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STANDARD AUTHORS

# TANGLEWOOD TALES



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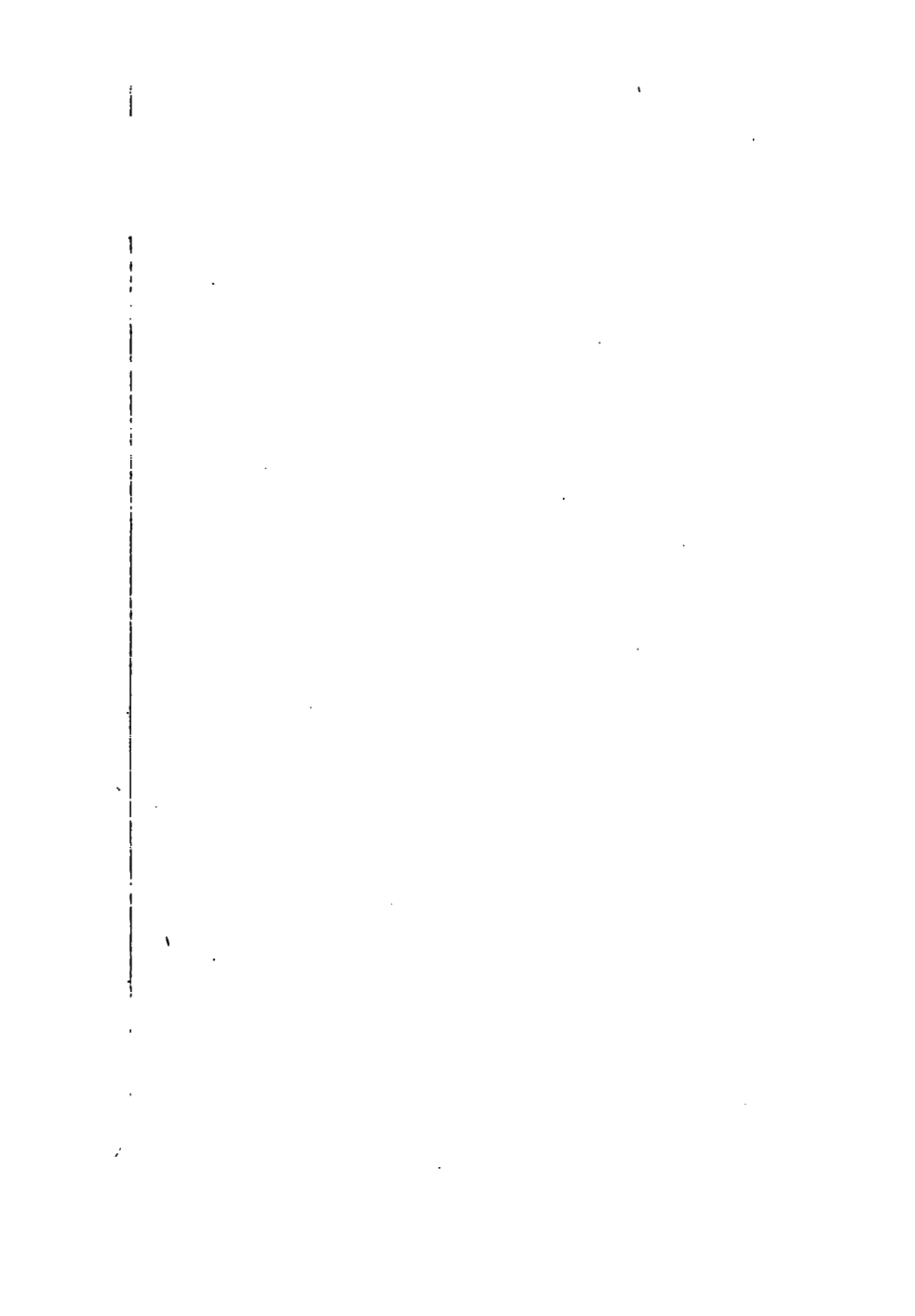
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“Jason answered only by drawing his sword and making a step forward. ‘Stay, foolish youth,’ said Medea, grasping his arm.”—Page 135.

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THE  
TANGLEWOOD TALES

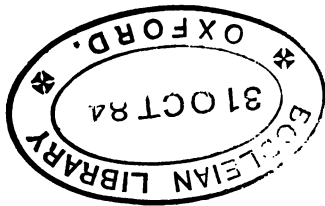
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## N O T E.

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THESE 'TANGLEWOOD TALES,' by Nathaniel Hawthorne, are the old Greek stories retold. The Introductions and Epilogues, which were full of allusions to American scenery and American customs, have been omitted.

# TANGLEWOOD TALES.

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## THE GORGON'S HEAD.



PERSEUS was the son of Danaë, who was the daughter of a king. And when Perseus was a very little boy, some wicked people put his mother and himself into a chest, and set them afloat upon the sea. The wind blew freshly, and drove the chest away from the shore, and the uneasy billows tossed it up and down; while Danaë clasped her child to her bosom, and dreaded that some big wave would dash its foamy crest over them both. The chest sailed on, however, and neither sank nor was upset; until, when night was coming on, it floated so near an island that it got entangled in a fisherman's nets, and was drawn out high and dry upon the sand. The island was called Serîphus, and it was reigned over by King Polydectes, who happened to be the fisherman's brother.

This fisherman was an exceedingly humane and upright man. He showed great kindness to Danaë and her little boy; and continued to befriend them, until Perseus had grown to be a handsome youth, very strong and active, and skilful in the use of arms. Long before this time, King Polydectes had seen the two strangers—the mother and her child—who had come to his dominions in a floating chest. As he was not good and kind, like his brother the fisher-

man, but extremely wicked, he resolved to send Perseus on a dangerous enterprise, in which he would probably be killed, and then to do some great mischief to Danaë herself. So this bad-hearted king spent a long while in considering what was the most dangerous thing that a young man could possibly try to perform. At last, having hit upon an enterprise that promised to turn out as fatally as he desired, he sent for the youthful Perseus.

The young man came to the palace, and found the king sitting upon his throne.

"Perseus," said King Polydectes, smiling craftily upon him, "you are grown up a fine young man. You and your good mother have received a great deal of kindness from myself, as well as from my worthy brother the fisherman, and I suppose you would not be sorry to repay some of it."

"May it please your majesty," answered Perseus, "I would willingly risk my life to do so."

"Well, then," continued the king, with a cunning smile on his lips, "I have a little adventure to propose to you; and, as you are a brave and enterprising youth, you will doubtless look upon it as a great piece of good luck to have so rare an opportunity of distinguishing yourself. You must know, my good Perseus, I think of getting married to the beautiful Princess Hippodamia; and it is customary, on these occasions, to make the bride a present of some far-fetched and wonderful curiosity. I have been a little perplexed, I must honestly confess, where to obtain anything likely to please a princess of her exquisite taste. But, this morning, I flatter myself, I have thought of the very thing."

"And can I help your majesty to get it?" cried Perseus, eagerly.

"You can, if you are as brave a youth as I believe you to be," replied King Polydectes, with the utmost graciousness of manner. "The bridal gift which I have set my heart on presenting to the beautiful Hippodamia is the head of the Gorgon Medusa, with the snaky locks; and I depend on you, my dear Perseus, to bring it to me. So, as I am anxious to settle affairs with the princess, the sooner you go in quest of the Gorgon, the better I shall be pleased."

"I will set out to-morrow morning," answered Perseus.

"Pray do so, my gallant youth," rejoined the king. "And, Perseus, in cutting off the Gorgon's head, be careful to make a clean stroke, so as not to injure its appearance."

Perseus left the palace, but was scarcely out of hearing before Polydectes burst into a laugh; being greatly amused, wicked king that he was! to find how readily the young man fell into the snare. The news quickly spread abroad, that Perseus had undertaken to cut off the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. Everybody was rejoiced; for most of the inhabitants of the island were as wicked as the king himself, and would have liked nothing better than to see some terrible mischief happen to Danaë and her son. The only good man in this unfortunate island of Seriphus appears to have been the fisherman. As Perseus walked along, therefore, the people pointed after him, and made mouths, and winked to one another, and ridiculed him as loudly as they dared.

"Ho, ho!" cried they; "Medusa's snakes will sting him soundly!"

Now there were three Gorgons alive at that period; and they were the most strange and terrible monsters that had ever been seen since the world was made, or that have been seen in after-days, or that are likely to be seen in all time to come. I hardly know what sort of creature or hobgoblin to call them. They were three sisters, and seem to have borne some distant resemblance to women, but were really a very frightful and mischievous species of dragon. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine what hideous beings these three sisters were. Instead of locks of hair, they had each of them a hundred enormous snakes growing on their heads, all alive, twisting, wriggling, curling, and thrusting out their venomous tongues, with forked stings at the end! The teeth of the Gorgons were terribly long tusks; their hands were made of brass; and their bodies were all over scales, which, if not iron, were something as hard and impenetrable. They had wings, too, and exceedingly splendid ones; for every feather in them was pure, bright, glittering, burnished gold, and they looked very dazzling and bright when the Gorgons were flying about in the sunshine.

