his own heart. They were man-eating horses, which he fed on the flesh of any strangers who came to that country or that were wrecked on the shore, thus breaking the most sacred laws and making himself hated by men and gods. The horses were blood-thirsty and so furious that they had to be chained to their stalls.

Eurystheus commanded Herakles to bring these horses to his stables in Mykenæ. This time Herakles took several friends with him, who helped him catch the horses and lead them to the shore. Diomedes, having heard of the robbery, started in pursuit with many armed men.

Herakles and his friends went by sea. They attacked the guards and led the horses down to the ship. A terrible battle followed, in which the wicked king was slain by Herakles, who threw him as food to the horses. The warriors who helped Diomedes were put to flight and some of Herakles' best men were also killed. With the rest he drove the horses into his ship and brought them safely to Mykenæ.

Eurystheus, of course, had no intention of keeping them in his stables and had them set loose. They ran off into the forests of Arcadia and were never seen again. It was thought that they were devoured by the mountain wolves.

CHAPTER XI

THE NINTH LABOR—THE GIRDLE OF HIPPOLYTE

EURYSTHEUS, as we have seen, sent Herakles a little farther every time in hopes of never seeing him again. It would take you a whole day going on the best steamer to get to Crete from Athens, and in those days, when steamers had not been thought of, the sailing must have been slow indeed. Eurystheus now sent the hero yet farther off to the Black Sea, on the southern shore of which there lived the Amazons, a nation of warlike women.

The Amazons were brought up like men. Their main occupation was war, and they were excellent horsewomen. They were sharpshooters with the bow and arrow. Hippolyte, the queen of the Amazons, was a brave and handsome woman. She wore a celebrated girdle, the gift of Ares, as a sign of her queenly rank.

Eurystheus had a daughter who had heard of the beauty of the famous girdle which was worn by the Amazon queen. She begged her father to send Herakles to bring it to her. Then Eurystheus ordered Herakles to fetch the girdle, and he manned a ship and sailed away, taking several companions with him.

After many wanderings they reached the Black Sea and sailed to the Amazon country. Queen Hippolyte was at once informed that some strangers had arrived from a far-off land, and she came down to the shore to learn why they had come. Herakles told her that a princess had sent him to get the girdle given her by Ares. Hippolyte admired the bold hero for his frankness and promised that she would give it to him.

But Hera changed herself into an Amazon and rushing into the midst of an army of them cried out, "The strangers are carrying off our queen!" Then all the Amazons snatched up their arms and rushed on horseback to the ship. When Herakles saw them coming armed to attack his men, he thought Hippolyte had betrayed him and he slew her and took her girdle.

Then he attacked the rest of the Amazons and put them to flight. When the battle was over, Herakles and his companions went on board the ship and sailed for home.

Soon after they had started on their way to Mykenæ they found Hesione, the daughter of Laömedon, on the shore chained to a rock. Laömedon was at that time king of Troy, and Herakles and his companions stopped to find out why the daughter of a great king had to suffer such a terrible punishment. She told Herakles that Apollo, the sun god, and Poseidon, the god of the sea, once took on the form of man and began to build walls around the city of Troy. Her father promised to aid them but neglected to keep his promise. This conduct made the gods indignant and Apollo sent a pestilence to rage in the city while Poseidon sent a sea-monster which came up out of the ocean and devoured the people.

Laömedon asked the priest of Apollo how he might appease the wrath of the gods. The priest answered that the city would be freed from the double plague if Laömedon would chain his daughter to the rock on the shore where the monster might devour her.

Laömedon obeyed the oracle and had her chained to the cliff near the sea. Just then Herakles arrived and stopped near the shore, when Laömedon with hot tears entreated him to save his daughter. Herakles promised to do it under the condition that Laömedon should give him as a reward a famous horse in his possession.

Herakles killed the sea-monster, but Laömedon again did not keep his promise and Herakles left Troy, his heart filled with scorn for the faithless king. On his return to Mykenæ he gave the girdle of the Amazon queen to his cousin, the daughter of Eurystheus.

CHAPTER XII

THE TENTH LABOR—THE CATTLE OF GERYON

IBERIA, now called Spain, lies at the farthest end of Europe, and beyond it, in the Atlantic, is an island which was once the home of Geryon, a famous giant. His body was as large around as three other men's bodies put together. He had three heads and three pairs of legs and six arms. He had huge wings also and carried dangerous weapons.

Geryon was the lord of many herds of cattle. He had one herd of red oxen, as red as the sky at the setting of the sun, and they were guarded by a trusty herdsman and a fierce two-headed dog. Eurystheus ordered Herakles to bring the cattle to Mykenæ.

Herakles having overcome numberless difficulties, wandering through wild deserts and unknown lands, finally reached the open ocean, the end of all. There he erected as a monument two pillars opposite each other, one on the African shore, and one in Europe. These were called the Pillars of Herakles in those days, but now they are known as the Rocks of Ceuta and Gibraltar.

Helios, the Sun, admiring the bravery of Herakles, lent him his golden skiff, shaped like a cup. Helios always sailed round the world every night from west to east in this cup, and Herakles, although he feared a storm, took his place in the strange boat and started for the island where Geryon tended his red cattle. The world, as the Greeks saw it, was in the form of a great plate, and the ocean was a river surrounding it as the rim surrounds the plate.

When the two-headed dog saw Herakles he rushed at him with fury, and the herdsman also attacked him at the same time. Herakles slew them both with his club, took the cattle and fled toward the boat. Then Geryon sprang upon him and forced him to fight for his life. They had a dreadful battle, in which Herakles drew his bow and shot at the giant with one of his deadly arrows and Geryon died.

Herakles at once drove the oxen down to the boat, and after a safe voyage landed them in Iberia. Then he started for home on foot, driving his cattle northward over the Pyrenees into Gaul or France. Here he was attacked by hundreds of people who wanted to rob him of his cattle.

Herakles shot at them with his arrows and killed great numbers, and they stoned him in return with large stones. Herakles would have lost the battle but Zeus sent down a shower of rocks of vast size, and Herakles hurled them at his foes, driving them away like frightened sheep. These enormous rocks are still to be seen in the south of France.

After this adventure Herakles drove his cattle over the Alps and down into Italy across the Tiber, and they came to the Seven Hills of Rome. In one of these hills there was a cave, the home of a lawless giant named Cacus. He was a creature of iron strength, and was hideously ugly. He breathed out fire and smoke, often killing people in this way, and everybody in all the country about feared him. Cacus saw Herakles coming with his cattle over the river and among the hills, and he determined to steal the cattle and hide them in his den.

So when Herakles was asleep and the cattle were grazing quietly, Cacus slipped out of his cave and, seizing great numbers of them by the tails, dragged them backward into the cavern that their tracks might point away from the cave and not toward it. When Herakles awoke he missed his cattle and began to look for them. He found their tracks and went in the direction they seemed to point out, getting farther and farther from their place of hiding. The oxen bellowed, and their noises were muffled by the rocks of the cavern, but Herakles heard them and returned to the Seven Hills. Listening intently he traced them to the right hill, but Cacus had braced a stone slab against the opening and it could not be moved from the outside.

Herakles went around to the other side of the hill and, tearing the stones away, forced a new entrance. He sprang into the cave and seized the terrible monster by the throat. Cacus blew flames into the hero's face and tried to burn him to death, but Herakles held on and strangled the giant to death. A volume of black smoke came from his mouth and a stream of melted lead as he fell back dead. Herakles tore the slab from the door of the cave and threw the body of Cacus out on the hill, and all the people came to see it and rejoice that their foe was slain. And they built an altar to Herakles and instituted games to be held every year in his honor.

Herakles left the Seven Hills and drove his cattle southward. Being tired, he lay down to rest on a mountain near Locri, and the grasshoppers came around him singing in such shrill tones that he could not sleep. He prayed to the gods to drive them away, and the gods swept them out of that region so that they never came back.

One of the wild oxen ran away to the southwest and escaped to an island. Herakles followed, driving the whole herd over to the island. The cattle swam across, and Herakles, sitting on the back of one of the oxen and holding on by its horns, was safely taken over. He captured the runaway and wandered for a long time through the island, enjoying the fresh water of the springs and the kindness of the people. Then he drove his cattle back to Italy and passed up the shores of the Ionian Sea.

But Hera sent gadflies to make the cattle wilder than they were before, and they scattered over the mountain-heights as clouds are scattered by a hot wind. They fled far to the east, until they came to Thrace. There Herakles gathered together as many as he could and brought them to Mykenæ, where Eurystheus sacrificed them to Hera.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ELEVENTH LABOR—THE GOLDEN APPLES OF HESPERIDES

WHEN the wedding between Zeus and Hera was celebrated all the gods brought presents. Mother Earth brought some apple-trees as her gift. These trees bore precious golden apples, and Zeus and Hera were so pleased with their wonderful wedding-present that they appointed four maidens, called the Daughters of the West, to guard the apples, and also they placed a dragon there with a hundred heads, who never slept.

The fruit was so inviting that even the maidens would have been tempted to eat it if the terrible dragon had not kept close to the tree. A roar like thunder came out of each of his hundred mouths and frightened everything away that dared approach the trees, and lightning darted from his eyes to strike down intruders.

The trees grew more and more beautiful from year to year, and the apples were so heavy that the boughs bent beneath the golden load. They grew in the Garden of the Hesperides, in islands way off to the west, and were watered by springs of nectar which had their rise near the throne of Zeus.

Eurystheus had heard of the apples and he ordered Herakles to bring them to him. For a long time Herakles wandered about in various lands until he came to the river Rhone, where the water-goddesses or nymphs advised him to ask counsel from the ancient lord of the deep sea, who knew all the secrets of the ocean depths and whose wisdom was beyond that of the gods. He is called by many names, but his gentlest name is Nereus, and he does not like to be questioned unless he can take any shape he pleases.

He usually escapes intruders, but to those who are not afraid and who manage to grasp and to hold him, he freely opens the store of his wisdom. This was what Herakles did. Nereus took on the form of a lion, a serpent, a fish, a stream of water, and at last, of an old man, but Herakles held him close and learned from him the road to the Garden of the Hesperides.

Leaving Nereus, Herakles travelled south into Africa, where he met Antæos, a huge giant who lived in the desert. Antæos was a son of Earth and Ocean, and he was as strong as the terrible sand-storms. He was cruel to all travellers who crossed his domains and slew them, but he loved and protected the tiny Pygmies that lived all around him. No one had ever been able to vanquish him in battle, for Mother Earth gave him new strength and vigor every time he lay down or touched the ground.

Herakles wrestled with him and threw him down many times, but Antæos sprang up stronger than ever. At last Herakles caught him up with one hand, and holding him high in the air where he could not receive help from Mother Earth, squeezed him to death.

Herakles was tired out with this tremendous exertion and lay down in the desert to rest. But he did not sleep long, for a whole army of the little people, seeing their beloved giant lying dead, came with their weapons to attack Herakles. He found himself covered with them from head to foot. He sprang up, and quickly gathering up his lion's skin, crushed a multitude of the Pygmies and killed them.

Then he hurried away toward the east, going through many countries until he came to India, and finding himself travelling in the wrong direction, turned to the north and west and came to the Caucasus Mountains. Here he found Prometheus chained to the rocks of a high mountain-peak. Prometheus had taught mankind the use of fire and how to build houses and had otherwise interfered with the work of the gods, thereby bringing this punishment upon himself. Herakles took pity on him and set him free. In return for this kindly act Prometheus told him the most direct way to the Garden of the Hesperides, which was through Scythia and the region of the Hyperboreans at the back of the North Wind.

On his way Herakles stopped to visit Atlas, who as a punishment for once having rebelled against the gods was obliged to carry the heavens on his shoulders. "Let me relieve thee for awhile, friend Atlas," said Herakles, after greeting him in a most cordial manner. "Let me take the heavens on my shoulders and I will let thee do me a great service in return. I must have the Golden Apples that grow in the Garden of the Hesperides to take to Eurystheus, and thou canst bring them to me."

Atlas gladly placed the heavy firmament on Herakles' shoulders and took his way to the Garden. There he contrived to put the many-headed dragon to sleep and then slay him. Taking possession of the Golden Apples, he returned with them to Herakles.

"I thank thee very much, friend Atlas," said Herakles. "Take thy place again and give me the apples."

"Nay, I have borne the weight of the heavens for a long time," answered Atlas. "Thou hadst better keep my place and I will carry the Golden Apples to Eurystheus."

Herakles was taken aback at this reply and began to consider how he might escape from this unexpected dilemma. At last he spoke. "Very well, I will willingly remain in thy place, friend Atlas," he said. "One thing only I must first ask of thee. Take the heavens back just for a moment while I get a pad to put on my head so that the weight may not hurt it. Otherwise the heavens will fall and crush us both."

Poor, simple old Atlas agreed to this, and putting the Golden Apples on the ground he again took the firmament on his shoulders. Herakles picked up the apples and went off saying, "We must not bear malice toward each other, friend Atlas. Good-by."

With this he departed and hastened back to Mykenæ.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWELFTH LABOR—HERAKLES FETCHES CERBERUS OUT OF HADES

ACCORDING to the terms of the doom that was laid upon Herakles, the performance of the last task was to free him from Eurystheus. Eleven were now fulfilled and the tyrant's heart failed him when he thought of what he might expect at the hands of the hero he had used so ill when once he was free from his power.

Cowards always fear those whom they have ill-treated, so he determined to send Herakles on an errand from which he thought he could not possibly return. He had come back unharmed from every known and unknown country on the face of the earth, but who was ever known to return alive from the land of the dead? So Eurystheus as a last task ordered him to go down to Hades and bring out alive Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the entrance to the lower world, feeling sure that Herakles would remain forever in Hades.

Cerberus was a terrible monster. Besides having three heads, he had a tail which ended in a serpent's head, and all along his spine he had serpents' heads instead of hair. His duty was to see that no dead should escape from Hades after once entering its gates.

There was a long dark cave leading down to Hades and the river Styx flowed across it. A white-haired old ferryman, Charon by name, waited with his boat on the shore to carry the spirits of all who died. There they were met by Minos, the great judge, who told them whether they could go into the fields of the Blessed or whether they were doomed to the region of the Unhappy. Charon's boat was but a delicate skiff and adapted only to carrying souls without bodies, so Herakles was not a welcome passenger.

