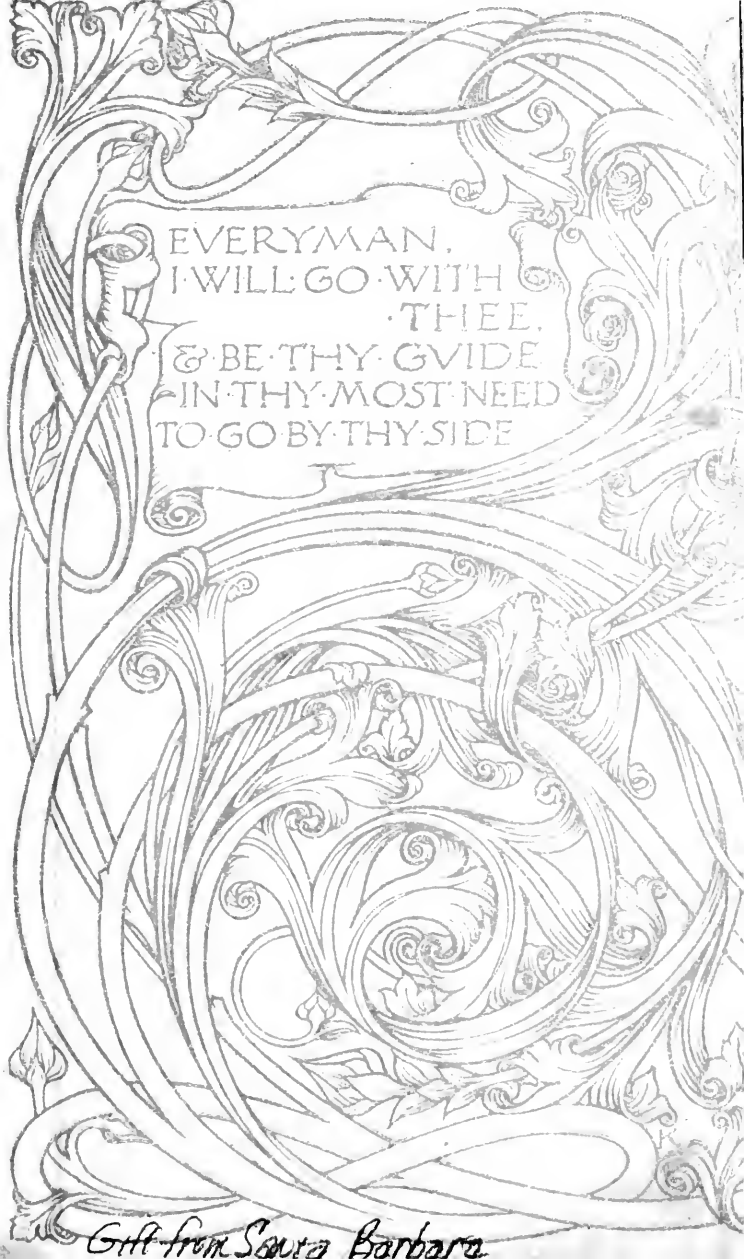

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THE MUSES' PAGEANT

BY W. M. L. HUTCHINSON

VOLUME TWO


THE
SAGES
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THE MUSES' PAGEANT.

Myths & Legends of Ancient Greece retold by W·M·L· HUTCHINSON

· VOLUME 2 ·

MYTHS OF THE HEROES

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INTRODUCTION

"He that sang the *Works and Days*"—whom, following antiquity, we may be content to call Hesiod[1]—enumerates five races of mankind who successively inhabited earth down to his own time. The first of these he calls the *Golden*, to express their perfection; the second, the *Silver*, on account of their inferiority to the first. Both these races passed away without issue; for not until a third race had been created, and civilised, by Prometheus, did Zeus create the First Woman—Pandora, to be the bane of man.[2] Now Hesiod calls this third race the *Bronze;* not merely because they were worse than their predecessors, but because, as he says, "of bronze was their gear, of bronze were their houses, and with bronze they tilled the soil; black iron there was none." Here, then, he seems to have engrafted on his allegory of Man's Fall and Decline a vague tradition of the great Bronze Age which we now know to have preceded the Iron or Homeric Age in Greek lands. But the curious thing is that although Hesiod includes an Iron Race in his list, he places it not fourth, but fifth; his "Iron Men" are not so called from their use of that metal, but metaphorically, from the hardness of their hearts; and they are not the men of the Homeric Age, but

[1] *See* Introduction, vol. i. p. 3.

[2] Vol. i. chap. ii.

the poet's own contemporaries. The Bronze Folk, as we shall see in the present volume, were cut off by Zeus on account of their wickedness; the Iron Folk are still more wicked; but between these two there appeared on earth a Fourth Race, "far better" than either, namely, the Race of the Heroes. These are they, says Hesiod, to mark their era, who fought in the two great sieges of Thebes and Troy.

Now this "better" race clearly does not belong to the original scheme, and we see that our poet puts it in to meet the following difficulty; every one knew that in the not very distant past there had lived and laboured in Greece illustrious Heroes, men godlike and sprung from gods, "the theme of every minstrel's art"; how could these be members, as by genealogical computation they must, either of the wicked Bronze or of the still more wicked Iron Race? How account for a Heracles, a Theseus, and, later still, an Achilles, if mankind has been steadily growing worse and weaker ever since the passing of the Age of Gold? Hesiod cuts the knot by assuming a pause, or rather a temporary upward movement, in the secular decline of things; this happier period was the Age of the Heroes, who were a distinct race, "made by Zeus."

This account of the Five Races and the special creation of the Heroes is obviously inconsistent with the legend, also Hesiodic, of the great Flood that destroyed the whole Bronze Race except one righteous pair—Deucalion and Pyrrha—who re-peopled the earth by casting stones over their

shoulders, which turned into men and women. For this legend represents all men since the Flood as descended from the "Stone Folk," and knows nothing of a Heroic or an Iron Race. The Greek poets, very wisely, troubled themselves not at all about such conflicts of tradition; but the modern compiler is obliged to attempt a little "harmonising," if he aims at a connected narrative. I have therefore taken the slight liberty, in Chapter I., of identifying the creation of "the Heroes" with the creation of the "Stone Folk."

Yet another tradition has to be considered; that, namely, which makes Deucalion himself the progenitor of the whole Greek race through his son HELLEN, who begat three sons, DORUS, AEOLUS, and Xouthos, the father of ION. This looks at first sight a mere piece of pedigree-making; Hellen being transparently nothing more than the eponymous ancestor of the Hellenes, as Dorus, Aeolus, Ion, are of their three main branches—the Dorians, Aeolians, and Ionians. And that "Hellen," at any rate, came comparatively late into the genealogy is evident from the fact that the name "Hellenes" in Homer denotes only the clansmen of Achilles, the Greeks in general being called Achaeans, Argives, or Danai. (Euripides, however, already knew of Hellen as the father of Aeolus, as appears from the fragments of his lost play *Melanippe the Wise*.) But Aeolus differs from the rest of these eponyms in that he is the reputed ancestor of a great Heroic house—the AEOLIDS. Like Deucalion, he is located in Thessaly, and before Hellen got into the pedi-

gree, he was probably accounted the son, not the grandson, of Deucalion. That assumption I have ventured to make in Chapter II.

Lastly, we must notice that the Flood-legend belongs only to Northern Greece, and more especially to Thessaly, the cradle of the Aeolids. Elsewhere we shall find neither record of a Deluge, nor any Heroic family tracing descent from Deucalion; while even in Northern Greece we shall meet a powerful clan descended not from him but from Ares the War-god, viz. the royal line of Aetolia, to which Meleager belongs (Chapter III).

As explained in the introduction to the first volume, the Myths of the Heroes collected in this work are arranged in territorial groups. The present volume deals with Northern Greece and with Argos, and includes three of the earliest and most famous Greek sagas—the Quest of the Golden Fleece, the Hunting of the Calydonian Boar, and the wonder-tale of Perseus.

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THE MUSES' PAGEANT

PART I.—NORTHERN GREECE

CHAPTER I

DEUCALION'S FLOOD

THUS far we have told the beginnings of the gods and of mankind; how Zeus and the other Olympians dethroned the old Titanian Powers; how the Titan Prometheus suffered the vengeance of Zeus because he stole the forbidden Fire out of heaven and gave it to men, whereby they became masters of every art that ministers to life. And how these men whom Prometheus befriended were called the Bronze Race, from their use of that metal, and were the third race of mortals that Earth had seen, for already there had lived and passed away the men named of Gold and of Silver. Now the Bronze Race were fated to pass away likewise, because of their wickedness, which exceeded the wickedness of the Silver Race, and provoked Zeus to destroy them root and branch; but for the sake of one righteous man among them he re-peopled the earth with that great and glorious race whom we call the HEROES—mortals, yet half divine, sprung from the union of gods with the fair daughters of men. Of these things we are now to tell, and first of the destruction that overtook the Bronze Folk.

In those far-off times, the gods came and went freely upon earth, delighting themselves in its pleasant places; and in their journeyings to and fro they would oftentimes lodge as guests with mortals, either openly or under some disguise. So they had done in the Golden and Silver Ages, and so for a while they did in the days of the Bronze Folk, taking pleasure to view those manifold works of skill that men now wrought by the gift and teaching of Prometheus. But ere long the Bronze Folk fell into all the evil ways of the Silver, and into worse besides; for having discovered the precious metals they began to amass riches, and to know the accursed greed of gain, that root of all iniquity. Thus they became not only fierce and cruel, like their fore-runners, but covetous, envious, treacherous, capable of every crime for lucre's sake; not one among them would trust his own brother, but each man's hand was against both kindred and neighbours; as for strangers, the poor were thrust from the doors, and the rich only welcomed to be murdered by their host for their costly arms and array. Now certain of the Olympians, having seen for themselves the abominable ways of the Bronze Men, made complaint to Zeus against them, desiring that he would punish those evil-doers, and chiefly for so foully transgressing the sacred law of guest-right, whereof he is the especial guardian. And Zeus answered that he would first himself prove the Bronze Men, seeking hospitality from them in the semblance of a humble wayfarer, and he bade Hermes accompany him.

So the two gods went down together into the land of Arcadia, and journeyed there three days, and found no man who would receive them into his house, nor so much as give them bite or sup. And having been turned away from many a door with threats and revilings, they came at last to a high mountain, where the King of Arcadia had his strong-walled dwelling. This was that savage King Lycaon of whom we have told somewhat in the story of Callisto, but the worst is yet to be told; like the wolf, his namesake, Lycaon was a cannibal. Alone of the Bronze Folk, he made all strangers welcome to his house, and would ply them with good cheer day after day; and little thought his hapless guests that their liberal host was but fattening them like so many swine, to furnish forth his horrible repast. Now when Zeus and Hermes came to the king's house, he received them gladly, for the one seemed a man in his prime and the other a buxom lad; and forthwith he bade them sit down and feast with him. And his servants set upon the table great platters of roasted flesh, of which he pressed the strangers to eat their fill, saying it was the flesh of a young wild boar, tender and good. But they, starting up in abhorrence, overthrew the table with its gruesome freight; their forms, transfigured by celestial light, towered to the rafters, and Lycaon shrank appalled beneath the awful gaze of Zeus. Then said the frowning God, in tones of thunder, "Thou wretch, viler than words can proclaim thee, no longer shalt thou wear the shape of man, who art a beast in nature as in name. Hence, Wolf,

to thy fellows in the forest, and never more darken human doors with thine accursed presence!" A long-drawn, dismal howl broke from the cannibal as he turned and ran, stooping low, out of the hall; as he crossed the threshold he fell on hands and knees, and so swiftly came the dread change over him that the terror-stricken sentinels without might plainly see it was no man but a grey, white-fanged beast that rushed snarling past them and went galloping into the nigh forest.

It was told in the after ages that Zeus laid the house of the man-eater in ruins with his thunderbolts; and that a dark yew-tree grove on the mountain marked the accursed spot, wherein whoso dared set foot was straightway changed into a wolf for nine years.

Now when Zeus had thus dealt with Lycaon, he and Hermes took again the guise of mortals, and they journeyed many days through all Arcadia, and through all the lands to northward, even to Thessaly; and wheresoever they went, they found nothing but wickedness. At last Zeus said, "We have seen enough, son of Maia; behold, this Bronze Folk have filled the whole earth with deceit and violence, and are altogether become abominable; there is not one righteous man among them, none that fears the gods or honours the stranger within his gates. Let us go hence, and to-morrow I will send a great rain, such as hath not been since the making of the world, and the whole race of men shall be destroyed by flood, for I am weary of their iniquity."

" So be it, Father Zeus," answered Hermes, " but let us tarry this one day more in Thessaly, if peradventure we may yet find one righteous man, and save him alive." And Zeus consented, and the two gods wandered that day over the rich Thessalian plains until they came at nightfall to the house of an old man named Deucalion. This Deucalion was, as some say, a son of Prometheus; or as others will have it, one of the men that Prometheus made of clay; he had to wife a daughter of Pandora, called Pyrrha, but she was childless, and like himself well stricken in age.

Homely enough was his dwelling, for he had no riches but content, and lived by the labour of his hands, tilling the fields and vineyards of his small domain. But courteously he and his wife welcomed the two travellers, and set before them the best of their frugal fare, and the gods lodged there that night, well pleased with their entertainment and the wise discourse of the good old host. Next morning, having broken fast with him, the strangers rose up as if to depart, uttering thanks and farewells; then Deucalion pressed them hospitably to stay, and said, " It is but little I can offer guests, but to such as I have they are ever right welcome, seeing I fear most high Zeus, the guide and guardian of strangers."

" Worthy Deucalion," answered Zeus, " the King of gods will reward you this selfsame hour for your pious hospitality both to others and to himself. Behold, I that speak to you am he! " With that, a glory shone around the strangers, and they stood

revealed in their true likeness; yet so gracious was the smile on the august countenance of Zeus that Deucalion and Pyrrha looked on him without fear. And then did Zeus declare to them his purposed vengeance upon the wicked race of Bronze; and he commanded Deucalion to build straightway an ark of strong oaken timbers, and store it with victuals and with all his household goods, and shut himself and his wife therein on the seventh day, for so they should escape the wrath to come. When Zeus had thus spoken a peal of thunder shook the sky, and the two gods vanished into air.

For six days thereafter Deucalion toiled at the building of the ark, and his neighbours, when they saw him, asked what he did. But when he told them a great flood was toward, whereof Zeus himself had given him warning, and entreated them to repent and seek mercy while it was yet time, they mocked him and went their way, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. On the seventh day the ark was finished, and Deucalion entered in with his wife and shut fast the door. Then Zeus broke up all the fountains of the deep, and opened the well-springs of heaven, and it rained forty days and forty nights continually. So the waters rose and covered the earth, even to the tops of the mountains, and all the Bronze Folk perished in the flood, both they and their children. And much cattle perished likewise; but by the providence of Zeus, some of every breed found refuge on the highest hill-tops, as did also the tribes of the wild things great and small. Meanwhile the ark drifted

on the face of the waters until it rested on the peak of towering Parnassus, that rose as it were an island out of the surging flood. And after forty days Zeus shut up the fountains of the rain, and caused a mighty wind to blow out of the East, which drove the waters before it into the uttermost parts of Ocean. So the flood was rolled back from the face of the earth, and that great wind blew for a hundred days, until both hills and valleys were dry land once more.

Now Deucalion had made him a window in the side of the ark, and when he and Pyrrha looked forth and saw the waters ebbing on every side, they came out upon the mountain top, giving thanks to Zeus for their deliverance; yet their hearts were heavy with sorrow to think they alone were left of all their race, an aged, childless pair, past hope of offspring. Daily, as the flood abated, they wandered further down the mountain-side, until they came one evening to a deep, rocky glen where was a cave. In this cave they laid them down to sleep, and as they slept they dreamed both of them the same dream. For the appearance of a veiled woman stood before them, like to the Immortals in mien and stature, and thus she spoke: "If you would see human faces about you once more, O Deucalion and Pyrrha, then take and cast behind you the bones of your Great Mother."

With that the sleepers awoke, and behold it was day; and each told the other of the vision; but for awhile they were perplexed, not understanding what it had bidden them do. At last the truth broke on

Deucalion, and he said, "Surely Earth is our Great Mother, of whose substance we are made; and the bones of Earth, what are they but the rocks and stones?" Then they went out quickly from the cave, and having gathered each a lapful of stones, they flung them backwards over their shoulders. And forthwith all the stones Deucalion threw turned into men, and those that Pyrrha threw became women. Thus came a new race of mortals into being, of whom all nations that have since inhabited the earth are descended. And holy Delphi is the cradle of them all; for in her solemn glen was that miracle wrought; moreover, though Deucalion and Pyrrha knew it not, the cave where they slept was Earth's most ancient oracular shrine, and she that appeared to them in vision was Themis, her daughter and prophetess, who uttered soothsay there until the coming of Apollo.

After these things Deucalion and Pyrrha returned again into their own land of Thessaly, with some of the folk that Zeus had raised up for them from the ground; and Deucalion founded a city there, and ruled it in peace until he died, full of years and honours. But the rest of the new men and women were dispersed abroad into all lands under heaven, and they increased and multiplied until they replenished the earth. Now this fourth race were far better in all ways than the races of Bronze and of Silver; nay, at first they were equal to the Golden race, for Zeus had created them in their likeness; but by the law that governs all things that live, they were fated to grow through bloom to

ripeness, and after that to suffer decay. Too brief, alas, was their glorious prime; those days when mortal men were as gods for strength and valour, and women so fair that gods were their lovers; when our earth was still a faery. place, and its green loneliness haunted by shapes divine; when "every morn brought forth a noble quest, and every quest brought forth a gallant knight"—a Perseus, a Theseus, or a Heracles. This was the Age of the Heroes, which closed with the Siege of Troy; the sons of those who fought in that long war saw the beginnings of a new Age, fitly named *The Iron*, full of all iniquities and oppressions that are done under the sun. In that Age we live to-day, if indeed that sixth and most evil Age foretold by ancient bards have not already dawned, wherein the utter corruption of mankind shall provoke the high gods to destroy this world with consuming fire. But let us pray with a wise poet of old to sleep the unawakening sleep or ever that day of wrath draw nigh.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF AEOLUS

In the ancient ages, a king named Aeolus ruled over Thessaly, land of noble steeds; and he had seven sons, who all went out into the world to seek their fortune, after the custom of those days; he had also five fair daughters, whom he gave in marriage to neighbouring princes. Now all the children of Aeolus prospered in the lands whither they went; for the gods at first had a favour unto him and his, because he was the son of the righteous Deucalion; but in some of them prosperity bred insolence, which ever goeth before a fall, and so they came to no good end, being hated of the Immortals. Time would fail to tell all the story of these Aeolids, and we speak only of those whose names were rendered famous by the singers of Hellas.

The Aloadae

Canace, daughter of Aeolus, had in childhood so great a love for the Sea that she would many a time steal away from her playfellows in the king's palace-garden to wander alone upon the shore and dreamily regard the marching billows. And as she grew to womanhood, the spell of the Sea drew her ever more potently, and the murmur of the waves

sounded like a lover's low pleading in her ears; there came a day when, filled with nameless yearnings, the maiden stooped and plunged her white arms into the rippling tide, as if she would fain gather its salt, bright water to her bosom. Then suddenly she was aware that other arms met hers, and another heart beat against her own—and therewith she sank into a dream of bliss. When Canace came to herself, she was lying alone on the sea-marge; dusk was falling fast, and the crawling foam glimmered ghostly white about her feet; far to seaward, shadowy on the shadowed deep, she could discern the tossing crests of four horses, the flash of chariot-wheels, and the erect figure of a charioteer; of more than mortal stature he seemed, and brandished aloft a huge trident that glittered like a moonbeam. She knew then that Poseidon himself had been with her, and returned with joy and trembling to her father's house.

Not long after, the king gave Canace for wife to Aloeus, a doughty chieftain; but when she brought forth her first-born it was soon rumoured that a god and no man had begotten them. For they were twin boys, so like that none might know one from the other, of marvellous size and strength; and they grew as never babes did before, for every year added a cubit to their breadth and a fathom to their stature. Moreover, they were of a fierce, restless, and untamable spirit; so that Aloeus and his folk began to be afraid of children so portentous, and he meditated putting them to death, ere worse came of it. But Canace divined his intent from a

chance word he let fall; and entreated him with tears to spare her sons, albeit, as she confessed, they were not his, but Poseidon's. When he heard that, Aloeus let them alone, fearing the wrath of the Earth-shaker. So the boys, whose names were Otus and Ephialtes, were reared nine years in his house, and were known as the Aloadae, from the name of their adoptive father.

But when they were nine years old, nine cubits broad and nine fathoms high, Otus and Ephialtes began to think themselves equal with the gods by reason of their giant strength, and in the folly of their hearts they declared war upon the heaven-dwellers. For the rest of human kind seemed to the Twins as far beneath their concern as so many ants—and well indeed for the men of their day that it was so!—wherefore they must needs look to the skies for foes worth challenging. Now their first exploit in that impious warfare inflamed their pride yet more; for when Ares came against them, having heard of their bidding defiance to the Olympians one and all, Otus and Ephialtes dragged the War-God by main force out of his chariot, snapped his spear in sunder like a reed, and bound him hand and foot with chains of brass. Then they cast him, bellowing with rage, into an underground dungeon in the house of Aloeus; and there he lay helpless, until Hermes came and freed him by stealth, under cloud of night. Meanwhile the exulting Twins betook themselves to the high mountains of Thessaly, threatening aloud that they would root up Ossa and pile him on wooded Pelion, his neighbour, and

so scale the heights of heaven. Fools, they knew not that, or ever that could be, the red levin-brand of Zeus would have laid them even with the dust! But from that doom Poseidon saved them; he stayed the Thunderer's hand, uplifted in act to throw, and craved respite for his unruly sons; this granted, he sped down to the glens of Ossa, and stood in majesty before them, and having made himself known to them as their true father, forbade them, at their peril, to war any more against him and his. Now for the time being the Giant Twins obeyed their divine Sire, so much the glory of his godhead abashed even their hardihood; but in no long while they forgot his warnings, and devised new outrage against the Olympians, even to carry off by force two of the goddesses for wives. Otus said that none but Hera, queen of them all, should serve his turn; Ephialtes' choice was Artemis, the Huntress, for he had beheld afar off the white wonder of her beauty thridding the gloom of Thessalian woods. The brothers drew lots to determine which of their chosen brides they should seize on first, and the lot falling on Artemis, they ranged far and wide, searching all her favourite haunts. Nor vainly, for their wicked design was not hid from Leto's daughter; and she showed herself to them in a valley of Phocis, nigh the sea; purposing such vengeance upon those sinners as should be most bitter to their souls. Forth with a shout sprang the Aloadae at sight of their wished prey; swift as a flying deer the goddess fled before them over hill and dale, but ever she glanced over her

shoulder, and took good heed to keep herself well in view; so on they raced, hunted and hunters, scarce a spear-cast asunder, until they came to the beach of the sea. Still onward flew silver-shafted Artemis, speeding dryshod along the main; and lightly as she her pursuers trod the waves, for such power have all Poseidon's sons. Thus came they to the wooded shores of Naxos; but there, even as Otus and Ephialtes overtook the goddess, she disappeared; and in her stead they saw a milk-white Hind bounding into the greenwood. Thereupon desire of that Hind so burned in them that they forgot all else; after brief chase, they lost her in thick covert, and began questing singly, like eager hounds. And suddenly each saw the Hind standing at gaze before him, in an open glade—but neither marked that just beyond her stood his brother! Otus and Ephialtes threw their javelins on the same instant—but in that instant the Hind vanished away, and the Giant Twins crashed to earth, each pierced by the other's dart. Too late they learned from her own lips how Artemis had beguiled them, as she drew near once more in her true shape and watched, coldly smiling, their dying throes. "Methinks I am well avenged, sons of Aloeus," said she, "for the outrage you would have done me; seeing you not only die, but have each of you slain with your own hand the one creature that you loved."

Thus perished the Aloadae, whose grave, a vast and grassy barrow, remains to this day in island Naxos, witnessing to their crime and punishment.

Of Salmoneus, and Alcyone

That deadly sin of Pride, which most easily beset the children of Aeolus, reached its height in Salmoneus, the goodliest of his sons, and Alcyone, the fairest of his daughters. Now Salmoneus, having journeyed westward seeking his fortune, came into the land of Elis, where by prowess he won himself a kingdom and much wealth, and reigned in splendour awhile. But the folk of Elis worship Zeus of the Thunderbolt with an especial devotion; and it irked Salmoneus to see it, for his haughty spirit could not brook that they should pay greater honours to their god than to their king, nor that he himself must pay homage to Zeus at his festival, as to an overlord. And so he dared a most heinous sacrilege; for on the great day of the Feast, when the sanctuary of Zeus was thronged with worshippers, he did as follows. A stream divided the sacred precinct from the city, and a wooden bridge spanned the stream; having caused this bridge to be paved with slabs of bronze, Salmoneus, robed and crowned, drove his four-horsed chariot over it in full view of the multitude, driving furiously; and amid the din of wheels and hoofs upon the bronze, he shouted, "I am the Thunderer! Behold your god, ye people, and fall down before him, lest he consume you with his lightnings!" And with that, he scattered abroad a shower of blazing firebrands, which by some secret art gave out blue flames and a reek of sulphur. Then all the people were amazed, and a panic

fear took hold on them; many cried out that Salmoneus was indeed a god and no man, and fell down to worship him. But instantly the air shook with no mimic thunder, and from the clear sky darted a blinding flash of lightning; full on his diademed brow it smote Salmoneus, and he fell headlong from the chariot, a blackened corpse. Such guerdon reaped that sinner for his mad presumption.

Of like temper was his sister Alcyone, who was wedded to a prince of Trachis in the North, Ceyx by name. For in the pride of her peerless beauty and royal estate, she deemed herself equal with the Queen of the Gods; insomuch that she persuaded Ceyx to call her *Hera*, and herself called her husband *Zeus*. And at her request, Ceyx made a great feast in his house, bidding all his kinsfolk and neighbours to the *marriage of Zeus and Hera;* then did this impious pair enact before their guests the divine Bride and Bridegroom, counterfeiting all the solemn rites of their most sacred union. But swift and sure comes the wrath of the Olympians on those that have them in derision; three days after, word came to Alcyone that certain fishermen had found her husband lying dead on the sea-shore, his body seared as by lightning. No man dared touch the corpse of one thus slain, nor so much as come near the accurséd thing; nay, the spot where man or beast fell by the stroke of Zeus was wont to be fenced round that none might set foot there for ever. But Alcyone rushed to the place and flung herself on her dead husband's breast, weeping and

lamenting, and accusing herself of having caused his death through her vainglorious folly. Too late she repented; yet was her anguish not wholly unpitied of the gods. For they of her household, standing afar off, saw her rise and fling herself into the sea, as though frenzied with sorrow; and behold, out of the billow that rolled over her flew a long-winged bird, and soared aloft with a wailing cry. Anon it came circling down to where the body of Ceyx had lain, but lay no longer. Awestruck, the beholders marked that a second bird, much like the first, but larger, rose from the place of the vanished corpse; and the pair flitted seaward together, uttering the same shrill, mournful note.

This is why the *ceyx* and the *halcyon*, birds of the sea-swallow tribe, are ever close companions, and why they keep up such a melancholy crying as they hover over their fishing-grounds. But the halcyon is dear to all sailors and seafarers, because through her they may count on a season of calm weather in the midst of wintry storms. For in latter Autumn, at the rising of the Goat-star, the halcyon builds her nest upon the waters; fourteen days she drifts in that frail ark, hatching her brood; and all that while great Poseidon hushes the deep to silence, for a bird's sake.

" The winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joy to the mild oceán;
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charméd wave."

Sisyphus

On the famed Isthmus of Corinth, that Bridge between two seas, stands like a giant sentinel Mount Acrocorinthus, towering in sombre majesty nigh two thousand feet above the plain. Sheer cliffs of grey limestone wall the mountain on three sides; on the fourth only, a steep and rugged way leads to his broad summit. At his base, on a rocky platform, lies the city that in her days of wealth and power was called Corinth, but in the age of the Heroes bore the name of Ephyré.

Hither came in quest of fortune the youngest of the sons of Aeolus, whose name was Sisyphus. Now Sisyphus was less warlike than his brethren, but he was exceedingly wise and cunning, a master of strange arts and a finder of many inventions; he seemed not less than a god to the simple folk of Ephyré, and before he had long dwelt among them they gladly made him their king; for they saw that whoever sought counsel of him in any matter had good success, and whatsoever he took in hand, it prospered. For a while all things went well with Sisyphus and with his folk; and their wealth increased by means of the arts and crafts he taught them, which brought much trade to their city. As some say, it was in his reign that Ephyré began to be called Corinth; however that be, Corinth we will call it in this tale.

Now Sisyphus built him a great citadel on the top of Acrocorinthus, to be a sure stronghold in

case of need; and there he dwelt as upon a watch-tower, surveying land and sea. He found on the mountain-top an ancient altar of Helios the Sun-god, to whom the whole Isthmus had belonged before the coming of the Olympians, but then he had yielded all the level bridge of land to Poseidon, himself keeping only Acrocorinthus. This altar Sisyphus rebuilded, and paid honours to the Sun above all gods; insomuch that the Corinthians deemed their godlike king was the son of Helios.

It fell on a day, as Sisyphus looked abroad from his mountain-tower, after his manner, to see what he might see, that he marked a huge Eagle flying low in the southern sky, bearing what seemed a white lamb in his talons. But of all mortals Sisyphus had the keenest sight, and looking intently he perceived it was no lamb, but a white-robed maiden. He marked also that the Eagle alighted with his prey on the solitary, far-seen peak of the island then called Oenone, that lies in a vast bay of the mainland. And more he saw not, for the Eagle no sooner alighted than the peak was veiled in clouds, though the noonday sun rode in a stainless heaven. "There is more in this than meets the eye," quoth the wise king to himself, "but if yonder Eagle is what I take him for, I shall do well to hold my peace about him." So he told no one what he had seen. But not many days after there came to him an ancient man, of great stature and noble aspect, wrapped in a green mantle and crowned with a garland of rushes. And when Sisyphus asked his name and errand, the stranger

answered, "I am Asopus the River, Poseidon's son, who come to seek your counsel, O wisest of mortals, in my sore distress. For Aegina, fairest of my maiden daughters, and dearest to me, went gathering flowers in the meads nine days agone, and never returned; nor can I hear word of her in all my country, though I have sought far and near, but she hath utterly disappeared from human sight. Wherefore I greatly fear some ravisher hath carried her away captive, and being at my wits' end, I bethought me that you, if any man, might teach me some way to find the maiden. Nay, it may be you have seen her—you that have your dwelling so high and sit beholding all things, like the blessed Sun himself?"

Then said Sisyphus, "Asopus, I have seen both the maiden and her ravisher; but ask me not who he is, for he is mightier far than thou, divine though thou art, and if I betray him he will work woe to us both. Depart to thine own place and seek Aegina no more—hast thou not yet many fair daughters to tend thee?"

But the River-god urged him vehemently, promising him all manner of gifts if he would tell what he knew. Sisyphus resisted awhile, but at last he said, "One boon I lack, and one only, which if thou canst grant me, ancient River, I will speak. This rock-citadel of mine is impregnable, as thou seest, yet not long could I hold it against a foe, for it is waterless. If thou canst give me here an ever-flowing spring, thou shalt learn what thou desirest."

" That can I," answered Asopus, " for Poseidon's son hath share in his father's power." So saying, he stamped thrice with his foot, and immediately a clear well-spring bubbled up from the rifted rock. Then Sisyphus told him that King Zeus in eagle-shape had carried away Aegina to the isle Oenone. And Asopus went his way in grief and rage; but how he called Zeus to a reckoning, and what Zeus did to him, we shall tell in another tale.

As for Sisyphus, though for awhile dread of retribution sat heavy on his mind, when time passed on and no evil happened to him he began to laugh at his fears; and he said in his heart, " Tush, Zeus is not all-seeing, as men believe; he knows not it was I that betrayed his secret. Aha, King of Gods, from other eyes thou mayest disguise thyself on thy love-quests, but not from mine! " Thus he spoke, glorying in his subtlety, and no bolt launched from Olympus, nor did any plague come nigh his dwelling. And having ruled Corinth in peace many years, he died and was buried, and Glaucus his son reigned in his stead. But if any man think that either by night or day his doings can escape the eye of Zeus, he greatly errs; and that he shall learn to his sorrow, here or hereafter. This truth unhappy Sisyphus proclaims for all time by divine ordinance, for the punishment he suffered not in life is his eternal portion in the Underwold. There, in the place of tormented sinners, he strives perpetually to heave a great round stone up a steep hillside; and ever, as he nears the hilltop, the stone slips from his grasp and rolls down to the shadowy plain.

Which things are a warning to the godless, and should likewise be laid to heart by all tale-bearers and meddlers.

Bellerophon

When Glaucus, son of Sisyphus, was king in Corinth, a great marvel befell there; for a Wingéd Horse appeared on Acrocorinthus, a noble beast, and white as the driven snow. Now this horse was Pegasus, he that sprang from the blood of the Gorgon Medusa what time Perseus slew that fell monster by Athena's aid. And no sooner was he born, far in the utmost West, than Pegasus soared aloft on his broad wings and flew over land and sea until he came to Corinth, not without providence divine. Down he lighted on the steep mountain-side, and straightway he looked about him for water, that he might drink; but there was none on all Acrocorinthus save the spring within the citadel. Then the Horse stamped with his hoof on the rocky ground, and there gushed forth the bright Fount that men call Pirené unto this day. Hence the Corinthians named him *Pegasus*, which means "He of the well-spring."

Now Bellerophon, the king's son, was the first to see the marvellous horse upon the mountain, and fain would he have caught him; but Pegasus, though he seemed both gentle and fearless, and suffered the prince to approach him, would not endure to be touched. Three days Bellerophon spent on the hillsides to no purpose; then he betook

him to a wise Seer that dwelt in Corinth and entreated his counsel how to subdue Pegasus. And the Seer, speaking by inspiration, bade him go that night into the temple of Athena and sleep upon her altar. So Bellerophon slept all night on the altar-stone, and at daybreak he dreamed a dream. He dreamed that the Goddess stood beside him, all in bright armour, and thus she spoke, "Sleepest thou, Aeolid prince? Arise now, take this gift I bring thee, for by the magic in it thou shalt tame Pegasus. But present it first to Poseidon with the sacrifice of a bull, forasmuch as he is lord and lover of steeds." With that, Bellerophon started up broad awake, and behold, at his feet lay a shining golden thing, the like of which he had never seen. For it was a horse's bit and bridle; and as yet men drove horses in the chariot by means of the halter and the yoke, but they could not well ride them, lacking as it were a rudder to guide them in career.