But when people happened to catch a glimpse of their glittering brightness, aloft in the air, they seldom stopped to gaze, but ran and hid themselves as fast as they could. You will think, perhaps, that they were afraid of being stung by the serpents that served the Gorgons instead of hair,—or of having their heads bitten off by their ugly tusks,—or of being torn to pieces by their brazen claws. Well, to be sure, these were some of the dangers, but by no means the greatest, nor the most difficult to avoid. For the worst thing about these Gorgons was, that, if once a poor mortal fixed his eyes full upon one of their faces, he was certain, that very instant, to be changed from warm flesh and blood into cold and lifeless stone!

Thus it was a very dangerous adventure that the wicked King Polydectes had contrived for this innocent young man. Perseus himself, when he had thought over the matter, could not help seeing that he had very little chance of coming safely through it, and that he was far more likely to become a stone image than to bring back the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. For, not to speak of other difficulties, there was one which it would have puzzled an older man than Perseus to get over. Not only must he fight with and slay this golden-winged, iron-scaled, long-tusked, brazen-clawed, snaky-haired monster, but he must do it with his eyes shut, or, at least, without so much as a glance at the enemy with whom he was contending. Else, while his arm was lifted to strike, he would stiffen into stone, and stand with that uplifted arm for centuries, until time, and the wind and weather, should crumble him quite away. This would be a very sad thing to befall a young man, who wanted to perform a great many brave deeds, and to enjoy a great deal of happiness, in this bright and beautiful world.

So sad did these thoughts make him, that Perseus could not bear to tell his mother what he had undertaken to do. He therefore took his shield, girded on his sword, and crossed over from the island to the mainland, where he sat down in a solitary place, and could hardly keep from shedding tears.

But while he was in this sorrowful mood, he heard a voice close beside him.

"Perseus," said the voice, "why are you so sad?"

He lifted his head from his hands, in which he had hidden it, and behold! all alone as Perseus had supposed himself to be, there was a stranger in the solitary place. It was a handsome, intelligent, and shrewd-looking young man, with a cloak over his shoulders, an odd sort of cap on his head, a strangely twisted staff in his hand, and a short and very crooked sword hanging by his side. He was exceedingly light and active in his figure, like a person much accustomed to gymnastic exercises, and well able to leap or run. Above all, the stranger had such a cheerful and helpful look, that Perseus could not help feeling his spirits grow livelier, as he gazed at him. Besides, being really a courageous youth, he felt greatly ashamed that anybody should have found him sitting with tears in his eyes, like a timid little schoolboy, when, after all, perhaps there might be no reason for despair. So Perseus wiped his eyes, and answered the stranger pretty briskly, putting on as brave a look as he could.

"I am not so very sad," said he; "only thoughtful about an adventure that I have undertaken."

"Oho!" answered the stranger. "Well, tell me all about it, and possibly I may be of service to you. I have helped a good many young men through adventures that looked difficult enough beforehand. Perhaps you may have heard of me. I have more names than one; but the name of Mercury is the name I am best known by. Tell me what your trouble is, and we will talk the matter over, and see what can be done."

The stranger's words and manner put Perseus into quite a different mood from his former one. He resolved to tell Mercury all his difficulties, since he could not easily be worse off than he already was; and, very possibly, his new friend might give him some advice that would turn out well in the end. So he let the stranger know, in few words, what the case was;—how King Polydectes wanted the head of Medusa with the snaky locks as a bridal gift for the beautiful Princess Hippodamia, and how he had undertaken to get it for him, but was afraid of being turned into stone.

"And that would be a great pity," said Mercury, with his



mischievous smile. "You would make a very handsome marble statue, it is true, and it would be a considerable number of centuries before you crumbled away; but, on the whole, one would rather be a young man for a few years, than a stone image for a great many."

"Oh, far rather!" exclaimed Perseus, with the tears again standing in his eyes. "And, besides, what would my dear mother do, if her son were turned into a stone?"

"Well, well; let us hope that the affair will not turn out so very badly," replied Mercury, in an encouraging tone. "I am the very person to help you, if anybody can. My sister and myself will do our utmost to bring you safe through the adventure, ugly as it now looks."

"Your sister?" repeated Perseus.

"Yes, my sister," said the stranger. "She is very wise, I promise you; and as for myself, I generally have all my wits about me, such as they are. If you show yourself bold and cautious, and follow our advice, you need not fear being made a stone image. But, first of all, you must polish your shield, till you can see your face in it as distinctly as in a mirror."

This seemed to Perseus rather an odd beginning of the adventure; for he thought it of far more consequence that the shield should be strong enough to defend him from the Gorgon's brazen claws, than that it should be bright enough to show him the reflection of his face. However, concluding that Mercury knew better than himself, he set to work, and scrubbed the shield with so much diligence and goodwill, that it very quickly shone like the moon at harvest-time. Mercury looked at it with a smile, and nodded his approbation. Then, taking off his own short and crooked sword, he girded it about Perseus, instead of the one which he had before worn.

"No sword but mine will answer your purpose," observed he: "the blade has a most excellent temper, and will cut through iron and brass as easily as through the slenderest twig. And now we will set out. The next thing is to find the Three Grey Women, who will tell us where to find the Nymphs."

"The Three Grey Women!" cried Perseus, to whom this seemed only a new difficulty in the path of his adventure;

"pray, who may the Three Grey Women be? I never heard of them before."

"They are three very strange old ladies," said Mercury, laughing. "They have but one eye among them, and only one tooth. Moreover, you must find them out by starlight, or in the dusk of the evening; for they never show themselves by the light either of the sun or moon."

"But," said Perseus, "why should I waste my time with these Three Grey Women? Would it not be better to set out at once in search of the terrible Gorgons?"

"No, no," answered his friend. "There are other things to be done, before you can find your way to the Gorgons. There is nothing for it but to find these old ladies; and when we meet with them, you may be sure that the Gorgons are not a great way off. Come, let us go!"

Perseus by this time felt so much confidence in his companion's sagacity, that he made no more objections, and professed himself ready to begin the adventure immediately. They accordingly set out, and walked at a pretty brisk pace; so brisk, indeed, that Perseus found it rather difficult to keep up with his nimble friend Mercury. To say the truth, he had a singular idea that Mercury was furnished with a pair of winged shoes, which, of course, helped him along marvellously. And then, too, when Perseus looked sideways at him, out of the corner of his eye, he seemed to see wings on the side of his head; although, if he turned a full gaze, there were no such things to be perceived, but only an odd kind of cap. But, at all events, the twisted staff was evidently a great help to Mercury, and enabled him to walk so fast, that Perseus, though a remarkably active young man, began to be out of breath.

"Here!" cried Mercury, at last—for he knew well enough, rogue that he was, how hard Perseus found it to keep pace with him—"take you the staff, for you need it a great deal more than I. Are there no better walkers than yourself in the island of Seriphus?"

"I could walk pretty well," said Perseus, glancing slyly at his companion's feet, "if I had only a pair of winged shoes."

"We must try to get you a pair," answered Mercury.

But the staff helped Perseus along so bravely, that he no longer felt the slightest weariness. In fact, the stick seemed to be alive in his hand, and to lend some of its life to Perseus. He and Mercury now walked on at their ease, talking very sociably together ; and Mercury told so many pleasant stories about his former adventures, and how well his wits had served him on various occasions, that Perseus began to think him a very wonderful person. He evidently knew the world, and nobody is so charming to a young man as a friend who has that kind of knowledge. Perseus listened the more eagerly, in the hope of brightening his own wits by what he heard.

At last, he happened to recollect that Mercury had spoken of a sister, who was to lend her assistance in the adventure which they were now bound upon.

"Where is she?" he inquired. "Shall we not meet her soon?"

"All at the proper time," said his companion. "But this sister of mine, you must understand, is quite a different sort of person from myself. She is very grave and prudent, seldom smiles, and never laughs, and makes it a rule not to utter a word unless she has something particular to say. Neither will she listen to any but the wisest conversation."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Perseus; "I shall be afraid to utter a syllable."

"She is a very accomplished person, I assure you," continued Mercury, "and has all the arts and sciences at her fingers' ends. In short, she is so very wise, that many people call her wisdom personified. But, to tell you the truth, she has hardly liveliness enough for my taste; and I think you would scarcely find her so pleasant a travelling companion as myself. She has her good points, nevertheless; and you will find the benefit of them in your encounter with the Gorgons."

By this time it had grown quite dusk. They were now come to a very wild and desert place, overgrown with shaggy bushes, and so silent and solitary that nobody seemed ever to have dwelt or journeyed there. All was waste and desolate in the grey twilight, which grew every moment more obscure. Perseus looked about him rather sadly, and asked Mercury whether they had a great deal further to go.