Herakles found his way into Hades in spite of all the difficulties, and presenting himself to Pluto, the King of the Dead, begged him to give him the Dog.

Pluto replied: "Take him and lead him out into the world and thou shalt have him. But thou must not use any weapon." Herakles answered, "I will use no weapon but my hands, and with them alone I will conquer him." Wearing his breastplate and clad in the lion's skin he approached Cerberus, who stood on guard at the gates. He threw his arms around the Dog's three heads and pressed them with all his might. The Dog fought with great fury, and bit him with the snake's mouth which he had at the end of his tail. Herakles threw his lion's skin over the head of the Dog and dragged him out by another gate into the daylight. Cerberus had never seen the light of the sun and was frightened beyond measure. He foamed at the mouth, and wherever the foam fell upon the ground it caused a poisonous plant to grow.

Herakles took Cerberus to Eurystheus, who was not pleased to see the Dog or the Hero. Then he carried him back to Hades and restored him to Pluto, and so were the twelve great labors ended.

CHAPTER XV

THESEUS, THE HERO OF ATHENS

THE land of Attica is very different from Arcadia. It was cleared at a much earlier time than the southern part of Greece, which could be done the more easily as the soil being naturally rather barren was not covered with the thick, bristling forests which there sheltered so many dangerous animals, and made it such hard work for the peasants to clear the smallest patch of farm.

Then, although the land offers but scanty pasture for cattle and bears but few kinds of trees and crops, it happens that those which it does bear are the very ones that were the greatest favorites with Greek farmers—the olive and the vine. Besides which, being a peninsula, and therefore almost entirely surrounded by the sea, fish and other sea-food was very plentiful, and trade with more or less distant neighbors very easy.

Attica has no very high mountains, but those that there are supply the country with beautiful marbles, both white and colored. The people, having such lovely material within reach, became from the earliest times the most skilful of builders. Their Acropolis, for which nature itself supplied them with a beautiful, tall rock, of bright-colored stone, soon became their greatest pride. It was the envy of their neighbors, because of the splendid marble palaces and temples which they could raise there at so little cost.

The city which grew up at the foot of the Acropolis was named Athens, after the goddess of wisdom and cunning craft, Athena, the favorite daughter of Zeus. It is clear from this that the Athenians considered themselves more civilized and in every way superior to the other Greeks. Indeed, they were all that, and even as far back as the heroic times their city began to be famous above others.

In this favored land of Attica, at the same time that Herakles astonished the world with his miraculous deeds, there reigned a king, Ægeus, who, having no child to succeed him on the throne, was grieved at heart. So Ægeus went to Delphi to consult the Oracle, and the priestess told him that he should go to Trœzene, where he would find a beautiful and gentle wife, the Princess Æthra, daughter of Pittheus, the King of Trœzene. And the Oracle promised that his wife should bear him a son whose name would become famous over all the world.

So Ægeus took his way to Trœzene, where he found Pittheus, the wise old king, who received him hospitably and gave him his daughter, Æthra, in marriage. Ægeus grew very fond of his wife, but after awhile he had to think of returning to his own kingdom, which he could not leave to itself forever. Æthra's father was old and feeble, and she did not like to leave him to the care of slaves; so Ægeus agreed to let her stay with him.

But before Ægeus departed he took Æthra to an out-of-the-way place and dug a pit in which he hid his sword and sandals. Then he rolled a large stone over the pit and said to his wife: "Listen, Æthra; take good care of the son which the gods are about to send us, but do not tell him who his father is. When he has grown to be a youth, bring him to this spot, and if he is able to lift the stone, let him take the sword and the sandals and come to me with them." After saying these words, Ægeus kissed his wife, and bidding her an affectionate farewell, returned to Athens.

When Theseus was born, Æthra rejoiced greatly, and brought him up with great care, as she had promised Ægeus she would do. He was the pride of his grandfather's court, and the good old king had him trained in all kinds of games and athletic exercises and in the use of the lyre. When he had grown up, Æthra led him to the rock, and after having told him the name of his father, she said to him: "My son, lift up this heavy stone. You will find under it what your father left for you. Take his gift and go to Athens with it."

Theseus, without any difficulty, raised the stone with his strong arms, and Æthra hung his father's sword over his shoulder and tied the sandals to his feet. Then Theseus was ready to set out for Athens. Æthra advised him to go by sea. It was the quickest and safest way. The woods by land were everywhere full of dangers from wild beasts and wicked men.

But Theseus, having heard of the great deeds of Herakles and envying the fame of the hero, said: "Herakles was set the task to destroy the wicked and to cleanse the land and sea from evil-doers; and so I will not shirk tasks which lie under my very feet and I will not shame my father, fleeing ingloriously over the sea, where I can perform no noble deeds by which I might prove myself a worthy son to him, and do honor to my mother's wisdom in bringing me up in the way she has done."

Theseus kissed his mother and grandfather and started on his journey by land. The worst part of his road lay across the Isthmus of Corinth, which was so narrow that it gave little chance for escape.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIRST EXPLOITS OF THESEUS. HE FINDS HIS FATHER

To the northwest of Trœzene is a tongue of land projecting into the Ægean Sea. In ancient times the town of Epidauros was situated upon it, and the temple, where Asklepios, the God of Healing, was worshipped, stood near by. It was a wild country whose hills were covered with trees and shrubs—the hiding-place of lawless robbers, the boldest of whom was named Periphetes. He was also called Korynetes, and he used an iron crown for a weapon, and with it he smashed the heads of travellers.

Periphetes put himself in Theseus' way and would not let him go on. But the youth grappled with him, and taking his iron crown from him, crushed him to death with it. Theseus carried the crown as his own particular weapon, just as Herakles wore the skin of the Nemean lion.

The most cruel of all the robbers lived a few miles farther to the north, on the Isthmus of Corinth, and his name was Sinis. He was called the Tree-bender, because he used to bend together two young pines. Then he would tie a man by a leg and arm to each tree and let the trees spring back, tearing the poor wretch to pieces. Theseus punished this malefactor by giving him the same treatment that he gave to others, and the people of the Isthmus were so grateful that they started a festival, called the Isthmian Games, to be held in honor of the hero every year.

On to the north went Theseus. He slew a man-eating boar at Krommyon, which had long terrified the people of that district. Coming among the wild cliffs near the sea in Megaris, he heard of the cruel giant Skiron, who used to lie in wait for travellers. This evil-doer compelled those who fell into his power to wash his feet. This task performed, he flung the unlucky traveller into the sea.

When Theseus passed his den Skiron ordered him to wash his feet, and Theseus answered: "To tell the truth, friend Skiron, thy demand is too small. I would willingly do more for thee. Not only are thy feet in need of a bath but so is thy whole body. The sea is near and I will give thee a thorough washing." And he seized Skiron around the body and flung him over the rocks into the breakers. From that time until to-day the rocks are called the Skironian Cliffs.

A little farther on Theseus came upon another famous robber known far and near as the Stretcher, Korydallon, or Prokrustes. This robber used to force the wayfarer to lie down on a bed which was always too long or too short for him. If the traveller proved too tall for the bed, Prokrustes would cut off his feet and legs to make him short enough to fit it. But if the traveller were too short for the bed, he would have him stretched until his feet touched the foot-board. Prokrustes invited Theseus to try the bed, but Theseus answered him: "Thou shalt try it first, friend Prokrustes, and I will try it after thee." Then Prokrustes was compelled to lie down in the bed, which was much too short for him, and Theseus cut off his head and his feet to make him fit the bed, as the cruel Stretcher had done to so many hapless strangers. Theseus exterminated a great many more cruel robbers who had made the roads to Athens unsafe, and the glory of his deeds went on before him.

Theseus, having performed these brave deeds, reached Athens; but the rougher class, seeing a stranger who wore a garb of a different fashion from their own, scoffed at him, as is the custom of vulgar people. His hair was long and his form slender, so they called him a girl and told him that he ought to take his nurse with him to protect him. As he walked along among these coarse people he came to a wagon heavily laden. He took up the wagon with its load and tossed it high in the air as easily as he would toss a ball, much to the astonishment of his tormentors.

Theseus having come to the king's palace in Athens, at once presented himself before Ægeus. But he did not immediately make himself known as his son. When he was called to the table as a guest he drew his sword as if he wanted to eat the meat with it, and Ægeus recognized him as his son and received him with joy and affection. Calling together the citizens he proclaimed Theseus his son and successor.

The citizens had heard of his heroic exploits, and acknowledged him heir to the throne amid general rejoicings. Only the nephews of Ægeus were sorry that Theseus had appeared in their midst. They had hoped to inherit the kingdom after their uncle's death, believing that he had no children. But now that Theseus came among them as a successor to the throne, they rebelled.

Theseus was brave and strong enough to defend his father and himself. He fought the rebels one after another and killed them. These victories increased his glory greatly and won him the hearts of the people of Athens.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ADVENTURES OF THESEUS

I. The Marathonian Bull

THESEUS was too active to love an idle life and began to look around him to find ways of helping his father's people. He wanted to be worthy of the throne. "It is not enough," he said, "that I am of royal descent. I should also have a royal heart and be of real service to mankind. I must be a leader in deeds as well as in words." He soon found an opportunity to show his prowess.

To the northeast of Athens is a beautiful mountain-ridge with a white marble band across it. This is the famous Pentelikon, and the purple mountain of Hymettos is separated from it by a narrow pass. Beyond these mountains is the plain of Marathon sloping down to the blue sea. In the plain of Marathon the terrible Bull which Herakles had brought from Crete to Eurystheus still roamed, but the tyrant had turned it loose. This Bull did great havoc among the inhabitants of the surrounding country.

Theseus heard of their distress and promised to free them from the fearful beast. He armed himself with a tough shield and a long spear and went to Marathon. When he found out the Bull's hiding-place he chased and overtook him. He grappled him by the horns with his powerful hands and dragged him back to Athens. The people of Athens and all the country about came to meet Theseus. They rejoiced because he had rid them of such a pest and they admired his strength, but they did not dare to help him, and stood ready to run for their lives in case the Bull should slip away from him. Theseus went through the midst of the city holding on to the Bull, which he took to the temple of Apollo and offered up as a sacrifice to that god. Old Ægeus shed tears of joy when he saw how the gods honored him in the possession of such a son.

II. Theseus Sails to Crete

But there was a greater adventure with greater glory awaiting Theseus, for Athens had a more terrible enemy than the mad Bull of Marathon. It had happened years before that a son of Minos, the wise and powerful King of Crete, had come to Athens to take part in the yearly festival held in honor of the goddess Athena. He took part in all their public games and came off victor every time. The athletes of Athens were very angry that a man from another country should show more skill and carry off all the prizes, so with Ægeus' consent they killed him.

Then Minos made war on the Athenians and killed a great number of them, and the gods also punished them for this treacherous murder by letting the land bear no crops and by sending on them a deadly fever.

The Athenians were compelled to surrender to Minos, and they had to agree to the most humiliating terms. They promised to send seven youths and seven maidens every year to Crete.

Now Minos had a park laid out by the most cunning man of his times. There were walks and paths so many and so winding that no one who got into it could get out again, but had to wander on and on, getting more and more confused. This park was called the Labyrinth, and in the centre of it was a cave in which just at that time King Minos kept a dangerous monster which had the body and limbs of a man but the head of a bull.

The creature was called the Minotaur and it was fierce and cruel. There was only one way to prevent him from roaming the fields and endangering the lives of the people. He had to be kept in a good humor, and this could be done only by feeding him now and then on human flesh. So Minos bethought him of using the Athenian captives for that purpose.

When the time of the third tribute arrived, the citizens of Athens began to urge Ægeus to do something to prevent the dreadful sacrifice. They accused him of being the sole cause of the trouble. They told him that it was shameful that he had no share in the punishment. These complaints wounded the ambitious Theseus to the quick.

His sense of justice told him that it would be only right for him to share the troubles of the citizens, and therefore he insisted on going to Crete with the seven youths and the seven maidens.

The citizens felt sorry for Theseus, and Ægeus prayed his son to remain at home with him, but Theseus answered: "My dear father, how can I be happy when the whole nation suffers? How can I abide in safety when our subjects are sacrificed? Do not try to dissuade me, for honor calls."

The vessel which was to take them to Crete was ready to start. It carried a black sail, a sign of its direful errand. Theseus tried to console his father by telling him that he was going to kill the Minotaur. Ægeus was quick to believe in the valor of his son and gave another sail, a white one, to the pilot, telling him to hoist it if they returned happily, but to leave the black one up if Theseus failed to win the victory. The ship sailed away and the parents and relatives of the youths and maidens wept bitter tears, but all the citizens called aloud to the gods to give Theseus success in his generous undertaking.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ADVENTURES OF THESEUS

III. Theseus Kills the Minotaur

THE ship reached Crete and Minos ordered the weeping youths and maidens to be thrown into the den of the Minotaur and Theseus with them. By a lucky chance Ariadne, the daughter of the king, saw Theseus and was moved with pity and a wish to save him. She slyly gave him a ball of yarn and told him to fasten one end of it to the inside entrance to the Labyrinth and then wind it off as he walked along that he might find his way back again.

Theseus took the ball and went with his companions into the Labyrinth. He fastened one end of the thread firmly to the inside of the entrance, and as he walked along the thread caught and held on to the bushes. They could hear the bellowing of the Minotaur as they approached the cave, and the companions of Theseus hid themselves in the bushes, trembling with fright. But Theseus approached fearlessly, and rushing upon the Minotaur, thrust his sword through him and the monster fell dead.

The youths and maidens came out from their hiding-places, and surrounding Theseus, kissed his hands and called him their preserver. Theseus, guided by the thread which Ariadne had given him, led his companions safely to the entrance of the Labyrinth. And when they were free from its entanglements, Theseus gratefully raised up his hands to heaven and offered a prayer of thanks to the gods for their escape.

Theseus and the companions whom he had saved reached the sea-shore unhindered, hurried their vessel into the water, unfurled the sail, and rowed with all their might in order to escape as quickly as possible from Crete and return to their own beloved country. The wind was favorable and the vessel cut through the sea like a swan. They passed through the midst of the islands of the sea and first landed at Delos, the home of the god, Apollo. This beautiful land was like a floating star and was said to be surrounded by a wall of pure gold.