Glad at heart, Bellerophon hied him to the Seer again, and showed him Athena's gift, and together they sacrificed a bull in Poseidon's sanctuary, as she had commanded. Then said the Seer, "My prince, I have likewise dreamed a dream this night, and now I bid you raise forthwith an altar to Athena of the Steed, hard by Poseidon's. Then fare to the mountain, and bind this will-taming golden charm about the jaws of Pegasus." The prince did even as he was bidden; by favour of Athena he easily bitted and bridled the Wingéd Horse, who no sooner felt the gentle compulsion of that enchanted curb than he suffered Bellerophon

to mount his back and disport himself in the wide fields of air. And the Corinthians builded a temple to Athena of the Bridle, in memory of her wondrous gift.

After these things a grievous calamity drove Bellerophon from his home; for by pure mischance he slew his younger brother in a boar-chase, his spear glancing off a tree and piercing the youth's heart. Wherefore he must needs avoid the land eight full years, for such was the law of those days when a man had shed blood, either wilfully or otherwise. So Bellerophon flew away from Corinth on his wingéd steed, and faring southward, came to the city of Argos; there he made himself known to Proetus the king, who entertained him hospitably, and grew every day more pleased with his guest. For he had never seen a more comely, courteous, and fair-spoken young man than this wandering prince.

Now, to his great misfortune, Bellerophon found no less favour in the sight of his host's fair wife, Queen Sthenoboea. Nor had he long dwelt under the king's roof when this wanton dame found means to entice him to her chamber, and with forthright speech wooed him then and there to lie with her. But sternly he repulsed her, mindful of the sacred tie that binds host and guest; and so fled out of the chamber, half-amazed by her shameless words. And at that slight put upon her, the queen's love turned to a fury of hate; swiftly she planned a way to undo Bellerophon, and having rent her robe and dishevelled her hair, she came to

Proetus in his hall, complaining with tears that his Corinthian guest had offered her violence. Proetus, nothing doubting her tale, swore in his rage that Bellerophon should die for that treachery; yet because of the guest-friendship between them, he feared to compass his death in Argos, lest it should bring on him the vengeance of Zeus, God of Guest-right. So, having pondered awhile, he sent for Bellerophon and with all his wonted friendliness asked if he would do him a service.

"That will I gladly, King," answered Bellerophon, "be it small or great."

"It will be great to me," said Proetus, "but easy to you, who have such a steed at your command. For I would have you bear a letter from me to King Iobates of Lycia, my friend and father-in-law, on an affair of weight."

"An easy task, truly," said the other; "give me the letter, my kind host, and I will bear it across the sea as swiftly as Pegasus can fly."

So Proetus wrote and sealed his letter, and Bellerophon mounted his wondrous courser and flew Eastward over the main. On the third day he came to the city of Iobates on the Lycian mountains, and gave the letter into the king's hand. But the king was troubled when he read it, for Proetus had written thus: "*Proetus of Argos to his royal father-in-law, much health. I require and charge you, as you value my goodwill and alliance, that you immediately put to death the man who brings you this. Farewell.*"

Then Iobates was in a great perplexity; being

on the one hand willing to please his son-in-law; on the other, not a little afraid of the newcomer from the moment he set eyes on him. For Bellerophon was splendid in rich armour of the famed Corinthian bronze; fair of face and of mien most noble, like the son of a god; and his look betokened him full of valour. And when Iobates saw further the wondrous horse he rode, his mind misgave him that here was some enchanter, on whom it were ill to lay hands. So he thought best to dissemble awhile, and make the stranger heartily welcome to his house, until he could devise safe means to destroy him. That day he made a sumptuous feast, and set Bellerophon in the place of honour; and when they began to carouse, the king pledged him in a golden cup, and gave him the same as a guest-gift. And so he did the second day, and the third; only each day the cup he gave was larger and more richly wrought.

But by the fourth morn Iobates had found a way, and when Bellerophon spoke of returning to Argos, he said to him, "Prince, I am full loth to part with such a guest; but if go you must, swear to grant me one boon ere you depart."

"Very willingly," answered Bellerophon, "for there is nothing I would refuse to so courteous an host."

So the king bound him by an oath; then he told him the boon, namely, that he should rid Lycia of the Earth-born monster, Chimaera. This Chimaera had long been the terror of the land, issuing forth from her mountain lair to make prey

of men and cattle; she had a lion's head and fore-paws, the body of a wild goat, and the tail of a serpent; and her fiery breath was more scorching than the blast of a furnace seven times heated, so that none could approach her and live. This Iobates well knew, and forebore to tell Bellerophon, trusting that he would meet with his death thereby. But he reckoned without the good ally that Bellerophon had in Pegasus. For soaring on his back, Bellerophon descried Chimaera from afar, as she prowled over the hills; and from high above, he shot an arrow that pierced her shaggy neck and stretched her dead. Then the Hero sped back to the palace with the tidings, and the king and all his folk went out to see the slain Terror; great rejoicings made the Lycians that day; but Iobates feared Bellerophon more than ever, and was at his wits' end what next to do.

Next day, as luck would have it, word came to him that the Amazons were making a raid on the northern borders of his kingdom, and the wild tribe of the Solymi had risen against him to the eastward. Forthwith he besought Bellerophon to help him, who readily consented; and the king sent him first to encounter the women-warriors, with good hope that he would fall by their hands, for they were terrible in battle. But instead of news of his death, tidings came that Bellerophon had routed the Amazon host with great slaughter, raining arrows upon them from upper air, and now he was gone against the Solymi. And Iobates said to himself, "Twice hath he escaped deadly peril;

if he come off safely the third time, assuredly the gods are on his side, and I will plot against him no more. Nay, I will give him my daughter to wife, and persuade him to abide in Lycia; for I need fear no foes with such a champion to defend me."

And when Bellerophon returned victorious from a great battle with the Solymi, the king did even as he had said; and when in a few years he died, leaving no son, Bellerophon reigned over Lycia.

Now the Aeolid prince lived honoured and wealthy in his new home, and three goodly sons were born to him; but in his prosperity he gave way to that monstrous excess of pride which was ever the bane of his house. For he boasted that he would ride Pegasus up to heaven's gate, and enter the mansions of the gods. But Zeus, hearing, sent a gadfly to sting Pegasus as he flew aloft, so that he plunged madly and threw his rider; then soared like an eagle into the upper blue, and disappeared for ever from mortal sight. And now he bides on Olympus, stabled in the golden stalls of Zeus.

As for Bellerophon, he fell to earth on the Plain called Aleïan, in Cilicia, beside the sea. This Plain was a waste land where no man came, nor had come since the making of the world, for it was covered with salt marshes and brackish lakes. And in its desolate fens Bellerophon wandered till he died, eating his heart, being smitten of Zeus with moody madness. So true it is that they whom the gods hate shall not live out half their days.

Athamas

In the ancient ages, the wealthiest city of Greece was Orchomenos, in the country of Boeotia, surnamed the Golden, from her magnificence. Thither came Athamas, son of Aeolus, out of the North, with a band of retainers, stout warriors all, who had adventured along with him in quest of lands and lordship. Now the folk of Orchomenos were afraid of these Northerners, being themselves no fighters, but peaceable craftsmen and traders, and their king, Andreos, was of the same mind; so he granted Athamas a small tract of his domains, hoping thereby to save the rest. But as time passed, the Aeolid and his followers encroached more and more on lands adjacent, until, when Andreos died, they were lords of all; then Athamas declared himself king, and ruled with the strong hand.

At this time Cadmus was king in Thebes, and Athamas resolved to seek alliance with that powerful neighbour; so he took rich gifts in hand, and went to visit Cadmus, and asked for one of his daughters in marriage; albeit he had already a wife called Nephelé, and two children by her. Word came to Nephelé of her lord's errand, and how he meant to cast her off that he might wed a princess of Thebes; and so great was her grief that she shortly pined away and died. So says, at least, the teller of this tale, though others will have it that Athamas was already a widower when he went to Thebes. But to me it seems that the wrath of Queen Hera came on him in the end for

no other cause than his openly slighting the sanctity of wedlock.

Be that as it may, Athamas prospered in his suit and brought home Ino, daughter of Cadmus, as his bride. Now after the manner of stepdames, Ino had scant kindness for the first wife's young children. Of the girl, Hellé by name, she took no heed at all; but from the time her own sons were born she sought means to destroy the boy, Phrixus, because he was the rightful and acknowledged heir of Athamas. It was long before she could contrive a way that would bring no suspicion upon herself, but at last this was what she did. When the time came for the sowing of corn, all the women of the land met together in Demeter's temple and celebrated the mysteries of the goddess; and there Queen Ino gave each of them a great jar of seed-corn from the king's granary, bidding them put that secretly in place of the corn their men folk had ready for sowing; "for this corn," said she, "is hallowed by these our mystic rites, and Demeter's blessing will be upon it if only you tell no man whence it came." And the women obeyed her, little knowing what they did. For Ino had parched that corn in an oven; so next Spring never a green blade appeared in the cornfields, and there was dearth in the land when there should have been harvest. King Athamas sent messengers to inquire of the God at Delphi concerning this calamity; for that, Ino was waiting; and with much gold she bribed the messengers not to go to Delphi, but return at the expected time and say as she instructed

them. So in due course the men appeared before the king, and declared they had received this response from Apollo's prophetess: "*Zeus, being wroth with Athamas, afflicts the land for his sake. Nor shall the fields bear fruit until the king offer his firstborn son for a sacrifice to the god.*"

When Athamas heard that saying he rent his clothes and cast dust upon his head, making loud lamentation; yet for all that he would not disobey the oracle, for the famine was sore in the land, and better it seemed to him that one should perish, than the whole people. Therefore he took Phrixus his son, and went up into the mountain called Laphystius, where was the altar of Zeus. But when he had bound the victim upon the altar, even as he upraised the knife to slay him, a miracle befell. For suddenly a Ram with fleece of glittering gold stood over Phrixus, and the cords that bound him snapped in twain; moved by a divine prompting, the boy flung himself upon the creature's back; and lo, it rose with him into the clouds and was lost to view ere the wonder-stricken king could draw breath to cry out!

Meanwhile the maiden Hellé had stolen away alone to Nephelé's tomb; kneeling there, she prayed with bitter tears to her dead mother, saying, "O mother, mother, if thou dost love us still in the Underworld, hast no help for thy helpless children? Oh, if it be possible, save Phrixus even now; but if not, save me, at least, from our cruel stepdame, that hates us both."

Scarcely had Hellé thus spoken when she was

'ware of a bright-eyed youth standing beside her, with a herald's staff in his hand. And she started up, afraid; but the youth said, "Fear not, damsel; I am Hermes, the Guide of Souls, whom the power of a dead mother's prayers hath sent to her children's aid. Look up yonder, and behold what I have done for Phrixus." Hellé looked, and saw the gold-fleeced Ram hovering near, and Phrixus astride him, safe and sound. Then Hermes placed her behind her brother, and charged the children to let the Ram carry them whither he would, for they should find a new home where he alighted.

Away flew the enchanted beast over hill and dale; northward he went, until Greek lands were left behind, and skirted the wild coasts of Thrace till he reached a strait of the sea between two headlands, the one in Europe, the other in Asia. Now the Ram crossed over to the Asian shore; but alas, when Hellé saw the tossing waves beneath her, she shrieked and threw up her arms for terror, and overbalancing, fell headlong into the sea! And in memory of the drowned maiden, that strait is called the Hellespont, that is, *Sea of Helle*, unto this day. As for Phrixus, the Ram bore him on swifter than the wind to the far country of the Colchians; but what further befell him belongs to the tale of the Quest of the Golden Fleece; so here we turn again to King Athamas and his queen.

When Ino heard of the miraculous carrying away of Phrixus, and that Hellé likewise had disappeared, she rejoiced at her good fortune in being rid of Nephelé's children so easily, and without, as she

thought, bringing the stain of bloodguilt on herself or her husband. But all too soon was she to learn that the gods judge not as men judge, by the outward act; that in their sight, whosoever purposes the death of another is already a murderer. For it fell on a day that Athamas, coming home from the chase along the sea-cliffs, met Ino walking there with her two young sons, Learchus and Melicertes; and suddenly madness came upon him, so that he took them for a hind with her fawns, and drawing his bow, he shot Learchus, the elder boy, through the heart. For a moment horror rooted Ino to the spot; then, as the madman bounded upon her, fitting a second arrow to the string, she caught up Melicertes in her arms and flung herself over the sheer cliff into the waves below. Thus was it meted to Ino with the measure she had meted withal; she saw her firstborn die by his father's hand, as she had plotted that Nephelé's son should die; being the cause of Hellé's drowning, she drowned her own child; and with her own life paid for the death of heart-broken Nephelé. Yet, having paid the full price for her crimes, Ino found forgiveness with the gods; nay, if all tales be true, they ordained a tearless, immortal life for that daughter of Cadmus and divine Harmonia in the sea-halls of aged Nereus. There is a goddess of the sea named Leucothea, "the White Goddess"; to her, and to her son, Palaemon, mariners ever pray when in danger of shipwreck, for the twain are well known to be saviours of drowning men. Was it not the White Goddess that saved Odysseus when his raft

foundered under him, by lending him her enchanted girdle, whereon he floated safe to land? Well, as ancient poets have it, Leucothea is none other than Ino, and the young Palaemon was once Melicertes. And true it is that the body of Ino was never found; albeit a corpse was washed ashore at the Corinthian Isthmus which Sisyphus declared to be that of his nephew Melicertes, and buried with much pomp, holding splendid games in the dead boy's honour.

Now Athamas, in his frenzy, would have plunged into the sea after his wife, had not the men of his hunting-train come up in time to restrain him by force. When the madness passed and he knew what he had done, the king's first words were, "This is thy vengeance, Hera!"—which was noted as a manifest token that the wrong he had done to Nephelé was brought home to him at last. And then the slayer of his son must go forth from the land he had defiled with blood, no more king of rich Orchomenos, but a wandering outlaw. But Athamas lacked neither strength nor prowess, and resolved to win fortune yet again; so he betook himself to Delphi and inquired of Apollo where he should make a new home; and the god answered, "*In the place where wild beasts afford you hospitality.*" At that, Athamas went away much disheartened, for he thought the oracle signified that he should never find a home anywhere, since it named a thing impossible. But not long after, as he wandered one evening through a forest, he came upon a pack of wolves that had just pulled down a deer; and the ravening beasts no sooner saw him

than they left the carcass and slunk quietly away. "This is a strange marvel," quoth Athamas; yet he thought no more of it until he had made a fire and cooked some of the deer's meat, for he had tasted no food that day and was faint with hunger. But when he had eaten his fill, and laid him down to sleep by his fire, it came into his mind that the wolves had played hosts to him, and here was the place spoken of by the oracle. Now the place was an open glade in the forest, intersected by a running stream. "The god has chosen well," thought Athamas; "here are wood and water, and what need I more?" So there he abode, and built himself a lodge of rough timbers, and lived by hunting. As time went on he gathered there a band of outlaws and chiefless men that were glad enough to follow so bold a captain; and they began to plunder the folk of that land, carrying off their goods and gear, their cattle and their women. And as more and more of such broken men flocked to join Athamas, his settlement—which he named *Athamantia*—became a robber-city, with himself for king; soon other cities were fain to buy peace and safety by owning him as overlord; at last he was master of the whole country that was later called Achaia. Thus was many a kingship founded in the days of the Heroes; but that of Athamas was not fated to abide with his descendants, although he wedded a third wife and had three sons by her. Neither did he himself escape in the end the justice of Zeus, that ever pursues the violent and lawless.

In seasons of dearth or pestilence, the ancient

dwellers in Achaia were wont to offer a solemn piacular sacrifice in the high place of Zeus on Mount Laphystius, and the victim they offered was their king for the time being. For as their fathers had taught them, none but the king could bear the sins of the people; he alone could be to them as a scapegoat, on whom to lay all the uncleanness that had poisoned the land. Now when King Athamas had grown old, there arose a great famine in Achaia; and as he would have done unto Phrixus his son, so the priest of Zeus Laphystius did unto him.

Cretheus

We read of but one son of Aeolus that gave no offence to the gods, and so lived in peace and prosperity to a good old age. This was Cretheus, founder and king of the fair harbour-town Iolcus, on the Thessalian coast. Now when King Cretheus heard the fearful end of his brother Salmoneus, and how his widow had killed herself in despair, he sent a herald to Elis to fetch the only child of Salmoneus, a beautiful little maid named Tyro. For by Aeolid custom, being himself unwedded, it was his right and duty by Aeolid custom to espouse his brother's orphan. So Tyro was brought up in the palace at Iolcus, until she was of full marriageable age. But before the time of her bridals, great Poseidon had wooed and won the lovely-tressed maiden, as she strayed solitary on the banks of the Enipeus; and she had brought forth twin sons in secret, whom, for fear of the king, she cast out

in a meadow by the river, to fare as they might. That same hour came the king's horse-herd into the meadow, driving horses to water; this man found the babes and took them home to his wife, who was childless, and she reared them as her own. Neleus and Pelias—so their foster-parents named the foundlings—grew up to be gallant youths; like all Poseidon's sons, they were dark-haired, of great strength and stature, high-hearted, sudden and quick in quarrel. Scarcely could these twins be told apart, save for a mark that Pelias had on his forehead, like the print of a horse-hoof; and this many believed was made by one of the horses stepping on him while he lay in the meadow, but it was in truth the seal of Poseidon, Lord of Steeds.

Meanwhile Tyro was wedded to King Cretheus and bore him three sons, Aeson, Amythaon, and Pheres. But while these were yet children, she was thrown into prison by her husband; for one of her handmaidens, called Sidero, revealed to him that the queen had been unchaste before wedlock. This cunning damsel had gained Tyro's trust by feigned love and loyalty, and drawn from her at last the secret of her girlhood; and she immediately betrayed it, through black envy and hatred of her mistress. Now Tyro neither denied the charge, nor would she tell her lover's name, fearing Poseidon's anger; so at first Cretheus was minded to put her to death; but repenting of that, he shut her up in a tower and made Sidero her keeper, and a cruel one she proved. And after that, the traitress so wrought upon the king by artful blandishments, that he took her to

wife in Tyro's stead; thus she achieved her evil heart's desire.

But when Neleus and Pelias came to manhood, King Cretheus died; and then did their foster-mother disclose to them what she had long known, namely, that they were the sons of the injured Queen Tyro. For this woman had belonged in youth to the royal household; and when her husband brought the babes to her, she knew the richly-patterned shawl they were wrapped in for one that she had seen Tyro weaving at the loom. But being of a great discretion, she held her peace; and thanked the gods therefor when the queen's disgrace was noised abroad, since Cretheus would assuredly have slain her love-children, could he have found them. And so she bided her time, until she heard the king was no more.

Then Neleus and Pelias got them sword and shield, and went in haste to Iolcus; like a whirlwind they rushed into the palace, crying out that they were come to avenge Tyro their mother; and none resisting them—for indeed there was none of the household but was fain to see her delivered—they burst with drawn swords into Sidero's chamber. The wicked queen escaped by another door, and fled for her life to the temple of Hera; the twins pressed hard upon her, but she outstripped them; and as she crossed the temple threshold Neleus halted and drew back, reverencing the holy place. But Pelias strode within, heedless of his brother's warning, and stabbed Sidero to the heart as she clung to the image of the goddess. By which

enormous sacrilege he brought on himself the abiding wrath of Hera.

Next, the twins set free their mother, and made themselves known to her; great joy was Tyro's that day, and all Iolcus rejoiced with her. But Neleus and Pelias had no mind to dwell in Iolcus, where their young half-brother Aeson must be king over them, as heir of Cretheus; and each went his own way, seeking what fortune the gods might send. Pelias went no further than the borders of Thessaly; but Neleus wandered south even to distant Pylos; and how these sons of Poseidon fared afterwards may be read elsewhere in this book.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

I

AESON, the son of Cretheus, was a just king, like his father before him, but something too mild of mood to keep in awe his turbulent Thessalian vassals. And when some of them rebelled against him, he was glad enough to take the proffered aid of his half-brother Pelias, who had settled not far from Iolcus and become a redoubted warrior. Pelias quelled the sedition with the strong hand, and the grateful king made him captain of his guard. But he was soon to find that he had bought peace too dear; Pelias, who was as crafty and ambitious as he was valiant, conspired against his lord and brother, and drove him from his throne. Nevertheless, he spared Aeson's life—rather in contempt, it seemed, than reverencing the sacred tie of blood, for what was holy to him that had killed the suppliant at the altar?—and let him retire with a few faithful servants to his own manor-house near the city, where he abode in a kind of honourable captivity. But all the king's demesne, his flocks and herds, slaves, horses, and all the rich treasure of his house, the usurper seized together with the kingship.

Nine years Pelias throve in his tyranny; then he began to be troubled of nights by a certain frightful dream of one that stood by his bed, ready to murder him, while he lay powerless to move or cry out. And being thus haunted for many nights, he sent messengers to Delphi, bidding them ask in his name, "*What means the dream that I have dreamed.*" To whom the god replied by the mouth of his priestess, "*Let King Pelias know that he will meet his death from the lordly Aeolids, whether their hands or their unbending wills bring it to pass. And I rede him beware above all of the Man with One Sandal that shall come out of a mountain home to bright Iolcus, whether he be outlander or citizen.*" And the crafty king's blood ran cold when he heard the word that was spoken beside the centre-stone of tree-clad Mother Earth. Yet he said to himself, "Who is it I should fear of the Aeolid kin? Aeson is weak and childless; as for his brothers, Amythaon dwells far in the West, and Pheres, like the time-server he is, courts my favour. All may yet be well, if I keep good watch against this Comer with one sandal." So he gave strict charge to the watchmen of the city gates, and to all his guards, to warn him instantly if they saw such a comer; but as years went by and there was no sign of him, Pelias well-nigh forgot his fears.

But at long last, he that was foretold came in his destined hour to Iolcus, a miracle of manhood. Two hunting-spears he bore, and was garbed after the fashion of the country, in close-fitting tunic; over that again, the skin of a mountain-pard was

flung round his splendid form. In the flower of his youth he seemed, and not yet had the curling locks of his red-gold hair known the shears, but fell in sunny waves adown his back. It was the busy hour of morning market when the stranger passed unnoted through the city gate, and stood awhile amid the throng in the market-place, putting to test the steadfastness of his soul. Now when the folk were presently 'ware of him, standing there in his beauty, and knew him not, awe filled their hearts; and they whispered, each to his neighbour, "Sure, it cannot be Apollo here—or Aphrodite's lord, he of the brazen car? . . . Or is this giant-like youth Otus, or his twin Ephialtes? . . . Nay, these, men say, died long since in fruitful Naxos. And Tityus, we know, hath likewise perished, by the shaft of Leto's child—a warning, he, to all that lust after forbidden joys."

Thus they talked, covertly eyeing the stranger; but meanwhile one had marked that *his left foot was unshod*, and brought word to King Pelias; and he came with headlong speed to the market-place in his burnished, mule-drawn car. Dismay smote him as he viewed the long-dreaded token of the Single Sandal upon the youth's right foot; but he masked his fear and disdainfully accosted him: "Stranger, what country do you call home? What ancient groundling of a mother brought you forth from her o'erteeméd womb? Come, speak out your parentage and shame it not by hateful lies."

Unmoved by those words of insult, the youth spoke with calm courtesy: "I will not shame, at

least, the teaching of Chiron. For I come from his mountain-cave, where I was reared by pure and holy nurses, even Philyra and Chariclo, his mother and spouse. Full twenty years I have housed with them, nor ever yet disgraced that upbringing by guileful word or deed. But to-day the wise Centaur hath bidden me return home to Iolcus, and win back the ancient realm of my father, that high Zeus granted to the sons of Aeolus, the warrior lord; for now, as I learn, a usurper rules it, Pelias the godless having violently dispossessed my sire of his ancestral throne."

"You are a manifest impostor," cried the king wrathfully. "All Iolcus knows that Aeson never had but the one son—who died at his birth."

"Nay, that he did not," answered Jason, "for I am he! Listen now; I was born shortly after my parents were driven out, and because they knew my life would be in danger from the tyrant, they gave me out for dead and held solemn rites of funeral. But meanwhile they privily sent me away under cloud of night to Mount Pelion; and their trusty messenger brought me—a babe in swaddling-bands of kingly purple—to the good Centaur, that I might be reared in safety. And in time the divine Beast called my name *Jason*,[1] because I learned not a little of his own healing art. . . . Now, worthy fellow-citizens, show me where dwells the old man, my father; 'tis no alien, trust me, you will guide to Aeson's house, but a true son of him and of this land."

[1] "Healer."

Then all the folk shouted for joy, and escorted Jason eagerly to the house; never a whit they heeded the scowling king, and he withdrew sullenly to his palace, oppressed with black misgivings. But Jason came to his father in the bare, ruinous house without the city; and the old man's eyes no sooner fell on Jason than he knew him; and the tears welled forth from his withered eyelids, for joy that his son was grown to be a very flower of men in might and comeliness.

The news flew abroad like wildfire, that Aeson's son was not dead but alive, and come home again, the most splendid young man ever seen; those tidings brought the discrowned king's brothers hurrying to Iolcus, Pheres from near by, and Amythaon out of Messene in the West, albeit neither had bestirred himself hitherto in Aeson's cause. And with them came their sons and kinsmen, a great company; of whom the two most noted in after time were Amythaon's son Melampus, that was a Seer, and Admetus, heir to Pheres, for whom his politic father had lately made a marriage with Pelias' daughter Alcestis. Then all the friends and well-wishers of Aeson began to pay him open court, and replenish his house with gifts of corn, wine, and oil, and his empty byres with fat sheep and oxen. Thus Jason, who played the host in his aged father's stead, was able to entertain his kinsfolk royally; and he made them good cheer for five whole nights and days, with feasting and minstrelsy, culling along with them the holy rose of Joy.

But on the sixth day, Jason opened his mind to

his kinsmen in earnest words; and when all had signified full approval of the purpose he declared to them, the whole company rose up with one accord and followed him to the palace in the city. And at sound of their voices in his hall, Pelias came to them, with haggard, uneasy looks; whom Jason thus addressed, fitting words of discretion to tones of blandest courtesy. "Son of Earth-shaking Poseidon, all too prone are the hearts of men to stray from Justice, pursuing gain along crooked paths, albeit they walk thereby to a bitter reckoning. But it behoves us two to govern our souls aright, devising what shall bring us happiness in days to come. Consider now, I pray you—for you know it well—that one mother bore Cretheus and the reckless Salmoneus, of whom you and I are descended in the third degree; and that the high-throned Fates avert their faces from a house divided against itself. Wherefore it were ill done of us to put it to the arbitrament of the sword, who shall hold this goodly realm of our forefathers—ay, and it shall be needless, King, if you will take my rede. For I on my part freely yield to you all the wealth in land, flocks, and herds whereof you have stripped my aged sire, nor grudge that these should make your storehouse and barns overflow with plenty. But do you on your part restore to me the kingly sceptre that was Aeson's, and the throne whence he dealt justice and judgment to his people—these, I say, yield peaceably into my hands, lest you rue the keeping of them."

Thus spoke Jason, and the crafty king answered

mildly: "Believe me, kinsman, you shall find me all that you can wish. Henceforth I will own you as Chief of our House—all the more willingly, because I begin to grow an old man, whereas you are in the prime of youth and strength, and fitter for the Quest that else were mine to undertake."

"What Quest is that?" asked the youth, wondering.

"I am about to tell you," said Pelias, "but first tell me, do you know the story of the boy Phrixus, our kinsman, whom Athamas his father was about to sacrifice, when the gods sent a Golden Ram that carried him away to the far land of Colchis?"

"The wise Centaur told me that tale," answered Jason, "and said, moreover, that when Phrixus came to Colchis, he sacrificed the enchanted Ram to Ares, god of the land, at the bidding of an oracle, and hung up its fleece in the god's sacred grove. Also, Chiron said that the King of the Colchians, who is a son of Helios, gave Phrixus his daughter for wife, when he was old enough; but the youth died not long after, for the Fates had allotted him a brief span of life."

"It is but too true," said Pelias, sighing, "and while Phrixus lies in that strange and distant land he cannot rest in the grave! Night after night, these three years past, hath he appeared to me in my dreams, bidding me fetch the Golden Fleece home to Hellas, for where his treasure is, there must his spirit dwell. And when I inquired of the god at Delphi whether my visions were true, he enjoined me to launch a ship forthwith on that high emprise.

Alas, how could an old man essay such a quest, or where could I find a captain that would venture over those unknown seas? But if you, that are also of the Aeolid kin, will adventure to Colchis in my stead, then will I swear a solemn oath to restore kingship, lands, and wealth to you and your father —when you bring back the Golden Fleece."

Now Pelias had had no such dreams as he alleged, nor any bidding from Delphi concerning the Golden Fleece; but while Jason was yet speaking his swift and subtle mind devised that pretext for sending him on a voyage to the world's end, whence he was little likely to return if all were true that rumour told of the uncharted Northern seas, of the fierce Colchian folk, and their wizard king, Aietes, the Child of the Sun. But nought of this knew Jason, and being himself without guile, he looked for none in others; so he readily covenanted with Pelias to undertake the Quest of the Golden Fleece, as the price of regaining the kingdom for Aeson. And Pelias swore the solemn oath, as he promised, with joy in his cunning heart; for he thought, "Thus have I made good riddance of the Man with One Sandal."

But how chanced it that Jason wore the one sandal when he came to Iolcus in the destined hour? Thus it befell, not without providence divine. On his way from Pelion to the city, Jason must cross the brook Anauros, that was swollen to a torrent by the autumn rains. Now on the hither bank he found an old beggar-wife sitting, who humbly besought him to carry her over; and he did it,

despite her rags and squalor, for Chiron had taught him ever to help the helpless. But so heavy proved the old woman, and so fiercely rolled Anauros, that Jason had much ado to win over; and midway his left sandal slipped off and was carried down the stream. Panting for breath, the youth set down his burden on the farther side, and instantly the fashion of her changed. Instead of a wrinkled, tattered crone, he beheld a Lady of more than earthly beauty and majesty, in glittering array. She looked on him with great mild eyes, like the eyes of kine, and said, "For the courtesy you showed the beggar-woman, Prince Jason, you shall not lack your reward. Henceforth I, Hera, am your friend, even as I am the foe of Pelias." And that was a true word, as this tale will show.

For no sooner had Jason undertaken the Quest of the Fleece, than Queen Hera put a thought into his heart, and forthwith he sent messengers East and West and South and North, to spread tidings of his enterprise, and how all should be welcome to sail along with him that could dare peril for the sake of deathless fame. And thereupon all the mightiest heroes that then lived came flocking to Iolcus, for Hera filled their souls with keen desire of so great and strange an adventure. First came the beautiful twin brethren, Castor and Polydeuces, Sons of the divine Swan; they that loved each other with a love passing the love of women, insomuch that even in death they were not divided. Next came Heracles, peerless in strength, the wanderer by land and sea, the helper of all that

suffered wrong; and a fair lad followed him, Hylas by name, that was his squire and cupbearer. And out of the stormy hills of Thrace came Orpheus, the beloved minstrel, son of the Muse Calliope; he that could charm all the wild things of the woodlands, yea, the forest oaks, to follow him, by the magic of his voice and lute. After him came Zetes and Calaïs, sons of Boreas, the North Wind; a wondrous pair to look upon, for wings like an eagle's waved from their broad shoulders. But time would fail to rehearse the names of all the heroes, sons of gods and of kings, that gathered in Aeson's hall; suffice it that they were every one renowned warriors, and two of them were likewise seers by grace of Apollo—Mopsus of Titaresos and Idmon from distant Argos, who foreknew that he must die upon that Quest, yet esteemed the glory of it better than life itself. And last came Tiphys, the best helmsman alive, and promised to steer Jason's ship.

Meanwhile King Pelias had set woodcutters to work on Mount Pelion, felling tall firs and tough ash-trees, which trains of mules and oxen dragged to the harbour side; and he hired the most skilful shipwrights in Iolcus and all the regions round to build the greatest and goodliest ship that had ever yet been seen; and spared neither pains nor cost to fit and freight her as should best please Jason and his crew. For he would not have grudged the half of all his treasure to rid himself the sooner of the youth, now he had seen what manner of spirit he was of. But there was never ship built so quickly as that ship, nor so wondrous well; for divine hands

wrought at the shaping of her, even the hands of Athena, mistress of all crafts by which men thrive. She, at Queen Hera's bidding, came to Iolcus in the guise of a wandering craftsman, and hired herself to Pelias among the rest of the shipwrights; who, when they saw the marvellous skill of the stranger, were fain to own him their master and work by his direction. And because this master-builder called himself *Argus*, Jason named the ship *Argo* on the day she was finished, in grateful remembrance of him. Now that same day Argus disappeared from Iolcus, without claiming his wage, and no man saw him more; but Athena visited Jason in a dream the next night, and told him what she had done for him to pleasure Queen Hera. And how, being the work of her immortal hands, *Argo* was a thing of life; "Moreover," said the goddess, "I have given her a voice, which shall speak sure counsel to you in the hour of need, for in her prow I have fixed a beam from the enchanted Oaks of Dodona, that prophesy with human tongues."

And now *Argo* lay ready for launching, a noble galley of fifty oars; her crew mustered at the haven, and all the folk of Iolcus thronged to watch them embark. But first Jason and his comrades offered sacrifice to Zeus; and Mopsus the seer prayed aloud, entreating favourable omens from the god, which were granted by the clear burning of the altar flames, and by lucky fall of the dice that the seer threw, after his manner of divining. So Mopsus bade them hoist sail with all speed, for the hour was auspicious. Then Zeus vouchsafed a

greater sign; for when all were come aboard, and the anchors raised, Jason stood by the helm and poured libation of wine into the sea from a golden cup, calling on the Lord of the Lightning, and all Powers of the Air and the Deep, to prosper his sea-faring; and straightway thunder pealed on high, and lightnings played harmless over *Argo's* mast. At that, all the heroes shouted for joy, and bent to their oars with mighty strokes, and *Argo* swept out into the bay amid the loud farewells and blessings of the people. But as for Pelias, his joy at their departing was swallowed up in grief; for Acastus, his only son, had made friends with Jason, and was neither to hold nor to bind from joining *Argo's* crew; nor dared Pelias tell the youth that Jason and his company were going to certain death. And another cousin of Jason's likewise sailed with him against a father's will, namely, Admetus, son of Pheres.