"Hist! hist!" whispered his companion. "Make no noise! This is just the time and place to meet the Three Grey Women. Be careful that they do not see you before you see them; for, though they have but a single eye among the three, it is as sharp-sighted as half-a-dozen common eyes."

"But what must I do," asked Perseus, "when we meet them?"

Mercury explained to Perseus how the Three Grey Women managed with their one eye. They were in the habit, it seems, of changing it from one to another, as if it had been a pair of spectacles. When one of the three had kept the eye a certain time, she took it out of the socket and passed it to one of her sisters, whose turn it might happen to be, and who immediately clapped it into her own head, and enjoyed a peep at the visible world. Thus it will easily be understood that only one of the Three Grey Women could see, while the other two were in utter darkness; and, moreover, at the instant when the eye was passing from hand to hand, neither of the poor old ladies was able to see anything.

Perseus was so astonished with this information, that he almost fancied his companion was joking with him, and that there were no such old women in the world.

"You will soon find whether I tell the truth or no," observed Mercury. "Hark! hush! hist! hist! There they come now!"

Perseus looked earnestly through the dusk of the evening, and there, sure enough, at no great distance off, he descried the Three Grey Women. The light being so faint, he could not well make out what sort of figures they were—only he discovered that they had long grey hair; and, as they came nearer, he saw that two of them had but the empty socket of an eye in the middle of their foreheads. But in the middle of the third sister's forehead, there was a very large bright and piercing eye, which sparkled like a great diamond in a ring; and so penetrating did it seem to be, that Perseus could not help thinking it must possess the gift of seeing in the darkest midnight just as perfectly as at noonday. The sight of three persons' eyes was melted and collected into that single one.

Thus the three old dames got along about as comfortably, upon the whole, as if they could all see at once. She who chanced to have the eye in her forehead led the other two by the hands, peeping sharply about her all the while; insomuch that Perseus dreaded lest she should see right through the thick clump of bushes behind which he and Mercury had hidden themselves.

But, before they reached the clump of bushes, one of the Three Grey Women spoke :

"Sister ! Sister Scarecrow !" cried she, "you have had the eye long enough. It is my turn now !"

"Let me keep it a moment longer, Sister Nightmare," answered Scarecrow. "I thought I had a glimpse of something behind that thick bush."

"Well, and what of that ?" retorted Nightmare, peevishly. "Can't I see into a thick bush as easily as yourself? The eye is mine, as well as yours ; and I know the use of it as well as you, or may be a little better. I insist upon taking a peep immediately !"

But here the third sister, whose name was Shakejoint, began to complain, and said it was her turn to have the eye, and that Scarecrow and Nightmare wanted to keep it all to themselves. To end the dispute, old Dame Scarecrow took the eye out of her forehead, and held it forth in her hand.

"Take it, one of you," cried she, "and stop this foolish quarrelling. For my part, I shall be glad of a little thick darkness. Take it quickly, I say, or I must place it in my own head again !"

Accordingly, both Nightmare and Shakejoint stretched out their hands, groping eagerly to snatch the eye out of the hand of Scarecrow. But, being both alike blind, they could not easily find where Scarecrow's hand was ; and Scarecrow, being now just as much in the dark as Shakejoint and Nightmare, could not at once meet either of their hands, in order to put the eye into it. Thus these good old dames had fallen into a strange perplexity. For, though the eye shone and glistened like a star as Scarecrow held it out, yet the Grey Women caught not the least glimpse of its light, and were all three in utter darkness, from too impatient a desire to see.

Mercury was so much amused at beholding Shakejoint and Nightmare both groping for the eye, and each finding fault with Scarecrow and one another, that he could scarcely help laughing aloud.

"Now is your time!" he whispered to Perseus. "Quick, quick! before they can put the eye into either of their heads. Rush out upon the old ladies, and snatch it from Scarecrow's hand!"

In an instant, while the Three Grey Women were still scolding each other, Perseus leaped from behind the clump of bushes, and made himself master of the prize. The marvellous eye, as he held it in his hand, shone very brightly, and seemed to look up into his face with a knowing air. But the Grey Women knew nothing of what had happened; and, each supposing that one of her sisters was in possession of the eye, they began their quarrel anew. At last, as Perseus did not wish to put these respectable dames to greater inconvenience than was really necessary, he thought it right to explain the matter.

"My good ladies," said he, "pray do not be angry with one another. If anybody is in fault, it is myself; for I have the honour to hold your very brilliant and excellent eye in my own hand!"

"You! you have our eye! And who are you, then?" screamed the Three Grey Women, all in a breath; for they were terribly frightened, of course, at hearing a strange voice, and discovering that their eyesight had got into the hands of they could not guess whom? "Oh! what shall we do, sisters? what shall we do? We are all in the dark! Give us our eye! Give us our one, precious, solitary eye! You have two of your own! Give us our eye!"

"Tell them," whispered Mercury to Perseus, "that they shall have back the eye as soon as they direct you where to find the Nymphs who have the flying slippers, the magic wallet, and the helmet of darkness."

"My dear, good, old ladies," said Perseus, addressing the Grey Women, "there is no occasion for putting yourselves into such a fright. I mean to do you no harm. You shall have back your eye, safe and sound, and as bright as ever, the moment you tell me where to find the Nymphs."

"The Nymphs! what Nymphs does he mean?" screamed Scarecrow. "There are a great many Nymphs, people say; some that go a-hunting in the woods, and some that live inside trees, and some that have a comfortable home in fountains of water. We know nothing at all about them. We are three unfortunate old women, that go wandering about in the dusk, and never had but one eye amongst us, and that one you have now stolen away. Oh, give it back, good stranger!—whoever you are, give it back!"

All this while, the Three Grey Women were groping with their outstretched hands, and trying their utmost to get hold of Perseus. But he took good care to keep out of their reach.

"My respectable dames," said he—for his mother had taught him always to use the greatest civility—"I hold your eye fast in my hand, and shall keep it safely for you until you please to tell me where to find these Nymphs. The Nymphs, I mean, who keep the enchanted wallet, the flying slippers, and the helmet of darkness."

"What is the young man talking about?" exclaimed Scarecrow, Nightmare, and Shakejoint, all in a breath. "A pair of flying slippers, did he say? His heels would quickly fly higher than his head, if he were silly enough to put them on. And a helmet of darkness! How could a helmet make him invisible, unless it were big enough for him to hide under it? And an enchanted wallet! What sort of contrivance may that be, I wonder? No, no, good stranger! we can tell you nothing of these marvellous things. You have two eyes of your own, and we but a single one amongst us three. You can find out such wonders better than three blind old creatures like us."

Perseus, hearing them talk in this way, began really to think that the Grey Women knew nothing of the matter; and, as it grieved him to have put them to so much trouble, he was just on the point of restoring their eye, and asking pardon for his rudeness in snatching it away. But Mercury caught his hand.

"Don't let them deceive you!" said he. "These Three Grey Women are the only persons in the world that can tell you where to find the Nymphs; and, unless you get that information, you will never succeed in cutting off the head of

Medusa with the snaky locks. Keep fast hold of the eye, and all will go well."

As it turned out, Mercury was in the right. There are but few things that people prize so much as they do their eyesight; and the Grey Women valued their single eye as highly as if it had been half a dozen, which was the number they ought to have had. Finding that there was no other way of recovering it, they at last told Perseus what he wanted to know. No sooner had they done so, than he immediately, and with the utmost respect, placed the eye into the vacant socket of one of their foreheads, thanked them for their kindness, and bade them farewell."

Now Mercury and Perseus made the best of their way in quest of the Nymphs. The old dames had given them such particular directions that they were not long in finding them out. They proved to be very different persons from Nightmare, Shakejoint, and Scarecrow: for, instead of being old, they were young and beautiful; and instead of one eye amongst the sisterhood, each Nymph had two exceedingly bright eyes of her own, with which she looked very kindly at Perseus. They seemed to be acquainted with Mercury; and, when he told them the adventure which Perseus had undertaken, they made no difficulty about giving him the valuable things that were in their custody. In the first place, they brought out what appeared to be a small purse, made of deerskin, and curiously embroidered, and bade him be sure and keep it safe. This was the magic wallet. The Nymphs next produced a pair of shoes, or slippers, with a nice little pair of wings at the heel of each.

"Put them on, Perseus," said Mercury. "You will find yourself as light-heeled as you can desire for the remainder of our journey."

So Perseus proceeded to put one of the slippers on, while he laid the other on the ground by his side. Unexpectedly, however, this other slipper spread its wings, fluttered up off the ground, and would probably have flown away, if Mercury had not made a leap and luckily caught it in the air.

When Perseus had got on both of these wonderful slippers, he was altogether too buoyant to tread on earth. Making a



step or two, lo and behold ! he rose into the air, high above the heads of Mercury and the Nymphs, and found it very difficult to come down again. Mercury laughed at his companion, and told him that he must not be in so very great a hurry, but must wait for the helmet of darkness.