Theseus offered a sacrifice to Apollo and danced with the youths and maidens a dance in which they represented the winding passages of the Labyrinth. But in their great joy neither he nor the pilot thought of unfurling the white sail. Old Ægeus came every day to the sea-shore to watch for the return of the ship. There he sat on a high cliff and gazed over the wide waters; he hoped to see the boat coming with the white sail hoisted, and was in great agony of mind for fear he should see it coming with the black sail up.

At last he espied, one day, a ship coming from afar. The nearer it came the greater grew the old king's anxiety. Soon he recognized the boat. It was the one which had borne away his beloved Theseus. But alas! the ship still carried the black sail, the sign of sorrow.

"My son is dead!" exclaimed the unhappy king. "My only son is dead! My beloved Theseus!"

The grief of Ægeus was beyond bounds and his reason left him. In despair he threw himself from the cliff into the sea and was drowned, and from that time all that water has been called the Ægean Sea.

The ship entered the port near Athens and Theseus brought the thanksgiving offerings which he had promised the gods when he left the port, and he sent a herald into the city to announce their safe return.

The Athenians, as soon as they learned that Theseus and the seven youths and seven maidens had returned safely, hastened to the palace, men, women, and children, and received him with joy and honors. But Theseus' pleasure changed to grief when he learned that his father had died on account of his great love for his son.

The Athenians led him forth, however, amidst the greatest demonstrations of enthusiasm and proclaimed him their king. Thus Theseus became King of Athens not only because he was of royal descent but because he was manly and loved his country better than himself. The court of Theseus became celebrated for its splendor and he ruled with prudence. The villages of the plain of Attica had formerly been at war with each other. Now they united under one government, with Athens as the chief city. Theseus founded festivals and encouraged education, and was in every way a good and wise leader.

Long after his death there was a beautiful temple erected in his honor, and it stands in Athens to this day. The stories of his great deeds are carved in its stones, which are much worn by time. There you can see the hero slaying Prokrustes, Skiron, the Minotaur, and Periphetes. And you can see the capture of the wild Bull of Marathon. There, too, are the stories of Herakles, in stone, as he slew the lion and hydra and performed other valiant deeds.

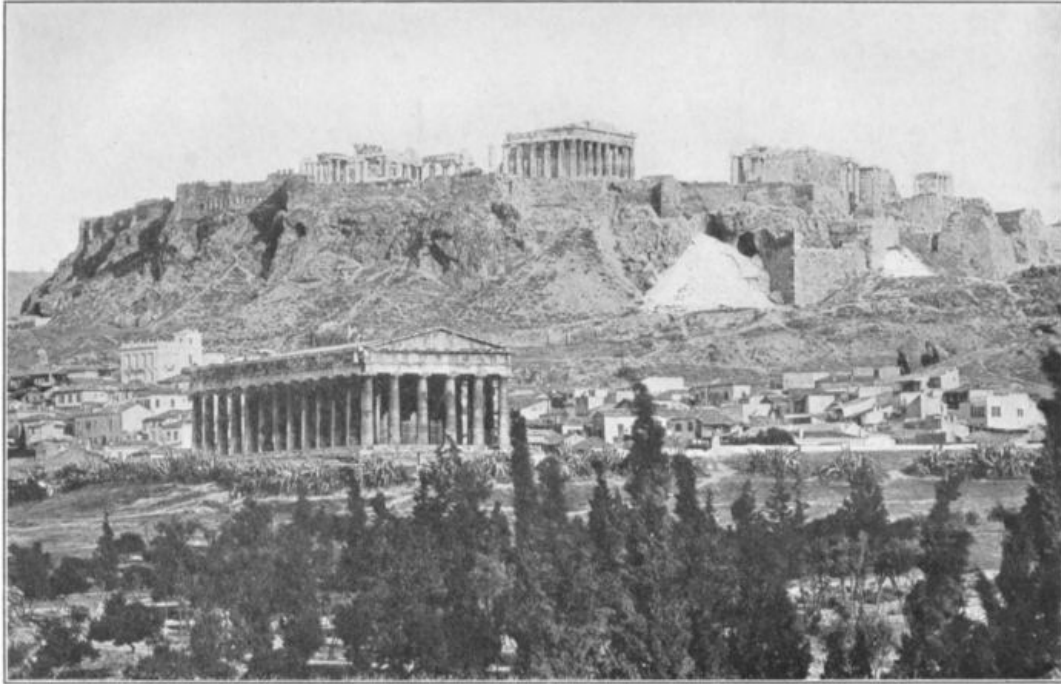
We speak of these heroes as if they had once lived in the flesh and died like mortals, but no one can tell whether or not they are purely Heroes of the Myth.

CHAPTER XIX

JASON, THE HERO OF THESSALY

Phrixos and Helle

BÆOTIA is a district northwest of Athens and quite different from the Attic plain. The name means The Land of Cattle, because it abounds in fat pasture-lands, is moist and fertile, and its beautiful green meadows slope up to the wooded mountains and lead down to well-watered valleys. Bœotia was always the paradise of farmers, who from the conditions of their life became famous for their stupidity.



THE TEMPLE TO THESEUS AT THE FOOT OF THE ACROPOLIS IN ATHENS.

Thebes was the capital of Bœotia, but each district had its own smaller city and its own ruling family, whose sons called themselves kings. One of these petty kings, Athamas, had a son and daughter named Phrixos and Helle, and when their mother died he took another wife, the fair Ino, but she was not as good as she was fair, for she was jealous of her step-children. So she contrived a plot for getting rid of them which was well carried out. Ino persuaded all the women of the country to use the seed grain or hide it so that none of it could be used for the next year's crop.

The women followed the queen's advice and the next year there was a great famine in the land. The women did not dare to tell their secret, although their families were beginning to starve. Then Athamas sent to the Oracle at Delphi in order to find out the cause of the trouble, and how he might deliver the country from the distress.

But Ino secretly persuaded the messenger to say that the Oracle had given the following answer: "The famine will cease when Athamas has sacrificed Phrixos to Zeus."

The king was almost stunned with grief when he received this message. How was it possible for him to sacrifice his own beloved son? But the wicked Ino published the false Oracle among the starving people, who, driven by hunger, clamored loudly for the death of Phrixos. The king being compelled by his people, allowed Phrixos to be led to the altar to be sacrificed.

But the spirit of the child's own mother came down in the form of a cloud to save him. She brought a large ram whose fleece was of shining gold, and said to the two children: "My dear unfortunate little ones, come and sit on this golden sheep and he will fly away with you and carry you safely into a far country, where the wicked Ino will no longer have the power of injuring you." Then she helped Phrixos to mount to the back of the ram and she placed his little sister Helle behind him with both her arms around him, and disappeared.

The ram flew up into the air like a bird and soared away over mountains and valleys and rivers and plains. Away, away they went through the blue sky until they reached the straits which separate Europe from Asia. There Helle lost her balance and fell into the sea. In vain did Phrixos try to save his sister, who cried and stretched out her arms to him. The poor child was swallowed by the waves and devoured by sea-monsters. From that time the sea in that place has been called the Hellespont.

Phrixos sailed on alone, on the back of the ram, which took him to the farthest shore of the Black Sea and landed him at Kolchis. There the king received Phrixos kindly. Phrixos sacrificed the ram to Zeus and hung up the golden fleece in a grove which was sacred to Ares, the God of War. The golden fleece was priceless in value and was guarded by a terrible sleepless dragon.

CHAPTER XX

JASON CLAIMS HIS THRONE

MORE than a hundred miles northwest of Athens is Thessaly, the most northern country of Greece. The greater part of it consists of mountains, the highest and steepest of all Greece. Among these the loftiest is Mount Olympos, whose summit, with its three snowy peaks standing out like glittering marble against the blue sky, rises high above the surrounding ridges. So glorious and so pure and so high did it appear to the ancient Greeks, that they imagined it to be the dwelling-place of the gods. It seemed the very end of the world as it rose up and shut off this horizon; and they believed the throne of Zeus, himself, to be on its summit.

When the shining crest was obscured by clouds, pious people from many countries around turned to it in awe and said that the Lord of Heaven had hid his face, and waited for him to hurl his lightnings and speak in thunder. And the people of Thessaly loved to walk in the Vale of Tempe, where the wild fig-tree and wild grape, the willow, and ivy clung with tough roots to the rugged rocks at the foot of the mountain.

The most mountainous portion of Thessaly was, of course, wild and inhospitable. The Centaurs were said to dwell in its gorges and caves, and it was claimed that they were wiser and gentler than the Centaurs of Arcadia. They were said to have gathered much lore of herbs and forest things, and to have been excellent surgeons. The same was told by fame of the Thessalian mountain-women, who, while as rugged and fierce as the men, were said to be extremely handsome and great mistresses in the art of making ointments and magic waters and juices for the casting of spells; in short, they were famous all over Greece as the most knowing and dangerous witches.

The land changed wonderfully where it sloped down to the sea. The narrow valleys spread out into broad plains. The moisture, gathered and treasured by the forests and protected by their shade, filtered through the soil, keeping the grass green for the large herds which at that time were the greatest wealth, both of farmer and king; while the thousand rivulets and streamlets that hurried down the mountain-side in brooks and torrents ran together and formed handsome rivers which scarcely ever became dry or even shallow, as did the small and stony streams of Attica. Many of the rivers of Attica are so small that they never reach the sea at all, but run into the sand and waste themselves, while the Thessalian rivers all carry their waters to the sea.

The largest of them, that which flows through the richest and most fertile country, is the Peneus, famed in song and story. In this beautiful land of Thessaly lived a king, Pelias. He really had no right to the throne, for he had an older brother. But that brother, being of a peaceful nature, allowed Pelias to take the crown from him, while he himself retired to some land he had in the mountains. His son, Jason, a handsome youth of great promise, he sent for his education to the wise Centaur, Chiron, who made his home in the deepest mountain-caves.

When Jason was twenty years old and his education in manly sports and in the art of war, in song and in music, was such as to do honor to his master, Chiron, he was directed by an Oracle to go straight to his uncle Pelias and boldly claim his father's kingdom. This was an undertaking after his own heart. Shortly after this Pelias celebrated the yearly festival of Poseidon, the God of the Sea, by solemn sacrifices offered on the shore. This was a grand national occasion, so he invited everyone around and did not dare to leave Jason out.

Jason accepted the invitation. He donned the skin of a panther which he had killed himself, and taking two long spears, started on his way. Now Pelias had learned from an Oracle that he should lose his kingdom, and he was always in fear. The Oracle had said that a descendant of Æolus would take his crown and throne from him, and that this person would come to him with only one sandal on. Pelias, therefore, was always on the lookout for the man with one sandal.

As Jason came along he saw an old woman sitting on the bank of a river which he had to cross. She begged him to take her over. The young Greeks were taught that their first duty was to be helpful and respectful to old people. Jason willingly took the old woman in his arms and carried her over as if she had been a child. She thanked him and wished him good luck.

The current of the river was strong and rapid and it swept away one of Jason's sandals. He set the old woman down on the shore after crossing and then stood in doubt as to whether he had better go back to look for his sandal. The old woman, however, advised him to proceed on his way. Then she disappeared. This meeting turned out to be of much greater importance to the young man than he could have imagined, for it was the goddess Hera, the Queen of Heaven, herself, who had taken the shape of an old woman to test his kindness and good-breeding. Being pleased with both, she remained his friend and protector.

The public square was full of people when Jason arrived. His face was comely, his figure heroic, and his long hair hung down to the panther's skin on his shoulders. He carried two long spears and walked like a king. Everybody turned in wonder to gaze at him, and some of them said to one another, "This stranger is no mortal man—he must be Apollo in disguise." Others said, "No, it is the God of War. Look at his powerful, athletic frame."

Just at this moment Pelias came driving by on his chariot drawn by two fleet-footed mules. His eyes were also attracted by the beauty of the youthful stranger, but when he noticed that he wore only one sandal he trembled with fear. Pelias, being old and crafty, concealed his anxiety and received his young kinsman with cordial friendliness seemingly. Jason at once announced his right to the king's throne, and Pelias admitted his claim.

But Pelias told him that he was too young to take such a responsible place, and suggested that so stalwart a youth ought to do some valiant deed to win the respect and admiration of his people before coming into power. "The people would not care for thee," he said, "if thou shouldst take the crown as a birthright and not because of thy prowess."

Then King Pelias proposed, as a suitable and honorable test of Jason's qualities as hero and leader, that he should cross the Black Sea and bring from Kolchis the golden fleece of Phrixos' ram. The wily old man had judged Jason at a

glance and knew that no words or offer of his could appeal more powerfully to the young hero's generous instincts; he also knew that the danger of such an undertaking would be attractive to his youthful imagination. But he smiled wickedly under his beard when Jason delightedly agreed to his proposal. Pelias thought to himself, "No sane man would ever go on such an expedition, and not the bravest man could return alive. He will never come back, and I shall remain the King of Iolkos."

CHAPTER XXI

THE EXPEDITION

JASON cared little about the motives of the king in sending him after the Golden Fleece. His courage ran high and the anticipation of seeing other countries and doing valiant deeds filled his mind. He set about building a large ship, the finest the world had ever seen, and to do this he employed Argos, a famous shipbuilder. No expense or labor was spared, and when the ship was finished it was named the Argo in honor of the builder. It was the largest ship that had ever sailed from Greece.

When the ship was ready Jason assembled the noblest heroes of all Hellas, Herakles, Kastor and Pollux, Meleagros, Peleus, Admetos, Theseus, Orpheus and two sons of Boreas, and many others of great renown. Jason invited them to go with him on this expedition, and they gladly accepted the invitation. They praised the ship; it was such a remarkable piece of work, and said that Athena must have advised and helped Argos, for no human being could make such a good boat. Jason was to be the captain, and all those who embarked on it with him would receive the name Argonauts, which means those who sail in the Argo.

Before sailing, the heroes gathered around the altar of Zeus, and Jason offered up a sacrifice and prayed for a sign of good luck, if the God looked favorably on their undertaking. Zeus answered with a peal of thunder and a flash of lightning, which pleased Jason and gave the heroes courage. At first the voyage went so smoothly that it seemed like a grand holiday trip. As they sailed out from the olive-clad plains surrounding Iolkos, Orpheus with his god-like voice and magic lyre quieted the wild waves of the sea, and inspired the men on the Argo with love for battle.

