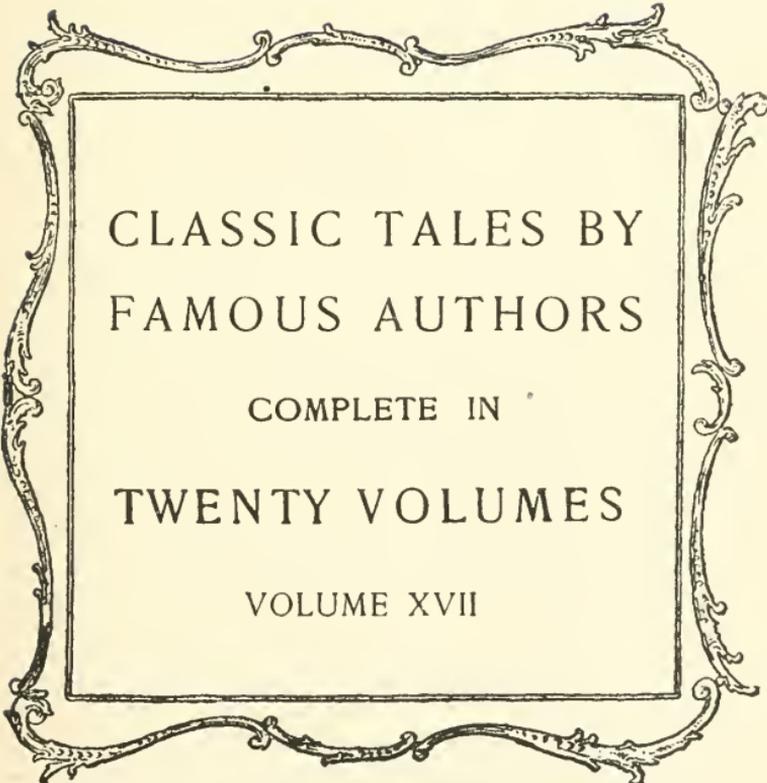




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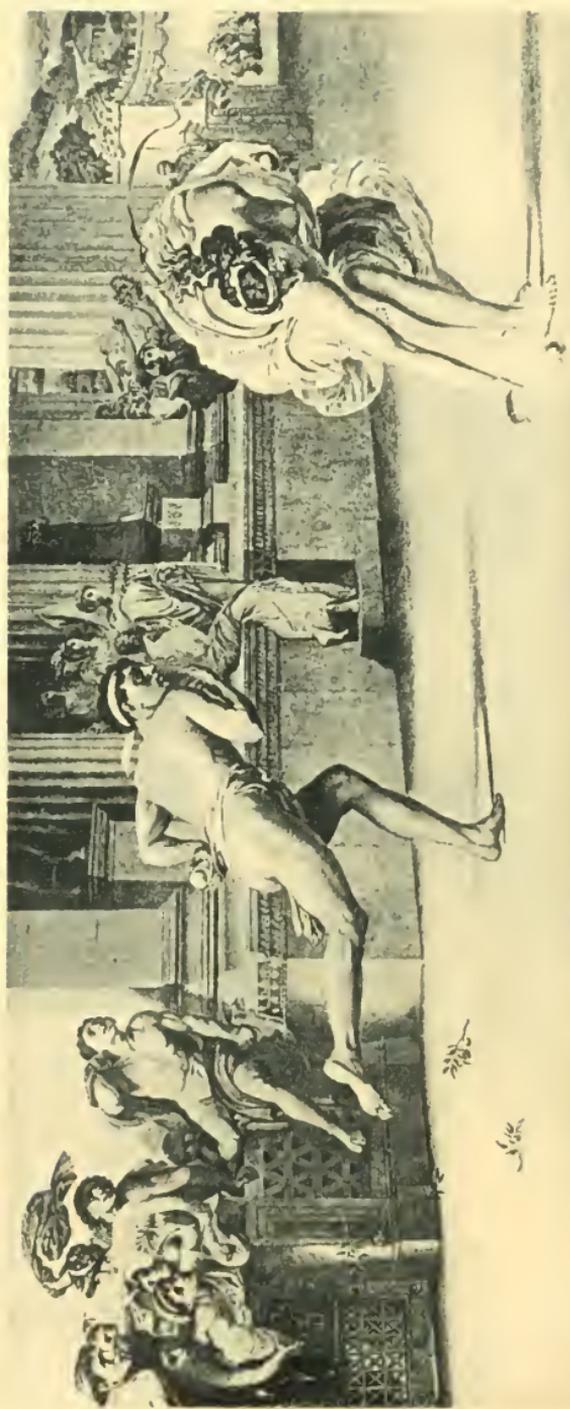


CLASSIC TALES BY
FAMOUS AUTHORS

COMPLETE IN

TWENTY VOLUMES

VOLUME XVII



Classic Tales

by

Famous Authors

CONTAINING COMPLETE ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS WITH PRELIMINARY
BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS NOTES

Atalanta's Race

Photogravure. From a Painting by E. J. Poynter

FREDERICK B. DE BEARD

With a General Introduction by

ROBERT JOHNSON, LL.D.

Published by

ERIC BODLEY-JAMES BODLEY

New York

1914

Classic Tales

by

Famous Authors

CONTAINING COMPLETE SELECTIONS FROM
THE WORLD'S BEST AUTHORS WITH PREFATORY
BIOGRAPHICAL AND SYNOPTICAL NOTES

Edited and Arranged by

FREDERICK B. DE BERARD

14530

With a General Introduction by

ROSSITER JOHNSON, LL.D.

Published by

THE BODLEIAN SOCIETY

NEW YORK

JAN 1906

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P.N.
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CRITICAL SYNOPSIS
OF SELECTIONS

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

APOLLO: BY REV. G. W. COX.

From the vague Greek mythology the Rev. G. W. Cox has drawn the diverse materials from which he has woven this story of the parentage, birth and doings of the god Apollo; how he left Delos, his early home, and made his shrine in Parnassus; how he and his sister, Artemis, smote the fourteen beautiful sons and daughters of Niobe, who had boasted that her children were fairer than Apollo and Artemis, the children of Leto; how Apollo loved and pursued the nymph Daphne, who escaped his grasp by becoming a beautiful bush; how he loved and wedded Kyrene; and how Hermes, the thief-god, stole Apollo's cattle and thereafter became his friend.

ATALANTA'S RACE: BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

Milanion, the son of King Amphidamas, while hunting, comes to the town of King Schoenus. There he sees Atalanta, the king's daughter, who has sworn that she will never marry until she finds a man who can outrun her. The life of those who try and fail is forfeit. After seeing two men put to death because of their failure, Milanion proclaims himself a contestant. He goes to the Temple of Venus at Argolis and prays for victory, and the goddess gives him three golden apples, the sight of which overcomes with the desire of possession, those who see them.

On the day of the race, when Atalanta gains, Milanion drops the apples one by one, and while she pauses to pick them up he overtakes and passes her, and thus wins the race and the hand of the maid.

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

BALDUR, THE BEAUTIFUL: BY FREDERICK B. DE BERRARD.

Among all the gods none was so well beloved as Baldur, the sun-god. All the earth rejoiced at his coming and sorrowed when he went away, so when it was prophesied that Baldur should die, Friga, the Queen of Heaven, made everything on the earth swear not to hurt him. But the little mistletoe was forgotten, and did not swear. So Loki, the fire-god, who alone hated Baldur, made of it an arrow which slew him, when, for sport, all the gods hurled their spears and smote with their swords, at Baldur, knowing their weapons would harm him not.

HERCULES AND CACUS: FROM CONINGTON'S TRANSLATION OF THE ÆNEID.

Deep in a mountain gorge is a gloomy cavern, whose entrance is hidden by mossy rocks piled before it. Here is the lair of the monstrous and frightful giant Cacus, who steals the cattle of Hercules and hides them in his stronghold. The poet Virgil tells of the rapine; how the hero follows the trail of the stolen herds; how he rends the mountain-side asunder, uncovers the giant, and slays him in his cave.

PERSEUS: BY CHARLES KINGSLEY.

Charles Kingsley has told anew in brilliant and glowing English the old Greek legends of demi-gods and heroes. This story relates how the infant Perseus and his mother, the queen, became waifs; how, when Perseus had grown to be a stalwart youth, the goddess Pallas Athene revealed to him his royal birth, and bade him seek and destroy the gorgon Medusa, the sight of whom turned all to stone; how he overcame the monster and took her head; how he rescued the Princess Andromeda, chained to a rock in the sea to become the prey of a sea dragon; and how he came to the court and turned to stone the tyrant king and all his retinue, by exposing to their gaze the snake-fringed gorgon's head, whereby Theseus and Danaë, his mother, came again to their own.

PROMETHEUS: BY REV. G. W. COX.

When the great Zeus, the Father of the Gods,

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

first ascended the throne of his father, Kronos, Prometheus, the Titan, went among men and taught them to defy the power of Zeus; so because of this, and because he stole fire from heaven for a gift to man, Zeus chained him to a mountain-top, and placed a vulture there to gnaw his heart forever. Now Prometheus had left with his brother, Epimetheus, all the evils known to man, sealed up in a great chest; and Pandora, his wife, opening the chest for curiosity, let them loose upon the world.

Io, the beloved of Zeus, doomed to an awful fate by the wrath of the goddess Here, wanders among the mountains and comes to Prometheus on his mountain-top. He tells her of the punishment imposed upon him by Zeus, and in gratitude for her pity foretells that from her shall descend a great hero, Hercules, who shall deliver the land from monsters and tyrants, and unloose the chains which bind Prometheus to the rock.

TALES OF ANCIENT GREECE: BY REV. G. W. COX.

I. THE CITY OF PALLAS ATHENE.—When the city of Erechtheus was young, the gods came down from Mount Olympos to judge a contest between Poseidon and Athene. Each was to make a gift to the sons of men, and the city was to bear the name of the one who should give the best gift. Poseidon brought a beautiful horse from the earth, but Athene made an olive tree to grow, and the prize was awarded to her gift, as it was not only a benefit to man, but a sign of prosperity and freedom. So the city is called Athens unto this very day.

II. THE SLEEP OF ENDYMION.—The goddess Selene saw the beautiful youth Endymion in the valley of Latmos, and because he would not leave his pleasant home to follow her, she made him sleep forever.

III. TANTALOS was a great king and the friend of Zeus himself, but he sinned many times against the gods, and was at last condemned to lie in Hades, surrounded by fruits and flowers and brooks, but unable, in spite of his hunger and thirst, to reach any of them.

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

THE ARGONAUTS: BY CHARLES KINGSLEY.

This story tells how Jason and his comrades, the pupils of old Cheiron the Centaur, sail in "The Argo" in quest of the Golden Fleece; how Jason undertakes to bring the Fleece to his uncle, King Pelias, claiming as a reward the kingdom which is his by right; how he casts in his lot with Medeia, the enchantress, who, though she helps him to win the Fleece, brings him much sorrow and misfortune; and how in the end he gains his kingdom and reigns with his beautiful, but wicked, wife.

THESEUS: BY CHARLES KINGSLEY.

This is the story of the hero, Theseus, who, when he had found his father, Ægeus, King of Athens, went with a tribute of seven youths and seven maidens to King Minos of Crete, that he might destroy the Minotaur and redeem the lives of his companions. It relates how he, through the aid of the beautiful Ariadne, the king's daughter, enters the labyrinth and kills the monster Minotaur, half-bull, half-human, and rescues his friends, condemned to be devoured in revenge for the death of Minos' son, whom Ægeus slew. Theseus sails away in the night with Ariadne as his bride, and with all his liberated companions, but while at Naxos, Dionusos, the wine-god, takes Ariadne from him, and he is forced to sail for Athens without her.

His old father, sitting on the cliffs to await his arrival, sees the black sails of the vessel, which were the omen of failure, which Theseus had forgotten to change for white, the signal of success; and the old king throws himself into the sea. So Theseus becomes king and rules long and wisely.

THE TOILS OF HERAKLES: BY REV. G. W. COX.

Herakles (Hercules), the hero-son of Zeus, was doomed by the enmity of Here, queen of the gods, to be the lifelong drudge of King Eurystheus, who set for him many terrible and toilsome tasks. This story tells how Herakles fought and overcame monsters, savage beasts and giants; how he cleansed the Augean stables; how he slew the centaur, Nessos; how he donned the poisoned shirt, the fatal gift of his dying enemy, and how he died in agony by reason of it.

EDITOR.

BIOGRAPHICAL
DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

CONINGTON, JOHN: (For Biographical Note, see Vol. VIII, "The Æneid.")

COX, G. W. (REV.): G. W. Cox, born at Benares in 1826, was educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Oxford. From 1861 to 1885 he was literary adviser of the publishing firm of Longmans & Co., and from 1881 to 1897 he was a clergyman in orders. His writings are entirely upon historical and mythological topics, and are not lacking in interest and clarity of style.

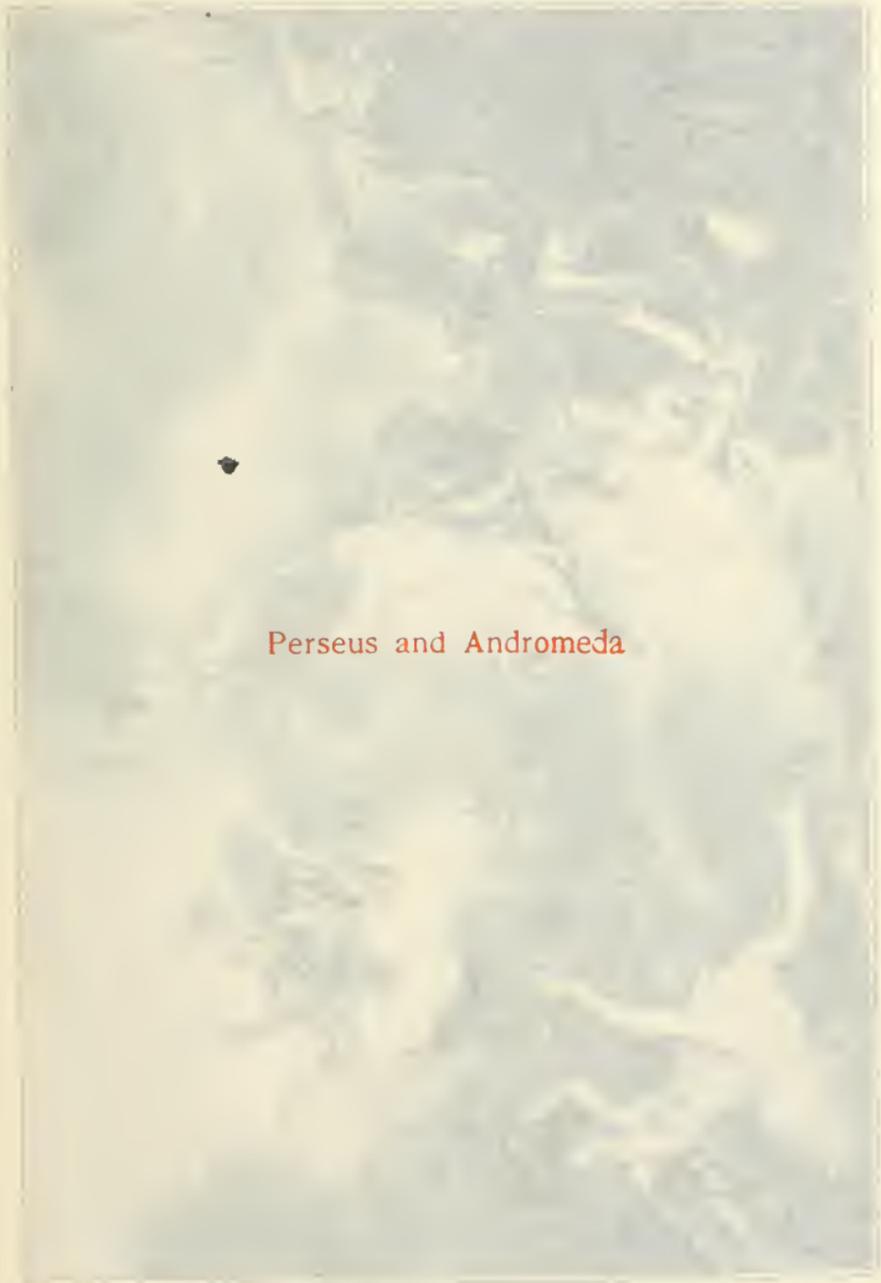
DEBERARD, FREDERICK B.: (For Biographical Note, see Vol. III, "Famous Tales of Heroism.")

KINGSLEY, CHARLES: (For Biographical Note, see Vol. X, "Famous Child Stories.")

MORRIS, WILLIAM: (For Biographical Note, see Vol. VIII, "The Æneid.")

EDITOR.

PERSEUS



Perseus and Andromeda

Peters and Williams



PERSEUS

Charles Kingsley

PART I

HOW PERSEUS AND HIS MOTHER CAME TO SERIPHOS

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ONCE upon a time there were two princes who were twins. Their names were Acrisius and Prætus, and they lived in the pleasant vale of Argos, far away in Hellas. They had fruitful meadows and vineyards, sheep and oxen, great herds of horses feeding down in Lerna Fen, and all that men could need to make them blest; and yet they were wretched, because they were jealous of each other. From the moment they were born they began to quarrel; and when they grew up, each tried to take away the other's share of the kingdom, and keep all for himself. So, first Acrisius drove out Prætus; and he went across the seas, and brought home a foreign princess for his wife, and foreign warriors to help him, who were called Cyclopes; and drove out Acrisius in his turn; and then they fought a long while up and down the land, till the quarrel was settled; and Acrisius took Argos and one-half the land, and Prætus took Tiryns and the other half. And Prætus and his Cyclopes built around Tiryns great walls of unhewn stone, which are standing to this day.

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

But there came a prophet to that hard-hearted Acrisius, and prophesied against him, and said: "Because you have risen up against your own blood, your own blood shall rise up against you; because you have sinned against your kindred, by your kindred you shall be punished. Your daughter Danae shall bear a son, and by that son's hand you shall die. So the gods have ordained, and it will surely come to pass."

And at that, Acrisius was very much afraid; but he did not mend his ways. He had been cruel to his own family; and, instead of repenting and being kind to them, he went on to be more cruel than ever; for he shut up his fair daughter Danae in a cavern underground, lined with brass, that no one might come near her. So he fancied himself more cunning than the gods; but you will see presently whether he was able to escape them.

Now it came to pass that in time Danae bore a son; so beautiful a babe that any but King Acrisius would have had pity on it. But he had no pity. For he took Danae and her babe down to the seashore, and put them into a great chest, and thrust them out to sea, for the winds and the waves to carry them whithersoever they would.

The northwest wind blew freshly out of the blue mountains, and down the pleasant vale of Argos, and away and out to sea. And away and out to sea before it floated the mother and her babe, while all who watched them wept, save that cruel father, King Acrisius.

So they floated on and on, and the chest danced up and down upon the billows, and the baby slept upon its mother's breast; but the poor mother could not sleep, but watched and wept, and she sang to her baby as they floated; and the song which she sang you shall learn yourselves some day.

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And now they are past the last blue headland, and in the open sea; and there is nothing round them but the waves, and the sky, and the wind. But the waves are gentle, and the sky is clear, and the breeze is tender and low; for these are the days when Halcyone and Ceyx build their nests, and no storms ever ruffle the pleasant summer sea.

And who were Halcyone and Ceyx? You shall hear while the chest floats on. Halcyone was a fairy maiden, the daughter of the beach and of the wind. And she loved a sailor boy, and married him, and none on earth were so happy as they. But at last Ceyx was wrecked; and before he could swim to the shore, the billows swallowed him up. And Halcyone saw him drowning, and leapt into the sea to him; but in vain. Then the Immortals took pity on them both, and changed them into two fair sea-birds; and now they build a floating nest every year, and sail up and down happily forever, upon the pleasant seas of Greece.

So a night passed and a day; and a long day it was for Danae; and another night and day beside, till Danae was faint with hunger and weeping, and yet no land appeared. And all the while the babe slept quietly; and at last poor Danae dropped her head and fell asleep likewise, with her cheek against her babe's.

After a while she awakened suddenly; for the chest was jarring and grinding, and the air was full of sound. She looked up, and over her head were mighty cliffs, all red in the setting sun, and around her rocks and breakers, and flying flakes of foam. She clasped her hands together, and shrieked aloud for help. And when she cried, help met her; for now there came over the rocks a tall and stately man, and looking down wondering upon poor Danae tossing about in the chest among the waves.

He wore a rough cloak of frieze, and on his head

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a broad hat to shade his face; in his hand he carried a trident for spearing fish, and over his shoulder was a casting-net; but Danae could see that he was no common man by his stature, and his walk, and his flowing golden hair and beard; and by the two servants who came behind him, carrying baskets for his fish. But she had hardly time to look at him, before he had laid aside his trident, and leapt down the rocks, and thrown his casting-net so surely over Danae and the chest, that he drew it, and her, and the baby, safe upon a ledge of rock.

Then the fisherman took Danae by the hand, and lifted her out of the chest, and said:

"O beautiful damsel, what strange chance has brought you to this island in so frail a ship? Who are you, and whence? Surely you are some king's daughter; and this boy has somewhat more than mortal."

And as he spoke, he pointed to the babe; for its face shone like the morning star.

But Danae only held down her head, and sobbed out:

"Tell me to what land I have come, unhappy that I am; and among what men I have fallen?"

And he said: "This isle is called Seriphos, and I am a Hellen, and dwell in it. I am the brother of Polydectes, the king; and men call me Dictys the netter, because I catch the fish of the shore."

Then Danae fell down at his feet, and embraced his knees, and cried:

"Oh, Sir, have pity upon a stranger, whom a cruel doom has driven to your land; and let me live in your house as a servant; but treat me honorably, for I was once a king's daughter, and this my boy (as you have truly said) is of no common race. I will not be a charge to you, or eat the bread of idleness; for I am

PERSEUS.

more skillful in weaving the embroidery than all the maidens of my land."

And she was going on; but Dictys stopped her, and raised her up, and said:

"My daughter, I am old, and my hairs are growing gray; while I have no children to make my home cheerful. Come with me, then, and you shall be a daughter to me and to my wife, and this babe shall be our grandchild. For I fear the gods, and show hospitality to all strangers; knowing that good deeds, like evil ones, always return to those who do them."

So Danae was comforted, and went home with Dictys, the good fisherman, and was a daughter to him and to his wife, till fifteen years were past.

PART II

HOW PERSEUS VOWED A RASH VOW

Fifteen years were past and gone, and the babe was now grown to be a tall lad and a sailor, and went many voyages after merchandise to the islands round. His mother called him Perseus; but all the people in Seriphos said that he was not the son of mortal man, and called him the son of Zeus, the king of the Immortals. For though he was but fifteen, he was taller by a head than any man in the island; and he was the most skillful of all in running and wrestling and boxing, and in throwing the quoit and the javelin, and in rowing with the oar, and in playing on the harp, and in all which befits a man. And he was brave and truthful, gentle and courteous, for good old Dictys had trained him well; and well it was for Perseus that he had done so. For now Danae

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and her son fell into great danger, and Perseus had need of all his wit to defend his mother and himself.

I said that Dictys's brother was Polydectes, king of the island. He was not a righteous man, like Dictys; but greedy, and cunning, and cruel. And when he saw fair Danae, he wanted to marry her. But she would not; for she did not love him, and cared for no one but her boy, and her boy's father, whom she never hoped to see again. At last Polydectes became furious; and while Perseus was away at sea, he took poor Danae away from Dictys, saying, "If you will not be my wife, you shall be my slave." So Danae was made a slave, and had to fetch water from the well, and grind in the mill, and perhaps was beaten, and wore a heavy chain, because she would not marry that cruel king. But Perseus was far away over the seas in the isle of Samos, little thinking how his mother was languishing in grief.

Now one day at Samos, while the ship was lading, Perseus wandered into a pleasant wood to get out of the sun, and sat down on the turf, and fell asleep. And as he slept a strange dream came to him; the strangest dream which he had ever had in his life.

There came a lady to him through the wood, taller than he, or any mortal man; but beautiful exceedingly, with great gray eyes, clear and piercing, but strangely soft and mild. On her head was a helmet, and in her hand a spear. And over her shoulder, above her long blue robes, hung a goatskin, which bore up a mighty shield of brass, polished like a mirror. She stood and looked at him with her clear gray eyes; and Perseus saw that her eyelids never moved, nor her eyeballs, but looked straight through and through him, and into his very heart, as if she could see all the secrets of his soul, and knew all that he had ever thought or longed for since the day that he was born.

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And Perseus dropped his eyes, trembling and blushing, as the wonderful lady spoke.

"Perseus, you must do an errand for me."

"Who are you, lady? And how do you know my name?"

"I am Pallas Athené; and I know the thoughts of all men's hearts, and discern their manhood or their baseness. And from the souls of clay I turn away; and they are blest, but not by me. They fatten at ease, like sheep in the pasture, and eat what they did not sow, like oxen in the stall. They grow and spread, like the gourd along the ground; but like the gourd, they give no shade to the traveller; and when they are ripe death gathers them, and they go down unloved into hell, and their name vanishes out of the land.

"But to the souls of fire I give more fire, and to those who are manful I give a might more than man's. These are the heroes, the sons of the Immortals, who are blest, but not like the souls of clay. For I drive them forth by strange paths, Perseus, that they may fight the Titans and the monsters, the enemies of Gods and men. Through doubt and need, danger and battle, I drive them; and some of them are slain in the flower of youth, no man knows when or where, and some of them win noble names, and a fair and green old age; but what will be their latter end I know not, and none, save Zeus, the father of Gods and men. Tell me now, Perseus, which of these two sorts of men seem to you more blest?"

Then Perseus answered, boldly: "Better to die in the flower of youth, on the chance of winning a noble name, than to live at ease, like the sheep, and die unloved and unrenowned."

Then that strange lady laughed, and held up her brazen shield, and cried: "See here, Perseus; dare you

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face such a monster as this, and slay it, that I may place its head upon this shield?"

And in the mirror of the shield there appeared a face, and as Perseus looked on it his blood ran cold. It was the face of a beautiful woman; but her cheeks were pale as death, and her brows were knit with everlasting pain, and her lips were thin and bitter like a snake's; and instead of hair, vipers wreathed about her temples, and shot out their forked tongues; while round her head were folded wings like an eagle's, and upon her bosom claws of brass.

And Perseus looked awhile, and then said: "If there is any thing so fierce and foul on earth, it were a noble deed to kill it. Where can I find the monster?"

Then the strange lady smiled again, and said: "Not yet; you are too young, and too unskilled; for this is Medusa the Gorgon, the mother of a monstrous brood. Return to your home, and do the work which waits there for you. You must play the man in that before I can think you worthy to go in search of the Gorgon."

Then Perseus would have spoken, but the strange lady vanished, and he awoke; and behold, it was a dream. But day and night Perseus saw before him the face of that dreadful woman, with the vipers writhing round her head.

So he returned home; and when he came to Seriphos, the first thing which he heard was that his mother was a slave in the house of Polydectes.

Grinding his teeth with rage, he went out, and away to the king's palace, and through the men's rooms, and the women's rooms, and so through all the house (for no one dared to stop him, so terrible and fair was he), till he found his mother sitting on the floor, turning the stone hand-mill, and weeping as she turned it. And he lifted her up, and kissed her, and bade her follow him forth. But before they could pass out of

PERSEUS.

the room, Polydectes came in raging. And when Perseus saw him, he flew upon him as the mastiff flies on the boar. "Villain and tyrant!" he cried; "is this your respect for the Gods, and thy mercy to strangers and widows? You shall die!" And because he had no sword, he caught up the stone hand-mill, and he lifted it to dash out Polydectes's brains.

But his mother clung to him, shrieking, "Oh my son, we are strangers, and helpless in the land; and if you kill the king, all the people will fall on us, and we shall both die."

Good Dictys, too, who had come in, entreated him. "Remember that he is my brother. Remember how I have brought you up, and trained you as my own son, and spare him for my sake."

Then Perseus lowered his hand; and Polydectes, who had been trembling all this while like a coward, because he knew that he was in the wrong, let Perseus and his mother pass.

Perseus took his mother to the temple of Athené, and there the priestess made her one of the temple-sweepers; for there they knew she would be safe, and not even Polydectes would dare to drag her away from the altar. And there Perseus, and the good Dictys, and his wife, came to visit her every day; while Polydectes, not being able to get what he wanted by force, cast about in his wicked heart how he might get it by cunning.

Now he was sure that he could never get back Danae as long as Perseus was in the island; so he made a plot to rid himself of him. And first he pretended to have forgiven Perseus, and to have forgotten Danae; so that, for a while, all went as smoothly as ever.

Next he proclaimed a great feast, and invited to it all the chiefs, and land-owners, and the young men of

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

the island, and among them Perseus, that they might all do him homage as their king, and eat of his banquet in his hall.

On the appointed day they all came; and, as the custom was then, each guest brought his present with him to the king; one a horse, another a shawl, or a ring, or a sword; and those who had nothing better brought a basket of grapes, or of game; but Perseus brought nothing, for he had nothing to bring, being but a poor sailor-lad.

He was ashamed, however, to go into the king's presence without his gift, and he was too proud to ask Dictys to lend him one. So he stood at the door sorrowfully, watching the rich men go in; and his face grew very red as they pointed at him, and smiled, and whispered, "What has that foundling to give?"

Now, this was what Polydectes wanted; and as soon as he heard that Perseus stood without, he bade them bring him in, and asked him scornfully before them all,—“Am I not your king, Perseus, and have I not invited you to my feast? Where is your present, then?”

Perseus blushed and stammered, while all the proud men round laughed, and some of them began jeering him openly. “This fellow was thrown ashore here like a piece of weed or drift wood, and yet he is too proud to bring a gift to the king.”

“And though he does not know who his father is, he is vain enough to let the old women call him the son of Zeus.”

And so forth, till poor Perseus grew mad with shame, and, hardly knowing what he said, cried out,—“A present! who are you who talk of presents? See if I do not bring a nobler one than all of yours together!”

So said he, boasting; and yet he felt in his heart

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that he was braver than all those scoffers, and more able to do some glorious deed,

"Hear him! Hear the boaster! What is it to be?" cried they all, laughing louder than ever.

Then his dream at Samos came into his mind, and he cried aloud, "The head of the Gorgon!"

He was half afraid after he had said these words; for all laughed louder than ever, and Polydectes loudest of all.

"You have promised to bring me the Gorgon's head? Then never appear again in this island without it. Go!"

Perseus ground his teeth with rage, for he saw that he had fallen into a trap; but his promise lay upon him, and he went out without a word.

Down to the cliffs he went, and looked across the broad, blue sea; and he wondered if his dream were true, and prayed in the bitterness of his soul.

"Pallas Athené, was my dream true? and shall I slay the Gorgon? If thou didst really show me her face, let me not come to shame as a liar and boastful. Rashly and angrily I promised; but cunningly and patiently will I perform."

But there was no answer, nor sign; neither thunder nor any appearance; not even a cloud in the sky.

And three times Perseus called weeping, "Rashly and angrily I promised; but cunningly and patiently will I perform."

Then he saw afar off, above the sea, a small white cloud, as bright as silver. And it came on, nearer and nearer, till its brightness dazzled his eyes.

Perseus wondered at that strange cloud, for there was no other cloud all round the sky; and he trembled as it touched the cliff below. And as it touched, it broke and parted, and within it appeared Pallas Athené, as he had seen her at Samos in his dream, and beside her a young man more light-limbed than the stag, whose

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eyes were like sparks of fire. By his side was a scimitar of diamond, all of one clear precious stone, and on his feet were golden sandals, from the heels of which grew living wings.

They looked upon Perseus keenly, and yet they never moved their eyes; and they came up the cliffs towards him more swiftly than the sea-gull, and yet they never moved their feet, nor did the breeze stir the robes about their limbs; only the wings of the youth's sandals quivered, like a hawk's when he hangs above the cliff. And Perseus fell down and worshipped, for he knew that they were more than man.

But Athené stood before him and spoke gently, and bid him have no fear. Then—

"Perseus," she said, "he who overcomes in one trial merits thereby a sharper trial still. You have braved Polydectes, and done manfully. Dare you brave Medusa the Gorgon?"

And Perseus said, "Try me; for since you spoke to me in Samos, a new soul has come into my breast, and I should be ashamed not to dare anything which I can do. Show me, then, how I can do this."

"Perseus," said Athené, "think well before you attempt; for this deed requires a seven years' journey, in which you cannot repent or turn back, nor escape; but if your heart fails you, you must die in the unshapen land, where no man will ever find your bones."

"Better so than live here, useless and despised," said Perseus. "Tell me, then, oh tell me, fair and wise Goddess, of your great kindness and condescension, how I can do but this one thing, and then, if need be, die!"

Then Athené smiled, and said,—

"Be patient and listen; for if you forget my words, you will indeed die. You must go northward to the country of the Hyperboreans, who live beyond the

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pole, at the sources of the cold north wind; till you find the three Grey Sisters, who have but one eye and one tooth between them. You must ask them the way to the Nymphs, the daughters of the Evening Star, who dance about the golden tree, in the Atlantic island of the west. They will tell you the way to the Gorgon, that you may slay her, my enemy, the mother of monstrous beasts. Once she was a maiden as beautiful as morn, till in her pride she sinned a sin at which the sun hid his face; and from that day her hair was turned to vipers, and her hands to eagle's claws; and her heart was filled with shame and rage, and her lips with bitter venom; and her eyes became so terrible that whosoever looks on them is turned to stone; and her children are the winged horse, and the giant of the golden sword; and her grandchildren are Echidna, the witch-adder, and Geryon, the three-headed tyrant, who feeds his herds beside the herds of hell. So she became the sister of the Gorgons, Stheino and Euryte the abhorred, the daughters of the Queen of the Sea. Touch them not, for they are immortal; but bring me only Medusa's head."

"And I will bring it!" said Perseus; "but how am I to escape her eyes? Will she not freeze me, too, into stone?"

"You shall take this polished shield," said Athené; "and when you come near her look not at her herself, but at her image in the brass; so you may strike her safely. And when you have struck off her head, wrap it, with your face turned away, in the folds of the goat-skin, on which the shield hangs, the hide of Amaltheié, the nurse of the Ægis-holder. So you will bring it safely back to me, and win to yourself renown and a place among the heroes who feast with the Immortals upon the peak where no winds blow."

Then Perseus said, "I will go, though I die in going."

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But how shall I cross the seas without a ship? And who will show me my way? And when I find her, how shall I slay her, if her scales be iron and brass?"

Then the young man spoke: "These sandals of mine will bear you across the seas, and over hill and dale like a bird, as they bear me all day long; for I am Hermes, the far-famed Argus-slayer, the messenger of the Immortals who dwell on Olympus."

Then Perseus fell down and worshipped, while the young man spoke again.

"The sandals themselves will guide you on the road, for they are divine and cannot stray; and this sword itself, the Argus-slayer, will kill her, for it is divine, and needs no second stroke. Arise, and gird them on, and go forth."

So Perseus arose, and girded on the sandals and the sword.

And Athené cried, "Now leap from the cliff, and be gone."

But Perseus lingered.

"May I not bid farewell to my mother and to Dictys? And may I not offer burnt-offerings to you, and to Hermes, the far-famed Argus-slayer, and to father Zeus above?"

"You shall not bid farewell to your mother, lest your heart relent at her weeping. I will comfort her and Dictys until your return in peace. Nor shall you offer burnt-offerings to the Olympians; for your offerings shall be Medusa's head. Leap, and trust in the armor of the Immortals."

Then Perseus looked down the cliff and shuddered; but he was ashamed to show his dread. Then he thought of Medusa and the renown before him, and he leaped into the empty air.

And behold, instead of falling, he floated, and stood, and ran along the sky. He looked back, but Athené

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had vanished, and Hermes; and the sandals led him on northward ever, like a crane who follows the spring toward the Ister fens.

PART III

HOW PERSEUS SLEW THE GORGON

So Perseus started on his journey, going dry-shod over land and sea; and his heart was high and joyful, for the winged sandals bore him each day a seven-day's journey.

And he went by Cythnus, and by Ceos, and the pleasant Cyclades to Attica, and past Athens, and Thebes, and the Copaic lake, and up the vale of Cephissus, and past the peaks of \AA eta and Pindus, and over the rich Thessalian plains, till the sunny hills of Greece were behind him, and before him were the wilds of the north. Then he passed the Thracian mountains, and many a barbarous tribe, Pæons, and Dardans, and Triballi, till he came to the Ister stream, and the dreary Scythian plains. And he walked across the Ister dry-shod, and away through the moors and fens, day and night, toward the bleak northwest, turning neither to the right hand nor the left, till he came to the Unshapen Land, and the place which has no name.

And seven days he walked through it, on a path which few can tell; for those who have trodden it like least to speak of it, and those who go there again in dreams are glad enough when they awake; till he came to the edge of the everlasting night, where the air was full of feathers, and the soil was hard with ice; and there at last he found the three Grey Sisters, by the shore of the freezing sea, nodding upon a white log of

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drift-wood, beneath the cold white winter moon, and they chanted a low song together, "Why the old times were better than the new."

There was no living thing around them, not a fly, not a moss upon the rocks. Neither seal nor sea-gull dare come near, lest the ice should clutch them in its claws. The surge broke up in foam, but it fell again in flakes of snow, and it frosted the hair of the three Grey Sisters, and the bones in the ice-cliff above their heads. They passed the eye from one to the other, but for all that they could not see; and they passed the tooth from one to the other, but for all that they could not eat; and they sat in the full glare of the moon, but they were none the warmer for her beams. And Perseus pitied the three Grey Sisters, but they did not pity themselves.

So he said, "Oh venerable mothers, wisdom is the daughter of old age. You therefore should know many things. Tell me, if you can, the path to the Gorgon."

Then one cried, "Who is this who reproaches us with old age?" And another, "This is the voice of one of the children of men."

And he, "I do not reproach, but honor your old age, and I am one of the sons of men and of the heroes. The rulers of Olympus have sent me to you to ask the way to the Gorgon."

Then one—"There are new rulers in Olympus, and all new things are bad." And another—"We hate your rulers, and the heroes, and all the children of men. We are the kindred of the Titans, and the Giants, and the Gorgons, and the ancient monsters of the deep." And another—"Who is this rash and insolent man who pushes unbidden into our world?" And the first—"There never was such a world as ours, nor will be; if we let him see it, he will spoil it all."

Then one cried, "Give me the eye, that I may see

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him;" and another, "Give me the tooth, that I may bite him." But Perseus, when he saw that they were foolish and proud, and did not love the children of men, left off pitying them, and said to himself, "Hungry men must needs be hasty; if I stay making many words here, I shall be starved." Then he stepped close to them, and watched till they passed the eye from hand to hand. And as they groped about between themselves, he held out his own hand gently, till one of them put the eye into it, fancying that it was the hand of her sister. Then he sprang back, and laughed, and cried—

"Cruel and proud old women, I have your eye; and I will throw it into the sea, unless you tell me the path to the Gorgon, and swear to me that you tell me right."