The good-natured Nymphs had the helmet, with its dark tuft of waving plumes, all in readiness to put upon his head. And now there happened a most wonderful incident. The instant before the helmet was put on, there stood Perseus, a beautiful young man, with golden ringlets and rosy cheeks, the crooked sword by his side, and the brightly polished shield upon his arm—a figure that seemed all made up of courage, sprightliness, and glorious light. But when the helmet had descended over his white brow, there was no longer any Perseus to be seen ! Nothing but empty air ! Even the helmet that covered him with its darkness had vanished !

“Where are you, Perseus ?” asked Mercury.

“Why, here, to be sure !” answered Perseus, very quietly, although his voice seemed to come out of the empty air. “Just where I was a moment ago. Don’t you see me ?”

“No, indeed !” answered his friend. “You are hidden under the helmet. But, if I cannot see you, neither can the Gorgons. Follow me, therefore, and we will try your dexterity in using the winged slippers.”

With these words, Mercury’s cap spread its wings, as if his head were about to fly away from his shoulders ; but his whole figure rose lightly into the air, and Perseus followed. By the time they had ascended a few hundred feet, the young man began to feel how delightful a thing it was to leave the dull earth so far beneath him, and to be able to flit about like a bird.

It was now deep night. Perseus looked upward, and saw the round, bright, silvery moon, and thought that he should desire nothing better than to soar up thither, and spend his life there. Then he looked downward again, and saw the earth, with its seas, and lakes, and the silver courses of its rivers, and its snowy mountain-peaks, and the breadth of its fields, and the dark cluster of its woods, and its cities of white marble ; and, with the moonshine sleeping over the whole

scene, it was as beautiful as the moon or any star could be. And, among other objects, he saw the island of Seriphus, where his dear mother was. Sometimes he and Mercury approached a cloud, that, at a distance, looked as if it were made of fleecy silver; although, when they plunged into it, they found themselves chilled and moistened with grey mist. So swift was their flight, however, that in an instant they emerged from the cloud into the moonlight again.

As the two companions flew onward, Perseus fancied that he could hear the rustle of a garment close by his side; and it was on the side opposite to the one where he beheld Mercury, yet only Mercury was visible.

"Whose garment is this," inquired Perseus, "that keeps rustling close beside me in the breeze?"

"Oh, it is my sister's!" answered Mercury. "She is coming along with us, as I told you she would. We could do nothing without the help of my sister. You have no idea how wise she is. She has such eyes, too! Why, she can see you at this moment just as distinctly as if you were not invisible; and I'll venture to say she will be the first to discover the Gorgons."

By this time, in their swift voyage through the air, they had come within sight of the great ocean, and were soon flying over it. Far beneath them the waves tossed themselves wildly in mid-sea, or rolled a white surf-line upon the long beaches, or foamed against the rocky cliffs with a roar that was thunderous in the lower world, although it became a gentle murmur, like the voice of a baby half asleep, before it reached the ears of Perseus. Just then a voice spoke in the air close by him. It seemed to be a woman's voice, and was melodious, though not exactly what might be called sweet, but grave and mild.

"Perseus," said the voice, "there are the Gorgons!"

"Where?" exclaimed Perseus. "I cannot see them."

"On the shore of that island beneath you," replied the voice. "A pebble, dropped from your hand, would strike in the midst of them."

"I told you she would be the first to discover them," said Mercury to Perseus. "And there they are!"

Straight downward, two or three thousand feet below him, Perseus perceived a small island, with the sea breaking into white foam all around its rocky shore, except on one side, where there was a beach of snowy sand. He descended towards it, and, looking earnestly at a cluster or heap of brightness at the foot of a precipice of black rocks, behold! there were the terrible Gorgons! They lay fast asleep, soothed by the thunder of the sea; for it required a tumult that would have deafened any one of human kind to lull such fierce creatures into slumber. The moonlight glistened on their steely scales and on their golden wings, which drooped idly over the sand. Their brazen claws, horrible to look at, were thrust out, and clutched the wave-beaten fragments of rock, while the sleeping Gorgons dreamed of tearing some poor mortal all to pieces. The snakes, that served them instead of hair, seemed likewise to be asleep, although now and then one would writhe, and lift its head, and thrust out its forked tongue, emitting a drowsy hiss, and then let itself sink down among its sister snakes.

The Gorgons were more like an awful, gigantic kind of insect—immense, golden-winged beetles or dragon-flies, or things of that sort,—at once ugly and beautiful,—than like anything else; only that they were a thousand and a million times as big. And with all this, there was something partly human about them, too. Luckily for Perseus, their faces were completely hidden from him by the posture in which they lay; for, had he but looked one instant at them, he would have fallen heavily out of the air, an image of senseless stone.

“Now,” whispered Mercury, as he hovered by the side of Perseus, “now is your time to do the deed! Be quick; for if one of the Gorgons should awake, you are too late!”

“Which shall I strike at?” asked Perseus, drawing his sword, and descending a little lower. “They all three look alike. All three have snaky locks. Which of the three is Medusa?”

Now Medusa was the only one of these dragon-monsters whose head Perseus could possibly cut off. As for the other two, let him have the sharpest sword that ever was forged,

and he might have hacked away by the hour together without doing them the least harm.

"Be cautious," said the calm voice which had before spoken to him. "One of the Gorgons is stirring in her sleep, and is just about to turn over. That is Medusa. Do not look at her! The sight would turn you to stone. Look at the reflection of her face and figure in the bright mirror of your shield."

Perseus now understood Mercury's motive for so earnestly exhorting him to polish his shield. In its surface he could safely look at the reflection of the Gorgon's face. And there it was—that terrible countenance—mirrored in the brightness of the shield, with the moonlight falling over it, and displaying all its horror. The snakes, whose venomous nature could not altogether sleep, kept twisting themselves over the forehead. It was the fiercest and most horrible face that ever was seen or imagined, and yet with a strange, fearful, and savage kind of beauty in it. The eyes were closed, and the Gorgon was still in a deep slumber; but there was an unquiet expression disturbing her features, as if the monster was troubled with an ugly dream. She gnashed her white tusks, and dug into the sand with her brazen claws.

The snakes, too, seemed to feel Medusa's dream, and to be made more restless by it. They twined themselves into tumultuous knots, writhed fiercely, and uplifted a hundred hissing heads, without opening their eyes.

"Now, now!" whispered Mercury, who was growing impatient. "Make a dash at the monster!"

"But be calm," said the grave, melodious voice at the young man's side. "Look in your shield as you fly downward, and take care that you do not miss your first stroke."

Perseus flew cautiously downward, still keeping his eyes on Medusa's face, as reflected in his shield. The nearer he came, the more terrible did the snaky visage and metallic body of the monster grow. At last, when he found himself hovering over her within arm's length, Perseus uplifted his sword, while, at the same instant, each separate snake upon the Gorgon's head stretched threateningly upward, and Medusa unclosed her eyes. But she awoke too late. The sword was

sharp, the stroke fell like a lightning-flash, and the head of the wicked Medusa tumbled from her body !

“ Well done ! ” cried Mercury. “ Make haste, and clap the head into your magic wallet.”

To the astonishment of Perseus, the small embroidered wallet, which he had hung about his neck, and which had hitherto been no bigger than a purse, grew all at once large enough to contain Medusa’s head. As quick as thought he snatched it up, with the snakes still writhing upon it, and thrust it in.

“ Your task is done,” said the calm voice. “ Now fly, for the other Gorgons will do their utmost to take vengeance for Medusa’s death.”

It was indeed necessary to take flight ; for Perseus had not done the deed so quietly, but that the clash of his sword, and the hissing of the snakes, and the thump of Medusa’s head as it tumbled upon the sea-beaten sand, awoke the two other monsters. There they sat for an instant, sleepily rubbing their eyes with their brazen fingers, while all the snakes on their heads reared themselves on end with surprise, and with venomous malice against they knew not what. But, when the Gorgons saw the scaly carcass of Medusa, headless, and her golden wings all ruffled, and half spread out on the sand, it was really awful to hear what yells and shrieks they uttered. And then the snakes ! They sent forth a hundredfold hiss with one consent, and Medusa’s snakes answered them, out of the magic wallet.

No sooner were the Gorgons fully awake, than they hurtled upward into the air, brandishing their brass talons, gnashing their horrible tusks, and flapping their huge wings so wildly, that some of the golden feathers were shaken out, and floated down upon the shore. And there perhaps those very feathers lie scattered till this day. Up rose the Gorgons, as I tell you, staring horribly about, in hope of turning somebody to stone. Had Perseus looked them in the face, or had he fallen into their clutches, his poor mother would never have kissed her boy again ! But he took good care to turn his eyes another way ; and, as he wore the helmet of darkness, the Gorgons knew not in what direction to follow him ; nor did he fail to



Perseus flew cautiously downward, still keeping his eyes on Medusa's face, as reflected in his shield."—Page 21.



make the best use of the winged slippers, by soaring upward a mile or so. At that height, when the screams of those abominable creatures sounded faintly beneath him, he made a straight course for the island of Seriphus, in order to carry Medusa's head to King Polydectes.