Now when the Argonauts had rowed out of the Pagasaean Gulf they sailed with a fair wind northward, past huge Olympus, home of the gods, and the wooded flanks of Athos, past Samothrace the divine, and Lemnos, isle of Hephaestus; then came they to Hellespont, and along the strait into the Propontis. On the Asian shore of Propontis is the country of the Doliones; there the *Argo* put in for water, and the King of the Doliones, by name Cyzicus, welcomed the strangers and made them a noble feast, and loaded them with guest-gifts—corn, and wine, and soft raiment. Cyzicus prayed the heroes to abide with him that night, and they

consented; but while they slept, at the dark hour before dawn, a robber band from the mountains burst into the king's house and set upon them. And they, deeming this some treachery of their host, laid furiously about them in the darkness, until the voice of Heracles bade them make every one for the ship and to sea with all speed. But when they got on board and would have raised anchor, behold neither Jason, nor Heracles, nor the whole crew, could haul it up an inch! They felt *Argo* straining under them, as a hound strains in the leash; then first she uttered the voice Athena gave, and said, "*'Tis the ghost of Cyzicus holds me, whom thou, Heracles, hast slain in the darkness, and he will never let me go except you appease him. For he was guiltless towards you, and the men that assailed you had broken in to spoil his goods.*" That word cut the heroes to the heart; they sprang ashore—for it was now dawn—and ran to the king's house; and there lay the corpse of their kindly host on a pile of others, all stripped and gashed by those savage marauders. Then the Argonauts mourned for Cyzicus with a great mourning, and buried him after the custom of the land; they raised a mound of earth above his grave, and slaughtering black rams thereon, they poured down the blood into the mound for a peace-offering to the entombed spirit. And after that, they held funeral games in his honour, after the manner of the Hellenes. So the ghost of Cyzicus was appeased, and *Argo* went her way rejoicing.

And next the heroes skirted the coast of Mysia

until they reached a fair, well-wooded bay, where they thought good to land and renew their store of food and water. And while Heracles went in quest of venison for them, the young Hylas undertook to find a stream or fount where they might fill their waterskins. But the gods willed that neither of the twain should return to their comrades. For Hylas found a still, clear pool embowered in the woods; and as he stooped to drink of it, the Naiads that dwelt therein flung caressing arms about his neck and drew him under, enamoured of his boyish beauty; and with one bubbling cry he sank to rise no more. Heracles heard that cry, and knew the voice of his belovéd; frantic, he ranged hither and thither through the woods, shouting "Hylas!" to the reverberate hills; but, save their echo, no answer came. So he went further, ever further, into the Mysian wilds; and having waited three days in vain for him and his darling, the Argonauts set sail again with heavy hearts.

And next they came to the land of the Bebryces, where the giant Amycus was king, whom a nymph of that land bore to Poseidon. It was this giant's custom to force all comers to box with him, whereupon he would lay them lifeless with one stroke of his huge fist; and haughtily he challenged *Argo's* crew. But though Amycus was not less skilful than strong, he found his match at last in Polydeuces; like a thunder-smitten tower he crashed down dead to earth as that prince of boxers got home his blow.

And next the heroes sailed up the storm-vexed

Bosphorus, and touched the bleak shore of Salmydessus, the home of Phineus. Now the gods had gifted Phineus with prophecy, but when he sinned against them in the folly of his heart, they sent blindness on him, and a worse evil besides. For two weird and loathsome monsters haunted him continually while he sat at meat; they had the heads of fair women, but the bodies of vultures, and vulture-like they would swoop upon his table and snatch away the food set before him with carrion-reeking claws. And what they left was so tainted with the noisome stench of them that none might touch a morsel of it. And no weapon was any avail against them, neither dart nor arrow, for they came and were gone like a whirlwind. Now when the Argonauts were come to the house of Phineus, and he had bidden them welcome—for by his art he knew them, and their quest, and that his destined deliverers were among them—they sat down to meat with him; and instantly those demon birds pounced on the fare after their manner, to the great wonder of the heroes. And they asked their host what this marvel meant; then said he, "Alas, my noble guests, this is the punishment I endure from the gods, over and above my blindness, because I did evil in their sight. The monsters you have seen are the Harpies, *Stormfoot* and *Swiftwing*, children of the Deep, sisters of the Rainbow; and in this manner do they torment me these many years, so that for all I am rich by means of my soothsaying, I am like to die of famine. Pity me, O heroes, and save a wretch whose one hope is in

you! For I know the sons of Boreas are among you, and they only have fleetness to chase and overtake the Harpies, that fly swifter than the shafts of Heracles himself. And if Zetes and Calaïs will rid me of those foul pests, I will forewarn you concerning a peril that *Argo* must shortly meet upon her course."

Zetes and Calaïs consented forthwith; but Jason said, "Swear to us first, blind seer, that the gods will not be wroth with us for releasing you."

"By high Zeus I swear it," answered Phineus, "for it was long since revealed to me that if ever I found deliverance, it should be when the gods directed hither a ship's company that were adventuring in quest of the Golden Fleece. And little I hoped it would ever enter the heart of any man to dare that perilous emprise!"

Then Jason bade him have the board set out with viands again; and no sooner did the Harpies appear as before, than Zetes and Calaïs drew their swords, spread their broad wings, and gave chase to them, calling on their sire for aid. And Boreas blew his fiercest in answer, and the great gale drove along pursuers and pursued, a thousand leagues and more to Southward. Nearer, ever nearer pressed Zetes and Calaïs on the shrieking Harpies, until they fell down spent on the isles that men call *Strophades*, the "Whirlwind Isles," unto this day. There had the sons of Boreas made an end of them, but suddenly appeared bright-winged Iris, their sister, commanding the brethren to put up their swords; "For Zeus," said she, "forbids you to slay the Harpies,

who are his ministers, even as I am." Then Zetes and Calaïs took an oath, even the dread oath by the Water of Styx, of the women-headed monsters, that they should never come near Phineus more; and so winged their way Northward again.

Meanwhile, their comrades feasted all night long with Phineus, biding their return; great cheer their host made them, and himself ate and drank and was merry; yet ever and anon would pause to hearken uneasily for a scream and flapping of wings; for it was like a dream to him that the Harpies should be gone. By and by, Jason asked him concerning the danger he had promised to forewarn them of; and the old seer answered, "I will tell you now, my son, both what it is and how you must meet it. At the end of this strait, you will come forth on the sea called Axine, "The Inhospitable," where never Greek has sailed before; a perilous sea it is, storm-vexed, full of shoals and treacherous currents, and misty with the freezing breath of the North Wind. But cross it you must to reach your bourne—and as you enter, I rede you beware of the portal! For you will see on either hand a huge and overhanging cliff, dark-blue, translucent like glass; these are the Symplegades, the Clashing Rocks, that live and move and catch prey; ay, if ever ship or sea-beast passes between them, they close suddenly thereon and grind it to powder! But I have a device for you, heroes, whereby I trust you shall win safely through. As *Argo* nears the cliffs, let loose a dove from her prow, and straightway row forward for your lives. For the cliffs will roll together to seize the bird—and

instantly roll apart again, after their wont; and then may *Argo* slip between, if you drive her with all your force. But I will tell you another thing to do. Ere you quit the strait, go ashore and raise an altar of stones, and sacrifice a red bull to Poseidon, entreating him to preserve your good ship from the perils of the unknown deep, and bring you to your desired haven."

Then said Jason, "All thanks, sage Phineus, for your counsel, which we shall heedfully perform. But if by grace of Poseidon we 'scape the Clashing Rocks, what course must Tiphys steer over that uncharted sea? If you can tell us that, and what it were best to do when we reach Colchis, we shall be yet more grateful."

"As for your voyaging," answered Phineus, "you have but to sail eastward, keeping land ever in view on your right, until you see forest-clad shores ahead, and come to the mouth of a broad river; for that will be Phasis, the river of the Colchians. But counsel you further I cannot, since the things that will befall you in Colchis are wholly dark to me; only this much is revealed—Aphrodite will rule your fortune there, whether for good or ill."

Now on the morrow the Argonauts bade farewell to Phineus, and he gave them a dove, and a red bull for Poseidon, and rich guest-gifts besides out of his treasury, wishing them godspeed; so they went their way and saw him no more. And on the shore of Bosphorus they sacrificed the bull to the Earth-shaker, with prayers for his favour, and rowed on again till they beheld open sea stretching before

them, and the dark blue rocks towering on either hand. Then the crew stayed their oars and Jason loosed the dove. Forward she flew between the rocks, that crashed together with a roar like thunder, but so swift was her flight that she passed through unscathed, and they caught but one feather of her tail. Then, as the rocks rolled back, watchful Tiphys gave the sign; on rowed the heroes as they never rowed before, and drove *Argo* a handsbreadth beyond that Pass of Death or ever its ravening jaws closed again. That was the end of the Clashing Rocks, for in the rage of missing their quarry, they grinded one against the other until they crumbled clean away.

After that, the heroes hoisted sail and coasted many a weary day along the unknown Asian shores. At last they must needs put in to land for fresh water, and they did so in the country of the Mariandyni, whose king was surnamed Lycus, that is, Wolf. And this barbarous king showed them no little kindness; for news had reached him of how these voyagers had slain Amycus the giant, who had formerly led the Bebryces to war against him, and wrought much havoc to the Mariandyni. So the Argonauts rested there a while from their sea-toils; but now first did heavy misfortune befall them, even the deaths of two of their company. For Idmon, the seer, was wounded mortally by a wild boar, that he roused unwittingly from his lair in a fenny brake; and Tiphys, the peerless helmsman, sickened and died of some unknown sickness. These two were buried on one day, in the same

grave; and their mourning comrades raised a high barrow over it, and set up an oar thereon, for a memorial unto them. And then, sad at heart, the Argonauts took leave of the friendly Wolf-king, and set sail again, having chosen Ancaeus, son of Lycurgus, to be helmsman in the stead of Tiphys.

Eastward still they fared, and saw before them at last the dark Colchian forests, and Phasis, that ancient river, mingling his waters with the barren deep. And because it was towards evening, and the day far spent, *Argo's* crew moored her in a creek of the broad stream; and, having taken counsel together for the morrow, they supped and lay down to sleep, each man by his oar.

II

Now when morning dawned again, Jason went ashore with only his kinsmen, Admetus and Acastus; for so it seemed best to the heroes, lest if their whole company appeared at the gates of King Aietes, he might take them for pirates, and fall upon them without parley. And when the three comrades had gone but a little way in the forest, they came to a wide clearing, where stood a great and splendid house, all roofed with burnished copper that shone like gold in the sunlight. No guard was at the gates, so they passed into the walled fore-court, and that, too, was empty; but needs must they halt to look at the fountain in the midst, and well they might, for it had not its like in the wide world. Four

golden nymphs stood back to back on the well-head, each pouring an ever-flowing stream from her golden urn into a jasper basin; and of these streams the first was wine, the second milk, the third sweet incense-breathing oil, and the fourth was pure water that ran warm all winter long, but ice-cold in the heat of summer. Now Hephaestus had made this magic fountain as a gift to bright Helios; and Helios gave it to Aietes, his son. "Certainly," said Admetus as he beheld it, "this King Aietes is a great enchanter, and we shall do well to beware of him."

"Chiron told me," answered Jason, "that all the Children of the Sun are potent in magic, both for good and evil. But why should we fear what man can do unto us, while the Queen of Gods is on our side, who already has brought us through so many and great perils?"

Thus he cheered his comrades, and the three went on boldly into the palace-hall, where the king sat feasting among his warriors, swarthy, hawk-eyed men in rich armour. Aietes was wrapped in a mantle of golden tissue, dazzling to the eye, and the rubies that studded his diadem glowed like live coals; stiff and mute as a molten image he sat, regarding the newcomers with a furtive smile on his pale face; his men glowered at them in silence; and they for their part stood half-amazed at manners so churlish. But there sat on the king's right hand his two daughters, of whom the elder suddenly cried to him, "Father, bid these strangers welcome, for I see they are Greeks by their garb, and what is

more, they are wondrous like in face to Phrixus, my dear, dead lord!"

"Ah, Lady Chalciope," cried Jason, for he knew her name, "well may we resemble the son of Athamas, seeing we are all three Aeolids, and his cousins."

"Say you so, young man?" said Aietes, rising up; "then I think I could make a guess at what brings you here. But sit down, sit down and feast; and afterwards we will hear your errand. No good ever came yet of talk between full men and fasting."

Thus he gained time to watch the strangers, and to ply them with questions little by little as they ate the good cheer before them, and drank the rich wine that his two daughters filled their cups withal. Whose sons they were, whence they came, and with what following, and where they had left their ship and crew—all this Aietes speedily drew from them; and the one thing he did not ask, his subtle mind had guessed in a moment, namely, that these kinsmen of Phrixus had adventured to Colchis at the world's end to claim the Fleece of Gold. So, when the feast was done, and Jason with his courteous mien and ready, persuasive tongue had briefly set forth the purpose of his arduous voyage, and desired the king to restore that wondrous treasure to the rightful heirs of Phrixus, Aietes was ready with an answer.

"This tale may be all very true," said he, "but I need more proof of it than fair words. How am I to know that you are the men you say you are, and not cunning sea-rovers, that would rob me of

the precious Fleece by a fraud? I must think of some proof I may put your captain to; meanwhile, do you send for the rest of your crew, that I may entertain them all." For he thought, "I will not refuse this godlike youth outright until I see what is the strength of his following."

So Admetus and Acastus fetched the rest of the heroes; whom when the wizard king saw, he marvelled, saying within himself, "Surely they are all sons of gods. I dare not give them battle openly—but some at least shall be slain by treachery this very day."

And having greeted and feasted the whole company, Aietes desired them with many flattering words to let him see their prowess in a mock-combat with some of his own warriors, to which they readily consented, for the honour of Hellas. Then Aietes had them forth into a level mead, and set ten picked swordsmen in the lists against Jason and nine of his comrades; and himself sat to watch the weapon-play, with the two princesses beside him. But by his secret bidding, the Colchian warriors fought in grim earnest, and the heroes quickly found that here was no pastime, but a combat to the death. Hard pressed were all the ten comrades, for their foes were light and agile, and came on with the fury of wolves; yet by grace of Hera not one of them was so much as grazed in the mellay; and since better might not be, they gave blow for blow until each had slain his assailant. Then Jason turned him to the king and cried, "On your head, Aietes, be the blood of these men, and not on ours. Why have

you dealt so evilly with us? Is this what you call pastime in Colchis, to force guests to slay or be slain?"

But Aietes answered, with a harsh laugh, "Every land has its own customs—if none but Greek pastimes please you, heroes, you had best have stayed at home. But I did this to prove you, and now I see by your mettle that you are true men; for never were liars so lion-hearted. Come, return we to the house; you shall sleep under my roof this night, and to-morrow we will speak further together." So saying, he led them back to the palace, and when they had supped, his house-stewards conducted them to the guest-chambers, for it was already late.

Now all this while the king's younger daughter had never taken her eyes from Jason from the moment he came into the banqueting-hall, though she had spoken no word to him as she filled and re-filled his wine-cup. This princess, whose name was Medea, was a witch, one that could draw the moon down from the sky by her spells, and she had, moreover, a double portion of her father's fierce and subtle spirit. For that, and for her dark, wild beauty, he loved her better than her gentler sister Chalciope, and next to his darling only son Absyrtus, a little lad of ten years old. And with Medea for ally he had certainly proved too strong for the Argonauts in the end, despite their godlike valour. But lest that should be, Queen Hera betook herself to Aphrodite the Foamborn and craved a boon; even that she would fire the heart of the witch-princess with such love of Jason that, forgetting all

else, she might help him to achieve his quest. To whom Aphrodite answered, sweetly smiling, "So be it, O Bride of Zeus; I will put a spell on this enchantress more potent than any known to her." And then first did the Love-goddess devise the Wryneck-spell, that maidens use to draw home a truant lover; for she took that speckled bird, and bound it by wings and feet to a four-spoked wheel, and twirled the wheel with her fair hands, saying, "*As turns this wheel, let Medea's heart turn to Jason; as this bird is bound, let her be bound with the cords of desire.*" Thus it came to pass that the daughter of Aietes no sooner looked on the gold-haired stranger prince than she loved him with the love that counts all things else as dust in the balance, so it may win to its goal.

And that night Medea came stealthily to the chamber where Jason lay sleeping in his armour, and awoke him gently, whispering in his ear. The youth started up, clutching the unsheathed sword at his side; then by the light of Medea's torch he saw her pale face, and burning eyes fixed on his, and he dropped the sword, amazed. "Prince Jason," said she, soft and low, "you do well to sleep armed in this house, as fearing treachery; but me you need not fear, for I come to save your life—at the peril of my own. Listen now; to-morrow the king my father will promise to give you the Fleece of Gold if you can accomplish a task he will set you —namely, to yoke his oxen and plough a furrow with his plough. And except by aid of art magical, no man can approach those oxen and live, for their

breath is consuming flame. But take this ivory box of ointment, and anoint your whole body therewith; and the fire will have no power upon your flesh. When Aietes sees that, he will believe you a wizard like himself, and his last hope will be that the Warder of the Fleece will destroy you, so he will lead you forthwith to Ares' sacred grove. Ah, prince, I saw your godlike strength in fight to-day, but against the Warder in the Grove it will avail you nothing; for he is a Dragon, fiercest of Earth's primeval brood; the speckled bulk of him is vaster than *Argo's* fifty-oared hull, his scales are weapon-proof, and his baleful eyes close never, night or day. Yet . . . through me . . . you shall steal away the treasure he guards, unseen of him . . . for how can I let you die? Nay, better my grim father should slay me, when he finds you are fled with your prize and knows by his art 'twas I that helped you, than you and all your noble fellowship perish on this Quest. Only . . . remember me sometimes . . . when you dwell happy and a king in your far homeland."

"Noblest of women," cried Jason, seizing her hand and kissing it, "shame befall me if I go hence without you, or ever cease to repay kindness such as this with grateful love. Now, by Hera, my Protectress, I swear—for sure, 'tis she and no other hath turned your heart toward me—if you will come with us and *Argo* wins safe home, you shall be my wedded wife the day I set foot in Iolcus. And if ever I fail or forsake you, then let the gods do so to me, and more also!"

" Deal with me as you list," murmured the witch-princess, " for I am yours from this hour."

Then they two plighted troth together, and having told Jason all she had devised to outwit her father, and all he must do on the morrow, Medea left the chamber with noiseless cat-like tread.

Now, as she had foretold, when the Argonauts had broken fast next day, their crafty host challenged Jason to another test, saying, " If you can yoke my oxen and plough with my plough, I shall know you are the true heir of Phrixus, and yield you the Fleece ungrudgingly; for so I was bidden by a vision in the night." And with that, Aietes led the heroes to a field near at hand, where lay a huge plough all of bronze, and hard by stood the fire-breathing bulls, dreadful to behold. He took up the massy brazen plough-yoke, and yoked the monsters; then with a sharp iron ox-goad, he drove them a furlong's length across the glebe, and turned them, and so back again, ploughing furrows straight as a dart. " Now, bold youth," said he to Jason, smiling evilly, " do as you have seen me do—and the Fleece of Gold is yours." And the rest of the heroes trembled, dauntless though they were, to see the flames gushing from the nostrils of the panting bulls; but Jason cast off his saffron vesture—for Aietes had stripped for that task, and he knew the reason—and stepped forward with a good courage. Nimbly he yoked the bulls, despite their plungings to and fro, mightily he wielded the goad and bore on the plough stilts, straight as the king's were the furrows he drove. And at that sight a groan burst

from the foiled enchanter, but words found he none. As for the heroes, they shouted aloud for joy, and thronged about Jason, praising him and clasping his hands, and they crowned him victor with a garland twined of meadow-grasses.

Then Aietes, still mute, beckoned with his hand, and led the way to the Grove of Ares. There oaks and hollies grew so thickly that they shut out the light of day; but athwart the gloom shone forth a point of radiance, like a star in a mirk midnight. "Yonder gleam," said Aietes, "is shed from the Golden Fleece, that hangs upon an oak in the heart of the grove. Enter in, Prince Jason, and take it—and much luck may it bring you!"

"With your leave, king," answered Jason, "I will first send back my comrades to our ship, to make her ready for sailing; and deem it not discourtesy if we bid farewell to you here, for now our Quest is achieved we would fain turn homeward with all speed."

"Trust me, I were loth to hinder you," cried Aietes, eyeing him malevolently, "and so farewell—most fortunate of men!" With that he went his way smiling, and the Argonauts saw him no more. But soon as he was out of view, Medea glided from the wood to Jason's side; and he told his comrades how she had saved him from the fire-breathing bulls, and now by drowsy spells had charmed asleep the Dragon-warder of the Fleece. And they would have thanked the witch-princess, but she put finger on lip, whispering, "Hush, friends, the very trees have ears in our country. And you, Jason, come

with me quickly, for Aietes will return anon to gloat over what he hopes to find—your bones and blood at the mouth of the gorged dragon's lair!"

So saying, she drew Jason into the grove; in a few moments they hurried forth again, bearing the great Fleece on a pole between them, like a shield of dazzling gold; and swiftly Medea led the heroes by unfrequented paths to where *Argo* lay moored, under guard of Castor and Polydeuces. But as they went they met the king's little son, Absyrtus, playing in the woods alone; he ran to Medea and sobbed out, "O sister, have you given the strange sailors our beautiful, wonderful Fleece? My nurse said they were come to take it away in their great ship—but pray, pray do not let them—I love it so—and our father says I shall have it for my very own when I am a man."

"He must come with us," breathed Medea to Jason; and she took the child in her arms and kissed him, saying, "Listen, little brother, and do not cry. These sailors are no strangers, but our kinsmen, and I am going with them to their own country over the sea—a far fairer land than ours. Would not you like to come with me, and sail in their gallant ship, and see all manner of wonderful things by the way, and then we will live merrily in a finer house than our father's, where you shall have new playthings every day—yes, and have the Golden Fleece when you are old enough?" And the child clapped his hands in delight, and cried, "Yes, yes, take me with you, sister! I love you next to the Fleece—and I shall not be afraid on the

great sea while you are with me." Then Admetus took the little boy on his shoulder, and they set forward again. And Medea said low to Jason, "We have silenced a spy—and gained a hostage."

Safe came the heroes to *Argo* with their glittering prize; swiftly they embarked, and rowed her down stream with muffled oars; and when they had reached open sea once more, they hoisted sail, rejoicing, for as yet it seemed their flight was unespied.

But Medea stood by the helmsman's side, looking back towards the fading Colchian shore; and *Argo* had gone but two leagues on her course when the witch-princess cried, "Row, heroes, row for your lives! Aietes pursues us with all his fleet—I see the red sails of his galley in the van of a hundred more." And the heroes bent to their oars and sent *Argo* onward like an arrow; but the Colchian ships gained on her fast, for Aietes by wizardry compelled the breeze to fill their sails and fail hers. Then said Medea, "There is no other way! Come hither, little brother; you shall help me make a magic that will stay our grim father, lest we all perish this same hour." With that, she stripped the boy and anointed his tender flesh with a certain unguent, muttering runes the while; then suddenly plucked a knife from her girdle and stabbed him to the heart. And a groan of horror burst from the heroes; but she, pointing silently to the half-moon of tall black galleys bearing down upon them, swiftly plied a hideous task. For she hewed the body in pieces, and flung them overboard between

Argo and the ships of Aietes, and they floated broadcast on the reddened waves. And that stayed the Colchian fleet; whether, as some say, because Aietes was fain to gather his son's relics for burial, without which his spirit could have no rest; or because Medea had indeed wrought a spell, and the ships could not pass over the waters that were mingled with blood of man.

So the Argonauts escaped out of the hand of King Aietes; but they could not look on the witch-princess without a shudder, albeit they now owed her their lives twice over. As for Jason, his heart began to turn from her that same hour, and to himself he said, "It is a fearful thing to be loved with a love like this. O gods, that the bride I bring home should be a murderess—and of her own flesh and blood!"

III

Three days Ancaeus the helmsman steered *Argo* on her Westward course; but on the fourth day a tempestuous wind blew from the South, and drove her far out of sight of land over the raging deep. And the heavens were black with the storm-clouds, and for seven days and nights the heroes sat darkling, with never a glimpse of sun or star, while their labouring ship fled before the gale, they knew not whither. Despair froze their valiant hearts, and they muttered one to another, "We perish by this accursed Colchian witch. Because of her bloody

deed Poseidon's wrath is upon us; now, even now, he will sink *Argo* under us, and swallow us up quick in a vast and wandering grave." And suddenly Acastus, Pelias' son, shouted through the roar of the hurricane, "Comrades, let us fling the witch overboard! Why should we all die for her iniquity, and all the fame of our great Quest be lost?" At that, Jason groaned in bitterness of soul, and he cried aloud, "Would to the gods I had never sailed upon the Quest, and brought sheer doom to this goodly fellowship! Ay, comrades, 'tis I have destroyed you, and not Medea, since for my sake she did all. Therefore no man shall lay hand on her, except he kill me first."

"That be far from us, noble Jason," cried all the heroes; and Castor said, "Now make we all vows and prayers to Zeus and to Poseidon, if peradventure they will have mercy on us." Which when they had done, the fury of the hurricane abated, and the black clouds rolled away; now might they see a clear heaven of stars above them, and a grey waste of heaving billows around, far as the eye could reach. Then Jason bade Ancaeus, helmsman and pilot, frame *Argo's* course anew by the stars; but he, looking skyward long and hard, cried out, "Alas, if I read the stars aright, we have been driven some thousand leagues north of the Inhospitable Sea, and are come where never man sailed before! Unless a god pilot us, small is our hope of ever making the fair haven of Iolcus."

Then once again the good ship *Argo* uttered her voice, and said, *Heroes, I myself will be your pilot,*

for I know the way that the gods will have us go. A weary way it is, even half the circuit of the round world; but home we may not see until we have found the enchantress Circe's Isle, in the utmost West, and she, the daughter of the Sun, has purified me and you from the stain of young Absyrtus' blood."

When they heard that saying, the heroes lifted up their voices and wept, for they were worn with their sea-toils and sick for home; but since better might not be, they took to their oars again, and Ancaeus lashed *Argo's* helm, that she might pursue her own trackless course through the watery waste. And sped by a fair wind, she flew Northward, still Northward, into the regions of eternal frost and snow; and behold, there was no night there, for the pale sun never forsook the sky. Now were they come into the boundless Ocean stream that girdles Earth about, and while three moons waxed and waned, *Argo* bore them Southward once more, past many a cloud-capped isle and misty headland, as yet nameless and untrod. Thus came they at last to the faery Isle of Circe, daughter of the Sun; where falls not rain, nor hail, nor any snow, but ever the Western wind plays softly through its groves of spice, and flowers bloom all the year in its bowery hollows. And when *Argo's* crew leaped ashore, there stood Circe waiting them in her beauty malign, with emerald-coloured robe, and crown of burning gold, and a three-leaved golden wand in her hand. "Welcome," she said, "Prince Jason and heroes all. I know your errand to me, and I will

purify you and your ship even now, for so hath Zeus commanded me at the request of great Hera." But to Medea she said, "Is it to me you come, O heart of flint, to cleanse you from the blood of my brother's son? Or think you the whole sea can wash that blood from—a sister's hand?"

"We were not born of one mother," muttered the Colchian princess, darkly flushing.

"I know it," answered Circe, "and by so much is your guilt the less; but I know also, Medea, that you would have done no otherwise though the same womb had given you birth. Nay, there shall come an hour when a yet closer, sweeter tie shall not stay you from a still darker deed. Innocent blood for the innocent blood—this price and none other shall surely pay at the last."

At that Medea's olive cheeks turned pale, yet proudly she answered, "So be it, wise Circe; for come that hour late or soon, at least I shall not flinch from the reckoning."

Then Circe caused the heroes to bathe in the sea, and she sprinkled sea-water on *Argo's* deck, uttering mystic words; and after that she purified them with burning sulphur; next, at her bidding, they dug a trench upon the shore, and slaughtered a black ram, and poured his blood into the trench, for a peace-offering to Absyrtus' ghost. And when those rites were done, the enchantress took leave of them, saying, "I had fain shown you my house, heroes, and feasted you there, but Zeus has forbidden me, knowing that the guests of Circe can seldom tear themselves away from the pleasures of

her abode. Now let Ancaeus take the helm again and set *Argo's* course due Eastward until you come to the Gates of Ocean, and the channel that divides Europe from Libya; thence you will pass into the Midland Sea, that stretches even to the coasts of your own land of Hellas. And thereafter fare ye all as ye may."

So saying, the daughter of the Sun went up from the beach to her faery palace in the green heart of the woods, and the Argonauts sailed away from her lovely isle.

Three days they sailed, and now rose before them the great land-barrier between Ocean and the Midland Sea. But the Argonauts were not destined to find the rock-walled Strait that pierces the barrier, for the gods reserved that for Heracles, who in the after time set up his far-seen Pillars there, to be a mark for mariners. So presently they came among lagoons, brackish and shallow, where *Argo* soon grounded and stuck fast. Then were the heroes' hearts much discomfited, for ahead of the marshy mere stretched yellow sand-dunes, far as eye could see. But Medea said to them, " Heroes, the Midland Sea lies no great way across these desert sands. Courage, then, and bear the good ship over on your shoulders, and in twelve days she shall bear you once more." And after one night's rest, the heroes essayed that giant labour, and with Medea for guide they toiled onwards day by day under *Argo's* weight. Nor failed their hardy, stalwart limbs, or the dauntless spirit in their breasts, until on the twelfth noon they saw with joy the blue, sparkling

waters of the Midland main, and moored *Argo* in a deep, land-locked bay.

Now having rested there that night, the Argonauts embarked at early dawn. And as they were drawing up the anchor, one hailed them from the shore, so that they looked with astonishment to see who this might be, for all the place was desert. And behold, at the water's edge stood a man, tall and majestic, and with hospitable words desired them to land again and be his guests that day. But when Jason courteously pleaded their haste for home, he said, "Far be it from me to delay you, sailors of *Argo*, for I know you, and your long wanderings, and how your hearts must yearn for sight of Iolcus' harbour. But in sign of my good-will, take at least a guest-gift at my hands ere you depart."

With that, the stranger took up a clod of earth from the shore, and held it forth to them, saying, "I give you of my own, for I am Eurypylus, king of this land by grace of my father, wide-ruling Poseidon."

Now there was a son of Poseidon among the Argonauts, named Euphemus; he, leaping lightly ashore, clasped hands with that unknown brother, and took the clod with thanks and greetings. But as he turned to spring on board again, the stranger vanished into air, and great awe fell on the heroes, understanding that one of the Immortals had appeared to them. Then said Medea, "This was indeed a son of the Earthshaker, but not one of his mortal offspring, born of women. We have seen

the Sea-god Triton, whom Queen Amphitrite bore to her wedded lord in her coral-paven bowers. But truly said he that Poseidon has given him this Libyan wilderness; and as for the clod, guard it well, Euphemus, for it is a sacred and mystic pledge."

And now, sped by a gale out of the South-West, the Argonauts drew near to a great island, crowned with purple peaks; and being in need of fresh water, they rowed close in by a steep headland, where a brook came tumbling to the sea. But behold, on the headland stood a man as huge as a tower and fearful to view, for he was not a man of flesh, but of red-hot, glowing brass. His eyes were like coals of fire, his breath like the blast of a furnace, and in trumpet tones he roared, "Begone, villains, sea-robbers, or you shall die the death!"

"We are no pirates," shouted Jason, "but peaceful mariners, voyaging home to Iolcus. Suffer us only to land and fill our waterskins at yon brook, and we will straightway depart."

"I care not who you are," roared back the Brazen Man, "no strangers set foot on Cretan ground while I, Talus, keep watch and ward for King Minos. Get you hence, I say—the first man that comes within reach, I will hug in my arms till he roasts to a cinder." And with that, the giant sprang down to the water's edge, and stood there, bellowing with rage.

Then out spoke Medea, "Heroes, I know this Talus, and how to deal with him. The great artificer Daedalus made him for King Minos, and filled his hollow body with liquid flame, pouring it

through a hole in his breast, which he closed up with a nail. Now let me go ashore, and I will make Talus pull out that nail; for then the flame, which is his life, will all run out, and he will be nought but a brazen image."

They all cried out that she should not go, for it was certain death; but the witch-princess heeded them not; quick as thought, she took a crystal vial from the coffer that held her jewels, and leaped to land, and went up to Talus, holding forth the vial, that sparkled in the sun. And Talus stared at her stupidly, amazed at her daring and the dark beauty of her smiling face. "Who are you, bold woman," he said, "and what do you want with me?"

"I am the daughter of the King of Colchis," said she, "who is the greatest wizard in the world, and I bring you a magic gift out of his treasury. For I have heard of you, Talus, and your wondrous might —and now I see the half was not told me, and you only lack one thing to be the equal of the gods themselves; which seems to me so great pity, that I am fain to give you that thing. Shall I tell you what it is?"

"Ay, do," answered the Brazen Man, well pleased with her flattery.

"It is *immortality*," went on Medea; "Daedalus could not give you that, so the fire in you will go out some day, and then you will die. But in this vial here I have some drops of the sacred ichor that flows in the veins of the gods, making them incorruptible; now, if you pull the nail out of your

breast and pour in this divine elixir, you will live for ever, as they do."

Then that simple giant eagerly took the vial with one hand, and with the other he pulled out the nail; and all the flame in him streamed forth in a blazing cataract, so that the earth was burnt black around him. But Medea stood by unscathed, for fire has no power over the race of the Sun; and, laughing, she watched the red glow fade from Talus' brazen limbs. And then sprang the Argonauts to land, and loaded her with thanks and praises; and having filled their waterskins from the brook, they put out to sea again, leaving the Brazen Man cold and motionless on the Cretan shore.

After this, the breeze that still wafted *Argo* Northward freshened to a gale, and at eventide the waves rose high about her, and washed from her deck the clod of Libyan soil that Triton gave to Euphemus. Too late, Euphemus saw it slide into the grey billows; and he cried out, " Alack, wise princess, I have lost the treasure you bade me guard—a wave has swept it overboard to lie fathoms deep in brine."

" Nay, not so," answered Medea, " that enchanted clod will not sink, but drift ashore on the isle that rises yonder on our lee. Mark, now, Euphemus, for I will prophesy concerning it. He that is lord of the land where that clod rests, shall be lord also of the land whence it came. Therefore, if you had brought it safe to your own domain of Taenarum, your children's children, who will seek new empery over seas, would have fared straight to Libya. But now they must make their new home in yonder isle,

which they will call Thera; and their descendants of the seventeenth generation will voyage thence to the land of the clod, and reign therein over two wealthy cities. Yea, in their days the wilderness we saw shall blossom as the rose, and be the home of a great people, famed alike in war and commerce." Thus Medea prophesied, and all her word was fulfilled in the after ages, when the posterity of Euphemus were merchant-kings in the parts of Libya about Cyrene.

And now were the Argonauts not far from home, but, as it was fated, the gale drove them Northward beyond the Pagasaean Gulf, even to Lemnos; and they, in fear of the tempest, put in to the cliff-walled haven of the isle. Then the folk of the near city came trooping to the harbour-wall—but strange to tell, they were all women, and most of them accoutred as warriors. One that seemed queen among them, by her golden helm and the sceptre in her hand, stepped forward and called out imperiously, " Who and whence are you, strangers? If traders, you are welcome; if pirates, offer no violence here, for we not only bear weapons, but can use them."

Then answered Jason for the rest, " Queen, we are no pirates, nor yet traders, but the sailors of *Argo*, that adventured for the Golden Fleece, and have won it, and now are homeward bound to Iolcus."