Then they wept, and chattered, and scolded; but in vain. They were forced to tell the truth, though when they told it, Perseus could hardly make out the road.

"You must go," they said, "foolish boy, to the southward, into the ugly glare of the sun, till you come to Atlas the Giant, who holds the heaven and the earth apart. And you must ask his daughters, the Hesperides, who are young and foolish like yourself. And now give us back our eye; for we have forgotten all the rest."

So Perseus gave them back their eye; but instead of using it, they nodded and fell fast asleep, and were turned into blocks of ice, till the tide came up and washed them all away. And now they float up and down like icebergs forever, weeping whenever they meet the sunshine, and the fruitful summer, and the warm south wind, which fill young hearts with joy.

But Perseus leaped away to the southward, leaving the snow and the ice behind; past the isle of the Hyperboreans, and the tin isles, and the long Iberian

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shore; while the sun rose higher day by day upon a bright blue summer sea. And the terns and the sea-gulls swept laughing round his head, and called to him to stop and play, and the dolphins gambolled up as he passed, and offered to carry him on their backs. And all night long the sea-nymphs sang sweetly, and the Tritons blew upon their conchs, as they played round Galatæa, their queen, in her car of pearled shells. Day by day the sun rose higher, and leaped more swiftly into the sea at night, and more swiftly out of the sea at dawn; while Perseus skimmed over the billows like a sea-gull, and his feet were never wetted; and leapt on from wave to wave, and his limbs were never weary, till he saw far away a mighty mountain, all rose-red in the setting sun. Its feet were wrapped in forests, and its head in wreaths of cloud; and Perseus knew that it was Atlas, who holds the heavens and the earth apart.

He came to the mountain, and leapt on shore, and wandered upward among the pleasant valleys and waterfalls, and the tall trees and strange ferns and flowers; but there was no smoke rising from any glen, nor house, nor sign of man.

At last he heard sweet voices singing; and he guessed that he was come to the garden of the Nymphs, the daughters of the Evening Star.

They sang like nightingales among the thickets, and Perseus stopped to hear their song; but the words which they spoke he could not understand; no, nor no man after him for many a hundred years. So he stepped forward and saw them dancing hand in hand around the charmed tree, which bent under its golden fruit; and round the tree-foot was coiled the dragon, old Ladon, the sleepless snake, who lies there forever, listening to the song of the maidens, blinking and watching with dry, bright eyes.

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Then Perseus stopped, not because he feared the dragon, but because he was bashful before those fair maids; but when they saw him, they, too, stopped, and called to him with trembling voices,—

“Who are you? Are you Heracles the mighty, who will come to rob our garden, and carry off our golden fruit?” And he answered,

“I am not Heracles the mighty, and I want none of your golden fruit. Tell me, fair nymphs, the way which leads to the Gorgon, that I may go on my way and slay her.”

“Not yet, not yet, fair boy; come dance with us around the tree, in the garden which knows no winter, the home of the south wind and the sun. Come hither and play with us awhile; we have danced alone here for a thousand years, and our hearts are weary with longing for a play-fellow. So come, come, come!”

“I cannot dance with you, fair maidens, for I must do the errand of the Immortals. So tell me the way to the Gorgon, lest I wander and perish in the waves.”

Then they sighed and wept; and answered:

“The Gorgon! she will freeze you into stone.”

“It is better to die like a hero than to live like an ox in a stall. The Immortals have lent me weapons, and they will give me wit to use them.”

Then they sighed again, and answered: “Fair boy, if you are bent on your own ruin, be it so. We know not the way to the Gorgon; but we will ask the giant Atlas, above upon the mountain peak, the brother of our father, the Silver Evening star. He sits aloft, and sees across the ocean, and far away into the Unshapen Land.”

So they went up the mountain to Atlas, their uncle, and Perseus went up with them. And they found the giant kneeling, as he held the heavens and the earth apart.

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They asked him, and he answered mildly, pointing to the sea-board with his mighty hand: "I can see the Gorgons lying on an island far away, but this youth can never come near them, unless he has the hat of darkness, which whosoever wears cannot be seen."

Then cried Perseus, "Where is that hat, that I may find it?"

But the giant smiled. "No living mortal can find that hat, for it lies in the depths of Hades, in the regions of the dead. But my nieces are immortal, and they shall fetch it for you, if you will promise me one thing and keep your faith."

Then Perseus promised; and the giant said: "When you come back with the head of Medusa, you shall show me the beautiful horror; that I may lose my feeling and my breathing, and become a stone forever; for it is weary labor for me to hold the heavens and the earth apart."

Then Perseus promised; and the eldest of the nymphs went down, and into a dark cavern among the cliffs, out of which came smoke and thunder, for it was one of the mouths of Hell.

And Perseus and the nymphs sat down seven days, and waited trembling, till the nymph came up again; and her face was pale, and her eyes dazzled with the light, for she had been long in the dreary darkness; but in her hand was the magic hat.

Then all the nymphs kissed Perseus, and wept over him a long while; but he was only impatient to be gone. And at last they put the hat upon his head, and he vanished out of their sight.

But Perseus went on boldly, past many an ugly sight, far away into the heart of the Unshapen Land, beyond the streams of Ocean, to the isles where no ship cruises, where is neither night nor day, where nothing is in its right place, and nothing has a name; till he

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heard the rustle of the Gorgons' wings, and saw the glitter of their brazen talons; and then he knew that it was time to halt, lest Medusa should freeze him into stone.

He thought awhile with himself, and remembered Athené's words. He rose aloft into the air, and held the mirror of the shield above his head, and looked up into it that he might see all that was below him.

And he saw the three Gorgons sleeping, as huge as elephants. He knew that they could not see him, because the hat of darkness hid him; and yet he trembled as he sank down near them, so terrible were those brazen claws.

Two of the Gorgons were fowl as swine, and lay sleeping heavily, as swine sleep, with their mighty wings outspread; but Medusa tossed to and fro restlessly, and as she tossed, Perseus pitied her, she looked so fair and sad. Her plumage was like that of the rainbow, and her face was like the face of a nymph, only her eyebrows were knit, and her lips clenched, with everlasting care and pain; and her long neck gleamed so white in the mirror, that Perseus had not the heart to strike, and said: "Ah, that it had been either of her sisters!"

But as he looked, from among her tresses the viper's heads awoke, and peeped up with their bright, dry eyes, and showed their fangs and hissed; and Medusa, as she tossed, threw back her wings, and showed her brazen claws; and Perseus saw that, for all her beauty, she was as foul and venomous as the rest.

Then he came down and stepped to her boldly, and looked steadfastly on his mirror, and struck with Herpé stoutly once; and he did not need to strike again. Then he wrapped the head in the goatskin, turning away his eyes, and sprang into the air aloft, faster than he ever sprang before.

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For Medusa's wings and talons rattled as she sank dead upon the rocks; and her two foul sisters woke, and saw her lying dead.

Into the air they sprang yelling, and looked for him who had done the deed. Thrice they swung round, like hawks who beat for a partridge; and thrice they snuffed round and round, like the hounds who draw upon a deer. At last they struck upon the scent of the blood, and they checked for a moment to make sure; and then on they rushed with a fearful howl, while the wind rattled hoarse in their wings.

On they rushed, sweeping and flapping, like eagles after a hare; and Perseus's blood ran cold, for all his courage, as he saw them come howling on his track; and he cried: "Bear me well, now, brave sandals, for the hounds of death are at my heels."

And well the brave sandals bore him, aloft through cloud and sunshine, across the shoreless sea; and fast followed the hounds of Death, as the roar of their wings came down the wind. But the roar came down fainter and fainter, and the howl of their voices died away; for the sandals were too swift, even for Gorgons, and by nightfall they were far behind, two black specks in the southern sky, till the sun sank and he saw them no more.

Then he came again to Atlas, and the garden of the nymphs; and when the giant heard him coming, he groaned, and said: "Fulfill thy promise to me." Then Perseus held up to him the Gorgon's head, and he had rest from all his toil; for he became a crag of stone, which sleeps forever far above the clouds.

Then he thanked the nymphs, and asked them: "By what road shall I go homeward again, for I wandered far round in coming hither!"

And they wept and cried: "Go home no more, but

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stay and play with us, the lonely maidens, who dwell forever far away from gods and men."

But he refused, and they told him his road and said: "Take with you this magic fruit, which, if you eat at once, you will not hunger for seven days. For you must go eastward and eastward ever, over the doleful Lybian shore, which Poseidon gave to Father Zeus, when he first burst open the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, and drowned the fair Lectonian land. And Zeus took that land in exchange, and a fair bargain, much bad ground for a little good, and to this day it lies waste and desert, with shingle, and rock, and sand."

Then they kissed Perseus, and wept over him, and he leapt down the mountain, and went on, lessening and lessening like a sea-gull, away and out to sea.

PART IV

HOW PERSEUS CAME TO THE ÆTHIOPS

So Perseus flitted onward to the northeast over many a league of sea, till he came to the rolling sand-hills, and the dreary Lybian shore.

And he flitted on across the desert, over rock-ledges, and banks of shingle, and level wastes of sand, and shell-drifts bleaching in the sunshine, and the skeletons of great sea-monsters, and dead bones of ancient giants, strewn up and down upon the old sea-floor. And as he went, the blood-drops fell to the earth from the Gorgon's head, and became poisonous asps and adders, which breed in the desert to this day.

Over the sands he went, he never knew how far or how long, feeding on the fruit which the nymphs had given him, till he saw the hills of the Psylli, and the dwarfs who fought with cranes. Their spears were

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of reeds and rushes, and their houses of the egg-shells of the cranes; and Perseus laughed, and went his way to the northeast, hoping all day long to see the blue Mediterranean sparkling, that he might fly across it to his home.

But now came down a mighty wind, and swept him back southward toward the desert. All day long he strove against it; but even the winged sandals could not prevail. So he was forced to float down the wind all night, and when the morning dawned there was nothing to be seen, save the same old hateful waste of sand.

And out of the north the sandstorms rushed upon him, blood-red pillars and wreaths, blotting out the noonday sun; and Perseus fled before them, lest he should be choked by the burning dust. At last the gale fell calm, and he tried to go northward again; but again came down the sandstorms, and swept him back into the waste, and then all was calm and cloudless as before. Seven days he strove against the storms, and seven days he was driven back, till he was spent with thirst and hunger, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Here and there he fancied that he saw a fair lake, and the sunbeams shining on the water; but when he came to it, it vanished at his feet, and there was naught but burning sand. And if he had not been of the race of the Immortals, he would have perished in the waste; but his life was strong within him, because it was more than man's.

Then he cried to Athené, and said,—

“Oh, fair and pure, if thou hearest me, wilt thou leave me here to die of drought? I have brought thee the Gorgon's head at thy bidding, and hitherto thou hast prospered my journey; dost thou desert me at the last? Else why will not these immortal sandals prevail, even against the desert storms? Shall I never see

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my mother more, and the blue ripple round Seriphos, and the sunny hills of Hellas?"

So he prayed; and after he had prayed there was a great silence.

The heaven was still above his head, and the sand was still beneath his feet; and Perseus looked up, but there was nothing but the blinding sun in the blinding blue; and round him there was nothing but the blinding sand.

And Perseus stood still awhile, and waited, and said—"Surely I am not here without the will of the Immortals, for Athené will not lie. Were not these sandals to lead me in the right road? Then the road in which I have tried to go must be a wrong road."

Then suddenly his ears were opened, and he heard the sound of running water.

And at that his heart was lifted up, though he scarcely dared believe his ears; and weary as he was, he hurried forward, though he could scarcely stand upright; and within a bowshot of him was a glen in the sand, and marble rocks, and date-trees, and a lawn of gay green grass. And through the lawn a streamlet sparkled and wandered out beyond the trees, and vanished in the sand.

The water trickled among the rocks, and a pleasant breeze rustled in the dry date-branches; and Perseus laughed for joy, and leapt down the cliff, and drank of the cool water, and ate of the dates, and slept upon the turf, and leapt up and went forward again; but not toward the north this time; for he said—"Surely Athené has sent me hither, and will not have me go homeward yet. What, if there be another noble deed to be done, before I see the sunny hills of Hellas?"

So he went east, and east forever, by fresh oases and fountains, date-palms, and lawns of grass, till he

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saw before him a mighty mountain-wall, all rose-red in the setting sun.

Then he towered in the air like an eagle, for his limbs were strong again; and he flew all night across the mountain till the day began to dawn, and rosy-fingered Eos came blushing up the sky. And then, behold, beneath him was the long, green garden of Egypt, and the shining stream of Nile.

And he saw cities walled up to heaven, and temples, and obelisks, and pyramids, and giant Gods of stone. And he came down amid fields of barley, and flax, and millet, and clambering gourds; and saw the people coming out of the gates of a great city, and setting to work, each in his place, among the water-courses, parting the streams among the plants cunningly with their feet, according to the wisdom of the Egyptians. But when they saw him they all stopped their work, and gathered round him, and cried,—

“Who art thou, fair youth? and what bearest thou beneath thy goat-skin there? Surely thou art one of the Immortals; for thy skin is white like ivory, and ours is red like clay. Thy hair is like threads of gold, and ours is black and curled. Surely thou art one of the Immortals;”—and they would have worshipped him then and there, but Perseus said,—

“I am not one of the Immortals; but I am a hero of the Hellens. And I have slain the Gorgon in the wilderness, and bear her head with me. Give me food, therefore, that I may go forward and finish my work.”

Then they gave him food, and fruit, and wine; but they would not let him go. And when the news came into the city that the Gorgon was slain, the priests came out to meet him, and the maidens, with songs and dances, and timbrels and harps; and they would have brought him to their temple and to their king;

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but Perseus put on the hat of darkness, and vanished away out of their sight.

Therefore the Egyptians looked long for his return, but in vain, and worshipped him as a hero, and made a statue of him in Chemmis, which stood for many a hundred years; and they said that he appeared to them at times, with sandals a cubic long; and that whenever he appeared the season was fruitful, and the Nile rose high that year.

Then Perseus went to the eastward, along the Red Sea shore; and then, because he was afraid to go into the Arabian deserts, he turned northward once more, and this time no storm hindered him.

He went past the Isthmus, and Mount Casius, and the vast Serbonian bog, and up the shore of Palestine, where the dark-faced Æthiops dwelt.

He flew on past pleasant hills and valleys, like Argos itself, or Lacedæmon, or the fair Vale of Tempe. But the lowlands were all drowned by floods, and the highlands blasted by fire, and the hills heaved like a bubbling cauldron, before the wrath of King Poseidon, the shaker of the earth.

And Perseus feared to go inland, but flew along the shore above the sea; and he went on all the day, and the sky was black with smoke; and he went on all night, and the sky was red with flame.

And at the dawn of day he looked toward the cliffs; and at the water's edge, under a black rock, he saw a white image stand.

"This," thought he, "must surely be the statue of some sea-God; I will go near and see what kind of Gods these barbarians worship."

So he came near; but when he came, it was no statue, but a maiden of flesh and blood; for he could see her tresses streaming in the breeze; and as he came closer

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still, he could see how she shrank and shivered, when the waves sprinkled her with cold salt spray. Her arms were spread above her head, and fastened to the rock with chains of brass; and her head drooped on her bosom, either with sleep, or weariness, or grief. But now and then she looked up and wailed, and called her mother; yet she did not see Perseus, for the cap of darkness was on his head.

Full of pity and indignation, Perseus drew near and looked upon the maid. Her cheeks were darker than his were, and her hair was blue-black like a hyacinth; but Perseus thought—"I have never seen so beautiful a maiden; no, not in all our Isles. Surely, she is a king's daughter. Do barbarians treat their king's daughters thus? She is too fair, at least, to have done any wrong. I will speak to her."

And lifting the hat from his head, he flashed into her sight. She shrieked with terror, and tried to hide her face with her hair, for she could not with her hands; but Perseus cried,—

"Do not fear me, fair one; I am a Hellen, and no barbarian. What cruel men have bound you? But first I will set you free."

And he tore at the fetters; but they were too strong for him; while the maiden cried,—

"Touch me not; I am accursed, devoted as a victim to the sea-Gods. They will slay you, if you dare to set me free."

"Let them try," said Perseus; and drawing Herpé from his thigh, he cut through the brass as if it had been flax.

"Now," he said, "you belong to me, and not to these sea-Gods, whosoever they may be!" But she only called the more on her mother.

"Why call on your mother? She can be no mother to have left you. If a bird is dropped out of the nest, it

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belongs to the man who picks it up. If a jewel is cast by the wayside, it is his who dare win it and wear it, as I will win you and will wear you. I know now why Pallas Athené sent me hither. She sent me to gain a prize worth all my toil, and more."

And he clasped her in his arms, and cried—"Where are these sea-Gods, cruel and unjust, who doom fair maids to death? I carry the weapons of Immortals. Let them measure their strength against mine! But tell me, maiden, who you are, and what dark fate brought you here."

And she answered, weeping—

"I am the daughter of Cepheus, King of Iopa, and my mother is Cassiopœia of the beautiful tresses, and they called me Andromeda, as long as life was mine. And I stand bound here, hapless that I am, for the sea-monster's food, to atone for my mother's sin. For she boasted of me once, that I was fairer than Atergatis, Queen of the Fishes; so she in her wrath sent the sea-floods, and her brother the Fire King sent the earthquakes, and wasted all the land; and after the floods a monster bred of the slime, who devours all living things. And now he must devour me, guiltless though I am—me who never harmed a living thing, nor saw a fish upon the shore but I gave it life, and threw it back into the sea; for in our land we eat no fish, for fear of Atergatis their Queen. Yet the priests say that nothing but my blood can atone for a sin which I never committed."

But Perseus laughed, and said—"A sea-monster? I have fought with worse than him; I would have faced Immortals for your sake; how much more a beast of the sea?"

Then Andromeda looked up at him, and new hope was kindled in her breast, so proud and fair did he stand with one hand round her, and in the other the

glittering sword. But she only sighed, and wept the more, and cried,—

“Why will you die, young as you are? Is there not death and sorrow enough in the world already? It is noble for me to die, that I may save the lives of a whole people; but you, better than them all, why should I slay you, too? Go you your way; I must go mine.”

But Perseus cried—“Not so; for the Lords of Olympus, whom I serve, are the friends of the heroes, and help them on to noble deeds. Led by them I slew the Gorgon, the beautiful horror; and not without them do I come hither to slay this monster with that same Gorgon’s head. Yet hide your eyes when I leave you, lest the sight of it freeze you, too, to stone.”

But the maiden answered nothing, for she could not believe his words. And then, suddenly looking up, she pointed to the sea, and shrieked,—

“There he comes, with the sunrise, as they promised. I must die now. How shall I endure it? Oh, go! Is it not dreadful enough to be torn piecemeal without having you to look on?” And she tried to thrust him away.

But he said—“I go; yet promise me one thing ere I go; that if I slay this beast you will be my wife, and come back with me to my kingdom in fruitful Argos, for I am a king’s heir. Promise me, and seal it with a kiss.”

Then she lifted up her face, and kissed him; and Perseus laughed for joy, and flew upward, while Andromeda crouched trembling on the rock, waiting for what might befall.

On came the great sea-monster, coasting along like a huge, black galley, lazily breasting the ripple, and stopping at times by creek or headland, to watch for the laughter of girls at their bleaching, or cattle paw-

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ing on the sand-hills, or boys bathing on the beach. His great sides were fringed with clustering shells and sea-weeds, and the water gurgled in and out of his wide jaws, as he rolled along, dripping and glistening, in the beams of the morning sun.

At last he saw Andromeda, and shot forward to take his prey, while the waves foamed white behind him, and before him the fish fled leaping.

Then down from the height of the air fell Perseus, like a shooting star; down to the crests of the waves, while Andromeda hid her face as he shouted; and then there was silence for a while.

At last she looked up trembling, and saw Perseus springing toward her; and instead of the monster a long, black rock, with the sea rippling quietly around it.

Who then so proud as Perseus, as he leapt back to the rock, and lifted his fair Andromeda in his arms, and flew with her to the cliff-top, as a falcon carries a dove?

Who so proud as Perseus, and who so joyful as all the Æthiop people? For they had stood watching the monster from the cliffs, wailing for the maiden's fate. And already a messenger had gone to Cepheus and Cassiopœia, where they sat in sackcloth and ashes on the ground, in the innermost palace chambers, awaiting their daughter's end. And they came, and all the city with them, to see the wonder, with songs and with dances, with cymbals and harps, and received their daughter back again, as one alive from the dead.

Then Cepheus said—"Hero of the Hellens, stay here with me and be my son-in-law, and I will give you half of my kingdom."

"I will be your son-in-law," said Perseus, "but of your kingdom I will have none; for I long after the pleasant land of Greece, and my mother who waits for me at home."

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Then Cepheus said—"You must not take my daughter away at once, for she is to us like one alive from the dead. Stay with us here a year, and after that you shall return with honor." And Perseus consented; but before he went to the palace, he bade the people bring stones and wood, and built three altars, one to Athené, and one to Hermes, and one to Father Zeus, and offered bullocks and rams.

And some said—"This is a pious man:" yet the priests said—"The Sea Queen will be yet more fierce against us, because her monster is slain." But they were afraid to speak aloud, for they feared the Gorgon's head. So they went up to the palace; and when they came in, there stood in the hall Phineus, the brother of Cepheus, chafing like a bear robbed of her whelps, and with him his sons, and his servants, and many an armed man; and he cried to Cepheus,—

"You shall not marry your daughter to this stranger, of whom no one knows even the name. Was not Andromeda betrothed to my son? And now she is safe again, has he not a right to claim her?"

But Perseus laughed and answered—"If your son is in want of a bride, let him save a maiden for himself. As yet he seems but a helpless bridegroom. He left this one to die, and dead she is to him. I saved her alive, and alive she is to me, but to no one else. Ungrateful man! have I not saved your land, and the lives of your sons and daughters, and will you requite me thus? Go, or it will be worse for you." But all the men-at-arms drew their swords, and rushed on him like wild beasts.

Then he unveiled the Gorgon's head, and said—"This has delivered my bride from one wild beast; it shall deliver her from many." And as he spoke, Phineus and all his men-at-arms stopped short, and stiffened each man as he stood; and before Perseus

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had drawn the goat-skin over the face again, they were all turned into stone.

Then Perseus bade the people bring levers and roll them out; and what was done with them after that, I cannot tell.

So they made a great wedding-feast, which lasted seven whole days, and who so happy as Perseus and Andromeda?

But on the eighth night, Perseus dreamed a dream; and he saw standing beside him Pallas Athené, as he had seen her in Seriphos, seven long years before; and she stood and called him by name, and said:—

“Perseus, you have played the man, and see, you have your reward. Know now that the Gods are just, and help him who helps himself. Now give me here Herpé the sword, and the sandals, and the hat of darkness, that I may give them back to their owners; but the Gorgon’s head you shall keep awhile, for you will need it in your land of Greece. Then you shall lay it up in my temple at Seriphos, that I may wear it on my shield forever, a terror to the Titans and the monsters, and the foes of Gods and men. And as for this land, I have appeased the sea and the fire, and there shall be no more floods nor earthquakes. But let the people build altars to Father Zeus and to me, and worship the Immortals, the Lords of heaven and earth.”

And Perseus rose to give her the sword, and the cap, and the sandals; but he woke, and his dream vanished away. And yet it was not altogether a dream; for the goat-skin with the head was in its place; but the sword, and the cap, and the sandals were gone, and Perseus never saw them more.

Then a great awe fell on Perseus; and he went out in the morning to the people, and told his dream, and bade them build altars to Zeus, the father of Gods and

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men, and to Athené, who gives wisdom to heroes; and fear no more the earthquakes and the floods, but sow and build in peace. And they did so for a while, and prospered; but after Perseus was gone, they forgot Zeus and Athené, and worshipped again Atergatis, the queen, and the undying fish of the sacred lake, where Deucalion's deluge was swallowed up, and they burnt their children before the Fire King, till Zeus was angry with that foolish people, and brought a strange nation against them out of Egypt, who fought against them and wasted them utterly, and dwelt in their cities for many a hundred years.

PART V

HOW PERSEUS CAME HOME AGAIN

And when a year was ended Perseus hired Phœnicians from Tyre, and cut down cedars, and built himself a noble galley; and painted its cheeks with vermillion, and pitched its sides with pitch; and in it he put Andromeda, and all her dowry of jewels, and rich shawls, and spices from the East; and great was the weeping when they rowed away. But the remembrance of his brave deed was left behind; and Andromeda's rock was shown at Jopa in Palestine, till more than a thousand years were past.

So Perseus and the Phœnicians rowed to the westward, across the sea of Crete, till they came to the blue Ægean and the pleasant Isles of Hellas, and Seriphos, his ancient home.

Then he left his galley on the beach, and went up as of old; and he embraced his mother, and Dictys: his good foster-father, and they wept over each other a

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long while, for it was seven years and more since they had met.

Then Perseus went out, and up to the hall of Polydectes; and underneath the goat-skin he bore the Gorgon's head.

And when he came into the hall, Polydectes sat at the table-head, and all his nobles and land-owners on either side, each according to his rank, feasting on the fish and the goat's-flesh, and drinking the blood-red wine. The harpers harped, and the revellers shouted, and the wine-cups rang merrily as they passed from hand to hand, and great was the noise in the hall of Polydectes.

Then Perseus stood upon the threshold, and called to the king by name. But none of the guests knew Perseus, for he was changed by his long journey. He had gone out a boy, and he was come home a hero; his eye shone like an eagle's and his beard was like a lion's beard, and he stood up like a wild bull in his pride.

But Polydectes the wicked knew him, and hardened his heart still more; and scornfully he called,—

“Ah, foundling! Have you found it more easy to promise than to fulfill?”

“Those whom the Gods help fulfill their promises; and those who despise them, reap as they have sown. Behold the Gorgon's head!”

Then Perseus drew back the goat-skin, and held aloft the Gorgon's head.

Pale grew Polydectes and his guests, as they looked upon that dreadful face. They tried to rise up from their seats; but from their seats they never rose, but stiffened, each man where he sat, into a ring of cold gray stones.

Then Perseus turned and left them, and went down to his galley in the bay; and he gave the kingdom to

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good Dictys, and sailed away with his mother and his bride.

And Polydectes and his guests sat still, with the wine-cups before them on the board; till the rafters crumbled down above their heads, and the walls behind their backs, and the table crumbled down between them and the grass sprung up about their feet; but Polydectes and his guests sit on the hill-side, a ring of gray stones, until this day.

But Perseus rowed westward toward Argos, and landed, and went up to the town. And when he came, he found that Acrisius, his grandfather, had fled.

For Prætus, his wicked brother, had made war against him afresh, and had come across the river from Tiryns, and conquered Argos, and Acrisius had fled to Larissa, in the country of the wild Pelasgi.

Then Perseus called the Argives together, and told them who he was, and all the noble deeds which he had done. And all the nobles and the yeomen made him king, for they saw that he had a royal heart; and they fought with him against Argos, and took it, and killed Prætus, and made the Cyclopes serve them, and build them walls round Argos, like the walls which they had built at Tiryns; and there were great rejoicings in the vale of Argos, because they had got a king from Father Zeus.

But Perseus's heart yearned after his grandfather, and he said, "Surely he is my flesh and blood; and he will love me now that I am come home with honor; I will go and find him, and bring him home, and we will reign together in peace."

So Perseus sailed away with his Phœnicians, round Hydreia and Sunium, past Marathon and the Attic shore, and through Euripus, and up the long Eubœan sea, till he came to the town of Larissa, where the wild Pelasgi dwelt.

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And when he came there, all the people were in the fields, and there was feasting, and all kinds of games; for Teutamenes, their king, wished to honor Acrisius, because he was the king of a mighty land.

So Perseus did not tell his name, but went up to the games unknown; for he said, "If I carry away the prize in the games, my grandfather's heart will be softened toward me."

So he threw off his helmet, and his cuirass, and all his clothes, and stood among the youths of Larissa, while all wondered at him, and said, "Who is this young stranger, who stands like a wild bull in his pride? Surely, he is one of the heroes, the sons of the Immortals, from Olympus."

And when the games began, they wondered yet more; for Perseus was the best man of all, at running, and leaping, and wrestling, and throwing the javelin; and he won four crowns, and took them, and then he said to himself, "There is a fifth crown yet to be won; I will win that, and lay them all upon the knees of my grandfather."

And as he spoke, he saw where Acrisius sat, by the side of Teutamenes, the king, with his white beard flowing down upon his knees, and his royal staff in his hand; and Perseus wept when he looked at him, for his heart yearned after his kin; and he said, "Surely he is a kingly old man, yet he need not be ashamed of his grandson."

Then he took the quoits, and hurled them five fathoms beyond all the rest; and the people shouted, "Further yet, brave stranger! There has never been such a hurler in this land."

Then Perseus put out all his strength, and hurled. But a gust of wind came from the sea, and carried the quoit aside, and far beyond all the rest; and it fell on

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the foot of Acrisius, and he swooned away with the pain.

Perseus shrieked, and ran up to him; but when they lifted the old man up, he was dead; for his life was slow and feeble.

Then Perseus rent his clothes, and cast dust upon his head, and wept a long while for his grandfather. At last he rose, and called to all the people aloud, and said,—

“The Gods are true, and what they have ordained must be. I am Perseus, the grandson of this dead man, the far-famed slayer of the Gorgon.”

Then he told them how the prophecy had declared that he should kill his grandfather, and all the story of his life.

So they made a great mourning for Acrisius, and burnt him on a right rich pile; and Perseus went to the temple, and was purified from the guilt of the death, because he had done it unknowingly.

Then he went home to Argos and reigned there well with fair Andromeda; and they had four sons and three daughters, and died in good old age.

And when they died, the ancients say, Athené took them up into the sky, with Cepheus and Cassiopœia. And there on starlight nights you may see them shining still; Cepheus with his kingly crown, and Cassiopœia in her ivory chair, plaiting her star-spangled tresses, and Perseus with the Gorgon's head, and fair Andromeda beside him, spreading her long white arms across the heaven, as she stood when chained to the stone for the monster. All night long they shine, for a beacon to wandering sailors; but all day they feast with the Gods, on the still blue peaks of Olympus.

THE ARGONAUTS

Vol. 17-4

THE ARGONAUTS

Charles Kingsley

PART I

HOW THE CENTAUR TRAINED THE HEROES ON PELION

I HAVE told you of a hero who fought with wild beasts and with wild men; but now I have a tale of heroes who sailed away into a distant land to win themselves renown forever, in the adventure of the Golden Fleece.

Whither they sailed, my children, I cannot clearly tell. It all happened long ago; so long that it has all grown dim, like a dream which you dreamt last year. And why they went, I cannot tell; some say that it was to win gold. It may be so; but the noblest deeds which have been done on earth, have not been done for gold. It was not for the sake of gold that the Lord came down and died, and the Apostles went out to preach the good news in all lands. The Spartans looked for no reward in money when they fought and died at Thermopylæ; and Socrates the wise asked no pay from his countrymen, but lived poor and barefoot all his days, only caring to make men good. And there are heroes in our days also, who do noble deeds, but not for gold. Our discoverers did not go to make themselves rich, when they sailed out one after another

into the dreary frozen seas; nor did the ladies, who went out last year, to drudge in the hospitals of the East, making themselves poor, that they might be rich in noble works. And young men, too, whom you know, children, and some of them of your own kin, did they say to themselves, "How much money shall I earn?" when they went out to the war, leaving wealth, and comfort, and a pleasant home, and all that money can give, to face hunger and thirst, and wounds and death, that they might fight for their country and their Queen? No, children, there is a better thing on earth than wealth, a better thing than life itself; and that is, to have done something before you die, for which good men may honor you, and God your Father smile upon your work.

Therefore, we will believe—why should we not?—of these same Argonauts of old, that they too were noble men, who planned and did a noble deed; and that therefore their fame has lived, and been told in story and in song, mixed up, no doubt, with dreams and fables, and yet true and right at heart. So we will honor these old Argonauts, and listen to their story as it stands; and we will try to be like them, each of us in our place; for each of us has a Golden Fleece to seek, and a wild sea to sail over, ere we reach it, and dragons to fight ere it be ours.

And what was that first Golden Fleece? I do not know, nor care. The old Hellenes said that it hung in Colchis, which we call the Circassian coast, nailed to a beech-tree in the War-God's wood; and that it was the fleece of the wondrous ram, who bore Phrixus and Helle cross the Euxine sea. For Phrixus and Helle were the children of the cloud-nymph, and of Athamas the Minuan king. And when a famine came upon the land, their cruel step-mother, Ino, wished to kill them, that her own children might reign, and said

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that they must be sacrificed on an altar, to turn away the anger of the gods. So the poor children were brought to the altar, and the priest stood ready with his knife, when out of the clouds came the Golden Ram, and took them on his back, and vanished. Then madness came upon that foolish king Athamas, and ruin upon Ino and her children. For Athamas killed one of them in his fury, and Ino fled from him with the other in her arms, and leaped from a cliff into the sea, and was changed into a dolphin, such as you have seen, which wanders over the waves forever sighing, with its little one clasped to its breast.

But the people drove out King Athamas, because he had killed his child; and he roamed about in his misery, till he came to the Oracle in Delphi. And the Oracle told him that he must wander for his sin, till the wild beasts should feast him as their guest. So he went on in hunger and sorrow for many a weary day, till he saw a pack of wolves. The wolves were tearing a sheep; but when they saw Athamas they fled, and left the sheep for him, and he ate of it; and then he knew that the oracle was fulfilled at last. So he wandered no more; but settled, and built a town, and became a king again.

But the ram carried the two children far away over land and sea, till he came to the Thracian Chersonese, and there Helle fell into the sea. So those narrow straits are called "Hellespont," after her, and they bear that name until this day.

Then the ram flew on with Phrixus to the northeast across the sea which we call the Black Sea now; but the Hellens called it Euxine. And at last, they say, he stopped at Colchis, on the steep Circassian coast; and there Phrixus married Chalchlope, the daughter of Aietes the king, and offered the ram in sacrifice, and

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Aietes nailed the ram's fleece to a beech, in the grove of Ares, the War-God.

And after awhile Phrixus died, and was buried, but his spirit had no rest; for he was buried far from his native land, and the pleasant hills of Hellas. So he came in dreams to the heroes of the Minuai, and called sadly by their beds,—“Come and set my spirit free, that I may go home to my fathers and to my kinsfolk, and the pleasant Minuan land.”

And they asked—“How shall we set your spirit free?”

“You must sail over the sea to Colchis, and bring home the golden fleece, and then my spirit will come back with it, and I shall sleep with my fathers and have rest.”

He came thus, and called to them often; but when they woke they looked at each other, and said—“Who dare sail to Colchis, or bring home the golden fleece?” And in all the country none was brave enough to try it; for the man and the time were not come.

Phrixus had a cousin called Æson, who was king in Iolcos by the sea. There he ruled over the rich Minuan heroes, as Athamas, his uncle, ruled in Bœotia; and, like Athamas, he was an unhappy man. For he had a step-brother named Pelias, of whom some said that he was a nymph's son, and there were dark and sad tales about his birth. When he was a babe he was cast out on the mountains, and a wild mare came by and kicked him. But a shepherd passing found the baby, with its face all blackened by the blow, and took him home, and called him Pelias, because his face was bruised and black. And he grew up fierce and lawless, and did many a fearful deed, and at last he drove out Æson, his step-brother, and then his own brother Neleus, and took the kingdom to himself, and ruled over the rich Minuan heroes, in Iolcos by the sea.

And Æson, when he was driven out, went sadly away

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out of the town, leading his little son by the hand, and he said to himself, "I must hide the child in the mountains; or Pelias will surely kill him, because he is the heir."

So he went up from the sea across the valley, through the vineyards and olive groves, and across the torrent of Anauros, toward Pelion, the ancient mountain, whose brows are white with snow.

He went up and up into the mountain, over marsh, and crag, and down, till the boy was tired and foot-sore, and Æson had to bear him in his arms, till he came to the mouth of a lonely cave, at the foot of a mighty cliff.

Above the cliff the snow wreaths hung, dripping and cracking in the sun; but at its foot around the cave's mouth grew all fair flowers and herbs, as if in a garden, ranged in order, each sort by itself. There they grew gayly in the sunshine, and the spray of the torrent from above; while from the cave came the sound of music, and a man's voice singing to the harp.

Then Æson put down the lad, and whispered,—

"Fear not, but go in, and whomsoever you shall find, lay your hands upon his knees, and say, 'In the name of Zeus, the father of gods and men, I am your guest from this day forth.'"

Then the lad went in without trembling, for he too was a hero's son; but when he was within, he stopped in wonder, to listen to that magic song.

And there he saw the singer lying upon bear-skins and fragrant boughs; Cheiron, the ancient centaur, the wisest of all things beneath the sky. Down to the waist he was a man; but below he was a noble horse; his white hair rolled down over his broad shoulders, and his white beard over his broad brown chest; and his eyes were wise and mild, and his forehead like a mountain-wall.

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And in his hands he held a harp of gold, and struck it with a golden key; and as he struck, he sang till his eyes glittered, and filled all the cave with light.

And he sang of the birth of Time, and of the heavens and the dancing stars; and of the ocean, and the ether, and the fire, and the shaping of the wondrous earth. And he sang of the treasures of the hills, and the hidden jewels of the mine, and the veins of fire and metal, and the virtues of all healing herbs, and of the speech of birds, and of prophecy, and of hidden things to come.

Then he sang of health, and strength, and manhood, and a valiant heart; and of music, and hunting, and wrestling, and all the games which heroes love; and of travel, and wars, and sieges, and a noble death in fight; and then he sang of peace and plenty, and of equal justice in the land; and as he sang, the boy listened wide-eyed, and forgot his errand in the song.

And at the last old Cheiron was silent, and called the lad with a soft voice.

And the lad ran trembling to him, and would have laid his hands upon his knees; but Cheiron smiled, and said, "Call hither your father Æson, for I know you, and all that has befallen, and saw you both afar in the valley, even before you left the town."

Then Æson came in sadly, and Cheiron asked him, "Why camest you not yourself to me, Æson the Æolid?"

And Æson said,—

"I thought, Cheiron will pity the lad if he sees him come alone; and I wished to try whether he was fearless, and dare venture like a hero's son. But now I entreat you by Father Zeus, let the boy be your guest till better times, and train him among the sons of the heroes, that he may avenge his father's house."

Then Cheiron smiled, and drew the lad to him, and laid his hand upon his golden locks, and said, "Are

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you afraid of my horse's hoofs, fair boy, or will you be my pupil from this day?"

"I would gladly have horse's hoofs like you, if I could sing such songs as yours."

And Cheiron laughed, and said, "Sit here by me till sundown, when your playfellows will come home, and you shall learn like them to be a king, worthy to rule over gallant men."