I have no time to tell you of several marvellous things that befell Perseus on his way homeward—such as his killing a hideous sea-monster, just as it was on the point of devouring a beautiful maiden; nor how he changed an enormous giant into a mountain of stone, merely by showing him the head of the Gorgon. If you doubt this latter story, you may make a voyage to Africa, some day or other, and see the very mountain, which is still known by the ancient giant's name.

At length our brave Perseus arrived at the island, where he expected to see his dear mother. But during his absence the wicked king had treated Danaë so very ill, that she was compelled to make her escape, and had taken refuge in a temple, where some good old priests were extremely kind to her. These praiseworthy priests, and the kind-hearted fisherman, who had first shown hospitality to Danaë and little Perseus, when he found them afloat in the chest, seem to have been the only persons on the island who cared about doing right. All the rest of the people, as well as King Polydectes himself, were remarkably ill-behaved, and deserved no better fate than that which was now to befall them.

Not finding his mother at home, Perseus went straight to the palace, and was immediately ushered into the presence of the king. Polydectes was by no means rejoiced to see him; for he had felt almost certain in his own evil mind that the Gorgons would have torn the poor young man to pieces. However, seeing him safely returned, he put the best face he could upon the matter, and asked Perseus how he had succeeded.

"Have you performed your promise?" inquired he. "Have you brought me the head of Medusa with the snaky locks? If not, young man, it will cost you dear; for I must have a bridal present for the beautiful princess Hippodamia, and there is nothing else that she would admire so much."

"Yes, please your majesty," answered Perseus, in a quiet way, as if it were no very wonderful deed for such a young



man as he to perform. "I have brought you the Gorgon's head, snaky locks and all!"

"Indeed! Pray let me see it," quoth King Polydectes. "It must be a very curious spectacle, if all that travellers tell about it be true!"

"Your majesty is right," replied Perseus. "It is really an object that will be certain to fix the regards of all who look at it. And, if your majesty think fit, I would suggest that a holiday be proclaimed, and that all your majesty's subjects be summoned to behold this wonderful curiosity. Few of them, I imagine, have seen a Gorgon's head before, and perhaps never may again!"

The king well knew that his subjects were idle, and very fond of sight-seeing, as idle persons usually are. So he took the young man's advice, and sent out heralds and messengers in all directions to blow the trumpet at the street-corners, and in the market-places, and wherever two roads met, and summon everybody to court. Thither, accordingly, came a great multitude of vagabonds, all of whom, out of pure love of mischief, would have been glad if Perseus had met with some ill hap in his encounter with the Gorgons. If there were any better people in the island, they stayed quietly at home, minding their own business, and taking care of their little children. Most of the inhabitants, at all events, ran as fast as they could to the palace, and shoved, and pushed, and elbowed one another, in their eagerness to get near a balcony, on which Perseus showed himself, holding the embroidered wallet in his hand.

On a platform, within full view of the balcony, sat the mighty King Polydectes, amid his evil counsellors, and with his flattering courtiers in a semicircle round about him. Monarch, counsellors, courtiers, and subjects, all gazed eagerly towards Perseus.

"Show us the head! Show us the head!" shouted the people; and there was a fierceness in their cry, as if they would tear Perseus to pieces, unless he should satisfy them with what he had to show. "Show us the head of Medusa with the snaky locks!"

A feeling of sorrow and pity came over the youthful Perseus.

"O King Polydectes," cried he, "and ye, many people, I am very loath to show you the Gorgon's head!"

"Ah, the villain and coward!" yelled the people more fiercely than before. "He is making game of us! He has no Gorgon's head! Show us the head if you have it, or we will take your own head for a football!"

The evil counsellors whispered bad advice in the king's ear; the courtiers murmured with one consent that Perseus had shown disrespect to their royal lord and master; and the great King Polydectes himself waved his hand, and ordered him, with the stern deep voice of authority, on his peril to produce the head.

"Show me the Gorgon's head, or I will cut off your own!" And Perseus sighed.

"This instant," repeated Polydectes, "or you die!"

"Behold it, then!" cried Perseus, in a voice like the blast of a trumpet.

And, suddenly holding up the head, not an eyelid had time to wink before the wicked King Polydectes, his evil counsellors, and all his fierce subjects, were no longer anything but the mere images of a monarch and his people. They were all fixed for ever in the look and attitude of that moment! At the first glimpse of the terrible head of Medusa they whitened into marble!

And Perseus thrust the head back into his wallet, and went to tell his dear mother that she need no longer fear the wiles of the wicked King Polydectes.

## THE GOLDEN TOUCH.



ONCE upon a time there lived a very rich man, and a king besides, whose name was Midas; and he had a little daughter, whom nobody but myself ever heard of, and whose name I either never knew, or have entirely forgotten. So, because I love odd names for little girls, I choose to call her Marygold.

This King Midas was fonder of gold than of anything else in the world. He valued his royal crown chiefly because it was composed of that precious metal. If he loved anything better, or half so well, it was the one little maiden who played so merrily around her father's footstool. But the more Midas loved his daughter, the more did he desire and seek for wealth. He thought, foolish man! that the best thing he could possibly do for this dear child would be to bequeath her the largest pile of yellow glistening coins that had ever been heaped together since the world was made. Thus he gave all his thoughts and all his time to this one purpose. If he ever happened to gaze for an instant at the gold-tinted clouds of sunset, he wished that they were real gold, and that they could be squeezed safely into his strong-box. When little Marygold ran to meet him, with a bunch of buttercups and dandelions, he used to say, "Pooh, pooh, child! If these flowers were as golden as they look, they would be worth the plucking!"

And yet, in his earlier days, before he was so entirely possessed with this insane desire for riches, King Midas had shown a great taste for flowers. He had planted a garden, in which grew the biggest, the most beautiful, and the sweetest roses that any mortal ever saw or smelt. These roses were still growing in the garden, as large, as lovely, and as fragrant as when Midas used to pass whole hours in gazing at them and inhaling their perfume. But now, if he looked at them at all, it was only to calculate how much the garden would be worth

if each of the innumerable rose-petals were a thin plate of gold. And though he once was fond of music (in spite of an idle story about his ears, which were said to resemble those of an ass), the only music for poor Midas now was the clink of one coin against another.

At length (as people always grow more and more foolish, unless they take care to grow wiser and wiser) Midas had got to be so exceedingly unreasonable, that he could scarcely bear to see or touch any object that was not gold. He made it his custom, therefore, to pass a large portion of every day in a dark and dreary apartment, under ground, at the basement of his palace. It was here that he kept his wealth. To this dismal hole—for it was little better than a dungeon—Midas betook himself whenever he wanted to be particularly happy. Here, after carefully locking the door, he would take a bag stuffed with gold coins, or a gold cup as big as a wash-bowl, or a heavy golden bar, or a peck-measure of gold-dust, and bring them from the obscure corners of the room into the one bright and narrow sunbeam that fell from the dungeon-like window. He valued the sunbeam for no other reason but that his treasure would not shine without its help. And then would he reckon over the coins in the bag; toss up the bar, and catch it as it came down; sift the gold-dust through his fingers; look at the funny image of his own face, as reflected in the burnished circumference of the cup; and whisper to himself, "O Midas, rich King Midas, what a happy man art thou!"

Midas called himself a happy man, but felt that he was not yet quite so happy as he might be. The very summit of enjoyment would never be reached, unless the whole world were to become his treasure-room, and be filled with yellow metal which should be all his own.

Midas was enjoying himself in his treasure-room one day, as usual, when he perceived a shadow fall over the heaps of gold; and looking suddenly up, he beheld the figure of a stranger standing in the bright and narrow sunbeam! It was a young man, with a cheerful and ruddy face. Whether it was that the imagination of King Midas threw a yellow tinge over everything, or whatever the cause might be, he could not help fancying that the smile with which the stranger regarded him

had a kind of golden brightness in it. Certainly, although his figure intercepted the sunshine, there was now a brighter gleam upon all the piled-up treasures than before. Even the remotest corners had their share of it, and were lighted up, when the stranger smiled, as with tips of flame and sparkles of fire.

As Midas knew that he had carefully turned the key in the lock, and that no mortal strength could possibly break into his treasure-room, he, of course, concluded that his visitor must be something more than mortal. Midas had met such beings before now, and was not sorry to meet one of them again. The stranger's aspect, indeed, was so good-humoured and kindly, if not beneficent, that it would have been unreasonable to suspect him of intending any mischief. It was far more probable that he came to do Midas a favour. And what could that favour be, unless to multiply his heaps of treasure!

The stranger gazed about the room; and when his lustrous smile had glistened upon all the golden objects that were there, he turned again to Midas.

"You are a wealthy man, friend Midas!" he observed. "I doubt whether any other four walls on earth contain so much gold as you have contrived to pile up in this room."