In this way they sailed along until they came to the island of Lemnos, where they were received in kindly fashion and remained a long time enjoying the new scenes and the festivals. Then they set sail again and came to a small island where they stayed a short time. Herakles had broken his oar and he wanted to replace it. He left the ship, taking with him a beautiful youth, Hylas, and they went into the woods to cut down a tree to make a new oar.

But the wood-nymphs saw Hylas and said to each other, "We will keep this beautiful youth to ramble with us in the forest, for he is gentle and kind and would be an agreeable companion. He is strong and will protect us against the rude creatures that cause us alarm." So they carried Hylas away and hid him, and Herakles would not leave the island without him. Then the Argo sailed on toward Kolchis, and the heroes mourned the loss of their two comrades.

They landed again soon on another island, where lived a king who was known to fame as a great boxer. He was cruel to travellers. He challenged them to boxing matches and killed them in the sport. The Argonauts asked him to give them a supply of fresh water for their ship, and in return he asked them to box with him. Pollux accepted the challenge, and gave him such a beating that his bones were broken. Then they took all the fresh water they needed and went back to the ship. After this, Pollux, instead of the cruel and boastful king, was known as the great boxer.

The Argo sailed on across the Ægean Sea and through the Hellespont, where the unfortunate Helle was drowned, and reached the straits of the Bosphorus. There were the immense Symplegades, two high cliffs that were not solidly rooted in the ground, but clashed together under the power of the winds, making the passage through the sea dangerous. It seemed impossible for the Argo to pass them without being crushed.

But they were saved from this peril by the advice of Phineus, the blind old king of the district, who was also a soothsayer. Phineus had long suffered a terrible penalty, which the gods had sent on him for some unkindness, and he had been punished quite enough. Whenever he sat down to a meal the Harpies pounced upon his food, devouring the most of it and polluting the rest of it so that it was unspeakably filthy. When the Argonauts asked him to direct them past the Symplegades, he promised to do so if they would free him from the Harpies. This the Argonauts promised to do.

They set a table before him laden with food, and the Harpies rushed down with great cries, perching on the table, eating greedily and snatching the food with their brazen claws.

Then the winged sons of Boreas, who were with Jason, rose into the air and pursued the Harpies with swords. The feathers of the Harpies flew like dirt in a windstorm as they rushed screaming this way and that. They fled from that region, and so Phineus was rescued.

Phineus showed the Argonauts how to steer their ship. He advised them to let a pigeon fly across the Symplegades, and if the bird passed unhurt they should quickly follow. When the Argonauts had come near the rocks they let a pigeon loose from the prow of their ship. It flew through between the cliffs, and the clashing together of the rocks caught only the end of its tail. Watching for the moment when the rocks should open and swing away from each other, the Argonauts sailed between them, rowing with all their might.

They called on Hera for assistance, and the goddess bade the rocks move slowly. The cliffs did not have time to close together upon the ship, and she got through safely, except that a small portion of the rudder was broken off. From that time on the Symplegades became one rock and remained firm. After this the Argonauts sailed along the whole coast of the Black Sea toward the east, and finally reached Kolchis.

CHAPTER XXII

JASON FINDS THE GOLDEN FLEECE

WHEN the Argonauts had drawn their ship up on the beach, Jason presented himself before the king and said: "Oh, king, we have come to ask thee for the Golden Fleece, which belongs to the Greeks at Iolkos. The ram which it covered was given to Phrixos and he dedicated it to Zeus; but the Fleece he hung up in the garden sacred to Ares. Moreover, the King of Iolkos has sent me to bring it back to Hellas."

The king answered: "Oh, stranger, thou art welcome to the Fleece. Take it back to Hellas, I pray thee. But first thou must yoke two wild bulls, which no one has ever yet been able to manage, to a plough, and turn up furrows in a field and sow it with dragons' teeth. The bulls snort fire with every breath and have brass hoofs. Beware lest they turn upon thee and burn thee to death with the fire of their nostrils, and trample thee into the earth."

Jason did not know how to tame the terrible bulls, and began to ponder. But Medea, the daughter of the king, saw Jason and pitied him. Medea was very much of a witch and could make all sorts of charms and mixtures of enchantment. She gave a magic ointment to Jason and said: "Stranger, I would gladly help thee to tame the wild bulls. Take this box of magic ointment and anoint thyself, also the end of thy spear and thy shield. It will make thee proof against fire and steel for one day, so that they cannot harm thee.

"And thou shouldst know that out of the dragons' teeth which thou art to sow, men will spring up all clad in armor. Hide thyself where these men cannot see thee, and when they stand close together throw stones among them." Jason took the drug and did as he was told. He anointed himself and his spear and shield, and went in search of the fiery bulls.

As soon as he found them he went boldly up and hitched them to a plough. They breathed fire at him and tried to strike him with their brazen hoofs. But he ploughed the field, turning back furrow after furrow. Then he went back to sow the field with dragons' teeth and hid himself nearby. Soon armed giants arose out of the ground. Jason threw a large stone into the midst of them, which made them think that some one of their own company was attacking the others. They began fighting among themselves, and became so furious with one another that they did not see Jason approach. He took his sword and slew them all. Then he returned to the king to receive the Golden Fleece.

But the king was surprised, for he had no intention of keeping his promise. He expected that Jason would be slain and never come back. And he was contriving a plot to burn the ship Argo, and kill Jason's companions.

Jason had done all that the king had required of him and would not give up the idea of taking the Fleece, and the king refused to let him have it. Then Jason went back to Medea for advice. Her admiration for the hero was greater than ever, since she had seen how fearlessly he went about his tasks.

She led him to the grove where hung the Golden Fleece, and with her magic drugs put the watchful dragon that guarded it to sleep. Jason snatched the Fleece and made for the ship, taking Medea, who had promised to be his wife, with him. When the old king missed his daughter he was very angry, and gave pursuit. But Jason and his companions pushed the boat out into the sea, and unfurling the sails, they swiftly took their way over the waters toward their own land.

After many wanderings and perils, the Argonauts came to the Greek coast, and the Argo entered again the sea of their own beloved country. They reached Iolkos, bringing the world-famous Golden Fleece with them, and the people received them in triumph. But Pelias still refused to give up the throne to Jason, although he gladly took the Golden Fleece which the young hero had brought him. So Jason slew him and made himself King of Iolkos; and as Medea's father had once reigned in Corinth, he added that country to his kingdom.

Jason lived in peace ten happy years in Kolchis, and his kingdom prospered; but a great trouble came upon his household. Medea, with her black arts of witchery and enchantment and her evil heart, could not always please him or hold his affections. He went to Corinth, where he met the gentle-hearted Kreusa, and her peaceful, kindly disposition won his heart. Now in those days a man was not despised and looked upon as a law-breaker if he married more than one wife, for the people had a different standard of right and wrong from that of the present day. And Jason in an unlucky hour took Kreusa for his wife.

Medea was maddened with jealousy when she heard of this, and she consulted the evil spirits of her witchcraft to find out how she could do away with Kreusa. She took a beautiful dress and a crown, and having sprinkled them with an enchanted juice, sent them to Kreusa. Her rival accepted the gifts and put them on, but she could never get them off again. They clung to her and burned into her flesh, so that she died. Then Medea took further revenge by burning Kreusa's home; and when she found that Jason was angry with her she slew her children and fled from Iolkos in a fiery chariot drawn by winged serpents. Poor Jason, beside himself with grief, went to his good ship Argo, which was now kept as a sacred place for the worship of the gods, and there he died.

CHAPTER XXIII

ORPHEUS, THE HERO OF THE LYRE

IN the same land of Thrace in which Jason's family ruled, Orpheus, the greatest musician of Greece, was born. It was said that his mother was the Goddess of Song, and such was the power of his voice and his art of playing on the lyre that he could move stones and trees. When the wild beasts heard his music they left their dens and lay down at his feet, the birds in the trees stopped singing, and the fishes came to the surface of the sea to listen to him.

Orpheus had a wife, Eurydike, celebrated for her beauty and virtue, and he loved her very dearly. One day when Eurydike was gathering flowers on the bank of a lake a venomous snake bit her foot and she died. Orpheus could not be consoled. He went off into the wildest waste that he could find and there he mourned day and night till all nature shared in his grief. At last he made up his mind to go down into Hades and beg her back of King Pluto, for life was worthless without her.

Orpheus took his lyre, and singing as he went, found his way down to Hades through a dismal abyss. Grim Cerberus himself held his breath to listen to the marvellous music. Not one bark did he give from any of his three terrible heads, and when Orpheus passed him he crouched at his feet. So Orpheus entered Hades unhindered, and standing before the throne of Pluto and his pale queen Persephone, he said: "Oh, king and queen, I have not come down into Hades to see the gloomy Tartaros, nor in order to carry away the three-headed warder of your kingdom, the dreadful Cerberus. I came down to implore you to give me back my beloved wife, Eurydike. I cannot bear life without her. To me the world is a desert, and life a burden. Why should she die, so young and beautiful? Have pity on me! If I may not take her back, then I will not again see the light of the sun, but I, too, will remain in the gloomy Hades."

Pluto and Persephone listened in silence to the pleadings of Orpheus. His pathetic voice and the sweet tones of his melodious lyre held them like a charm. The shades of the dead came flocking around him and mourned. Tantalos forgot his thirst and listened to the singer's complaints. Sisyphos, who was compelled to roll a stone to the top of a mountain whence it always dashed back again to the bottom, ceased his dreadful labor to listen, and the Furies themselves first shed tears.



ORPHEUS LEADING EURYDIKE OUT OF HADES.
(From the painting by Corot.)

Persephone and Pluto were pitiless gods. Their hearts were long since hardened to the cries of the living who prayed for the restoration of their loved ones. But they could not resist the power of the enchanting sounds that Orpheus made. They called the spirit of the beautiful Eurydike to them and said to the musician: "Take thy wife Eurydike and go up again to the light of the sun. Let her gaze on the smiling sky and see the fields of the upper world. But beware of one thing. Let her follow thee and do not turn around to look at her before reaching the world of the living. If thou shouldst turn and look upon her she will return at once to her place among the dead."

Orpheus left Hades in great haste and Eurydike followed him. In the midst of deepest silence they ascended through dismal rocky places. They neared their journey's end. They could almost see the green earth when Orpheus was seized with a dreadful doubt. "I hear no sound whatever behind me," he said to himself. "Is my beloved Eurydike really following me?" He turned his head a little. He saw Eurydike, who followed him like a shadow. But suddenly

she began to be drawn backward. She stretched out her arms toward Orpheus as if imploring his help. Orpheus hurried to take her in his arms, but she vanished from his sight and Orpheus was alone again.

Yet he did not despair. Again he descended into Hades and reached the river which separates this world from that of the dead, but the boatman, Charon, refused to ferry him across. Seven days and seven nights Orpheus remained there without drink or food, weeping and mourning. The decree of the gods was not to be changed. When Orpheus found that he could effect nothing he returned to the earth. He wandered alone over the mountains and glens of Thrace, which resounded with his plaintive songs day and night.

One day as he sat upon a grassy spot and played his lyre a troop of wild women who were celebrating a festival rushed upon him and tried to make him play for them to dance. Orpheus indignantly refused, and they grew angry and handled him so roughly that he died. Where he was buried the nightingales sang more sweetly than elsewhere. And his lyre, which was thrown into the sea, was caught by the waves, which made sweet music upon it as they rose and fell.

Orpheus was honored by the gods, and after his death they brought him to the Abode of the Blessed, where he found his beloved Eurydike and was reunited to her.

CHAPTER XXIV

PELOPS, THE HERO OF THE PELOPONNESOS

SOME of the heroes famed in Greek song and story, and whose descendants lived in Greece, had come from foreign countries, many of them from Asia Minor. Greece and Asia Minor had always been closely connected. Travellers from each were in the habit of visiting the other country. Sometimes they traded together and sometimes made war on each other.

One of the most powerful kingdoms of Asia Minor was Phrygia, and it was ruled by a king of the name of Tantalos, who had at first governed wisely and in the fear of the gods. He was made arrogant by prosperity, and at length grew so overbearing and cruel even to his own son, Pelops, that the gods determined to make an example of him. They sent him living to Tartaros, the portion of Hades reserved for the very worst offenders, there to endure a terrible punishment forever.

He was placed up to his waist in the midst of running water, clear and cool, under hanging boughs laden with lovely fruit. Yet he could not reach the water or the fruit, and was always faint with hunger and thirst. Whenever he bent down to get a drink of water it rapidly rushed away from him, and if he lifted up his hand to pluck some of the ripe fragrant fruit, a sudden gust of wind tossed the branches high up into the air. Poor Tantalos never came nearer than this to quenching his thirst or satisfying his hunger.

To make his misery more unbearable, a huge block of rock was poised above his head, so lightly that it moved with every breeze, and he was in perpetual fear of its falling down on him. Pelops, the son whom he had abused in childhood, became a great favorite with the gods, and they wished to make up to him for his father's cruelty. They gave him a shoulder of ivory to replace the shoulder of which his father had deprived him. When he grew up the gods helped him to leave his native land, where he had been ill-treated, and they guided him across the Ægean Sea, and around the southern point of Greece to Elis, where Herakles had cleaned out the stables of Augeias. The capital of Elis was the city of Pisa, where a king ruled who had a beautiful daughter named Hippodameia. She must have been very fond of sports and athletics, for her name means "The Tamer of Horses."

Hippodameia had many suitors, but her father, CEnomaos, had heard that he would be dethroned by his daughter's husband, and so he did not wish her to marry. He was very warlike, being a son of Ares, the God of War, and he determined to kill all the suitors. So he proposed a chariot race with each of the wooers, and promised that the one who succeeded in winning the race should have his daughter in marriage; on the other hand, if the suitor lost the race he should be put to death by the king.

CEnomaos was a famous charioteer, and he had steeds which were swifter than the wind. The race-course began at Pisa, and stretched as far as the Isthmus of Corinth to the altar of Poseidon. CEnomaos believed in himself and in his own skill. So great was his self-reliance, and so sure was he of the swiftness of his horses, that whenever a suitor came along he let him go ahead with his chariot drawn by four horses, while he himself first sacrificed a ram to Zeus, and only at the end of the ceremony mounted his chariot, having as driver, Myrtilos, and being armed with a strong spear. Then he would overtake the suitor and kill him. Thus he had already killed a great many.