Then he turned to Æson, and said, "Go back in peace, and bend before the storm like a prudent man. This boy shall not cross the Anauros again, till he has become a glory to you and to the house of Æolus."

And Æson wept over his son and went away; but the boy did not weep, so full was his fancy of that strange cave, and the Centaur, and his song, and the playfellows whom he was to see.

Then Cheiron put the lyre into his hands, and taught him how to play it, till the sun sank low behind the cliff, and a shout was heard outside.

And then in came the sons of the heroes, Æneas, and Heracles, and Peleus, and many another mighty name.

And great Cheiron leapt up joyfully, and his hoofs made the cave resound, as they shouted, "Come out, Father Cheiron; come out and see our game." And one cried, "I have killed two deer," and another, "I took a wild cat among the crags;" and Heracles dragged a wild goat after him by its horns, for he was as huge as a mountain crag; and Cæneus carried a bear-cub under each arm, and laughed when they scratched and bit; for neither tooth nor steel could wound him.

And Cheiron praised them all, each according to his deserts.

Only one walked apart and silent, Asclepius, the too-wise child, with his bosom full of herbs and flowers, and round his wrist a spotted snake; he came with downcast eyes to Cheiron, and whispered how he had

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watched the snake cast his old skin, and grow young again before his eyes, and how he had gone down into a village in the vale, and cured a dying man with a herb which he had seen a sick goat eat.

And Cheiron smiled, and said, "To each Athené and Apollo give some gift, and each is worthy in his place; but to this child they have given an honor beyond all honors, to cure while others kill."

Then the lads brought in wood, and split it, and lighted a blazing fire; and others skinned the deer and quartered them, and set them to roast before the fire; and while the venison was cooking they bathed in the snow torrent, and washed away the dust and sweat.

And then all ate till they could eat no more (for they had tasted nothing since the dawn), and drank of the clear spring water, for wine is not fit for growing lads. And when the remnants were put away, they all lay down upon the skins and leaves about the fire, and each took the lyre in turn, and sang and played with all his heart.

And after awhile they all went out to a plot of grass at the cave's mouth, and there they boxed, and ran, and wrestled, and laughed till the stones fell from the cliffs.

Then Cheiron took his lyre, and all the lads joined hands; and as he played, they danced to his measure, in and out, and round and round. There they danced hand in hand, till the night fell over land and sea, while the black glen shone with their broad white limbs, and the gleam of their golden hair.

And the lad danced with them, delighted, and then slept a wholesome sleep, upon fragrant leaves of bay, and myrtle, and marjoram, and flowers of thyme; and rose at the dawn, and bathed in the torrent, and became a school-fellow to the heroes' sons, and forgot Ioclos, and his father, and all his former life. But he grew

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strong, and brave and cunning, upon the pleasant downs of Pelion, in the keen hungry mountain air. And he learnt to wrestle, and to box, and to hunt, and to play upon the harp; and next he learnt to ride, for old Cheiron used to mount him on his back; and he learnt the virtues of all herbs, and how to cure all wounds; and Cheiron called him Jason the healer, and that is his name until this day.

PART II

HOW JASON LOST HIS SANDAL IN ANAUROS

And ten years came and went, and Jason was grown to be a mighty man. Some of his fellows were gone, and some were growing up by his side. Asclepius was gone into Peloponnese, to work his wondrous cures on men; and some say he used to raise the dead to life. And Heracles was gone to Thebes, to fulfill those famous labors which have become a proverb among men. And Peleus had married a sea-nymph, and his wedding is famous to this day. And Æneas was gone home to Troy, and many a noble tale you will read of him, and of all other gallant heroes, the scholars of Cheiron the just. And it happened on a day that Jason stood on the mountain, and looked north and south and east and west; and Cheiron stood by him and watched him, for he knew that the time was come.

And Jason looked and saw the plains of Thessaly, where the Lapithai breed their horses; and the lake of Boibé, and the stream which runs northward to Peneus and Tempe; and he looked north, and saw the mountain wall which guards the Magnesian shore; Olympus, the seat of the Immortals, and Ossa, and

Pelion, where he stood. Then he looked east and saw the bright blue sea, which stretched away forever toward the dawn. Then he looked south, and saw a pleasant land, with white-walled towns and farms, nestling along the shore of a land-locked bay, while the smoke rose blue among the trees; and he knew it for the bay of Pagasai, and the rich lowlands of Hæmonia, and Iolcos by the sea.

Then he sighed, and asked: "Is it true what the heroes tell me, that I am heir of that fair land?"

"And what good would it be to you, Jason, if you were heir of that fair land?"

"I would take it and keep it."

"A strong man has taken it and kept it long. Are you stronger than Pelias the terrible?"

"I can try my strength with his," said Jason. But Cheiron sighed and said:—

"You have many a danger to go through before you rule in Iolcos by the sea; many a danger, and many a woe; and strange troubles in strange lands, such as man never saw before."

"The happier I," said Jason, "to see what man never saw before."

And Cheiron sighed again, and said: "The eaglet must leave the nest when it is fledged. Will you go to Iolcos by the sea? Then promise me two things before you go."

Jason promised, and Cheiron answered: "Speak harshly to no soul whom you may meet, and stand by the word which you shall speak."

Jason wondered why Cheiron asked this of him; but he knew that the Centaur was a prophet, and saw things long before they came. So he promised, and leaped down the mountain, to take his fortune like a man.

He went down through the arbutus thickets, and

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across the downs of thyme, till he came to the vineyard walls, and the pomegranates and the olives in the glen; and among the olives roared Anauros, all foaming with a summer flood.

And on the bank of Anauros sat a woman, all wrinkled, gray, and old; her head shook palsied on her breast, and her hands shook palsied on her knees; and when she saw Jason, she spoke whining: "Who will carry me across the flood?"

Jason was bold and hasty, and was just going to leap into the flood; and yet he thought twice before he leaped, so loud roared the torrent down, all brown from the mountain rains, and silver-veined with melting snow; while underneath he could hear the boulders rumbling like the tramp of horsemen or the roll of wheels, as they ground along the narrow channel, and shook the rocks on which they stood.

But the old woman whined all the more: "I am weak and old, fair youth. For Hera's sake, carry me over the torrent."

And Jason was going to answer her scornfully, when Cheiron's words came to his mind.

So he said: "For Hera's sake, the Queen of the Immortals on Olympus, I will carry you over the torrent, unless we are both drowned midway."

Then the old dame leapt upon his back, as nimbly as a goat; and Jason staggered in, wondering; and the first step was up to his knees.

The first step was up to his knees; and the second step was up to his waist; and the stones rolled about his feet, and his feet slipped about the stones; so he went on staggering and panting, while the old woman cried from off his back:—

"Fool, you have wet my mantle! Do you make game of poor old souls like me?"

Jason had half a mind to drop her, and let her get

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through the torrent by herself; but Cheiron's words were in his mind, and he said only: "Patience, mother; the best horse may stumble some day."

At last he staggered to the shore, and set her down upon the bank; and a strong man he needed to have been, or that wild water he never would have crossed.

He lay panting awhile upon the bank, and then leaped up to go upon his journey; but he cast one look at the old woman, for he thought, "She should thank me once at least."

And as he looked, she grew fairer than all women, and taller than all men on earth; and her garments shone like the summer sea, and her jewels like the stars of heaven; and over her forehead was a veil, woven of the golden clouds of sunset; and through the veil she looked down on him, with great, soft heifer's eyes: with great eyes, mild and awful, which filled all the glen with light.

And Jason fell upon his knees, and hid his face between his hands.

And she spoke—"I am the Queen of Olympus, Hera, the wife of Zeus. As thou hast done to me, so will I do to thee. Call on me in the hour of need, and try if the Immortals can forget."

And when Jason looked up, she rose from off the earth, like a pillar of tall white cloud, and floated away across the mountain peaks, toward Olympus, the holy hill.

Then a great fear fell on Jason; but after a while he grew light of heart; and he blessed old Cheiron, and said—"Surely the Centaur is a prophet, and guessed what would come to pass, when he bade me speak harshly to no soul whom I might meet."

Then he went down toward Iolcos, and as he walked he found that he had lost one of his sandals in the flood.

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And as he went through the streets, the people came out to look at him, so tall and fair was he; but some of the elders whispered together; and at last one of them stopped Jason and called to him—"Fair lad, who are you, and whence come you; and what is your errand in the town?"

"My name, good father, is Jason, and I come from Pelion up above; and my errand is to Pelias, your king; tell me, then, where his palace is."

But the old man started, and grew pale, and said, "Do you not know the oracle, my son, that you go so boldly through the town, with but one sandal on?"

"I am a stranger here, and know of no oracle; but what of my one sandal? I lost the other in Anauros, while I was struggling with the flood."

Then the old man looked back to his companions; and one sighed and another smiled; at last he said—"I will tell you, lest you rush upon your ruin unawares. The oracle in Delphi has said, that a man wearing one sandal should take the kingdom from Pelias, and keep it for himself. Therefore beware how you go up to his palace, for he is the fiercest and most cunning of all kings."

Then Jason laughed a great laugh, like a warhorse in his pride—"Good news, good father, both for you and me. For that very end I came into the town."

Then he strode on toward the palace of Pelias, while all the people wondered at his bearing.

And he stood in the doorway and cried, "Come out, come out, Pelias the valiant, and fight for your kingdom like a man!"

Pelias came out wondering, and "Who are you, bold youth?" he cried.

"I am Jason, the son of Æson, the heir of all this land."

Then Pelias lifted up his hands and eyes, and wept,

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or seemed to weep; and blessed the heavens which had brought his nephew to him, never to leave him more. "For," said he, "I have but three daughters, and no son to be my heir. You shall be my heir, then, and rule the kingdom after me, and marry whichever of my daughters you shall choose; though a sad kingdom you will find it, and whosoever rules it a miserable man. But come in, come in, and feast."

So he drew Jason in, whether he would or not, and spoke to him so lovingly and feasted him so well, that Jason's anger passed; and after supper his three cousins came into the hall, and Jason thought that he should like well enough to have one of them for his wife.

But at last he said to Pelias, "Why do you look so sad, my uncle? And what did you mean just now, when you said that this was a doleful kingdom, and its ruler a miserable man?"

Then Pelias sighed heavily again and again and again, like a man who had to tell some dreadful story and was afraid to begin; but at last—

"For seven long years and more have I never known a quiet night; and no more will he who comes after me, till the golden fleece be brought home."

Then he told Jason the story of Phrixus, and of the golden fleece; and told him, too, which was a lie, that Phrixus's spirit tormented him, calling to him day and night. And his daughters came, and told the same tale (for their father had taught them their parts), and wept, and said, "Oh, who will bring home the golden fleece, that our uncle's spirit may have rest; and that we may have rest also, whom he never lets sleep in peace?"

Jason sat awhile, sad and silent; for he had often heard of that golden fleece; but he looked on it as a thing hopeless and impossible for any mortal man to win it.

But when Pelias saw him silent, he began to talk of other things, and courted Jason more and more, speaking to him as if he was certain to be his heir, and asking his advice about the kingdom; till Jason, who was young and simple, could not help saying to himself, "Surely he is not the dark man whom people call him. Yet why did he drive my father out?" And he asked Pelias boldly, "Men say that you are terrible, and a man of blood; but I find you a kind and hospitable man; and as you are to me, so will I be to you. Yet why did you drive my father out?"

Pelias smiled and sighed: "Men have slandered me in that, as in all things. Your father was growing old and weary, and he gave the kingdom up to me of his own will. You shall see him to-morrow, and ask him; and he will tell you the same."

Jason's heart leaped in him, when he heard that he was to see his father; and he believed all that Pelias said, forgetting that his father might not dare to tell the truth.

"One thing more there is," said Pelias, "on which I need your advice; for though you are young, I see in you a wisdom beyond your years. There is one neighbor of mine, whom I dread more than all men on earth. I am stronger than he now, and can command him; but I know that if he stay among us, he will work my ruin in the end. Can you give me a plan, Jason, by which I can rid myself of that man?"

After awhile, Jason answered, half laughing, "Were I you, I would send him to fetch that same golden fleece; for if he once set forth after it you would never be troubled with him more."

And at that a bitter smile came across Pelias's lips, and a flash of wicked joy into his eyes; and Jason saw it, and started; and over his mind came the warning of

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the old man, and his own one sandal, and the oracle, and he saw that he was taken in a trap.

But Pelias only answered gently, "My son, he shall be sent forthwith."

"You mean me?" cried Jason, starting up, "because I came here with one sandal!" And he lifted his fist angrily, while Pelias stood up to him like a wolf at bay; and whether of the two was the stronger and the fiercer, it would be hard to tell.

But after a moment Pelias spoke gently—"Why then so rash, my son? You, and not I, have said what is said; why blame me for what I have not done? Had you bid me love the man of whom I spoke, and make him my son-in-law and heir, I would have obeyed you; and what if I obey you now, and send the man to win himself immortal fame? I have not harmed you, or him. One thing at least I know, that he will go, and that gladly; for he has a hero's heart within him; loving glory, and scorning to break the word which he has given."

Jason saw that he was entrapped; but his second promise to Cheiron came into his mind, and he thought, "What if the Centaur were a prophet in that also, and meant that I should win the fleece!" Then he cried aloud,—

"You have well spoken, cunning uncle of mine! I love glory, and I dare keep to my word. I will go and fetch this golden fleece. Promise me but this in return, and keep your word as I keep mine. Treat my father lovingly while I am gone, for the sake of the all-seeing Zeus; and give me up the kingdom for my own, on the day that I bring back the golden fleece."

Then Pelias looked at him and almost loved him, in the midst of all his hate; and said, "I promise, and I will perform. It will be no shame to give up my kingdom to the man who wins that fleece."

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Then they swore a great oath between them; and afterwards both went in, and lay down to sleep.

But Jason could not sleep, for thinking of his mighty oath, and how he was to fulfill it, all alone, and without wealth or friends. So he tossed a long time upon his bed, and thought of this plan and of that; and sometimes Phrixus seemed to call him, in a thin voice, faint and low, as if it came from far across the sea—"Let me come home to my fathers and have rest." And sometimes he seemed to see the eyes of Hera, and to hear her words again,—“Call on me in the hour of need, and see if the Immortals can forget.”

And on the morrow he went to Pelias, and said, “Give me a victim, that I may sacrifice to Hera.” So he went up, and offered his sacrifice; and as he stood by the altar, Hera sent a thought into his mind; and he went back to Pelias, and said—

“If you are indeed in earnest, give me two heralds, that they may go round to all the princes of the Minuai, who were pupils of the Centaur with me, that we may fit out a ship together, and take what shall befall.”

At that Pelias praised his wisdom, and hastened to send the heralds out; for he said in his heart, “Let all the princes go with him, and like him, never return; for so I shall be lord of all the Minuai, and the greatest king in Hellas.”

PART III

HOW THEY BUILT THE SHIP ARGO IN IOLCOS

So the heralds went out, and cried to all the heroes of the Minuai, “Who dare come to the adventure of the golden fleece?”

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And Hera stirred the hearts of all the princes, and they came from all their valleys to the yellow sands of Pagasai. And first came Heracles the mighty, with his lion's skin and club, and behind him, Hylas his young squire, who bore his arrows and his bow; and Tiphys, the skillful steersman; and Butes, the fairest of all men; and Castor and Polydeuces the twins, the sons of the magic swan; and Caineus, the strongest of mortals, whom the Centaurs tried in vain to kill, and overwhelmed him with trunks of pine trees, but even so he would not die; and thither came Zetes and Calais, the winged sons of the north wind; and Peleus, the father of Achilles, whose bride was silver-footed Thetis the goddess of the sea. And thither came Telamon and Oileus, the fathers of the two Aiantes, who fought upon the plains of Troy; and Mopsus, the wise soothsayer, who knew the speech of birds; and Idmon, to whom Phœbus gave a tongue to prophesy of things to come; and Ancaios, who could read the stars, and knew all the circles of the heavens; and Argus, the famed ship-builder, and many a hero more, in helmets of brass and gold with tall dyed horse-hair crests, and embroidered shirts of linen beneath their coats of mail, and greaves of polished tin to guard their knees in fight; with each man his shield upon his shoulder, of many a fold of tough bull's hide, and his sword of tempered bronze in his silver-studded belt, and in his right hand a pair of lances, of the heavy white ash-staves.

So they came down to Iolcos, and all the city came out to meet them, and were never tired with looking at their height, and their beauty, and their gallant bearing, and the glitter of their inlaid arms. And some said, "Never was such a gathering of the heroes since the Hellens conquered the land." But the women sighed

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over them, and whispered, "Alas! they are all going to their death."

Then they felled the pines on Pelion, and shaped them with the axe, and Argus taught them to build a galley, the first long ship which ever sailed the seas. They pierced her for fifty oars, an oar for each hero of the crew, and pitched her with coal-black pitch, and painted her bows with vermillion; and they named her "Argo" after Argus, and worked at her all day long. And at night Pelias feasted them like a king, and they slept in his palace-porch.

But Jason went away to the northward, and into the land of Thrace, till he found Orpheus, the prince of minstrels, where he dwelt in his cave under Rhodope, among the savage Cicon tribes. And he asked him—"Will you leave your mountains, Orpheus, my fellow-scholar in old times, and cross Strymon once more with me, to sail with the heroes of the Minuai, and bring home the golden fleece, and charm for us all men and all monsters with your magic harp and song?"

Then Orpheus sighed—"Have I not had enough of toil and of weary wandering far and wide, since I lived in Cheiron's cave, above Iolcos by the sea? In vain is the skill and the voice which my goddess mother gave me; in vain have I sung and labored; in vain I went down to the dead, and charmed all the kings of Hades, to win back Eurydice, my bride. For I won her, my beloved, and lost her again the same day, and wandered away in my madness, even to Egypt and the Libyan sands, and the isles of all the seas, driven on by the terrible gadfly, while I charmed in vain the hearts of men, and the savage forest beasts, and the trees, and the lifeless stones, with my magic harp and song, giving rest, but finding none. But at last Calliope, my mother, delivered me, and brought me home in peace; and I dwell here in the cave alone among the savage

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Cicon tribes, softening their wild hearts with music and the gentle laws of Zeus. And now I must go out again to the ends of all the earth, far away into the misty darkness, to the last wave of the eastern sea. But what is doomed must be, and a friend's demand obeyed; for prayers are the daughters of Zeus, and who honors them honors him."

Then Orpheus rose up sighing, and took his harp, and went over Strymon. And he led Jason to the southwest, up the banks of Haliacmon and over the spurs of Pindus, to Dodona, the town of Zeus, where it stood by the side of the sacred lake, and the fountain which breathed out fire, in the darkness of the ancient oak wood, beneath the mountain of the hundred springs. And he led him to the holy oak, where the black dove settled in old times, and was changed into the priestess of Zeus, and gave oracles to all nations round. And he bade him cut down a bough, and sacrifice to Hera and to Zeus; and they took the bough and came to Iolcos, and nailed it to the beak-head of the ship.

And at last the ship was finished, and they tried to launch her down the beach; but she was too heavy for them to move her, and her keel sank deep in the sand. Then all the heroes looked at each other blushing; but Jason spoke, and said, "Let us ask the magic bough; perhaps it can help us in our need."

Then a voice came from the bough, and Jason heard the words it said, and bade Orpheus play upon the harp, while the heroes waited round, holding the pine-trunk rollers, to help her toward the sea.

Then Orpheus took his harp, and began his magic song: "How sweet it is to ride upon the surges, and to leap from wave to wave, while the wind sings cheerful in the cordage, and the oars flash fast among the foam! How sweet it is to roam across the ocean, and see new

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towns and wondrous lands, and to come home laden with treasure, and to win undying fame!"

And the good ship Argo heard him, and longed to be away and out at sea; till she stirred in every timber, and heaved from stem to stern, and leaped up from the sand upon the rollers, and plunged onward like a gallant horse; and the heroes fed her path with pine-trunks, till she rushed into the whispering sea.

Then they stored her well with food and water, and pulled the ladder up on board, and settled themselves each man to his oar, and kept time to Orpheus's harp; and away across the bay they rowed southward, while the people lined the cliffs; and the women wept while the men shouted, at the starting of that gallant crew.

PART IV

HOW THE ARGONAUTS SAILED TO COLCHIS

And what happened next, my children, whether it be true or not, stands written in ancient songs, which you shall read for yourselves some day. And grand old songs they are, written in grand old rolling verse; and they call them the songs of Orpheus, or the Orphics, to this day. And they tell how the heroes came to Aphetai, across the bay, and waited for the southwest wind, and chose themselves a captain from their crew; and how all called for Heracles, because he was the strongest and most huge; but Heracles refused, and called for Jason, because he was the wisest of them all. So Jason was chosen captain; and Orpheus heaped a pile of wood, and slew a bull, and offered it to Hera, and called all the heroes to stand round, each man's head crowned with olive, and to strike their swords into

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the bull. Then he filled a golden goblet with the bull's blood, and with wheaten flour, and honey, and wine, and the bitter salt sea-water, and bade the heroes taste. So each tasted the goblet, and passed it round, and vowed an awful vow: and they vowed before the sun, and the night, and the blue-haired sea who shakes the land, to stand by Jason faithfully, in the adventure of the golden fleece; and whosoever shrank back, or disobeyed, or turned traitor to his vow, then justice should witness against him, and the Erinnues who track guilty men.

Then Jason lighted the pile, and burnt the carcase of the bull; and they went to their ship and sailed eastward, like men who have a work to do; and the place from which they went was called Aphetai, the sailing-place, from that day forth. Three thousand years and more they sailed away, into the unknown eastern seas; and great nations have come and gone since then, and many a storm has swept the earth; and many a mighty armament, to which Argo would be but one small boat, English and French, Turkish and Russian, have sailed these waters since; yet the fame of that small Argo lives forever, and her name is become a proverb among men.

So they sailed past the Isle of Sciathos, with the Cape of Sepius on their left, and turned to the northward toward Pelion, up the long Magnesian shore. On their right hand was the open sea, and on their left old Pelion rose, while the clouds crawled round his dark pine-forests, and his caps of summer snow. And their hearts yearned for the dear old mountain, as they thought of pleasant days gone by, and of the sports of their boyhood, and their hunting, and their schooling in the cave beneath the cliff. And at last Peleus spoke—"Let us land here, friends, and climb the dear old hill once more. We are going on a fearful journey: who knows if we shall see Pelion again? Let us go up

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to Cheiron our master, and ask his blessing ere we start. And I have a boy, too, with him, whom he trains as he trained me once, the son whom Thetis brought me, the silver-footed lady of the sea, whom I caught in the cave, and tamed her, though she changed her shape seven times. For she changed, as I held her, into water, and to vapor, and to burning flame, and to a rock, and to a black-maned lion, and to a tall and stately tree. But I held her and held her ever, till she took her own shape again, and led her to my father's house, and won her for my bride. And all the rulers of Olympus came to our wedding, and the heavens and the earth rejoiced together, when an immortal wedded mortal man. And now let me see my son; for it is not often I shall see him upon earth: famous he will be, but short-lived, and die in the flower of youth."

So Tiphys, the helmsman, steered them to the shore under the crags of Pelion; and they went up through the dark pine-forests toward the Centaur's cave.

And they came into the misty hall, beneath the snow-crowned crag; and saw the great Centaur lying with his huge limbs spread upon the rock; and beside him stood Achilles, the child whom no steel could wound, and played upon his harp right sweetly, while Cheiron watched and smiled.

Then Cheiron leaped up and welcomed them, and kissed them every one, and set a feast before them, of swine's flesh, and venison, and good wine; and young Achilles served them, and carried the golden goblet round. And after supper all the heroes clapped their hands, and called on Orpheus to sing; but he refused, and said, "How can I, who am the younger, sing before our ancient host?" So they called on Cheiron to sing, and Achilles brought him his harp; and he began a wondrous song; a famous story of old time, of the fight

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between Centaurs and the Lapithai, which you may still see carved in stone.¹ He sang how his brothers came to ruin by their folly, when they were mad with wine; and how they and the heroes fought, with fists, and teeth, and the goblets from which they drank; and how they tore up the pine trees in their fury, and hurled great crags of stone, while the mountains thundered with the battle, and the land was wasted far and wide; till the Lapithai drove them from their home in the rich Thessalian plains to the lonely glens of Pindus, leaving Cheiron all alone. And the heroes praised his song right heartily; for some of them had helped in that great fight.

Then Orpheus took the lyre, and sang of Chaos, and the making of the wondrous World, and how all things sprang from Love, who could not live alone in the Abyss. And as he sang, his voice rose from the cave, above the crags, and through the tree-tops, and the glens of oak and pine. And the trees bowed their heads when they heard it, and the grey rocks cracked and rang, and the forest beasts crept near to listen, and the birds forsook their nests and hovered round. And old Cheiron clapped his hands together, and beat his hoofs upon the ground, for wonder at that magic song.

Then Peleus kissed his boy, and wept over him, and they went down to the ship; and Cheiron came down with them, weeping, and kissed them one by one, and blessed them, and promised to them great renown. And the heroes wept when they left him, till their great hearts could weep no more; for he was kind and just and pious, and wiser than all beasts and men. Then he went up to a cliff, and prayed for them, that they might come home safe and well; while the heroes rowed away, and watched him standing on his cliff above the sea, with his great hands raised toward

¹ In the Elgin Marbles.

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heaven, and his white locks waving in the wind; and they strained their eyes to watch him to the last, for they felt that they should look on him no more.

So they rowed on over the long swell of the sea, past Olympus, the seat of the immortals, and past the wooded bays of Athos, and Samothrace, the sacred isle; and they came past Lemnos to the Hellespont, and through the narrow strait of Abydos, and so on into the Propontis, which we call Marmora now. And there they met with Cyzicus, ruling in Asia over the Dolions, who, the songs say, was the son of Æneas, of whom you will hear many a tale some day. For Homer tells us how he fought at Troy; and Virgil how he sailed away and founded Rome; and men believed until late years that from him sprang our old British kings. Now Cyzicus, the songs say, welcomed the heroes; for his father had been one of Cheiron's scholars; so he welcomed them, and feasted them, and stored their ship with corn and wine, and cloaks and rugs, the songs say, and shirts, of which no doubt they stood in need.

But at night, while they lay sleeping, came down on them terrible men, who lived with the bears in the mountains, like Titans or giants in shape; for each of them had six arms, and they fought with young firs and pines. But Heracles killed them all before morn with his deadly poisoned arrows; but among them, in the darkness, he slew Cyzicus the kindly prince.

Then they got to their ship and to their oars, and Tiphys bade them cast off the hawsers, and go to sea. But as he spoke a whirlwind came, and spun the Argo round, and twisted the hawsers together, so that no man could loose them. Then Tiphys dropped the rudder from his hand, and cried, "This comes from the Gods above." But Jason went forward, and asked counsel of the magic bough.

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Then the magic bough spoke and answered.—“This is because you have slain Cyzicus, your friend. You must appease his soul, or you will never leave this shore.”

Jason went back sadly, and told the heroes what he had heard. And they leaped on shore, and searched till dawn; and at dawn they found the body, all rolled in dust and blood, among the corpses of those monstrous beasts. And they wept over their kind host, and laid him on a fair bed, and heaped a huge mound over him, and offered black sheep at his tomb, and Orpheus sang a magic song to him, that his spirit might have rest. And then they held games at the tomb, after the custom of those times, and Jason gave prizes to each winner. To Ancæus he gave a golden cup, for he wrestled best of all; and to Heracles a silver one, for he was the strongest of all; and to Castor, who rode best, a golden crest; and Polydeuces, the boxer, had a rich carpet, and to Orpheus for his song, a sandal with golden wings. But Jason himself was the best of all the archers, and the Minuai crowned him with an olive crown; and so, the songs say, the soul of good Cyzicus was appeased, and the heroes went on their way in peace.

But when Cyzicus's wife heard that he was dead, she died likewise of grief; and her tears became a fountain of clear water, which flows the whole year round.

Then they rowed away, the songs say, along the Mysian shore, and past the mouth of Rhindacus, till they found a pleasant bay, sheltered by the long ridges of Arganthus, and by high walls of basalt rock. And there they ran the ship ashore upon the yellow sand, and furled the sail, and took the mast down, and lashed it in its crutch. And next they let down the ladder, and went ashore to sport and rest.

And there Heracles went away into the woods, bow

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in hand, to hunt wild deer; and Hylas the fair boy slipped away after him, and followed him by stealth, until he lost himself among the glens, and sat down weary to rest himself by the side of a lake; and there the water nymphs came up to look at him, and loved him, and carried him down under the lake to be their playfellow, forever happy and young. And Heracles sought for him in vain, shouting his name till all the mountains rang; but Hylas never heard him, far down under the sparkling lake. So while Heracles wandered searching for him, a fair breeze sprang up, and Heracles was nowhere to be found; and the Argo sailed away, and Heracles was left behind, and never saw the noble Phasian stream.

Then the Minuai came to a doleful land, where Amycus the giant ruled, and cared nothing for the laws of Zeus, but challenged all strangers to box with him, and those whom he conquered he slew. But Polydeuces, the boxer, struck him a harder blow than he ever felt before, and slew him; and the Minuai went on up the Bosphorus, till they came to the city of Phineus, the fierce Bithynian king; for Zetes and Calais bade Jason land there, because they had a work to do.

And they went up from the shore toward the city, through forests white with snow; and Phineus came out to meet them with a lean and woeful face, and said, "Welcome, gallant heroes, to the land of bitter blasts, a land of cold and misery; yet I will feast you as best I can." And he led them in, and set meat before them; but before they could put their hands to their mouths, down came two fearful monsters, the like of whom man never saw; for they had the faces and the hair of fair maidens, but the wings and claws of hawks; and they snatched the meat from off the table, and flew shrieking out above the roofs.

Then Phineus beat his breast and cried, "Those are

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the Harpies, whose names are the Whirlwind and the Swift, the daughters of Wonder and of the Amber nymph, and they rob us night and day. They carried off the daughters of Pandareus, whom all the Gods had blessed; for Aphrodite fed them on Olympus with honey and milk and wine; and Hera gave them beauty and wisdom, and Athené skilled in all the arts; but when they came to their wedding, the Harpies snatched them both away, and gave them to be slaves to the Erinnues, and live in horror all their days. And now they haunt me, and my people, and the Bosphorus, with fearful storms; and sweep away our food from off our tables, so that we starve in spite of all our wealth."

Then up rose Zetes and Calais, the winged sons of the North-wind, and said, "Do you not know us, Phineus, and these wings which grow upon our backs?" And Phineus hid his face in terror; but he answered not a word.

"Because you have been a traitor, Phineus, the Harpies haunt you night and day. Where is Cleopatra our sister, your wife, whom you keep in prison? And where are her two children, whom you blinded in your rage, at the bidding of an evil woman, and cast them out upon the rocks? Swear to us that you will right our sister, and cast out that wicked woman; and then we will free you from your plague, and drive the whirlwind maidens from the south; but if not, we will put out your eyes, as you put out the eyes of your own sons."

Then Phineus swore an oath to them, and drove out the wicked woman; and Jason took those two poor children, and cured their eyes with magic herbs.

But Zetes and Calais rose up sadly, and said, "Farewell now, heroes all; farewell, our dear companions, with whom we played on Pelion in old times; for a fate is laid upon us, and our day is come at last, in

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which we may hunt the whirlwinds, over land and sea forever; and if we catch them they die, and if not, we die ourselves."

At that all the heroes wept; but the two young men sprang up, and aloft into the air after the Harpies, and the battle of the winds began.

The heroes trembled in silence as they heard the shrieking of the blasts; while the palace rocked and all the city, and great stones were torn from the crags, and the forest-pines were hurled eastward, north and south and east and west, and the Bosphorus boiled white with foam, and the clouds were dashed against the cliffs.

But at last the battle ended, and the Harpies fled screaming toward the south, and the sons of the North wind rushed after them, and brought clear sunshine where they passed. For many a league they followed them, over all the isles of the Cyclades, and away to the southwest across Hellas till they came to the Ionian sea, and there they fell upon the Echinades, at the mouth of the Achelous; and those isles were called the Whirlwind Isles for many a hundred years. But what became of Zetes and Calais I know not; for the heroes never saw them again: and some say that Heracles met them, and quarreled with them, and slew them with his arrows; and some say that they fell down from weariness and the heat of the summer sun, and that the Sun-god buried them among the Cyclades, in the pleasant Isle of Tenos; and for many hundred years their grave was shown there, and over it a pillar, which turned to every wind. But those dark storms and whirlwinds haunt the Bosphorus until this day.

But the Argonauts went eastward, and out into the open sea, which we now call the Black Sea, but it was called the Euxine then. No Hellen had ever crossed it and all feared that dreadful sea, and its rocks, and

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shoals, and fogs, and bitter freezing storms; and they told strange stories of it, some false and some half true, how it stretched northward to the ends of the earth, and the sluggish Putrid Sea, and the everlasting night, and the regions of the dead. So the heroes trembled, for all their courage, as they came into that wild Black Sea, and saw it stretching out before them, without a shore, as far as eye could see.

And first Orpheus spoke, and warned them,—“We shall come now to the wandering blue rocks; my mother warned me of them, Calliope, the immortal muse.”

And soon they saw the blue rocks shining, like spires and castles of grey glass, while an ice-cold wind blew from them, and chilled all the heroes' hearts. And as they neared, they could see them heaving, as they rolled upon the long sea-waves, crashing and grinding together, till the roar went up to heaven. The sea sprang up in spouts between them, and swept round them in white sheets of foam; but their heads swung nodding high in air, while the wind whistled shrill among the crags.

The heroes' hearts sank within them, and they lay upon their oars in fear; but Orpheus called to Tiphys the helmsman—“Between them we must pass; so look ahead for an opening, and be brave, for Hera is with us.” But Tiphys the cunning helmsman stood silent, clenching his teeth, till he saw a heron come flying mast-high toward the rocks, and hover awhile before them, as if looking for a passage through. Then he cried, “Hera has sent us a pilot; let us follow the cunning bird.”

Then the heron flapped to and fro a moment, till he saw a hidden gap, and into it he rushed like an arrow, while the heroes watched what would befall.

And the blue rocks clashed together as the bird fled

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swiftly through; but they struck but a feather from his tail, and then rebounded apart at the shock.

Then Tiphys cheered the heroes, and they shouted; and the oars bent like withes beneath their strokes, as they rushed between those toppling ice-crag, and the cold blue lips of death. And ere the rocks could meet again they had passed them, and were safe out in the open sea.

And after that they had sailed on wearily along the Asian coast, by the Black Cape and Thyneis, where the hot stream of Thymbris falls into the sea, and Sangarius, whose waters float on the Euxine, till they came to Wolf the river, and to Wolf the kindly king. And there died two brave heroes, Idmon and Tiphys, the wise helmsman; one died of an evil sickness, and one a wild boar slew. So the heroes heaped a mound above them, and set upon it an oar on high, and left them there to sleep together, on the far-off Lycian shore. But Idas killed the boar, and avenged Tiphys; and Ancaios took the rudder and was helmsman, and steered them on toward the east.

And they went on past Sinope, and many a mighty river's mouth, and past many a barbarous tribe, and the cities of the Amazons, the warlike women of the East, till all night they heard the clank of anvils and the roar of furnace-blasts, and the forge-fires shone like sparks through the darkness, in the mountain glens aloft; for they were come to the shores of the Chalybes, the smiths who never tire, but serve Ares the cruel War-god, forging weapons day and night.

And at day-dawn they looked eastward, and midway between the sea and the sky they saw white snow-peaks hanging, glittering sharp and bright above the clouds. And they knew that they were come to Caucasus, at the end of all the earth; Caucasus the highest of all mountains, the father of the rivers of the East. On his peak

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lies chained the Titan, while a vulture tears his heart; and at his feet are piled dark forests round the magic Colchian land.

And they rowed three days to the eastward, while Caucasus rose higher hour by hour, till they saw the dark stream of Phasis rushing headlong to the sea, and, shining above the tree-tops, the golden roofs of king Aietes, the child of the sun.

Then out spoke Ancaios the helmsman, "We are come to our goal at last; for there are the roofs of Aietes, and the woods where all poisons grow; but who can tell us where among them is hid the golden fleece? Many a toil must we bear ere we find it, and bring it home to Greece."

But Jason cheered the heroes, for his heart was high and bold; and he said, "I will go alone up to Aietes, though he be the child of the sun, and win him with soft words. Better so than to go altogether, and to come to blows at once." But the Minuai would not stay behind, so they rowed boldly up the stream.

And a dream came to Aietes, and filled his heart with fear. He thought he saw a shining star, which fell into his daughter's lap; and that Medeia his daughter took it gladly, and carried it to the river-side, and cast it in, and there the whirling river bore it down, and out into the Euxine Sea.

Then he leaped up in fear, and bade his servants bring his chariot, that he might go down to the river-side and appease the nymphs, and the heroes whose spirits haunt the bank. So he went down in his golden chariot, and his daughters by his side, Medeia the fair witch-maiden, and Chalciopé, who had been Phrixus's wife, and behind him a crowd of servants and soldiers, for he was a rich and mighty prince.

And as he drove down by the reedy river, he saw the Argo sliding up beneath the bank, and many a hero in

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her, like immortals for beauty and for strength, as their weapons glittered round them in the level morning sunlight, through the white mist of the stream. But Jason was the noblest of all; for Hera who loved him gave him beauty, and tallness, and terrible manhood.

And when they came near together and looked into each other's eyes, the heroes were awed before Aietes as he shone in his chariot, like his father, the glorious Sun; for his robes were of rich gold tissue, and the rays of his diadem flashed fire; and in his hand he bore a jeweled sceptre, which glittered like the stars; and sternly he looked at them under his brows, and sternly he spoke and loud—

“Who are you, and what want you here, that you come to the shore of Cutaia? Do you take no account of my rule, nor of my people, the Colchians, who serve me, who never tired yet in the battle, and know well how to face an invader?”

And the heroes sat silent awhile before the face of that ancient king. But Hera, the awful goddess, put courage into Jason's heart, and he rose and shouted loudly in answer, “We are no pirates nor lawless men. We come not to plunder and to ravage, or carry away slaves from your land; but my uncle, the son of Poseidon, Pelias, the Minuan king, he it is who has set me on a quest to bring home the golden fleece. And these, too, my bold comrades, they are no nameless men; for some are the sons of immortals, and some of heroes far renowned. And we, too, never tire in battle, and know well how to give blows and to take; yet we wish to be guests at your table; it will be better so for both.”

Then Aietes's rage rushed up like a whirlwind, and his eyes flashed fire as he heard; but he crushed his anger down in his breast, and spoke mildly a cunning speech,—

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"If you will fight for the fleece with my Colchians, then many a man must die. But do you indeed expect to win from me the fleece in fight? So few you are, that if you be worsted, I can load your ship with your corpses. But if you will be ruled by me, you will find it better far to choose the best man among you, and let him fulfill the labors which I demand. Then I will give him the golden fleece for a prize and a glory to you all."