When the Lemnian Queen heard that, she was glad, and bade the Argonauts come ashore and feast in her house; for the fame of them and their perilous Quest had gone out into all lands. So they lodged with her that night, and five days after, because the

wind was high and contrary. Now when she had well feasted them the first night, Jason asked the queen her name, and how it had come to pass that none but women dwelt in Lemnos; whereupon she told a tale that made all the heroes shudder, and deem the worse of womankind thenceforward. "Courteous lord," said she, "my name is Hypsipyle; I am daughter to Thoas, who of late was king in Lemnos. But not long since, while he and all the men of the isle were absent on a foray, the wrath of Aphrodite fell upon us women, because we had neglected the rites of that wanton goddess; and she afflicted us all with breaths so malodorous, that when our menfolk returned they thrust us away with loathing from bed and board, and took their captives, alien women, in our stead. Fools! They knew not that a leopardess mad with wounds is less to be feared than a woman spurned! We, the wronged and rejected, conspired together for vengeance; and in one night our daggers slew all the men of Lemnos, as they slept beside their paramours. *All*, I said; but I, against the oath I had sworn, spared Thoas my father, and hid him in a chest, which next day I caused to be thrown into the sea. It may be, some vessel has picked it up, or it has drifted ashore on some other isle; this is on the knees of the gods, but at least my hands are clean of the old man's blood."

Such was the tale that fierce barbarian queen told the Argonauts, and through them it became known all over Hellas, insomuch that all cruel and bloody deeds were called *Lemnian deeds* in the after time.

Now the next day Queen Hypsipyle would have *Argo's* crew contend in feats of strength, to make her pastime; and she set forth a splendid prize, a golden shield of rarest workmanship, for a race to be run in full armour. Seven of the heroes competed, wearing corslet, helm, and greaves of bronze, and carrying both spear and shield; and the Lemnian women laughed and jeered at one of them, Erginos by name; for his hair was grey, albeit he was yet in his prime, and they took him for an old man. But Erginos outstripped the other six, and came first to the goal, so that the laugh was with him as he received the golden shield from the queen's hand. And now these women of Lemnos began to be much enamoured of their guests; nor did the heroes thwart their desires, being ripe for Love's disport after long sea-faring; thus it came to pass that many a noble Lemnian house traced descent from the Argonauts. As for Hypsipyle, the story goes that she wooed Jason not in vain, and had a son by him, who lived to be king of the isle.

But after five days, the wind blew fair for Iolcus, and then *Argo's* crew were neither to hold nor to bind, such longing came on every man to see home again; they took brief farewell of the Lemnian women, despite their pleading; made the good ship ready in all haste, and put out to sea with oar and sail. And like a homing dove *Argo* flew before the breeze, till the dark mass of Pelion rose on the glad heroes' sight, and rounding Cape Sepias, she sped up the long Pagasaean Gulf to her desired haven.

Then all the folk of Iolcus flocked to the harbour

and greeted the Argonauts with laughter and with weeping, for they had long given them up for lost; and they led Jason and his noble comrades in triumph to his father's house. So that day there was great joy in Iolcus. But one man inly raged, and that was Pelias; for now perforce he must make restitution to Aeson, and he did it with the best grace he might, but black wrath at his heart. Moreover, Jason took from him all his ill-gotten gains; and some of the Argonauts were for putting him to death, because of his treachery in the matter of the Golden Fleece; but for the sake of the kinship between them Jason let him go free. And when the heroes had seen old Aeson restored to the throne of his fathers, and sat at the wedding-feast of Jason and Medea, they went their ways, every one to his own country.

Now albeit Jason himself laid no hand on Pelias, the crafty king did not escape in the end from the doom foretold by Apollo. For his two daughters heard that the Colchian enchantress had made ancient Aeson young again by her art, and they went and begged her to do the like for their father. "That will I," Medea said; "watch now what I do;" and she killed and cut up an old ram in their presence, and boiled the pieces in a cauldron together with certain herbs, muttering spells the while. And when the cauldron boiled over, the witch plunged in her hand, and drew out a fine yearling lamb, alive and unscathed. Then said she to the maidens, "Take this handful of magic herbs, and do to Pelias as you have seen me do to this sheep; so will he

likewise recover his youth." But the herbs she gave them were not magical, and in their simplicity they did not ask to be taught the incantation she spoke over the cauldron. Home they went, and when Pelias heard the miracle of the ram, he was full eager to undergo the same enchantment, and bade his daughters set about it straightway. So he perished miserably by the hands of his own children; yet since it was Medea that truly slew him, being resolved to rid Jason of so dangerous an enemy, the oracle was fulfilled that warned him against the Man with One Sandal.

Though Pelias had few well-wishers in Iolcus, the manner of his death filled the citizens with horror, and they were deeply moved at sight of his hapless orphans, who went about the streets like women distraught, crying for justice on their father's murderers, Jason and his witch-wife. The elders and chief men of the city came to King Aeson, demanding in the name of all the people that Medea should be banished the land, and Jason also, as being art and part with her in the crime. And when Aeson, fearing a revolt, ordered the cause to be tried in due form of law, Medea avowed that she had devised the murder without her husband's consent or knowledge; but because of Jason's known feud with the dead man few believed this, and the Court of Elders pronounced both the accused guilty, and sentenced both to the doom of exile. Then Aeson rose up from his royal seat, threw down his sceptre, and rent his mantle before all the multitude that were gathered together in the place of assembly;

yet he durst not gainsay that doom, lest the folk should rise against him. No word he spoke, but fell on Jason's neck and wept; and many that stood by wept also, bethinking them how the old man must see his son's face no more for ever.

Thus it came to pass that Jason went forth a banished man from the home he had yearned for so long and possessed such a brief while. It seemed best to him and to Medea to take up their abode in Corinth; for the king that ruled there then was a guest-friend of Aeson, and a distant kinsman.

When they came to the city, this king, whose name was Creon, entertained them hospitably, and would have lodged them and their retinue in his palace; but Jason said, "Not so, king, lest we become a burden to you; suffer me rather to hire myself a house in Corinth, and dwell there at my own charges. For though homeless and landless, I am a wealthy man, seeing I have with me the Fleece of Gold." Then Creon let him have his way; and for some years Jason and Medea fared prosperously in their new home.

CHAPTER IV

MEDEA AT CORINTH

One glorious midsummer morning an old slave-woman sat alone in the forecourt of a great white house that stood, embowered in trees, outside the walls of Corinth. Behind the house rose the steep, craggy sides of Acrocorinthus; before and a little below it lay the stately city with her mart and temples; beyond that, the sandy levels of the Isthmus stretched on either hand to the blue glitter of a waveless sea. But the old woman looked at none of these things; seated on the marble steps of the columned porch, she kept her eyes fixed on the gateway of the forecourt, as though anxiously expecting some one; ever and anon she sighed deeply, and a tear trickled down her withered cheek. Presently, growing restless, she began to rock slowly to and fro, muttering to herself the while. "Would to the gods," she said, "that yon ship *Argo* had never sailed, or that the Clashing Bergs had caught and crushed her ere she reached our Colchian shores! Then had my mistress never left home and country for love of Jason—never seen Iolcus—and never been banished thence for contriving the death of old Pelias! . . . Not but what she was happy enough in exile—for i' faith this Corinth is a fine place, and she has won the

people's hearts—until last night's ill tidings came. Ah, blessed gods, was ever such a thankless traitor born as this husband of hers? After all Medea has done and dared for him, to cast her off—desert her and his young children without a word—that he may marry King Creon's daughter! Ay, Jason weds to-day—and my poor lady lies face downwards on her chamber floor, sobbing her heart out. Neither bite nor sup has she tasted since she heard that news—I have tried and better tried to persuade her, but for all the heed she takes of the old nurse that loves her so she might be made of stone. But this mood will not last . . . I know her mettle . . . she is no docile Greek wife, to brook her wrongs tamely . . . and I fear, I fear what this may drive her to. . . . Ah, here comes old Xanthias at last with the children—now will I warn him to keep them away from their mother, for when I spoke of them, thinking to soften her, there came into her eyes—the gods avert the omen!—a look of deadly hate!"

So saying, the Nurse hurried to the gate to meet a grey-haired slave who led in each hand a little boy, rosy and beautiful. The children ran to her with prattle about their morning's walk; she bent and kissed them hastily, then whispered in the ear of their old attendant, "Keep them apart." "But they are to go with her," he whispered back, and seeing her bewildered look, "Have you not heard? Alack, our mistress does not know the worst, then."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the Nurse. "We

have heard nothing—speak, tell me quickly—nay, never heed the children; see, they are playing with their ball."

"You will hear soon enough, Nurse," said Xanthias evasively, "for ill news travels apace—but 'tis never lucky to be the bearer of it, so let me take the children within."

"No, no," she begged, holding him by the sleeve. "You *must* tell me; come, you can trust your old fellow-servant—I will not repeat a single word."

"Well, then," said he reluctantly, "as we passed by Pirene's Fount, where the old men of the city meet and talk, I overheard one of them say—though I feigned not to hear—'*Our king is going to banish yon two children and their mother from the land to-day.*' Now I come to reflect, he *may* have spoken falsely, and let us hope he did."

"Surely," cried the Nurse indignantly, "Jason would never suffer his own children to be driven into exile? He must have some heart for *them*, though he has none for their mother."

"Ay, but he loves himself best," returned Xanthias, "which after all is only human nature, you know. 'Tis every man for himself in this world—Jason will give up his sons sooner than lose the king's favour."

"The pretty innocents," exclaimed the Nurse, bursting into tears, "to think they should have such a father! Now, were he not my lord and master, I could curse him . . . "

"Hush, no ill-omened words," the old man admonished her, "he has malison enough upon his

head, if 'tis true that our lady cursed him when Creon's herald brought her the news last night."

"That she did, and the bride and her father too," said the Nurse, "and I think the messenger was glad enough to win safe out of her presence, for her rage was a frightful thing to see. But the worst of all was, to hear her call her own sweet babes accurséd for their false father's sake, and pray they may perish with him. . . ."

"Have done, Nurse," said Xanthias impatiently, "who recks what a woman says that is distraught with anguish? However, I will see that the children keep away from Medea's chamber; and do you beware of telling her the report I have heard, until we know the truth of it." And calling the little ones to his side, he led them quickly into the house. The old Nurse was hobbling after, when a loud summons rang from the gateway—"Ho, within there, the king would speak with Medea of Colchis!" —and Creon himself strode into the court, followed by his bodyguard of spearmen. He was a tall, handsome man of middle age, with a mien of great dignity, but something arrogant withal. "Bid your mistress come hither on the instant," he said curtly, as the old woman made humble obeisance; and just then Medea came gliding like a ghost out of the house and stood before him. An eerie sight she was, with her blood-red robe all torn, and her black hair hanging to her knees, and her face gone grey like a dead woman's. "What is your will with me, King of Corinth?" she asked, fixing her burning eyes upon his face.

"My will is," he answered imperiously, "that you, Medea, get you gone out of my realm, and take your children along with you. Delay not, but go at once; for I hereby pronounce sentence of banishment upon you, and I will not return home until I have seen you cross the border."

At that word, a sob broke from Medea. "Woe is me," she cried, "now am I utterly undone! Mine enemies strip me bare—I am left helpless, hopeless, in my misery. But hear me, Creon, for I will speak —what cause have you to banish me?"

"To tell you plainly," said the king, "I am afraid lest you work some deadly harm to my child. Good warrant have I to fear it, seeing you are a cunning woman, powerful in evil magic, and smarting under the loss of your bedfellow. Ay, as I am told, you have threatened to be revenged on bridegroom and bride, and the bride's father also; which mischief I mean to prevent betimes."

"Alas," said Medea, "will the king condemn me on mere hearsay? 'Tis true, I have some slight skill in drugs and charms—would that my sage father had never taught it me!—and therefore the ignorant many tax me with baleful witchcraft—but must I suffer exile for their baseless slanders? As for threats, if indeed I let fall any against you and yours in the first transports of grief, believe me, I knew not what I said. For in my right wits I could never dare so heinous a crime as treason to a heaven-appointed king. Nay, Creon, wherefore should I bear *you* any grudge? You wrong me not, I trow; full right is yours to bestow your daughter in

marriage on whom you list; it is not you I hate . . . but . . . my husband. And though he wrongs me, must I not submit . . . being the weaker? I will not complain . . . I wish you all three joy of this marriage . . . only let me stay here with my children."

"These are fair words, lady," answered Creon, "but I mistrust you none the less for them. Nay, now I think you more dangerous than I did before; far easier 'tis to guard one's self from a woman that gives rein to angry passion, than from one that bides her time in silence. Away, then, and that quickly; say no more, for not all your cunning can change my fixed resolve."

Then suddenly Medea flung herself at his feet and clasped his knees, and besought him with tears to have compassion on her, for the sake of Zeus, God of Suppliants, and for the sake of his own fair daughter that was newly made a bride. But he turned a deaf ear to her pleading, and bade her loose him and depart instantly, or the guards should drag her away. And she, still kneeling and clinging to his mantle, cried, "Hear me, king, yet a moment, for now I ask but a small thing. I will go forth, as you decree; only grant me one day's grace, that I may prepare needments for the journey, and bethink me where to seek a refuge for my little, helpless children. O Creon, have pity on them, who are yourself a father; they have no father now! I care not what becomes of my wretched self—all my grief is to think what hardships *they* must bear, wandering homeless, friendless, from door to door."

She paused, for sobs choked her utterance, and the king said, not unmoved, "I am no tyrant, Medea, nor ruthless by nature—so far from it, indeed, that I have many a time suffered harm and loss through my clemency. And although I know it were wiser to deny you, you have my leave to bide this one day in Corinth. But I warn you, if you and your children are found within my borders after to-morrow's sunrise, you shall be put to death. So beware you outstay not the time you ask for—which is too short, meseems, for you to compass the revenge that I misdoubt your heart is set upon."

Having thus spoken, the king went his way with his retainers. Medea watched, motionless, until the last spearman had tramped out of the gateway; then turned to the old Nurse with a dreadful smile on her white face. "The fool!" she cried, "he had me utterly in his power—and he has put himself in mine. You heard him, Nurse? He gives me to-day!"

"And what good will that do you?" said the Nurse, disconsolately, "Is it so great a matter whether you are banished to-day or to-morrow, since banished you must be?"

"If it were not," said her mistress, fiercely, "do you think I would have humbled myself before that man—kneeled to him—I, Medea—with abject supplications? I tell you, this one day his blind folly yielded so lightly shall see me strike my enemies dead. . . ay, this Creon and his girl and . . . her bridegroom . . . shall be corpses ere yon sun goes down."

At these words the Nurse moaned aloud, and began to stammer out a feeble protest; but Medea, unheeding, spoke on as one communing with herself. "How shall I kill them? . . . I know a thousand ways . . . poison is the safest for me. . . . Yes, but they no sooner die than I am suspected . . . the Corinthians will pursue and kill the murderess. There is the hitch . . . not that I care at all to live, but it mars my triumph if they die not unavenged. Well, the day is before me . . . I will wait awhile, if peradventure some way of escape may open; if not . . . my dagger shall find their hearts this night, though I be caught redhanded and suffer the worst that can befall."

Thus talking with herself, Medea paced swiftly to and fro like some beautiful caged beast of the forest; she had come close to the gateway when a man entered it, at sight of whom she uttered a low cry and stood still. For it was Jason; a splendid figure in purple raiment of glossy newness clasped and belted with jewels, wearing a myrtle garland on his sleek, golden head. But the troubled frown on his comely face sorted ill with his array of bridegroom, and his eyes betrayed a certain dread as they encountered Medea's. Silently the two regarded each other for a moment; then Jason, calling up a look and tone of anger as a man will that knows himself without excuse, hastily began, "How often have I warned you, Medea, to curb that headstrong temper of yours—and always in vain! Well, you see now what it has brought you to; if you had submitted quietly to the pleasure of . . . the

powers that be, you might have kept this home and all your comforts . . . but no, you must vent your rage in such threats and railings against the royal house that you have fully earned the punishment of exile. . . . It is the king's will, not mine, you must understand; for my part, you may revile and miscall me to your heart's content; I have, indeed, done my utmost to persuade Creon to pardon you—but he is inflexible. . . . So you see, it is your own fault that you are driven out of Corinth. . . . However, I did not come to reproach you, Medea, but to make sure you are well supplied for your journey. If you need aught for yourself or the children, you have only to ask . . . I have gold at command, and it is my earnest wish that you should want for nothing. For, hate me as you will, I can never think of you but kindly."

The sound of his fluent tongue, or the perfect calmness with which his wife listened to it, restored Jason's self-confidence; as he spoke the last words he drew nearer to her, smiling, and laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder. But Medea shook off his hand as it were an adder, and, quivering with passion, "Base villain that you are," she cried, "how durst you come hither—how dare you look on me again after what you have done? Is this your courage, most doughty champion? Ay, you will call it so—you are not afraid of me, forsooth! —but shall I tell you why? Because no shame can touch your callous soul! But answer me now—for I will convict you out of your own mouth—who saved your life in Colchis? Who won the Golden

Fleece for you, and delivered you not once nor twice from the perils of our long sea-faring? And when *Argo* came home again, who was it that made an end of Pelias, because there could be no safety for you while that cunning enemy lived? . . . I must answer for you, it seems, since you stand there tongue-tied. . . . She that did all this was the woman who loved you, the wife you vowed to love and cherish . . . and have betrayed for her reward! Your wife, I said . . . ah, and the mother of your children; there is what makes your faithlessness a crime! For had I proved barren I would not blame you to take another wife that you might have sons by her, knowing how grievous childlessness is to a man. But I have borne you two noble boys—O gods, that they must grow up outcasts and wanderers, begging their bread among strangers! Verily, that shall add much to your fame in Hellas, when every city beholds our wretched plight, and the folk shall say, *Lo, these are the children of Jason the fortunate, the happy bridegroom—and this is Medea to whom he owes his life.* . . . O thankless, false, forsworn, why could I not see beneath that goodly mask? Why have the gods made a touchstone for gold, and none to try hearts withal, so that we give our all for glittering dross?"

With that she broke into passionate weeping and turned away; but Jason stepped before her and said calmly, though with flushed brow, "You have said your say, lady, and I have listened patiently; but now hear me, for being accused, it is my right to justify myself—as I can and will."

Medea's head was bowed, and she had drawn her veil over her face, but she waved her hand in token of assent, and Jason continued, "First, then, since you have made so much of what I owe you, I must needs say I hold that my true and only preserver on the Quest of the Fleece was—Aphrodite. For you were so desperately in love that you could not help doing all you did; you saved my life simply to get the man you wanted. However, it were ungracious to dwell on this, nor do I wish to disparage your services to me; but I would remind you that great as they are, they have been amply repaid. Have I not brought you out of a land of outer barbarians into this fair Hellas, where Law and Order reign, instead of brute Violence; and are not your wisdom and magic art renowned far and wide among the Hellenes, which but for me would never have been heard of save by a few remote and savage tribes? Truly, if we are to reckon past benefits, I think I am rather your creditor than your debtor. But enough of that . . . I had never named it, only you threw me down a challenge. . . . And now, as to this marriage that you reproach me for so bitterly . . . "

"Ah!" interrupted Medea, dropping her veil and quietly regarding him, "I am curious to hear your eloquence upon *that* score, though you can scarce better what you have said already."

"Then let me tell you," went on Jason, complacently, "that you wholly misconstrue my reason for seeking this alliance. It is not that I am weary of you or enamoured of another; far from disloyalty,

my single aim has been your welfare and our children's. And how could I secure it better than by marrying the King's only child? Why, were you not blind with jealousy, Medea, you could not fail to see what an excellent stroke of policy that is! Her dowry makes us rich for life . . . from a fugitive alien I become a citizen, and the most powerful man in Corinth next to the King . . . above all, our sons' future is assured, for I hope to give them brothers who will some day be reigning princes. And yet you tell me I am not a good father! But that is the way of women . . . they care for only one thing in the world, and while a man gives it them he is perfect, whatever his vices . . . but let him forsake their bed, and he is the cruellest villain alive, though he do everything to serve them. . . . Ah, if the gods had never created your sex, but devised some other means for us men to beget offspring, how happy we might have been!"

"Have you more to say?" asked his wife, as Jason paused for breath.

"No, Medea," he replied with dignity, "unless you wish me to repeat what I have just proved to you—that I have made this marriage with a single eye to your good."

"You are a dexterous juggler with words," she answered, "but one plain question will make short work of your sophistries—Why did you not tell me you were going to do this thing?"

"Because I knew how you would take it," said Jason readily; "much use it would have been to ask your consent to a marriage that has driven you

frantic with rage! You would not have listened to my reasons . . . "

"No," exclaimed Medea, "for they are lies! The mere truth is, you were grown ashamed of your barbarian wife, and saw your way to a better match."

"You do me grave injustice to say so," returned Jason, "but it is vain, I perceive, to argue the matter further. I must leave you, wilful woman, to the fate you have chosen—yet for the sake of all that has come and gone between us, I am fain to help you on your way. I have friends in other cities . . . let me give you tokens to them, and they will gladly show you hospitality. You shall have money, too . . . "

"Do you think I would touch *your* bounty," broke in Medea, "or have any dealings with those that call you friend? Now go—why do you linger? I know you are eager to be with your bride again . . . an hour's absence seems an age to newwed lovers! Go, play the fond bridegroom while you may, it shall not be for long, Zeus willing." And with that the Colchian bent on Jason a gaze so malign that he quailed under it, and went from her presence without another word. Then Medea flung herself down before the altar in the midst of the courtyard—the altar of Zeus of the Homestead—and began to pray, fervently and low. Her Nurse, who all this while had hovered near in mute dismay, crept timidly to her side. "Dear lady," she faltered presently, "will you not come within? Time presses . . . there is much to be done . . . "

"There is indeed," said Medea, rising up, "but we must wait a little longer. Go to the gate, Nurse, and look up and down the road, and tell me if you see any one coming."

The old woman went, grumbling to herself; after some minutes she called out, "I see a traveller coming along the North road. He rides a mule . . . three slaves follow him on foot. . . . He is near now, and looks this way. . . . And now he dismounts . . . mistress, he is coming to our door. . . ."

"Bid him enter," cried Medea, exultantly, and looking heavenward, "I thank thee, Zeus," she said, "who hast heard my prayer." The next moment a stately, black-bearded man in traveller's garb came towards her with outstretched hand, saying, "All hail, noble Medea! Health and joy be with you!"

"And with you, King Aegeus," she replied, as they clasped hands, "thrice welcome hither, Lord of famous Athens! But tell me, whence come you, and what brings you to Corinth?"

"I am on my way home from Delphi, lady," said Aegeus, "where I have been to inquire of the Oracle; and although in haste, I could not pass this house without saluting the friend I have not seen for years, and asking how she fares. Prosperously, I trust?"

"You shall hear, worthy Aegeus," said Medea, hastily, "but first I would fain ask—if I may without offence—the nature of your business at Delphi?"

"Surely you may ask," replied Aegeus. "I sought

the God's counsel on a matter that has long been a heavy grief to me—though wedded more than once, I have never had a child. So I besought Apollo to show me some remedy, lest I go childless to my grave and leave no heir to sit upon my throne; but alas, he answered with a dark saying that it passes my wit to unriddle. But I have a friend and ally —Pittheus of Troezene—you have doubtless heard of him, since his wisdom is a byword all over Hellas —and I am going straight to him with this oracle, for he will interpret it if any mortal can."

"Yes, I have heard of the wise Pittheus," said Medea, "and I pray with all my heart that his skill may avail you, good friend. And may the gods grant you the son you desire!"

"I thank you, lady," said Aegeus, "and wish you, in return, all happiness. . . . But what is this? You are weeping . . . and now I mark it, your face is pale and haggard. . . . Alas, what evil has befallen you?"

"O Aegeus," sobbed Medea, "my husband is the basest of men! He has wronged me cruelly . . . infamously . . . me, that never gave him cause!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the astonished king, "What, Jason cruel to *you?* But how . . . what has he done? Tell me more, I pray you."

And brokenly Medea told all that had come to pass; only, she said no word of Creon's fear of her, but made it appear that he had banished her by Jason's desire, to rid him of his cast-off wife. As, indeed, she partly believed. The Athenian king heard her with indignation. "I could not have

believed," he cried, when she ended, "that your husband would wrong you so grossly! But do not weep thus, Medea; let him go—methinks you have no great loss of him, seeing he proves utterly worthless."

"It is not for him I weep," said she, "but for myself. What will become of me, driven out into the world a lone, lorn woman? Who will befriend me, that am known to have such powerful foes as the King of Corinth—and the whole kindred of Pelias? O good Aegeus,"—and with that she threw herself at his feet—"have pity on me most wretched . . . see, I am your suppliant . . . I touch your beard and knees in token thereof, adjuring you to give me shelter and protection! Take me to Athens, king, and receive me under your roof—you little know how it shall profit you! For I will cause you to beget children, through the potency of certain charms I have."

"Believe me, lady," answered Aegeus, "I would fain grant your request, and that not for your promised boon—albeit most precious to me—but for the gods' sake, who are honoured most by deeds of mercy. But thus it is—I may not escort you out of Creon's country, for he, too, is my guest-friend, and would rightfully resent it, did I openly take your part in such wise. He must not say I came into his kingdom and succoured a fugitive outlaw! But if you come to me at Athens, that is another matter and no concern of his; and very gladly will I receive and harbour you. Can you not journey thither alone, Medea?"

" Yes, yes, kind friend," she said, " but promise me one thing—that you will never banish me yourself, nor give me up to my enemies. For they hate me so, I know they will seek to hunt me from my refuge."

" Fear not, lady," said the king, " once you have taken sanctuary in my house I will give you up to no man, be he who he may."

" Swear that you will not! " cried Medea eagerly.

" Is not my word enough for you? " said Aegeus, somewhat displeased.

" Ah, forgive me," said Medea, " I doubt you not —but I am weak and beset with fears."

" Nay, then, to ease your mind, I will take any oath you desire," said Aegeus; " name the gods by whom you would have me swear."

" Let them be the gods that both Hellenes and Barbarians worship," said Medea; " swear to me by Earth, and by yonder Sun in heaven, the divine parent of my race. So shall I rest assured you will never fail me, come what may; for who would dare take those holy names in vain? "

Then Aegeus swore the solemn oath, calling Earth and Sun to witness that neither for fear nor favour would he ever give Medea into the hands of her enemies, nor ever expel her from his city; and having sworn, he bade her farewell until they should meet in Athens, and hastened on his way. Scarcely was he forth of the gate when she broke into a peal of laughter, not good to hear. " All's done, all's won, Nurse," she cried, running up to the old woman and shaking her by the arm. " This mends

the one flaw in my plan—'twas for this I waited, see you? I shall be safe in Athens now, were I ten times a—murderess. But I must to work. . . . Quick, Nurse, bid one of the slaves run to the palace and tell Jason from me that I entreat him to return instantly—that I repent my folly and earnestly desire to make my peace with him before I go. Come, make haste . . . dear gods, how slow you are!" So saying, and still grasping the old woman's arm, Medea hurried her within doors, regardless of her querulous protests.

Less than an hour had passed when Jason's quick, firm step was heard in the paved courtyard; Medea, shut in her chamber, quivered like an aspen-leaf at that familiar sound; but calm and subdued was her mien as she met him on the threshold of the house. She was holding her two children by the hand; behind her stood their old attendant, and a slave-girl bearing a small, painted coffer. "My lord," she said, gently and sadly, "when we parted just now, I was carried away by unreasoning anger and spoke as a fool; but having had time to reflect, I see I was utterly in the wrong. . . . You have done well and wisely. . . . I ought to have been overjoyed at your making such a marriage . . . and helped with right goodwill at the bedding of the bride . . . instead of giving way to my froward mood. Can you forgive me, Jason, and forget my bitter words . . . remembering only that . . . you loved me once?"

"Say no more, Medea," replied her husband graciously, "I know too well what women's nature

is not to excuse your outbreak; and now you have come to a better mind, and speak so sensibly and discreetly, I am more than willing to be friends again. So now bid me farewell—but first let me embrace our little ones." With that he took the boys in his arms and kissed them, saying, "Farewell, my sons; you will know some day, the gods willing, your father's zealous care for your prosperity. For in a few years I hope to have you back in Corinth, and see you share royal wealth and power with the brothers whom I intend to provide for you. Grow up strong and lusty, my pretty boys; may the gods watch over you, and send you safe home to be the pride and stay of my old age! Take them, Medea—how now, why do you weep and turn away your face?"

"It is nothing," she murmured, holding out her arms to the children, and setting them gently down, "only a mother's weakness . . . as you uttered that prayer I thought, *what if they should die young?* . . . Ah, Jason, they are so little—too little and tender for a wandering life! Listen, I do not ask reprieve for myself . . . I see it is best I should go . . . but will you not ask Creon to let the children remain with you?"

"It is what I wish myself," answered Jason, "but I doubt I could not persuade him."

"Ask his daughter to intercede with him," said Medea, "*she* cannot deny you anything, I know."

"I have not yet met a woman who could," said Jason simply; "that is a good thought of yours, Medea; I will go and ask the princess, and as her

father is devoted to her, she is certain to win his consent."

And he turned to depart, but Medea cried, "Tarry a moment, my lord! Let the children go with you, and carry a wedding-gift from me to your bride—it will soften her heart towards them, for it is a treasure beyond price. See," she went on, taking the coffer from her handmaid and holding forth what lay within, "see this ruby crown, and this silk-soft vesture woven of pure gold! No queen on earth has such adornments; Aietes had them from his father the Sun-god, and gave them to me for dowry."

"Keep them, I pray you," said Jason; "Creon's daughter has more gold and jewels than she can count, and why should you impoverish yourself for one so much wealthier than you? Nay, I shall rather persuade her to bestow some rich gift on *you*, in charity to the exile."

"That you shall not!" exclaimed Medea passionately—then checking herself, said with a smile, "Dear my lord, let me have my way in this—trust a woman to know what will please a woman best. Your bride is young and lovely—she cannot but delight in a gift that will set off her beauty so splendidly. . . . Here, my darlings, take these pretty shining things and follow your father to the palace, give them to the beautiful lady you will see there. . . . Jason, you will not refuse me this last boon? Go at once, then; and let Xanthias bring the children home quickly . . . I long to hear they have found favour with my royal mistress."

"As you will," answered Jason, "for though your gift is needless, at least there is no harm in giving it. Bid me farewell, Medea, since we must part now, never to meet again."

But Medea flung the veil over her face and turned away in silence, pointing with a trembling hand to the gate. "Poor soul, she cannot bear to part from me," murmured Jason; and went upon his errand thinking all the better of her, and of himself.

. . . . . .

The sun rode at his highest in a cloudless sky, and all Corinth lay sleeping under the blaze of noon. Silence brooded over the deserted streets and market-place; it was the hour of repose for rich and poor, masters and slaves; and in the wide, shady chambers of Medea's dwelling, her household slumbered like the rest. But their mistress was walking up and down in the full glare of the sun-baked courtyard with swift, catlike tread, as you may see a tigress padding to and fro behind prison bars. Her cheeks, so wan of late, were darkly flushed; her eyes glittered feverishly; she panted for breath as she went, talked to herself in hoarse and broken murmurs—"They should be at hand by now . . . what will the news be? Gods, if my plot has failed . . . if that whey-faced girl has refused the bait! . . . No, no, she will not. I know her vanity will over-ride all scruples; she will long to deck herself with that crown and robe . . . that I have steeped in withering poison. Ay, she will die . . . in torments . . . nor she alone,

but whoso comes to her aid . . . Zeus send it be Creon or . . . her loving spouse! Thou hast conquered, Medea! I shall see my desire upon mine enemies this day . . . and what then . . . *what then?* I dare not think of that . . . and yet I must . . . it is too late to falter now. Have I not seen it all along? *If I take that woman's life, I must take my children's too.* For if I flee and leave them here, the Corinthians will slay the offspring of the murderess . . . yet leave them I must; I could never out-distance my pursuers hampered with two young children. . . . Shall I stay and die with them? . . . What, and let Medea's name be a name of scorn in Hellas, as of one that, aiming at revenge on her foes, did but achieve an ignominious death for herself? No, by yonder Sun whose fire is in my blood, by dread Hecate my mistress, though life be hateful I will not die but live—live triumphant, renowned above all women for the vengeance I wrought on my oppressors. Away with weakness . . . there's no turning back now . . . unless . . . O me, here come the children . . . *empty-handed!*"

Old Xanthias' face was wreathed in smiles as he approached his mistress, carrying one boy on his shoulder and the other in his arms. "Good news, my noble lady," he said, "the princess has accepted your gifts, and gained her father's leave for your sons to abide in Corinth."

At that, Medea reeled as though he had struck her, and cried out like one in mortal agony. "What ails you?" exclaimed the affrighted old man; "Sure there is nought to distress you in my

tidings?" And as Medea suddenly broke into wild weeping, "Alas," he said pityingly, "I forgot you must be cruelly sundered from these dear ones. But take comfort, lady; this trouble will blow over some day, and you will be permitted to return to them. Meanwhile, grieve not overmuch; *things past cure*, say the wise, *should be past care.*"

"You counsel well," answered Medea, faintly, "and I will lay your words to heart. But take the children to their beds, good Xanthias—see, they are half asleep already. . . . Kiss me first, my sweet, sweet babes; put your soft arms round my neck this once more, ere I send you to . . . your rest." She snatched both children from him and hugged them to her breast, devouring the rosy dimpled faces with kisses; then suddenly, "Take them away, old man," she gasped, "I cannot bear it . . . I cannot . . . it kills me to look on them . . . take them, I say!" The old slave obeyed without a word; as he went, the children looked back over his shoulder, laughing and waving their hands to their mother, who watched them out of sight with an awful hunger in her eyes.

And then, like one in a dream, Medea slowly drew a dagger from the folds of her girdle, unsheathed it, and began fingering the keen, bright blade. "I will wait till they are asleep," she whispered; "they will feel nothing . . . and never wake again . . . never, never, never, never!" Her voice rose into a shriek upon the words; she stared some moments at the weapon in her hand as though fascinated by its glitter; then, flinging it violently

from her—" I could never do it," she burst out, " I must have been mad to think it possible. Let revenge go—let my foes live and triumph, I reck not; I will away to Athens now, this moment, and leave my darlings safe in the home I have secured them. . . . *Safe?* O no, no, I am forgetting! The poisoned robe! . . . Ay, here comes news of it, methinks! "

Even as she spoke, a man in the dress of Jason's retainers dashed full speed into the courtyard. " Fly, Medea, fly for your life," he shouted, catching sight of her; " that gift you sent has killed the princess, and her father too! "

A wild laugh broke from Medea, and she clapped her hands so loudly that the Nurse came hurrying out from the house, thinking herself summoned. " They are dead, Nurse," cried her mistress, exultantly, and turning to the messenger, " I will owe you a good turn, friend," she said, " for bringing me such tidings. But tell me more—I am twice your debtor if you can assure me they died—horribly."

" Ah, lady," said he, " think rather of your own peril, and escape while yet you may."