Pelops, on his arrival at Pisa, saw Hippodameia, and at once had a strong desire to make her his wife. When he saw that he could not conquer CEnomaos by fair means he planned a trick. He secretly approached the king's charioteer, Myrtilos, and said to him: "Myrtilos, hear what I have to say to thee. Help me to win the race and I will give thee half the kingdom when I become King of Pisa."

Hippodameia, too, who greatly admired the young man, advised the charioteer to lend them his aid. Myrtilos accepted the proposal of Pelops. On the day of the race CEnomaos again waited to sacrifice a ram to Zeus, leaving Pelops to drive on ahead, and only mounted his chariot after the offering was over, being sure that he should overtake the suitor as he had done with the others.

But suddenly a wheel flew off from the king's chariot, and CEnomaos fell to the ground, hurting himself badly. Myrtilos had removed the pin which held the wheel on to the axle. Thus Pelops reached the Isthmus before the king and won the race.

CEnomaos died of his injuries, and Pelops married Hippodameia, and took possession of the kingdom. Then Myrtilos demanded half the kingdom as it had been promised him by Pelops. But Pelops carried him to the sea and cast him into it. On account of this crime the descendants of Pelops, the Pelopides, had to suffer many misfortunes. Crime and craft may answer an immediate purpose, but they are followed by divine wrath.

Pelops instituted the famous Olympic games, which were celebrated every fourth year, and lasted five days. And he did many other things which were of great use to his people. In honor of Pelops, the great peninsula, south of the Isthmus of Corinth, was called Peloponnesos, which means Pelops' Island. The name was not quite correct at the time, for the land was not an island but a peninsula. But after all these thousands of years it has curiously come to pass that the old name is a true one, for it was only a few years ago that the Isthmus of Corinth was cut in two, and the Peloponnesos was in truth made an island.

CHAPTER XXV

PERSEUS, THE HERO OF ARGOS

LESS than sixty miles in a straight line to the southwest of Athens there is a barren, swampy plain. It is in the Peloponnesos and is bounded on all sides by mountains except to the south, where it is bounded by the sea. In this plain lies the market-town, Argos, at the foot of a lofty hill, its acropolis, Larisa. There is a citadel on this acropolis which looks off to a high mountain at the north near the Isthmus of Corinth, and the white-streaked hills beyond. And nearer to the citadel, on the north, is a higher mountain, the highest of the Peloponnesos, where the people used to pray to Zeus and Hera for rain. To the southeast the Larisa looks over a great prison on a fortified mountain.

We have said that the Peloponnesos was the shape of a man's hand. The thumb of this hand is a peninsula pointing toward the east and south. In more ancient times this thumb was called the peninsula of Argos. The town, Argos, shares its name with the barren plain in which it is situated, and in olden times it shared it with the peninsula also. The peninsula of Argos was quite separate from a larger district, called Argolis, until the Romans conquered Greece. But now it is one with the entire district, and Argos the town, and Argos the plain, and Argos the peninsula, are all in Argolis.

Hera, wife of Zeus and goddess of the heavens, was the patron deity of Argos. It is said that she had a contest with Poseidon to see which should name the land, and as she brought the most valuable gift, the honor fell to her. The river Inachos flows through Argos the plain. The first king of Argos was a son of the river-god, Inachos, and the ocean-nymph, Melia, was his mother.

The earliest people of Argos must have worked hard to keep the country rightly irrigated. They were called Danaæ, doubtless because their work resembled that of the Danaïds, who were said to be punished in the lower world by carrying water in pitchers to fill a broken cistern. As fast as they poured water in the cistern it ran out through the cracks at the bottom. So, too, the Danaæ carried water to the sandy soil, but it ran into the earth without doing very much good.

The Danaæ came from Egypt and were accustomed to farming in the sand. They knew the unsparing pains that must be taken to conquer it, and kept at work until the land became fertile enough to repay them. But in modern times the plain has lost its fertility because the farmers do not take the same trouble in cultivating the soil.

One of the earliest of the Argive kings, Danaos, sent his daughters out to search for springs as he would have sent them to bring water from the Nile if they had remained in Egypt. Poseidon, seeing how fair one of them was, loved her and caused a spring to flow at Lerna, and it is called by her own name, Amyone, to the present time. It was this spring that created the marsh where the terrible Hydra was slain by Herakles.

Danaos had many descendants, one after another succeeding him as king. The fifth successor was Akrisios and he had a daughter, Danæe. Some oracle had told him that he would be slain by a son of Danæe if she ever had one. This worried the king and he determined that she should never marry. He built a high tower of brass and shut her up in it so that no one could get to her.

Danæe grew very lonely, shut up in the tower, and she used to watch from the window to try to catch a glimpse of the people below. No one looked up to notice her, but Zeus saw her from his abode in the heavens and was struck with her beauty and loneliness. He sent a golden shower of sunbeams to console her in her prison, and a little babe was born to her, and she called him Perseus, the son of Light.

Akrisios, the king, heard the child's voice and called his daughter to a holy sanctuary and bade her tell the truth about the babe. This she did, but the king would not believe her. He put her into a box and the child with her and cast the box into the sea to sink or float. The box did float and the kind waves carried it to the island of Seriphos. A good old fisherman caught it in a net and took it to his own little hut, and thus Danæe and her babe were saved.

Perseus grew up to be a strong, handsome lad, and was often seen with his beautiful mother wandering over the island. As Perseus grew older he became his mother's protector and champion and could never do enough for her. They continued to live at the cottage of the fisherman, who had adopted them as members of his own family.

The fisherman had a brother, Polydektes, who was king of the island, and he was as proud and cruel as the fisherman was simple and kind. Polydektes saw the beautiful Danæe and resolved to add her to his possessions and make her subject to his whims. He feared Perseus, however, and studied how to get him out of the way. So he called his friends together, among them Perseus, and said that he was looking for quaint gifts to send to the wedding of Hippodameia, the daughter of CEnomaos.

All the young men came to the court of the king and listened to his request, and each one promised to go on some quest and find a present worthy of the princess. Perseus wanted to outdo all the others, and said he would bring the head of Medusa if the king desired it. Polydektes took him at his word and ordered him to go for it at once.

CHAPTER XXVI

PERSEUS FINDS THE GORGONS

MEDUSA was the youngest of three sisters known as the Gorgons, who lived somewhere in the far west by the ocean. She was the fairest of the three and in her youth had been a famous beauty. But having insulted Athena in her holy temple, that goddess punished her by spoiling her beauty in a most ghastly way. She changed her beautiful locks into living snakes. A great horror settled on the face of the poor girl, and it became so terrible in its look of agony, with its frightful frame of snakes, that no one could bear the sight. Whoever looked at her turned to stone.

Perseus set forth to find Medusa with the courage of a youth who has never known defeat. The goddess, Athena, who particularly despised the Gorgon, lent him her aid. She advised him to go to three aged women, who lived in a dark cavern near the entrance to the infernal regions. They were old women from their birth, gray-haired, misshapen, and had but one eye and a single tooth for the three. These they exchanged, each taking a turn at using the tooth and eye, while the other two sat toothless and blind.

Perseus approached them quietly, for they were easily alarmed and always on the lookout for something to dread. As they were passing the eye from one to the other, Perseus seized it, and they pleaded piteously for him to restore it. This Perseus refused to do until they should tell him the way to the home of the nymphs who took care of the invisible helmet of Hades and the winged shoes of Hermes, messenger of the gods. The three miserable old women were glad to get back their eye and tooth, although they were loath to give Perseus the information he wanted. But they told him the way to find the home of the nymphs, and he went on with a happier heart.

Perseus received the winged sandals from the nymphs and bound them to his own feet. They gave him a mantle, too, which he threw over his shoulders. It made him invisible, just as the darkness of night hides everything from human eyes. They put the helmet of Hades on his head. Whoever wore this helmet could see others, but no one could see him. Moreover, Hermes gave him a two-edged sword and Athena gave him a shield of brass, which was polished on the inside until it glittered like a mirror and reflected the image of everything back of the person using it.

Perseus, being thus armed, went flying toward the ocean and found the Gorgons lying on the shore. There were three of them and they were sisters. Medusa alone was immortal. The other Gorgons, as well as Medusa, had snakes on their heads instead of hair, and large teeth like wild beasts, and iron hands with golden nails. Athena had taught Perseus how to approach them without being the victim of Medusa's deadly stare. Instead of facing her, he kept his face turned toward his shield and looked at her image only.

In this way, guarded by his cloak and helmet of invisibility, he came close to Medusa, and with one blow from his two-edged sword cut off the monster's head. As the blood flowed down over the sand, there sprang from it a beautiful white-winged horse. Perseus had brought a large pouch which the nymphs had given him; a magic pocket that could be distended to almost any size. He hurried the head into the pouch without looking at it and flew away as fast as his winged sandals would carry him; the other Gorgons followed him in vain, for he was invisible to them.

CHAPTER XXVII

PERSEUS RESCUES ANDROMEDA

ON his way back to the island of Seriphos, Perseus met with many adventures. He visited Atlas, expecting the hospitality which the Greeks consider due to all strangers. But Atlas did not receive him with courtesy, and Perseus in return held up the Gorgon's head for Atlas to gaze at. Atlas was turned into a rocky mountain, and there he stands and always will stand with the firmament resting on his head.

In his flight Perseus reached Ætheopia, where King Kepheus reigned. There he saw an immense rock on the coast and a charming maiden was chained to the rock. Perseus approached her in pity and said, "Tell me, oh maiden, why thou art bound to this rock! What is thy name and which is thy country?" "I am a princess, the daughter of King Kepheus," answered the girl, "and my name is Andromeda. My mother praised my beauty above that of the daughters of Nereus, displeasing the nymphs themselves and offending the god.

"The Nereids complained to Poseidon, and in his wrath he sent a sea-monster on shore to destroy the people and their flocks and herds and devastate the country. The king, my father, inquired of the Oracle how the country might be freed from this calamity. The Oracle made reply that the country would be delivered if the king would give up his own daughter to be devoured by the monster. When the people of Ætheopia heard of the answer of the Oracle they forced my father to accede to the terms. They themselves chained me to this rock, and every moment I expect the monster to come and tear me to pieces."

No sooner had Andromeda finished her tale than the monster appeared in the distance. Her father and mother saw him too and wept in despair. Crying out to their beloved child, with extended hands they bewailed her fate.

"A truce to tears!" cried Perseus. "The brave man sheds no tears in the face of danger! He wastes no words but dares! Shall Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danæe, having slain Medusa, quail before a sea-serpent? I will save thy daughter, but thou must give her to me to be my wife!"

"Thou shalt have our daughter for thy wife and our kingdom as well," cried the king, "if thou wilt save her!"

The waves rose higher and higher around the cliff and the sea-monster came roaring and hissing, with open jaws showing his savage teeth, his neck outstretched, and his head reared high above the breakers. Over the waves rose his tremendous back covered with thick, heavy scales, and he lashed the waters to a foam with his coiling tail.

Then Perseus, with the aid of his winged sandals, rose up into the air and attacked the monster from above. The beast plunged this way and that, leaping up and striking at Perseus with his fangs, diving again into the water and springing out, bellowing in a frightful manner.

Time after time Perseus thrust his sword into the monster, until a stream of black blood ran from its throat, and it grew motionless and died. Perseus quickly flew to Andromeda and took off the chains that bound her, and she sprang into her father's arms with a cry of joy. The king and queen threw their arms around their beloved daughter and covered her with kisses, and they clasped the hand of Perseus with gratitude which they could not express.

Then they returned to the grand castle of Kepheus, promising to celebrate the nuptials of Perseus and Andromeda. The wedding took place amidst great pomp and splendor, but while they were in the midst of their festivities the din of arms and battle-cries resounded through the hall. Phineus, the brother of the king, had come with a crowd of warriors to steal the bride. For Andromeda, before her misfortunes, had been promised to him in marriage, but in the hour of danger he had left her to her fate, a prey to the sea-monster.

Now that she was safe again and in favor, Phineus had come to claim her. He said petulantly to Perseus, "Andromeda belongs to me. I come to get her. Neither thy winged sandals nor thy father Zeus shall save thee from my wrath. Thou art a robber trying to take my bride from me."

Then the king answered him angrily. "Phineus," he said, "thou art a boastful coward. In no way does Perseus rob thee of Andromeda. Thou hast lost her through thine own fault, for when she was in peril thou didst desert her like a coward, and she would have been devoured by the sea-monster before now if this noble youth had not saved her. My daughter shall wed the man who has saved her from a terrible death."

But Phineus would not yield. Wishing to kill Perseus, he shot an arrow at him. At the same time he ordered his band of followers to rush upon him. The arrow did not hit Perseus, who fought single-handed against them all, but as soon as he struck down one foe a new one sprang up in his place. Perseus saw that he could keep on fighting for all time, and never conquer this army, which could furnish a new warrior as often as one was slain. Having thus fought alone against great numbers until he saw it was hopeless, Perseus took the head of Medusa out of the pouch where he had kept it and held it up for Phineus and his warriors to gaze upon. Instantly everyone of them was changed to stone, and Perseus, taking his bride, returned to the island of Seriphos.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PERSEUS BECOMES KING OF TIRYNS

WHEN Perseus reached home he did not find the glad welcome to which he had looked forward with all the ardor of a youth who has been for the first time on an important errand. His mother had taken refuge in a temple at the altar of Zeus to escape the persecutions of King Polydektes, who had begun to ill-treat her as soon as Perseus had departed in search of Medusa. His brother, the fisherman, had tried to protect her and had used hot words in warning the king to desist from his unmanly purpose. But Polydektes turned his wrath upon his brother also, and he, too, could find no refuge save the sacred altars.

Perseus went at once to the king and announced his arrival. The king was uneasy, and yet he did not believe that Perseus had been able to keep his word. He called all the nobles of his court together to listen to what Perseus had to say. Perseus came before them, and taking the fearful head from its covering, held it up for them to look at. At once they became stone images, a ghastly court of petrified men. Even the frogs and beetles and other animals in the castle and its grounds were turned to stone.

Then Perseus flew to his mother, who was still a beautiful woman in spite of all her sorrows. She had long prayed for her son's return, almost without hope, and now that he had really come her joy was boundless. Perseus established the fisherman as king of the island in his brother's place, and the people rejoiced that they had been freed from the tyrant, Polydektes.