So saying, he turned his horses and drove back in silence to the town. And the Minuāi sat silent with sorrow, and longed for Heracles and his strength; for there was no facing the thousands of the Colchians, and the fearful chance of war.

But Chalciopē, Phrixus's widow, went weeping to the town; for she remembered her Minuan husband, and all the pleasures of her youth, while she watched the fair faces of his kinsmen, and their long locks of golden hair. And she whispered to Medeia, her sister: "Why should all these brave men die? why does not my father give them up the fleece, that my husband's spirit may have rest!"

And Medeia's heart pitied the heroes, and Jason most of all; and she answered: "Our father is stern and terrible, and who can win the golden fleece?" But Chalciopē said, "These men are not like our men; there is nothing which they cannot dare nor do."

And Medeia thought of Jason and his brave countenance, and said, "If there was one among them who knew no fear, I could show him how to win the fleece."

So in the dusk of evening they went down to the river-side, Chalciopē and Medeia, the witch-maiden, and Argus, Phrixus's son. And Argus, the boy, crept forward, among the beds of reeds, till he came where the heroes were sleeping, on the thwarts of the ship, beneath the bank, while Jason kept ward on shore, and

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leaned upon his lance, full of thought. And the boy came to Jason, and said—

“I am the son of Phrixus, your cousin; and Chalci-ope, my mother, waits for you, to talk about the golden fleece.”

Then Jason went boldly with the boy, and found the two princesses standing; and when Chalci-ope saw him she wept, and took his hands, and cried—

“O cousin of my beloved, go home before you die!”

“It would be base to go home now, fair princess, and to have sailed all these seas in vain.” Then both the princesses besought him; but Jason said, “It is too late.”

“But you know not,” said Medeia, “what he must do who would win the fleece. He must tame the two brazen-footed bulls, who breathe devouring flame; and with them he must plough ere nightfall four acres in the field of Ares; and he must sow them with serpents’ teeth, of which each tooth springs up into an armed man. Then he must fight with all those warriors; and little will it profit him to conquer them; for the fleece is guarded by a serpent, more huge than any mountain pine; and over his body you must step, if you would reach the golden fleece.”

Then Jason laughed bitterly. “Unjustly is that fleece kept here, and by an unjust and lawless king; and unjustly shall I die in my youth, for I will attempt it ere another sun be set.”

Then Medeia trembled and said, “No mortal man can reach that fleece, unless I guide him through. For round it, beyond the river, is a wall full nine ells high, with lofty towers and buttresses, and mighty gates of threefold brass; and over the gates the wall is arched, with golden battlements above. And over the gateway sits Brimo, the wild witch-huntress of the woods, brandishing a pine-torch in her hands, while her mad hounds howl around. No man dare meet her or look on her,

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but only I, her priestess, and she watches far and wide lest any stranger should come near."

"No wall so high but it may be climbed at last, and no wood so thick but it may be crawled through; no serpent so wary but it may be charmed, or witch-queen so fierce but spells may soothe her; and I may yet win the golden fleece, if a wise maiden help bold men."

And he looked at Medeia cunningly, and held her with his glittering eye, till she blushed and trembled, and said—

"Who can face the fire of the bulls' breath, and fight ten thousand armed men?"

"He whom you help," said Jason, flattering her, "for your fame is spread over all the earth. Are you not the queen of all enchantresses, wiser even than your sister, Circe, in her fairy island in the West?"

"Would that I were with my sister, Circe, in her fairy island in the West, far away from sore temptation, and thoughts which tear the heart! But if it must be so—for why should you die?—I have an ointment here; I made it from the magic ice-flower which sprang from Prometheus's wound, above the clouds on Caucasus, in the dreary fields of snow. Anoint yourself with that, and you shall have in you seven men's strength; and anoint your shield with it, and neither fire nor sword can harm you. But what you begin you must end before sunset, for its virtue lasts only one day. And anoint your helmet with it before you sow the serpents' teeth; and when the sons of earth spring up, cast your helmet among their ranks; and the deadly crop of the War-god's field will mow itself, and perish."

Then Jason fell on his knees before her, and thanked her, and kissed her hands; and she gave him the vase of ointment, and fled trembling through the reeds. And Jason told his comrades what had happened, and

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showed them the box of ointment; and all rejoiced but Idas, and he grew mad with envy.

And at sunrise Jason went and bathed, and anointed himself from head to foot, and his shield, and his helmet, and his weapons, and bade his comrades try the spell. So they tried to bend his lance, but it stood like an iron bar; and Idas in spite hewed at it with his sword, but the blade flew to splinters in his face. Then they hurled their lances at his shield, but the spear-points turned like lead; and Caineus tried to throw him, but he never stirred a foot; and Polydeuces struck him with his fist, a blow which would have killed an ox; but Jason only smiled, and the heroes danced about him with delight; and he leaped and ran, and shouted, in the joy of that enormous strength, till the sun rose, and it was time to go and to claim Aietes's promise.

So he sent up Telamon and Aithalides to tell Aietes that he was ready for the fight; and they went up among the marble walls, and beneath the roofs of gold, and stood in Aietes's hall, while he grew pale with rage.

"Fulfill your promise to us, child of the blazing sun. Give us the serpents' teeth, and let loose the fiery bulls; for we have found a champion among us who can win the golden fleece."

And Aietes bit his lips, for he fancied that they had fled away by night; but he could not go back upon his promise; so he gave them the serpents' teeth.

Then he called for his chariot and his horses, and sent heralds through all the town; and all the people went out with him to the dreadful War-god's field.

And there Aietes sat upon his throne, with his warriors on each hand, thousands and tens of thousands, clothed from head to foot in steel-chain mail. And the people and the women crowded to every window, and

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bank, and wall; while the Minuai stood together, a mere handful in the midst of that great host.

And Chalciopé was there, and Argus, trembling, and Medeia, wrapped closely in her veil; but Aietes did not know that she was muttering cunning spells between her lips.

Then Jason cried, "Fulfill your promise, and let your fiery bulls come forth."

Then Aietes bade open the gates, and the magic bulls leaped forth. Their brazen hoofs rang upon the ground, and their nostrils sent out sheets of flame, as they rushed with lowered heads upon Jason; but he never flinched a step. The flame of their breath swept round him, but it singed not a hair of his head; and the bulls stopped short and trembled, when Medeia began her spell.

Then Jason sprang upon the nearest, and seized him by the horn; and up and down they wrestled, till the bull fell groveling on his knees; for the heart of the brute died within him, and his mighty limbs were loosed, beneath the steadfast eye of the dark witch- maiden, and the magic whisper of her lips.

So both the bulls were tamed and yoked; and Jason bound them to the plough, and goaded them onward with his lance, till he had ploughed the sacred field.

And all the Minuai shouted; but Aietes bit his lips with rage; for the half of Jason's work was over, and the sun was yet high in heaven.

Then he took the serpent's teeth and sowed them, and waited what would befall. But Medeia looked at him and at his helmet, lest he should forget the lesson she had taught.

And every furrow heaved and bubbled, and out of every clod rose a man. Out of the earth they rose by thousands, each clad from head to foot in steel, and

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drew their swords and rushed on Jason, where he stood in the midst alone.

Then the Minuai grew pale with fear for him; but Aietes laughed a bitter laugh. "See! if I had not warriors enough already round me, I could call them out of the bosom of the earth."

But Jason snatched off his helmet, and hurled it into the thickest of the throng. And blind madness came upon them, suspicion, hate, and fear; and one cried to his fellow, "Thou didst strike me!" and another, "Thou art Jason; thou shalt die!" So fury seized those earth-born phantoms, and each turned his hand against the rest; and they fought and were never weary, till they all lay dead upon the ground. Then the magic furrows opened, and the kind earth took them home into her breast; and the grass grew up all green again above them, and Jason's work was done.

Then the Minuai rose and shouted, till Prometheus heard them from his crag. And Jason cried—"Lead me to the fleece this moment, before the sun goes down."

But Aietes thought—"He has conquered the bulls, and sown and reaped the deadly crop. Who is this who is proof against all magic? He may kill the serpent yet." So he delayed, and sat taking counsel with his princes, till the sun went down and all was dark. Then he bade a herald cry, "Every man to his home for to-night. To-morrow we will meet these heroes, and speak about the golden fleece."

Then he turned and looked at Medeia: "This is your doing, false witch-maid! You have helped these yellow-haired strangers, and brought shame upon your father and yourself!"

Medeia shrank and trembled, and her face grew pale with fear; and Aietes knew that she was guilty, and whispered, "If they win the fleece, you die!"

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But the Minuai marched toward their ship, growling like lions cheated of their prey; for they saw that Aietes meant to mock them, and to cheat them out of all their toil. And Oileus said, "Let us go to the grove together and take the fleece by force."

And Idas the rash cried, "Let us draw lots who shall go in first; for while the dragon is devouring one, the rest can slay him, and carry off the fleece in peace." But Jason held them back, though he praised them; for he hoped for Medeia's help.

And after awhile Medeia came trembling, and wept a long while before she spoke. And at last,—

"My end is come, and I must die; for my father has found out that I have helped you. You he would kill if he dared; but he will not harm you, because you have been his guests. Go then, go, and remember poor Medeia when you are far away across the sea." But all the heroes cried—

"If you die, we die with you; for without you we cannot win the fleece, and home we will not go without it, but fall here fighting to the last man."

"You need not die," said Jason. "Flee home with us across the sea. Show us first how to win the fleece; for you can do it. Why else are you the priestess of the grove? Show us but how to win the fleece, and come with us, and you shall be my queen, and rule over the rich princes of the Minuai, in Iolcos by the sea."

And all the heroes pressed round, and vowed to her that she should be their queen.

Medeia wept, and shuddered, and hid her face in her hands; for her heart yearned after her sisters and her play fellows, and the home where she was brought up as a child. But at last she looked up at Jason, and spoke between her sobs,—

"Must I leave my home and my people, to wander

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with strangers across the sea? The lot is cast, and I must endure it. I will show you how to win the golden fleece. Bring up your ship to the woodside, and moor her there against the bank; and let Jason come up at midnight, and one brave comrade with him, and meet me beneath the wall."

Then all the heroes together—"I will go!" "and I!" "and I!" And Idas the rash grew mad with envy; for he longed to be foremost in all things. But Medeia calmed them, and said, "Orpheus shall go with Jason, and bring his magic harp; for I hear of him that he is the king of all minstrels, and can charm all things on earth."

And Orpheus laughed for joy, and clapped his hands, because the choice had fallen on him; for in those days poets and singers were as bold warriors as the best.

So at midnight they went up the bank, and found Medeia; and beside came Absyrtus, her young brother, leading a yearling lamb.

Then Medeia brought them to a thicket, beside the War-god's gate; and there she bade Jason dig a ditch and kill the lamb and leave it there, and strew on it magic herbs and honey from the honeycomb.

Then sprang up through the earth, with the red fire flashing before her, Brimo the wild witch-huntress, while her mad hounds howled around. She had one head like a horse's, and another like a ravening hound's and another like a hissing snake's, and a sword in either hand. And she leaped into the ditch with her hounds, and they ate and drank their fill, while Jason and Orpheus trembled, and Medeia hid her eyes. And at last the witch queen vanished, and fled with her hounds into the woods; and the bars of the gates fell down, and the brazen doors flew wide, and Medeia and the heroes ran forward and hurried through the poison

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wood, among the dark stems of the mighty beeches, guided by the gleam of the golden fleece, until they saw it hanging on one vast tree in the midst. And Jason would have sprung to seize it: but Medeia held him back, and pointed shuddering to the tree-foot, where the mighty serpent lay, coiled in and out among the roots, with a body like a mountain-pine. His coils stretched many a fathom, spangled with bronze and gold; and half of him they could see, but no more; for the rest lay in the darkness far beyond.

And when he saw them coming, he lifted up his head, and watched them with his small bright eyes, and flashed his forked tongue, and roared like the fire among the woodlands, till the forest tossed and groaned. For his cry shook the trees from leaf to root, and swept over the long reaches of the river, and over Æetes's hall, and woke the sleepers in the city, till mothers clasped their children in their fear.

But Medeia called gently to him; and he stretched out his long spotted neck, and licked her hand, and looked up in her face, as if to ask for food. Then she made a sign to Orpheus, and he began his magic song.

And as he sung, the forest grew calm again, and the leaves on every tree hung still; and the serpent's head sank down, and his brazen coils grew limp, and his glittering eyes closed lazily, till he breathed as gently as a child, while Orpheus called to pleasant Slumber, who gives peace to men, and beasts and waves.

Then Jason leaped forward warily, and stepped across that mighty snake, and tore the fleece from off the tree-trunk; and the four rushed down the garden, to the bank where the Argo lay.

There was a silence for a moment, while Jason held the golden fleece on high. Then he cried—"Go now, good Argo, swift and steady, if ever you would see Pelion more."

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And she went, as the heroes drove her, grim and silent all, with muffled oars, till the pine-wood bent like willow in their hands, and stout Argo groaned beneath their strokes.

On and on, beneath the dewy darkness, they fled swiftly down the swirling stream; underneath black walls, and temples, and the castles of the princes of the East; past sluice-mouths, and fragrant gardens, and groves of all strange fruits; past marshes where fat kine lay sleeping, and long beds of whispering reeds; till they heard the merry music of the surge upon the bar, as it tumbled in the moonlight all alone.

Into the surge they rushed, and Argo leaped the breakers like a horse; for she knew the time was come to show her mettle, and win honor for the heroes and herself.

Into the surge they rushed, and Argo leaped the breakers like a horse, till the heroes stopped all panting, each man upon his oar, as she slid into the still broad sea.

Then Orpheus took his harp and sang a pæan, till the heroes' hearts rose high again; and they rowed on stoutly and steadfastly, away into the darkness of the West.

PART V

HOW THE ARGONAUTS WERE DRIVEN INTO THE UNKNOWN SEA

So they fled away in haste to the westward: but Aietes manned his fleet and followed them. And Lynceus the quick-eyed saw him coming, while he was still many a mile away, and cried, "I see a hundred ships, like a flock of white swans, far in the east." And at that

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they rowed hard, like heroes; but the ships came nearer every hour.

Then Medeia, the dark witch-maiden, laid a cruel and cunning plot; for she killed Absyrtus her young brother, and cast him into the sea, and said, "Ere my father can take up his corpse and bury it, he must wait long, and be left far behind."

And all the heroes shuddered, and looked one at the other for shame; yet they did not punish that dark witch-woman, because she had won for them the golden fleece.

And when Aietes came to the place, he saw the floating corpse; and he stopped a long while, and bewailed his son, and took him up, and went home. But he sent on his sailors toward the westward, and bound them by a mighty curse: "Bring back to me that dark witch-woman, that she may die a dreadful death. But if you return without her, you shall die by the same death yourselves."

So the Argonauts escaped for that time: but Father Zeus saw that foul crime; and out of the heavens he sent a storm, and swept the ship far from her course. Day after day the storm drove her, amid foam and blinding mist, till they knew no longer where they were, for the sun was blotted from the skies. And at last the ship struck on a shoal, amid low isles of mud and sand, and the waves rolled over her and through her, and the heroes lost all hope of life.

Then Jason cried to Hera: "Fair queen, who hast befriended us till now, why hast thou left us in our misery, to die here among unknown seas? It is hard to lose the honor which we have won with such toil and danger, and hard never to see Hellas again, and the pleasant bay of Pagasai."

Then out and spoke the magic bough which stood upon the Argo's beak: "Because Father Zeus is angry,

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all this has fallen on you; for a cruel crime has been done on board, and the sacred ship is foul with blood."

At that some of the heroes cried: "Medcia is the murderess. Let the witch-woman bear her sin, and die!" And they seized Medeia, to hurl her into the sea and atone for the young boy's death; but the magic bough spoke again: "Let her live till her crimes are full. Vengeance waits for her, slow and sure; but she must live, for you need her still. She must show you the way to her sister Circe, who lives among the islands of the West. To her you must sail, a weary way, and she shall cleanse you from your guilt."

Then all the heroes wept aloud when they heard the sentence of the oak; for they knew that a dark journey lay before them, and years of bitter toil. And some upbraided the dark witch-woman, and some said, "Nay, we are her debtors still; without her we should never have won the fleece." But most of them bit their lips in silence, for they feared the witch's spells.

And now the sea grew calmer, and the sun shone out once more, and the heroes thrust the ship off the sand-bank, and rowed forward on their weary course, under the guiding of the dark witch-maiden, into the wastes of the unknown sea.

Whither they went I cannot tell, nor how they came to Circe's isle. Some say that they went to the westward, and up the Isle¹ stream, and so came into the Adriatic, dragging their ship over the snowy Alps. And others say that they went southward, into the Red Indian Sea, and past the sunny lands where spices grow, round Æthiopia toward the West; and that at last they came to Libya, and dragged their ship across the burning sands, and over the hills into the Syrtes, where the flats and quicksands spread for many a mile, between rich Cyrene and the Lotus eaters' shore. But all these

¹ The Danube.

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are but dreams and fables, and dim hints of unknown lands.

But all say that they came to a place where they had to drag their ship across the land nine days with ropes and rollers, till they came into an unknown sea. And the best of all the old songs tells us, how they went away toward the North, till they came to the slope of Caucasus, where it sinks into the sea; and to the narrow Cimmerian Bosphorus,¹ where the Titan swam across upon the bull; and thence into the lazy waters of the still Mæotid lake.² And thence they went northward ever, up the Tanais, which we call Don, past the Geloni and Sauromatai, and many a wandering shepherd-tribe, and the one-eyed Arimaspii, of whom old Greek poets tell, who steal the gold from the Griffins, in the cold Rhiphaian³ hills.

And they passed the Scythian archers, and the Tauri who eat men, and the wandering Hyperboreai, who feed their flocks beneath the polestar, until they came into the northern ocean, the dull dead Cronian Sea.⁴ And there Argo would move on no longer; and each man clasped his elbow, and leaned his head upon his hand, heartbroken with toil and hunger, and gave himself up to death. But brave Ancaios the helmsman cheered up their hearts once more, and bade them leap on land, and haul the ship with ropes and rollers for many a weary day, whether over land, or mud, or ice, I know not, for the song is mixed and broken like a dream. And it says next, how they came to the rich nation of the famous long-lived men; and to the coast of the Cimmerians, who never saw the sun, buried deep in the glens of the snow mountains; and to the fair land of Hermione, where dwelt the most righteous of all na-

¹ Between the Crimæa and Circassia.

² The Sea of Azov.

³ The Ural Mountains.

⁴ The Baltic.

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tions; and to the gates of the world below, and to the dwelling-place of dreams.

And at last Ancaios shouted—"Endure a little while, brave friends, the worst is surely past; for I can see the pure west wind ruffle the water and hear the roar of ocean on the sands. So raise up the mast, and set the sail, and face what comes like men."

Then out spoke the magic bough—"Ah, would that I had perished long ago, and been whelmed by the dread blue rocks, beneath the fierce swell of the Euxine! Better so, than to wander forever, disgraced by the guilt of my princess; for the blood of Absyrtus still tracks me, and woe follows hard upon woe. And now some dark horror will clutch me, if I come near the Isle of Ierne.¹ Unless you will cling to the land, and sail southward and southward forever, I shall wander beyond the Atlantic, to the ocean which has no shore."

Then they blessed the magic bough, and sailed southward along the land. But ere they could pass Ierne, the land of mists and storms, the wild wind came down, dark and roaring, and caught the sail, and strained the ropes. And away they drove twelve nights, on the wide wild western sea, through the foam, and over the rollers, while they saw neither sun nor stars. And they cried again, "We shall perish, for we know not where we are. We are lost in the dreary damp darkness, and cannot tell north from south."

But Lynceus the long-sighted called gayly from the bows—"Take heart again, brave sailors; for I see a pine-clad isle, and the halls of the kind Earth-mother, with a crown of clouds around them."

But Orpheus said, "Turn from them, for no living man can land there: there is no harbor on the coast, but steep-walled cliffs all around."

¹ Britain?

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So Ancaios turned the ship away; and for three days more they sailed on, till they came to Aiaia, Circe's home, and the fairy island of the West.¹

And there Jason bid them land, and seek about for any sign of living man. And as they went inland, Circe met them, coming down toward the ship; and they trembled when they saw her; for her hair, and face, and robes, shone like flame.

And she came and looked at Medeia; and Medeia hid her face beneath her veil.

And Circe cried, "Ah, wretched girl, have you forgotten all your sins, that you come hither to my island, where the flowers bloom all the year round? Where is your aged father, and the brother whom you killed? Little do I expect you to return in safety with these strangers whom you love. I will send you food and wine: but your ship must not stay here, for it is foul with sin, and foul with sin its crew."

And the heroes prayed her, but in vain, and cried, "Cleanse us from our guilt!" But she sent them away and said, "Go on to Malea, and there you may be cleansed, and return home."

Then a fair wind rose, and they sailed eastward, by Tartessus on the Iberian shore, till they came to the Pillars of Hercules, and the Mediterranean Sea. And thence they sailed on through the deeps of Sardinia, and past the Ausonian islands, and the capes of the Tyrrhenian shore, till they came to a flowery island, upon a still bright summer's eve. And as they neared it, slowly and wearily, they heard sweet songs upon the shore. But when Medeia heard it, she started, and cried, "Beware, all heroes, for these are the rocks of the Sirens. You must pass close by them, for there is no other channel; but those who listen to that song are lost."

¹ The Azores?

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Then Orpheus spoke, the king of all minstrels—"Let them match their song against mine. I have charmed stones, and trees, and dragons, how much more the hearts of men!" So he caught up his lyre, and stood upon the poop, and began his magic song.

And now they could see the Sirens, on Anthemousa, the flowery isle; three fair maidens sitting on the beach, beneath a red rock in the setting sun, among beds of crimson poppies and golden asphodel. Slowly they sung and sleepily, with silver voices, mild and clear, which stole over the golden waters, and into the hearts of all the heroes, in spite of Orpheus's song.

And all things stayed around and listened; the gulls sat in white lines along the rocks; on the beach great seals lay basking, and kept time with lazy heads; while silver shoals of fish came up to hearken, and whispered as they broke the shining calm. The Wind overhead hushed his whistling, as he shepherded his clouds toward the west; and the clouds stood in mid blue, and listened dreaming, like a flock of golden sheep.

And as the heroes listened, the oars fell from their hands, and their heads drooped on their breasts, and they closed their heavy eyes; and they dreamed of bright still gardens, and of slumbers under murmuring pines, till all their toil seemed foolishness, and they thought of their renown no more.

Then one lifted his head suddenly, and cried? "What use in wandering forever? Let us stay here and rest awhile." And another, "Let us row to the shore, and hear the words they sing." And another, "I care not for the words, but for the music. They shall sing me to sleep, that I may rest."

And Butes, the son of Pandion, the fairest of all mortal men, leaped out and swam toward the shore, crying, "I come, I come, fair maidens, to live and die here, listening to your song."

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Then Medeia clapped her hands together, and cried, "Sing louder, Orpheus, sing a bolder strain; wake up these hapless sluggards, or none of them will see the land of Hellas more."

Then Orpheus lifted his harp, and crashed his cunning hand across the strings; and his music and his voice rose like a trumpet through the still evening air; into the air it rushed like thunder, till the rocks rang and the sea; and into their souls it rushed like wine, till all hearts beat fast within their breasts.

And he sung the song of Perseus, how the Gods led him over land and sea, and how he slew the loathly Gorgon, and won himself a peerless bride; and how he sits now with the Gods upon Olympus, a shining star in the sky, immortal with his immortal bride, and honored by all men below.

So Orpheus sang, and the Sirens, answering each other across the golden sea, till Orpheus's voice drowned the Sirens, and the heroes caught their oars again.

And they cried, "We will be men like Perseus, and we will dare and suffer to the last. Sing us his song again, brave Orpheus, that we may forget the Sirens and their spell."

And as Orpheus sang, they dashed their oars into the sea, and kept time to his music, as they fled fast away; and the Sirens' voices died behind them, in the hissing of the foam along their wake.

But Butes swam to the shore, and knelt down before the Sirens, and cried, "Sing on! sing on!" But he could say no more; for a charmed sleep came over him, and a pleasant humming in his ears; and he sank all along upon the pebbles, and forgot all heaven and earth, and never looked at that sad beach around him, all strewn with the bones of men.

Then slowly rose up those three fair sisters, with a

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cruel smile upon their lips; and slowly they crept down towards him, like leopards who creep upon their prey; and their hands were like the talons of eagles, as they stepped across the bones of their victims to enjoy their cruel feast.

But fairest Aphrodite saw him from the highest Idalian peak, and she pitied his youth and his beauty, and leaped up from her golden throne; and like a falling star she cleft the sky, and left a trail of glittering light, till she stooped to the Isle of the Sirens, and snatched their prey from their claws. And she lifted Butes as he lay sleeping, and wrapped him in a golden mist; and she bore him to the peak of Lilybæum, and he slept there many a pleasant year.

But when the Sirens saw that they were conquered, they shrieked for envy and rage, and leaped from the beach into the sea, and were changed into rocks until this day.

Then they came to the straits by Lilybæum, and saw Sicily, the three-cornered island, under which Enceladus the giant lies groaning day and night, and when he turns the earth quakes, and his breath bursts out in roaring flames from the highest cone of Ætna, above the chestnut woods. And there Charybdis caught them in its fearful coils of wave, and rolled mast-high about them, and spun them round and round; and they could go neither back nor forward, while the whirlpool sucked them in.

And while they struggled they saw near them, on the other side the strait, a rock stand in the water, with a peak wrapt round in clouds; a rock which no man could climb, though he had twenty hands and feet, for the stone was smooth and slippery, as if polished by man's hand; and half way up a misty cave looked out toward the west.

And when Orpheus saw it, he groaned, and struck

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his hands together. And "Little will it help to us," he cried, "to escape the jaws of the whirlpool; for in that cave lies Scylla, the seahag with a young whelp's voice; my mother warned me of her ere we sailed away from Hellas; she has six heads, and six long necks, and hides in that dark cleft. And from her cave she fishes for all things which pass by, for sharks, and seals, and dolphins, and all the herds of Amphitrite. And never ship's crew boasted that they came safe by her rock; for she bends her long necks down to them, and every mouth takes up a man. And who will help us now? For Hera and Zeus hate us, and our ship is foul with guilt; so we must die, whatever befalls."

Then out of the depths came Thetis, Peleus's silver-footed bride, for love of her gallant husband, and all her nymphs around her; and they played like snow-white dolphins, diving on from wave to wave, before the ship, and in her wake, and beside her, as dolphins play. And they caught the ship, and guided her, and passed her on from hand to hand, and tossed her through the billows, as maidens toss the ball. And when Scylla stooped to seize her, they struck back her ravening heads, and foul Scylla whined, as a whelp whines, at the touch of their gentle hands. But she shrank into her cave affrighted; for all bad things shrink from good; and Argo leaped safe past her, while a fair breeze rose behind. Then Thetis and her nymphs sank down to their coral caves beneath the sea, and their gardens of green and purple, where live flowers bloom all the year round; while the heroes went on rejoicing, yet dreading what might come next.

After that they rowed on steadily for many a weary day, till they saw a long high island, and beyond it a mountain land. And they searched till they found a harbor, and there rowed boldly in. But after awhile

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they stopped, and wondered; for there stood a great city on the shore, and temples and walls and gardens, and castles high in air upon the cliffs. And on either side they saw a harbor, with a narrow mouth, but wide within; and black ships without number, high and dry upon the shore.

Then Ancaius, the wise helmsman, spoke, "What new wonder is this? I know all isles, and harbors, and the windings of all seas; and this should be Corcyra, where a few wild goatherds dwell. But whence come these new harbors, and vast works of polished stone?"

But Jason said, "They can be no savage people. We will go in and take our chance."

So they rowed into the harbor, among a thousand black-beaked ships, each larger far than Argo, toward a quay of polished stone. And they wondered at that mighty city, with its roofs of burnished brass, and long and lofty walls of marble, with strong palisades above. And the quays were full of people, merchants, and mariners, and slaves, going to and fro with merchandise among the crowd of ships. And the heroes' hearts were humbled, and they looked at each other and said, "We thought ourselves a gallant crew when we sailed from Iolcos by the sea; but how small we look before this city, like an ant before a hive of bees."

Then the sailors hailed them roughly from the quay, "What men are you?—we want no strangers here, nor pirates. We keep our business to ourselves."

But Jason answered gently, with many a flattering word, and praised their city and their harbor, and their fleet of gallant ships. "Surely you are the children of Poseidon, and the masters of the sea; and we are but poor wandering mariners, worn out with thirst and toil. Give us but food and water, and we will go on our voyage in peace."

Then the sailors laughed and answered, "Stranger,

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you are no fool; you talk like an honest man, and you shall find us honest too. We are the children of Poseidon, and the masters of the sea; but come ashore to us, and you shall have the best that we can give."

So they limped ashore, all stiff and weary, with long ragged beards and sunburned cheeks, and garments torn and weather-stained, and weapons rusted with the spray, while the sailors laughed at them (for they were rough-tongued, though their hearts were frank and kind). And one said, "These fellows are but raw sailors; they look as if they had been sea-sick all the day." And another, "Their legs have grown crooked with much rowing, till they waddle in their walk like ducks."

At that Idas the rash would have struck them; but Jason held him back, till one of the merchant-kings spoke to them, a tall and stately man.

"Do not be angry, strangers; the sailor boys must have their jest. But we will treat you justly and kindly, for strangers and poor men come from God; and you seem no common sailors by your strength, and height, and weapons. Come up with me to the palace of Alcinous, the rich sea-going king, and we will feast you well and heartily; and after that you shall tell us your name."

But Medeia hung back, and trembled, and whispered in Jason's ear, "We are betrayed, and are going to our ruin; for I see my countrymen among the crowd; dark-eyed Colchi in steel mail-shirts, such as they wear in my father's land."

"It is too late to turn," said Jason. And he spoke to the merchant-king—"What country is this, good sir; and what is this new-built town?"

"This is the land of the Phæaces, beloved by all the Immortals; for they come hither and feast like friends with us, and sit by our side in the hall. Hither we came from Liburnia to escape the unrighteous Cy-

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clopes; for they robbed us, peaceful merchants, of our hard-earned wares and wealth. So Nausithous, the son of Poseidon, brought us hither, and died in peace; and now his son Alcinous rules us, and Arete, the wisest of queens."

So they went up across the square, and wondered still more as they went; for along the quays lay in order great cables, and yards, and masts, before the fair temple of Poseidon, the blue-haired king of the seas. And round the square worked the shipwrights, as many in number as ants, twining ropes, and hewing timber, and smoothing long yards and oars. And the Minuai went on in silence through clean, white marble streets, till they came to the hall of Alcinous, and they wondered then still more. For the lofty palace shone aloft in the sun, with walls of plated brass, from the threshold to the innermost chamber, and the doors were of silver and gold. And on each side of the doorway sat living dogs of gold, who never grew old or died, so well Hephaistus had made them in his forges in smoking Lemnos, and gave them to Alcinous to guard his gates by night. And within, against the walls, stood thrones on either side, down the whole length of the hall, strewn with rich, glossy shawls; and on them the merchant-kings of those crafty, sea-roving Phæaces sat eating and drinking in pride, and feasting there all the year round. And boys of molten gold stood each on a polished altar, and held torches in their hands, to give light all night to the guests. And round the house sat fifty maid-servants, some grinding the meal in the mill, some turning the spindle, some weaving at the loom, while their hands twinkled as they passed the shuttle, like quivering aspen leaves.

And outside before the palace a great garden was walled round, filled full of stately fruit-trees, with olives and sweet figs, and pomegranates, pears, and apples,

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which bore the whole year round. For the rich south-west wind fed them, till pear grew ripe on pear, fig on fig, and grape on grape, all the winter and the spring. And at the further end gay flower-beds bloomed through all seasons of the year; and two fair fountains rose, and ran, one through the garden-grounds and one beneath the palace gate, to water all the town. Such noble gifts the heavens had given to Alcinous the wise.

So they went in, and saw him sitting, like Poseidon, on his throne, with his golden sceptre by him, in garments stiff with gold, and in his hand a sculptured goblet, as he pledged the merchant-kings; and beside him stood Arete, his wise and lovely queen, and leaned against a pillar, as she spun her golden threads.

Then Alcinous rose, and welcomed them, and bade them sit and eat; and the servants brought them tables, and bread, and meat, and wine.

But Medeia went on trembling toward Arete the fair queen, and fell at her knees, and clasped them, and cried, weeping as she knelt,—

“I am your guest, fair queen, and I entreat you by Zeus from whom prayers come. Do not send me back to my father, to die some dreadful death; but let me go my way, and bear my burden. Have I not had enough of punishment and shame?”

“Who are you, strange maiden? and what is the meaning of your prayer?”

“I am Medeia, daughter of Aietes, and I saw my countrymen here to-day; and I know that they are come to find me, and take me home to die some dreadful death.”

Then Arete frowned, and said—“Lead this girl in, my maidens; and let the kings decide, not I.”

And Alcinous leaped up from his throne, and cried,

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"Speak, strangers, who are you? And who is this maiden?"

"We are the heroes of the Minuai," said Jason; "and this maiden has spoken truth. We are the men who took the golden fleece, the men whose fame has run round every shore. We came hither out of the ocean, after sorrow such as man never saw before. We went out many, and come back few, for many a noble comrade have we lost. So let us go, as you should let your guests go, in peace; that the world may say, 'Alcinous is a just king.'"

But Alcinous frowned, and stood deep in thought; and at last he spoke—

"Had not the deed been done, which is done, I should have said this day to myself, 'It is an honor to Alcinous, and to his children after him, that the far-famed Argonauts are his guests.' But these Colchi are my guests, as you are; and for this month they have waited here with all their fleet; for they have hunted all the seas of Hellas, and could not find you, and dared neither go further, nor go home."

"Let them choose out their champions, and we will fight them, man for man."

"No guest of ours shall fight upon our island; and if you go outside, they will outnumber you. I will do justice between you; for I know and do what is right."

Then he turned to his kings, and said: "This may stand over till to-morrow. To-night we will feast our guests, and hear the story of all their wanderings, and how they came hither out of the ocean."

So Alcinous bade the servants take the heroes in, and bathe them, and give them clothes. And they were glad when they saw the warm water, for it was long since they had bathed. And they washed off the sea-salt from their limbs, and anointed themselves from head to foot with oil, and combed out their golden

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hair. Then they came back again into the hall, while the merchant-kings rose up to do them honor. And each man said to his neighbor: "No wonder that these men won fame. How they stand now like Giants, or Titans, or Immortals come down from Olympus, though many a winter has worn them, and many a fearful storm. What must they have been when they sailed from Iolcos, in the bloom of their youth, long ago?"

Then they went out to the garden; and the merchant-princes said: "Heroes, run races with us. Let us see whose feet are nimblest."

"We cannot race against you, for our limbs are stiff from sea; and we have lost our two swift comrades, the sons of the north wind. But do not think us cowards: if you wish to try our strength, we will shoot, and box, and wrestle, against any men on earth."

And Alcinous smiled, and answered: "I believe you, gallant guests; with your long limbs and broad shoulders, we could never match you here. For we care nothing here for boxing, or for shooting with the bow; but for feasts, and songs, and harping, and dancing, and running races, to stretch our limbs on shore."

So they danced there and ran races, the jolly merchant-kings, till the night fell, and all went in. And then they ate and drank, and comforted their weary souls, till Alcinous called a herald, and bade him go and fetch the harper.

The herald went out, and fetched the harper, and led him in by the hand; and Alcinous cut him a piece of meat from the fattest of the haunch, and sent it to him, and said: "Sing to us, noble harper, and rejoice the heroes' hearts."

So the harper played and sang, while the dancers danced strange figures; and after that the tumblers showed their tricks, till the heroes laughed again.

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Then, "Tell me, heroes," asked Alcinous, "you who have sailed the ocean round and seen the manners of all nations, have you seen such dancers as ours here? or heard such music and such singing? We hold ours to be the best on earth."

"Such dancing we have never seen," said Orpheus; "and your singer is a happy man; for Phœbus himself must have taught him, or else he is the son of a Muse; as I am also, and have sung once or twice, though not so well as he."

"Sing to us, then, noble stranger," said Alcinous; "and we will give you precious gifts."

So Orpheus took his magic harp, and sang to them a stirring song of their voyage from Iolcos, and their dangers, and how they won the golden fleece; and of Medeia's love, and how she helped them, and went with them over land and sea; and of all their fearful dangers, from monsters, and rocks, and storms, till the heart of Arete was softened, and all the women wept. And the merchant-kings rose up, each man from off his golden throne, and clapped their hands, and shouted: "Hail to the noble Argonauts, who sailed the unknown sea!"

Then he went on, and told their journey over the sluggish northern main, and through the shoreless outer ocean, to the fairy island of the west; and of the Sirens, and Scylla, and Charybdis, and all the wonders they had seen, till midnight passed, and the day dawned; but the kings never thought of sleep. Each man sat still and listened with his chin upon his hand.

And at last when Orpheus had ended, they all went thoughtful out, and the heroes lay down to sleep, beneath the sounding porch outside, where Arete had strewn them rugs and carpets, in the sweet, still summer night.

But Arete pleaded hard with her husband for Medeia,

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for her heart was softened. And she said: "The Gods will punish her, not we. After all, she is our guest and my suppliant, and prayers are the daughters of Zeus. And who, too, dare part man and wife, after all they have endured together?"

And Alcinous smiled. "The minstrel's song has charmed you; but I must remember what is right; for songs cannot alter justice; and I must be faithful to my name. Alcinous I am called, the man of sturdy sense, and Alcinous I will be." But for all that, Arete besought him, until she won him round.

So next morning he sent a herald, and called the kings into the square, and said: "This is a puzzling matter; remember but one thing. These Minuai live close by us, and we may meet them often on the seas; but Aietes lives afar off, and we have only heard his name. Which, then, of the two is it safer to offend, the men near us, or the men afar off?"

The princes laughed, and praised his wisdom; and Alcinous called the heroes to the square, and the Colchi also; and they came and stood opposite each other; but Medeia stayed in the palace. Then Alcinous spoke,—“Heroes of the Colchi, what is your errand about this lady?"

"To carry her home with us, that she may die a shameful death; but if we return without her, we must die the death she should have died."

"What say you to this, Jason the Æolid?" said Alcinous, turning to the Minuai.

"I say," said the cunning Jason, "that they are come here on a bootless errand. Do you think that you can make her follow you, heroes of the Colchi? her, who knows all spells and charms? She will cast away your ships on quicksands, or call down on you Brimo the wild huntress; or the chains will fall from off her wrists and she will escape in her dragon-car; or if

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not thus, some other way; for she has a thousand plans and wiles. And why return home at all, brave heroes, and face the long seas again, and the Bosphorus, and the stormy Euxine, and double all your toil? There is many a fair land round these coasts, which waits for gallant men like you. Better to settle there, and build a city, and let Aietes and Colchis help themselves."