"I have done pretty well—pretty well," answered Midas, in a slightly discontented tone. "But, after all, it is but a trifle, when you consider that it has taken me my whole lifetime to get it together. If one could live a thousand years, he might have time to grow rich!"

"What!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then you are not satisfied?"

Midas shook his head.

"And pray what would satisfy you?" asked the stranger. "Merely for the curiosity of the thing, I should be glad to know."

Midas paused and meditated. He felt sure that this stranger, with such a golden lustre in his good-humoured smile, had come hither with both the power and the purpose of gratifying his utmost wishes. Now, therefore, was the fortunate moment, when he had but to speak, and obtain whatever possible, or seemingly impossible thing, it might

come into his head to ask. So he thought, and thought, and thought, and heaped up one golden mountain upon another in his imagination, without being able to imagine them big enough. At last a bright idea occurred to King Midas. It seemed really as bright as the glistening metal which he loved so much.

Raising his head, he looked the lustrous stranger in the face.

"Well, Midas," observed his visitor, "I see that you have at length hit upon something that will satisfy you. Tell me your wish."

"It is only this," replied Midas; "I am weary of collecting my treasures with so much trouble, and beholding the heap so diminutive after I have done my best. I wish everything that I touch to be changed to gold!"

The stranger's smile grew so bright and radiant, that it seemed to fill the room like an outburst of the sun gleaming into a shadowy dell, where the yellow autumnal leaves—for so looked the lumps and particles of gold—lie strewn in the glow of light.

"The Golden Touch!" exclaimed he. "You certainly deserve credit, friend Midas, for striking out so brilliant a fancy. But are you quite sure that this will satisfy you?"

"How could it fail?" said Midas.

"And you will never regret the possession of it?"

"What could induce me?" asked Midas. "I ask nothing else, to render me perfectly happy."

"Be it as you wish, then," replied the stranger, waving his hand in token of farewell. "To-morrow, at sunrise, you will find yourself gifted with the Golden Touch."

The figure of the stranger then became exceedingly bright, and Midas involuntarily closed his eyes. On opening them again, he beheld only one yellow sunbeam in the room, and, all around him, the glistening of the precious metal which he had spent his life in hoarding up.

Whether Midas slept as usual that night, the story does not say. Asleep or awake, however, his mind was probably in the state of a child's, to whom a beautiful new plaything has been promised in the morning. At any rate, day had hardly peeped over the hills when King Midas was broad awake,

and, stretching his arms out of bed, began to touch the objects that were within reach. He was anxious to prove whether the Golden Touch had really come, according to the stranger's promise. So he laid his finger on a chair by the bedside, and on various other things, but was grievously disappointed to perceive that they remained of exactly the same substance as before. Indeed he felt very much afraid that he had only dreamed about the lustrous stranger, or else that the latter had purposely deceived him. And what a miserable affair would it be, if, after all his hopes, Midas must content himself with what little gold he could scrape together by ordinary means, instead of creating it by a touch!

All this while it was only the grey of the morning, with but a streak of brightness along the edge of the sky, where Midas could not see it. He lay in a very sad and disappointed mood, regretting the downfall of his hopes, and kept growing sadder and sadder, until the earliest sunbeam shone through the window, and gilded the ceiling over his head. It seemed to Midas that this bright yellow sunbeam was reflected in rather a singular way on the white covering of the bed. Looking more closely, what was his astonishment and delight when he found that this linen fabric had been transmuted to what seemed a woven texture of the purest and brightest gold! The Golden Touch had come to him with the first sunbeam!

Midas started up in a kind of joyful frenzy, and ran about the room, grasping at everything that happened to be in his way. He seized one of the bedposts, and it became immediately a fluted golden pillar. He pulled aside a window-curtain, in order to admit a clear spectacle of the wonders which he was performing, and the tassel grew heavy in his hand—a mass of gold. He took up a book from the table. At his first touch, it assumed the appearance of a splendidly bound and gilt-edged volume; but, on running his fingers through the leaves, behold! it was a bundle of thin golden plates, in which all the wisdom of the book had grown illegible. He hurriedly put on his clothes, and was enraptured to see himself in a magnificent suit of gold cloth, which retained its flexibility and softness, although it burdened him a little

with its weight. He drew out his handkerchief, which little Marygold had hemmed for him. That was likewise gold, with the dear child's neat and pretty stitches running all along the border in gold thread!

Somehow or other this last transformation did not quite please King Midas. He would rather that his little daughter's handiwork should have remained just the same as when she had climbed his knee and put it into his hand.

But it was not worth while to vex himself about a trifle. Midas now took his spectacles from his pocket, and put them on his nose, in order that he might see more distinctly what he was about. In those days, spectacles for common people had not been invented, but were already worn by kings; else, how could Midas have had any? To his great perplexity, however, excellent as the glasses were, he discovered that he could not possibly see through them. But this was the most natural thing in the world; for, on taking them off, the transparent crystals turned out to be plates of yellow metal, and, of course, were worthless as spectacles, though valuable as gold. It struck Midas as rather inconvenient that, with all his wealth, he could never again be rich enough to own a pair of serviceable spectacles.

"It is no great matter, nevertheless," said he to himself, very philosophically. "We cannot expect any great good without its being accompanied with some small inconvenience. The Golden Touch is worth the sacrifice of a pair of spectacles at least, if not of one's very eyesight. My own eyes will serve for ordinary purposes, and little Marygold will soon be old enough to read to me."

Wise King Midas was so exalted by his good fortune, that the palace seemed not sufficiently spacious to contain him. He therefore went down-stairs, and smiled on observing that the balustrade of the staircase became a bar of burnished gold as his hand passed over it in his descent. He lifted the door-latch (it was brass only a moment ago, but golden when his fingers quitted it) and emerged into the garden. Here, as it happened, he found a great number of beautiful roses in full bloom, and others in all the stages of lovely bud and blossom. Very delicious was their fragrance in the morning breeze.



Their delicate blush was one of the fairest sights in the world—so gentle, so modest, and so full of sweet soothing did these roses seem to be.

But Midas knew a way to make them far more precious, according to his way of thinking, than roses had ever been before. So he took great pains in going from bush to bush, and exercised his magic touch most untiringly, until every individual flower and bud, and even the worms at the heart of some of them, were changed to gold. By the time this good work was completed, King Midas was summoned to breakfast; and, as the morning air had given him an excellent appetite, he made haste back to the palace.

What was usually a king's breakfast in the days of Midas I really do not know, and cannot now stop to investigate. To the best of my knowledge, however, on this particular morning the breakfast consisted of hot cakes, some nice little brook-trout, roasted potatoes, fresh boiled eggs, and coffee, for King Midas himself, and a bowl of bread and milk for his daughter Marygold.

Little Marygold had not yet made her appearance. Her father ordered her to be called, and, seating himself at table, awaited the child's coming, in order to begin his own breakfast. To do Midas justice, he really loved his daughter, and loved her so much the more this morning, on account of the good fortune which had befallen him. It was not a great while before he heard her coming along the passage, crying bitterly. This circumstance surprised him, because Marygold was one of the most cheerful little people whom you would see in a summer's day, and hardly shed a tear in a twelvemonth. When Midas heard her sobs, he determined to put little Marygold into better spirits by an agreeable surprise; so, leaning across the table, he touched his daughter's bowl (which was a china one, with pretty figures all around it), and changed it into gleaming gold.

Meanwhile Marygold slowly and sadly opened the door, and showed herself with her apron at her eyes, still sobbing as if her heart would break.

"How now, my little lady!" cried Midas. "Pray what is the matter with you, this bright morning?"

Marygold, without taking the apron from her eyes, held out her hand, in which was one of the roses which Midas had so recently changed into gold.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed her father. "And what is there in this magnificent golden rose to make you cry?"

"Ah, dear father," answered the child, between her sobs, "it is not beautiful, but the ugliest flower that ever grew! As soon as I was dressed, I ran into the garden to gather some roses for you; because I know you like them, and like them the better when gathered by your little daughter. But, oh dear, dear me! what do you think has happened? Such a sad thing! All the beautiful roses, that smelled so sweetly and had so many lovely blushes, are blighted and spoilt! They are grown quite yellow, as you see this one, and have no longer any fragrance! What can have been the matter with them?"

"Pooh, my dear little girl, pray don't cry about it!" said Midas, who was ashamed to confess that he himself had wrought the change which so greatly afflicted her. "Sit down and eat your bread and milk. You will find it easy enough to exchange a golden rose like that (which will last hundreds of years) for an ordinary one, which would wither in a day."

"I don't care for such roses as this!" cried Marygold, tossing it contemptuously away. "It has no smell, and the hard petals prick my nose!"

The child now sat down to table, but was so occupied with her grief for the blighted roses that she did not even notice the wonderful change in her china bowl. Perhaps this was all the better; for Marygold was accustomed to take pleasure in looking at the queer figures and strange trees and houses that were painted on the outside of the bowl, and those ornaments were now entirely lost in the yellow hue of the metal.