Perseus now gave up his winged sandals to Hermes, and asked him to carry the helmet and mantle to the nymphs, but the head of Medusa he gave to Athena, who wore it on her shield ever after.

Perseus could not remain idle at Seriphos. He set out for Argos to visit his grandfather, taking his mother and Andromeda. Akrisios, suspecting that he would come, for the words of the Oracle often came to his mind, had gone to Thessaly. There at Larissa he had built a home and established himself, hoping that his grandson would be contented to remain in Argos.

But Perseus went on until he came to Thessaly, and finding some games going on he took part in them. He threw a discus which accidentally struck his grandfather's foot, giving him a painful wound which could not be cured. Thus the Oracle was fulfilled. Learning whom he had killed and that Akrisios had died according to an old prophecy, he mourned for him and buried him with honors outside of the city.

Perseus then returned to Argos, where he had left his wife and mother, and he became king of the country in the place of his grandfather, Akrisios. But the thought of sitting on a throne whose rightful king he had accidentally killed was distasteful to him, so he exchanged kingdoms with Megapenthes of Tiryns.

It is said that the Persian kings claimed to be descendants from Perses, a son of Perseus and Andromeda. However this may be, Perseus has certainly inspired many a poet and artist and hero to express great actions and courage in word and deed.

CHAPTER XXIX

TRIPTOLEMOS, THE HERO OF ELEUSIS, AND DEMETER, THE EARTH-MOTHER

TWELVE miles to the west of Athens is a beautiful hill which ends abruptly close to the sea. It is the acropolis or highest point of Eleusis and is covered with splendid blocks of marble, the ruins of wonderful temples which stood there in ancient times. The greatest of these temples was called The Temple of the Mysteries. Demeter, the Earth-Mother, was worshipped there.

The principal road leading to the acropolis of Eleusis begins at the acropolis at Athens and is called The Sacred Way. Over this road, thousands of years ago, went the stately processions of loose-robed Greeks, their beautiful garments fluttering in the winds. Their heavy chariot-wheels left deep prints in the rocks, and there they are at the present time. There are ruins of temples to the gods along The Sacred Way, and the little lambs and kids skip playfully about among them.

A narrow pass between the hills admits you into a flowery meadow. It was here that Persephone played when a child. There are two salt lakes in the plain in which only priests were allowed to fish in the olden times. There, too, is a well where you stop for a cup of water as people have done through the long ages.

The plain of Eleusis is separated from Attica by a range of low hills clad with fields of wheat and barley. At the foot of the acropolis is the sickly little village of Eleusis, but the Island of Salamis rises across the blue waters of the bay like a fairyland shining through a delicate atmosphere of violet tint. This was the kingdom of Keleos and his son Triptolemos, the Hero of Agriculture, and it was the scene of the story of Demeter and Persephone, the story which brings us to the Hero of Eleusis.

It is said that Kronos and Rhea were the father and mother of the greatest of the gods, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades or (Pluto) and their sister Demeter, the mother of fertility. Though men might plough the fields and the rain moisten the swelling seed-grains, it was Demeter who gave the vital touch which caused the new life to spring up.

Demeter had one beloved daughter, Persephone, on whom she bestowed all the tenderness of her divine mother-heart. One day Persephone went out into the blooming meadows to play with her companions. The fields were gay with roses, violets, and lilies. The yellow crocus, the asphodel, and the purple and pink narcissus made bank and by-path seem like a soft carpet and filled the air with sweet fragrance.

Persephone stooped to pluck a flower of unusual beauty, when the earth suddenly opened and Hades appeared with a splendid chariot drawn by fiery black horses. He seized Persephone, and placing her on his chariot, drove away to his kingdom under the earth. Persephone uttered piercing cries, praying to the gods and imploring men to come to her rescue. But all in vain. Zeus looked on with approval, for he knew that his good brother ought not to be condemned to reign alone in the dread realms of darkness.

Now there was a goddess of the night, a torch-bearer who lived in a dark cave. Her name was Hekate and she knew the secrets of lonely forests and cross-roads and the gloomy underground world. She heard the shrieks of the maiden when Hades seized her; and Helios, too, the sun-god who sees everything, saw him bear her away.

The mother, Demeter, also, heard the cries of her daughter, and an unspeakable grief took possession of her. She wandered from place to place, taking neither food nor sleep, beseeching everyone to tell her where she could find her child. But no one could give her any information. She yoked her winged snakes to her car and drove with lighted torch through every country. Wherever she went she was received gladly by the people, for she stopped to teach them something of agriculture and left her blessing with them when she departed.

CHAPTER XXX

DEMETER'S GRIEF

ON the tenth day of her wanderings she met Hekate, who said: "Lovable Demeter, who hath robbed thee of thy daughter and plunged thee into sorrow? I heard her cries when she was carried off, but I could not see who it was that took her. There is one, however, who sees everything, Helios, and he may tell thee where thy daughter is concealed."

Demeter gladly took the hint, and with Hekate she set out to find Helios, and when they saw his horses and chariot they stationed themselves where they could speak to him. The venerable goddess said to him: "If ever, oh, Helios, I have pleased thee in word or deed, I pray thee look down from the heavens and tell me truly whether it is a god or a mortal that hath stolen my daughter."

"Honored Queen," replied Helios, "I willingly tell thee all I know. Hades hath taken thy daughter and led her into the gloomy kingdom below. But Zeus is the author of this deed, for he gave his permission to Hades to make Persephone his wife. Yet thou hast no need to grieve, for Hades is a loving husband and hath given thy daughter an honorable place as queen of his realm."

When Demeter heard this her grief was unbounded and her anger terrible. She left the abode of the gods on Mount Olympus and went down to earth, where she assumed the form of a mortal woman. In her travels on the earth she reached Eleusis, and sat down on a stone near a spring, from which the people drew water.

As she sat there two beautiful maidens, daughters of Keleos, the King of Eleusis, came to the spring to fill their bronze pitchers with water. They saw the stately woman in garments of mourning, and, approaching her, asked with sympathy whence she came and why she sat alone so far from the city instead of coming to the houses, where the women would gladly show her every kindness in word and deed.

Demeter replied: "May the Olympian gods bestow all good gifts upon you, my daughters. Have pity on me and lead me to the house of some chief, where I may be a servant, doing such work as an old woman can perform. I can take care of a new-born babe, guard the house, tend the beds, and teach serving-women housework."

"Venerable lady," answered one of the daughters, "I thank thee for thy good wishes, and I will tell thee the names of the foremost men of the city. There are several chiefs of note in Eleusis, but our father is the king and he will give thee royal welcome. Let us take thee to our mother, Metaneira, and she will not let thee go into a strange house. She has a little son, and if thou wilt bring him up well she will give thee rich gifts."

Demeter consented to go, and the girls, after filling their jugs, hastened home, where they told the queen, their mother, what they had seen and heard. The beautiful Metaneira sent them to call in the aged woman, and they ran back to the spot where they had left her. They took her by the hand and led her to their home, where they presented her to their mother.

Metaneira had her baby in her arms and received Demeter kindly. "Welcome, my dear woman," she said, "thou hast come in good time. But I cannot treat thee as a servant, for thou dost appear like a princess.

"The gods often visit us with misfortunes, which we must bear as best we can. Let this home be thine and I will trust this babe of mine to thee, that thou mayst rear him. We had no hope of his living when he was born, but the gods had pity on me and let him live. For this reason he is much dearer to me. Care for him most lovingly and I will give thee a fitting reward."

"My greeting I give to thee, too, dear lady," answered Demeter. "May the gods give thee all thy desires. I will tend thy child with affection as if he were my own."

Demeter made herself at home in the large hall of Keleos and undertook the bringing up of the boy. She gave him no other food but ambrosia, that he might never grow feeble with old age. The child thrived wonderfully and was a joy to everybody. The father and mother were astonished at his rapid growth and handsome face.

But one night Metaneira wished to see how her son was getting along, and, going into the room where Demeter was tending him, saw a strange sight, for the supposed old woman held him over a fire like a brand. Metaneira, terribly frightened, cried out, "Oh, my child, the stranger is burning thee!"

But the goddess grew angry, took the child out of the fire, and setting it down on the ground, made reply: "Surely mortals are blind and incapable of telling good from evil. I vow to thee by the waters of the Styx that I have rendered thy beloved son immortal. I put him on the fire that it should render his mortal flesh impervious to the ills of men. For thee it is an eternal honor that I have lived in thy house and let thee sit in my presence."

At that instant Demeter threw off her disguise as an old woman and appeared in all her glory as a goddess. Her face shone like the sun, and a heavenly odor was shed from her robe, and her golden hair glittered as it fell over her shoulders.

"Know that I am the goddess Demeter," she said, "who am honored by mortals and immortals. Thou shalt hasten to bid the whole populace of Eleusis to build me a great temple above the spring on the mountain."

Metaneira was speechless with astonishment at what she had heard and seen. She began to tremble and did not even take heed of her child, who sat on the floor looking at them with wonder. She went at once to her husband and told him all that had happened. King Keleos called his people together in a general assembly and ordered a beautiful temple to be built on the acropolis in honor of Demeter.

The people loved their king and believed his words, and they went to work at once to build the temple. They set

about it with such zeal that it was finished in one day, for the goddess gave them divine strength and directed the work. Demeter took up her abode in the temple and remained away from the other gods, still mourning over the loss of her daughter.

CHAPTER XXXI

DEMETER'S JOY

PERSEPHONE did not return, and the angry goddess grew more angry. She determined to punish the gods, even though it brought suffering to mankind. Indeed there was no other way to punish them. So she forbade the earth to bring forth any more fruit, and there was a great famine. In vain did the oxen pull the plough through the field. In vain did the farmer sow the grain. The land was covered with stubble. No flower sprang up on the parched earth; the starving people had no sacrifice to offer to the gods, and their altars were left without the incense arising from sacred offerings.

Now the gods loved the praises of men, and the incense from their altars was most precious to them. They complained to Zeus because they were deprived of their incense, and Zeus saw the cause of it. He sent the rainbow-winged Iris to call Demeter back to Mount Olympos.

The beautiful messenger flew like a sunbeam through the space between heaven and earth, and soon reached Eleusis. She found Demeter in her temple and said to her, "Dear Mother, I bring a message to thee from the great god Zeus. He commands thee to return to the abode of the immortal gods, and his command no one dares to disobey."

But Demeter received the command with scorn, so Zeus sent all the gods, one after another, to entreat her to return, and he sent promises of beautiful gifts and courtly honors, but Demeter remained unmoved. "The earth shall yield no fruits," she said, "nor will I return to the company of the gods until I behold with mine own eyes my beautiful daughter."

Then Zeus sent Hermes to Hades to persuade him with sweet words to give up his wife and send her back to her mother since Demeter's anger could not be appeased without her. Hermes went down to the under-world to the King of the Dead, and said to him: "Immortal Hades, father Zeus has charged me to take thy wife from this dark realm back to the light of day that her mother may see her, for the anger of the goddess cannot be appeased. In her wrath she is starving men and depriving the gods of the honors that mortals bestow on them. She hath left the home of the gods and will not abide with them. Neither will she speak to them, but lives alone in her temple at Eleusis."

The grim king smiled and said to his wife, "Persephone, my queen, go to thy blue-robed mother and appease her wrath. The winter is over and thou must see the light of the sun. But first thou shalt eat with me of the pomegranate, the apple of love, for thou dost love me and this shall keep thee in remembrance of me."

Then Persephone took from the king the pomegranate and ate it, for the grim Hades had made her truly a queen and had done honors to her. But she was glad to return to her mother and the blessed light of the day. She mounted the chariot. Hermes took the reins and the whip, and the horses flew over the stony road that led from Hades. On and on they went until they reached the Eleusinian plains and the temple of Demeter.

There they emerged from the cave close to the temple, and a fig-tree burst into budding as they came. Demeter stood with outstretched arms at the mouth of the cave to receive her daughter. Hermes helped her from the chariot and Persephone sprang into her mother's arms as the flowers of May spring forth on the bosom of earth with the early showers.

No one can describe Demeter's joy as she beheld once more her beloved child, and pressed her to her heart, covering her with kisses. The whole earth smiled and burst into verdant growth. The fields were covered with grain. The meadows bloomed with gay flowers. The birds sang and the people rejoiced.



THE RETURN OF PERSEPHONE.
(Lord Leighton.)

Demeter drew her daughter into the holiest sanctuary of her great temple and they talked over all that had happened during Persephone's long absence. She told her mother how Hades had stolen her away from the meadows while she gathered flowers, and how he had treated her while she stayed with him in the lower world. She had only words of love and honor for the dread King of the Dead.

A whole day mother and daughter passed in an affectionate embrace and in exchanging words of love, each pitying the other on account of the long separation. Then Zeus sent Rhea to bring Demeter and Persephone to Mount Olympos. And he told them that Persephone might remain with her mother until the winter months came back again.

To this Demeter seriously objected, for she dreaded the separation and the loneliness. But Zeus replied: "If thy daughter hath eaten of the pomegranate she is truly wedded to Hades the King of the Dead, and must go back to him to stay during the winter. For the pomegranate is the apple of love, and having shared it with him, he hath part in her affection and can claim her as his wife. But if she hath not eaten of the fruit she shall remain with thee and go no more to the gloomy realms below."

Demeter was satisfied with these terms and promised that Persephone should return to her honored husband during the winter months, for Persephone had told her that she had eaten with him of the pomegranate and that she loved him in spite of his gloomy surroundings. Then Demeter forgave Zeus for his part in allowing the abduction of Persephone, and the mother and daughter descended once more to Eleusis to bestow blessings upon the inhabitants, and from that time on the earth was clad in flowers and foliage as long as Persephone stayed with her mother. But it was brown and barren when she returned to the regions of the Dead. And the good Hades warmed the earth from below by virtue of his divine power, helping it to produce more abundantly the precious grains and the fragrant flowers.

CHAPTER XXXII

TRIPTOLEMOS BECOMES A HERO. DEMETER'S GIFT

DEMETER returned to her home among the gods on Mount Olympos. But before she went she called Triptolemos, an older son of King Keleos to her and gave him her car which was drawn by winged dragons. There is nothing more precious to the gods than open, benevolent hearts and generous hospitality. The poorest and meanest man may be god-like in generosity, sharing his goods with open hand, as sunshine is poured out from the heavens. King Keleos had shown himself a most royal-hearted man in his princely generosity toward the goddess when she came in the guise of a poor old woman, and Demeter resolved to bestow upon him and upon mankind, for his sake, a blessing proportionate to her power and rank.