Then a murmur rose among the Colchi, and some cried, "He has spoken well;" and some, "We have had enough of roving, we will sail the seas no more!" And the chief said at last, "Be it so, then; a plague she has been to us, and a plague to the house of her father, and a plague she will be to you. Take her, since you are no wiser; and we will sail away toward the north."

Then Alcinous gave them food, and water, and garments, and rich presents of all sorts; and he gave the same to the Minuai, and sent them all away in peace.

So Jason kept the dark witch-maiden to breed him woe and shame; and the Colchi went northward into the Adriatic, and settled, and built towns along the shore.

Then the heroes rowed away to the eastward, to reach Hellas their beloved land; but a storm came down upon them, and swept them far away toward the south. And they rowed till they were spent with struggling, through the darkness and the blinding rain, but where they were they could not tell, and they gave up all hope of life. And at last they touched the ground, and when daylight came they waded to the shore; and saw nothing round but sand, and desolate salt pools; for they had come to the quicksands of the Syrtis, and the dreary, treeless flats, which lie between Numidia and Syrene, on the burning shore of Africa. And there they wandered, starving, for many a weary

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day, ere they could launch their ship again, and gain the open sea. And there Canthus was killed while he was trying to drive off sheep, by a stone which a herdsman threw.

And there, too, Mopsus died, the seer who knew the voices of all birds; but he could not foretell his own end, for he was bitten in the foot by a snake, one of those which sprang from the Gorgon's head when Perseus carried it across the sands.

At last they rowed away toward the northward, for many a weary day, till their water was spent, and their food eaten; and they were worn out with hunger and thirst. But at last they saw a long, steep island, and a blue peak high among the clouds; and they knew it for the peak of Ida, and the famous land of Crete. And they said, "We will land in Crete, and see Minos, the just king, and all his glory and his wealth; at least he will treat us hospitably, and let us fill our water-casks upon the shore."

But when they came nearer to the island they saw a wondrous sight upon the cliffs. For on a cape to the westward stood a giant, taller than any mountain pine; who glittered aloft against the sky like a tower of burnished brass. He turned and looked on all sides round him, till he saw the Argo and her crew; and when he saw them he came toward them, more swiftly than the swiftest horse, leaping across the glens at a bound, and striding at one step from down to down. And when he came abreast of them he brandished his arms up and down, as a ship hoists and lowers her yards, and shouted with his brazen throat like a trumpet from off the hills—"You are pirates, you are robbers! If you dare land here, you die!"

Then the heroes cried, "We are no pirates. We are all good men and true; and all we ask is food and water;" but the Giant cried the more—

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"You are robbers, you are pirates all; I know you; and if you land, you shall die the death."

Then he waved his arms again as a signal, and they saw the people flying inland, driving their flocks before them, while a great flame arose among the hills. Then the giant ran up a valley and vanished; and the heroes lay on their oars in fear.

But Medeia stood watching all, from under her steep black brows, with a cunning smile upon her lips, and a cunning plot within her heart. At last she spoke: "I know this giant. I heard of him in the East. Hephaistos the Fire King made him, in his forge in Ætna beneath the earth, and called him Talos, and gave him to Minos for a servant, to guard the coast of Crete. Thrice a day he walks round the island, and never stops to sleep; and if strangers land he leaps into his furnace, which flames there among the hills; and when he is red-hot he rushes on them, and burns them in his brazen hands."

Then all the heroes cried, "What shall we do, wise Medeia? We must have water, or we die of thirst. Flesh and blood we can face fairly; but who can face this red-hot brass?"

"I can face red-hot brass, if the tale I hear be true. For they say that he has but one vein in all his body, filled with liquid fire; and that this vein is closed with a nail; but I know not where that nail is placed. But if I can get it once into these hands, you shall water your ship here in peace."

Then she bade them put her on shore, and row off again, and wait what would befall.

And the heroes obeyed her unwillingly: for they were ashamed to leave her so alone; but Jason said, "She is dearer to me than to any of you, yet I will trust her freely on shore; she has more plots than we

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can dream of, in the windings of that fair and cunning head."

So they left the witch-maiden on the shore; and she stood there in her beauty all alone, till the giant strode back red-hot from head to heel, while the grass hissed and smoked beneath his tread.

And when he saw the maiden alone, he stopped; and she looked boldly up into his face without moving, and began her magic song:—

"Life is short, though life is sweet; and even men of brass and fire must die. The brass must rust, the fire must cool, for time gnaws all things in their turn. Life is short, though life is sweet; but sweeter to live forever; sweeter to live ever youthful like the Gods, who have ichor in their veins; ichor which gives life, and youth, and joy, and a bounding heart."

Then Talus said, "Who are you, strange maiden; and where is this ichor of youth?"

Then Medeia held up a flask of crystal, and said, "Here is the ichor of youth. I am Medeia the enchantress; my sister Circe gave me this, and said, 'Go and reward Talus the faithful servant, for his fame is gone out into all lands.' So come, and I will pour this into your veins, that you may live forever young."

And he listened to her false words, that simple Talus, and came near; and Medeia said, "Dip yourself in the sea first, and cool yourself, lest you burn my tender hands; then show me where the nail in your vein is, that I may pour the ichor in."

Then that simple Talus dipped himself in the sea, till it hissed, and roared, and smoked; and came and knelt before Medeia, and showed her the secret nail.

And she drew the nail out gently; but she poured no ichor in; and instead the liquid fire spouted forth, like a stream of red-hot iron. And Talus tried to leap up, crying, "You have betrayed me, false witch-

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maiden!" But she lifted up her hands before him, and sang, till he sank beneath her spell. And as he sank, his brazen limbs clanked heavily, and the earth groaned beneath his weight; and the liquid fire ran from his heel, like a stream of lava to the sea; and Medeia laughed, and called to the heroes, "Come ashore, and water your ship in peace."

So they came, and found the giant lying dead; and they fell down, and kissed Medeia's feet; and watered their ship, and took sheep and oxen, and so left that inhospitable shore.

At last, after many more adventures, they came to the Cape of Melea, at the southwest point of the Peloponnese. And there they offered sacrifice, and Orpheus purged them from their guilt. Then they rowed away again to the northward, past the Laconian shore, and came all worn and tired by Sunium, and up the long Eubœan Strait, until they saw once more Pelion, and Aphetai, and Iolcos by the sea.

And they ran their ship ashore; but they had no strength left to haul her up the beach; and they crawled out on the pebbles; and sat down, and wept till they could weep no more. For the houses and the trees were all altered; and all the faces which they saw were strange; and their joy was swallowed up in sorrow, while they thought of their youth, and all their labor, and the gallant comrades they had lost.

And the people crowded round, and asked them, "Who are you, that you sit weeping here?"

"We are the sons of your princes, who sailed out many a year ago. We went to fetch the golden fleece; and we have brought it, and grief herewith. Give us news of our fathers and our mothers, if any of them be left alive on earth."

'Then there was shouting and laughing, and weeping; and all the kings came to the shore, and then led away

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the heroes to their homes, and bewailed the valiant dead.

Then Jason went up with Medeia to the palace of his uncle Pelias. And when he came in, Pelias sat by the hearth, crippled and blind with age; while opposite him sat Æson, Jason's father, crippled and blind likewise; and the two old men's heads shook together, as they tried to warm themselves before the fire.

And Jason fell down at his father's knees and wept, and called him by his name. And the old man stretched his hands out, and felt him, and said, "Do not mock me, young hero. My son Jason is dead long ago at sea."

"I am your own son Jason, whom you trusted to the Centaur upon Pelion; and I have brought home the golden fleece, and a princess of the Sun's race for my bride. So now give me up the kingdom, Pelias my uncle, and fulfill your promise as I have fulfilled mine."

Then his father clung to him like a child, and wept, and would not let him go; and cried, "Now I shall not go down lonely to my grave. Promise me never to leave me till I die."

PART VI

WHAT WAS THE END OF THE HEROES

And now I wish that I could end my story pleasantly; but it is no fault of mine that I cannot. The old songs end it sadly, and I believe that they are right and wise; for though the heroes were purified at Malea, yet sacrifices cannot make bad hearts good, and Jason had taken a wicked wife, and he had to bear his burden to the last.

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And first she laid a cunning plot, to punish that poor old Pelias, instead of letting him die in peace.

For she told his daughters, "I can make old things young again; I will show you how easy it is to do." So she took an old ram and killed him, and put him in a cauldron with magic herbs; and whispered her spells over him, and he leaped out again a young lamb. So that "Medeia's cauldron" is a proverb still, by which we mean times of war and change, when the world has become old and feeble, and grows young again through bitter pains.

Then she said to Pelias's daughters, "Do to your father as I did to this ram, and he will grow young and strong again." But she only told them half the spell; so they failed, while Medeia mocked them; and poor old Pelias died, and his daughters came to misery. But the songs say she cured Æson, Jason's father, and he became young and strong again.

But Jason could not love her, after all her cruel deeds. So he was ungrateful to her, and wronged her; and she revenged herself on him. And a terrible revenge she took—too terrible to speak of here. But you will hear of it yourselves when you grow up, for it has been sung in noble poetry and music; and whether it be true or not, it stands forever as a warning to us, not to seek for help from evil persons, or to gain good ends by evil means. For if we use an adder even against our enemies, it will turn again and sting us.

But of all the other heroes there is many a brave tale left, which I have no space to tell you, so you must read them for yourselves;—of the hunting of the boar in Calydon, which Meleager killed; and of Heracles's twelve famous labors; and of the seven who fought at Thebes; and of the noble love of Castor and Polydeuces, the twin Dioscouroi; how when one died,

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the other would not live without him, so they shared their immortality between them; and Zeus changed them into two twin stars, which never rise both at once.

And what became of Cheiron, the good immortal beast? That, too, is a sad story; for the heroes never saw him more. He was wounded by a poisoned arrow, at Pholoe, among the hills, when Heracles opened the fatal wine-jar, which Cheiron had warned him not to touch. And the Centaurs smelt the wine, and flocked to it, and fought for it with Heracles; but he killed them all with his poisoned arrows, and Cheiron was left alone. Then Cheiron took up one of the arrows, and dropped it by chance upon his foot; and the poison ran like fire along his veins, and he lay down, and longed to die; and cried, "Through wine I perish, the bane of all my race. Why should I live forever in this agony? Who will take my immortality that I may die?"

Then Prometheus answered, the good Titan, whom Heracles had set free from Caucasus, "I will take your immortality and live forever, that I may help poor mortal men." So Cheiron gave him his immortality, and died, and had rest from pain. And Heracles and Prometheus wept over him, and went to bury him on Pelion; but Zeus took him up among the stars, to live forever, grand and mild, low down in the far southern sky.

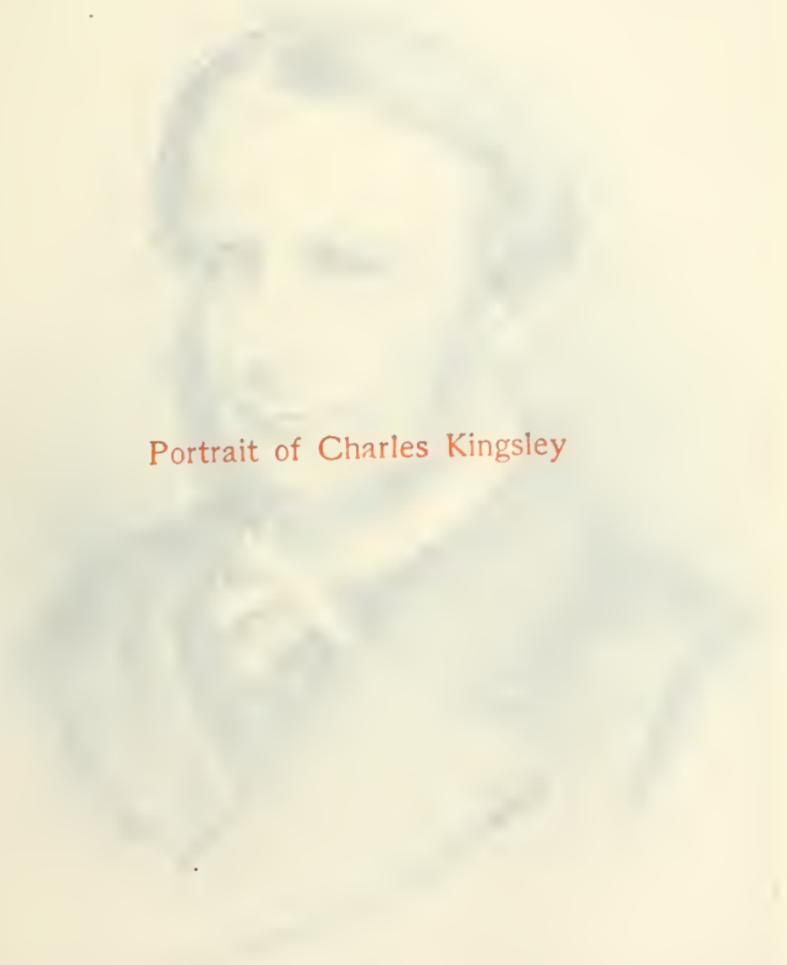
And in time the heroes died, all but Nestor the silver-tongued old man; and left behind them valiant sons, but not so great as they had been. Yet their fame, too, lives till this day; for they fought at the ten years' siege of Troy; and their story is in the book which we call Homer, in two of the noblest songs on earth; the Iliad, which tells us of the siege of Troy, and Achilles's quarrel with the kings: and the Odyssey,

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which tells the wanderings of Odysseus, through many lands for many years; and how Alcinous sent him home at last, safe to Ithaca his beloved island, and to Penelope his faithful wife, and Telemachus his son, and Euphorbus the noble swineherd, and the old dog who licked his hand and died. We will read that sweet story, children, by the fire some wintry night. And now I will end my tale, and begin another and a more cheerful one, of a hero who became a worthy king, and won his people's love.

THESEUS

Portrait of Charles Kingsley





THESEUS

Charles Kingsley

PART I

HOW THESEUS LIFTED THE STONE

ONCE upon a time there was a princess in Trœzene, Aithra, the daughter of Pittheus the king. She had one fair son, named Theseus, the bravest lad in all the land; and Aithra never smiled but when she looked at him, for her husband had forgotten her, and lived far away. And she used to go up to the mountain above Trœzene, to the temple of Poseidon, and sit there all day looking out across the bay, over Methana, to the purple peaks of Ægina, and the Attic shore beyond. And when Theseus was full fifteen years old she took him up with her to the temple, and into the thickets of the grove which grew in the temple yard. And she led him to a tall plane-tree, beneath whose shade grew arbutus, and lentisk, and purple heather-bushes. And there she sighed, and said, "Theseus, my son, go into that thicket, and you will find at the plane-tree foot a great flat stone; lift it, and bring me what lies underneath."

Then Theseus pushed his way in through the thick bushes, and saw that they had not been moved for many a year. And searching among their roots he

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found a great flat stone, all overgrown with ivy, and acanthus, and moss. He tried to lift it, but he could not. And he tried it till the sweat ran down his brow from heat, and the tears from his eyes for shame; but all was of no avail. And at last he came back to his mother, and said, "I have found the stone, but I cannot lift it, nor do I think that any man could in all Trœzene."

Then she sighed, and said, "The Gods wait long; but they are just at last. Let it be for another year. The day may come when you will be a stronger man than lives in all Trœzene."

Then she shook him by the hand, and went into the temple and prayed, and came down again with Theseus to her home.

And when a full year was past, she led Theseus up again to the temple, and bade him lift the stone; but he could not.

Then she sighed, and said the same words again, and went down, and came again the next year; but Theseus could not lift the stone then, nor the year after; and he longed to ask his mother the meaning of that stone, and what might lie underneath it; but her face was so sad, that he had not the heart to ask.

So he said to himself, "The day shall surely come when I will lift that stone, though no man in Trœzene can." And in order to grow strong he spent all his days in wrestling, and boxing, and hurling, and taming horses, and hunting the boar and the bull, and coursing goats and deer among the rocks; till upon all the mountains there was no hunter so swift as Theseus, and he killed Phaia, the wild sow of Crommuon, which wasted all the land; till all the people said, "Surely the Gods are with the lad."

And when his eighteenth year was past, Aithra led him up again to the temple, and said, "Theseus, lift the

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stone this day, or never know who you are." And Theseus went into the thicket, and stood over the stone, and tugged at it; and it moved. Then his spirit swelled within him, and he said, "If I break my heart in my body, it shall up." And he tugged at it once more, and lifted it, and rolled it over with a shout.

And when he looked beneath it, on the ground lay a sword of bronze, with a hilt of glittering gold, and by it a pair of golden sandals; and he caught them up, and burst through the bushes like a wild boar, and leaped to his mother, holding them high above his head.

But when she saw them she wept long in silence, hiding her face in her shawl; and Theseus stood by her wondering, and wept also, he knew not why. And when she was tired of weeping, she lifted up her head, and laid her finger on her lips, and said, "Hide them in your bosom, Theseus, my son, and come with me where we can look down upon the sea."

Then they went outside the sacred wall, and looked down over the bright blue sea; and Aithra said:

"Do you see this land at our feet?"

And he said, "Yes, this is Trœzene, where I was born and bred."

And she said, "It is but a little land, barren and rocky, and looks toward the bleak northeast. Do you see that land beyond?"

"Yes, that is Attica, where the Athenian people dwell."

"That is a fair land and large, Theseus, my son; and it looks toward the sunny south; a land of olive-oil and honey, the joy of Gods and men. For the Gods have girdled it with mountains, whose veins are of pure silver, and their bones of marble white as snow; and there the hills are sweet with thyme and basil, and the meadows with violet and asphodel, and the nightingales sing all day in the thickets, by the side of ever-

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flowing streams. There are twelve towns well peopled, the homes of an ancient race, the children of Kekrops, the serpent-king, the son of Mother Earth, who wear gold cicalas among the tresses of their golden hair; for like the cicalas they sprang from the earth, and like the cicalas they sing all day, rejoicing in the genial sun. What would you do, son Theseus, if you were king of such a land?"

Then Theseus stood astonished, as he looked across the broad, bright sea, and saw the fair Attic shore, from Sunium to Hymettus and Pentelicus, and all the mountain peaks which girdle Athens round. But Athens itself he could not see, for purple Ægina stood before it, midway across the sea.

Then his heart grew great within him, and he said, "If I were king of such a land, I would rule it wisely and well in wisdom and in might, that when I died all men might weep over my tomb, and cry, "Alas for the shepherd of his people!"

And Aithra smiled and said, "Take, then, the sword and the sandals, and go to Ægeus, king of Athens, who lives on Pallas's hill; and say to him, 'The stone is lifted, but whose is the pledge beneath it?' Then show him the sword and the sandals, and take what the Gods shall send."

Then Theseus wept—"Shall I leave you, O my mother?"

But she answered, "Weep not for me. That which is fated must be; and grief is easy to those who do naught but grieve. Full of sorrow was my youth, and full of sorrow my womanhood. Full of sorrow was my youth for Bellerophon, the slayer of the Chimæra, whom my father drove away by treason; and full of sorrow my womanhood, for thy treacherous father and for thee; and full of sorrow my old age will be (for I see my fate in dreams, when the sons of the Swan shall carry

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me captive to the hollow vale of Eurotas, till I sail across the seas a slave, the handmaid of the pest of Greece. Yet shall I be avenged, when the golden-haired heroes sail against Troy, and sack the palaces of Ilium; then my son shall set me free from thralldom, and I shall hear the tale of Theseus's fame. Yet beyond that I see new sorrows; but I can bear them as I have borne the past."

Then she kissed Theseus, and wept over him; and went into the temple, and Theseus saw her no more.

PART II

HOW THESEUS SLEW THE DEVOURERS OF MEN

So Theseus stood there alone, with his mind full of many hopes. And first he thought of going down to the harbor and hiring a swift ship, and sailing across the bay to Athens; but even that seemed too slow for him, and he longed for wings to fly across the sea, and find his father. But after a while his heart began to fail him; and he sighed, and said within himself:

"What if my father have other sons about him, whom he loves? What if he will not receive me? And what have I done that he should receive me? He has forgotten me ever since I was born; why should he welcome me now?"

Then he thought a long while sadly; and at the last he cried aloud, "Yes! I will make him love me; for I will prove myself worthy of his love. I will win honor and renown, and do such deeds that Ægeus shall be proud of me, though he had fifty other sons! Did not Heracles win himself honor though he was oppressed, and the slave of Eurystheus? Did he not kill all rob-

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bers and evil beasts, and drain the lakes and marshes, breaking the hills through with his club? Therefore it was that all men honored him, because he rid them of their miseries, and made life pleasant to them and their children after them. Where can I go, to do as Hercules has done? Where can I find strange adventures, robbers, and monsters, and the children of hell, the enemies of men? I will go by land, and into the mountains, and round by the way of the Isthmus. Perhaps there I may hear of brave adventures, and do something which shall win my father's love."

So he went by land, and away into the mountains, with his father's sword upon his thigh, till he came to the Spider mountains, which hang over Epidaurus and the sea, where the glens run downward from one peak in the midst, as the rays spread in a spider's web.

And he went up into the gloomy glens, between the furrowed marble walls, till the lowland grew blue beneath his feet, and the clouds drove damp about his head.

But he went up and up forever, through the spider's web of glens, till he could see the narrow gulfs spread below him, north and south, and east and west; black cracks half choked with mists, and above all a dreary down.

But over that down he must go, for there was no road right or left; so he toiled on through bog and brake, till he came to a pile of stones.

And on the stones a man was sitting, wrapped in a bear-skin cloak. The head of the bear served him for a cap, and its teeth grinned white around his brows; and the feet were tied about his throat, and their claws shone white upon his chest. And when he saw Theseus he rose, and laughed till the glens rattled.

"And who art thou, fair fly, who hast walked into the spider's web?" But Theseus walked on steadily,

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and made no answer; but he thought, "Is this some robber? and has an adventure come already to me?" But the strange man laughed louder than ever, and said:

"Bold fly, know you not that these glens are the web from which no fly ever finds his way out again, and this down the spider's house, and I the spider who suck the flies? Come hither, and let me feast upon you; for it is of no use to run away; so cunning a web has my father, Hephaistos, spread for me, when he made these clefts in the mountains, through which no man finds his way home."

But Theseus came on steadily, and asked:

"And what is your name among men, bold spider? and where are your spider's fangs?"

Then the strange man laughed again—

"My name is Periphetes, the son of Hephaistos and Anticlea, the mountain imp. But men call me Corynetes, the club-bearer; and here is my spider's fang." And he lifted from off the stones at his side a mighty club of bronze.

"This my father gave me, and forged it himself in the roots of the mountain; and with it I pound all proud flies till they give out their fatness and their sweetness. So give me up that gay sword of yours, and your mantle, and your golden sandals, lest I pound you, and by ill luck you die."

But Theseus wrapped his mantle round his left arm quickly, in hard folds, from his shoulder to his hand, and drew his sword and rushed upon the club-bearer, and the club-bearer rushed on him.

Twice he struck at Theseus, and made him bend under the blows like a sapling; but Theseus guarded his head with his left arm, and the mantle which was wrapped around it.

And thrice Theseus sprang upright after the blow, like a sapling when the storm is past; and he stabbed

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at the club-bearer with his sword, but the loose folds of the bear-skin saved him.

Then Theseus grew mad, and closed with him, and caught him by the throat, and they fell and rolled over together; but when Theseus rose up from the ground the club-bearer lay still at his feet.

Then Theseus took his club and his bear-skin, and left him to the kites and crows, and went upon his journey down the glens on the further slope, till he came to a broad, green valley, and saw flocks and herds sleeping beneath the trees.

And by the side of a pleasant fountain, under the shade of rocks and trees, were nymphs and shepherds dancing; but no one piped to them while they danced.

And when they saw Theseus they shrieked; and the shepherds ran off and drove away their flocks, while the nymphs dived into the fountain like coots, and vanished.

Theseus wondered and laughed: "What strange fancies have folks here who run away from strangers, and have no music when they dance!" But he was tired, and dusty, and thirsty; so he thought no more of them, but drank and bathed in the clear pool, and then lay down in the shade under a plane-tree, while the water sang him to sleep, as it trickled down from stone to stone.

And when he woke he heard a whispering, and saw the nymphs peeping at him across the fountain from the dark mouth of a cave, where they sat on green cushions of moss. And one said, "Surely he is not Periphetes;" and another, "He looks like no robber, but a fair and gentle youth."

Then Theseus smiled, and called them, "Fair nymphs, I am not Periphetes. He sleeps among the kites and crows; but I have brought away his bear-skin and his club."

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Then they leaped across the pool, and came to him, and called the shepherds back. And he told them how he had slain the club-bearer; and the shepherds kissed his feet, and sang, "Now we shall feed our flocks in peace, and not be afraid to have music when we dance; for the cruel club-bearer has met his match, and he will listen for our pipes no more."

Then they brought him kid's flesh and wine, and the nymphs brought him honey from the rocks; and he ate, and drank, and slept again, while the nymphs and shepherds danced and sang. And when he woke, they begged him to stay; but he would not. "I have a great work to do," he said; "I must be away toward the Isthmus, that I may go to Athens."

But the shepherds said, "Will you go alone toward Athens? None travel that way now, except in armed troops."

"As for arms, I have enough, as you see. And as for troops, an honest man is good enough company for himself. Why should I not go alone toward Athens?"

"If you do, you must look warily about you on the Isthmus, lest you meet Sinis, the robber, whom men call Pituocampes, the pine-bender; for he bends down two pine trees, and binds all travelers hand and foot between them; and when he lets the trees go again, their bodies are torn in sunder."

"And after that," said another, "you must go inland, and dare not pass over the cliffs of Sciron; for on the left hand are the mountains, and on the right the sea, so that you have no escape, but must needs meet Sciron, the robber, who will make you wash his feet, and while you are washing them he will kick you over the cliff, to the tortoise who lives below, and feeds upon the bodies of the dead."

And before Theseus could answer, another cried,

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"And after that is a worse danger still, unless you go inland always, and leave Eleusis far on your right. For in Eleusis rules Kerkuon, the cruel king, the terror of all mortals, who killed his own daughter Alope in prison. But she was changed into a fair fountain; and her child he cast out upon the mountains; but the wild mare gave it milk. And now he challenges all comers to wrestle with him; for he is the best wrestler in all Attica, and overthrows all who come; and those whom he overthrows he murders miserably, and his palace-court is full of their bones."

Then Theseus frowned, and said, "This seems indeed an ill-ruled land, and adventures enough in it to be tried. But if I am the heir of it, I will rule it and right it, and here is my royal sceptre." And he shook his club of bronze, while the nymphs and shepherds clung round him, and entreated him not to go.

But on he went, nevertheless, till he could see both the seas, and the citadel of Corinth towering high above all the land. And he passed swiftly along the Isthmus, for his heart burned to meet that cruel Sinis; and in a pine-wood at last he met him, where the Isthmus was narrowest and the road ran between high rocks. There he sat upon a stone by the wayside, with a young fir tree for a club across his knees, and a cord lay ready by his side; and over his head, upon the fir-tops, hung the bones of murdered men.

Then Theseus shouted to him, "Holla, thou valiant pine-bender, hast thou two fir-trees left for me?"

And Sinis leaped to his feet, and answered, pointing to the bones above his head, "My larder has grown empty lately, so I have two fir trees ready for thee." And he rushed on Theseus, lifting his club, and Theseus rushed upon him.

Then they hammered together till the green woods rang; but the metal was tougher than the pine; and

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Sinis's club broke right across, as the bronze came down upon it. Then Theseus heaved up another mighty stroke, and smote Sinis down upon his face; and knelt upon his back, and bound him with his own cord, and said, "As thou hast done to others, so shall it be done to thee." Then he bent down two young fir trees, and bound Sinis between them, for all his struggling and his prayers; and let them go, and ended Sinis, and went on, leaving him to the hawks and crows.

Then he went over the hills toward Megara, keeping close along the Saronic Sea, till he came to the cliffs of Sciron, and the narrow path between the mountain and the sea.

And there he saw Sciron sitting by a fountain, at the edge of the cliff. On his knees was a mighty club; and he had barred the path with stones, so that every one must stop who came up.

Then Theseus shouted to him and said, "Holla, thou tortoise-feeder, do thy feet need washing to-day?"

And Sciron leaped to his feet and answered:

"My tortoise is empty and hungry, and my feet need washing to-day." And he stood before his barrier, and lifted up his club in both hands.

Then Theseus rushed upon him; and sore was the battle upon the cliff; for when Sciron felt the weight of the bronze club, he dropped his own, and closed with Theseus, and tried to hurl him by main force over the cliff. But Theseus was a wary wrestler, and dropped his own club, and caught him by the throat and by the knee, and forced him back against the wall of stones, and crushed him up against them, till his breath was almost gone. And Sciron cried, panting, "Loose me, and I will let thee pass." But Theseus answered, "I must not pass till I have made the rough

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way smooth:" and he forced him back against the wall till it fell, and Sciron rolled head over heels.

Then Theseus lifted him up all bruised, and said, "Come hither and wash my feet." And he drew his sword, and sat down by the well, and said, "Wash my feet or I cut you piecemeal."

And Sciron washed his feet tremblingly; and when it was done, Theseus rose and cried, "As thou hast done to others, so shall it be done to thee. Go feed thy tortoise thyself:" and he kicked him over the cliff into the sea.

And whether the tortoise ate him, I know not; for some say that earth and sea both disdained to take his body, so foul it was with sin. So the sea cast it out upon the shore, and the shore cast it back into the sea, and at last the waves hurled it high into the air in anger; and it hung there long without a grave, till it was changed into a desolate rock, which stands there in the surge until this day.

This at least is true, which Pausanias tells, that in the royal porch at Athens he saw the figure of Theseus modelled in clay, and by him Sciron, the robber, falling headlong into the sea.

Then he went a long day's journey, past Megara, into the Attic land, and high before him rose the snow-peaks of Cithæron, all cold above the black pine woods, where haunt the Furies, and the raving Bacchæ, and the nymphs who drive men wild, far aloft upon the dreary mountains, where the storms howl all day long. And on his right hand was the sea always, and Salamis, with its island cliffs, and the sacred strait of the sea-fight, where afterwards the Persians fled before the Greeks. So he went all day until the evening, till he saw the Thriasian plain, and the sacred city of Eleusis, where the Earth Mother's Temple stands. For there she met Triptolemus, when all the land lay waste, Demeter the

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kind Earth-mother, and in her hands a sheaf of corn. And she taught him to plough the fallows, and to yoke the lazy kine; and she taught him to sow the seed-fields, and to reap the golden grain: and sent him forth to teach all nations, and give corn to laboring men. So at Eleusis all men honor her, whosoever tills the land; her and Triptolemus, her beloved, who gave corn to laboring men.

And he went along the plain into Eleusis, and stood in the market-place, and cried:

“Where is Kerkuon, the king of the city? I must wrestle a fall with him to-day.”

Then all the people crowded round him, and cried, “Fair youth, why will you die? Hasten out of the city, before the cruel king hears that a stranger is here.”

But Theseus went up through the town, while the people wept and prayed, and through the gates of the palace-yard, and through the piles of bones and skulls, till he came to the door of Kerkuon’s hall, the terror of all mortal men.

And there he saw Kerkuon sitting at the table in the hall alone; and before him was a whole sheep roasted, and beside him a whole jar of wine. And Theseus stood and called him, “Holla, thou valiant wrestler, wilt thou wrestle a fall to-day?”

And Kerkuon looked up and laughed, and answered, “I will wrestle a fall to-day; but come in, for I am lonely and thou weary, and eat and drink before thou die.”

Then Theseus went up boldly, and sat down before Kerkuon at the board; and he ate his fill of the sheep’s flesh, and drank his fill of the wine; and Theseus ate enough for three men, but Kerkuon ate enough for seven.

But neither spoke a word to the other, though they

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looked across the table by stealth; and each said in his heart, "He has broad shoulders; but I trust mine are as broad as his."

At last, when the sheep was eaten, and the jar of wine drained dry, King Kerkuon rose, and cried, "Let us wrestle a fall before we sleep."

So they tossed off all their garments, and went forth into the palace-yard; and Kerkuon bade strew fresh sand in an open space between the bones. And here the heroes stood fact to face, while their eyes glared like wild bulls'; and all the people crowded at the gates, to see what would befall.

And there they stood and wrestled, till the stars shone out above their heads; up and down and round, till the sand was stamped hard beneath their feet. And their eyes flashed like stars in the darkness, and their breath went up like smoke in the night air; but neither took nor gave a footstep, and the people watched silent at the gates.

But at last Kerkuon grew angry, and caught Theseus round the neck, and shook him as a mastiff shakes a rat; but he could not shake him off his feet.

But Theseus was quick and wary, and clasped Kerkuon round the waist, and slipped his loin quickly underneath him, while he caught him by the wrist; and then he heave a mighty heave, a heave which would have stirred an oak, and lifted Kerkuon, and pitched him, right over his shoulder, on the ground.

Then he leaped on him, and called, "Yield, or I kill thee!" but Kerkuon said no word; for his heart was burst within him, with the fall, and the meat, and the wine.

Then Theseus opened the gates, and called in all the people; and they cried, "You have slain our evil king; be you now our king, and rule us well."

"I will be your king in Eleusis, and I will rule you

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right and well; for this cause I have slain all evil-doers, Sinis, and Sciron, and this man last of all."

Then an aged man stepped forth, and said, "Young hero, hast thou slain Sinis? Beware, then, of Ægeus, king of Athens, to whom thou goest, for he is near of kin to Sinis."

"Then I have slain my own kinsman," said Theseus, "though well he deserved to die. Who will purge me from his death, for rightfully I slew him, unrighteous and accursed as he was?"

And the old man answered:

"That will the heroes do, the sons of Phytalus, who dwell beneath the elm tree in Aphidnai, by the bank of silver Cephisus; for they know the mysteries of the Gods. Thither you shall go and be purified, and after you shall be our king."

So he took an oath of the people of Eleusis, that they would serve him as their king, and went away next morning across the Thriasian plain, and over the hills toward Aphidnai, that he might find the sons of Phytalus.

And as he was skirting the Vale of Cephisus, along the foot of lofty Parnes, a very tall and strong man came down to meet him, dressed in rich garments. On his arms were golden bracelets, and round his neck a collar of jewels; and he came forward, bowing courteously, and held out both his hands, and spoke:

"Welcome, fair youth, to these mountains; happy am I to have met you! For what greater pleasure to a good man than to entertain strangers? But I see that you are weary. Come up to my castle, and rest yourself awhile."

"I give you thanks," said Theseus; "but I am in haste to go up the valley, and to reach Aphidnai, in the Vale of Cephisus."

"Alas! you have wandered far from the right way,

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and you cannot reach Aphidnai to-night; for there are many miles of mountain between you and it, and steep passes, and cliffs dangerous after nightfall. It is well for you that I met you; for my whole joy is to find strangers, and to feast them at my castle, and hear tales from them of foreign lands. Come up with me, and eat the best of venison, and drink the rich, red wine; and sleep upon my famous bed, of which all travelers say they never saw the like. For whatsoever the stature of my guest, however tall or short, that bed fits him to a hair, and he sleeps on it as he never slept before." And he laid hold on Theseus's hands, and would not let him go.

Theseus wished to go forwards; but he was ashamed to seem churlish to so hospitable a man; and he was curious to see that wondrous bed; and besides, he was hungry and weary; yet he shrank from the man, he knew not why; for though his voice was gentle and fawning, it was dry and husky like a toad's; and though his eyes were gentle, they were dull and cold like stones. But he consented, and went with the man up a glen which led from the road toward the peaks of Parnes, under the dark shadow of the cliffs.

And as they went up, the glen grew narrower, and the cliffs higher and darker. and beneath them a torrent roared, half seen between bare limestone crags. And around them was neither tree nor bush, while from the white peaks of Parnes the snow-blasts swept down the glen, cutting and chilling, till a horror fell on Theseus, as he looked round at that doleful place. And he asked at last, "Your castle stands, it seems, in a dreary region."

"Yes, but once within it, hospitality makes all things cheerful. But who are these?" and he looked back, and Theseus also; and far below, along the road which

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they had left, came a string of laden asses, and merchants walking by them, watching their ware.

"Ah, poor souls!" said the stranger. "Well for them that I looked back and saw them! And well for me, too, for I shall have the more guests at my feast. Wait awhile till I go down and call them, and we will eat and drink together the livelong night. Happy am I to whom Heaven sends so many guests at once!"

And he ran back down the hill, waving his hand and shouting to the merchants, while Theseus went slowly up the steep pass.

But as he went up he met an aged man, who had been gathering driftwood in the torrent-bed. He had laid down his fagot in the road, and was trying to lift it again to his shoulder. And when he saw Theseus, he called to him, and said: "O, fair youth, help me up with my burden; for my limbs are stiff and weak with years."

Then Theseus lifted the burden on his back. And the old man blessed him, and then looked earnestly upon him, and said:

"Who are you, fair youth, and wherefore travel you this doleful road?"

"Who I am my parents know; but I travel this doleful road because I have been invited by a hospitable man, who promises to feast me, and to make me sleep upon I know not what wondrous bed."

Then the old man clapped his hands together, and cried:

"O house of Hades, man-devouring; will thy maw never be full? Know, fair youth, that you are going to torment and to death; for he who met you (I will requite your kindness by another) is a robber and a murderer of men. Whatsoever stranger he meets he entices him hither to death; and as for this bed of

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which he speaks, truly it fits all comers, yet none ever rose alive off it save me."

"Why?" asked Theseus, astonished.

"Because, if a man be too tall for it, he lops his limbs till they be short enough, and if he be too short, he stretches his limbs till they be long enough; but me only he spared, seven weary years ago; for I alone of all fitted his bed exactly, so he spared me, and made me his slave. And once I was a wealthy merchant, and dwelt in brazen-gated Thebes; but now I hew wood and draw water for him, the torment of all mortal men."

Then Theseus said nothing, but he ground his teeth together.

"Escape, then," said the old man, "for he will have no pity on thy youth. But yesterday he brought up hither a young man and a maiden, and fitted them upon his bed; and the young man's hands and feet he cut off; but the maiden's limbs he stretched until she died, and so both perished miserably—but I am tired of weeping over the slain. And therefore he is called Procrustes, the stretcher, though his father called him Damastes. Flee from him; yet whither will you flee? The cliffs are steep, and who can climb them? and there is no other road."

But Theseus laid his hand upon the old man's mouth, and said, "There is no need to flee;" and he turned to go down the pass.

"Do not tell him that I have warned you, or he will kill me by some evil death;" and the old man screamed after him down the glen; but Theseus strode on in his wrath.

And he said to himself, "This is an ill-ruled land; when shall I have done ridding it of monsters?" And as he spoke, Procrustes came up the hill, and all the merchants with him, smiling and talking gayly. And

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when he saw Theseus, he cried, "Ah, fair young guest, have I kept you too long waiting?"