" I will not stir a foot till I have heard all," answered Medea. " Speak, good fellow, how was it? "

And at that Jason's henchman, who was in sooth bursting with the dreadful tale, told it in these words—" Lady, when my master brought your little sons into the palace, all we his servants, that love you, were glad at heart, and whispered one to

another that you and he were reconciled; and we thronged about the noble children as they passed, each man fain to kiss their hands or stroke their golden curls. As for me, I was so uplifted with joy that I followed them even into the apartment of the princess, our new mistress. Now she blushed and smiled at seeing Jason, but when she saw who were with him, she turned angrily away, pulling down her veil as if she loathed the very sight of your children. However, my lord soon coaxed away her ill-humour—that tongue of his would wile the bird off the tree, as they say; and when he had told his errand and displayed your gift, the princess readily promised the boon he asked. Indeed, you could see she was thinking of nothing but those glittering gauds . . . she cried out for pleasure like a child when she saw them, and took them so eagerly. . . . So then she hurried Jason off to the king, who consented to let the children remain, as you know. That done, back she hies to her chamber, and puts on the crown and robe, and calls for her burnished mirror, and looks at herself with delight, while the tirewomen praise and flatter her to her heart's content. And then she must needs go sweeping through hall and bower, flaunting her splendours, proud as any peacock; until, all of a sudden, she turned the hue of death, and staggering to a chair lay back rigid and senseless. Her women ran to her aid, and one said, 'It is the falling sickness,' but another screamed, 'She is poisoned! See that dark froth oozing from her lips! Woe, woe, she is dying, our princess is dying!' At that cry, all the

house was in an uproar; some ran to fetch the king —I myself went for Jason, but he had gone forth— while the sobbing women strove to revive their hapless mistress by chafing her ice-cold limbs. But just as Creon rushed in they all started back in horror—for she sprang up, shrieking, 'I burn, I burn!' and the next instant was all one flame from head to foot. Oh what a sight was that for a father's eyes! He flung his mantle about the writhing girl—but it was shrivelled to tinder in a moment; he tried to tear off the burning robe, and the red-hot crown that was searing her forehead to the bone— 'twas worse than vain, for the magic poison had glued them to the flesh, so that bleeding morsels came away with each strip of the flaming gold. As for the rest of us, we stood rooted to the spot with horror; not a man dared come near those two, and a mercy that was! For we saw those hellish flames die out suddenly of their own accord, and the old king catch his daughter in his arms just as she fell—a charred, bloodstained corpse. And as he laid her down, making piteous moan, we saw her smouldering robe flutter without a blast, and coil about the old man's body like a serpent! . . . Ah, he fought hard to free himself; but the more he struggled the closer clung the deadly thing, fast as ivy on an oak, and in the twinkling of an eye, out burst the sleeping flame . . . it needs not to tell you the rest . . . daughter and sire perished in the like torment, and their blackened relics lie yonder side by side, fearful witnesses, Medea, to the power of your art! Oh my heart is sick to think on the

hideous doom of that fair young bride; yet, lady, you were foully wronged, as none can deny, and what is more, you have ever been good and gracious to me; so I came hotfoot to warn you—and once more I beg of you to fly at once. All is confusion in the palace, else the guards had been sent to take you ere now; but I warrant they will come soon, and I were best not be found here—so fare you well."

With that he was gone; and thereupon the Nurse and old Xanthias, who had scarcely restrained their impatience all this while, vehemently besought Medea to heed the man's warning and make off instantly through the postern at the back of the house, assuring her that they and the whole household would die sooner than tell the pursuers which way she went.

"I know it, true hearts," said she, "and I will away this very moment. The gods reward you all for your loyalty—farewell!" So saying, she hastily caught up the dagger, that lay near her feet, and ran into the house with the speed of a deer.

Xanthias and the Nurse were slowly following when a cry rang from within that curdled their blood—the cry of a child in mortal terror or anguish. It came again, more faintly; then all was still. Medea's old servants exchanged one long look of awful comprehension; bowed their grey heads; and passed into the house, tearless and dumb.

. . . . . .

When the royal guards, headed by Jason himself, came to drag the murderess of Creon and his child

to execution, she was already far on her way to Athens. Her husband, led by the old Nurse into the chamber where his little sons lay beautiful in death, then felt a pang more heartrending than all he had that day endured. Doubtless Medea knew it would be so; but whether that knowledge, or fear of what her children might suffer from the enraged Corinthians, nerved her hand at the last fatal moment, who shall declare? Here, anywise, was her crowning vengeance on the man that requited her great love with betrayal. For since no one thenceforward dared to have Jason for a son-in-law, he remained childless all his days, which were many and evil; no tender daughters cherished him; no son's strong arm enforced respect for him when his own strength was departed. "That which should accompany old age, as honour, love, obedience troops of friends, he might not look to have."

A solitary, neglected old man, Jason wandered on a day to the market-place of Iolcus, where he had stood once in the glory of his young manhood, the cynosure of all eyes. None knew or heeded the forlorn figure; after awhile he crept silently out of the throng, and down to a lonely part of the sea-beach. There, high above the tides, lay *Argo*, and had lain ever since her one, immortal voyage, mouldering in the sun and rain of fifty years. Jason's dim eyes brightened at the sight of her; it seemed to him as though he had found the one friend left him upon earth; vaguely comforted, he lay down under the shadow of her hull to rest there through the noon-day heat; and when presently he

dropped asleep, something of the beauty of his youth illumined his peaceful face. That was how the old men of Iolcus recognised the stranger who was found that evening lying dead beside *Argo's* hull, with one of her heavy timbers fallen across his breast. Jason's last friend had done him the last kindness.

CHAPTER V

THE FOLK OF ARES

I

Of Coronis and Asclepius

THERE was once a king in Thessaly called Phlegyas, who ruled the tribes of the Lapithae, and dwelt in the city of Lacereia, by the great Lake Boebeïs. Phlegyas was proud of heart and bloody of hand; he boasted himself the son of Ares, and honoured him only among the gods. So he came at last to no good end, having provoked Zeus to destroy him; but here we say no more of him, for this tale is of his sole daughter, Coronis, and her child.

Now Coronis had not her peer for beauty in all broad Thessaly, and thereby she came to bliss and honour vouchsafed to few maidens, for golden-haired Apollo himself sought and won her love. Happiest of all women might she have lived and died if she had kept faith with that divine lover! But there is a certain most witless tribe of mortals who scorn whatsoever is their own and hanker after alien things, pursuing vain, deluding hopes; and of such was Coronis. For she became enamoured of a stranger from Arcadia, one Ischys, son of Elatus, that sojourned awhile in her father's house; and

with him she played Apollo false, even while she bore within her the holy seed of the god. Had she but waited until her child was born, then without blame she might have openly wedded a mortal husband, like other maidens beloved of a god; but her headstrong passion brooked no delay; she must needs meet her new lover by stealth, rather than tarry the day that should see her made a bride with due pomp and revelry. Coronis hid this amour from the king her father, and, as she hoped, from all; little deeming, foolish, hapless girl, whose watchful eyes marked her treason afar off. Apollo saw it all, where he sat in his golden house in distant Pytho; and forthwith he sent Artemis his sister in fierce wrath to Lacereia; and with viewless arrows of pestilence she smote down not the guilty damsel alone, but many of her neighbours, even as one spark that falls upon a tree-clad mountain will spread havoc through much timber.

But when her kinsmen had laid Coronis on a lofty funeral pyre, and the greedy flames over-ran it, then out spoke Apollo—" No longer may I steel my heart to let mine own offspring perish by its mother's bitter doom." He said, and with one stride, as gods can, he was come to the pyre; unseen of mortal eyes he stood amid the roaring flames, that parted before him this way and that, and snatched a living babe from the burning corpse. Then he sped with the babe to Chiron's cave on Pelion and gave it to the wise Centaur, saying, " Take this son of mine, whom his mother's funeral fire has brought to birth untimely, and rear him for me, teaching him all thy

skill in leechcraft, that he also may be a great healer of men; and call his name Asclepius."

So Chiron took the newborn babe, and gave him to his mother Philyra and his wife Chariclo to be nursed; tender nurses were they, and the child throve in their keeping. And of all the heroes that were the good Centaur's fosterlings, Asclepius became dearest to him, so gentle was the boy and so apt to learn the art of healing. No pleasure had he in feats of strength or in the chase, like other lads; but all his delight was to gather knowledge, and to try his skill on beasts and birds that were ailing or wounded. At last Chiron said to him, "My best-belovéd pupil, you have learned all I can teach, and in skill you excel your master. Now must you go forth into the world and minister to the sick and suffering, according to the will of your father Apollo." And with loving farewells he sent the young man away.

Then Asclepius journeyed from city to city through the land of Greece, healing all manner of diseases. Marvellous were the cures he wrought, and wherever he went the folk loaded him with praises and rewards. For there was no man who sought help of this physician but was speedily made whole, whatsoever ailed him; agues, or wasting fevers, or malignant self-grown ulcers, or sword-dealt wounds—Asclepius had sure remedies for each. Some patients he would anoint with salves made of precious balms, others he caused to drink of lulling anodynes; others he made whole by deft surgery. After a while Asclepius took up his abode in the

pleasant town of Epidaurus, by the sea; and many resorted to him there, for his fame was noised abroad throughout all Hellas. So for certain years he lived happy and honoured, labouring in his vocation. But one besetting sin he had to which even wisest men are often prone—and that was greed of gain. The time came when a vast sum of gold was proffered the wondrous leech if he would restore a slain man to life. As some tell, this man was Androgeos, son to the great King Minos of Crete; others say he was Theseus' son, Hippolytus the fair, whom his own horses, taking fright, dragged to death, tangled in the chariot-reins. Be this as it may, Asclepius took the glittering bribe, and by his miraculous art healed the dead man's wounds, and called back his soul from Hades' prison-house—for one brief moment. But the next instant, a thunderbolt slew both healer and healed; for Zeus endured not that a mortal should presume to reverse the sentence of the Fates.

Great wrath had Apollo for the death of his son, and in revenge he went to Etna and shot dead the Cyclopes that had forged the thunderbolt. And as penance for that deed, Zeus ordained that he should be exiled from heaven a whole year, and pass that time in servitude to a mortal. Thus it came to pass that Apollo dwelt with Admetus, king in Pherae, and served him as a herdsman; what else he did for that master, in requital of his kindness, those who will may read in another part of this book, where we tell the Adventures of Heracles.

But when Apollo had fulfilled the year of penance,

the august Father was reconciled to him, and promised him a boon in token of renewed favour. Then Apollo asked and obtained wondrous grace for his loved son; even that Asclepius should be raised body and soul to the heavenly halls, and being made partaker of immortality by eating the divine ambrosia, should thenceforth be numbered with the ever-blesséd gods. This Zeus granted the more readily because he was not unmindful of that great physician's benefits to his suffering fellow-men. And all the Olympians welcomed the new Immortal with right goodwill, no less for his father's sake than his own.

Now Asclepius begot two sons during his earthly life, called Podalirius and Machaon, to whom he imparted all his lore; these heroes won renown only less than their sire's in the after time, and were the physicians of the Greek host that beleaguered Troy. Their descendants settled in the Island of Cos, where a renowned guild of physicians flourished for many ages under the name of " Sons of Asclepius." But after he became a god, Asclepius had a daughter named Hygieia and a son named Telesphorus—that is, *Recoverer from Sickness ;* and those two received worship together with their father in the temple that men built him at Epidaurus. There, while a thousand years rolled by, the sick, the maimed, the halt, and the blind sought healing of the Divine Physician; after prayer and sacrifice, they were wont to sleep all night in the cloistered courts of the temple; and to such as had prayed with devout faith, Asclepius would reveal in a dream how they might be healed.

II

Of Ixion the Ingrate

When King Phlegyas had met a well-earned doom, Ixion his son reigned over the Lapithae in his stead. This prince was not less wicked than his father, but being more cunning, he had recourse to guile, where Phlegyas would have gained his end by open violence. Soon after he came into his kingdom, Ixion was minded to take a wife; and he sought in marriage the daughter of King Deïoneus of Phocis. Now this maiden, whose name was Dia, was exceeding fair, and had many suitors, so that her father asked a great bride-price for her. And Ixion having readily promised to pay it, Deïoneus gave him the maiden's hand, with goodwill on her part, for her bridegroom was as fair without as false within. But when, after the marriage rejoicings, Ixion had brought her to his own home, he did not send the bride-price to her father, as he had covenanted to do; and when messengers from Deïoneus came seeking it, he mocked them, and sent them away empty-handed. Then the Phocian king went himself to Lacereia, for he thought, "My son-in-law will reverence *me*, at least;" and sure enough, Ixion received him with all honour, making plausible excuses for having rebuffed his messengers. "Those men," said he, "showed me neither your royal signet nor any token that they came from you; wherefore I feared to trust them with gold to the value of five hundred oxen."

"Is it in gold you mean to pay the bride-price?" asked Deïoneus eagerly.

"Even so, king," answered Ixion; "hence my delay, for I could only amass so great a store of the precious metal by barter of much cattle. But now the whole sum lies in my treasure-house; feast with me to-night, and to-morrow I will show it you."

Now Deïoneus was overjoyed at his words, having an especial love for gold above all other wealth; so that night they feasted together and made merry. But while all slept, Ixion digged a pit before the door of a tower in his garden, and filled it with burning charcoal, and covered it with osier twigs, strewing earth thickly over all. And on the morrow he led Deïoneus to the place, and pointing to the door of the tower, bade him enter, for the gold lay within. As the luckless king stepped forward the seeming-solid ground gave way under his feet, and with a wild cry he sank into the deep, narrow pit, where the charcoal fumes quickly bereft him of sense and life.

It is said that Ixion was the first who ever murdered a kinsman by treachery. If he deemed himself powerful enough to avoid punishment for a crime so atrocious, he soon learned his error; the whole Lapith folk rose up against the murderer; wife, friends, and retainers fled from him in abhorrence; and not the meanest slave would breathe the same air with one so deeply polluted. Thus he was forced to fly the land, not to escape slaying—for the priests and seers declared that whoso laid hand on him would be infected by the deadly

miasma of his blood-guilt—but because every man, woman, and child shunned him as they would a leper. Long time Ixion wandered from city to city, seeking a king who would purify him from the blood-guilt, after the manner of kings in those days; but he found none that would even suffer him within his gates, when he made himself known. Wherever he went, it seemed the tidings of his unheard-of crime had gone before him; everywhere men looked with suspicion on his haggard face and asked, "*Is not your name Ixion?*" If he confessed it, they shut their doors against him, and if he denied, gave him such scant and grudging entertainment as showed they longed to be rid of him.

One day, famished and well nigh desperate, the outcast came to a certain mountain where was a high place and altar of Zeus; and forthwith he sat down as a suppliant at the altar, embracing it with his guilty hands. "God of Suppliants," he cried, "do thou receive and purify me, since none else will! But if thou wilt not, here will I bide until I die of hunger on thine altar. Better die, I trow, than live this death-in-life, cut off from my kind. There is no mercy upon earth for so great a sinner—O, is there none with thee, Father of gods and men?"

Then Zeus, moved with compassion, answered that bitter cry in wondrous wise; for he came himself to the mountain, and bore the half-fainting wretch in his arms to the golden courts of heaven. There the suppliant whom earthly kings rejected was purified by the king of gods, and did eat and

drink at his table in company with the Olympians. And Zeus said to him, "Learn from this, Ixion, that there is no iniquity the gods will not forgive a man, if only he repent. So should it be likewise with the children of men; but their ways are not as our ways, nor their thoughts as our thoughts."

But so far from repenting, Ixion even then was meditating a new wickedness. For at the right hand of Zeus sat his all-glorious queen, and as Ixion gazed on her divine beauty, the most impious desire burned within him that ever entered the heart of man to conceive. This madman, raised from abject wretchedness to be the guest and boon-fellow of the kindly gods and sharer of their tearless lot, counted all that bliss nothing worth unless he might enjoy her whose eternal portion is the sacred marriage-bed of Zeus. Infatuate with lawless longing, he imagined that Queen Hera showed him marks of especial favour, and read more than kindness in her gracious smiles; eagerly he awaited some chance of speech with her alone, and when it came, so boldly urged his suit that the goddess fled to her inmost bower glowing with shame and anger. And presently she made complaint to Zeus of the insult offered her by the mortal he had thought fit to bring among the Olympians. "Is it not enough," she cried, "that thou shouldst play me false continually with mortal women, but I must suffer yet worse dishonour from a woman's son? Wouldst thou have me a faithless wife, O Thunderer, because thou art a faithless husband? I well believe it is for that thou harbourest yon miscreant, else had thy

lightning blasted him or ever his touch profaned the vesture of Hera."

"Content thee, lady mine," answered Zeus, "for thou shalt be better avenged than so. Yea, the man hath wronged me more deeply far than thee, seeing I was his host and called him friend; now, therefore, I will make him a world's wonder for his ingratitude. But first I will prove him to the uttermost, that his act may condemn him, and not his intent alone."

That night Ixion awoke from dreams of Hera to find her living self—as he thought—standing by his bed; and she whispered, smiling, that she had but repulsed him for fear of Zeus—who now was safe asleep. Ixion needed no more, but took her in his arms, and for a moment bathed in unhallowed rapture; then he felt the form of the seeming goddess dissolve in his embrace, and with a mocking laugh she vanished into air. For she was nought but a Cloud that Zeus had moulded in Hera's likeness and sent to delude him. And suddenly fiercer laughter rang all about him, and the scornful faces of the Olympians, white in the dim dawn, bent over him where he lay. Ixion writhed under their wounding gaze, and covered his eyes with his hands —but not before he had met for an instant the look of Zeus. The unutterable reproach in that look pierced the sinner's soul; he knew, then, what he had done and all he had lost for ever. With that, despair rolled over him like a benumbing flood—and when he came to himself he was in heaven no longer. . . .

High in the murky air of Tartarus hangs a great four-spoked wheel, kept ever whirling by the pitiless storm-blasts of the nether sky; a man lies outstretched thereon, bound hand and foot to the spokes, even as the wryneck, the magic bird, is bound to the wheel that maidens turn as a love-charm. And ever as the great wheel spins, his lamentable voice comes borne upon the wind, "*O mortals, repay your benefactors with good and not with evil, lest ye come likewise to this place of torment! Remember Ixion, O ye dwellers upon earth, and flee from the sin of sins—ingratitude!*"

Such was the fitting doom that Zeus devised for that prince of ingrates; even that he should be made the tragic counterfeit of a love-spell, in witness of the mad lust that drew him on to his ruin.

III

Of the Wooing of Marpessa

While Phlegyas yet reigned in Thessaly, three valiant kinsmen of his set out in quest of fortune, and came to the land of Aetolia, in the West, where each won himself a kingdom by the sword. Two of them, Evenus and Thestius, were sons of Ares by a Thessalian princess; the third, Oeneus, was the son of their mother's brother. It was the hap of all the three to become famous in Hellas on account of the surprising fortunes of their children, as our tale will show. And first of King Evenus and his daughter Marpessa. . . .

This Evenus was a true son of the War-god; without fear and without ruth, violent, headstrong, sudden in his wrath, and one that loved a fray better than a feast. It was no small grief to him that his only child was a girl; but Marpessa grew up so beautiful and high-spirited that his fierce heart warmed to her as to no other creature; he resolved that she should never leave him, but take the place of a son to him in his old age; and so he trained the maiden like a young warrior, and forbade her ever to think of love or marriage, for they were not for her. But Marpessa's beauty was a light that could not be hid, and drew so many princely wooers to her father's house that he durst not refuse them all openly, lest in the end they should league together to overthrow him. Therefore he devised a pretext for getting rid of them singly, and a cunning one it was. For he let proclaim that he would give his daughter's hand to the suitor who should win against him in a chariot-race; but as the prize was to be great, so should be the loser's forfeit, even death by the king's spear. Now Evenus had two mares, a bay and a chestnut, that the War-god had given him out of his own Thracian stalls, and he knew no horses of earthly breed could match them in swiftness. And that was proved ere long by the deaths of four-and-twenty kings' sons, all skilful charioteers and masters of famous horses, who hazarded their lives in the race for Marpessa. All these Evenus slew in the moment of their defeat, with a well-aimed spear-throw from his chariot as it passed; he cut

off the heads of every one, and fixed them as trophies along the cornice of the temple of Ares.

Now each time the race was run, Marpessa, decked out as a bride, was placed at the goal; ready, as the king would grimly say, for the lucky bridegroom. And she saw without blenching all those gallant wooers slain one by one before her face; for she was hardened from a child to the sight of bloodshed, and as yet her untamed heart knew neither love nor pity. But when the last of the four-and-twenty had fallen, there came yet another wooer to her father's house—a stranger youth from Messenia, in the far South; and as Marpessa saw this charioteer entering the race-course, unknown emotions bewildered her; she felt nothing clearly, except that she could not bear to see him die like those others. A trumpet gave the signal, and the two chariots, drawn up abreast, flew forward on the long, sandy level of the double course; the stranger's horses were white, with proudly-arched necks, and their tossing crests looked to Marpessa oddly like the crests of sea-waves; still abreast with the War-god's mares, they thundered along the outward track and rounded the turning-post. They gained the lead then—and her heart stood still; this was ever her father's way—holding in the mares until the last; 'twas rare sport, he said, to overtake his victims just as they fancied they had won the race. The white horses were close upon her now . . . foam flying about them like spindrift . . . a cloud of dust behind hid the king's car . . . now would come the sudden dart forward . . . the flash of his whirling

spear . . . Marpessa shut her eyes from the sight that must follow. Suddenly, as in a dream, she felt herself uplifted and borne onward with a rushing motion . . . she opened her eyes . . . and met the ardent gaze of the stranger youth, who was holding her fast in one arm as the swaying chariot rolled on over hill and dale. "This can never be," she thought, "I am dreaming;" with that, a roar like a lion's rose behind them; she looked back and saw Evenus driving furiously in pursuit, and brandishing his spear. And, "Ah, prince," she cried, "we are lost! By what strange chance you outstripped my father, I cannot guess—but he will certainly overtake and kill you now. Those mares are of the War-god's breed—fleeter than any earthly coursers——"

"But not so fleet as the horses of Poseidon, it seems," laughed the youth; "nay, fear not, dearest maiden, Evenus shall never get within spear-cast of us. Out upon him! Is this how he keeps his bargain? 'Twas well I came forewarned of treachery."

So saying, he gave the reins a shake, and those white horses tossed their heads and sped on rejoicing; now they seemed to fly, rather than gallop; their twinkling hoofs scarce dinted the earth they trod; and when Marpessa looked backward again, her father's chariot was but a dwindling speck on the distant plain. By this they were come to the ford of the river Lycormas, that bounded the kingdom of Evenus; and the river was roaring down in spate, for the autumn rains had begun. But what was that to Poseidon's horses? Dryshod they

crossed the raging flood, and on again like the wind! When Evenus reached the ford, the pursued were already out of sight; and now his mares, well-nigh spent, stood still on the river brink, nor could he force them forward though he plied the lash savagely, uttering frantic reproaches. "Die, then," he cried at last, "since you have betrayed me these two times!"—and plunged his spear into the necks of both. Then, in the madness of his baffled rage, Ares' son flung himself into the torrent, and its brown, eddying waters swept him away helpless, until they closed over his head for ever. Now the river that drowned him was no more called Lycormas, but Evenus, by the people of the land; and in after times they showed a barrow beside the ford as the grave of the two famous mares.

But Marpessa and the stranger held on their way Southward, until evening; then he halted the still unwearied steeds in a grassy meadow, by a running brook; the place was solitary, but a small temple near at hand offered shelter to wayfarers. The stranger quickly unyoked his horses and turned them loose in the pasture. "Let us rest here for the night, my fair one," said he. "See, I have victual and a wine-flask in my scrip, and having supped we can sleep in the temple yonder." So they sat down to eat; but Marpessa was ill at ease, for ever since she heard that the wonderful white horses were Poseidon's, it stuck in her mind that their charioteer was no mortal, but a god disguised. By and by he asked what ailed her to look so downcast. "It is because," said she, "I have not heard your name

yet—and am afraid to hear it. For I will own it—my heart went out to you at first sight; I could be a happy wife, if you were what you seem—but what woman ever prospered, mated to an Immortal?"

Then merrily laughed the youth, and took her by the hand, and said, "Nay, dear heart, I am no Immortal, but of the same clay as yourself; my name is Idas; King Aphareus of Messenia is my father, and blithe will he be to welcome the lovely bride I have won by Poseidon's aid. We are on the border of his country now, Marpessa, and to-morrow shall be our wedding-day."

"That shall please me well," said Marpessa, "though little I thought ever to marry, until this day. For my father, as you may know, bred me up unlike other maidens, and hitherto I have cared for nothing but war and the chase. But tell me, Idas, how came you by the horses of Poseidon? When you said they were his, I thought, 'Surely this is one of the Olympians—maybe the Earthshaker himself.'"

Then Idas told how Poseidon had a special favour to his house from of old; and how, when word came to Messenia about the chariot-race of Evenus, he longed to essay that perilous adventure, and bethought him of seeking help from the god. And how, as he made his prayer on the seashore, Poseidon rose up before him out of the waves, leading two prancing steeds by the bridle, and said, "With these shalt thou overcome Evenus, albeit his mares are of the War-god's breed. But beware of his treachery; soon as thou comest to the goal, take up

thy prize quickly, and flee for thy life." When Idas had told his tale, he fell to such discourse as lovers use, and after they had talked their fill, these two lay down to sleep within the temple.

Now at early dawn, Idas was awaked by a cry; he started up, and saw a tall golden-haired youth in the act of carrying Marpessa over the threshold. Drawing his sword, Idas rushed to the rescue; he overtook the marauder a few paces from the temple and fiercely bade him yield up his booty or die; but with a scornful laugh that other turned—and behold, the face of him was as the face of a god in its splendour. The rising sun was no brighter than his golden head; divinely tall, clothed in beauty such as never mortal wore, he stood there with the trembling maiden in his arms, and smiled disdainfully on his astonished foe. Idas knew him at a glance by the glittering bow and quiver slung over his shoulder, but nothing daunted, he cried, "Yield up that maiden, Phoebus Apollo, for she is my plighted wife. Let her go instantly, I say, or you shall rue it, god though you are. I have won, and I will keep her—ay, against twenty such night-walking robbers as you!"

"Miscall me not, Idas," said Apollo, angrily, "Marpessa is my lawful prize, since I found her in my own temple. Go hence, foolhardy youth, and be thankful I do not take away your life as well as your bride to requite this insolence."

"By holy Zeus, you shall take both or neither!" shouted Idas, and ran at him, sword in hand. Quick as thought, the god set Marpessa down

behind him, bent his bow, and fitted an arrow to the string—the man saw the winged death waiting, but he saw his love too, and leaped forward—and at the same instant, with a roar and blinding flash, a thunderbolt fell to earth between him and Apollo. For a moment Idas remained dazzled and stupefied; then he was aware of one that stood beside him—a crowned, majestic figure, at whose feet crouched an eagle. And great awe came upon Idas, for he knew this was none other than Zeus himself.

Then thus spoke the King of gods to Phoebus Apollo, "Is it well done, O son of Leto, to match thy strength against a mortal's in such a cause as this? Or is it a light thing that thou shouldst make the name of the Olympians a byword among men for violence and injustice? That will I not endure; therefore let this maiden choose for herself which shall have her, thou or Idas; if thy wooing can prevail with her, she shall be thine—but if not, I charge thee to let these twain depart unmolested, and bear no malice to either of them."

So saying, Zeus nodded, and the dark, ambrosial locks waved upon his kingly head; and therewithal the earth trembled. Then he took his way heavenward, upborne on the eagle's pinions, and Idas and Marpessa saw him no more.

And now Apollo laid down his bow, and with the voice that is more musical than his own golden lyre he wooed Marpessa to stay with him and be his love. He told of all the joys that should be hers, mated to a god; how she should never know care or pain, never weep the loss of husband or child, but live all

her days in ease and pleasure; how she should be lodged and clothed more sumptuously than any earthly queen, and wear jewels that even Hera's self might envy. Of his passionate love he spoke, and vowed it should never fail her—then, indeed, the maiden blushed and sighed, so tender grew the pleading voice and so heavenly sweet the eyes that sought her own. But when the god ceased, she answered without faltering, "All this moves me not, Apollo, when I think on the years to come. You love me now in the heyday of my beauty, but will you, the ever young, love me when my youth is gone and my bloom faded, and the grey hairs come? Shall I not be left lonely then—or worse, see you, whom Time cannot wither, shrink from the unlovely change he will work in me? Nay, being a mortal woman, I will rather choose a mate who will grow old along with me, whose age-dimmed eyes will see no wrinkles on my brow, whose failing feet will keep step with mine on the downward slope of life's journey. What matter trouble and sorrow if we share them together? And as for happiness—what are all your promised joys, Olympian, beside the love of husband and children? Ah, may the Fates grant me that one true crown of woman's life! Now, take me, Idas, for to you I give myself."

And as Marpessa stretched out both hands to her human lover, Apollo turned and went his way quickly, with the shadow of a vague regret darkening his immortal brow.

IV

Meleager's Hunting

Turn we next to another son of Ares, namely, Thestius, who was brother to Evenus, and likewise made himself a king in Aetolia, as I have said. Thestius too was a man of war, but his nature was less savage than his brother's; in one thing he appeared greatly more fortunate, having four stalwart sons, besides two daughters whom he married to royal husbands. Althaea, the elder daughter, he bestowed on his cousin, Oeneus, King of Calydon; the younger, a white wonder of a maid whose name was Leda, Thestius gave to Tyndareus, a prince of distant Sparta, choosing him from among many suitors for his prowess in war. Now of Leda's marvellous fate you shall hear in due time; meanwhile, here begins the history of Queen Althaea and her son Meleager.

There was never sister who more dearly loved her brothers than the beautiful Althaea; from childhood she shared all their boyish sport, disdaining the quiet pastimes that pleased gentle Leda; a maiden grown, she was still their companion, and learned to rein a steed and couch a spear with the best of them. So when she came a bride to Calydon, Althaea pined at first, missing her brothers; but King Oeneus proved a kind and loving husband, and ere the year was out new joys dawned for her with the birth of a son.

Now on the birth-night, as Althaea lay in her chamber, half-dreaming half-awake, with the babe

cradled at her side, she was aware suddenly of three unknown women seated around the hearth. Their faces, pale against the firelight, were calm and inscrutable as the face of a marble sphinx, and so like each other that it was plain the three were sisters. Each held a golden distaff, and one was spinning wool from hers with a golden spindle. And Althaea watched them in silent awe, for it came into her mind that these must be the three Fates, who have power over the hour of birth and of death. But presently she heard one say, "Is the life-thread long, Clotho, that thou spinnest for the new-born?" And the spinner answered, "Nay, Atropos, it is brief enough, as thou mayest see; look, I have done—the measure of his days on earth is scarce four-and-twenty years." At those words a cry burst from the mother's lips; she caught her first-born to her breast, and in tones of wild entreaty, "Dread goddesses," she said, "have pity on this little one! Take my life instead of his, and I will bless you—I will bear any pains—I am ready to die this moment—only let him not perish in the flower of his youth." More she would have said, but sobs choked her utterance. Then slowly answered Clotho, "Thou knowest not, Althaea, what thou askest, nor from whom. In us thou beholdest only the passionless ministers of Necessity, strongest of all things, who is from the foundation of the world. Yet because even we are not unmoved by the holy power of mother-love, this much we grant thee, that thy son's life shall rest in thine own keeping." With that, the solemn Fate

took up a brand that lay smouldering on the hearth, and trod out the sparks in it; and she gave it to Althaea, saying, "While this brand is unconsumed, thy son shall live and see good days; but when fire wastes it, then shall his life waste away. And we bid thee call his name *Meleager;* for a day will come when thou shalt say that he was well so named of the prophetic Fates." Now when she had heard this much, deep sleep fell upon Althaea until the morning; and her first waking thought was that she had only dreamed of those grey Spinners—but there lay the blackened brand upon her coverlet. Forthwith she hid it under her pillows, and spoke of it to none; but kept it thenceforward in a lockfast iron coffer that held her choicest jewels.

Now when the day came for naming the babe, King Oeneus asked what she would have him called, and she answered, "Meleager shall be his name."

"That is no good name," said the king, "for it signifies *He of the Dolorous Hunting.* To call our son by it were ominous of some disaster to him in the chase—death, for all I know."

"There is no fear of that," said Althaea with a happy laugh; and then she told her husband that the Fates had appeared to her in a dream, and ordained that name for their babe, and given her a pledge of his living to extreme age. But jealous of her secret, she would not tell even him about the magic brand. So the child was called Meleager; and in process of time he grew into a fair, gallant youth, of whom it was remarked that nothing ever

ailed him, and that singular good luck attended him in all things, but especially in hunting.

When Meleager was three-and-twenty years old, it seemed to his parents high time he were married, and the bride they chose for him was his young cousin Cleopatra, the daughter of Idas and Marpessa. The wedding was held at the gathering in of the harvest, which that year was very plenteous; and King Oeneus kept the Feast of the Firstfruits with more than common magnificence, burning thank-offerings on the altars of all the gods, save one. But by some oversight he sent no portion of first-fruits to the altar of Artemis, Lady of the Wild Things. Whereat incensed, the goddess bided her time until the next Spring; then she visited her wrath in fearful wise on the whole land of Calydon. For she sent the hugest wild boar ever seen down from the mountains, that ravaged the growing crops in the valleys, and rooted up the vineyards and oliveyards, until he laid all waste. In vain toils were spread and pitfalls digged for him, and all the peasantry lived in terror of the monster, for in his fury he would charge and rip up whoever was so luckless as to encounter him afield. It was but seldom, however, that he was seen by day; all his havoc was wrought in the night, and before sunrise he would skulk to his mountain lair, after the manner of his kind.