So she gave to Triptolemos something far better than her magic car and serpent-steeds. She taught him how to make the plough of iron. Heretofore men had ploughed the fields with the crudest of ploughs—a pointed stick, or an iron bar. She taught him how to turn a furrow and put the seed into it, and cover it up so that the birds should not eat it.

And when summer came she showed him how to cut the grain, to bring it in wagons to the barn where he was to thrash it, and to store it away, keeping each kind separate.

Triptolemos, being carried on his wagon through the air, sowed the precious grain all over the inhabited world and turned many a barren waste into a cultivated field. He taught the people everywhere, as Demeter had taught him, how to cultivate the soil. Thus he became a great benefactor to all mankind and induced a better way of living. For when people had farms to take care of, they ceased to roam aimlessly about the world. They built homes and learned to be friendly, and from this sprang up the government which should protect the home and make men happy and comfortable.

Triptolemos received the honors of a god, and the people of Eleusis built a temple to him close to the acropolis, where some of the stones of the temple may still be seen. But his best monument is the cultivated fields of barley, rye, and oats, and all the grains which from Demeter (Ceres) we call cereals.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PROMETHEUS, THE CHAMPION OF MANKIND

HEAVEN and earth were created. The sea rolled its waves against the shore and played around the islands. The fishes sported in the waters in lively gambols. On the land the birds flew from tree to tree singing with sweetest voices; wild beasts were peaceable; flowers threw out delicious odors; nature beamed with loveliness.

But mankind could not notice the beauty of nature. Men walked as in a dream, for they were not awakened to delicate odors or sweet sounds or beautiful forms and colors. They were barbarous and rude; they did not know any of the arts of civilization; they were not even able to build homes; they lived in caves like wild beasts and fed on nuts and fruit.

The cultivation of the soil was unknown. Men made no difference between the blooming spring and fruitful summer and the cold winter. They did not know how to cut stone. Like the wild creatures they lived in constant fear, crawling about miserably.

Prometheus, the son of Japetos, was wise and good. He looked down from his comfortable abode and saw with pity how man was stupefied and enthralled by ignorance, and he wished to deliver him from his unhappy state. At that time Zeus reigned in the heavens; he was the lord of thunder and of fire. He stored the fire in the heavens and sent it down to earth in the form of lightning to terrify men but not to help them.

Without fire upon earth man's condition was hopeless. He needed it for making tools, if ever he learned to forge metals, for baking clay with which to make bricks and dishes, for cooking his food, and protecting himself from the biting frosts of winter. But Zeus does not willingly part with his treasures, and he looked upon fire as property solely his own. No one could get it from him by open means, and man had not even dreamed that he needed it.

Prometheus made it a part of his own duty to teach man the use of fire and how to live better by knowing its secrets. So he went to Olympos, the home of Zeus himself, and took a few sparks of the heavenly fire, which he hid in a hollow reed so that it could not go out. He came down to earth, bringing it to men, and they made a great blaze and gave thanks to Prometheus from the depths of their hearts when they saw what it would do.

When it grew cold they sat around the big fire and warmed themselves. They began to cook their food, they melted iron and made spears and tools. They baked clay which they had moulded into dishes, and it led on to their inventing all those things that are made by the use of fire.

When Zeus looked down from the heavens and saw the light of the flames on the earth he at once became aware that Prometheus had stolen the fire from him and given it to mortals. Zeus was greatly alarmed to find his power shared by men, for the lightning had been his sceptre. He called Hephæstos to his aid, the Blacksmith of the Gods, and his powerful servants, Violence and Force, and bade them lead Prometheus far away and chain him to a lofty peak in the Caucasus, a wild mountain-range of Scythia.

Hephæstos loved Prometheus, but he could not disobey the command of Zeus. When they reached the Caucasus, Violence said to Hephæstos: "See! we have reached far off Scythia, a desert where no trace of man is ever found. Behold the Caucasus! Now is the time to perform the task with which thy father Zeus hath charged thee. Let us chain Prometheus to the highest rock with fetters which cannot be broken. Thus may he learn the will of Zeus and that he is subject to his rule. Thus, too, will he see where his love for wretched men has brought him."

But Hephæstos answered: "Force and Violence, do ye execute the order of Zeus, for I have not the heart to fetter a god who is of my own kin, to this wild mountain. It must be done, because it is the will of Zeus, and it is a dangerous thing to disobey him."

Then, turning to Prometheus, he said: "High-minded son of Heaven, it is with a sorrowful heart and against my will that I let my servants bind thee with never-breaking bonds to this rock. There thou wilt never hear a human voice nor see a human form. Here wilt thou stay with no power to stir, and the burning sun will scorch thee. There is no place where thou canst rest thy weary limbs or thy sleepless head. This is thy reward for thy love to mankind. But I would rather bear thy punishment than be the tyrant to treat thee so unjustly."

CHAPTER XXXIV

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

PROMETHEUS was securely bound with iron fetters and fastened to the solid rock. The servants of Hephæstos increased his tortures with their bitter speeches. But Prometheus bore his sufferings and their taunts with heroic indifference and courage. As long as they were near not a sound came from his lips. Only when Hephæstos and his servants were gone did he begin to bewail his unjust punishment.

The winds carried the sound of his moans far off to the shore of the sea. The sea maidens, daughters of old Ocean, heard them and were moved to tearful pity. They hastened on the wings of the salt breeze like a swarm of birds to comfort and cheer him. Nay, more, old Ocean himself came from afar, and rising up from his watery abode, stationed himself near Prometheus to speak to him.

"I am grieved to the heart, dear Prometheus," he said, "for all that thou hast to suffer. I am thy kin, and it breaks my heart to see thee like this. Even apart from our kinship there is no one whom I honor as much as thee. Tell me, is there any way in which I can help thee?"

Prometheus, hearing what Okeanos said, made reply: "What do my eyes behold, friend Okeanos? Hast thou come to see me in my misery? I fear me I have only bitter words in exchange for thy kindly greeting. See in what manner Zeus treats me, his friend, who hath assisted him to gain possession of the throne of the world!"

Okeanos felt the truth of his words, but thought it better to try to persuade Prometheus to submit to Zeus, and so he answered pleadingly: "Curb such overbearing speeches, dear Prometheus, and I will myself try to appease the anger of Zeus." But Prometheus quickly replied: "I have done no evil that I know of, and I will not bow to tyranny and injustice.

"My fault is this: I loved mankind too well to let them lie helpless in stupidity and ignorance. I found them in a pitiable plight. They had eyes but could not see. They had ears but could not hear. Not one thing did they know until I taught them. I told them to observe the rising and the setting of the sun, moon, and stars. I taught them how to count, and write, and remember.

"I taught them to yoke oxen to their ploughs instead of dragging them themselves. And I showed them how to harness horses to the chariots likewise. I helped them to make boats with oars for the rivers, and ships winged with white sails to traverse the seas. I taught them the healing power of plants to relieve them in their sickness. From me they learned how to mine for silver and copper, and how to work them. Indeed, friend Okeanos, thou mayst well say that all the arts men know how to apply they have learned from Prometheus."

Zeus sat uneasily on his throne, angry when he saw that the spirit of Prometheus was unbroken. "He still defies me, but I will conquer yet," said the Thunderer; and he sent a cruel vulture to tear and eat his vitals every day. At night they grew again and he was healed. But each morning the vulture came and renewed his terrible feast.

Two thousand years the large hearted, man-loving Prometheus passed in suffering in the Caucasus. At length Herakles came that way in his wanderings, when he was trying to find his way to the Garden of the Hesperides. He broke the iron bands like egg shells and set Prometheus free.

To tell the truth, Prometheus was too wise for Zeus to have him as an enemy forever, for he knew one thing which Zeus did not—he knew the future. Zeus was aware that there were many important secrets concerning the future which he could learn from no one else. It is supposed that Zeus may have hoped to force Prometheus to yield up his secrets by these punishments, and that on finding out his mistake he slyly connived at his victim's liberation because he could not afford to be unreconciled to him any longer.

Prometheus has been loved and honored through all the ages. On an island belonging to Greece the people built an altar to him at the foot of a burning mountain. Once a year they put out all their fires and sent a ship to Delos to bring a fresh light. They used this new flame for kindling again the fires they had extinguished.

At Athens, Prometheus was held in sacred honor. People held torch-light festivals in memory of him. And on frosty nights, as they sat by the fire, they praised the great Prometheus, who could endure long enough to conquer destiny, the hero who had brought them mental balance, "The Gift of Equilibrium."

CHAPTER XXXV

DEUKALION, THE CHAMPION OF A NEW RACE

DEUKALION was the son of Prometheus, and a just and god-fearing man. In the time of Deukalion, Zeus destroyed the human race by means of a great flood. People had become wicked and godless; they did not fear the gods, and the meaner classes paid no respect to the better, and all of them loved every manner of wickedness.

This state of affairs reached the ears of Zeus. But wishing to take the evidence of his own eyes and see if the stories that came to him were really true, he took the form of a mortal man and went down from his Olympian home to the Earth.

One evening after sunset he reached Arcadia and asked for a night's shelter in the palace of Lykaon, the king. Lykaon was famous for his wickedness. Some of the people seemed to see some signs that Zeus was a god and went down on their knees to him, but Lykaon laughed at their credulity and said: "Stay till I find out whether he be a god or a man!"

Lykaon had a stranger in his palace who had been sent to him as a messenger. Lykaon had the stranger killed and served up as food for his guest. When the dreadful feast was placed before Zeus, he arose at once in anger and left the table, and he shattered the house with a thunder-bolt. Lykaon betook himself to flight with all speed. He fled to the fields howling like a wild beast.

Lykaon tried to speak, but his human voice had left him. His skin turned into a wolf's pelt, his hands into paws. He rushed furiously among the herds and began to tear and bite cattle and sheep. He had been changed into a wolf.

Zeus, having seen with his own eyes that things were even worse than had been told him, returned to Olympos. He called the gods together in council and related to them the wicked deeds he had seen. He ended by saying: "The whole race of man must surely perish," and the other gods consented to his judgment.

At first Zeus thought it best to send thunder-bolts to destroy the evil race, but he feared that the flames might reach from earth into the heavens and burn the whole firmament. He therefore laid aside his thunder-bolts and resolved to drown the earth's inhabitants by means of a flood. So he ordered the God of the Winds to shut Boreas and all the other winds in his cave, save Notos, only, the wet south wind, who was to go free.

Then Notos flew forth with his damp wings. A thick cloud hid his face like a veil and darkness hung around his head. Water ran down from his brow and his hair. Cloud-bursts broke from the sky and sent cataracts of water over the earth, flooding it in every direction. The work of the farmers was stopped and their hopes destroyed in an instant.

But Zeus was not satisfied with that. He called Poseidon, Lord of the Seas, to his assistance. Poseidon came quickly. He spoke to all the rivers in a loud commanding voice. "Leave your beds," he cried, "and rush wildly over your banks and flood the world!" The rivers obeyed, and Poseidon himself struck the earth with his trident. The earth quaked and, bursting open in many places, let forth torrents of water.

The waters rose higher and higher. The valleys became one wide lake, and soon the tops of the trees were no longer above the water. Man and herds were drowned. The altars of the gods were swept away. When a house remained standing it was soon covered with water. The highest towers disappeared in the flood. Land and sea were no longer separated. The world was all sea—a long, shoreless sea.

Seals gambolled where goats had formerly grazed. Dolphins swam over the cities that were buried beneath the waves. Wolves and sheep, lions and tigers huddled close together and swam about as long as they could keep afloat, when they sank below the waters. The deer could no longer find ground for his fleet foot. The birds flew on tired, trembling wings searching for a place on which to perch and finally fell into the sea with worn-out wings.

The people tried to save themselves in any possible way. Some fled to the hills and mountains. Some took refuge in ships and sailed over the fields where formerly the plough had moved. By and by the mountain-tops were swept by the waves, and the ships were whirled about by the terrible currents and wrecked.

Deukalion and his wife, Pyrrha, were the only ones to be saved. He had taken the advice of his father, Prometheus, to build himself a floating-house in the form of a box and to store in it a great amount of food; when the flood came he entered this house with his wife. The house was carried about nine days and nine nights by the winds. Only the two peaks of Parnassos remained above water. On this mountain the floating-house stuck fast.

When Zeus cast his eyes down to earth he saw that everything was covered with water, on the surface of which floated trees and grasses and thousands of animals and people who had perished in the flood. And he saw Deukalion and his wife safely anchored on the heights of Parnassos.

Then Zeus gave commands to Boreas to chase away the black clouds. The sun shone again and the waters retreated from the earth, which was soon dry again. Poseidon laid aside his trident and the rivers ran in their old channels. Woods sprang up and the fields bloomed with flowers.

Deukalion and Pyrrha looked around them. Everywhere was loneliness and silence. It was like the solitude of death. Deukalion wept and said to his beloved Pyrrha: "My dear wife, I do not see a living soul far or near in any direction. Thou art my only companion. All the friends we have known have perished in the flood. We are the only inhabitants of the earth. What will life be worth to us, since we must live alone in the world with no fellow-men. I should like better to live if we had other people whom we might love and help and with whom we could enjoy ourselves. But we will give thanks to Zeus for saving us."

They walked along a little way and came to an altar of the Goddess of Justice. There they fell on their knees and said: "Oh, divine Justice, tell us how we may revive the human race which has perished. Oh, help us and restore our lost

ones to us." They listened for the goddess to answer and soon they heard a soft voice reply: "Veil your faces, oh, Deukalion and Pyrrha. Go down the mountain, and as ye go throw backward over your shoulders the bones of your mother."

Deukalion and his wife were puzzled at these words and at first they could not tell what they meant. But after some meditation Deukalion said: "My dear wife, the earth is our mother and her bones are the rocks. As we go down the mountain we will cast behind us the stones which we find in our pathway."

So they started forth, the founders of a new race, throwing the stones and rocks which they met over their shoulders and out of sight. From the stones which they cast there sprang up living men and women; the stones which Deukalion threw became men and those which Pyrrha cast became women.