But Theseus answered, "The man who stretches his guests upon a bed, and hews off their hands and feet, what shall be done to him, when right is done throughout the land?"

Then Procrustes's countenance changed, and his cheeks grew green as a lizard, and he felt for his sword in haste; but Theseus leaped on him and cried:

"Is this true, my host, or is it false?" and he clasped Procrustes round the waist and elbow, so that he could not draw his sword.

"Is it true, my host, or is it false?" But Procrustes answered never a word.

Then Theseus flung him from him, and lifted up his dreadful club; and before Procrustes could strike him he had struck, and felled him to the ground.

And once again he struck him; and his evil soul fled forth, and went down to Hades squeaking like a bat into the darkness of a cave.

Then Theseus stripped him of his gold ornaments, and went up to his house, and found there great wealth and treasure, which he had stolen from the passers by. And he called the people of the country, whom Procrustes had spoiled a long time, and parted the spoil among them, and went down the mountains, and away.

And he went down the glens of Parnes, through mist, and cloud, and rain, down the slopes of oak, and lentisk, and arbutus, and fragrant bay, till he came to the Vale of Cephissus, and the pleasant town of Aphidnai, and the home of the Phyalid heroes, where they dwelt beneath a mighty elm.

And there they built an altar, and bade him bathe in Cephissus, and offer a yearling ram, and purified him from the blood of Sinis, and sent him away in peace.

And he went down the valley by Archarnai, and by

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the silver-swirling stream, while all the people blessed him; for the fame of his prowess had spread wide, till he saw the plain of Athens, and the hill where Athené dwells.

So Theseus went up through Athens, and all the people ran out to see him; for his fame had gone before him, and everyone knew of his mighty deeds. And all cried, "Here comes the hero who slew Sinis, and Phaia, the wild sow of Crommyon, and conquered Cercyon in wrestling, and slew Procrustes the pitiless." But Theseus went on sadly and steadfastly; for his heart yearned after his father; and he said, "How shall I deliver him from these leeches who suck his blood?"

So he went up the holy stairs, and into the Acropolis, where Ægeus's palace stood; and he went straight into Ægeus's hall, and stood upon the threshold, and looked round.

And there he saw his cousins sitting about the table, at the wine; many a son of Pallas, but no Ægeus among them. There they sat and feasted, and laughed, and passed the wine-cup round; while harpers harped, and slave girls sang, and the tumblers showed their tricks.

Loud laughed the sons of Pallas, and fast went the wine-cup round; but Theseus frowned, and said under his breath, "No wonder that the land is full of robbers, while such as these bear rule."

Then the Pallantids saw him, and called to him, half-drunk with wine—"Holla, tall stranger at the door, what is your will to-day?"

"I come hither to ask for hospitality."

"Then take it, and welcome. You look like a hero and a bold warrior; and we like such to drink with us."

"I ask no hospitality of you; I ask it of Ægeus, the king, the master of this house."

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At that some growled, and some laughed, and shouted, "Heydey, we are all masters here."

"Then I am master as much as the rest of you," said Theseus; and he strode past the table up the hall, and looked around for Ægeus, but he was nowhere to be seen.

The Pallantids looked at him, and then at each other; and each whispered to the man next him, "This is a forward fellow; he ought to be thrust out of the door." But each man's neighbor whispered in return, "His shoulders are broad; will you rise and put him out?" So they all sat still where they were.

Then Theseus called to the servants, and said, "Go tell King Ægeus, your master, that Theseus of Trœzene is here, and asks to be his guest awhile."

A servant ran and told Ægeus, where he sat in his chamber within, by Medeia, the dark witch-woman, watching her eye and hand. And when Ægeus heard of Trœzene, he turned pale and red again; and rose from his seat trembling, while Medeia watched him like a snake.

"What is Trœzene to you?" she asked. But he said, hastily, "Do you not know who this Theseus is? The hero who has cleared the country from all monsters; but that he came from Trœzene I never heard before. I must go out and welcome him."

So Ægeus came out into the hall; and when Theseus saw him, his heart leaped into his mouth, and he longed to fall on his neck and welcome him; but he controlled himself and said, "My father may not wish for me, after all. I will try him before I discover myself;" and he bowed low before Ægeus, and said, "I have delivered the king's realm from many monsters; therefore I am come to ask a reward of the king."

And old Ægeus looked on him, and loved him, as

what fond heart would not have done? But he only sighed, and said:

"It is little that I can give you, noble lad, and nothing that is worthy of you; for surely you are no mortal man, or at least no mortal's son."

"All I ask," said Theseus, "is to eat and drink at your table."

"That I can give you," said Ægeus, "if at least I am master in my own hall."

Then he bade them put a seat for Theseus, and set before him the best of the feast; and Theseus sat and ate so much that all the company wondered at him; but always he kept his club by his side.

But Medeia, the dark witch-woman, had been watching him all the while. She saw how Ægeus turned red and pale, when the lad said that he came from Trœzene. She saw, too, how his heart was opened toward Theseus; and how Theseus bore himself before all the sons of Pallas like a lion among a pack of curs. And she said to herself, "This youth will be master here; perhaps he is nearer to Ægeus already than mere fancy. At least the Pallantids will have no chance, by the side of such as he."

Then she went back into her chamber modestly, while Theseus ate and drank; and all the servants whispered, "This, then, is the man who killed the monsters! How noble are his looks, and how huge his size. Ah, would that he were our master's son!"

But presently Medeia came forth, decked in her jewels and her rich Eastern robes, and looking more beautiful than the day; so that all the guests could look at nothing else. And in her right hand she held a golden cup, and in her left a flask of gold; and she came up to Theseus, and spoke, in a sweet, soft, winning voice:

"Hail to the hero, the conqueror, the unconquered, the destroyer of all evil things! Drink, hero, of my

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charmed cup, which gives rest after every toil, which heals all wounds, and pours new life into the veins. Drink of my cup, for in it sparkles the wine of the East, and Nepenthe, the comfort of the Immortals."

And as she spoke she poured the flask into the cup; and the fragrance of the wine spread through the hall, like the scent of thyme and roses.

And Theseus looked up in her fair face, and into her deep, dark eyes. And as he looked, he shrank and shuddered; for they were dry like the eyes of a snake. And he rose, and said, "The wine is rich and fragrant, and the wine-bearer as fair as the immortals; but let her pledge me first herself in the cup, that the wine may be the sweeter from her lips."

Then Medeia turned pale, and stammered, "Forgive me, fair hero; but I am ill, and dare drink no wine."

And Theseus looked again into her eyes, and cried, "Thou shalt pledge me in that cup, or die." And he lifted up his brazen club, while all the guests looked on aghast.

Medeia shrieked a fearful shriek, and dashed the cup to the ground, and fled; and where the wine flowed over the marble pavement, the stone bubbled, and crumbled, and hissed, under the fierce venom of the draught.

But Medeia called her dragon chariot, and sprang into it and fled aloft, away over land and sea, and no man saw her more.

And Ægeus cried, "What hast thou done?" But Theseus pointed to the stone—"I have rid the land of an enchantment; now I will rid it of one more."

And he came close to Ægeus, and drew from his bosom the sword and the sandals, and said the words which his mother bade him.

And Ægeus stepped back a pace and looked at the lad till his eyes grew dim; he then cast himself on his

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neck and wept, and Theseus wept on his neck, till they had no strength left to weep more.

Then Ægeus turned to all the people, and cried, "Behold my son, children of Cecrops, a better man than his father was before him."

Who then were mad but the Pallantids, though they had been mad enough before? And one shouted, "Shall we make room for an upstart, a pretender, who comes from we know not where?" And another, "If he be one, we are more than one; and the stronger can hold his own." And one shouted one thing and one another; for they were hot and wild with wine; but all caught swords and lances off the wall, where the weapons hung around, and sprang forward to Theseus, and Theseus sprang forward to them.

And he cried, "Go in peace, if you will, my cousins; but if not, your blood be on your own heads." But they rushed at him; and then stopped short and railed him, as curs stop and bark when they rouse a lion from his lair.

But one hurled a lance from the rear rank, which passed close by Theseus's head; and at that Theseus rushed forward, and the fight began indeed. Twenty against one they fought, and yet Theseus beat them all; and those who were left fled down into the town where the people set on them, and drove them out, till Theseus was left alone in the palace, with Ægeus, his new-found father. But before nightfall all the town came up, with victims, and dances, and songs; and they offered sacrifices to Athené, and rejoiced all the night long, because their king had found a noble son, and an heir to his royal house.

So Theseus stayed with his father all the winter; and when the spring equinox drew near, all the Athenians grew sad and silent, and Theseus saw it, and asked the reason; but no one would answer him a word.

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Then he went to his father, and asked him; but Ægeus turned away his face and wept.

“Do not ask, my son, beforehand, about evils which must happen; it is enough to have to face them when they come.”

And when the spring equinox came, a herald came to Athens, and stood in the market, and cried, “O people and King of Athens, where is your yearly tribute?” Then a great lamentation arose throughout the city. But Theseus stood up to the herald, and cried:

“And who are you, dog-faced, who dare demand tribute here? If I did not reverence your herald’s staff, I would brain you with this club.”

And the herald answered proudly, for he was a grave and ancient man:

“Fair youth, I am not dog-faced or shameless; I do my master’s bidding, Minos the King of hundred-cities Crete, the wisest of all kings on earth. And you must be surely a stranger here, or you would know why I come, and that I come by right.”

“I am a stranger here. Tell me, then, why you come.”

“To fetch the tribute which King Ægeus promised to Minos, and confirmed his promise with an oath. For Minos conquered all this land, and Megara which lies to the east, when he came hither with a great fleet of ships, enraged about the murder of his son. For his son, Androgeos, came hither to the Panathenaic games, and overcame all the Greeks in the sports, so that the people honored him as a hero. But when Ægeus saw his valor, he envied him, and feared lest he should join the sons of Pallas, and take away the sceptre from him. So he plotted against his life, and slew him basely, no man knows how or where. Some say that he waylaid him by Oinoe, on the road which goes to Thebes; and some that he sent him against the bull of

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Marathon, that the beast might kill him. But Ægeus says that the young men killed him from envy, because he had conquered them in the games. So Minos came hither and avenged him, and would not depart till this land had promised him tribute, seven youths and seven maidens every year, who go with me in a black-sailed ship till they come to hundred-cities Crete."

And Theseus ground his teeth together, and said, "Wert thou not a herald I would kill thee, for saying such things of my father; but I will go to him, and know the truth." So he went to his father, and asked him; but he turned away his head and wept, and said, "Blood was shed in the land unjustly, and by blood it is avenged. Break not my heart by questions; it is enough to endure in silence."

Then Theseus groaned inwardly, and said, "I will go myself with these youths and maidens, and kill Minos upon his royal throne."

But Ægeus shrieked, and cried, "You shall not go, my son, the light of my old age, to whom alone I look to rule this people, after I am dead and gone. You shall not go, to die horribly, as those youths and maidens die; for Minos thrusts them into a labyrinth, which Daidalos made for him among the rocks,—Daidalos, the renegade, the accursed, the pest of this his native land. From that labyrinth no one can escape, entangled in its winding ways, before they meet the Minotaur, the monster, who feeds upon the flesh of men. There he devours them horribly, and they never see this land again."

Then Theseus grew red, and his ears tingled, and his heart beat loud in his bosom. And he stood awhile like a tall stone pillar, on the cliffs above some hero's grave; and at last he spoke:

"Therefore all the more I will go with them, and slay the accursed beast. Have I not slain all evil-doers

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and monsters, that I might free this land? Where are Periphetes, and Sinis, and Kerkuon, and Phaia, the wild sow? Where are the fifty sons of Pallas? And this Minotaur shall go the road which they have gone, and Minos himself, if he dare stay me."

"But how will you slay him, my son? For you must leave your club and your armor behind, and be cast to the monster, defenceless and naked like the rest."

And Theseus said, "Are there no stones in that labyrinth; and have I not fists and teeth? Did I need my club to kill Kerkuon, the terror of all mortal men?"

Then Ægeus clung to his knees; but he would not hear; and at last he let him go, weeping bitterly, and said only this one word:

"Promise me but this, if you return in peace, though that may hardly be: Take down the black sail of the ship (for I shall watch for it all day upon the cliffs), and hoist instead a white sail, that I may know afar off that you are safe."

And Theseus promised, and went out, and to the market-place where the herald stood, while they drew lots for the youths and maidens who were to sail in that doleful crew. And the people stood wailing and weeping, as the lot fell on this one and on that; but Theseus strode into the midst, and cried:

"Here is a youth who needs no lot. I myself will be one of the seven."

And the herald asked in wonder, "Fair youth, know you whither you are going?"

And Theseus said, "I know. Let us go down to the black-sailed ship."

So they went down to the black-sailed ship, seven maidens and seven youths, and Theseus before them all, and the people following them, lamenting. But Theseus whispered to his companions, "Have hope, for the monster is not immortal. Where are Periphetes, and

Sinis, and Sciron, and all whom I have slain?" Then their hearts were comforted a little; but they wept as they went on board, and the cliffs of Sunium rang, and all the isles of the Ægean Sea, with the voice of their lamentation, as they sailed on toward their deaths in Crete.

PART III

HOW THESEUS SLEW THE MINOTAUR

And at last they came to Crete, and to Cnosus, beneath the peaks of Ida, and to the palace of Minos, the great king, to whom Zeus himself taught laws. So he was the wisest of all mortal kings, and conquered all the Ægean isles; and his ships were as many as the sea-gulls, and his palace like a marble hill. And he sat among the pillars of the hall, upon his throne of beaten gold, and around him stood the speaking statues which Daidalos had made by his skill. For Daidalos was the most cunning of all Athenians, and he first invented the plumb-line, and the auger, and glue, and many a tool with which wood is wrought. And he first set up masts in ships, and yards, and his son made sails for them; but Perdix, his nephew, excelled him; for he first invented the saw and its teeth, copying it from the backbone of a fish; and invented, too, the chisel, and the compasses, and the potter's wheel which moulds the clay. Therefore Daidalos envied him, and hurled him headlong from the temple of Athené; but the Goddess pitied him (for she loves the wise), and changed him into a partridge, which flits forever about the hills. And Daidalos fled to Crete, to Minos, and worked for him for many a year, till he did a shameful deed, at which the sun hid his face on high.

Then he fled from the anger of Minos, he and Icaros,

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his son, having made themselves wings of feathers, and fixed the feathers with wax. So they flew over the sea towards Sicily; but Icaros flew too near the sun, and the wax of his wings was melted, and he fell into the Icarian Sea. But Daidalos came safe to Sicily, and there wrought many a wondrous work; for he made for King Cocalos a reservoir, from which a great river watered all the land; and a castle and a treasury on a mountain, which the giants themselves could not have stormed; and in Selinos he took the steam which comes up from the fires of Ætna, and made of it a warm bath of vapor, to cure the pains of mortal men; and he made a honeycomb of gold, in which the bees came and stored their honey, and in Egypt he made the fore-court of the temple of Hephaistos in Memphis, and a statue of himself within it, and many another wondrous work. And for Minos he made statues which spoke and moved, and the temple of Britomartis, and the dancing-hall of Ariadne, which he carved of fair white stone. And in Sardinia he worked for Iölaos, and in many a land beside, wandering up and down forever with his cunning, unlovely and accursed by men.

But Theseus stood before Minos, and they looked each other in the face. And Minos bade take them to prison, and cast them to the monster one by one, that the death of Androgeos might be avenged. Then Theseus cried:

“A boon, O Minos. Let me be thrown first to the beast. For I came hither for that very purpose, of my own will, and not by lot.”

“Who art thou, then, brave youth?”

“I am the son of him whom of all men thou hatest most, Ægeus, the king of Athens, and I am come here to end this matter.”

And Minos pondered awhile, looking steadfastly at him, and he thought, “The lad means to atone by his

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own death for his father's sin;" and he answered at last, mildly:

"Go back in peace, my son. It is a pity that one so brave should die."

But Theseus said, "I have sworn that I will not go back till I have seen the monster face to face."

And at that Minos frowned, and said, "Then thou shalt see him; take the madman away."

And they led Theseus away into the prison, with the other youths and maids.

But Ariadne, Minos's daughter, saw him, as she came out of her white stone hall; and she loved him for his courage and his majesty, and said, "Shame that such a youth should die!" And by night she went down to the prison, and told him all her heart; and said:

"Flee down to your ship at once, for I have bribed the guards before the door. Flee, you and all your friends, and go back in peace to Greece; and take me, take me with you! for I dare not stay after you are gone; for my father will kill me miserably if he knows what I have done."

And Theseus stood silent awhile; for he was astonished and confounded by her beauty; but at last he said, "I cannot go home in peace, till I have seen and slain this Minotaur, and avenged the deaths of the youths and maidens, and put an end to the terrors of my land."

"And will you kill the Minotaur? How then?"

"I know not, nor do I care; but he must be strong if he be too strong for me."

Then she loved him all the more, and said, "But when you have killed him, how will you find your way out of the labyrinth?"

"I know not, neither do I care; but it must be a strange road, if I do not find it out before I have eaten up the monster's carcass."

THESEUS.

Then she loved him all the more, and said:

“Fair youth, you are too bold; but I can help you, weak as I am. I will give you a sword, and with that, perhaps, you may slay the beast; and a clue of thread, and by that, perhaps, you may find your way out again. Only promise me, that if you escape safe you will take me home with you to Greece; for my father will surely kill me, if he knows what I have done.”

Then Theseus laughed, and said, “Am I not safe enough now?” And he hid the sword in his bosom, and rolled up the clue in his hand; and then he swore to Ariadne, and fell down before her, and kissed her hands and her feet; and she wept over him a long while, and then went away; and Theseus lay down and slept sweetly.

And when the evening came, the guards came in and led him away to the labyrinth.

And he went down into that doleful gulf, through winding paths among the rocks, under caverns, and arches, and galleries, and over heaps of fallen stone. And he turned on the left hand, and on the right hand, and went up and down, till his head was dizzy; but all the while he held his clue. For when he went in he had fastened it to a stone, and left it to unroll out of his hand as he went on; and it lasted him till he met the Minotaur, in a narrow chasm between black cliffs.

And when he saw him he stopped awhile, for he had never seen so strange a beast. His body was a man's; but his head was the head of a bull; and his teeth were the teeth of a lion; and with them he tore his prey. And when he saw Theseus he roared, and put his head down, and rushed right at him.

But Theseus stepped aside nimbly, and as he passed by, cut him in the knee; and ere he could turn in the narrow path, he followed him, and stabbed him again

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and again from behind, till the monster fled, bellowing wildly; for he had never before felt a wound. And Theseus followed him at full speed, holding the clue of thread in his left hand.

Then on, through cavern after cavern, under dark ribs of sounding stone, and up rough glens and torrent-beds, among the sunless roots of Ida, and to the edge of the eternal snow, went they, the hunter and the hunted, while the hills bellowed to the monster's bellow.

And at last Theseus came up with him, where he lay panting on a slab among the snow, and caught him by the horns, and forced his head back, and drove the keen sword through his throat.

Then he turned and went back, limping and weary, feeling his way down by the clue of thread, till he came to the mouth of that dreadful place; and saw waiting for him, whom but Ariadne!

And he whispered, "It is done!" and showed her the sword; and she laid her finger on her lips, and led him to the prison, and opened the doors, and set all the prisoners free, while the guards lay sleeping heavily; for she had silenced them with wine.

Then they fled to their ship together, and leaped on board, and hoisted up the sail; and the night lay dark around them, so that they passed through Minos's ships, and escaped all safe to Naxos; and there Ariadne became Theseus's wife.

PART IV

HOW THESEUS FELL BY HIS PRIDE

But that fair Ariadne never came to Athens with her husband. Some say that Theseus left her sleeping on Naxos among the Cyclades; and that Dionusos, the

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wine-king, found her, and took her up into the sky, as you shall see some day in a painting of old Titian's, one of the most glorious pictures upon earth. And some say that Dionusos drove away Theseus, and took Ariadne from him by force; but however that may be, in his haste or in his grief, Theseus forgot to put up the white sail. Now, Ægeus, his father, sat and watched on Sunium day after day, and strained his old eyes across the sea, to see the ship afar. And when he saw the black sail, and not the white one, he gave up Theseus for dead, and in his grief he fell into the sea, and died; so it is called Ægean to this day.

And now Theseus was king of Athens, and he guarded it and ruled it well.

For he killed the bull of Marathon, which had killed Androgeos, Minos's son; and he drove back the famous Amazons, the warlike women of the East, when they came from Asia, and conquered all Hellas, and broke into Athens itself. But Theseus stopped them there, and conquered them, and took Hippolute, their queen, to be his wife. Then he went out to fight against the Lapithai, and Peirithoos, their famous king; but when the two heroes came face to face they loved each other, and embraced, and became noble friends; so that the friendship of Theseus and Peirithoos is a proverb even now. And he gathered (so the Athenians say) all the boroughs of the land together, and knit them into one strong people, while before they were all parted and weak; and many another wise thing he did, so that his people honored him after he was dead, for many a hundred years, as the father of their freedom and their laws. And six hundred years after his death, in the famous fight at Marathon, men said that they saw the ghost of Theseus, with his mighty brazen club, fighting in the van of battle against the invading Persians for the country which he loved. And twenty

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years after Marathon, his bones (they say) were found in Scuros, an ile beyond the sea; and they were bigger than the bones of mortal man. So the Athenians brought them home in triumph; and all the people came out to welcome them; and they built over them a noble temple, and adorned it with sculptures and paintings, in which were told all the noble deeds of Theseus, and the Centaurs, and the Lapithai, and the Amazons; and the ruins of it are standing still.

But why did they find his bones in Scuros? Why did he not die in peace at Athens, and sleep by his father's side? Because, after his triumph, he grew proud, and broke the laws of God and man. And one thing worst of all he did, which brought him to his grave with sorrow. For he went down (they say beneath the earth) with that Peirithoos, his friend, to help him to carry off Persephone, the queen of the world below. But Peirithoos was killed miserably, in the dark fire-kingdoms underground; and Theseus was chained to a rock in everlasting pain. And there he sat for years, till Heracles, the mighty, came down to bring up the three-headed dog who sits at Pluto's gate. So Heracles loosed him from his chain, and brought him up to the light once more.

But when he came back his people had forgotten him, and Castor and Polydeuces, the sons of the wondrous Swan, had invaded his land, and carried off his mother, Aithra, for a slave, in revenge for a grievous wrong.

So the fair land of Athens was wasted, and another king ruled it, and drove out Theseus shamefully, and he fled across the sea to Scuros. And there he lived in sadness, in the house of Lucomedes, the king, till Lucomedes killed him by treachery, and there was an end of all his labors.

So it is still, my children, and so it will be to the end.

THESEUS

In those old Greeks, and in us also, all strength and virtue come from God. But if men grow proud and self-willed, and misuse God's fair gifts, He lets them go their own ways, and fall pitifully, that the glory may be His alone. God help us all, and give us wisdom, and courage to do noble deeds! but God keep pride from us when we have done them, lest we fall, and come to shame!

ATALANTA'S RACE

ATALANTA'S RACE

William Morris: From "The Earthly Paradise"

[Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenge'd; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.]

CHROUGH thick Arcadian woods a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
But since his horn-tipped bow, but seldom bent,
Now at the noon-tide naught had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds away,
Harkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,
And all the day-long noises of the wood,
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

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Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sunburnt face;
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done;
Whereon one farewell, backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won,
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land,
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,
Or midst the newly blossomed vines did stand,
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was: about him sung the birds,
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds
Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed;
While from the freshness of his blue abode,
Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget,
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there;
Where through, unquestioned of his race or name,

ATALANTA'S RACE.

He entered, and along the streets 'gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were wellnigh bare;
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he 'gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on,
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won,
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do.
And now our hunter looked for something new,
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat,
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy,
'Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councillors thereby;
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high,
He saw a golden image of the sun,
A silver image of the Fleet-foot One.

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind;
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword, intertwined
With yellow flowers; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting-place.

And there two runners did the sign abide
Foot set to foot,—a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well-knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circle of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

But on this day with whom shall he contend?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend, "
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.

She seemed all earthly matters to forget;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide gray eyes upon the goal were set
Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near,
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's
 clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When half-way to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss unhop'd for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard

ATALANTA'S RACE.

His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamor laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear gray eyes and deep,
Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

SO was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke,
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-headed, oft-repeated tale.

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

And with the last of all the hunter went,
Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen,
Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant,
Both why the vanquished man so slain had been,
And if the maiden were an earthly queen,
Or rather what much more she seemed to be,
No sharer in the world's mortality.

"Stranger," said he, "I pray she soon may die
Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!
King Schœneus' daughter is she verily,
Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
Was fain to end her life but new begun,
For he had vowed to leave but men alone
Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

"Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood,
And let wild things deal with her as they might,
But this being done, some cruel god thought good
To save her beauty in the world's despite:
Folk say that her, so delicate and white
As now she is, a rough, root-grubbing bear
Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

"In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,
Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,
But armed and swift, 'mid beasts destruction wrought,
Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay,
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

"So to this city, led by fate, she came
Whom known by signs, whereof I cannot tell,
King Schœneus for his child at last did claim,
Nor elsewhere since that day doth she dwell,

ATALANTA'S RACE.

Sending too many a noble soul to hell.—
What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

“Listen, my son, and love some other maid,
For she the saffron gown will never wear,
And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear:
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,
Yea, rather, if thou lovest him utterly,
Thou still may'st woo her ere thou comest to die,

“Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;
For, fearing as I deem the sea-born one,
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,
But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
He came the nighest that was slain to-day,
Although with him I deem she did but play.

“Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
To those that long to win her loveliness;
Be wise! be sure that many a maid there lives
Gentler than she, of beauty little less,
Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless,
When in some garden, knee set close to knee,
Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee.”

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
And left him for his own home presently:
But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan
Reached the thick wood, and there 'twixt tree and
tree
Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

'Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow,
As panting down the broad green glades he flew,
There by his horn the Dryads well might know
His thrust against the bear's heart had been true,
And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew,
But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
For none the more his restlessness was spent.

So wandering, he to Argive cities came,
And in the lists with valiant men he stood,
And by great deeds he won him praise and fame,
And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood;
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good
Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happened when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schoeneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,
Where still mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That, owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud, "And here too must I try,
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame,
And cast new glory on my father's name."

In spite of that, how beat his heart, when first
Folk said to him, "And art thou come to see

ATALANTA'S RACE.

That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run."

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe,
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
How long it was before the dawn begun
Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done!
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face
Looked down upon the murmur royally,
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said, "Canst thou live twice,
Fair son? canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice,
Thyself the victim? nay then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

"O fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the three-formed goddess she has made
To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

"Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer-up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume:
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb."

How should he listen to her earnest speech?
Words, such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead—
He turned about, and through the marketstead
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

Then said the King, "Stranger, what dost thou here?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mate to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis?"

"O King," he said, "thou sayest the word indeed;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son:
So fear not that to thy old name, O King,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring."

"Nay, Prince," said Schœneus, "welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand;
Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down thy luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

"Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
And what a bitter thing is death anear.
O Son! be wise, and hearken unto me,
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide:

"But if thou lovest life, then all is lost."
"Nay, King," Milanion said, "thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest forever lay."

"Nay," said King Schoeneus, "thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die:
And with my good-will wouldst thou have the maid,
For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

"And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget."
"Nay," said he, "couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set,
Then had I 'scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

"Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep."

He went with that, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

UPON the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle-trees,
Through the brass doors that guard the holy place,
And entering, hear the washing of the seas
That twice a day rise high above the base,
And with the southwest urging them, embrace
The marble feet of her that standeth there,
That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

Small is the fane through which the sea-wind sings
About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white,
But hung around are many precious things,
The gifts of those who, longing for delight,
Have hung them there within the goddess' sight,
And in return have taken at her hands
The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

And thither now has come Milanion,
And showed unto the priests' wide-open eyes
Gifts fairer than all those that there have shown,
Silk cloth, inwrought with Indian fantasies,
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things,
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the Sea-born One he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft,
And while the incense trickles from his hands,

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her: "O Thou, who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress,
Despise me not for this my wretchedness!

"O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer?

"O great one, some men love, and are ashamed;
Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee?

"Think then, will it bring honor to thy head
If folk say, 'Everything aside he cast
And to all fame and honor was he dead,
And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly,
He to his helper did not cease to cry.'

"Nay, but thou wilt help; they who died before
Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,
Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and winners of renown.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

“O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
O, set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where naught but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track,—
The golden age, the golden age come back!

“O fairest, hear me now, who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still:
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee!

“But none the less this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords.”

Then from the altar back a space he drew,
But from the Queen turned not his face away,
But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue
That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing gray,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down,
Nor had he moved, when the dim golden light,
Like the far lustre of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night,

FAMOUS TALES OF GODS AND HEROES.

Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

Naught noted he the shallow flowing sea
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim,
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn,
And naught the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,
He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south-wind that lovingly
Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky,
Not sun or moon, for all the world was gray,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw naught for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odors breathed around,
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found
To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of Divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place;
Then he unwitting cried aloud her name,
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, "Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear?
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

"See, by my feet three golden apples lie—
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,

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Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

“And note, that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care,
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
By sight of these amid her glory stayed.

“For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

“Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana’s raiment must unbind
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn’s clime,
And thou with eager arms about her twined
Beholdest first her gray eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the Helper of unhappy men.”

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmers doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and gray,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream,
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep; but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then, leaving the fair place where this befell,
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

NOW has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running-place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But yet—what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, "We come to die,
Look down upon us for a little while,
That, dead, we may bethink us of thy smile."

But he—what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,

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E'en if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise,
And wish that she were clad in other guise?
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard,
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before,
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time past o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more?
Why does she tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woful victory fear?

But while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out,
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part;
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though, slackening once, she turned her head about,
But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand;
Then trembling she her feet together drew,
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy; some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

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Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And, mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note, too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had wellnigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit;
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid,
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around,
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had **she**
To win the day, though now but scanty **space**
Was left betwixt him and the winning-place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet,
Quickly she gained upon him, till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet

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And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win,
Once more, an unblest woful victory—
And yet—and yet—why does her breath begin
To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? why do her gray eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find,
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined.
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

SHATTER the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed forever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk, make no delay,
Open King Schœneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguent brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

APOLLO

APOLLO

Rev. G. W. Cox: From "Tales of Ancient Greece"

I THE COMING OF APOLLO

FROM land to land the lady Lêtô wandered in fear and sorrow, for no city or country would give her a home where she might abide in peace. From Crete to Athens, from Athens to Ægina, from Ægina to the heights of Pelion and Athos, through all the islands of the wide Ægæan Sea, Skyros and Imbros and Lemnos, and Chios the fairest of all, she passed, seeking a home. But in vain she prayed each land to receive her, until she came to the island of Delos, and promised to raise it to great glory if only there she might rest in peace. And she lifted up her voice and said, "Listen to me, O island of the dark sea. If thou wilt grant me a home, all nations shall come unto thee, and great wealth shall flow in upon thee; for here shall Phœbus Apollo, the lord of light and life, be born, and men shall come hither to know his will and win his favor." Then answered Delos, and said, "Lady, thou promisest great things; but they say that the power of Phœbus Apollo will be such as nothing on the wide earth may withstand; and mine is but a poor and stony soil, where there is little to please the eye of those who look upon me. Wherefore I fear that he will despise my hard and barren land, and go to some

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other country where he will build a more glorious temple, and grant richer gifts to the people who come to worship him." But Lêtô sware by the dark water of Styx, and the wide heaven above, and the broad earth around her, that in Delos should be the shrine of Phœbus, and that there should the rich offerings burn on his altar the whole year round.

So Lêtô rested in the island of Delos, and there was Phœbus Apollo born. And there was joy among the undying gods who dwell in Olympos, and the earth laughed beneath the smile of heaven. Then was his temple built in Delos, and men came to it from all lands to learn his will and offer rich sacrifices on his altar.

Long time Apollo abode in Delos; and every year all the children of Iôn were gathered to the feast which was held before his temple. But at length it came to pass that Apollo went through many lands, journeying towards Pytho. With harp in hand he drew nigh to the gates of Olympos, where Zeus and the gods dwell in their glory; and straightway all rejoiced for the sweetness of his harping. The Muses sang the undying gifts of the gods, and the griefs and woes of mortal men who cannot flee from old age and death. The bright Horai joined hands together with Hêbê and Harmonia; and Ares stood by the side of Aphroditê with Hermes the slayer of Argos, gazing on the face of Phœbus Apollo, which glistened as with the light of the new-risen sun. Then from Olympos he went down into the Pierian land, to Iolkos and the Lelantian plain; but it pleased him not there to build himself a home. Thence he wandered on to Mykalessos, and, traversing the grassy plains of Teumessos, came to the sacred Thebes; but neither would he dwell there, for no man had yet come thither, neither was there road or path, but only wild forest in all the land.

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Further and further he roamed, across the stream of Kephisos and beyond Okalea and Haliartos, until he came to Telphûsa. There he thought to build himself a temple, for the land was rich and fair; so he said, "Beautiful Telphûsa, here would I rest in thy happy vale, and here shall men come to ask my will and seek for aid in the hour of fear; and great glory shall come to thee while I abide in thy land." But Telphûsa was moved with anger when she saw Phœbus marking out the place for his shrine and laying its foundations; and she spake craftily to him and said, "Listen to me, Phœbus Apollo. Thou seekest here to have a home, but here thou canst never rest in peace; for my broad plain will tempt men to the strife of battle, and the tramp of war-horses shall vex the stillness of thy holy temple. Nay, even in time of peace, the lowing cattle shall come in crowds to my fountain, and the tumult will grieve thine heart. But go thou to Krisa, and make for thyself a home in the hidden clefts of Parnassos, and thither shall men hasten with their gifts from the utmost bounds of the earth." So Apollo believed her words, and he went on through the land of the Phlegyes until he came to Krisa. There he laid the foundations of his shrine in the deep cleft of Parnassos; and Trophonios and Agamedes, the children of Erginos, raised the walls. There also he found the mighty dragon who nursed Typhâon, the child of Hêrê, and he smote him, and said, "Rot there upon the ground, and vex not more the children of men. The days of thy life are ended, neither can Typhœus himself aid thee now, or Chimæra of the evil name. But the earth and the burning sun shall consume and scorch thy body." So the dragon died, and his body rotted on the ground; wherefore the name of that

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place is called Pytho, and they worship Phœbus Apollo as the great Pythian king.

But Phœbus knew now that Telphûsa had deceived him, because she said nothing of the great dragon of Krisa, or of the roughness of the land. So he hastened back in his anger and said, "Thou hast beguiled me, Telphûsa, with thy crafty words; but no more shall thy fountain send forth its sweet water, and the glory shall be mine alone." Then Apollo hurled great crags down and choked the stream near the beautiful fountain, and the glory departed from Telphûsa.

Then he thought within himself what men he should choose to be his priests at Pytho; and far away, as he stood on a high hill, he saw a ship sailing on the wine-faced sea, and the men who were in it were Cretans, sailing from the land of King Minos to barter their goods with the men of Pylos. So Phœbus leaped into the sea, and changed his form to the form of a dolphin, and hastened to meet the ship. None knew whence the great fish came which smote the side of their vessel with its mighty fins; but all marvelled at the sight, as the dolphin guided the ship through the dark waters, and they sat trembling with fear, as they sped on without a sail by the force of the strong south wind. From the headland of Malea and the land of the Lakonians they passed to Helos and to Tænaron where Hélios dwells, in whom the sons of men take delight, and where his cattle feed in the rich pastures. There the sailors would have ended their wanderings; but they sought in vain to land, for the ship would not obey its helm. Onward it went along the coast of the island of Pelops, for the mighty dolphin guided it. So, from Arênê and Arguphea it came to the sandy Pylos, by Chalkis and Dymê to the land of the Epeians, to Pheræ and to Ithaka. There the men saw spread out before them the waters which

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wash the shores of Krisa; and the strong west wind came with its fierce breath, and drove them on to the east and towards the sunrising until they came to Krisa.

Then Phœbus Apollo came forth from the sea like a star, and the brightness of his glory reached up to the high heaven. Into his shrine he hastened, and on the altar he kindled the undying fire, and his bright arrows were hurled abroad, until all Krisa was filled with the blaze of his lightnings, so that fear came upon all, and the cries of the women rose shrill on the sultry air. Then, swift as a thought of the heart, he hastened back to the ship; but his form was now the form of a man in his beauty, and his golden locks flowed down over his broad shoulders. From the shore he called out to the men in the Cretan ship, and said, "Who are ye, strangers? and do ye come as thieves and robbers, bringing terror and sorrow whithersoever ye may go? Why stay ye thus, tarrying in your ship, and seek not to come out upon the land? Surely ye must know that all who sail on the wide sea rejoice when their ship comes to the shore, that so they may come forth and feast with the people of the land." So spake Phœbus Apollo; and the leader of the Cretans took courage and said, "Stranger, sure I am that thou art no mortal man, but one of the bright heroes or the undying gods. Wherefore tell us now the name of this land and of the people who dwell in it. Hither we never sought to come, for we were sailing from the land of Minos to barter our wares at Pylos; but some one of the gods hath brought us hither against our will." Then spake the mighty Apollo and said to them, "O strangers, who have dwelt in Knossos of the Cretan land, think not to return to your ancient home, to your wives or to your children. Here ye must guard and keep my shrine, and ye shall

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be honored of all the children of men. For I am the son of Zeus, and my name is Phœbus Apollo. It was I who brought you hither across the wide sea, not in guile or anger, but that in all time to come ye may have great power and glory, that ye may learn the counsels of the undying gods, and make known their will to men. Hasten then to do my bidding; let down your sails, and bring your ship to the shore. Then bring out your goods and build an altar on the beach, and kindle a fire, and offer white barley as an offering; and because I led you hither under the form of a dolphin, so worship me as the Delphian god. Then eat bread and drink wine, as much as your soul may lust after; and after that come with me to the holy place, where ye shall guard my temple."

So they obeyed the words of Phœbus; and when they had offered the white barley and feasted richly on the seashore, they rose up to go, and Apollo led them on their way. His harp was in his hand, and he made sweet music, such as no mortal ear had heard before; and they raised the chant *Io Pæan*, for a new power was breathed into their hearts, as they went along. They thought not now of toil or sorrow; but with feet unwearied they went up the hill until they reached the clefts of Parnassos, where Phœbus would have them dwell.

Then out spake the leader of the Cretans and said boldly, "O king, thou hast brought us far away from our homes to a strange land; whence are we to get food here? No harvest will grow on these bare rocks, no meadows are spread out before our eyes. The whole land is bare and desolate." But the son of Zeus smiled and said, "O foolish man, and easy to be cast down, if ye had your wish ye would gain nothing but care and toil. But listen to me and ponder well my words. Stretch forth your hands, and slay each day

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the rich offerings, for they shall come to you without stint and sparing, seeing that the sons of men shall hasten hither from all lands, to learn my will and ask for aid in the hour of fear. Only guard ye my temple well, and keep your hands clean and your hearts pure; for if ye deal rightly, no man shall take away your glory; but if ye speak lies and do iniquity, if ye hurt the people who come to my altar, and make them to go astray, then shall other men rise up in your place, and ye yourselves shall be thrust out forever, because ye would not obey my words."