Now Meleager, being resolved to rid the land of this strange pest, obtained his father's leave to proclaim a great hunting, and sent out messengers far and wide. And many heroes, sons of kings,

gathered to the house of Oeneus, eager for the chase, of whom more anon. Then came in to them a certain seer that dwelt in Calydon, and spoke a warning to Meleager that he should by no means hunt the boar, for it was the minister of the vengeance of Artemis; and therewithal he declared how King Oeneus had offended the goddess. When the king heard that, he was troubled, and some of the old men, his companions, said, "It were better, then, to do sacrifice to Artemis, and entreat her to take away her plague, and not to let our prince go on this chase, lest it prove his bane. But Queen Althaea, knowing her son bore an enchanted life, laughed them to scorn; nor would Meleager heed the warning, since he feared nothing in the world but dishonour, and thought shame to flinch from the emprise that had drawn such a goodly company together. For the flower of heroes who then lived were assembled in Oeneus' hall that day; Idas was come from Messenia, with his brother Lynceus, who of all mortals had the keenest sight; from Sparta came the twin sons of Leda, fair as their mother, and so like each to each as never twins before; from the far isle of Aegina came the sons of good King Aeacus, Telamon of the broad shield, and Peleus, destined to win an immortal bride; from Argos came Amphiaraus, best of warriors and best of seers. There, too, were Admetus of Pherae, Ixion's son Pirithous, and many another prince of Thessaly; and of Aetolians, Dryas, son of Ares, and two brothers of Althaea. Last came gigantic Ancaeus, from the glens of Arcady; and with him

one that seemed at first glance a tall, slender youth, wearing hunting garb, accoutred with bow and quiver, and holding two noble hounds in leash. But on nearer view, this comer's softly rounded form, and long braids of lustrous hair, showed her for a woman; and in reply to King Oeneus' courteous questioning, she named herself Atalanta, daughter of Iasus the Arcadian. Then the eyes of all the heroes were fixed on the maiden, for they had heard of her renown as a huntress, and her surpassing fleetness of foot, and most of them gave her greeting as a worthy comrade. But Althaea's brothers, Toxeus and Plexippus, men of overbearing and violent natures, were highly displeased, and loudly protested that it was beneath the dignity of warriors to let a mere girl share their exploits. Nay, they roughly bade Atalanta go home and spin, for the distaff was the only weapon fit for a woman's hands, and to ape the ways of men as she did was sheer immodesty. Then out spoke Meleager, wroth at heart, "Be silent, brethren of my mother, or I shall blush for my kinship with you. How dare ye name immodesty in one breath with this pure flower of maidenhood? Who knows not that the virgin daughter of Iasus hath denied a score of suitors for love of chastity? But the truth is, you are jealous of the fame her prowess in the chase has won her throughout Hellas. Now by Ares, father of our race, I swear Atalanta shall go with me on this hunt—or I go not at all."

"It is well spoken, Meleager! she shall go with us," cried the rest of the heroes, and seeing them

all of one mind, the proud sons of Thestius yielded grudging consent.

Now nothing would please the hospitable Oeneus but that his noble guests should rest and refresh themselves at leisure, for many of them had journeyed a weary way; so he feasted them royally for nine days, and on the tenth morn the whole company set out for the hills with their retainers and their hunting-hounds. Now as they went, a shepherd brought them word of a fresh trail of the boar, and guided them to a wooded fen below the mountain he was known to haunt. There saw they his monstrous tracks, but soon lost them in the brakes, and for some hours men and hounds quested to and fro in vain. But about noon, Plexippus spied a vast grey bulk couched motionless among the tall reeds of a swamp; with a loud halloo he launched his javelin—but through very eagerness missed his mark; the dart, hurtling through the rushes, buried its point in the stem of an alder. Up reared the boar, glaring wickedly about him with his small red eyes; hunters and hounds flew to the spot, but the sight of that fearful quarry gave pause to all save one—Arcadian Atalanta. Nimbly, steadily, she drew bow, and her arrow stuck quivering in the monster's bristled flank as he charged, head lowered, and sword-sharp tushes gleaming. And in his blind onrush he dealt the young chieftain Hyleus a death-wound in the groin or ever he could avoid out of his path; then wheeling, made straight at Amphiaraus. But the prophet of Argos stayed the raging beast in mid-career with a shaft that pierced

one of his eyes; then Meleager hurled his spear with a good aim and true, and so deeply smote him where neck and shoulder join that he crashed dead to earth. And all the heroes thundered applause till woods and hills rang again.

Straightway Meleager bade his men out with their knives and flay the carcass; this was no sooner done than he took the reeking hide and laid it at the feet of Atalanta, and said to her, "Maid of Arcady, this spoil is yours, not mine; for you drew first blood from the boar." Now on this Althaea's brethren made violent outcry, vowing the prize was the slayer's, by all laws of venery; but if he waived his right, then Plexippus had next claim to it, who first sighted and roused the quarry. "Shall the Arcadians boast," cried Toxeus, "that one of their maidens bore off the spoils of this famous hunting from the best men of Aetolia and of all the North? By Ares, that shall they never!" And he laid hold of the boarskin, thrusting Atalanta roughly aside as he did so. Furious, Meleager sprang to drag it from him; Plexippus barred his way, and with taunting smile, "Back, stripling," he cried, "this is no toy for your foreign light o' love. E'en find her another, for this trophy shall deck Althaea's hall, whether you will or no. Out on you, degenerate kinsman, that would rob our house of honour to please yonder cream-faced wanton!" For all reply, Meleager drove his spear full at Plexippus' breast with such force that the point looked out between his shoulders, and he fell down dead without a moan, his lips still writhen in the maliceful grin. And all

that saw it shuddered, and stood still while you might count a score; but Meleager planted foot on the dead man's breast and tugged out the steel, and suddenly Toxeus flung himself at him with a wild, wolfish howl. Their short spears crossed and clashed, glittering, for one moment; in the next, Meleager's darted like a darting adder right at Toxeus' face, and bit so deep through bone and brain that he fell a corpse on the corpse of Plexippus. Yet again Meleager wrenched forth his spear, doubly dyed with blood of kin; then there was muttering and drawing of swords among the henchmen of the slain, but they shrank back cowed as he fronted them with burning, challenging eyes and a countenance all transfigured by a sort of divine rage. Not otherwise might Ares look, with the battle-madness upon him. But while the rest of his comrades stood like men amazed, Atalanta stepped to his side and laid her hand gently on his arm, and looked him in the face. Meleager's eyes fell before her sad, pitying glance; he began to tremble like a leaf; and turning from her, and throwing down the blood-dripping spear, " O mother, mother, mother," he cried out, " what is this that I have done? " . . .

Now even as her son thus called on her in his anguish, Queen Althaea sat with her women at the palace gate, on the watch for tidings; for Meleager had promised to send her word by a well-horsed retainer the instant the boar was killed; and just then did she behold the messenger spurring towards them along the plain. And as the man rode up, he loudly hailed the Queen, wishing her joy of her son's

triumph, for by his spear was the terror of Calydon slain. "I no sooner saw the beast fall," said he, "than I put spurs to my horse, as our prince had commanded me beforehand; and now, Lady, make ready to welcome him with meet rejoicings, for he will speedily bring home his prize." Then the Queen and her handmaids raised a shrill, joyous cry that brought old Oeneus with all the household to the gate; Althaea, having richly guerdoned the messenger, hastened to oversee the providing of a great feast; the King took order for splendid sacrifices to Zeus of the Homestead, to Ares, and to Artemis; and the palace hummed like a beehive with festal preparations.

But while the merry stir was at its height, the corpses of Toxeus and Plexippus, stretched on a rough litter of green boughs, were borne by their henchmen into the courtyard under Althaea's very eyes. These men came alone; for the hero guests of Oeneus, reverencing their stricken host, would not enter the house of mourning, but straightway departed out of Calydon, every one to his own country; and as for Meleager, he lingered with his train on the road, not enduring himself to bring home the tidings of his deed. So when Althaea saw whose bodies lay on the bier, and the ghastly wounds they had, she cried out, "What fray has befallen? Where is my son? Ah, if he lives, he is taking bloody vengeance on the slayers of these two! My curse, a sister's curse, upon them, whoe'er they be." And the men looked at one another, afraid to speak; then one said, "Queen, Meleager lives—but

how should he take vengeance on—*himself?*" And King Oeneus, standing by, groaned aloud at that word; but calmly Althaea answered, "No riddling, friend! Thou wouldst say, Meleager has killed one of my brothers . . . by some dreadful mischance . . . . *but not both* . . . no, no, how could that be? . . . Speak the whole truth, and quickly!" And while the henchman told his tale she stood rigid, looking down upon the dead, for all the world like one that heard not. As he ceased, the old king lifted up his voice and wept, and said, "Alas, my son, too truly wast thou named *Meleager*, for this thy hunting hath brought calamity on thee and me, even a blood-feud with thine own mother's kin. Yea, thou hast pierced her heart also with thy fatal spear!" Then all his servants, and Althaea's handmaids, began to weep and lament; but she, tearless and mute, kissed the brows of the dead, and passed swiftly within the house.

Oeneus made a sign that none should follow her, for he thought, "Being so proud a woman, she goes to her chamber to weep there unseen;" then he commanded to take up the bodies and lay them in the great hall, while their funeral rites were preparing. Now he followed the bier as it was slowly carried in, and scarce had it crossed the threshold than a great sudden blaze leapt up from the hearth to the roof-tree. Half dazzled, the king saw his wife kneeling by the hearthstone, her face and hair and neck all the colour of flame in the glow of crackling logs. An empty oil-jar lay beside her; she was blowing the flames sidelong to catch a pine-

brand, already partly charred, on the edge of the hearth, and as it slowly kindled, she looked thereon with a kind of hungry eagerness, dreadful to see. "The gods pity thee, lady," exclaimed Oeneus; "hath this grief crazed thy brain? What dost thou there? Why, this is a fire to burn the house down, if it be not well looked to!"

Althaea rose up, and in a strange, muffled voice, "*To burn the house,*" she echoed, "ay, wherefore not, when the house is fallen . . . and its ruins are my brothers' funeral pyre? . . . Ah, sons of Thestius, such a torch I kindle it withal that all the world shall take note how your sister honoured you in death! . . . Look, Oeneus, on this flaming brand . . . see, the core turns red as heart's blood . . . and shall I tell thee why? . . . Because it is Meleager's heart . . . 'tis *he,* the child of my womb, lies burning there!"

"Forbear ill-omened words!" cried the horrified king; "now I see thou art distraught indeed. But listen, Althaea—though thy loss is grievous, 'tis not what thou thinkest; we mourn Toxeus and Plexippus, but not—the gods forefend—our son! No, no, he lives—we have at least that comfort, hearest thou?—I say, Meleager lives."

"Unsay the word, my father," said a faint voice behind him, "for I am dying—dying." And Oeneus, turning, saw Meleager, deathly pale, with drooped head and arms hanging limply, supported by two of his slaves. They half led, half carried him to a couch, and propped him up with pillows; while the dismayed father chafed his icy hands,

calling for wine to revive him, and urgently questioning the slaves of his hurt—for no wound was visible. There was none, they answered; their young lord was returning sound and well, when suddenly, close to the palace, he reeled like a man stricken by mortal sickness. Meanwhile, you would have thought Althaea saw and heard nothing of what was going on around her; for she neither approached her son, nor so much as turned her head his way, but remained intently watching the brand, now almost consumed, and burning low and fitfully. But as they raised Meleager's head and forced wine between his lips, the brand flickered into flame; then she turned about, and drew near, and said, "Let be, let be; trouble him not—he will but go the faster." At that, Meleager lifted his glazing eyes, and whispered, "O mother, hast thou no help for me? Is this death indeed—this numbing trance? . . . Even so . . . I feel life ebbing from me like a wave . . . To die so young. . . . Ah, what cruel god hath smitten me down untimely?"

Then thus spoke Althaea, "My son, no god hath reft thee of thy life, but I myself; who had it in my keeping. For the holy Fates came to me on thy birth-night, and gave me a brand from the hearth, saying thou shouldst live until that brand was burned, and no longer. And I guarded it like the apple of mine eye—until this day; but now it lies smouldering yonder—because I saw it was not good that thou shouldst live, having done the thing thou hast done unto her that bare thee. Child, knowest thou not I must hate thee, living, who art bone of

my bone and flesh of my flesh? Yea, for other children I may have, but brothers never any more. There they lie in their blood—their wounds, poor, poor dumb mouths, cry to me for vengeance. . . . O, what were I to let them plead in vain? Meleager, belovéd son, this was the only way . . . now give, and take, thy mother's pardon."

"Forgive me, mother," he breathed, "as I forgive . . . " and with that word his spirit passed. In the same instant, the last spark died out from the brand upon the hearth and left it ashes. . . .

Thus ended the great and famous Hunting of the Calydonian Boar, whose slaying cost the lives of four valiant heroes; ay, and made the house of Oeneus desolate unto him in a single day. For Althaea, having kissed and closed the eyes of her dead son, went full quietly out of the hall, and shut herself into her chamber; there, an hour after, the women, who burst in with news of a fresh woe, found her lifeless body hanging by her girdle from the roof-tree. Now those tidings were that Meleager's girl-wife, who had even then returned from praying for him at the shrine of Artemis, had stabbed herself to the heart when she beheld him dead. And herein she proved a true daughter of Marpessa, to whom love was life itself.

Now when King Oeneus and all his folk had mourned many days, the chiefs and elders of the people came and earnestly counselled him to take another wife, that he might leave a son to rule them when he was gathered to his fathers. For his sole remaining child was a little maid of nine summers

old, called Deïaneira. Then Oeneus consented, for the good of the folk, lest on his death without an heir they should be plunged in strife and bloodshed. And having sent messengers to Hipponous, a prince of Argos, who was his guest-friend, he obtained Periboea his daughter in marriage; and she bore him a son to whom was given the name of Tydeus. Now albeit past his prime, Oeneus was yet hale, and he lived to see Tydeus become a youth of great strength and daring. But as though the gods were never weary of afflicting this hapless king, Tydeus was forced to fly from Calydon in his twentieth year, having killed in a quarrel the youngest son of a powerful chieftain. And coming to Argos, his mother's homeland, he was well received of the king, Adrastus, who made him one of his chief captains and married him to one of his own daughters. But as for Oeneus, he was fated to endure yet other sorrows in extreme old age, and die at last by violence in a strange land. Which things you may read in the tale of *The Seven against Thebes;* where also you may find what befell Atalanta, when she had returned to Arcadia with the spoil of Meleager's hunting.

PART II—ARGOS

CHAPTER VI

THE DANAIDS

NOWHERE in broad Hellas might you find so many time-honoured holy places as in the city of Argos, that Hera loved. But the most ancient and venerable of all Argive sanctuaries lay without the walls, midway between the city and the sea-coast. This was a great, turf-clad mound, rising sheer from the plain—a natural hillock, in appearance, but really the work of men's hands. For the mound was one vast tomb, where, each in his own narrow cell, primeval heroes, whose very names were forgotten, slept the unawakening sleep. Yet were those sleepers mighty to bless and guard the land they had fought for in their lifetime; and still, with the dim senses of the dead, they could hear prayers and savour sacrifice; could feel pleasure, too, in honours paid to their memory, and specially in the holding by their grave of such noble contests as had been the delight of their youth. So deemed, at least, the men of the Heroic Age; hence it was ever their custom to hold athletic games at the funeral of a great warrior, and on the anniversary of his death. In after times there was scarce a city of Hellas but commemorated her departed heroes by

local games; four among which—the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, Nemean—rose to be world-famous, and were alone called *The Sacred Games.* But while such festivals waxed in splendour, remembrance of their first beginnings waned and faded from men's minds; insomuch that all the greater, and many lesser games, were no longer celebrated in honour of a hero, but to the glory of some god. Even where immemorial custom still rendered to local heroes their ancient dues of sacrifice, they must often forego the distinctive and crowning tribute; not they, but one or more of the Olympians, presided over the games. That this had happened to the earliest Argive heroes, their sepulchral mound itself bore witness at the time of our story. For a low, hollow altar at its base, inscribed TO THE HEROES, was daily wet with libations; but on its broad summit stood images of Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, and Hermes; and on the plinth of each, together with the god's name, was graven the title AGONIOS—" Patron of Contests." Steps cut in the sward gave easy access to the top of the mound, and these were trodden bare by the frequent feet of the Olympians' worshippers.

To this holy hill there came one summer's morn, by the road from the coast, the strangest band of wayfarers ever seen. For they were fifty beautiful damsels, each attired like a king's daughter, and each holding aloft a fresh-green bough twined with ribands of white wool—the token of suppliants. A reverend, grey-haired man led them; other escort they had none; what was still more singular in that

peaceful countryside, they were hurrying along like creatures pursued, with many a frightened backward look. These fugitives seemed making direct for the city; but on approaching the mound their old leader halted, pointed to it with his staff, and cried, "Daughters, let us go up into yonder high place of the gods and take sanctuary there, lest peradventure our foes overtake us before we win to Argos." So saying, he led the way uphill at the best speed he could, and the maidens trooped after him like a flock after the shepherd. And when they had gained the summit, one exclaimed, "Look, Father Danaus, from here you can see all the road we came by, and the haven—and both are empty! Praise to Zeus, those wicked ones are yet far away!" But another damsel cried, "I spy a dark sail out at sea. . . . 'Tis our kinsmen's ship! Oh, that Poseidon would raise a tempest and whelm her in the waves! . . . But no, on she drives with a fair wind . . . look, look, sisters, how fast she is nearing land!"

All now huddled together in confusion and alarm, weeping, wailing, and loudly imploring help of the gods. But the old man immediately hushed the tumult by a look and gesture full of authority, and having obtained silence, spoke as follows:

"If you give way to panic, my daughters, all is lost; for our one hope is, that the Argives will grant you protection on the score of your ancestry. But if they find you behaving yourselves so unseemly, how shall they believe you are verily of the royal blood of Inachus? Outcries, unrestrained speech,

disordered movements, are permitted to slaves, not to kings' daughters."

The maidens hung their heads, abashed, and their father went on, "While you looked seaward, children, I looked towards Argos, whence our help must come. Turn your eyes thither—do you mark yonder cloud of dust rolling towards us on the highway? That tells me our advance has been seen from the city walls, and the king, or some great one, comes with chariots and horsemen to learn who and what we are. Now listen heedfully, and do as I shall bid you. Sit you all down at the feet of these hallowed images, in ordered ranks, holding your sacred emblems up to view. Behold, to no strange gods are ye come—there stands Poseidon with his trident—there, Hermes, whom Egyptians too adore —there Archer Apollo—and here our own Zeus, to whose feet I will myself sit nearest, on this marble step. So—have all taken their places? That is well; and now do you, my eldest born, stand here by my right hand, and be ready to answer yonder comer modestly and discreetly. For now I perceive by his crown that it is the king of the land; and I, who am myself a king, may not brook to address him in this lowly suppliant's posture. You, therefore, shall speak on behalf of us all, showing for what cause we claim the protection of Argos. But remember to tell all simply, in few words; for the Argives are known to love plainness and brevity of speech."

At this moment the chariot and attendant riders drew up below the mound, and a voice loudly

hailed, "Ho, strangers above there, who and whence are you?" The speaker was a gold-crowned, bearded man, who stood leaning on a sceptre, beside the charioteer. Hypermnestra, prompted by a whisper from her father, answered, in clear, bell-like tones, "Is it the King of Argos who speaks? To him and none other I would fain tell all, for I and these my sisters are come to claim his protection —as Argives."

"Fair damsel," said the man in the chariot, "I am indeed the king of this land—by lineal descent from Phoroneus, son of Inachus the River. But that you and your following are my countrywomen is more than I can believe; why, one need but look at you to know you are not Hellenes at all! By your many-hued attire and barbaric ornaments, your olive skins and raven hair, you might be Cypriots—or Indians, or Egyptians; had you bows and quivers, I should take you for a roving band of Amazons, those warrior-women of the East. But of Hellas you show no trace—except that you carry, I see, the badges of suppliants, which custom belongs to our race alone. Now let me hear the truth from you without delay; for greatly I marvel what has brought a company of foreign maidens, unescorted and unheralded, into my kingdom."

"King Pelasgus," answered Hypermnestra with gentle dignity, "it were as unbefitting for me to utter falsehoods as for you to listen thereto. For I am not only your countrywoman, but of your own house and lineage; as I will make plain, if you will give me leave to question you a little."

" Willingly," replied the king, " since you speak so modestly and discreetly. But first, that we may parley with the more ease, I will come nearer."

So saying, he lighted down from his chariot and mounted the sacred hill; and curiously he eyed the fifty maidens ranged about the images like bevies of gay-plumaged exotic birds, and the kingly-looking old man seated in their midst, placid and dumb as those images themselves. Then he turned to the grave young spokeswoman of these enigmatical visitants, and bade her say on.

" You trace your descent," said she, " from the son of Inachus the River God. Tell me now, had not this Inachus a daughter named Io, who was priestess and temple-warden to great Hera? And was not Io so wondrous fair that Hera's wedded lord, the King of gods, became enamoured of her, whereby she came to strange misfortune? "

" Such is the tradition," replied Pelasgus, " handed down among us from father to son. The jealous goddess, they say, transformed Io to a heifer, and sent a gadfly to torment her, which drove her, frenzied, out of Argos and into far countries. But what has all this to do with you? "

" Patience, King, and you shall hear," said Hypermnestra. " After wandering over the whole earth, this hapless daughter of Inachus found rest and relief at last . . . in what distant land? "

" In Egypt, on the banks of sacred Nile," answered the king; " for there Zeus appeared to her, and by the touch of his hand, not only restored

her to human shape, but made her pregnant with a son, thence named Epaphus—that is *Touch-begotten.*"

"And does your legend tell also," went on the questioner, "the fate of that miraculous offspring?"

"He became King of Egypt, according to the promise of Zeus," said Pelasgus; "and 'tis said his posterity reign there still, in cities that he founded; but their names I know not, for our sea-traders have few dealings with the Egyptians."

"Let me tell you, then," said Hypermnestra, "that the first heir of Epaphus was his daughter Libya, a great queen; next reigned her son Belus; after whose death his two sons divided the kingdom. Now the elder took all the rich Nile province, and called it after his own name—*Aegyptus*, assigning the coasts of Libya to his younger brother, Danaus. Both these kings married many wives, after the custom of the Nile-dwellers; and it befell that Aegyptus had fifty sons and Danaus fifty daughters. And now, as I said, O king, you shall own us of your race, though outland-born; this old man you see before you is Danaus, and all we are his daughters."

"Kinswomen, I greet you all," courteously answered Pelasgus, "and your venerable father likewise. But, lady, as it seems you are spokeswoman for the rest, be pleased to tell me why you are come hither in the guise of suppliants? Has some evil chance driven you from Egypt under the ban of blood-guiltiness? I trust not—yet such cause it is that most often brings suppliants to shrines and altars of refuge."

"Nay, King, we are no murderesses, nor stained

with any crime," answered Hypermnestra, proudly. "Suppliants we are, but most guiltless; exiles we are, yet not because we have broken, but because we would not break, a sacred law. In few words, we have fled from home to escape incestuous marriage with our cousins, the fifty sons of King Aegyptus. Yes, those violent and impious young men would have wedded us by force, against the ancient law that forbids the marriage of near kin; they invaded our father's realm with a great army, and he, knowing himself the weaker, could only save us by immediately taking ship and flying with us overseas. Alas, we had not sailed three leagues when the princes descried us and gave chase in a war-galley; thanks be to Zeus, they failed to overtake us, but they held us in view all the way to Argive waters, and doubtless they will soon follow us ashore. And now, O king, our one hope is in you. By the sacred ties of kin and country, by the inviolable rights of suppliants, and by these divine guardians of your realm, we adjure you not to suffer our foes to lead us away captive."

Then said Pelasgus, with a troubled look, "Far be it from me to slight such claims as yours, O daughters of Danaus. But—how if the princes your cousins have also a claim to urge? You hold by the ancient law of *No marriage within the blood-kin*, and so do we Argives; but in other cities of Hellas, and in Egypt for aught I know, a different law has arisen, namely, that a woman's next kinsman on the father's side has the right to marry her. Which law has this manifest advantage, that it

conserves the power and wealth of a family by preventing the inheritance of its daughters from passing into the hands of strangers. If, therefore, the sons of Aegyptus claim you for brides in virtue of this law, I see no remedy for you, maidens, but submission."

Then cried they all with one voice, "We will rather die than submit to infamy;" and Hypermnestra, unloosing her girdle, held it forth to the king, and said, "Here is *my* remedy, Pelasgus, if you refuse to shield us."

"What mean you?" he said, uneasily. "What will you do with this girdle?"

"I will hang myself with it," said she, "and this image of Zeus shall serve me for a gallows. Ay, and not one of these graven gods but shall do the like office—for I know my sisters are of one mind with myself."

"Hush, reckless woman," exclaimed Pelasgus, shuddering, "threaten not the sanctities around us with hideous, unspeakable defilement. Now, if in truth you purpose a deed so fearful—a deed that will blight the whole land of Argos with pollution never to be washed away—let Argos look to it! 'Tis the state must hear and judge your cause, not I."

"But you are the state," cried Hypermnestra; "your will is the people's will; you alone, responsible to none, are the supreme court of appeal in every cause, be it civil or religious. What else is it to be a king?"

"You speak as an Egyptian," returned Pelasgus,

" not knowing that the kings of the Hellenes are not, like yours, despots, but heads of free commonwealths. The citizens of Argos have ever been jealous of their rights and liberties; and deep would be their resentment were I to act without consulting them in a matter that so vitally concerns them. For look you, here is a choice of evils; if I defend you from your kinsmen, I plunge Argos into war with Egypt's powerful king; if I give you up, and you lay violent hands upon yourselves, I sin against the high gods, protectors of suppliants, and bring their curse upon this land and people. Either way, 'tis the folk that must suffer, and not only I, the king; therefore to the folk you shall appeal. Come, let us go straightway to the city."

But the maidens all cried out vehemently that they would not leave the holy mound, for they knew not what might befall them if once they came out of sanctuary. " Then let your ancient sire go and plead on your behalf," said Pelasgus; and forthwith Danaus rose up, saying gravely, " I will do so, King. Tell me, I pray you, how I may best acquit myself of that errand? "

" Revered Danaus," answered the other, " I counsel you to sit down as a suppliant before the altars of the City's Guardian Gods, in the marketplace, that the folk, seeing your grey hairs brought so low, may be moved to pity and indignation. Let it appear that you have cast yourself on their protection of your own motion, and drop no word of having had recourse to the king first; for a democracy loves to find fault with its rulers, and is always

suspicious of their interference. The Argives will far more readily espouse your quarrel if they think you have appealed to them without hint from me. For which reason, I do not offer to conduct you myself into the city; but retainers of mine shall meet you at the gates, as though by chance, and escort you through the streets, lest your foreign garb bring you annoyance from the baser sort of our citizens." Having thus spoken, the Argive king departed citywards in his chariot; and Danaus followed after on foot, with a vigour beyond his years.

A weary while it seemed to the anxious maidens before they saw their father returning, mounted on a sleek, pacing mule. "Good tidings, daughters," cried he as he drew rein below the hill, "the Argives in full assembly have voted your deliverance. Come down hither, my children—all danger is past—and hear what this noble folk hath done for us." Then with loud cries of joy all the maidens descended the slope like fluttering doves—all, save Hypermnestra; but she, while the rest crowded around their sire, remained standing on the hill-brow, watchful and alert as a sentinel on his post.

And Danaus said, "Now praise Zeus, God of Suppliants, my daughters, and call down his choicest blessings on this land of Argos, on her people, and, above all, on their worthy king. For by his sage counselling I found favour in their sight; and when I had pleaded our cause in their assembly, he arose and spoke wingéd words, bidding them consider the double guilt they must incur by rejecting us, who

are not only their suppliants, but their kinsfolk. And seeing them moved, he took occasion by the hand, like a skilful statesman, and proposed this decree—'*Be it enacted, that Danaus and his children shall dwell in Argos as free settlers, exempt from tribute, and under the protection of the state. They shall not be expelled from the land either by citizens or aliens. In case of their being molested by any foreign power, all citizens shall be bound to render them assistance, under penalty of disfranchisement and exile.*' Thus spoke the good Pelasgus, and on his lips Persuasion sat. For without waiting for the herald to put the decree formally to the vote, the Argive Assembly carried it then and there by show of hands. Wherefore let us honour most of mortals that wise and upright king; but among gods, adore we Zeus the Fulfiller, who hath crowned his friendly efforts with success."

When Danaus made an end of speaking, the glad maidens lifted up their voices in sweet, unpremeditated strains, hymning the praise of Zeus. But suddenly Hypermnestra shrilled from her coign of vantage, " O father, O sisters mine, let not the enemy take you unawares! Lo, their squadron is in the bay—the leading galley rows ashore—I can descry the swarthy, white-robed crew thick like bees upon her deck."

" Courage, courage, my children," exclaimed Danaus, as the maidens crowded around him, pale and trembling; " remember, no one can harm you now; the Argives will not suffer yon villains to lay a finger on you. Ah ha, sons of Aegyptus, so you

come with an host to take the old man and his daughters—an easy prey, you think? But you will find it is not helpless women you must fight, my gallant nephews—no, but better men than you!"

"Alas, my father," broke in one of the maidens, "our cousins are mighty warriors—you yourself have seen their prowess in battle. Will the Argives be able to stand against them?"

"Ay, if wolves can stand against dogs," returned Danaus; "I saw but now the spearmen of Argos—a wolf's head is the badge upon their shield—and I tell you, child, as the wolf exceeds the dog in strength and fierceness, so do these Hellenes the sons of Nile. Away with fears, then; I will hie me back to the city and summon our brave defenders: meanwhile, I charge you to abide on this mount of refuge."

"Oh, leave us not, leave us not alone, father," wailed the maidens. "We dare not stay here—those impious ones will come while you are gone—they will drag us away, though we cling to the holy images. . . ."

"There is no fear of that," said Danaus, soothingly, "and I will tell you why. Your cousins are too wary to attempt any violence on foreign soil until they have disembarked all their host—now, that will take time, for yonder shore is an ill landing-place, as we found ourselves. The most they will venture meantime is to send forward a herald or other envoy to demand your surrender from the Argives. Should that messenger, finding you here, seek to arrest you, bid him defiance; for I shall

return with help long before the Egyptians can march hither."

Having thus encouraged the maidens, Danaus rode away with speed, and they took their places again on the mound, and began to chant supplications to the gods for their enemies' discomfiture. But while they kneeled before the images, absorbed in prayer, came by the herald of the princes, as Danaus foresaw; and before they marked him, he scaled the hill and stood among them. Loud shrieked the startled maidens, and cowered down close together, like partridges when the hawk hovers above; then, insolently smiling, the Egyptian cried, "So, runaways, you are caught! Ay, you may shriek and beat your breasts, foolish virgins—little good that will do you. Come, rise up and quit this place—for back you go with me to my lords, willy nilly. Up, I say, and march—or I shall drive you with this staff to the ships!"

But the maidens obeyed not; as many as could clung to the images, and the rest held to the robes of these, so that all might share the hallowing contact; and boldly spoke Hypermnestra from the verge of the throng, "Detested minion, nothing but force will make us leave this sanctuary. Begone, or dread the wrath of these gods, whose suppliants we are."

"What care I for the gods of the Hellenes?" retorted the herald, "their power reaches not, I trow, to the banks of Nile. But I will waste no more words on you, audacious girl; since force alone will serve your turn, I will drag you hence by the hair."

With that, he roughly seized the maiden, who cried in piercing tones, "Help, help or we are undone! Hither and save us, O king!"

"You shall have kings enough shortly," mocked the Egyptian, "ay, kings and bridegrooms too, for all the fifty of you. So come your ways, truant, without bootless clamour."

But Hypermnestra had cried to one that she saw nigh at hand; that sight braced her to resist her captor, and by a desperate effort she wrenched herself free of his grasp, just as the Argive king strode up to him with menacing looks. "How now, sirrah," he thundered, "have you your senses, that you dare commit this outrage on the territory of Argos? Do you think you have come to a city of women? Insolent barbarian, I will teach you to affront Hellenes!"

"Why, what have I done?" said the herald, cringing, "I neither meddle nor make with the folk of Argos—I only seek to recover certain lawful property of my masters, the young princes of Egypt. Is that any reason for this harsh reception of a peaceable traveller? Or is hospitality to strangers an unknown virtue in your country?"

"To strangers who harry women—yes!" replied Pelasgus sternly. "Now hear me, Egyptian. Go and tell your masters that the people of Argos will not suffer any man to lay violent hands on these maidens, who are their suppliants, and have taken refuge in this ancient sanctuary of their gods and heroes. But if the sons of Aegyptus claim marriage-rights over their kinswomen, let them plead the same

before a tribunal of our citizens, and abide by their verdict."

"How if they refuse to plead?" asked the herald, sullenly.

"Then let them either quit our shores at once," answered the king, "or prepare for battle."

"And in whose name am I to deliver so discourteous a message?" said the other. "Truly, Argive, you were best think twice ere you send it, for your petty state is no match for the armies of Egypt, as you will learn to your cost if you challenge us."

"That is on the knees of the gods," returned Pelasgus, "but we are thrice-armed, having our quarrel just. Nor need you think to daunt me or my folk with threats. *Our* warriors, herald, are no millet-eaters, no drinkers of barley-beer; good wheaten bread gives them thews and sinews; the juice of the grape puts mettle in their blood; shall men like these be afraid what the whole rabble of Nile may do unto them? No, by the gods of Argos! —and so you may tell your masters from me, her king. As for my name—say they shall hear it before long . . . where they will find cause to remember it . . . on the battlefield."

And thereupon the Egyptian herald went his way, scowling and muttering to himself; for he saw a long line of spears advancing on the road from the city, and judged it not good to tarry. But the rescued maidens gathered round Pelasgus, laughing and weeping for joy; some kissed his hands, others the hem of his mantle, and all loaded him with

thanks and blessings. "Nay, now, damsels," said he, "rather praise the gods, and next to them, the citizens of Argos, that are mustering yonder in your defence. And see, here comes the good old man, your father, to conduct you to the new home they have already assigned to you within the city. For my part, I would have gladly lodged you all under my own roof; but he, in his wisdom, preferred the offer of our Assembly to entertain you as public guests."

"Yes, my children," said Danaus, as he once more stood beside them, "for royal Pelasgus is as yet unwedded—and the fair fame of young maidens is a tender plant, easily blighted by the breath of scandal. Moreover, as strangers and sojourners, it behoves us to shun all occasion of offence to the citizens. Let me exhort you, dear daughters, never to forget that you are aliens and new-comers in Argos; especially liable, therefore, to censorious remark; and make it your endeavour to win the goodwill of our hosts by your discreet walk and conversation. And now let us hurry to the city; for the king, I see, has already joined the vanguard of his army; and when warriors take the field, women should be praying at home. Fervent and unwearied, I know, will *your* prayers be for the victory of your noble Argive champions."

With these words Danaus led his daughters from the grass-grown tomb of those other Argive champions who, unseen, unbidden, had watched over the suppliant maidens in their hour of peril.

. . . . . .

Now when the sons of Aegyptus heard that the king and folk of Argos refused to give the Danaids up to them, and were making ready for war, they dared not risk a battle on the spot; but having sailed to the Isle of Cyprus, which was tributary to their father, they there levied three thousand archers and slingers, and sent to Egypt for five thousand spearmen. With this host they invaded Argos, and by sheer force of numbers routed her citizen army after a desperate battle, in which Pelasgus was slain. Then the Egyptians marched to storm the city, where only old men and boys were left on guard. But as they drew near the walls, a procession of women, in bridal array, issued from the gates and advanced sedately to meet the astonished princes. They were the Danaid maidens, who with memorable courage had resolved on surrendering themselves to abhorred wedlock as a ransom for the city that had sheltered them. And when the enamoured sons of Aegyptus heard that their fair cousins were willing to espouse them at once if they would declare peace with Argos, they eagerly consented to those terms; and bound themselves by an oath to quit the land next day without plundering so much as a henroost. So the Egyptian host withdrew from the city to encamp on the seashore for the night; and that was the wedding-night of the Danaids.