Deukalion and Pyrrha had many children. One of their sons was called Hellen. Hellen's children and grandchildren spread over Greece and were called Hellenes, and they gave the name Hellas to Greece.

CHAPTER XXXVI

DÆDALOS, A HERO OF INVENTION

DÆDALOS was a native of Athens and descended from one of the most ancient kings of Attica. It was he who constructed the labyrinth in which King Minos of Crete locked up the monster Minotaur. Dædalos was the greatest artist of his time and was master of many useful crafts. He produced wonderful pieces of work in a great many places of the world.

His statues were so cleverly made that they were taken for living beings. It was thought that they could see and walk about. For while the artists before him sculptured their statues with closed eyes, with their hands crossed over their breasts, and their feet turned sidewise, Dædalos made statues with open eyes, outstretched arms, and feet pointing forward into space.

Dædalos had Talos for a disciple, a clever and intelligent youth, who, though but a mere boy, had invented several tools of great usefulness. One day, finding the jaw-bone of a snake he began to cut a piece of wood with it. It was hardly sharp enough to answer his purpose, so he constructed a saw of iron on the same plan.

Dædalos was so jealous of the boy that he pushed him off from the Acropolis and the lad died of the injury. When Dædalos saw what he had done he went to Talos, but found him dead, so he hurried to bury him. He was surprised in the act and brought before the court which met on the hill called Areopagus. He was condemned to death by the court, and in order to save himself he fled to Crete.

At that time Minos was king in Crete. He received the famous artist very kindly and held him in great honor. There Dædalos did many fine works for Minos besides the famous labyrinth for the Minotaur.

After he had stayed some time in Crete he wanted to go away. But Minos did not wish to let him go, and when Dædalos concealed himself, the king searched for him everywhere and gave the order that no ship should take him away from the island.

The ingenious Dædalos then meditated a plan of flight. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Minos may watch the sea and the land, but he cannot watch the air. That is still free. I will make me wings and fly away."

Dædalos constructed two large wings and fastened them to his body with wax. Moving them with his arms and hands he was able to fly like a bird. He made another pair of wings for his son Ikaros, fastened them to the boy's body and taught him how to move them. Then he instructed Ikaros to keep close to him and not to fly too high lest the wax should be melted by the heat of the sun, nor to keep too near the surface of the sea, as he might dip his wings into the water and render them too heavy for flight.

After he had given this advice, he flew up first and his son followed. Away they went, cutting through the air like two eagles, and soon the high mountains of Crete were left far behind them. Below them the wide sea stretched out its great expanse. The sailors looked up from their boats and wondered what these strange beings were.



DÆDALOS AND IKAROS.
(From the painting by Van Dyck.)

They flew over fields where farmers were ploughing, and the farmers gazed up with astonishment. But Dædalos and Ikaros flew on and on, heedless of all that was going on below. The fishermen forgot to take in their fish and the farmers forgot to urge their oxen on with the goad, but kept gazing into the sky until the flying people were out of sight.

At first Ikaros kept close in the wake of his father, but when his confidence grew stronger he rose up higher. He forgot his father's advice and flew very high into the air. Up, up to the sun as nearly as he could go. The wax melted. The wings parted and fell to pieces, and Ikaros was precipitated like a stone into the sea.

Dædalos missed the boy in a short time and turned back to look for him. He could not see him anywhere, so he called: "Ikaros, Ikaros, my son, where art thou?" But Ikaros made no answer. Dædalos flew about in great agony, and at last he saw the wings of his son floating on the surface of the sea.

Then Dædalos knew that his beloved Ikaros was drowned. He descended to an island and searched the cliffs, and at length he found the body of Ikaros, which the waves had washed ashore. With tears and lamentations Dædalos buried his only son, and thus was he punished for the death of his disciple, Talos. And the sea in which Ikaros was drowned was called the Icarian Sea from that time.

CHAPTER XXXVII

PHAETHON, A HERO OF BAD FORTUNE

HELIOS, the god of the Day, had a famous son whose name was Phaethon. Helios drove the chariot of the Sun through the heavens, and Phaethon played by the sea-shore where his mother lived. She was a daughter of Old Ocean and had many daughters of her own. Phaethon grew to be a youth of great promise, but he had one fault, an excessive conceit.

When he had grown to be a young man he left his mother's home and went to his father to receive the more manly instructions which belong to those of heavenly descent. When he reached the wonderful palace of Helios, which was built of gold and precious stones, he sat down and rested near the glittering columns, his self-pride growing with the thought of being one of the heirs to such an estate.

He rose and entered the silver gates which shone like mirrors. He found Helios in the palace surrounded by a flood of light, sitting on a throne shaped out of an emerald. To the right and left of Helios stood Hemera (the Day), Men (the Month), Etos (the Year), the Æones (the Seasons), and at equal distance from one another the Horæ (Hours), and Ages unnumbered. There also stood Spring adorned by a wreath of flowers, Summer with ears of grain in his hands, Autumn laden with juicy fruits, and Winter with his white hair.

Phaethon halted in awe. But Helios, as soon as he perceived him, welcomed him to his palace. He took the crown of golden rays from his own head lest its dazzling splendor should blind the eyes of Phaethon, and then called him to come nearer.

Phaethon approached with fear and trembling, but Helios called him his son and reassured him with endearing words. When Phaethon's eyes had grown somewhat accustomed to the blinding splendor, Helios said to him with fatherly love: "What has brought my dear child into the heavenly palace of his father? Surely this is hardly the place for anyone who is accustomed to the cool earth."

Phaethon answered: "Oh, my royal father, I am very unhappy. I am the subject of much gossip and derision. People taunt me because my father lives in the heavens and does not abide in our home on earth. They say that I am not thy son at all, and I have come to thee to get the proof from thee that I am really thy son."

Now if Helios had lived upon earth everything would have been burned up in the light of his glittering rays, but he felt sorry for his son and said: "Thou art my dear son, indeed. I would gladly leave this palace to come and abide in thy home by the sea. But I must drive the chariot of the Day. Even the gods are not exempt from duty."

Then said Phaethon: "If thou art indeed my father, thou wilt grant me the boon which I ask of thee." "Ask what thou wilt," replied Helios, "and I swear to thee by the waters of the Styx, that I will give it to thee."

Then Phaethon made answer: "Let me drive thy chariot for one day and all these people who despise me will see that I am thy son."

Helios was dismayed when he heard the audacious and unexpected demand of his son.

"What words hast thou spoken, my dear Phaethon!" he said. "Thou dost ask for thine own destruction. Thou dost request a thing that no one of the gods would dare to undertake, not even Zeus himself. No one but myself is able to drive my chariot."

But Phaethon would not be persuaded. "Thou dost not love me, my father," he said with tears. "I see that thou dost not love me. If thou didst thou wouldst let me have thy chariot in order that the whole world might see that I am indeed thy son."

"Foolish boy," responded Helios, "just because I love thee shall I let thee destroy thyself? Ask any other boon but this."

"Nay, I want the chariot and nothing else," replied Phaethon.

Helios was stricken with grief, but he had bound himself by the Great Oath of the Gods, which cannot be broken. He took Phaethon by the hand and led him to his chariot and placed him in it.

The chariot was a wonderful piece of workmanship done by Hephæstos. The seat and axle were made of gold. Golden also were the tires of the wheels and the spokes were of silver.

While Phaethon was yet gazing with wonder at the glittering chariot of his father, the rosy-fingered Dawn opened the dazzling gates of the East, the stars, one after another, set—last of all the Morning Star, and the light of the Moon died out.

Helios ordered the Hours to harness up his immortal steeds, which were always fed on nectar and ambrosia. The Hours brought the horses up from the stables and yoked them to the chariot. While this was done Helios anointed the face of his son with heavenly oil, lest he might be scorched by the fiery rays. Then he placed his radiant crown upon Phaethon's head, and sighing bitterly, gave his son this parting advice:

"My son, do not touch the horses with the whip, but hold on to the reins with all thy might. The horses are impetuous and thou wilt find it hard to hold them. Keep them well in hand when making the ascent as well as in the descent. First thy course is steeply upward, and on the other side it descends rapidly.

"Do not go near the earth lest thou burn it, and do not rise too high or thou wilt set fire to the heavens. The twilight is waning. Go, my son, for mortals are looking for the light of Helios. At the last moment I pray thee to change thy mind and hand the reins to me."

But the son, exulting with joy, gathered up the reins, and taking leave of his disconsolate father, boldly drove off.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE DEATH OF PHAETHON

THE horses darted forward to their long race, and their first few leaps brought them above the highest mountains. Before the eyes of the youth the whole extent of land and sea lay outstretched.

The deer already had left their shelters and gone up on the heights. All nature seemed to awake. The quiet woods resounded with the songs of the birds, which seemed to greet the rising sun. Glittering dewdrops hung on the leaves and flowers and shone like diamonds with the light of Helios. Hares and rabbits left their hiding-places and came forth for food. Bees flew humming from flower to flower, gathering their precious sweets. The shepherd led forth his bleating flocks into the green pastures, the farmer plodded off into the fields with his rural tools. Smoke began to rise from the cottage chimneys.

Only the owls and other night-birds, unable to bear the light of the sun, flew back to their lonely hiding-places, and a few timid flowers closed their petals, but the sun-flowers turned their faces with joy toward the rising sun. Phaethon was entranced by the sight of the glorious beauty of awakening nature.

The horses soon perceived that they were not held by the powerful hands of Helios; they also felt that they were not drawing their accustomed burden, and as a ship that does not carry the necessary ballast is tossed about by the waves, so the chariot was jolted through the air, rising and falling as if it were empty.

The horses strayed from their path. Phaethon tried to rein them in. He did not know the way and was not strong enough to curb the restive steeds. They ran this way and that, to right and left, under the uncertain guidance of their new driver.

On they flew. They were near the middle of the sky where the road was steepest. Phaethon looked down from the tremendous height upon the earth. He became dizzy; his hands trembled and his knees knocked together. He let the reins go loose; the horses darted forward like arrows. He pulled them back, and they plunged and stood on their hind feet. He wanted to speak to them, but he did not know their names.

Overcome at last by fear, he threw the reins down on the backs of the horses and clung to the chariot. Having no guidance whatever the horses now started on a wild race. They approached the earth and turned everything into a desert; woods and meadows, cities and villages were burnt to ashes. The rivers were dried up and the sea was boiling.

Again the chariot was borne up to an immeasurable height and the earth was relieved of the terrible heat. But now the firmament was in danger of being destroyed by fire. Curses and prayers rose to heaven from the suffering people on earth, and cries of fright resounded through Olympos.

Zeus heard the sighs and wailings and cries, and to save the world from destruction he hurled his thunder-bolt at the unfortunate Phaethon, who fell from the dizzy heights to earth. With tears and lamentations his mother searched for the body of her wayward son. She found him near the mouth of a great river which had been burned dry.

There she buried him, and the sisters of the unfortunate youth shed bitter tears over his grave. They could not bear to go away from the tomb and leave him lying there alone, so they remained kneeling and motionless until Zeus took pity on them and changed them into weeping willows. Even then they kept on weeping, but their tears were dried by the sun and carried away by the streams into the great sea, where they became jewels of amber.

Kyknos, too, a friend of Phaethon's, mourned his loss and could not be comforted; so Zeus, in kindness, changed him into a swan. Helios, in his fatherly grief, refused to drive the chariot of the Sun any longer, and the earth was left in darkness for a whole day. But the gods entreated him to take the reins again and men prayed for light, and from that time on the Sun has kept its true course through the heavens, under his wise guidance.

VOCABULARY

Ad mē' tos.
Æ gē' us.
Æ thra (ē' thra).
A kris' i os.
Alk mē' ne.
An tæ os (an tē' os).
A res (ā' rēs).
A ri ad' ne.
As klep' i os, or Æs cu la' pi us.
Ath' a mas.
Au gei as, or Au ge as (au gī' as, or au gē' as).
Bœ o' ti a.
Ca' cus, or Ka' kos.
Cer' be rus, or Ker' be ros.
Da' nā e (dǎ).
Da' na æ.
Da na' i des, or Da' na ids.
Da' na os.
Dæ' da los.
De' los.
De me' ter.
Deu ka' li on.
Di o me' des.
E leu' sis.
Eu rys theus (û rys' thuse).
Glau' ke.
Hē' ka te.
Hē' li os.
He phæs tos (hě fēs' tos), or Vulcan.
Her' a kles or Her' cu les.
He si o ne (hě see' o ne).
Hip po da mei a (hip po da mī' a).
Hip pol' y te.
Hy met' tos.
Hy per bo rē' ans.
I bē' ri a.
I' ka ros, or Ic' a rus.
I o la os (ē ō' la os).
I ol kos (ē ol' kos).
Jap e tos, or I ap e tus (yap' e tos, or ē ap' e tus).
Kē' le os.
Ke pheus (kē' fuse).
Kre ū' sa.
Krom' my on.
La ri' sa.
Li nos (lē' nos).
Lo cri (lo' crē).
Ly ka' on.
Me de a (mě dē' a).
Mē' ga ris.
Me le a gros (mě le ah' gros).
Met a nei ra (met a nī ra).
My ke' næ, or My cē' næ.
Myr' til os.
Ne me' an.
Ne reus (nē' ruse).
Œ no' ma os.
O ke' a nos.
Or pheus (or' fuse).
Pe leus (pē' luse).
Pe li as (pē' li as).
Pe lop' i des.
Pe lop on nes' os, or Pe lop on nes' us.
Per i phe' tes or Kor y ne' tes.
Per seph' o ne, or Pro serp' i ne.
Pha ë thon (fā' e thon).
Phin' e us.
Pit' theus.
Po sei don (po sī' don).
Se' ri phos (sě).
Stym phā' los.

Sym ple gä' des (sym ple gah' des).

Ta' los.

The seus (the ' suse).

Trip tol e mos (trip tol' a mos).

Træ ze ne (tre zē' ne).

Vale of Tem pe (tem' pe).

Zeus (zuse).

Transcriber's Note

Variant spelling is preserved as printed.

Minor punctuation errors have been repaired. Hyphenation has been made consistent.

The following amendment has been made:

Page [vii](#)—xiii amended to xi—INTRODUCTION xi

The frontispiece illustration has been moved to follow the title page. Other illustrations have been moved where necessary so that they are not in the middle of a paragraph.

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