II NIOBE AND LETO

NIOBE had many sons and many daughters, and she was very proud of them, for she thought that in all the island of Delos, and even in all the world, there were no children so beautiful as her own. And as they walked, and leaped, and ran amongst the hills and valleys of that rocky island, all the people looked at them and said, "Surely there are no other children like the children of the lady Niobê." And Niobê was so pleased at hearing this, that she began to boast to every one how strong and beautiful her sons and daughters were.

Now, Artemis and Phœbus Apollo, the children of Lêtô, were very strong and fair indeed. And whenever the lady Niobê saw them, she tried to think that her own children were still more beautiful, although she could hardly help feeling that she had never seen any so glorious as Artemis and Apollo. So one day the lady Lêtô and the lady Niobê were together, and their children were playing before them; and Phœbus Apollo played on his golden harp, and then he shot from his golden bow the arrows which never missed

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their mark. But Niobê never thought of Apollo's bow, and the arrows which he had in his quiver; and she began to boast to the lady Lêtô of the beauty of her children, and she said, "See, Lêtô; look at my seven sons and my seven daughters, and see how strong and fair they are. Apollo and Artemis are beautiful, I know, but my children are fairer still; and you have only two children, while I have seven sons and seven daughters." So Niobê went on boasting, and never thought whether she should make Lêtô angry. But Lêtô said nothing until Niobê and her children were gone, and then she called Apollo, and said to him, "I do not love the lady Niobê. She is always boasting that her sons and daughters are more beautiful than you and your sister; and I wish you to show her that no one else is so strong as my children, or so beautiful." Then Phœbus Apollo was angry, and a dark frown came upon his fair young face, and his eyes were like the flaming fire. But he said nothing; and he took his golden bow in his hand, and put his quiver with his terrible arrows across his shoulder, and went away to the hills where he knew that the lady Niobê and her children were. And when he saw them he went and stood on a bare high rock, and stretched the string of his golden bow, and took an arrow from his quiver. Then he held out the bow, and drew the string to his breast, until the point of the arrow touched the bow; and then he let the arrow fly. Straight to its mark it went, and one of the lady Niobê's sons fell dead. Then another arrow flew swiftly from the bow, and another, and another, and another, till all the sons and all the daughters of Niobê lay dead on the hillside. Then Apollo called out to Niobê, and said, "Go and boast now of your beautiful children."

It had all passed so quickly that Niobê scarcely

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knew whether it was not a dream. She could not believe that her children were really gone—all her sons and all her daughters, whom she had just now seen so happy and strong around her. But there they lay, still and cold upon the ground. Their eyes were closed as if they were asleep, and their faces had still a happy smile, which made them look more beautiful than ever. And Niobê went to them all one by one, and touched their cold hands, and kissed their pale cheeks; and then she knew that the arrows of Phœbus Apollo had killed them. Then she sat down on a stone which was close to them, and the tears flowed from her eyes, and they streamed down her face, as she sat there as still as her children who lay dead before her. She never raised her head to look at the blue sky—she never moved hand or foot, but she sat weeping on the cold rock till she became as cold as the rock herself. And still her tears flowed on, and still her body grew colder and colder, until her heart beat no more, and the lady Niobê was dead. But there she still seemed to sit and weep, for her great grief had turned her into a stone; and all the people, whenever they came near that place, said, "See, there sits the lady Niobê, who was turned into stone, when Phœbus Apollo killed all her children, because she boasted that no one was so beautiful as they were." And long after, when the stone was grown old and covered with moss, the people still thought they could see the form of the lady Niobê; for the stone, which did not look much like the form of a woman when they came near to it, seemed at a distance just as though Niobê still sat there, weeping for her beautiful children whom Phœbus Apollo slew.

III DAPHNE

IN the vale of Tempê, where the stream of Peneios flows beneath the heights of Olympus towards the sea, the beautiful Daphnê passed the days of her happy childhood. Fresh as the earliest morning, she climbed the crags to greet the first rays of the rising sun; and when he had driven his fiery horses over the sky, she watched his chariot sink behind the western mountains. Over hill and dale she roamed, free and light as the breeze of spring. Other maidens round her spoke each of her love, but Daphnê cared not to listen to the voice of man, though many a one sought her to be his wife.

One day, as she stood on the slopes of Ossa in the glow of early morning, she saw before her a glorious form. The light of the new-risen sun fell on his face with a golden splendor, and she knew that it was Phœbus Apollo. Hastily he ran towards her, and said, "I have found thee, Child of the Morning. Others thou hast cast aside, but from me thou canst not escape. I have sought thee long, and now will I make thee mine." But the heart of Daphnê was bold and strong; and her cheek flushed and her eye sparkled with anger, as she said, "I know neither love nor bondage. I live free among the streams and hills; and to none will I yield my freedom." Then the face of Apollo grew dark with anger, and he drew near to seize the maiden; but swift as the wind she flew away. Over hill and dale, over crag and river, the feet of Daphnê fell lightly as falling leaves in autumn; but nearer yet came Phœbus Apollo, till at last the strength of the maiden began to fail. Then she stretched out her hands, and cried for help to the lady Dêmêtêr; but she came not to her aid. Her head was dizzy, and her limbs trembled in utter feebleness as she drew near to the

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broad river which gladdens the plains of Thessaly, till she almost felt the breath of Phœbus, and her robe was almost in his grasp. Then, with a wild cry, she said, "Father Peneios, receive thy child," and she rushed into the stream, whose waters closed gently over her.

She was gone; and Apollo mourned for his madness in chasing thus the free maiden. And he said, "I have punished myself by my folly; the light of the morning is taken out of the day. I must go on alone till my journey shall draw towards its end." Then he spake the word, and a laurel came up on the bank where Daphnê had plunged into the stream; and the green bush with its thick clustering leaves keeps her name forever.

IV KYRENE

AMONG the valleys and hills of Thessaly, Kyrênê, the fair-armed daughter of Hypseus, wandered free as the deer upon the mountain side. Of all the maidens of the land, there was none to vie with her in beauty; neither was there any that could be matched with her for strength of arm and speed of foot. She touched not the loom or the spindle; she cared not for banquets with those who revel under houses. Her feasts were spread on the green grass, beneath the branching tree; and with her spear and dagger she went fearless among the beasts of the field, or sought them out in their dens.

One day she was roaming along the winding banks of Peneios, when a lion sprang from a thicket across her path. Neither spear nor dagger was in her hand, but the heart of Kyrênê knew no fear, and she grappled with him until the beast sank wearied at her feet. She had conquered, but not unseen, for Phœbus

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Apollo had watched the maiden as she battled with the angry lion; and straightway he called the wise centaur Cheiron, who had taught him in the days of his youth. "Come forth," he said, "from thy dark cave, and teach me once again, for I have a question to ask thee. Look at yonder maiden, and the beast which lies beaten at her feet; and tell me (for thou art wise) whence she comes, and what name she bears. Who is she, that thus she wanders in these lonely valleys without fear and without hurt? Tell me if she may be wooed and won." Then Cheiron looked steadfastly at the face of Phœbus, and a smile passed over his countenance as he answered, "There are hidden keys to unlock the prison-house of love; but why asketh thou me of the maiden's name and race,—thou who knowest the end of all things, and all the paths along which the sons of men are journeying? Thou hast counted the leaves which burst forth in the spring-time, and the grains of sand which the wind tosses on the river bank, or by the seashore. But if I must needs match thee in subtle wisdom, then listen to my words. The maiden is wooed and won already; and thou art going to bear her as thy bride over the dark sea, and place her in golden halls on the far-off Libyan land. There she shall have a home rich in every fruit that may grow up from the earth; and there shall thy son Aristaios be born, on whose lips the bright Horai shall shed nectar and ambrosia, so that he may not come under the doom of mortal men."

Then Phœbus Apollo smiled as he answered, "Of a truth, Cheiron, thou deservest thy fame, for there are none to match with thee in wisdom; and now I go to bear Kyréné to the land which shall be called by her name, and where, in time to come, her children shall build great and mighty cities, and their name

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shall be spread abroad throughout all the earth for strength and wisdom."

So the maiden Kyrênê came to the Libyan land, and there Aristaios, her child, was born. And Hermes carried the babe to the bright Horai, who granted him an endless life; and he dwelt in the broad Libyan plains, tending his flocks, and bringing forth rich harvests from the earth. For him the bees wrought their sweetest honey; for him the sheep gave their softest wool; for him the cornfields waved with the fullest grain. No blight touched the grapes which his hand had tended; no sickness vexed the herds which fed in his pastures. And they who dwelt in the land said, "Strife and war bring no such gifts as these to the sons of men; therefore let us live in peace."

V HERMES

EARLY in the morning, long ago, in a cave of the great Kyllenian hill, lay the new-born Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia. The cradle-clothes were scarcely stirred by his soft breathing, while he slept as peacefully as the children of mortal mothers. But the sun had not driven his fiery chariot over half the heaven, when the babe rose from his sacred cradle and stepped forth from the dark cavern. Before the threshold a tortoise fed lazily on the grass; and when the child saw it, he laughed merrily. "Ah! this is luck indeed," he said; "whence hast thou come, pretty creature, with thy bright speckled shell? Thou art mine now, and I must take thee into my cave. It is better to be under shelter than out of doors; and though there may be some use in thee while thou livest, it will comfort thee to think that thou wilt sing sweetly when thou art dead."

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So the child Hermes took up his treasure in both arms, and carried it into the cavern. There he took an iron probe, and pierced out the life of the tortoise; and quick as thought, he drilled holes in its shell, and fixed in them reed-canes. Then across the shell he fastened a piece of ox-hide, and with seven sheep-gut cords he finished the making of his lyre. Presently he struck it with the bow, and a wave of sweet music swelled out upon the air. Like the merry songs of youths and maidens, as they sport in village feasts, rose the song of the child Hermes; and his eyes laughed slyly as he sang of the loves of Zeus and Maia, and how he himself was born of the mighty race of the gods. Still he sang on, telling of all that he saw around him in the glittering home of the nymph, his mother. But all the while, as he sang, his mind was pondering on other things; and when the song was ended, he went forth from the cave, like a thief in the night, on his wily errand.

The sun was hastening down the slope of heaven with his chariot and horses to the slow-rolling stream of Ocean, as Hermes came to the shadowy hills of Pieria, where the cattle of the gods feed in their large pastures. There he took fifty from the herd, and made ready to drive them to the Kyllenian hill. But before him lay vast plains of sand; and, therefore, lest the track of the cattle should tell the tale of his thieving, he drove the beasts round about by crooked paths, until it seemed as though they had gone to the place from which he had stolen them. He had taken good care that his own footsteps should not betray him, for with branches of tamarisk and myrtle, well twisted with their leaves, he hastily made himself sandals, and sped away from Pieria. One man alone saw him, a very old man, who was working in his vineyard on the sunny plain of Onchêstos. To him

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Hermes went quickly, and said, "Old man, thou wilt have plenty of wine when these roots come all into bearing trim. Meanwhile, keep a wise head on thy crumpled shoulders, and take heed not to remember more than may be convenient."

Onwards, over dark hills, and through sounding dells, and across flowery plains, hastened the child Hermes, driving his flock before him. The night waxed and waned, and the moon had climbed to her watchtower in the heaven, when, in the flush of early morning, Hermes reached the banks of the great Alpheian stream. There he turned his herd to feed on the grassy plain, while he gathered logs of wood, and, rubbing two sticks together, kindled the first flame that burned upon the earth where dwell the sons of men. The smoke went up to the heaven, and the flame crackled fiercely beneath it, as Hermes brought forth two of the herd, and, tumbling them on their back, pierced out the life of both. Their hides he placed on the hard rock; their flesh he cut up into twelve portions; and so Hermes hath the right of ordering all sacrifices which the children of men offer to the undying gods. But he ate not of the flesh or fat, although hunger sorely pressed him, and he burnt the bones in the fire, and tossed his tamarisk sandals into the swift stream of Alpheios. Then he quenched the fire, and with all his might trampled down the ashes, until the pale moon rose up again in the sky. So he sped on his way to Kyllênê. Neither god nor man saw him as he went, nor did the dogs bark. Early in the morning he reached his mother's cave, and darted through the keyhole of the door, softly as a summer breeze. Without a sound his little feet paced the stony floor, till he reached his cradle and lay down, playing like a babe among the clothes with

his left hand, while his right held the tortoise-lyre hidden underneath them.

But, wily though he was, he could not cheat his mother. To his cradle she came and said, "Whither hast thou wandered in the dark night? Crafty rogue, mischief will be thy ruin. The Son of Lêtô will soon be here, and bear thee away bound in chains not easily shaken off. Out of my sight, little wretch, born to worry the blessed gods and plague the race of men!" "Mother," said Hermes, gently, "why talk thus to me, as though I were like mortal babes, a poor cowering thing, to cry for a little scolding? I know thy interest and mine: why should we stay here in this wretched cave, with never a gift nor a feast to cheer our hearts? I shall not stay. It is pleasanter to banquet with the gods than to dwell in a cavern in draughts of whistling wind. I shall try my luck against Apollo, for I mean to be his peer; and if he will not suffer me, and if Zeus, my father, takes not up my cause, I will see what I can do for myself, by going to the shrine of Pytho and stealing thence the tripods and cauldrons, the iron vessels and glittering robes. If I may not have honor in Olympos, I can at least be the prince of thieves."

Meanwhile, as they talked together, Eôs rose up from the deep ocean stream, and her tender light flushed across the sky, while Apollo hastened to Onchêstos and the holy grove of Poseidon. There the old man was at work in his vineyard, and to him Phœbus went quickly and said, "Friend hedger, I am come from Pieria looking for my cows. Fifty of them have been driven away, and the bull has been left behind with the four dogs who guarded them. Tell me, old man, hast thou seen anyone with these cows, on the road?" But the old man said that it would be a hard matter to tell of all that he might chance to

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see. "Many travelers journey on this road, some with evil thoughts, some with good; I cannot well remember all. This only I know, that yesterday, from the rising of the sun to its setting, I was digging in my vineyard; and I think, but I am not sure, that I saw a child with a herd of cattle. A babe he was, and he held a staff in his hand, and, as he went, he wandered strangely from the path on either side."

Then Phœbus stayed not to hear more, for now he knew of a surety that the new-born son of Zeus had done him the mischief. Wrapped in a purple mist, he hastened to beautiful Pylos, and came on the track of the cattle. "O Zeus!" he cried, "this is indeed a marvel. I see the footprints of cattle, but they are marked as though the cattle were going to the asphodel meadow, not away from it. Of man or woman, of wolf, bear, or lion, I spy not a single trace. Only here and there I behold the footprint of some strange monster, who has left his mark at random on either side of the road." So on he sped to the woody heights of Kyllênê, and stood on the doorstep of Maia's cave, Straightway the child Hermes nestled under the cradle-clothes in fear, like a new-born babe asleep. But, seeing through all his craft, Phœbus looked steadily through all the cave and opened three secret places full of the food and drink of the gods, and full also of gold and silver and raiment; but not a cow was in any of them. At last he fixed his eyes sternly on the child and said, "Wily babe, where are my cows? If thou wilt not tell me, there will be strife between us; and then I shall hurl thee down to the gloomy Tartaros, to the land of darkness whence neither thy father nor thy mother can bring thee back, and where thy kingdom shall be only over the ghosts of men." "Ah!" said Hermes, "these are dreadful words indeed; but why dost thou chide me thus, or come here to look for cows? I have not seen

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or heard of them, nor has anyone told me of them. I cannot tell where they are, or get the reward, if any were promised, for discovering them. This is no work of mine; what do I care for but for sleeping and sucking, and playing with my cradle-clothes, and being washed in warm water? My friend, it will be much better that no one should hear of such a silly quarrel. The undying gods would laugh at the very thought of a little babe leaving its cradle to run after cows. I was born but yesterday. My feet are soft, and the ground is hard. But if it be any comfort to thee, I will swear by my father's head (and that is a very great oath) that I have not done this deed, nor seen anyone else steal your cows, and that I do not know what cows are."

As he spoke he looked stealthily from one side to the other, while his eyes winked slyly, and he made a long soft whistling sound, as if the words of Phœbus had amused him mightily. "Well, friend," said Apollo, with a smile, "thou wilt break into many a house, I see, and thy followers after thee; and thy fancy for beef will set many a herdsman grieving. But come down from the cradle, or this sleep will be thy last. Only this honor can I promise thee, to be called the prince of thieves forever." So, without ado Phœbus caught up the babe in his arms; but Hermes gave so mighty a sneeze that he quickly let him fall, and Phœbus said to him gravely, "This is the sign that I shall find my cows: show me, then, the way." In great fear, Hermes started up and pulled the cradle-clothes over both his ears, as he said, "Cruel god, what dost thou seek to do with me? Why worry me thus about cows? I would there were not a cow in all the earth. I stole them not, nor have I seen anyone steal the cows, whatever things cows may be. I know nothing but

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their name. But come; Zeus must decide the quarrel between us."

Thus each with his own purpose spake to the other, and their minds grew all the darker, for Phœbus sought only to know where his cows might be, while Hermes strove only to cheat him. So they went quickly and sulkily on, the babe first, and Phœbus following after him, till they came to the heights of Olympos and the home of the mighty Zeus. There Zeus sat on the throne of judgment, and all the undying gods stood around him. Before them in the midst stood Phœbus and the child Hermes, and Zeus said, "Thou hast brought a fine booty after thy hunt to-day, Phœbus—a child of a day old. A fine matter is this to put before the gods."

"My father," said Apollo, quickly, "I have a tale to tell which will show that I am not the only plunderer. After a weary search, I found this babe in the cave of Kyllênê; and a thief he is such as I have never seen, whether among gods or men. Yester eve he stole my cattle from the meadow, and drove them straight towards Pylos to the shore of the sounding sea. The tracks left were such that gods and men might well marvel at them. The footprints of the cows on the sand were as though they were going to my meadows, not away from them; his own footmarks beggar all words, as if he had gone neither on his feet nor on his hands, and as if the oak tops had suddenly taken to walking. So was it on the sandy soil; and after this was passed, there remained no marks at all. But an old man saw him driving them on the road to Pylos. There he shut up the cattle at his leisure, and, going to his mother's cave, lay down in his cradle like a spark in a mass of cinders, which an eagle could scarcely spy out. When I taxed him with the theft, he boldly denied it, and told me that

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he had not seen the cows or heard aught of them, and could not get the reward if one were offered for restoring them."

So the words of Phœbus were ended, and the child Hermes made obeisance to Zeus, the lord of all the gods, and said, "Father Zeus, I shall tell thee the truth, for I am a very truthful being, and I know not how to tell a lie. This morning, when the sun was but newly risen, Phœbus came to my mother's cave, looking for cows. He brought no witnesses; he urged me by force to confess; he threatened to hurl me into the abyss of Tartaros. Yet he has all the strength of early manhood, while I, as he knows, was born but yesterday, and am not in the least like a cattle-reiver. Believe me (by thy love for me, thy child) that I have not brought these cows home, or passed beyond my mother's threshold. This is strict truth. Nay, by Hêlios and the other gods, I swear that I love thee and have respect for Phœbus. Thou knowest that I am guiltless, and, if thou wilt, I will also swear it. But, spite of all his strength, I will avenge myself some day on Phœbus for his unkindness; and then help thou the weaker."

So spake Hermes, winking his eyes, and holding the clothes to his shoulders; and Zeus laughed aloud at the wiliness of the babe, and bade Phœbus and the child be friends. Then he bowed his head and charged Hermes to show the spot where he had hidden the cattle, and the child obeyed, for none may despise that sign and live. To Pylos they hastened and to the broad stream of Alpheios, and from the fold Hermes drove forth the cattle. But as he stood apart, Apollo beheld the hides flung on the rock, and he asked Hermes, "How wast thou able, cunning rogue, to flay two cows, thou a child but one day old? I fear thy might in time to come, and I cannot let thee

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live." Again he seized the child, and bound him fast with willow bands; but the child tore them from his body like flax, so that Phœbus marvelled greatly. In vain Hermes sought a place wherein to hide himself, and great fear came upon him till he thought of his tortoise-lyre. With his bow he touched the strings, and the wave of song swelled out upon the air more full and sweet than ever. He sang of the undying gods and the dark earth, how it was made at the first, and how to each of the gods his own appointed portion was given, till the heart of Apollo was filled with a mighty longing, and he spake to Hermes, and said, "Cattle-reiver, wily rogue, thy song is worth fifty head of cattle. We will settle our strife by and by. Meanwhile, tell me, was this wondrous gift of song born with thee, or hast thou it as a gift from any god or mortal man? Never on Olympos, from those who cannot die, have I heard such strains as these. They who hear thee may have what they will, be it mirth, or love, or sleep. Great is thy power, and great shall be thy renown, and by my cornel staff I swear that I will not stand in the way of thy honor or deceive thee in anywise."

Then said Hermes, "I grudge thee not my skill, son of Lêtô, for I seek but thy friendship. Yet thy gifts from Zeus are great. Thou knowest his mind, thou canst declare his will, and reveal what is stored up in time to come for undying gods or mortal men. This knowledge I fain would have. But my power of song shall this day be thine. Take my lyre, the soother of the wearied, the sweet companion in hours of sorrow or of feasting. To those who come skilled in its language, it can discourse sweetly of all things, and drive away all thoughts that annoy and cares that vex the soul. To those who touch it, not knowing how to draw forth its speech, it will babble strange

nonsense, and rave with uncertain moanings. But thy knowledge is born with thee, and so my lyre is thine. Wherefore now let us feed the herds together, and with our care they shall thrive and multiply. There is no more cause for anger."

So saying, the babe held out the lyre, and Phœbus Apollo took it. In his turn he gave to the child Hermes a glittering scourge, with charge over his flocks and herds. Then, touching the chords of the lyre, he filled the air with sweet music, and they both took their way to Olympus, and Zeus was glad at heart to see that the wrath of Apollo had passed away. But Phœbus dreaded yet the wiles of Hermes, and said, "I fear me much, child of Maia, that in time to come thou mayest steal both my harp and my bow, and take away my honor among men. Come now, and swear to me by the dark water of Styx that thou wilt never do me wrong." Then Hermes bowed his head, and swore never to steal anything from Apollo, and never to lay hands on his holy shrine; and Phœbus swore that of all the undying gods there should be none so dear to him as Hermes. "And of this love," he said, "I will give thee a pledge. My golden rod shall guard thee, and teach thee all that Zeus may say to me for the well or ill doing of gods or men. But the higher knowledge for which thou didst pray may not be thine; for that is hidden in the mind of Zeus, and I have sworn a great oath that none shall learn it from me. But the man who comes to me with true signs, I will never deceive; and he who puts trust in false omens and then comes to inquire at my shrine, shall be answered according to his folly, but his offering shall go into my treasure-house. Yet further, son of Maia, in the clefts of Parnassos far away dwell the winged Thriai, who taught me long ago the secret things of times to come. Go thou

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then to the three sisters, and thus shalt thou test them. If they have eaten of the honeycomb before they speak, they will answer thee truly; but if they lack the sweet food of the gods, they will seek to lead astray those who come to them. These I give thee for thy counsellors; only follow them warily; and have thou dominion over all flocks and herds, and over all living things that feed on the wide earth; and be thou the guide to lead the souls of mortal men to the dark kingdom of Hades."

So was the love of Apollo for Hermes made sure; and Hermes hath his place amongst all the deathless gods and dying men. Nevertheless, the sons of men have from him no great gain, for all night long he vexes them with his treacherous wiles.

PROMETHEUS

PROMETHEUS

Rev. G. W. Cox: From "Tales of Ancient Greece"

I THE WRATH OF ZEUS

CHERE was strife between Zeus and men; for Prometheus stood forth on their side and taught them how they might withstand the new god who sat on the throne of Kronos; and he said, "O men, Zeus is greedy of riches and honor; and your flocks and herds will be wasted with burnt-offerings, if ye offer up to Zeus the whole victim. Come and let us make a covenant with him, that there may be a fair portion for him and for men." So Prometheus chose out a large ox, and slew him, and divided the body. Under the skin he placed the entrails and the flesh, and under the fat he placed the bones. Then he said, "Choose thy portion, O Zeus, and let that on which thou layest thine hands be thy share forever." So Zeus stretched forth his hand in haste, and placed it upon the fat; and fierce was his wrath when he found only the bare bones underneath it. Wherefore men offer up to the undying gods only the bones and fat of the victims that are slain.

Then in his anger Zeus sought how he might avenge himself on the race of men; and he took away from them the gift of fire, so that they were vexed by cold and darkness and hunger, until Prometheus brought them down fire which he had stolen from heaven. Then was the rage of Zeus still more cruel, and he smote

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Promêtheus with his thunderbolts; and at his bidding Hermes bare him to the crags of Caucasus, and bound him with iron chains to the hard rock, where the vulture gnawed his heart with its beak.

But the wrath of Zeus was not appeased, and he sought how he might yet more vex the race of men; and he remembered how the Titan Promêtheus had warned them to accept no gift from the gods, and how he left his brother Epimêtheus to guard them against the wiles of the son of Kronos. And he said within himself, "The race of men knows neither sickness nor pain, strife or war, theft or falsehood; for all these evil things are sealed up in the great cask which is guarded by Epimêtheus. I will let loose these evils, and the whole earth shall be filled with woe and misery."

So he called Hephaistos, the lord of fire, and he said, "Make ready a gift which all the undying gods shall give to the race of man. Take earth, and fashion it into the shape of woman. Very fair let it be to look upon, but give her an evil nature, that the race of men may suffer for all the deeds that they have done me." Then Hephaistos took the clay and moulded from it the image of a fair woman, and Athênê clothed her in a beautiful robe, and placed a crown upon her head, from which a veil fell over her snowy shoulders. And Hermes, the messenger of Zeus, gave her the power of words, and a greedy mind, to cheat and deceive the race of men. Then Hephaistos brought her before the assembly of the gods, and they marveled at the greatness of her beauty; and Zeus took her by the hand and gave her to Epimêtheus, and said, "Ye toil hard, ye children of men: behold one who shall soothe and cheer you when the hours of toil are ended. The undying gods have taken pity on you, because ye have none to comfort you; and woman is their gift to men, therefore is her name called Pandora."

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Then Epimêtheus forgot the warning of his brother, and the race of men did obeisance to Zeus, and received Pandôra at his hands; for the greatness of her beauty enslaved the hearts of all who looked upon her. But they rejoiced not long in the gift of the gods; for Pandôra saw a great cask on the threshold of the house of Epimêtheus, and she lifted the lid; and from it came strife and war, plague and sickness, theft and violence, grief and sorrow. Then in her terror she set down the lid again upon the cask, and Hope was shut up within it, so that she could not comfort the race of men for the grievous evil which Pandôra had brought upon them.

II THE PUNISHMENT OF PROMETHEUS

IN the halls of Inachos, king of Argos, Zeus beheld and loved the fair maiden Iô; but when Hêrê the queen knew it, she was very wroth and sought to slay her. Then Zeus changed the maiden into a heifer, to save her from the anger of Hêrê; but presently Hêrê learned that the heifer was the maiden whom she hated, and she went to Zeus and said, "Give me that which I shall desire;" and Zeus answered, "Say on." Then Hêrê said, "Give me that beautiful heifer which I see feeding in the pastures of King Inachos." So Zeus granted her prayer, for he liked not to confess what he had done to Iô to save her from the wrath of Hêrê; and Hêrê took the heifer and bade Argos with the hundred eyes watch over it by night and by day.

Long time Zeus sought how he might deliver the maiden from the vengeance of Hêrê; but he strove in vain, for Argos never slept, and his hundred eyes saw everything around him, and none could approach without being seen and slain. At the last Zeus sent Hermes,

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the bright messenger of the gods, who stole gently towards Argos, playing soft music on his lute. Soothingly the sweet sounds fell upon his ear, and a deep sleep began to weigh down his eyelids, until Argos with the hundred eyes lay powerless before Hermes. Then Hermes drew his sharp sword, and with a single stroke he smote off his head; wherefore men call him the slayer of Argos with the hundred eyes. But the wrath of Hêrê was fiercer than ever when she learned that her watchman was slain; and she swore that the heifer should have no rest, but wander in terror and pain from land to land. So she sent a gadfly to goad the heifer with its fiery sting over hill and valley, across sea and river, to torment her if she lay down to rest, and madden her with pain when she sought to sleep. In grief and madness she fled from the pastures of Inachos, past the city of Erechtheus into the land of Kadmos the Theban. On and on still she went, resting not by night or day, through the Dorian and Thessalian plains, until at last she came to the wild Thracian land. Her feet bled on the sharp stones; her body was torn by the thorns and brambles, and tortured by the stings of the fearful gadfly. Still she fled on and on, while the tears streamed often down her cheeks, and her moaning showed the greatness of her agony. "O Zeus," she said, "dost thou not see me in my misery? Thou didst tell me once of thy love; and dost thou suffer me now to be driven thus wildly from land to land, without hope of comfort or rest? Slay me at once, I pray thee, or suffer me to sink into the deep sea, that so I may put off the sore burden of my woe."

But Iô knew not that, while she spake, one heard her who had suffered even harder things from Zeus. Far above her head, towards the desolate crags of Caucasus, the wild eagle soared shrieking in the sky, and the vulture hovered near, as though waiting close to

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some dying man till death should leave him for its prey. Dark snow-clouds brooded heavily on the mountain, the icy wind crept lazily through the frozen air; and Iô thought that the hour of her death was come. Then, as she raised her head, she saw far off a giant form, which seemed fastened by nails to the naked rock; and a low groan reach her ear, as of one in mortal pain, and she heard a voice which said, "Whence comest thou, daughter of Inachos, into this savage wilderness? Hath the love of Zeus driven thee thus to the icy corners of the earth?" Then Iô gazed at him in wonder and awe, and said, "How dost thou know my name and my sorrows? and what is thine own wrong? Tell me (if it is given to thee to know) what awaits thee and me in the time to come; for sure I am that thou art no mortal man. Thy giant form is as the form of gods or heroes, who come down sometimes to mingle with the sons of men; and great must be the wrath of Zeus, that thou shouldst be thus tormented here." Then he said, "Maiden, thou seest the Titan Promêtheus, who brought down fire for the children of men, and taught them how to build themselves houses and till the earth, and how to win for themselves food and clothing. I gave them wise thoughts and good laws and prudent counsel, and raised them from the life of beasts to a life which was fit for speaking men. But the son of Kronos was afraid at my doings, lest, with the aid of men, I might hurl him from his place and set up new gods upon his throne. So he forgot all my good deeds in times past, how I had aided him when the earth-born giants sought to destroy his power and heaped rock on rock and crag on crag to smite him on his throne; and he caught me by craft, telling me in smooth words how that he was my friend, and that my honor should not fail in the halls of Olympos. So he took me unawares and bound me with iron chains, and bade Hephaistos

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take and fasten me to this mountain-side, where the frost and wind and heat scorch and torment me by day and night, and the vulture gnaws my heart with its merciless beak. But my spirit is not wholly cast down; for I know that I have done good to the sons of men, and that they honor the Titan Promêtheus, who has saved them from cold and hunger and sickness. And well I know, also, that the reign of Zeus shall one day come to an end, and that another shall sit at length upon his throne, even as now he sits on the throne of his father Kronos. Hither come, also, those who seek to comfort me; and thou seest before thee the daughters of Okeanos, who have but now left the green halls of their father to talk with me. Listen then to me, daughter of Inachos, and I will tell thee what shall befall thee in time to come. Hence from the ice-bound chain of Caucasus thou shalt roam into the Scythian land and the regions of the Chalybes. Thence thou shalt come to the dwelling-place of the Amâzons on the banks of the river Thermôdon; these shall guide thee on thy way, until at length thou shalt come to a strait, which thou wilt cross, and which shall tell by its name forever where the heifer passed from Europe into Asia. But the end of thy wanderings is not yet."

Then Iô could no longer repress her grief, and her tears burst forth afresh; and Promêtheus said, "Daughter of Inachos, if thou sorrowest thus at what I have told thee, how wilt thou bear to hear what beyond these things there remains for thee to do?" But Iô said, "Of what use is it, O Titan, to tell me of these woful wanderings? Better were it now to die and be at rest from all this misery and sorrow." "Nay, not so, O maiden of Argos," said Promêtheus, "for if thou livest, the days will come when Zeus shall be cast down from his throne; and the end of his reign shall also be the end of my

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sufferings. For when thou hast passed by the Thra-
kian Bosphoros into the land of Asia, thou wilt wander
on through many regions, where the Gorgons dwell,
and the Arimaspians and Ethiopians, until at last thou
shalt come to the three-cornered land where the mighty
Nile goes out by its many arms into the sea. There
shall be thy resting-place, and there shall Epaphos, thy
son, be born, from whom, in times yet far away, shall
spring the great Herakles, who shall break my chain
and set me free from my long torments. And if in this
thou doubtest my words, I can tell thee of every land
through which thou hast passed on thy journey hither;
but it is enough if I tell thee how the speaking oaks
of Dodona hailed thee as one day to be the wife of Zeus
and the mother of the mighty Epaphos. Hasten, then,
on thy way, daughter of Inachos. Long years of pain
and sorrow await thee still; but my griefs shall endure
for many generations. It avails not now to weep; but
this comfort thou hast, that thy lot is happier than
mine; and for both of us remains the surety that the
right shall at last conquer, and the power of Zeus shall
be brought low, even as the power of Kronos, whom he
hurled from his ancient throne. Depart hence quickly,
for I see Hermes the messenger drawing nigh, and per-
chance he comes with fresh torments for thee and me."

So Iô went on her weary road, and Hermes drew
nigh to Promêtheus, and bade him once again yield
himself to the will of the mighty Zeus. But Promê-
theus laughed him to scorn; and as Hermes turned to
go away, the icy wind came shrieking through the air,
and the dark cloud sank lower and lower down the
hillside, until it covered the rock on which the body of
the Titan was nailed; and the great mountain heaved
with the earthquake, and the blazing thunderbolts
darted fearfully through the sky. Brighter and brighter
flashed the lightning, and louder pealed the thunder in

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the ears of Promêtheus, but he quailed not for all the fiery majesty of Zeus; and still, as the storm grew fiercer and the curls of fire were wreathed around his form, his voice was heard amid the din and roar, and it spake of the day when the good shall triumph, and unjust power shall be crushed and destroyed forever.

HERCULES

HERCULES

- I. The Toils of Herakles
- II. Hercules and Cacus

I THE TOILS OF HERAKLES

Rev. G. W. Cox: From "Tales of Ancient Greece"

BY the doom of his father Zeus, Herakles served in Argos the false and cruel Eurystheus. For so it was that Zeus spake of the birth of Herakles to Hêrê, the queen, and said, "This day shall a child be born of the race of Perseus, who shall be the mightiest of the sons of men." Even so he spake, because Atê had deceived him by her evil counsel. And Hêrê asked whether this should be so in very deed; and Zeus bowed his head, and the word went forth which could not be recalled. Then Hêrê went to the mighty Eileithyiai, and by their aid she brought it about that Eurystheus was born before Herakles the son of Zeus.

So the lot was fixed that all his life long Herakles should toil at the will of a weak and crafty master. Brave in heart and stout in body, so that no man might be matched with him for strength or beauty, yet was he to have no profit of all his labor till he should come to the land of the undying gods. But it grieved Zeus that the craft of Hêrê, the queen, had brought grievous wrong on his child, and he cast forth Atê from the halls of Olympos, that she might no

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more dwell among the gods. Then he spake the word that Herakles should dwell with the gods in Olympos, as soon as the days of his toil on earth should be ended.

Thus the child grew in the house of Amphitryon, full of beauty and might, so that men marvelled at his great strength; for as he lay one day sleeping, there came two serpents into the chamber, and twisted their long coils round the cradle, and peered upon him with their cold, glassy eyes, till the sound of their hissing woke him from his slumber. But Herakles trembled not for fear, but he stretched forth his arms and placed his hands on the serpents' necks, and tightened his grasp more and more till they fell dead on the ground. Then all knew by this sign that Herakles must do great things and suffer many sorrows, but that in the end he should win the victory. So the child waxed great and strong, and none could be matched with him for strength of arm and swiftness of foot and in taming of horses and in wrestling. The best men in Argos were his teachers, and the wise centaur Cheiron was his friend, and taught him ever to help the weak and take their part against any who oppressed them. So, for all his great strength, none were more gentle than Herakles, none more full of pity for those who were bowed down by pain and labor.

But it was a sore grief to Herakles that all his life long he must toil for Eurystheus, while others were full of joy and pleasure and feasted at tables laden with good things. And so it came to pass that one day, as he thought of these things, he sat down by the wayside, where two paths met, in a lonely valley far away from the dwellings of men. Suddenly, as he lifted up his eyes, he saw two women coming towards him, each from a different road. They were both fair to look upon; but the one had a soft and

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gentle face, and she was clad in a seemly robe of pure white. The other looked boldly at Herakles, and her face was more ruddy, and her eyes shone with a hot and restless glare. From her shoulders streamed the long folds of her soft embroidered robe, which scantily hid the beauty of her form beneath. With a quick and eager step she hastened to Herakles, that so she might be the first to speak. And she said, "I know, O man of much toil and sorrow, that thy heart is sad within thee, and that thou knowest not which way thou shalt turn. Come then with me, and I will lead thee on a soft and pleasant road, where no storms shall vex thee and no sorrows shall trouble thee. Thou shalt never hear of wars and battles, and sickness and pain shall not come nigh to thee; but all day long shalt thou feast at rich banquets and listen to the songs of minstrels. Thou shalt not want for sparkling wine, and soft robes, and pleasant couches; thou shalt not lack the delights of love, for the bright eyes of maidens shall look gently upon thee, and their song shall lull thee to sleep in the soft evening hour, when the stars come out in the sky." And Herakles said, "Thou promisest to me pleasant things, lady, and I am sorely pressed down by a hard master. What is thy name?" "My friends," said she, "call me the happy and joyous one; and they who look not upon me with love have given me an evil name, but they speak falsely."