But when morning dawned again, all was confusion and horror in the camp of the Egyptians; for every one of their fifty princes, save the eldest, lay dead in his tent, with a dagger through his heart.

That eldest brother, Lynceus by name, was nowhere to be found; and all the new-made brides had likewise vanished.

The superstitious Egyptians, deeming this the vengeance of the gods of the land, were seized with panic; and they incontinently took ship and fled for their lives, leaving the corpses of their princes, and all their treasure, arms, and baggage, to fall into the hands of the Argives. But meanwhile, in the city, the burghers that had escaped out of the fight, and their wives and children, were welcoming home the Danaids with honours only given to gods and victors; flowers and rich tapestries were strewn before their feet, incense steamed around them, and a thousand voices hailed them *Saviours of Argos*. Old men blessed them as they went by; mothers held up their little ones to look, bidding them remember to their dying day those glorious maidens who had destroyed their enemies. For now the whole city knew with what fell purpose the Danaids had yielded themselves to the sons of Aegyptus; and how each had gone forth with a dagger hidden in her girdle, that she might kill her bridegroom while he slept.

So that day there was both joy and mourning among the Argives; for their enemies indeed had fled discomfited, but their king and many a brave man more had fallen. And since Pelasgus left no heir of his body, they chose Danaus to reign over them in his stead. Now his first care was that the Argive dead should be interred with meet honours; then he went to view the camp of the Egyptians,

and having divided the spoil among the citizens, he had a great trench dug upon the shore, and buried his kinsmen there without dirge or holy rites. But when Lynceus was not found among the slain, Danaus was troubled; and returning to the city, he straitly questioned Hypermnestra, for he knew that she, as his eldest daughter, had been taken by the eldest of the princes. Then Hypermnestra fell at his feet, and confessed with tears that she had spared her bridegroom, and had brought him while it was yet night to the mount of sanctuary, where he now lay concealed. "For," said she, "Lynceus treated me with all gentleness; he told me I should be his wife in name only until he could win my heart—and I know not how it was . . . but from that moment I began to love him."

"This to my face?" cried Danaus; "now shame upon you, traitress! What, have I endured exile and the perils of the sea, have the brave Argives fought and died, to save you from this man—were you not sworn to kill him, to avenge them and yourself—and do you now dare tell me you have let him live, out of mere wantonness? Henceforth you are no daughter of mine—I will denounce you to the citizens; they shall try you for high treason, and if they condemn you, I myself will see the death-sentence carried out. As for your paramour, he dies; by our swords if he quits sanctuary; by hunger and thirst if he remains there."

Then said Hypermnestra, "You have the right, father, to take away my life, but not my honour and good name. If I die, I die a stainless maid;

Aphrodite be my witness that nought has passed between me and Lynceus save what becomes affianced lovers. O, may that goddess, who has turned our hearts to one another, have pity on us both!"

Now Aphrodite heard that prayer, and answered it in wondrous wise. For when Hypermnestra was brought to trial before the Argive Assembly—her father himself standing forth as her accuser—and asked if she had anything to say in her own defence; then stepped to her side a rose-crowned queen, fairer than the daughters of men, from whose golden head streamed light and fragrance not earthly. And she said to the awe-struck judges, "Men of Argos, it is I that must plead for Hypermnestra, for I, Aphrodite the Cyprian, inclined her heart to spare her lover. Consider, therefore, that if you condemn the maiden, you affront one whose power is not slight for good and evil; but if you let her go free, you shall please not me only, but your own goddess Hera, who is Queen of Marriage. For I bear witness that Lynceus and Hypermnestra love each other with a pure and honourable love, insomuch that they refrained from tasting of my secret joys until they should be made one by the sacred rites of torch-bearing Hymen, the god that peoples every town. He also hath a favour unto these lovers, delighting in the espousals of chaste man and maid. True it is that this daughter of Danaus hath disobeyed him, and broken her vow of vengeance; yet this is a law from of old, that a woman shall forsake father and kindred, and cleave to her wedded

husband. Now by the custom of Egypt, Lynceus was rightful husband to Hypermnestra, as ye know; and though that custom be disallowed among you, and she herself renounced it, she may well plead, as an Egyptian born, that she owed him the duty of a wife. And as for her being forsworn, I tell you, Argives, the gods themselves count that breach of faith no crime, but a glory unto her. I have spoken; do you ponder well my words ere you give judgment."

With that, Aphrodite vanished away like a golden mist, and the Argives saw her no more. But having debated a little while, they gave their votes on the cause, after the Hellenic manner; each citizen putting into the voting-urn either a white pebble for acquittal or a black one for doom; and when the pebbles were counted, the white and the black were found equal in number. Then said the President of the Assembly, an ancient chosen by lot, "I have the casting-vote, in virtue of mine office, and I yield it to divine Aphrodite. In her name do I pronounce Hypermnestra acquitted. Let the trumpet sound, and the herald proclaim accordingly."

This was no sooner done than all the matrons and maids of Argos rushed tumultuously into the place of assembly and surrounded Hypermnestra, wishing her joy and chanting the praises of Aphrodite. But the maiden, who had stood tearless and unmoved while her fate hung in the balance, now cast herself, weeping, at the feet of her judges and pleaded with eloquence the most touching for the life of Lynceus. And while the Argive women wept likewise for pity,

she begged as many as had husbands or lovers to add their prayers to hers. Nor could the citizens find it in their hearts to deny the boon thus entreated; they not only promised safety for the son of Aegyptus, but persuaded King Danaus to be reconciled with him and receive him as a son-in-law. So Hypermnestra and Lynceus were wedded, and dwelt in Argos; and she built an altar there to *Aphrodite of Victory*. These two lived happy in perfect concord all their days, much honoured and beloved of the Argives, who, when Danaus died without male heir, chose Lynceus for their king.

But how fared it with the rest of the Danaids? Albeit those fatal brides had saved Argos, the gratitude of the folk changed to horror as they reflected on their deed; they felt that a curse must rest upon the city if it housed those defiled by the murder of blood-kin. And they would have expelled the maidens; but Zeus, author and patron of their race, sent Athena and Hermes to purify them from the blood-guilt with solemn rites at his altar in Argos. And he ordained this penance for the maidens in lieu of exile; that they should be drawers and carriers of water to the city by the space of seven years. Now that was no light task; for Poseidon, as we have told already, had dried up the springs of the land what time Inachus the River-god rejected his claim to it in favour of Queen Hera. So the Danaids must journey far and wide, bringing water from marshes and rain-fed pools. It chanced one day that Amymone, youngest and fairest of the sisters, came to the fen called

Lerna, nigh the sea; and unawares she disturbed a Satyr that was slumbering in a bed of reeds. Up sprang the shaggy Wild Man and seized her with lascivious hands; ill had it fared then with the defenceless maiden, but that a god was near, whom her piteous cries brought to the rescue. It was Poseidon the Earthshaker; at sight of his brandished trident the Satyr fled; but lovely Amymone had scarce gathered voice to thank her preserver when she began to tremble afresh under his ardent gaze. Then the god took her by the hand, and so gently told his love that she trembled no more, but listened with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes, nor could find it in her heart to say him nay. And before they parted, he showed her where there rose a fount of sweet water in the midst of the brackish fen, and said, " Poseidon gives you this boon, fair and kind maiden, in exchange for that you have granted him. Henceforth you shall be Lady of this Fountain, and no longer be reckoned among the woeful Danaids, but have the Naiads for your sisters, and possess like them an immortal lot." So Amymone came home to Argos no more.

Now after the rest of the Danaids had fulfilled their years of penance, their father took thought how to bestow them in marriage, that they might not live all their days in the unblest state of the unwed. And this device seemed best to the sage king. He let proclaim that he would hold the yearly Games in honour of Zeus and the other Patrons of Argos with more than wonted magnificence, and offer the most splendid prizes for each

contest. This drew a great concourse of young and gallant princes to Argos on the appointed day; and the whole city gathered together below the sacred mount to watch them contend in boxing, wrestling, spear-throwing, and other feats of strength, for the golden vessels and armour, miracles of rare workmanship, that King Danaus set forth as prizes.

Now at the close of day, the heralds proclaimed a foot-race, for which the king would offer the richest prizes of all; and then were the eight-and-forty Danaids, each adorned as a bride and covered with glittering jewels, led to the goal by their father, and ranged there in a row. "Now, friends," said he to the assembled princes, "here stand my daughters, each bearing a queen's dowry upon her person. These are the prizes of this race, and thus shall they be allotted; the runner first at the goal shall take the maiden that pleases him best, and so on with the others, till all are won." Threescore goodly youths, all sons of kings, ran in that race, and the same night Danaus held a sumptuous wedding-feast for the victors and their brides. Thus in a single day he provided all his daughters with husbands, and with new homes forth of Argos, where they might forget the things they had done and suffered in that land.

But the dread shadow of their first nuptials hung over those sisters their lives long; nay, if bards say truly, it rests upon them yet in the Underworld. There, among the ghosts of sinners unforgiven, the Danaids endure the same toil as once on earth;

ever carrying water in their pitchers to fill a great water-jar of stone. Never may they rest until the jar is full; and that can never be, for the bottom of it is pierced with as many holes as a sieve. Neither can Zeus himself release them from the power of the mindful Erinyes, the Avengers of Blood, who were before the gods, and shall be when they are no more.

CHAPTER VII

PERSEUS THE GORGON-SLAYER

When King Lynceus died, full of years and of honours, Abas his son reigned over Argos in his stead. He was a wise and upright king, like his father before him; the land had peace in his time, and the folk prospered; so true it is that a good ruler brings blessings from the gods upon his city. Now the wife of Abas bore him twin sons, Acrisius and Proetus, who by some strange fatality hated each other with a deadly hatred from their cradles; it was even reported that they strove together while yet in their mother's womb. The good Abas died when these two were just come to manhood; and because he had seen that they could never dwell peaceably in one city, he commanded them on his deathbed to divide the kingdom equally between them. But the royal city of Argos, he said, must fall to the share of Acrisius, as the elder twin. And he straitly charged them both, as they would shun a father's curse, never to make war on one another, but keep each within his own borders. So the brothers divided Argos into two kingdoms, an Eastern and a Western, making the river Inachus the boundary between them; Acrisius had the Western tract, wherein lay the city; and Proetus the Eastern, where were the villages of Midea and

Tiryns, and Hera's ancient temple at the foot of Mount Euboea. It was this Proetus who entertained Bellerophon, and afterwards sent him to be murdered in Lycia, as you may read in the story of the Aeolids. Now the rest of the acts of Proteus are written in the next chapter to this; follows here the tale of the Doom of King Acrisius.

I

Full fifteen years Acrisius reigned prosperously in Argos; and he had but one thing to vex him, that his only child was a girl, whose mother died in giving her birth. Howbeit, so lovely was this child that she became the pride of her father's heart and the delight of his eyes; and for her sake he would not take another wife; and he resolved that as soon as Danae—so was the maiden named—came to marriageable years, he would find her some princely husband, and bequeath his kingdom to them and their children.

But when the fifteen years were past, it befell that the king went on a pilgrimage to Apollo's temple in Delphi; and the god spake this oracle unto him by the mouth of the priestess—"*Men call thee fortunate, King Acrisius, but so do not I; for thy fate is, to be slain by thine own daughter's child.*" Then Acrisius returned home again troubled at heart; and having pondered long how he might escape that doom, he said to himself, "It were safest for me that Danae should not live; but since

I may not endure to put her to death, I will shut her up in a prison where no man but myself shall ever set eyes on her. For if she never has husband or lover, the oracle must come to nought." And forthwith he caused skilled craftsmen to build in his palace garden a tower all of bronze, whereof the uppermost chamber had no windows, but was lit by a trellised opening in the roof; and in this chamber, richly dight as for a queen, he imprisoned the maiden Danae. Her old and faithful nurse, with three handmaids, were lodged in the lower rooms of the tower, to wait upon their mistress; food was conveyed to them every day through a lattice in the massive door; but of that door Acrisius himself kept the key, and he alone ever crossed its threshold.

Now Danae was of her nature, most gentle and patient; some bitter tears she wept when she found herself a prisoner in that royal-rich chamber; but her father's will had ever been law to her, and she submitted to it now without murmur or repining. From the guards who conducted her to the tower of bronze she learned only that she was to be immured there during the king's pleasure; her women knew no more; he himself, on his first visit, told her sternly, yet tenderly, to forbear questioning him, and be content to know that he had thus dealt with her for no fault, but for reasons of weighty import to them both. Everything her heart could desire, he added, she should have for the asking—except freedom.

It was the Springtide when Danae's captivity

began, and as the year wore to its sweet prime, she grew heartsick with longing for the woods and fields where she had used to roam so blithely with her young playmates, gathering flowers and hearing the joyous song of birds. By day she passed the hours as best as she might in weaving at the loom, or spinning with her golden distaff, while the agéd nurse recounted endless tales of wonder; but at night, lying sleepless on her ivory bed, the gentle maiden was oftentimes assailed by so great anguish and despair that she prayed for death, rather than this living tomb.

It was after such a vigil that Danae, one summer morning, lay watching for the earliest beams of sunrise to fall through the trellis overhead. For the captive's one delight was to look on the square patch of sky framed in the carved ceiling that was all she could see of the outer world; save against heavy rain, she would never have the sliding panel drawn that closed the opening at need. Dear to her were the stars of midnight, the glimpses of the moon riding in highest heaven, the sailing clouds; dearer still the coming of sacred Dawn. And now she laughed for pleasure, like a child, and held out her arms in welcome as a broad shaft of golden light struck full on her uncovered throat and breast. Ever thus she loved to meet the sun's first kiss—but never before had it thrilled her with so sweet and strange a rapture. Her arms dropped, and she lay still, half swooning; yet beheld, as in a dream, the sun-rays changing as they fell into flakes of gold . . . yes, it must be gold she felt raining

lightly upon her with that tinkling sound . . . gold that was covering her bed like a yellow snowdrift. . . "But I am dreaming," she murmured, "and this is dream-gold . . . so warm and soft. . . ." With that, a great wave of bliss drowned her senses, and she knew no more. . . .

When Danae came to herself, that faery gold had vanished; and lo, there stood beside her one in the likeness of a king, glorious to look upon, whose countenance and golden raiment were as the sun for brightness. Then was the maiden sore afraid; but he said to her, "Fear not, sweet Danae, but be glad; for I, Zeus the King, am thy lover, and will befriend thee evermore, mindful of the joy I have had in thy beauty even now. It was to me thou heldest forth thy tender arms—I myself was the shower of gold that descended into thy bosom. And now, gentle heart, I leave with thee a hidden gift more precious than gold, which by and by shall open the doors of thy prison-house. Thou hast prayed for death, but instead thereof I bring thee —a new life. Be of good courage, come what troubles may; for nothing in the world shall have power to harm thee, and great peace shall be thine at the last." When the god had thus spoken, he disappeared, and thunder pealed from the cloudless heaven.

From that day forward Danae pined no more, but would talk even merrily with her women, and sing at the loom as sweetly as bird in cage, to their great wonder, who knew not the hope she cherished. Or she would sit idle, her lips parted in a dreamy

smile, musing what the hidden gift might be that was to work her deliverance. Was it, she thought, some divine, invisible amulet, that would charm her stern father to relent when next he came to the tower? Eagerly now she looked for his coming; yet after he had been and gone not once but many times without word of releasing her, she still waited in hope and patience, trusting the promise of Zeus. Nor was it long before she grew aware, with a deep, secret joy, what gift had come to her in the golden shower. . . .

Meanwhile, King Acrisius lived at ease, thinking that he had escaped from the doom that threatened him, until a year had passed since the building of the brazen tower. But then came to him a messenger trembling and dismayed, with tidings that curdled his blood to hear—*his daughter had brought forth a son in her prison.* Her handmaids had cried the news from the tower to the guards that kept watch around it night and day, bidding them hasten to tell the king of the miracle. Acrisius knew in his heart it was a miracle indeed, and the work of some god; for no mortal could win into the tower without the cunningly-fashioned key that hung always about his neck; but in his rage and terror, he caught at a pretext for destroying both Danae and the fatal babe. "There has been treachery among you, villain," he shouted, "I will have you all put to the sword and the women hanged! Never tell me—I am betrayed—some man has been with the princess—Love laughs at locksmiths. Now by all the gods of Argos, since

my daughter has brought this shame upon our house, she dies for it, and her misbegotten babe shall perish with her."

Thus raved the king; but despite his threats, he meant not to punish his servants, well knowing them innocent, and caring simply to rid himself once for all of the peril that had so mysteriously arisen. The child fated to slay him must die . . . and the mother too; for not otherwise, it was plain, could he make sure of defeating the oracle. Yet to shed their blood, that was his own, would stain him with guilt inexpiable. . . . After long thought, Acrisius found a better way . . . and sent command to Danae's nurse to let him be told when her charge was able to rise and walk.

Gleefully the old woman reported that message to her mistress, saying that the king now doubtless intended to set her free. "The gods alone know, sweetheart," quoth she, "why he has mewed you up so cruelly all this while; but I warrant this great marvel they have wrought on you has softened his heart." And Danae smiled, and kissed her little son, thinking, "Truly said Zeus that his gift should unlock my prison doors." But when dawned the expected day of release, came a band of the king's spearmen to the tower; grimly their captain bade Danae take up her babe and go with them; and silently they led her, not to the palace, but a lonely part of the sea-shore. And meekly she went along, clasping the sleeping babe to her breast, though all too plainly could she read in the men's faces that she was doomed to die. Now being come to the

shore, they led her out on a point of rock that jutted into deep water; and Danae saw that a great chest stood there, such as are in kings' houses, built of cypress wood and richly carved and painted. The chest was open, and empty save for a loaf of bread, a cruse of water, and a mattress spread on its floor. At that sight, an awful foreboding froze the maiden's blood; yet she did not strive nor cry when her guards lifted her into the chest, and shut down the high-arched lid. She swooned, then, for very anguish; and lay senseless while the chest was launched upon the tide and drifted out to sea.

The wailing of the child on her bosom, and the touch of his little hands, groping for food, brought Danae to herself. Tenderly she soothed the babe, and gave him the breast; nor heeded aught else until he was content and slumbered once more. It was not quite dark in her floating cell; some kindly hand had broken a carved panel of the lid, to give her air; looking up, Danae could see a wisp of blue sky through the chink, flecked ever and again with dashing spray. A fresh breeze was blowing from the West, and her frail ark, sailless and rudderless, was speeding before it, guided by providence divine. But Danae the while sat trembling with fear of the heaving billows around, and the wind that whistled overhead. Tears streamed down her lovely cheeks as she gazed on the babe calmly sleeping in her arms. "Ah, my child," she said, "little thou knowest what grief thy mother endures whilst thou art lapped in sweetest slumber. Fast, fast asleep . . . drawing quiet breath . . . recking nought of the

wind's clamour, or the waves breaking high above thy golden head! . . . O, well for thee thou canst not know the perils that encompass us, thou beautiful one! . . . Sleep on, my darling, and mother will sing thee a cradle-song. . . .

> "'*Sleep, baby, lullaby!*
> *Sleep, winds and waves so high.*
> *All things hurtful, fall asleep,*
> *And come not nigh!*'"

Thus sang Danae through her tears; and then, with uplifted hands, "How long, O Zeus," she said, "will it not repent thee of the evil thou hast wrought me? If that be too bold a word, forgive it, for the sake of this innocent—whom thou gavest me. Yea, King of gods, we are thine, both I and he, and wilt thou not save us? O, let it not be in vain that I have trusted in thy gracious promises!"

No sooner had she said this, than Zeus cast a deep sleep upon Danae; and when she awoke, behold, the chest stood open on a sea-beach, and a man was bending over her, with wonder in his eyes. "Lady," said he, "or goddess should I rather call you—for never saw I mortal so fair—who are you, and whence come you to our isle in such marvellous wise?"

"Good sir," she answered, rising to her feet, "I am no goddess, but the most hapless of women. My name is Danae; Argos is my native home, and there was I set adrift in this chest to perish on the sea, being condemned to death for a crime whereof I was guiltless. But tell me, of your courtesy, what isle this is, and how I came ashore."

"This is Seriphos, beauteous lady," the man

replied, "the kingdom of Polydectes, my elder brother. I, who am called Dictys, went this morn a-fishing; and just now, when I let down my net for a draught, it was my happy chance to enclose and draw into my boat this painted ark of yours. Trust me, I am overjoyed at your marvellous escape, and praise the gods therefor. But you are faint and weary—come, I will bring you to the King's house, where you shall have rest and tendance; right gladly will he welcome such a guest."

So Danae was brought to the island king, who received the lovely stranger with all kindness, bidding her forget her troubles overpast, for she was come to a new home and to friends, and should lack for nothing beseeming a king's daughter. And he gave her a fair house, and a meinie of slaves, and good store of all things needful; so she dwelt happy and honoured in Seriphos, until eighteen years had rolled away.

II

Meanwhile, the child sprung from the shower of living gold had grown up the most beautiful youth ever seen, the joy of his mother's heart. PERSEUS, that is, "Sun Prince," was the name she had given him—because he came to her in the sunbeams; and well that name sorted with his flashing eyes and his curling golden hair. All the folk of the isle loved Perseus for his comeliness and gracious ways; but King Polydectes secretly hated him; for not only was he jealous of the youth's favour

with the people, but he had long desired to make beautiful Danae his wife, and always she rejected his suit, telling him that all her heart was given to her beloved son.

Now once a year the King held a great feast in his house, to which all the men of the isle were bidden; and the custom of the feast was, that every guest brought the King a present. When Perseus had seen eighteen summers, he came to the feast with the rest of the young men; but having nothing of his own, he brought no gift in hand; and while they sat at meat, the King flung a covert taunt at him, muttering somewhat of beggarly aliens that thrust themselves in among their betters. Then uprose the youth, with a blush of shame on his fair face, and said, "O King, it is true that I am an alien, reared on your bounty; nor have I goods or gear of mine own; therefore have I brought you no present, like your other guests. But since you count that a reproach, I swear to you by Zeus on high that I will bring you whatever gift you choose, though I go to the world's end for it."

"Say you so, bold youth?" cried the King; "then bring me the head of Medusa!" And with that he laughed till the hall rang again, knowing full well that he had entrapped Danae's son to a fatal quest.

"If you speak in earnest," said Perseus, "tell me who and what Medusa is, and I shall assuredly bring you her head, if I live. But it seems you jest with me."

"Nay, nay," answered Polydectes; "if I laughed,

it was with pleasure to find so gallant a spirit in one of your years. It bodes well for your enterprise, which is very far from being a jesting matter. For you must know that somewhere in the utmost West dwell three sisters who are called the Gorgons, portentous beings, neither human nor divine. They have the forms of women; but vulture's wings grow from their shoulders, and every hair upon their heads is a venomous serpent. Two of them are deathless by nature, but the third is mortal; this is Medusa, whom to slay were a feat well worthy of the noblest hero. And therefore, Perseus, do I choose the head of that dire monster as the gift you have promised me; believe me, I am right fain that your mother's son should win the renown of such a deed."

Now Perseus, as he was himself without guile, so he looked not for guile in other men; he thanked the King for his goodwill, and asked him to say, further, in what land of the West the Gorgons had their habitation. "Nay, that I cannot tell you," said Polydectes; "for as rumour has it, they dwell in an undiscovered country, beyond the Western gates of Ocean. But what is that to a mettled lad like yourself? Did you not say you would journey to the word's end? Up and away, then; I know you are all eagerness for the adventure . . . fare you then well! But pledge me ere you go in this cup of wine—and you, my feast-mates, drink one and all to Perseus the Gorgon-slayer." And thereupon he drank from his own cup, and held it forth to Perseus, with a nod and wink to his familiars, who raised their brimming goblets and cried ob-

sequiously, "All hail, brave champion, and good speed to you!" But the youth, looking steadfastly on their smiling faces and the cold eyes of the King, perceived that he was mocked of them all; and he turned and went out of that company without a word. It was now midnight, but instead of returning to his home, he went down to the beach of the sea and paced to and fro, thinking bitter thoughts. For some reason he fathomed not, King Polydectes had put him to an open shame; and to humble him still further, had set him a task beyond the power of mortal man. He saw that clearly now—yet for his oath's sake he must not draw back . . . at daybreak he would hire some fisher's boat, and cross to one of the larger isles or a port of the mainland, where he might find a ship bound for the Western seas. . . . And by good luck, there was an old fisherman yonder, sitting beside his coble, and mending his net in the light of the full moon! . . . He would bargain with this ancient for a passage on the morrow. . . .

The fisherman looked up with a surly air as Perseus approached him, and having heard his request, "Methinks I know your face, springald," said he gruffly, "Are you not the son of the Lady Danae?"

"That same," answered Perseus, "but who may *you* be, old man? For though you know my face, yours is strange to me, albeit I know all the folk of our small isle."

"It matters not who I am," said the fisherman, "if I do you the service you require. But before I

do that, you must tell me on what errand you would leave Seriphos."

Then Perseus told him all that had befallen at the King's feast, and how he was resolved to find and slay Medusa. "Why, this is midsummer madness," cried the fisherman, "I tell you, pretty lad, you might as well have promised the King to fetch him yonder moon out of the sky, and you are going to certain death."

"It may be as you say, good ancient," said Perseus, "none the less, I go, for said word is thrall. So waste not words, but tell me forthright whether I can hire your skiff, and at what price."

"Wilful man must have his way," said the other, in an altered voice, "and I love the brave . . . I would lend you the skiff for nothing, Perseus . . . only . . . I have things here that will better serve your need."

With that he got to his feet and stooped over the boat; lifted therefrom a wallet, such as travellers bear, and turned again to Perseus, holding it out to him. But the youth started back amazed; for in that instant the form and fashion of the man had wholly changed. Tall and erect he stood, who had seemed bent with age; his rough mantle slid from him, revealing a shining corslet; his fisher's bonnet was become a great golden helm. And the face beneath the helm—O wonder!—was the face of a maiden, severe in youthful beauty, with piercing, starry eyes. Then Perseus knew it was divine Athena he looked upon; and he was afraid, and said, "Ah, glorious Daughter of Zeus, wherefore

art thou come unto me?" And with a grave, sweet smile she answered, "I come to aid you Perseus, by the will of Him who is my Father—and yours. Be of good courage, and take this scrip that is in my hand; for therein are three things that will help you on your adventure. First, the winged, golden sandals of Hermes, that will bear you dryshod over the sea; next, King Pluto's Cap of Darkness, that makes the wearer invisible; and last a sharp sickle of adamant, the work of Hephaestus, wherewith to smite off Medusa's head as a reaper reaps the gold-tressed corn. And now listen what you must do to find and slay her. When you have flown to the Western verge of Earth, following the Sun as he journeys, you will come to the Twilight Land, on the borders of Ocean; and there, in a cave of the shore, you will find the Grey Women—three wrinkled and witch-like crones as old as Time, that have but one eye among them. Now these are sisters to the Gorgons, and can tell you the way to their abode; but they will not do that willingly, for they are gifted with prophecy, and will know you and your errand. So you must go softly in to them, wearing the Cap of Darkness, and snatch away their eye, as they pass it from hand to hand after their manner; then threaten to destroy it, unless they tell you where their sisters are, and they will yield through terror of blindness. And when you come to the Gorgons, you shall know Medusa by her wings, that are white like a swan's, whereas the other two have the wings of vultures. Fierce and fell are all three, and could they see you,

hero, your days were done; they would pinion you in their arms, and strangle you with their serpent-tresses, for the might of them is not earthly; I borrowed Hades' cap to save you from that peril—but there is another, against which I lend you this fourth help—mine own shield. For Medusa has in her eyes such baleful power that whoso looks on them is straightway turned to stone; take heed, therefore, not to meet that gaze, but approaching backwards, hold up the shield as a mirror, and let her reflected image guide your blow. And having struck, beware of looking on the severed head, for the eyes will keep their dreadful power in death; hide it quickly in your wallet and flee instantly from the vengeance of the other Gorgons. Now fare you well awhile, my Perseus; be bold, and fear nothing, for Athena will be with you in the hour of peril."

When the goddess had thus spoken, she vanished in the twinkling of an eye; and Perseus, overcome with gratitude and wonder, knelt and kissed the sand her sacred feet had trod. Then, opening the scrip, he viewed, not without awe, the lendings of the gods—the golden sandals of Hermes, with a gold-feathered wing sprouting from each ankle-thong; King Pluto's magic cap, of some dark, soft fur; and the gleaming sickle wrought by Hephaestus, the divine craftsman. Having accoutred himself with this enchanted gear, he slung the wallet on his back, took Athena's shield on his arm, and commending himself to her protection, rose aloft, and held Westward over the midland main.

The brief summer night was almost past when Danae's son left the small isle that was all he knew of the world; and not many leagues had he flown, high in air, when earth and sea were bathed in the glory of Sunrise. Came then a gale from the South, driving a white flock of clouds before it; and blowing mightily, it wafted Perseus out of his true course to land of the Hyperboreans, in the farthest North. There falls not rain, nor hail, nor any snow; nor do the trees shed their leaves, but flourish all the year in a mild and serene clime; for that country lies behind the icy blasts of the North Wind. And the folk of that country are not as other men; they know not trouble, sorrow, or disease, neither wax old; but having lived in full vigour a thousand years, they fall peacefully into the unawakening sleep. This blesséd race are the chosen of Apollo, whom they worship with music and song, and offer him hecatombs of wild asses; when the dark, cold winter comes, the god leaves his glorious house in Delphi, and sojourns with the Hyperboreans until it is Spring on earth again. Many have sought to find that marvellous land, but few have ever reached it; for the truth is, there is only one road that leads to it, and that is a Hidden Way, in which no mortal can walk except by favour of the gods. Now Zeus, to honour his son, caused him first of all men to travel the mystic road; so Perseus came among the blameless folk of Apollo, and they received him gladly into their houses, and that day he beheld their sacrifices, and sat with them at their feast. But when the sun began to slope Westward,

he bade them farewell, saying he had a long journey before him, even to the Gates of Ocean; and so hovered up once more into the deserts of air. Across half the world he soared, in the track of Helios' burning wheels; while far, far below, mountains and forests and winding rivers showed bright and small as in a picture. And just as the sun sank into his Ocean bed, came Perseus to Earth's farthest coast, and descended into the mists and shadows of the Twilight Land.

Then saw he the cave whereof Athena had spoken, and the Grey Women sitting on the threshold; they were crooning a weird and doleful ditty; ghastly looked their blind, wan faces in the niggard light; one held in her hand their single eye, that glowed like a red jewel. And as she passed it to her next neighbour, Perseus darted forward and snatched it from her. Forthwith she raised a lamentable cry, "O sisters, he that we have dreaded so long hath stolen viewless upon us, and hath bereft me of our eye!" At that, the others moaned like a winter's wind; but Perseus cried, "Since you know me, ancient ones, you can guess my errand to you; teach me to find the Gorgons, and I will restore your eye. But if you will not, I shall trample it underfoot, or cast it into Ocean."

"Ask us anything but that, son of Zeus," wailed the Grey Women; "honour, riches, royal sway—these are ours to bestow, wretched though we seem, and are. Choose what thou wilt, and thou shalt have it—only give us back our seeing!"

"Nay, I care for none of these things," said

Perseus, " for my heart is set on nothing else than the quest I am come upon. Answer me, crones, or you shall sit darkling for ever."

Then, seeing he was not to be moved, the Grey Women bade him hold Southward along the Ocean cliffs, until he came to a rocky islet, close under a tall headland; for that islet was the Gorgons' lair. Now being come to the place, Perseus saw a black, foursquare rock, unapproachable by sea or land; the cliff rose sheer above it, and a boiling surf glimmered white around it in the dusk. And dimly he could descry three winged shapes huddled together on the flat top of the rock, as it had been mónstrous sea-fowl roosting there. Then down he lighted on the cliff over against them, and tarried for moonrise to show him which of these three was his destined prey; but, being wearied, laid him down the while and slept.

When he awoke, the moon rode, full-orbed, in highest heaven; and plain as by day appeared the forms of the slumbering Gorgons; now he took in hand the adamantine sickle, flew lightly to their rock, and warily approached them, gazing intently on the burnished mirror of Athena's shield. And therein saw he reflected the swan-pinions of Medusa; her serpent-tresses; her beautiful, dreadful visage, that even as he looked opened wide its gleaming eyes in a stare unutterably malign. . . . The mere image of that regard thicked the hero's blood with cold; shuddering, he nerved himself to strike . . . the curved blade flashed in air as he swung it, reaper-wise . . . there was a frightful hissing sound

. . . a dull thud . . . and the Gorgon's head rolled to his feet. Horrible was the clammy touch of the dead snakes; but manfully he grasped the limp, black tangle, thrust his booty into his scrip, and darted heavenward like an arrow—just as unearthly yells told him that Medusa's sisters had awaked. Up rose the twain, flapping their vulture-wings, and with hideous clamour flew wildly round and round, seeking the enemy that had done this thing; but lightly the invisible hero sped past them and away Eastward, mindful of Athena's bidding.

Now the goddess, herself unseen, had stood beside him on the rock, putting boldness in his heart and strengthening his arm; there she yet lingered when the Gorgons, baffled of revenge, swooped down beside Medusa's headless corpse and raised a shrill, passionate lament. Such was the weird beauty of that dirge that Athena hearkened enthralled; and not long after, she devised the Flute, wherewith to copy the Gorgons' plaintive melody. And having given the vocal thing to mortals for their delight, she taught them to play thereon the tune called "The Many-headed Tune," which mimics the dirge of the snaky-headed sisters.

But while they yet sang, and the charmed goddess stood viewless by, a marvel of marvels was wrought before their eyes. From the blood of Medusa, that lay in a dark pool upon the rock, sprang a noble, prancing Horse, white as the driven snow, with great wings like a swan's waving from his shoulders. And as the Gorgons stared amazed on this prodigy, he soared aloft and vanished from their ken. Then

Athena appeared to them, and said, "Dire sisters, hateful to gods and men, wherefore marvel ye that Medusa's offspring should be a winged horse? Know ye not that her lover was Poseidon, Tamer of Steeds—and in what shape he wooed her? Behold, now am I avenged on her that profaned my Libyan temple, defiling with love-embraces the courts of the Virgin Goddess. For 'twas I that armed and helped hither Perseus, the son of Danae, who hath struck the head from this wretched corse. But as for Medusa's wondrous child, his divine sire hath him in keeping, and for a little while will lend him to a human master; but after that his home shall be in the golden stalls of Zeus."

So saying, Athena went her way and left the Gorgons lamenting. And still, as mariners tell, they that sail by moonlight along that iron-bound coast of Spain may hear their dolorous voices in the wind, and see their dark forms on the surf-beaten rock, crouching over a blanched and headless skeleton.