Midas, meanwhile, had poured out a cup of coffee; and, as a matter of course, the coffee-pot, whatever metal it may have been when he took it up, was gold when he set it down. He thought to himself that it was rather an extravagant style of splendour, in a king of his simple habits, to breakfast off a service of gold, and began to be puzzled with the difficulty of keep-

ing his treasures safe. The cupboard and the kitchen would no longer be a secure place of deposit for articles so valuable as golden bowls and golden coffee-pots.

Amid these thoughts, he lifted a spoonful of coffee to his lips, and sipping it, was astonished to perceive that, the instant his lips touched the liquid, it became molten gold, and the next moment hardened into a lump!

"Ha!" exclaimed Midas, rather aghast.

"What is the matter, father?" asked little Marygold, gazing at him, with the tears still standing in her eyes.

"Nothing, child, nothing!" said Midas. "Have your milk, before it gets quite cold."

He took one of the nice little trouts on his plate, and touched its tail with his finger. To his horror, it was immediately changed from a brook-trout into a gold fish, and looked as if it had been very cunningly made by the nicest goldsmith in the world. Its little bones were now golden wires; its fins and tail were thin plates of gold; and there were the marks of the fork in it, and all the delicate frothy appearance of a nicely fried fish exactly imitated in metal.

"I don't quite see," thought he to himself, "how I am to get any breakfast!"

He took one of the smoking hot cakes, and had scarcely broken it when, to his cruel mortification, though a moment before it had been of the whitest wheat, it assumed a yellow hue. Its solidity and increased weight made him too bitterly sensible that it was gold. Almost in despair he helped himself to a boiled egg, which immediately underwent a change similar to that of the trout and the cake.

"Well, this is terrible," thought he, leaning back in his chair, and looking quite enviously at little Marygold, who was now eating her bread and milk with great satisfaction. "Such a costly breakfast before me, and nothing that can be eaten!"

Hoping that by dint of great despatch he might avoid what he now felt to be a considerable inconvenience, King Midas next snatched a hot potato, and attempted to cram it into his mouth and swallow it in a hurry. But the Golden Touch was too nimble for him. He found his mouth full, not of

mealy potato, but of solid metal, which so burnt his tongue that he roared aloud, and, jumping up from the table, began to dance and stamp about the room, both with pain and affright.

“Father, dear father!” cried little Marygold, who was a very affectionate child, “pray what is the matter? Have you burnt your mouth?”

“Ah, dear child,” groaned Midas, dolefully, “I don’t know what is to become of your poor father!”

And, truly, did you ever hear of such a pitiable case in all your lives? Here was literally the richest breakfast that could be set before a king, and its very richness made it absolutely good for nothing. The poorest labourer, sitting down to his crust of bread and cup of water, was far better off than King Midas, whose delicate food was really worth its weight in gold. And what was to be done? Already, at breakfast, Midas was excessively hungry. Would he be less so by dinner-time? And how ravenous would be his appetite for supper, which must undoubtedly consist of the same sort of indigestible dishes as those now before him! How many days, think you, would he survive a continuance of this rich fare?

These reflections so troubled wise King Midas, that he began to doubt whether, after all, riches are the one desirable thing in the world, or even the most desirable. But this was only a passing thought. So fascinated was Midas with the glitter of the yellow metal, that he would still have refused to give up the Golden Touch for so paltry a consideration as a breakfast. Just imagine what a price for one meal’s victuals! It would have been the same as paying millions and millions of money (and as many millions more as would take for ever to reckon up) for some fried trout, an egg, a potato, a hot cake, and a cup of coffee!

“It would be much too dear,” thought Midas.

Nevertheless, so great was his hunger and the perplexity of his situation, that he again groaned aloud, and very grievously too. Our pretty Marygold could endure it no longer. She sat a moment gazing at her father, and trying, with all the might of her little wits, to find out what was the matter

with him. Then, with a sweet and sorrowful impulse to comfort him, she started from her chair, and running to Midas, threw her arms affectionately about his knees. He bent down and kissed her. He felt that his little daughter's love was worth a thousand times more than he had gained by the Golden Touch.

"My precious, precious Marygold!" cried he.

But Marygold made no answer.

Alas! what had he done? How fatal was the gift which the stranger bestowed! The moment the lips of Midas touched Marygold's forehead, a change had taken place. Her sweet rosy face, so full of affection as it had been, assumed a glittering yellow colour, with yellow tear-drops congealing on her cheeks. Her beautiful brown ringlets took the same tint. Her soft and tender little form grew hard and inflexible within her father's encircling arms. Oh terrible misfortune! The victim of his insatiable desire for wealth, little Marygold was a human child no longer, but a golden statue!

Yes, there she was, with the questioning look of love, grief, and pity hardened into her face. It was the prettiest and most woful sight that ever mortal saw. All the features and tokens of Marygold were there; even the beloved little dimple remained in her golden chin. But the more perfect was the resemblance, the greater was the father's agony at beholding this golden image, which was all that was left him of a daughter. It had been a favourite phrase of Midas, whenever he felt particularly fond of the child, to say that she was worth her weight in gold. And now the phrase had become literally true. And now at last, when it was too late, he felt how infinitely a warm and tender heart, that loved him, exceeded in value all the wealth that could be piled up betwixt the earth and sky!

It would be too sad a story if I were to tell you how Midas, in the fulness of all his gratified desires, began to wring his hands and bemoan himself; and how he could neither bear to look at Marygold, nor yet to look away from her. Except when his eyes were fixed on the image, he could not possibly believe that she was changed to gold. But, stealing another glance, there was the precious little figure, with a yellow tear-

drop on its yellow cheek, and a look so piteous and tender, that it seemed as if that very expression must needs soften the gold, and make it flesh again. This, however, could not be. So Midas had only to wring his hands, and to wish that he were the poorest man in the wide world, if the loss of all his wealth might bring back the faintest rose-colour to his dear child's face.

While he was in this tumult of despair, he suddenly beheld a stranger standing near the door. Midas bent down his head, without speaking; for he recognised the same figure which had appeared to him the day before in the treasure-room, and had bestowed on him this disastrous power of the Golden Touch. The stranger's countenance still wore a smile, which seemed to shed a yellow lustre all about the room, and gleamed on little Marygold's image, and on the other objects that had been transmuted by the touch of Midas.

"Well, friend Midas," said the stranger, "pray how do you succeed with the Golden Touch?"

Midas shook his head.

"I am very miserable," said he.

"Very miserable! indeed!" exclaimed the stranger; "and how happens that? Have I not faithfully kept my promise with you? Have you not everything that your heart desired?"

"Gold is not everything," answered Midas. "And I have lost all that my heart really cared for."

"Ah! So you have made a discovery since yesterday?" observed the stranger. "Let us see, then. Which of these two things do you think is really worth the most,—the gift of the Golden Touch, or one cup of clear cold water?"

"Oh blessed water!" exclaimed Midas; "it will never moisten my parched throat again!"

"The Golden Touch," continued the stranger, "or a crust of bread?"

"A piece of bread," answered Midas, "is worth all the gold on earth!"

"The Golden Touch," asked the stranger, "or your own little Marygold, warm, soft, and loving, as she was an hour ago?"

"O my child, my dear child!" cried poor King Midas, wringing his hands. "I would not have given that one small dimple in her chin for the power of changing this whole big earth into a solid lump of gold!"

"You are wiser than you were, King Midas!" said the stranger, looking seriously at him. "Your own heart, I perceive, has not been entirely changed from flesh to gold. Were it so, your case would indeed be desperate. But you appear to be still capable of understanding that the commonest things, such as lie within everybody's grasp, are more valuable than the riches which so many mortals sigh and struggle after. Tell me, now, do you sincerely desire to rid yourself of this Golden Touch?"

"It is hateful to me!" replied Midas.

A fly settled on his nose, but immediately fell to the floor; for it, too, had become gold. Midas shuddered.

"Go, then," said the stranger, "and plunge into the river that glides past the bottom of your garden. Take likewise a vase of the same water, and sprinkle it over any object that you may desire to change back again from gold into its former substance. If you do this in earnestness and sincerity, it may possibly repair the mischief which your avarice has occasioned."

King Midas bowed low; and when he lifted his head, the lustrous stranger had vanished.

You will easily believe that Midas lost no time in snatching up a great earthen pitcher (but, alas! it was no longer earthen after he touched it), and hastening to the river-side. As he ran along, and forced his way through the shrubbery, it was positively marvellous to see how the foliage turned yellow behind him, as if the autumn had been there and nowhere else. On reaching the river's brink, he plunged headlong in, without waiting so much as to pull off his shoes.

"Poof! poof! poof!" gasped King Midas, as his head emerged out of the water. "Well, this is really a refreshing bath, and I think it must have quite washed away the Golden Touch. And now for filling my pitcher!"