Then the other spake and said, "O Herakles, I too know whence thou art, and the doom that is laid upon thee, and how thou hast lived and toiled even from the days of thy childhood; and therefore I think that thou wilt give me thy love, and if thou dost, then men shall speak of thy good deeds in time to come, and my name shall be yet more exalted. But I have no fair words wherewith to cheat thee. Nothing good is ever reached without labor; nothing great is ever

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won without toil. If thou seek for fruit from the earth, thou must tend and till it; if thou wouldst have the favor of the undying gods, thou must come before them with prayers and offerings; if thou longest for the love of men, thou must do them good." Then the other brake in upon her words and said, "Thou seest, Herakles, that Aretê seeks to lead thee on a long and weary path, but my broad and easy road leads thee quickly to happiness." Then Aretê answered her (and her eye flashed with anger), "O wretched one, what good thing hast thou to give, and what pleasure canst thou feel, who knowest not what it is to toil? Thy lusts are pampered, thy taste is dull. Thou quaffest the rich wine before thou art thirsty, and fillest thyself with dainties before thou art hungry. Though thou art numbered amongst the undying ones, the gods have cast thee forth out of heaven, and good men scorn thee. The sweetest of all sounds, when a man's heart praises him, thou hast never heard; the sweetest of all sights, when a man looks on his good deeds, thou hast never seen. They who bow down to thee are weak and feeble in youth, and wretched and loathsome in old age. But I dwell with the gods in heaven, and with good men on the earth; and without me nothing good and pure may be thought and done. More than all others am I honored by the gods, more than all others am I cherished by the men who love me. In peace and in war, in health and in sickness, I am the aid of all who seek me; and my help never fails. My children know the purest of all pleasures, when the hour of rest comes after the toil of day. In youth they are strong, and their limbs are quick with health; in old age they look back upon a happy life; and when they lie down to the sleep of death, their name is cherished among men for their brave and good deeds. Love me, therefore, Herakles, and obey my words, and thou shalt

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dwelt with me, when thy toil is ended, in the home of the undying gods."

Then Herakles bowed down his head and swore to follow her counsels; and when the two maidens passed away from his sight, he went forth with a good courage to his labor and suffering. In many a land he sojourned and toiled to do the will of the false Eurystheus. Good deeds he did for the sons of men: but he had no profit of all his labor, save the love of the gentle Iolê. Far away in Æchalia, where the sun rises from the eastern sea, he saw the maiden in the halls of Eurytos, and sought to win her love. But the word which Zeus spake to Hêrê, the queen, gave him no rest; and Eurystheus sent him forth to other lands, and he saw the maiden no more.

But Herakles toiled on with a good heart, and soon the glory of his great deeds was spread abroad throughout all the earth. Minstrels sang how he slew the monsters and savage beasts who vexed the sons of men, how he smote the Hydra in the land of Lernai, and the wild boar which haunted the groves of Erymanthos, and the Harpies who lurked in the swamps of Stymphalos. They told how he wandered far away to the land of the setting sun, when Eurystheus bade him pluck the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides,—how over hill and dale, across marsh and river, through thicket and forest, he came to the western sea, and crossed to the African land where Atlas lifts up his white head to the high heaven,—how he smote the dragon which guarded the brazen gates, and brought the apples to King Eurystheus. They sang of his weary journey when he roamed through the land of the Ethiopians and came to the wild and desolate heights of Caucasus,—how he saw a giant form high on the naked rock, and the vulture which gnawed the Titan's heart with its beak.

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They told how he slew the bird, and smote off the cruel chains, and set Promêtheus free. They sang how Eurystheus laid on him a fruitless task, and sent him down to the dark land of King Hades to bring up the monster Kerberos, how upon the shore of the gloomy Acheron he found the mighty hound who guards the home of Hades and Persephônê, how he seized him in his strong right hand and bare him to King Eurystheus. They sang of the days when he toiled in the land of Queen Omphalê beneath the Libyan sun, how he destroyed the walls of Ilion when Laomedon was king, and how he went to Kalydon and wooed and won Dêianeira, the daughter of the chieftain Oineus.

Long time he abode in Kalydon, and the people of the land loved him for his kindly deeds. But one day his spear smote the boy Eunomos; and his father was not angry, because he knew that Herakles sought not to slay him. Yet Herakles would go forth from the land, for his heart was grieved for the death of the child. So he journeyed to the banks of the Evênos, where he smote the centaur Nessos because he sought to lay hands on Dêianeira. Swiftly the poison from the barb of the spear ran through the centaur's veins; but Nessos knew how to avenge himself on Herakles, and with a faint voice he besought Dêianeira to fill a shell with his blood, so that, if ever she lost the love of Herakles, she might win it again by spreading it on a robe for him to wear.

So Nessos died; and Herakles went to the land of Trachis, and there Dêianeira abode while he journeyed to the eastern sea. Many times the moon waxed and waned in the heaven, and the corn sprang up from the ground and gave its golden harvest; but Herakles came not back. At last the tidings came how he had done great deeds in distant lands, how Eurytos, the king of Œchalia, was slain, and how among the captives was

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the daughter of the king, the fairest of all the maidens of the land.

Then the words of Nessos came back to Dêianeira, and she hastened to anoint a broidered robe; for she thought only that the love of Herakles had passed away from her, and that she must win it to herself again. So with words of love and honor, she sent the gift for Herakles to put on; and the messenger found him on the Keneian shore, where he was offering rich sacrifices to Zeus his father, and gave him the broidered robe in token of the love of Dêianeira. Then Herakles wrapt it closely round him, and he stood by the altar while the dark smoke went up in a thick cloud to heaven. Presently the vengeance of Nessos was accomplished. Through the veins of Herakles the poison spread like devouring fire. Fiercer and fiercer grew the burning pain, and Herakles vainly strove to tear the robe and cast it from him. It ate into his flesh; and as he struggled in his agony, the dark blood gushed from his body in streams. Then came the maiden Iolê to his side. With her gentle hands she sought to soothe his pain; and with pitying words to cheer him in his woe. Then once more the face of Herakles flushed with a deep joy, and his eye glanced with a pure light, as in the days of his might and strength; and he said, "Ah, Iolê, brightest of maidens, thy voice shall cheer me as I sink down in the sleep of death. I loved thee in the bright morning time, when my hand was strong and my foot swift; but Zeus willed not that thou shouldst be with me in my long wanderings. Yet I grieve not now, for again thou hast come, fair as the soft clouds which gather round the dying sun." Then Herakles bade them bear him to the high crest of Oita and gather wood. So when all was ready, he lay down to rest, and they kindled the great pile. The black mists were spreading over the sky, but still Herakles sought

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to gaze on the fair face of Iolê and to comfort her in her sorrow. "Weep not, Iolê," he said; "my toil is done, and now is the time for rest. I shall see thee again in the bright land which is never trodden by the feet of night."

Blacker and blacker grew the evening shades; and only the long line of light broke the darkness which gathered round the blazing pile. Then from the high heaven came down the thick cloud, and the din of its thunder crashed through the air. So Zeus carried his child home, and the halls of Olympos were opened to welcome the bright hero who rested from his mighty toil. There the fair maiden Aretê placed a crown upon his head, and Hêbê clothed him in a white robe for the banquet of the gods.

HERCULES AND CACUS

Virgil's "Æneid," Conington's Translation

[Hercules (Alcides) having despoiled Geryon and captured herds of stately cattle, is bereft of part of his spoil by the giant-monster Cacus, who drives away four bulls and four heifers, concealing their trail. Hercules pursues him to his hidden den in the mountains and slays him.]

BEHOLD yon beetling cliff o'erhung,
Those crags in wild confusion flung,
That mountain-dwelling, all forlorn,
And rocks from their foundations torn!
Beneath the hill a cavern ran
Where Cacus lived, half beast, half man:
No sunbeam e'er came in:
The wet ground reeked with fresh-spilt gore,
And human heads adorned the door
With foul and ghastly grin.
Dark Vulcan was the monster's sire:
He vomited Vulcanian fire,
And, glorying in so proud a birth,
Shook with his bulk the solid earth.

We, too, when yearning to be freed,
Found heavenly succor in our need.
At length a strong avenger came,
Alcides, in the glow of fame
From Geryon spoiled and killed:

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His captured bulls he led this way
Victorious, and the stately prey
 Bank-side and valley filled.
But Cacus, spurred by Furies on
To leave no wickedness undone,
Four bulls, four heifers, beauteous all,
Bears off in plunder from the stall:
And these, to hide their track, he trails
Back through the valley by their tails,
And thus, the footprints all reversed,
Conceals them in his lair accursed.
No sign, no mark the foray gave
To lead the seeker to the cave:
Till when at last Amphitryon's son
Removed his herd, their pasture done,
 And stood prepared to go,
The oxen at departing fill
With noisy utterance grove and hill,
 And breathe a farewell low:
When hark! a heifer from the den
Makes answer to the sound again,
 And mocks her wily foe.

Black choler filled Alcides' heart:
He snatches club and bow and dart,
 And scales the mountain's height:
Then, nor till then, was Cacus seen
With quailing eye, and troubled mien:
Swifter than swiftest wind he flies
At once, and to the cavern hies,
 While terror wings his flight.
Scarce had he gained the cavern door
And lowered the rock that hung before
Fixed by his father's art: the strain
Makes the stout doorposts start again:

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When lo! the fierce Tirynthian came,
His vengeful spirit all on flame,
Darts here and there his blazing eye,
If haply entrance he may spy,
 And grinds for rage his teeth;
And thrice the mountain he surveyed,
Thrice the blocked gate in vain essayed,
 Thrice rested, and took breath.

A pointed rock, on all sides steep,
Rose high above that dungeon-keep,
Abrupt and craggy, fitted best
For noisome birds to build their nest.
This, as it frowned above the tide,
He pushed from the remoter side,
 And from its socket tore:
Then hurled it down: the high heavens crack,
The river to its source runs back,
 And shore recoils from shore.
Then Cacus' mansion stood displayed;
The cave revealed its depth of shade;
 As though by some strange might
Earth, parting to her inmost core,
Should show the realms that gods abhor,
The vast abyss lie bare to-day,
And spectres huddle in dismay
 At influx of the light.

There as surprised with sudden glare
The monster, pent within his lair,
 In hideous fashion roars,
Alcides plies him from on high
With all his dread artillery,
 And trunk and millstone pours.
He, powerless to elude or flee,
Black smoke disgorges, dire to see,

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With darkness floods the room,
Blots out all prospect from the sight,
And makes another, deeper night,
Half lightning and half gloom.

Alcides, chafing as for shame,
Dashed onward headlong through the flame,
Where thickest spout the jets of smoke,
And blackest clouds the cavern choke.
There, as in vain he fumed and hissed,
He locked him in a deadly twist,
And cleaving, clinging, throttling, strained
His starting eyes, his throat blood-drained.
The victor now, the doors down-torn,
The loathsome den reveals,
Displays the oxen, late forsworn,
And the foul carcase drags in scorn
To daylight by the heels.

The rustics view with wild surprise
The body o'er and o'er,
That shaggy breast, those dreadful eyes,
Those jaws that flame no more.



TALES OF ANCIENT
GREECE

TALES OF ANCIENT GREECE

Rev. G. W. Cox

I THE CITY OF PALLAS ATHENE

NEAR the banks of the stream Kephisos, Erechtheus had built a city in a rocky and thin-soiled land. He was the father of a free and brave people; and though his city was small and humble, yet Zeus by his wisdom foresaw that one day it would become the noblest of all cities throughout the wide earth. And there was a strife between Poseidon the lord of the sea, and Athênê the virgin child of Zeus, to see by whose name the city of Erechtheus should be called. So Zeus appointed a day in the which he would judge between them in presence of the great gods who dwell on high Olympos.

When the day was come, the gods sat each on his golden throne, on the banks of the stream Kephisos. High above all was the throne of Zeus, the great father of gods and men, and by his side sat Hêrê the queen. This day even the sons of men might gaze upon them, for Zeus had laid aside his lightnings, and all the gods had come down in peace to listen to his judgment between Poseidon and Athênê. There sat Phœbus Apollo with his golden harp in his hand. His face glistened for the brightness of his beauty; but there was no anger

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in his gleaming eye, and idle by his side lay the unerring spear with which he smites all who deal falsely and speak lies. There beside him sat Artemis, his sister, whose days were spent in chasing the beasts of the earth and in sporting with the nymphs on the reedy banks of Eurôtas. There by the side of Zeus sat Hermes ever bright and youthful, the spokesman of the gods, with staff in hand to do the will of the great father. There sat Hephaistos the lord of fire, and Hestia who guards the hearth. There, too, was Arês, who delights in war; and Dionysos, who loves the banquet and the wine-cup; and Aphroditê, who rose from the sea-foam to fill the earth with laughter and woe.

Before them all stood the great rivals, awaiting the judgment of Zeus. High in her left hand, Athênê held the invincible spear; and on her ægis, hidden from mortal sight, was the face on which no man may gaze and live. Close beside her, proud in the greatness of his power, Poseidon waited the issue of the contest. In his right hand gleamed the trident with which he shakes the earth and cleaves the waters of the sea.

Then from his golden seat rose the spokesman Hermes, and his clear voice sounded over all the great council. "Listen," he said, "to the will of Zeus, who judges now between Poseidon and Athênê. The city of Erechtheus shall bear the name of that god who shall bring forth out of the earth the best gift for the sons of men. If Poseidon do this, the city shall be called Poseidonia; but if Athênê brings the higher gift, it shall be called Athens."

Then King Poseidon rose up in the greatness of his majesty, and with his trident he smote the earth where he stood. Straightway the hill was shaken to its depths, and the earth clave asunder, and forth from the chasm leaped a horse, such as never shall be seen again for strength and beauty. His body shone white all over

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as the driven snow; his mane streamed proudly in the wind as he stamped on the ground and scoured in very wantonness over hill and valley. "Behold my gift," said Poseidon, "and call the city after my name. Who shall give aught better than the horse to the sons of men?"

But Athênê looked steadfastly at the gods with her keen grey eye; and she stooped slowly down to the ground, and planted in it a little seed which she held in her right hand. She spake no word, but still gazed calmly on that great council. Presently they saw springing from the earth a little germ, which grew up and threw out its boughs and leaves. Higher and higher it rose, with all its thick green foliage, and put forth fruit on its clustering branches. "My gift is better, O Zeus," she said, "than that of King Poseidon. The horse which he has given shall bring war and strife and anguish to the children of men; my olive-tree is the sign of peace and plenty, of health and strength, and the pledge of happiness and freedom. Shall not, then, the city of Erechtheus be called after my name?"

Then with one accord rose the voices of the gods in the air, as they cried out, "The gift of Athênê is the best which may be given to the sons of men; it is the token that the city of Erechtheus shall be greater in peace than in war, and nobler in its freedom than its power. Let the city be called Athens."

Then Zeus, the mighty son of Kronos, bowed his head in sign of judgment that the city should be called by the name of Athênê. From his head the immortal locks streamed down, and the earth trembled beneath his feet as he rose from his golden throne to return to the halls of Olympos. But still Athênê stood gazing over the land which was now her own; and she stretched out her spear towards the city of Erechtheus, and said: "I have won the victory, and here shall be my home. Here shall my children grow up in happiness

and freedom; and hither shall the sons of men come to learn of law and order. Here shall they see what great things may be done by mortal hands when aided by the gods who dwell on Olympos; and when the torch of freedom has gone out at Athens, its light shall be handed on to other lands, and men shall learn that my gift is still the best, and they shall say that reverence for law and the freedom of thought and deed has come to them from the city of Erechtheus, which bears the name of Athênê."

II THE SLEEP OF ENDYMION

ONE beautiful evening, when the sun was sinking down in the west, Selênê was wandering on the banks of the river Meander; and she thought that of all the places which she had ever seen there was none more lovely than the quiet valley through which that gentle river was flowing. On her right hand rose a hill, whose sides were covered with trees and flowers; where the vine clambered over the elm, and the purple grapes shone out from amongst the dark leaves. Then Selênê asked some people who were passing by to tell her the name of the hill, and they told her that it was called the hill of Latmos. On she went, under the tall trees, whose branches waved over her in the clear evening light, till at last she reached the top, and looked down on the valley which lay beneath her. Then Selênê was indeed astonished, for she had never seen anything so beautiful before, even in a dream. She had fancied that nothing could be more lovely than the vale of the Meander, and now she saw something far more beautiful than the rocks and stones and clear, bright water of that winding river. It was a small valley, at the bottom of which a lake shone like silver in

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the light of the setting sun. All around it beautiful trees covered the sloping banks; and their long branches drooped down over the water. Not a breath of wind was stirring the dark leaves—not a bird was flying in the air. Only the large green dragon-fly floated lazily on the lake, while the swan lay half asleep on the silvery waters. On one side, in the loveliest corner of the valley, there was a marble temple, whose pillars shone like the white snow; and, leading down to the lake, there were steps of marble, over which the palm-trees spread their branches; and everywhere were clusters of all beautiful flowers, amongst which mosses, and ferns, and the green ivy were tangled. There was the white narcissus and the purple tulip—the dark hyacinth and the soft red rose. But more beautiful than all the trees and flowers, a man lay sleeping on the marble steps of the temple. It was Endymiôn, who lived in this quiet valley, where the storms never came, and where the dark rain-clouds never covered the sides of the mountain. There he lay in the still evening hour; and at first Selênê thought that it could scarcely be a living man whom she saw, for he lay as still as if he were made of marble himself. And as she looked upon him, Selênê drew in her breath for wonder; and she went gently down the valley till she came to the steps where Endymiôn lay asleep. Presently the sun sank behind the hill, and the rich glow of the evening made the silvery lake gleam like gold; and Endymiôn awoke and saw Selênê standing near him. Then Selênê said, "I am wandering over the earth; and I may not stay here. Come away, and I will show you larger lakes and more glorious valleys than these." But Endymiôn said, "Lady, I cannot go. There may be lakes which are larger, and valleys more splendid than this; but I love

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this still and quiet place, where the storms never come, and the sky is never black with clouds. You must not ask me to leave the cool shade of these sleeping trees, and the myrtles and roses which twine under the tall elms, and these waters, where the swans rest in the hot hours of the day and the dragon-fly spreads his green and golden wings to the sun."

Many times did Selênê ask him, but Endymiôn would not leave his pleasant home; and at last she said, "I can stay no more; but if you will not come with me, then you shall sleep on these marble steps and never wake up again." So Selênê left him; and presently a deep sleep came over Endymiôn, and his hands dropped down by his side, and he lay without moving on the steps of the temple, while the evening breeze began to stir gently the broad leaves of the palm-trees, and the lilies which bowed their heads over the calm water. There he lay all through the still and happy night; and there he lay when the sun rose up from the sea, and mounted up with his fiery horses into the sky. There was a charm now on this beautiful valley, which made the breeze more gentle and the lake more still than ever. The green dragon-flies came floating lazily in the air near Endymiôn, but he never opened his eyes; and the swans looked up from the lake, to see if he was coming to feed them: but he stirred not in his deep and dreamless sleep. There he lay day and night, for weeks, and months, and years; and many times, when the sun went down into the sea, Selênê came and stood on the Latmian hill, and watched Endymiôn as he lay asleep on the marble steps beneath the drooping palm-trees: and she said, "I have punished him because he would not leave his home; and Endymiôn sleeps forever in the land of Latmos."

III TANTALOS

BENEATH the mighty rocks of Sipylos stood the palace of Tantalos the Phrygian king, gleaming with the blaze of gold and jewels. Its burnished roofs glistened from afar like the rays which dance on ruffled waters. Its marble columns flashed with hues rich as the hues of purple clouds which gather round the sun as he sinks down in the sky. And far and wide was known the name of the mighty chieftain, who was wiser than all the sons of mortal men; for his wife Euryanassa, they said, came of the race of the undying gods, and to Tantalos Zeus had given the power of Hêlios, that he might know his secret counsels and see into the hidden things of earth and air and sea. Many a time, so the people said, he held converse with Zeus himself in his home on the high Olympos; and day by day his wealth increased, his flocks and herds multiplied exceedingly, and in his fields the golden corn waved like a sunlit sea.

But, as the years rolled round, there were dark sayings spread abroad, that the wisdom of Tantalos was turned to craft, and that his wealth and power were used for evil ends. Men said that he had sinned like Promêtheus the Titan, and had stolen from the banquet hall of Zeus the food and drink of the gods, and given them to mortal men. And tales yet more strange were told, how that Pendareôs brought to him the hound which Rhea placed in the cave of Diktê to guard the child Zeus, and how, when Hermes bade him yield up the dog, Tantalos laughed him to scorn, and said, "Dost thou ask me for the hound which guarded Zeus in the days of his childhood? It were as well to ask me for the unseen breeze which sighs through the groves of Sipylos."

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Then, last of all, men spake in whispers of a sin yet more fearful which Tantalos had sinned, and the tale was told that Zeus and all the gods came down from Olympos to feast in his banquet-hall, and how, when the red wine sparkled in the golden goblets, Tantalos placed savory meat before Zeus, and bade him eat of a costly food, and, when the feast was ended, told him that in the dish had lain the limbs of the child Pelops, whose sunny smile had gladdened the hearts of mortal men. Then came the day of vengeance, for Zeus bade Hermes bring back Pelops again from the kingdom of Hades to the land of living men, and on Tantalos was passed a doom which should torment him forever and ever. In the shadowy region where wander the ghosts of men, Tantalos, they said, lay prisoned in a beautiful garden, gazing on bright flowers and glistening fruits and laughing waters; but for all that his tongue was parched, and his limbs were faint with hunger. No drop of water might cool his lips, no luscious fruit might soothe his agony. If he bowed his head to drink, the water fled away; if he stretched forth his hand to pluck the golden apples, the branches vanished like mists before the face of the rising sun; and in place of ripe fruits glistening among green leaves, a mighty rock beetled above his head, as though it must fall and grind him to powder. Wherefore men say, when the cup of pleasure is dashed from the lips of those who would drink of it, that on them has fallen the doom of the Phrygian Tantalos.

BALDUR THE BEAUTIFUL

BALDUR THE BEAUTIFUL

Frederick B. De Berard

I THE BUILDING OF ASGARD

FAR up in the glorious heavens where the mighty arch of Bifröst, the Trembling Bridge, soars highest above the Nine Worlds, the Asa-folk builded their glorious city of Asgard, the home of the gods.

Here great Odin, the All-Father, sire of the valiant Asa-people, rested on his return from warring against the monster Jötuns—the fierce and cruel giant race who dwelt in the dark and frozen north, the land of Jötunheim. Long and valiantly had Odin and his brave sons battled with the dread Jötuns, smiting and destroying until the few left alive were beaten back into their far-distant ice-fastness, drear and savage, beyond the fathomless abyss.

Then the victor gods, the Asas, lords of the whole Earth, chanted songs of triumph, and journeyed homeward to the beautiful land of the Overworld. Ever there hovered about the All-Father two attendant ravens, Hugin and Munin—Thought and Memory—to give him daily tidings of all the Nine Worlds. Ever on either hand paced two great guardian wolves—Strength and Wisdom. Around him thronged his noble sons: Thor, the War-god, mighty in strength and valor; Tyr, brave, fearless and headstrong; Hermod, the Fly-

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ing Word; the wise and silent Vidar; Hodur, the blind; Bragi and Hænir; and Baldur the Beautiful, the Sun-god, radiant, noble, idolised by all created things in Asgard, the land of gods, and in Midgard, the land of Men-folk.

"Here, oh heroes, will we abide and build us a mighty castle where the bridge Bifröst touches the border of the Overworld," said Odin. "Far, far below in the darkness of fathomless space is Niflheim, the land of demons; nearer is Jötunheim, the land of ice and frost. The foundations of Bifröst rest in these profound abysses, and out of the gloomy realms of evil and malice its silver spans spring upward to the golden clouds of the Overworld, the home of the Asa-folk. Along that fatal pathway ages hence will the dark spirits of the Underworld swarm into our realm and overthrow Asgard and the gods. For so have the Niorns decreed!

"But that dread day is yet in the far distant future, and long shall the powers of light and goodness hold evil in bondage. Here shall arise Valhalla, the temple of Heroes, to guard the Overworld and Midgard, to hold the bridge Bifröst against the enemies of gods and men!"

And so it was. Even as Odin said, the heroes builded Valhalla; from the clustered spears of the gods were its towering columns made, its vast arches were of war-bows, and a thousand golden shields formed its roof radiant and glorious as the sun itself. Fair and beautiful was the Overworld; noble was the Palace of the Hero-Gods. Where the opal-tinted mountains soared highest toward the shining heavens, where the glittering summits climbed up and still up, almost to the mighty arch of Bifröst, drawn like a filament of gossamer sparkling with dew-drops across the blue ether, there rested Valhalla. In the early dawn and in

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the twilight a beautiful white radiance glowed from its crystal walls and pinnacles: and Valhalla's golden roof in the sunlight glittered like the sun itself, and sent its brilliant beams into every corner of all the Nine Worlds.

High above all, just below Bifröst, was the Air Throne of Odin the Mighty, whence he viewed all created things. And nothing was invisible to him who sat on the Air Throne. From thence his vision pierced below the lowest depths of the Underworld, below the dim realms of Urd and Mimir, below the awful demon-land of Nifheim, even to the foundations of Surt's Fiery Dales, and the World of Torture.

There Odin kept watch and ward against the Jötuns. There Hugin and Munin brought word of the Nine Worlds. There Strength and Wisdom waited the bidding of Odin.

II BALDUR

BEAUTIFUL, and beloved of all created things, was Baldur, the God of Light, the Sun-God, he who daily conquered the evil spirits of the darkness, who returned with each dawn to rescue Earth from the terror of Night, and drive it far beyond the western skies.

Life and love, beauty and happiness—these were the good gifts which the Shining One bestowed without stint upon all the Asa, the God-People of Asgard; upon the Men-Folk, the dwellers in Midgard; and upon the Thing-Folk, the hidden sprites of the waters, the woods and the earth. Of these are the elves and fays—the little people of the trees, the flowers, the frolicking leaves and waving grass; the gnomes, who are dwellers in the rocks; the nixies and water-sprites; the ouphes

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and the brownies, who have the semblance of birds, insects and gentle beasts.

Drear and melancholy were all things when Baldur was absent from Asgard, gone perhaps on a journey beyond the yawning abyss Ginungagap, far from the ken of gods or men. Then gloom came down upon the world. The sun grew pale and dim and feeble. Barely could he climb half-way up the sky. Scarcely could he push back the threatening Night for a few short hours; and no longer did his sickly beams shed light and heat. Then would the evil Jötuns, ever waiting their time to destroy the Asa-people and the Men-Folk, say to each other:

“Baldur has gone—perchance is dead—and the creatures of Earth are shorn of light and strength and courage: some are fixed in sleep, some go in terror because of the gloom that Night has cast upon them. Let us now steal upon them, and all that live shall perish at the breath of the Frost-Giants. We will breathe upon them, and they shall become like stone; and eternal Cold and Darkness shall prevail in Asgard and Midgard, vanquished by us, the Jötuns!”

And all that had life grew chill and pale with dread at the oncoming of the evil Frost-Giants; and the hearts of the Men-Folk turned cold for fear.

And lo! even while men said “The end of all things is at hand!” far, far away a faint, rosy flush like the coming dawn shot athwart the vast gloom. Scarcely could it be seen at the first, so faint and distant was it; but ever it grew brighter, ever it climbed higher and outspread, until on a day the heavens were filled with radiance flashed back in dazzling rays from the swift-flying Light-Spears hurled by the Shining One against the foes of god and men. Then backward the Jötuns fled to the realm of Ice and Frost, and all things that had life shouted and sung for joy—

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“Baldur, the Shining One, the god who conquers Night and Gloom, he who o’ercomes the Giants of the Frost—Baldur the Beautiful has come!”

And at the coming of Baldur all the Earth rejoiced, all that slumbered threw off the bonds of Sleep, and those that the breath of the Jötuns had made like stone came back to life and light. As he advanced, fear and hate and selfishness fell away, and in their stead sprung gentleness, love, and joy. The gloomy clouds and chill mists vanished under his genial radiance; and its gracious beams lulled the boisterous Vanir to calm so that they stilled the wild winds and welcomed the god with soft and balmy zephyrs. Where his footsteps fell the bare brown earth thrilled and stirred; and from it upsprang myriads of grass blades of tenderest translucent green, and waved a glad welcome to the Lord of Light.

High overhead the arching boughs felt the glad impulse, budded and sprang into life, and their murmuring leaves swayed in the gentle breeze as they too sung, “Welcome, Baldur!” All about, the bare rocks were clothed with the beautiful tracery of moss and fern and graceful foliage, and Earth grew gay with the beauty of the flowers. Under the glorious sunshine and the cloudless heavens, birds circled in great curves, or swooped down to greet him who had brought them back to life and love, warbling sweet notes, long silent for dread of the Frost-Giants. The gentle god smiled upon them, and at his glance louder and sweeter grew their song, brighter and more brilliant grew their plumage until they seemed live jewels, transformed from dull and hueless things by Baldur’s rays. Through forest and field, in the over-arching skies and under the dome of the glittering Valhalla the Palace of the Gods, rung out the glad welcome—

“Baldur has come, the Earth lives again!”

III THE SHADOW OF DEATH

A GRIM shadow rested upon the soul of Baldur, the Beautiful One. Never before in his joyous life had he felt aught of grief or gloom, and now about his heart was a strange and dreadful chill. It was the Shadow of Death, the forewarning of that dreadful day when the Jötuns, as long ago foretold, should conquer the Gods and destroy Asgard and Midgard.

Sorrow and distress were in the heart of Baldur, and he that looked upon his face saw their reflection there. Strange was the sight to the heroes of Valhalla; never before had their Beautiful One, Baldur, the loved of Gods and Men, been the prey of sorrow and foreboding; and dismay spread throughout Asgard at the sight of his woe. In a vision the fearful Niorns had appeared to him and clutched his heart with their icy hands. He awoke, but the icy grip upon his heart relaxed not.

Friga, the Queen of the Gods, wept at the grief of her beloved Baldur. Earnestly she strove to banish the shadow from his brow, but no word of cheer could lift the gloom or unloose that direful grip that froze his heart and benumbed his brain and body. Bitter was the anguish of Odin, the All-Father, when Friga, his wife, told him of the affliction that had come upon Baldur. "It is the hand of the Niorns," he exclaimed. "Woe has come upon Valhalla and Asgard; it is the Shadow of Death; Baldur, the God of Light, must die, and the Jötuns shall prevail!"

"But whence shall come this evil?" cried Friga, the Mother of Gods. "Who among all that lives bears malice toward Baldur the Well-Beloved? is there aught among created things that would willingly do harm to the Sun-God, the Giver of Light and Life?"

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"Hearken, all ye gods and all ye dwellers in Midgard; all ye spirits of Water, Earth and Air; ye who soar above in the blue sky, ye who swiftly cleave the waters, ye beasts of forest, moor and fell, all creeping things, and ye that burrow in the ground, swear to me by the faith of Asgard that never will ye do harm to Baldur the Beautiful!

"And ye, Oh! Mountains, Rocks and Floods, ye hurrying Winds, ye flaming Fires, ye Trees, Shrubs and Flowers! All! all! let all make solemn oath that not in anywise will ye work Baldur woe!"

Sore was the grief at the cry of the mourning goddess; and with one accord all swore: "Never shall Baldur, He whom we love, suffer aught of harm through us!"

And Friga rejoiced and was glad, because all created things had sworn to spare her son.

But upon the brow of great Odin, the All-Father, still sat deep gloom; for he knew that the oath availed not. For the Shadow of Death yet abode with Baldur, still the cold hand of the Niorns clutched his heart!

And Odin knew that Baldur must die!

IV THE AWAKING OF THE VALA

FAR down in the lowest depths of the Nine Worlds. below the roots of the Life Tree, lies the realm of Mimir, the Wise One. There is the grave of the dead Vala—she who awakes from the death-sleep at the Word of Power, and reads from the roll of the future what the Niorns have decreed in time to come.

"Thither will I go," said Odin, "to learn of the wise Vala if perchance the Shadow of Death may be lifted from the heart of the Shining One."

Forth leaped the great gray horse, Sleipnir, the

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Eight-Footed One, bearing Odin down to the Underworld. Onward he rushed, swift as the wind, through the bitter Ice Realm, and beyond the mountains where dwelt the Jötuns; fiercely Odin battled with Garm, the monster Hell-Dog who guarded the mouth of the cavern Gnipa. Thrice he hurled himself upon Odin, gnashing his vast jaws with fury and shaking all Niflheim with savage yells; thrice Odin beat him back with crushing blows, then swept onward, leaving Garm shattered and dripping gore. Down through the vast black reaches of the Hell-Cavern went Sleipnir, bearing Odin, and at last they came where deep in the Earth the wise Vala lay in the death-sleep.

Then the heart of Odin shrunk within him, as he chanted the mournful runes whose magic charm compels the dead to come forth and reveal the future to the living. And the earth heaved, and from deep beneath came a mournful voice, as one who laments and is in pain:

“Woe! woe!” it cried in anguish; “with the snows have I been decked: the rains have beaten upon me, and me have the chilly dews enwrapped! Long have I been dead: who is this that dares disturb my sleep?”

“Arise, Oh! Vala; for Odin, the Asa King, would know the doom of Baldur the Shining One!”

Then the earth parted and the dead Vala came forth.

“Wouldst know of Baldur?” she asked; and her voice was as the voice of Death. And she stretched forth her arm and said, “Behold!”

And Odin lifted up his eyes and where the dead Vala’s hand pointed he beheld a stately castle, wherein were many having the semblance of warriors and fair women, but lo! they were the forms of the dead. And a great banquet was being made ready for a guest of honor. At the upper end of the hall, high above all the rest, stood a golden throne. Beside it was spread a

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noble feast, covered with a beautiful golden shield as a token that it was the place of a great warrior. Beside it stood a great golden flagon, in which the mead already foamed, so near was the guest's coming.

When Odin beheld, dread clutched his heart, and he feared to hear the name of him for whom that banquet waited. Hollow and faint, his voice crept out from his dry lips—

“What guest wait ye, and for whom is this feast?”

Then a noble youth replied to Odin: “We wait, oh! stranger, for one who is at hand, as the wise Mimir has bidden us—one who comes to rule us; and so noble, wise and beautiful is he that he is beloved of all created things!”

Faint and pale Odin turned in mute appeal to the dreadful Vala. Her face was hard as stone. Unswerving was the outstretched arm; and it pointed changelessly at the empty throne! And from her lips came the awful words of doom:

“Yea! Baldur the Beautiful shall die!”

V THE REVENGE OF LOKI

THERE was rejoicing in Asgard: for had not all things sworn to harm not Baldur?

In the fair green Peacestead were gathered the Asa-folk joyful at the passing of the Shadow of Death, filled with gladness that Baldur the Beloved should die not. Happiness and mirth were there, and they made merry with games of daring and strength such as warriors love, in honor of the Shining One.

“See now!” said Thor, the Thunderer; “our brother needs not now either mail-coat or shield, for no weapon borne of gods or men will smite the gentle Baldur.

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Harmless they will fall at his feet, or swiftly turn aside from their course."

"Behold," said the fearless Tyr, "how Nothung the Sword, that in my hands bites through adamant, obeys me not when though but in jest I aim a little stroke at him whom Nothung has made oath to hurt not!" Then Tyr the Strong swung high the mighty sword, and whirling it in gleaming circles about his head struck, swift as light, a blow that would have shorn asunder the mightiest of the Jötuns; nor would it have been stayed by the massiest shield nor the toughest mail. Fairly was it aimed, full at Baldur's head. He shrunk not nor leaped aside, but laughing at the sport, stood with folded arms.

Nothung came not nigh to Baldur, but swerved aside with such force that Tyr, the great sword-swinger, shouted for pain, so fierce was the wrench; while Nothung flew from his hand, swung high into the air, then wheeling about in a great circle, glided gently down and rested at Baldur's feet: "Thou art my master, oh! valiant Tyr," said Nothung the Sword; "in naught will I fail thee, but never will I smite Baldur the Beloved: for thus have I sworn!"

Then all the gods shouted for gladness and Baldur stood forth as a mark for the sport of gods who made merry to see the weapons refuse to do their owner's bidding.

Many times did Thor, the strongest of all the Asa, hurl his ponderous hammer Miölnir, whose aim naught could escape, and under whose blow mountains were rent; but Miölnir's touch was as light as thistle-down upon Baldur's forehead, and thence he shot back to the hand of his master Thor. Vidar's spears flew awry: the battle-axe of Hænir did no more than tap softly upon Baldur's breast; Bragi's arrows entered not.

But alas! the Shadow of Death was there, even

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among the gods who joyed at its going. Loki the Evil One, Loki the Traitor-Asa, in secret nursed bitter wrath against Odin and all the warrior gods, because they had imprisoned Fenrir, the fearful Wolf-Demon, beneath the mountains; and hurled Jormüngard, the Snake-Monster, beyond the Ocean-River. For these two were the misbegotten secret progeny of Loki the Fallen.

Full of malice and envy was Loki, and when he saw how all things loved Baldur he thought: "Bitter will be the grief of those I hate, should Baldur whom they so love die! Sweet would be my revenge, could I but compass his death and thus avenge the fates of Fenrir and Jormüngard!"

And lo, among all the gods the evil Loki alone knew how the death of Baldur might be wrought; only he knew that in the Taking of the Oath one feeble, insignificant thing had sworn not, and that by the gnarled and mis-shapen Mistletoe might deadly hurt be done to Baldur. And Loki plucked the Mistletoe from its roots and stripped it of its leaves, berries and twigs. Small, crooked and unsightly were its miserable stems; nor could one deem that aught so feeble had power for death. But Loki plunged the twisted stem into the boiling Geyser until it grew soft and supple; deftly he shaped it and made it straight and true; then making it fast he hardened it with fire, so that it became like iron. So the twisted stem of the feeble Mistletoe became a strong, straight shaft, which Loki fashioned into a keen arrow, able to fly true, pierce deep and carry Death.

Hodur the Blind stood apart hearkening to the joyous shouts of the gods as they hurled their powerless weapons at the harm-proof Baldur. To him came Loki the Evil One.

"All the Asa do honor to Baldur, oh! Hodur," said

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Loki; "None are there who hurl not the spear or strike not with sword or axe or mace; that all may see how the Weapons, the servants of the Mighty Ones, harm Baldur not. Why dost thou not as the other gods, to show that Hodur joys that the Shadow of Death is banished?"

"Ah! Loki," replied Hodur with a sigh, "am I not the Sightless One? Glad is my heart that Baldur dies not, and fain would I do him honor, but thou knowest that one who sees not, aims not the spear aright nor smites aught but air with the sword-edge!"

Then the cunning Loki placed in the hands of Hodur the Blind, his bow, and fixed in its place against the cord the Mistletoe Arrow,—the sole thing able to do harm to Baldur. "Let Hodur the Sightless shoot but one shaft at the Shining One. Fairly the arrow bears upon his breast, and the eyes of Loki shall guide the arm of Hodur; and the Asa will be glad that thou thus showest thy love for Baldur, and they will shout for glee to see the arrow of the Blind One fly straight and true, yet harmless!"

Then Hodur loosed the bow-string. The Mistletoe Arrow sped forth like light. Strong was the arm and true was the aim. Full upon Baldur's breast it struck; it swerved not nor harmless did it break; it paused not in its course, but cleft its way deep into Baldur's heart.

And Baldur the Beloved lay dead upon the green Peacestead, with the Mistletoe Arrow in his heart.

THE END

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