III

Now Perseus, having turned his back on the Ocean stream, flew right onward over mountain-chains, and wind-swept plateaus, and over many a league of the Midland Sea. And swifter than an eagle's was his flight, upborne by Hermes' magic sandals; for in the grey dawn passed he the gleaming hill of Cyrene, and the misty mouths of Nile, and at sunrise he saw before him the rocky coast-

line of Ethiopia, that torrid land that neighbours the Gates of Morning. And there rose up from the shore a great noise of weeping and wailing. Perseus flew nearer to see whence it came, and beheld a multitude of men and women standing on the brink of a high red cliff, all gazing seaward with terrified faces and lamenting aloud. And under the cliff, on a narrow strip of sand, a white figure stood motionless, rigid, as it had been a graven image . . . but on nearer view, Perseus saw it was the figure of a living maiden, who was bound with chains of brass to a stake planted at the water's edge. Her rose-white limbs were bare, save for the veil of dusky tresses that fell to her knees; her head was thrown back, and close-shut were her fringed eyelids; Perseus would have thought her in a swoon but that her lips quivered ever and again as with some cruel anguish.

At that sight, the hero's heart burned within him for pity and wrath; he lighted down upon the sand, and plucking off the Cap of Darkness, "Ah, fairest maiden," he softly cried, "what wicked men have dared to torment you thus? Dearly shall they rue such outrage, be they who they may!" And she, opening her sweet dark eyes and regarding him with amazement, faintly said, "Is it a god I see before me? O, if thou be, as thou seemest, one of the heaven-dwelling Olympians, do not mock me, for well thou knowest the doom that waits me here."

"No god am I, but a woman's son," answered Perseus, quickly, "yet have I gods to my helpers, and I well believe they have sent me to this place,

that with a gift of theirs I may free you from these shameful bonds." With that, he drew from his wallet the sickle Hephaestus wrought, and severed the brazen chains that fettered her wrists and ankles as easily as though they had been hempen cords. No sooner were her delicate hands thus freed, than the maiden wrapped her tresses more closely about her, blushing rosy-red; then suddenly she began to weep bitterly, and, "Alas, gentle youth," she cried, "'tis in vain you have broken my fetters, for there is no escape for me . . . I am set here to die a hideous death . . . the hour is come . . . O, fly this place instantly, I entreat you, or you too will perish miserably!"

"Can you think me so base?" exclaimed Perseus. "Nay, I will save you, if the gods will it—if not, better death than to live a craven! Now tell me quickly, what is this doom you spoke of? If I guess well, it is coming from the sea, and yonder multitude are watching for it. But speak, let me know what adversary I am to encounter."

"A monster of the deep," said the maiden, shuddering, "that Poseidon, being wroth with us, sent to ravage our land. Ah, brave stranger, all your valour can do nought against him! He is huger than a galley of fifty oars . . . no weapon can pierce the scales that clothe his black, loathly bulk . . . his vast jaws have three rows of iron teeth, and breathe forth a deadly vapour. Daily, at sunrise, this terror comes ashore in quest of prey, and daily—for he can move as swiftly on land as in the water—he seizes on cattle, men and women, and

devours them alive. An ox, they say, is but a mouthful to him—in one day's raid he has crunched the bones of two score! . . . At last, yester-eve, an oracle declared Poseidon's wrath, and that it would never be appeased until the king's daughter were offered to the monster. . . ."

"And you are she?" cried Perseus. "Tell me your name, lady, and your father's, and what folk he rules? A savage folk, certes—and a yet more savage king, that gave his own child to such a fate!"

"Nay, he could not choose," said the King's daughter, "and better was it one girl should perish than the whole Ethiopian nation. For this land, you must know, is Ethiopia—as for my father's name, he is called Cepheus; and I myself am named Andromeda."

Now even as she spoke, cries of horror rang from the cliff above them, and the sea at their feet boiled like a cauldron with the wallowing of some enormous beast. Then something like the upturned hull of a black ship came rolling ashore with a great noise of floundering—a terrific head, vast as a cachalot's, reared itself close to Perseus—so close, that the fetid breath of its gaping jaws blew hot upon his face. But quick as thought the hero thrust Andromeda behind him, snatched the Gorgon's head from his wallet, and held it out in full view of the monster's small and wicked eyes. And lo, as they met the eyes of dead Medusa, they took on the same fixed, glassy stare; the beast's cavernous jaws remained wide-stretched, but the breath went out of them in

one last gasp—as all his enormous frame stiffened into a thing of stone! And there he is unto this day.

Now the watchers on the height—who were the whole folk of the neighbouring city—had not marked that a stranger youth talked with Andromeda, for she was almost hidden from them by the overhanging cliff, and they were all intent on the coming of the monster. Bitterly they mourned for their doomed princess—yet all felt a secret longing to know the dread sacrifice was accomplished which should rid them of that god-sent Terror. But when, craning forward over the cliff's verge, they beheld him come ashore and the miracle that followed, they rent the air with shouts of thanksgiving, crying that a god, in the likeness of a man, had wrought this deliverance. And the whole multitude rushed down to the shore by the nearest way; and crowding around Perseus, they fell down at his feet, praising and blessing him. But he, meanwhile, had wrapped Andromeda in his cloak, and was holding her, pale and half swooning, in his arms; and impatiently he cried, "Friends, thank not me, who am a man like yourselves, but the high gods; and especially Athena, by whose grace I have overcome yon fearsome beast. And now do some of you carry your princess home to her father; as for me, I must begone upon my journey."

Then Andromeda lifted her beautiful head from his shoulder, and stood upright on her feet, and looking at him with frank, modest eyes, "You shall not leave me, noblest of men," she said, "until my father and mother have seen the preserver of their

child—no hand but yours must give me back to them, as from the dead. Pray you now, let us be going—I am strong, and need no bearers—only your arm to lean upon."

"Be it as you will, fair Andromeda," said Perseus, "for I were the veriest churl to deny you so slight a boon."

Thereupon all the folk shouted applause; and when they had gazed their fill on the rock that had so lately been their living terror, they ran in haste to the city, to tell the wondrous news to the king. But Perseus and Andromeda came after at a slower pace; for they found much to say to each other on the way. First, she asked him of his name and parentage; and from that she led him on by her eager questioning and sweet, wondering looks, until she had heard all the story of Danae, of his own boyhood in Seriphos, how he undertook the quest of the Gorgon's Head, and all the marvels that ensued. Then Perseus in his turn began to question; and asked what had kindled Poseidon's wrath against Cepheus and his folk. "Alas," said Andromeda, "we all suffered for the sin of one—and that one was my mother, Queen Cassiopeïa. For she has great beauty, and such was her pride in it that she boasted herself fairer than the Nereïds that haunt our shores. Nay, she forbade me and the other maidens of our city to deck their altars by the sea with flowers, after our custom; saying she herself was worthier of such honours. Then, as the oracle declared, the Nereids made complaint to their great kinsman Poseidon; and he sent that woe

upon the land, that Cassiopeïa might be forced to yield up her belovéd child as an atonement to the offended Sea-queens."

This and much more did the youth and maiden say to each other as they went inland over high, grassy downs; and by the time they reached the city, their talk had become as the talk of familiar friends, and their hearts were knit together with cords of desire. Now King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeïa met them at the city-gate, with the nobles and the folk, all garlanded and in festal array; and when her parents had embraced Andromeda with tears of joy, they bade Perseus welcome, and thanked him from overflowing hearts. And the King, having asked and heard his name, said to him, "What reward, O Perseus, shall I offer unto you, who have saved my only child by valour like a god's? Will you have broad lands, or the choicest of our flocks and herds, or a ship laden with the fine gold of Ethiopia? Ask what you will and take it, to the half of my kingdom."

Then said Perseus, "O King, I neither desire nor deserve reward for what I did by pure grace of Athena. But since of your royal bounty you promise me any gift I choose, to the half of your kingdom—give me this maiden for my bride!"

"That will I gladly," answered Cepheus, "for who can have a better right to her hand? She will have a noble husband—and I a son-in-law who will bring renown to my house, seeing the gods have plainly destined you for glorious exploits. May they bless the marriage with sons like unto their

father, who shall rule my kingdom when I am gone! As for yourself, I will make you a prince and a chief captain of the warlike Ethiopians."

"Deem me not ungrateful, Ethiop King," said Perseus, "but I cannot abide in your land. For first of all, I must return to my home in the little isle Seriphos; having pledged mine oath to the King there that I would bring him the head of the Gorgon Medusa. That head I have in my wallet, and by the magic in it was the sea-beast turned to stone. But when I have redeemed my promise, I am minded to sail to famous Argos, where I was born. For I am heir to that realm; being the son of Danae, who is the sole child of its agéd king, Acrisius; and now I am come to manhood I will go claim my rights from my grandsire, whom I have never seen. A fierce and ruthless man he is, and cast out my innocent mother on an infamous charge, while I was yet a helpless babe; but now shall he make her amends, or rue denial."

When Cepheus heard this he was grieved, and said, "Though you do well and wisely, Prince of Argos, to return to your own far country, you should not take my daughter with you, if it were not for my promise' sake." And then outspoke his proud Queen, "Ah, hero, will you let this maiden, so tenderly reared, follow you through the rough world while you seek your fortunes?"

"Let her choose, Lady," said Perseus, smiling, "if she is not content to go with me, I will give the King back his word."

"Generously spoken," cried Cepheus. "Now

daughter, how say you? Will you bide with father, mother, and kindred, or follow this stranger into strange lands?"

And the maiden, with downcast eyes and a blush of Love's own hue, softly answered, "I will follow Perseus, my father, though it be to the world's end. For now I am his; not yours, who—ah, your pardon!—surrendered all your rights over me to the bridegroom Death. I give him the life he saved—where he goes I will go, and where he dwells I will dwell, and share what good or ill the gods may send him."

"So be it, child," said the King, "for I see this youth hath won a double victory to-day, and not Athena only befriends him, but Aphrodite. Take your bride, Prince Perseus; with right goodwill do I join your hands—and now go we to the palace, where, after due sacrifices of thanksgiving, your marriage-feast shall crown this auspicious day."

So that day all the city kept holiday; and the country folk flocked in from far and near, hearing the great news that the Terror of the land was no more, and eager to behold the hero that had made an end of him. And King Cepheus held a day-long feast for all comers in his palace-hall, of such abundance that you would have thought it rained meat and drink; and at even the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda was celebrated with solemn and gorgeous ritual, after the Ethiopian manner. Now the King and Queen had prevailed with their son-in-law to remain with them a se'nnight, while a ship was made ready and freighted with treasure, jewels,

fine raiment, and all things else belonging to the dowry of a princess, that Andromeda might keep her wonted state in her future home; and the marriage revelries were kept up during those seven days. But on the seventh day, while the King and his men-guests sat carousing after the banquet, a great tumult was heard without; and suddenly a troop of mail-clad men rushed into the hall, shouting and brandishing their javelins. Their leader, a gigantic, black-bearded Ethiopian in dazzling armour, strode up to the King's chair and addressed him with furious looks—"False Cepheus, what is this I hear of you that you have wedded my affianced bride to another? Did you not swear to give me your fair daughter's hand in guerdon of my service to you in war? Ay, you may well tremble and turn pale! By all the gods, I have a mind to kill you, perjured King—but for the sake of our kinship I will let you alone if you instantly yield me up Andromeda."

"Noble Phineus," said the King, who was indeed unable to conceal his fear, "it is true I have broken faith with you—but what else could I do? My daughter was as good as dead when this stranger prince saved her life; he asked her hand as reward, and surely 'twas not robbing you to grant him what was already lost to you for ever? Be pacified, good kinsman; and to make amends you shall have twice the weight of fine gold I promised you as the maiden's dowry. But as for herself—why she is wedded, see you, and that cannot be undone."

"*Cannot?* It shall, it must," exclaimed Phineus.

"Why else, think you, have I and my men ridden day and night from the borders of your realm since the tidings came? No more paltering, I say! Look you, you are all unarmed here—your burghers timid as sheep—I have you at my mercy. Send for the girl this instant, and let us ride off with her peaceably—or I will make your banqueting-hall run blood like a shambles."

Then up rose Perseus in his place, and the grey eyes of him glinted like steel under his frowning brows as he cried, "Enough of threats and insolence, barbarian! Now hear me—for this is my quarrel; it is with me, the son of Zeus, you have to deal, and not with this timorous old King. Be warned in time; get you gone and trouble us no more; for if you make the least show of violence, you and your followers are all dead men." So saying, he took up the wallet that lay beside him.

"Ay, you trust in your magic, young wizard," answered Phineus with a sneer, "but this time it shall not serve you." And with that, he shouted his war-cry and rushed at Perseus, sword in hand, and his spearmen after him.

But he, loudly crying, "Friends all, keep still and hide your eyes!" suddenly held out at arm's length the baleful Head, and thrust it, shieldwise, in the fierce, dark faces hemming him in. . . . The clamour of voices and clash of weapons died on the instant . . . all was still in the hall while one might count a score . . . then the calm voice of Perseus bade Cepheus and his guests look up, and they beheld him yet encompassed by foes with levelled

lances—but they were foes of stone! Phineus, with arm upraised to strike, and the grin of rage frozen on his face . . . his henchmen to right and left of him, each with a spear poised for a throw, head thrust forward, eyes intently glaring . . . there they stood lifeless, in such perfect mimicry of life as never sculptor's chisel wrought. And there they stood for ages, even until Time's wasting hand did away the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia and laid the city of Cepheus in ruins; for the King, overcome with awe and horror at the fearful end of those men, would not suffer the images to be removed, but had the doors of the banqueting-hall walled up, and builded himself another.

Now on the morrow Perseus and Andromeda took last farewell of Cepheus and the beautiful, haughty Queen, and went down to the harbour of the city, where their rich-freighted ship lay ready, manned by sturdy slaves; and embarked with the princess's train of handmaids. A great concourse of people watched them set sail, and sped them on their way with prayers and blessings. And with a prosperous wind they came in nine days to Seriphos and cast anchor in the little lonely haven of the isle. Then Perseus leaped to land and hastened cityward, and the first man he met was the good fisherman Dictys, that had been ever a friend to Danae and her child since the day he drew them from the sea. Joyfully the youth greeted him and said, " Rejoice with me, best of friends, for I have won my quest and more —much more besides! You shall hear all—but first let us hasten to my mother—what joy will be hers

to see me safe and sound! After that, to the king with my gift—'tis here, in this wallet—but come, man, why do you loiter—and look at me so sadly? O gods, my mother . . . has some evil befallen her?"

"Yes, Perseus," said Dictys, sorrowfully, "evil enough, though not the worst—no; calm yourself, she is alive! But my most wicked brother has thrown off the mask at last; no sooner had you left Seriphos than he went to Danae and bade choose between marrying him forthwith or starving in a prison. And when he saw threats could not move her, the wretch had her loaded with iron fetters, and cast into a dark and miry dungeon. There has he kept her ever since on bread and water, and visits her ever day, with threats of worse outrage if she will not yield; but nothing shakes her noble constancy. I have long suspected that he harboured base designs upon her; and now 'tis but too clear that he sent you on such a quest in hopes you might never return to avenge her wrongs."

Perseus heard all this like one thunderstruck; but as Dictys ceased, he cried in a voice trembling with rage, "He shall see the gift he sent me for—he shall see it! Come, Dictys, let us to the palace without wasting an instant!" And he sped onward fleet as a deer, unbuckling his wallet as he ran.

"Now the gods help the lad!" exclaimed the astonished fisherman, "sure, these ill tidings have driven him distraught. Does he think Polydectes will release his mother because he has brought him

a Gorgon's head? Alas, he is more like to murder him for his pains! But I will after, and do my poor best to defend him."

So saying, Dictys likewise ran cityward at the top of his speed; and with such goodwill that, though Perseus easily outstripped him, he stood, panting, on the threshold of the King's hall but a few moments after the youth had crossed it. Polydectes was sitting at the upper end of the hall among his boon-companions, wine-cup in hand, a round, silver table before him; his eyes, glittering with deadly hate, were fixed on the son of Danae, who stood fronting him at a little distance, silent, holding the wallet in his outstretched right hand. The king was speaking to him in low, deliberate tones—Dictys could not hear the words, but their import was to be guessed from the peals of insulting laughter which burst from the king's familiars as he ended. And then, while the hall still rang to their shouts of mockery, Perseus stepped quickly forward, threw down the open wallet on the table, and cried, "There is the gift you desired, Polydectes! Look well at it, King, and tell me, is it the Gorgon's Head or no?"

But Polydectes answered never a word; for even as his eyes met the blind, upturned eyes of Medusa he stiffened into stone. As for his gay companions, some fled, screaming, from the hall; the rest, half-dead with terror, crawled to the feet of Perseus, imploring mercy. "Fools!" said he, "wherefore should I harm you? Does the bird of Zeus wage war on chattering pies?" And swiftly closing the

wallet again, he turned and strode to the doorway; where Dictys met him, trembling and bewildered at the thing he had seen, yet glad at heart that the tyrant was no more.

Then quickly the two friends went to the gloomy prison-house where Danae lay; but already the warders, hearing what had befallen, and in great fear of Perseus, had made haste to bring the gentle captive out of her dungeon. . . . Only once, men say, did tears ever fall from that godlike hero's eyes; and that was when he beheld his sweet mother carried forth in her chains, death-pale, wasted to a shadow by want and grief. . . . But all that misery faded like an evil dream in the bliss that came to Danae as she felt her son's strong arms round her once more, and saw the light of victory on his brow. . . .

And now came all the men of Seriphos to Perseus, offering to make him king of the isle; for one and all were overjoyed that there was an end of Polydectes, who had ruled them with a rod of iron. But he answered, "Good friends, that may not be; for I seek another kingdom, even famous Argos, that is my rightful heritage. Thither must I fare without delay, but ere I set sail, fain would I hear you swear allegiance to a worthier king—the wise and upright Dictys."

And all the folk cried with one consent, "We swear it, great hero! Since you must leave us, Dictys shall be our king." Then Perseus and his mother took loving farewell of the new-made king, and all their friends among the islanders, and went

on board the stately Ethiop galley; and so those two left Seriphos in a far different vessel from that which had borne them thither, eighteen years before. And they took with them the painted cypresswood coffer for a memorial and witness of that miraculous voyage.

Now when they had sailed a day and a night, and looked soon to make the port of Argos, a gale sprang up that drove the ship out of her course and far to Northward, until the master-mariner was fain to run in for shelter into a land-locked bay of Thessaly. And from certain peasants who came hurrying to view the foreign ship, Perseus learned the name of the country; and that not far off was the ancient city of Larissa, where their king, Teutamias, was that day holding games open to all comers in honour of his dead father. Then, moved by divine prompting, Perseus resolved to see and share in the contests; and going alone to strong-walled Larissa, he overcame the flower of the Thessalian youth in boxing, wrestling, and running; so that Teutamias and all his folk marvelled greatly who this godlike stranger could be. But when the discus-throwing came on, Perseus cast so mightily that the discus flew far beyond the arena, and among the lookers-on; and the sharp, bronze edge smote an old man who was seated at the king's right hand, full on the temple. Down he fell to earth, his silver hair all drenched with blood, and breathed his last without a groan. Filled with grief and dismay, Perseus asked the bystanders who the old man was; and with horror heard them reply, "It is our lord's

guest-friend, King Acrisius of Argos, who came but yesterday to sojourn with him."

Thereupon Perseus made himself known to the Thessalian king, and told all his mother's story, beginning with the oracle spoken at Delphi so long ago, and now by such unlooked-for means fulfilled. "Marvellous indeed," said Teutamias, "are the hidden workings of Destiny, and vainly does any mortal strive to escape the thing she ordains. Acrisius had fled to me, because a strange rumour was rife in Argos that Danae's son was alive and coming home to avenge her wrongs. Grown old and feeble, his one hope of safety lay, as he thought, in abandoning his kingdom and fleeing to this remote corner of Hellas. And little indeed could human eye foresee that in this place of all others he would encounter the hour and the man whereof the oracle warned him long ago!"

So Perseus knew that no chance wind had blown him to the shores of Thessaly, and that his seeming-luckless throw had found the mark appointed by the gods. But sadly he departed from Larissa and set sail again; because, though all unwittingly and by pure misadventure, he had brought on himself the stain of kindred blood. For which reason, when he was come at last to Argos, he scrupled to take the kingdom of his grandsire; but made exchange of city and realm with his kinsman Megapenthes, son of Proetus, who then ruled in Tiryns.

Now Athena herself cleansed her well-belovéd hero from the blood-guilt, and besides the magical lendings of Hermes and King Pluto, he gave up to her

Medusa's snake-tressed head, which ever since adorns the breastplate of the Warrior Goddess. And after that, in obedience to an oracle, Perseus went forth from Tiryns and builded the great stronghold of Mycenae, on the northern border of his kingdom. There he reigned many years in peace and felicity; there his gentle mother died and was buried; and there, in the fulness of time, both he and his fair queen passed away from earth. But Zeus suffered not those two to see corruption, or dwell in the mouldy House of Hades; their souls he wafted to the Elysian Meadows, and their mortal bodies he changed into those bright star-clusters that yet bear the names of *Perseus* and *Andromeda*. And near them did the King of gods place in the heavens the enthroned figure of *Cassiopeïa*—

> "That starred Ethiop queen who strove
> To set her beauty's praise above
> The sea Nymphs, and their powers offended."

CHAPTER VIII

MELAMPUS

KING PROETUS, brother and foe of Acrisius, had three beautiful daughters, who were the proudest maidens ever seen. The ancient and famous temple of Argive Hera stood near their father's city of Tiryns, and all the women of the land repaired thither once a year to keep the festival of the goddess. Then would Hera's priestess bring forth her sacred image, veiled and crowned like a bride, and it was carried to the city on a gilded car drawn by white oxen; while matrons and maids followed in procession bearing garlands and torches, and chanting marriage-hymns in honour of the glorious Spouse of Zeus. But the three proud princesses thought scorn to walk in the train even of a goddess, nor could endure to hear the praises of any beauty but their own; they kept at home during the festival, and there came a day when they looked out on the procession from a window, and mocked at the image as it went by, in the hearing of all the folk. And swiftly Queen Hera avenged the insult; that same night, the three princesses were seized with madness, and rushing forth of the city, wandered with frenzied shrieks about the hills. King Proetus and all his men chased them for days in vain; none could lay hands on them, for when

any approached, they bounded away more fleetly than deer. Then the King, at his wits' end, sent out messengers far and wide with offer of a rich reward to whosoever would heal his daughters of their frenzy; and there came to him a seer out of the country of Messenia in the West, whose name was Melampus.

Now Melampus was by race an Aeolid; being son to Amythaon, younger brother of King Aeson of Iolcus, who had won himself lands and lordship in Messenia; he was the first of his house to possess the gift of a seer, and this was how he came by it. One day, wearied with hunting, he lay down to sleep in the woods; and while he slept, a pair of snakes crept from their hole and licked his eyelids and ears with their soft, forked tongues. Melampus awoke at the touch, and immediately the two snakes glided away; but not before he heard one say to the other, " Now we have rewarded the man that spared our lives last year, when his servants killed our mother in her nest, and would have killed us also." And while he yet lay still, bemused with wonder, he heard two woodpeckers talking together in the tree above him, and understood all they said. From that day, Melampus became both a seer and a great healer; for by the magic in the snake-tongues his eyes were opened to see visions, and his ears to hear all the wisdom of beast and bird, who dwell nearer than ourselves to the heart of Mother Earth, and know more of her secrets. The healing virtues of flowers and herbs, of well-springs and running brooks—where to find certain stones that are

amulets against disease or poison—all this Melampus learned by diligent hearkening to the talk of the woodland creatures.

And being come to King Proetus, he offered to heal his daughters of their frenzy if he might name his own reward. And when the King asked him what it was, the seer answered, "A third part of your kingdom;" which Proetus angrily refused, and bade him begone. But now came the same frenzy on all the women of Tiryns, so that they also fled the city and roamed distraught on the hillsides. And the King was forced to send after Melampus, with promise to give him what he asked; for the folk had heard of it, and they rose up in revolt, demanding that Proetus should rid them at any cost of the plague wherewith Hera had afflicted them because of his daughters' sin against her. So Melampus was brought back; but now he said he would not heal the women unless Proetus gave him two-thirds of the land, one for himself and one for his brother Bias. And when the King granted even this, through fear of the people, the seer bade all the men of Tiryns follow him to the hills; there he caused them to drive the women before them, like a herd of deer, towards a certain rushing stream; and no sooner did those frenzied ones pass through its waters than they came to their right mind again. But the eldest of the three princesses slipped and fell in crossing; and the torrent carried her away and drowned her. As for her sisters, King Proetus gave them in marriage to the seer and his brother; for he thought, "Though these Aeolids take a

monstrous cantle of my land in possession, it will not be lost to the House of Danaus if their sons are my daughters' children."

After this, Melampus and Bias lived prosperously in Argos many years; and it was commonly remarked that the mutual love of those brothers was as singular as the hatred between the twin kings, Proetus and Acrisius. The Argives noted also that Bias, the younger brother, paid Melampus all the reverence due to a father, and took his counsel in everything; and this, they found, he did with good reason. For as Bias himself loved to tell, Melampus had not only won him lands and lordship in Argos, but had achieved for his sake a most hazardous adventure, what time they were both young men and dwelling in Messenia.

Now the adventure was this. King Neleus, of Pylos, half-brother to Amythaon, had one lovely daughter, named Pero, whom Bias wooed for a wife. And the maiden smiled on him; but when he asked Neleus for her hand, offering a great bride-price in sheep and oxen, the King said, "I will take no bride-price for my daughter but the cows of Phylacus."

When Bias heard that, he went away troubled; for the chieftain Phylacus, who lived across the Messenian border, was not more famous for his herd of red cows than for the wonderful watchdog that kept guard over them. He was as wise as a man and as strong as a lion, and though all the most cunning thieves in the West had tried to steal those cows, he had caught them every one. What troubled

Bias still more, Phylacus had put all these marauders to death. In this strait he betook himself to Melampus, and entreated him to devise some means of getting the cows, "For if I cannot wed fair Pero," said he, "I shall have no more pleasure in my days."

"I will get you the cows myself, brother," said the seer, "but you must wait a year for them, and for your bride, with what patience you may. For I shall go this very night to steal them, and be caught by the watchdog—but he will not hurt me, and when his master sees that, he will put me in prison instead of killing me. There he will keep me a whole year, refusing ransom; but after that he will let me go—and give me the cows of his own accord."

Now all this came to pass as the seer foretold; and it was through his knowledge of the speech of beasts and birds that he gained his end at last. For when the year was nearly past, he lay wakeful one night in his prison-cell, and heard the woodworms talking in the roof-tree overhead. "How long will it be," said one, "before we have gnawed right through this beam?" "Less than an hour, sister," replied another, "then down it will come, and the roof with it." Up sprang Melampus, with a shout that awoke his gaolers; and as they ran in he said to them, "Take me quickly out of this building, friends, and escape from it yourselves; if we stay here another hour the roof will fall on us." And so earnest was his pleading that the men refused not, though they laughed at him, but led him in his

fetters to an empty byre, and shut him in there. And scarcely had they done so, when the roof of the prison-house fell in with a crash!

When Phylacus heard from the gaolers what had passed, he perceived that Melampus was a great seer; and immediately setting him at liberty, he offered him a rich reward if he would reveal the cause why Iphiclus, his only son, remained childless.

"If I can do so," said Melampus, "and also heal your son of his infirmity, will you give me your herd of red cows?"

"That I will," answered Phylacus; "much as I prize them, a grandson would be worth far more to me than ten such herds."

Then the seer ordered two oxen to be killed and flayed, and thrown out in a field; and when the birds of prey came swooping on the carcasses, he cried to them, "Wise ones, you shall be welcome to my feast, if you tell me the thing I desire to know." And a vulture answered straightway, "Iphiclus will be healed and beget children, if for ten days he drinks water wherein you have steeped the rusty knife that you will find sticking in the bark of yonder oak. For one day, while he was a young child, Iphiclus met his father by that tree, and that knife was in his father's hand, bloodstained, for he had been gelding sheep with it. And because the child was frightened when he saw it, and ran away crying, Phylacus stuck the knife into the oak and went to comfort him; and as he forgot what he had done with the knife, it has been there all these years, until the bark has grown over it. But that tree is

the haunt of a Dryad, and in her anger with Phylacus for polluting it, she bewitched his son; nor can her spell be broken save by the counter-charm I have taught you."

So Melampus thanked the wise vulture, and left him feasting with his fellows; and having done according to his bidding, he healed the son of Phylacus. Thus he won the famous herd for his brother, as he foretold; and when King Neleus had received the bride-price he coveted, Bias and the lovely Pero were wedded with great splendour and rejoicings.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

The account of the Six Ages is taken from Hesiod's *Works and Days* (ll. 109 *sqq.*), on which see Introduction, Vol. I. Pindar (Olympian IX. 45) places the creation of the " Stone Folk " (p. 8) at Opous in Locris.

CHAPTER II

P. 22. *Bellerophon.* The story of the Taming of Pegasus by means of Athena's gift forms the myth of Pindar's Thirteenth Olympian Ode, composed for a Corinthian victor; the Bit and Bridle are there reckoned among the inventions for which Corinth was celebrated. Pindar, after his manner, makes only a veiled allusion to Bellerophon's madness and wandering on the Aleïan Plain—a legend already found in Homer (*Iliad,* VI. 201).

CHAPTER III

Pindar's Fourth Pythian Ode—a sort of miniature epic, the longest, and one of the most brilliant, of his extant works—has been closely followed throughout the series of episodes of the *Golden Fleece* saga which it presents. These are—the Delphic warning to Pelias; the Coming of the Man with One Sandal; the Gathering of Heroes to Iolcus; the Sailing of the *Argo;* Sacrifice of Bulls to Poseidon; the Clashing Rocks; Combat of Argonauts and Colchians; Aphrodite makes Medea enamoured of Jason by the Wryneck Charm; Jason ploughs with the Oxen of Aietes; the Gift of the Clod to Euphemus, and Medea's prophecy concerning it;

the Argonauts mate with the women of Lemnos. Pindar gives prominence to the two last episodes because this ode celebrates the chariot-victory at the Pythian Games of a King of Cyrene (Arcesilas IV.), who traced his descent from Euphemus. The rest of this chapter is based on the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius.

CHAPTER IV

Paraphrases the *Medea* of Euripides, omitting the choruses and dispensing with the conventional "curtain"—viz. Medea's escape in a chariot drawn by winged dragons—a *dénoument* which stultifies the preceding plot, and must be regarded as a concession on Euripides' part to stage convention. (See the late Dr. Verrall's essay on this play in his *Euripides the Rationalist.*)

CHAPTER V

The punishments of the faithless *Coronis,* and of her son *Asclepios* (pp. 115-117), are told in Pindar's Third Pythian Ode; the story of *Ixion* (pp. 119-124) is from his Second Pythian. Both odes were composed for his patron Hiero, the famous tyrant of Syracuse, between 476-470 B.C. Another version of the fate of *Meleager* (p. 145) was known to Homer and Pindar, who represent him as falling in defence of his native city; the Brand-story is given by Pindar's contemporary and rival, Bacchylides, in an ode for Hiero (V.), where it is told to Heracles in Hades by the Shade of Meleager.

CHAPTER VI

This chapter, to the end of p. 164, paraphrases the earliest extant play of Aeschylus—the *Supplices,* or Suppliant Women. The play was the first of a trilogy dealing with the Danaids, of which the other two are lost. In the second play, the *Aegyptii,* the sons of Aegyptus, apparently, over-

came the Argives and forced marriage on their kinswomen. The third play, the *Danaides*, ended with an " epiphany " of the goddess Aphrodite, whose speech, instituting marriage based on mutual consent, is preserved among the Fragments of Aeschylus (Nauck. fr. 44). The legend of Danaus providing second marriages for his daughters (except Hypermnestra and Amymone) by means of a foot-race, is given in Pindar's Ninth Pythian Ode.

CHAPTER VII

Danae's lullaby to her babe (p. 182) is taken from the beautiful Fragment of a Threnos (Dirge) by Simonides of Ceos, uncle of Bacchylides, and rival, in his latter years, of Pindar. An early ode of Pindar (the Tenth Pythian) narrates Perseus' visit to the Hyperboreans (p. 190); while his Twelfth Pythian gives Athena's invention of the Flute (p. 193).

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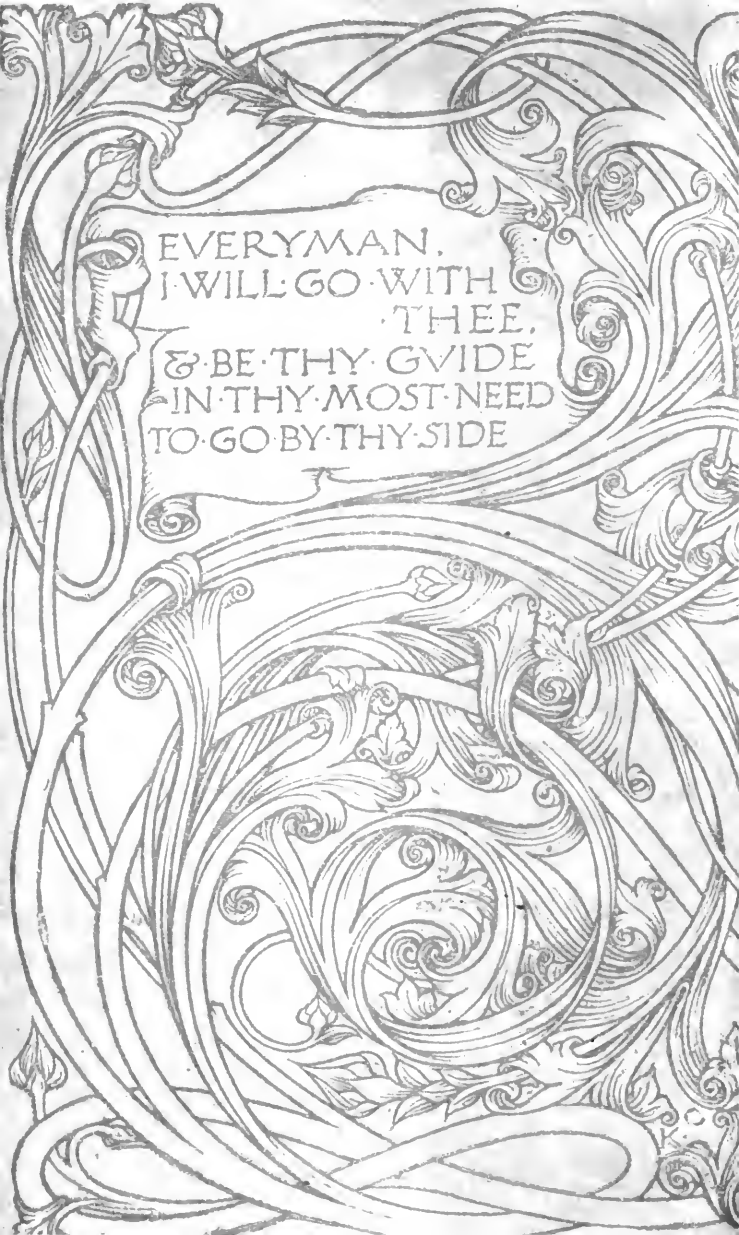
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