As he dipped the pitcher into the water, it gladdened his very heart to see it change from gold into the same good

honest earthen vessel which it had been before he touched it. He was conscious, also, of a change within himself. A cold, hard, and heavy weight seemed to have gone out of his bosom. No doubt his heart had been gradually losing its human substance, and changing itself into insensible metal, but had now softened back again into flesh. Perceiving a violet that grew on the bank of the river, Midas touched it with his finger, and was overjoyed to find that the delicate flower retained its purple hue, instead of undergoing a yellow blight. The curse of the Golden Touch had, therefore, really been removed from him.

King Midas hastened back to the palace; and I suppose the servants knew not what to make of it when they saw their royal master so carefully bringing home an earthen pitcher of water. But that water, which was to undo all the mischief that his folly had wrought, was more precious to Midas than an ocean of molten gold could have been. The first thing he did, as you need hardly be told, was to sprinkle it by handfuls over the golden figure of little Marygold.

No sooner did it fall on her than you would have laughed to see how the rosy colour came back to the dear child's cheek! and how astonished she was to find herself dripping wet, and her father still throwing more water over her!

"Pray do not, dear father!" cried she. "See how you have wet my nice frock, which I put on only this morning!"

For Marygold did not know that she had been a little golden statue; nor could she remember anything that had happened since the moment when she ran with outstretched arms to comfort poor King Midas.

Her father did not think it necessary to tell his beloved child how very foolish he had been, but contented himself with showing how much wiser he had now grown. For this purpose, he led little Marygold into the garden, where he sprinkled all the remainder of the water over the rose-bushes, and with such good effect that above five thousand roses recovered their beautiful bloom. There were two circumstances, however, which, as long as he lived, used to remind King Midas of the Golden Touch. One was, that the sands of the river, in which he had bathed, sparkled like gold; the other, that



little Marygold's hair had now a golden tinge, which he had never observed in it before she had been changed by the effect of his kiss. This change of hue was really an improvement, and made Marygold's hair richer than in her babyhood.

When King Midas had grown quite an old man, and used to take Marygold's children on his knee, he was fond of telling them this marvellous story, pretty much as I have now told it to you. And then would he stroke their glossy ringlets, and tell them that their hair, likewise, had a rich shade of gold, which they had inherited from their mother.



## THE THREE GOLDEN APPLES.



WID you ever hear of the golden apples that grew in the garden of the Hesperides? Ah, those were such apples as would bring a great price, if any of them could be found growing in the orchards nowadays! But there is not, I suppose, a graft of that wonderful fruit on a single tree in the wide world. Not so much as a seed of those apples exists any longer.

And even in the old, old, half-forgotten times, before the garden of the Hesperides was overrun with weeds, a great many people doubted whether there could be real trees that bore apples of solid gold upon their branches. All had heard of them, but nobody remembered to have seen any. Children, nevertheless, used to listen to stories of the golden apple-tree, and resolved to discover it when they should be big enough. Adventurous young men, who desired to do a braver thing than any of their fellows, set out in quest of this fruit. Many of them returned no more; none of them brought back the apples. No wonder that they found it impossible to gather them. It is said that there was a dragon beneath the tree

with a hundred terrible heads, fifty of which were always on the watch, while the other fifty slept.

It was quite a common thing with young persons, when tired of too much peace and rest, to go in search of the garden of the Hesperides. And once the adventure was undertaken by a hero who had enjoyed very little peace or rest since he came into the world. At the time of which I am going to speak, he was wandering through the pleasant land of Italy, with a mighty club in his hand, and a bow and quiver slung across his shoulders. He was wrapt in the skin of the biggest and fiercest lion that ever had been seen, and which he himself had killed ; and though, on the whole, he was kind and generous and noble, there was a good deal of the lion's fierceness in his heart. As he went on his way, he continually inquired whether that were the right road to the famous garden. But none of the country-people knew anything about the matter, and many looked as if they would have laughed at the question, if the stranger had not carried so very big a club.

So he journeyed on and on, still making the same inquiry, until at last he came to the brink of a river, where some beautiful young women sat twining wreaths of flowers.

"Can you tell me, pretty maidens," asked the stranger, "whether this is the right way to the garden of the Hesperides?"

The young women had been sitting together weaving the flowers into wreaths, and crowning one another's heads. And there seemed to be a kind of magic in the touch of their fingers that made the flowers more fresh and dewy, and of brighter hues, and sweeter fragrance, while they played with them, than even when they had been growing on their native stems. But, on hearing the stranger's question, they dropped all their flowers on the grass, and gazed at him with astonishment.

"The garden of the Hesperides!" cried one. "We thought mortals had been weary of seeking it after so many disappointments. And pray, adventurous traveller, what do you want there?"

"A certain king, who is my cousin," replied he, "has ordered me to get him three of the golden apples."

"Most of the young men who go in quest of these apples," observed another of the damsels, "desire to obtain them for themselves, or to present them to some fair maiden whom they love. Do you, then, love this king, your cousin, so very much?"

"Perhaps not," replied the stranger, sighing. "He has often been severe and cruel to me. But it is my duty and hard lot to obey him."

"And do you know," asked the damsel who had first spoken, "that a terrible dragon with a hundred heads keeps watch under the golden apple-tree?"

"I know it well," answered the stranger, calmly. "But from my cradle upwards it has been my business, and almost my pastime, to deal with serpents and dragons."

The young women looked at his massive club, and at the shaggy lion's skin which he wore, and likewise at his heroic limbs and figure; and they whispered to each other that the stranger appeared to be one who might reasonably expect to perform deeds far beyond the might of other men. But then, the dragon with a hundred heads! What mortal, even if he possessed a hundred lives, could hope to escape the fangs of such a monster? So kind-hearted were the maidens, that they could not bear to see this brave and handsome traveller attempt what was so very dangerous, and devote himself most probably to become a meal for the dragon's hundred ravenous mouths.

"Go back," cried they all—"go back to your own home! Your mother, beholding you safe and sound, will shed tears of joy; and what can she do more, should you win ever so great a victory? No matter for the golden apples! No matter for the king, your cruel cousin! We do not wish the dragon with the hundred heads to eat you up!"

The stranger seemed to grow impatient at these remonstrances. He carelessly lifted his mighty club, and let it fall upon a rock that lay half buried in the earth close by. With the force of that idle blow the great rock was shattered all to pieces. This feat cost the stranger no more effort than for one of the young maidens to touch her sister's rosy cheek with a flower.

"Do you not believe," said he, looking at the damsels with

a smile, "that such a blow would have crushed one of the dragon's hundred heads?"

Then he sat down on the grass and told them the story of his life, or as much of it as he could remember, from the day when he was first cradled in a warrior's brazen shield. While he lay there, he told them, two immense serpents came gliding over the floor, and opened their hideous jaws to devour him; and he, a baby of a few months old, had gripped one of the fierce snakes in each of his little fists, and strangled them to death. When he was but a stripling, he had killed a huge lion; and this was the one whose vast and shaggy hide he now wore upon his shoulders. The next thing that he had done was to fight a battle with an ugly sort of monster, called a hydra, which had no less than nine heads, and exceedingly sharp teeth in every one of them.

"But the dragon of the Hesperides, you know," observed one of the damsels, "has a hundred heads."

"Nevertheless," replied the stranger, "I would rather fight two such dragons than a single hydra. For, as fast as I cut off a head, two others grew in its place; and besides, there was one of the heads that could not possibly be killed, but kept biting as fiercely as ever, long after it was cut off. So I was forced to bury it under a stone, where it is doubtless alive to this very day. But the hydra's body, and its eight other heads, will never do any further mischief."

The damsels, judging that the story was likely to last a good while, had been preparing a repast of bread and grapes, that the stranger might refresh himself in the intervals of his talk. They took pleasure in helping him to this simple food; and now and then one of them would put a sweet grape between her rosy lips, lest he should feel uncomfortable eating alone.

The traveller proceeded to tell how he had chased a very swift stag for a twelvemonth together without ever stopping to take breath, and had at last caught it by the antlers, and carried it home alive. And he had fought with a very odd race of people—half horses and half men—and had put them all to death. Besides all this, he took to himself great credit for having cleaned out a stable.

"Do you call that a wonderful exploit?" asked one of the

young maidens, with a smile. "Any clown in the country has done as much!"

"Had it been an ordinary stable," replied the stranger, "I should not have mentioned it. But this was so gigantic a task that it would have taken me all my life to perform it if I had not luckily thought of turning the channel of a river through the stable-door. That made it clean and pure in a very short time!"

Seeing how earnestly his fair hearers listened, he next told them how he had shot some monstrous birds, and had caught a wild bull alive, and let him go again, and had tamed a number of very wild horses, and had conquered Hippolyta, the warlike queen of the Amazons. He mentioned, likewise, that he had taken off Hippolyta's enchanted girdle, and had given it to the daughter of his cousin the king.

"Was it the girdle of Venus," inquired the prettiest of the damsels, "which makes women beautiful?"

"No," answered the stranger. "It had formerly been the sword-belt of Mars; and it can only make the wearer valiant and courageous."

"An old sword-belt!" cried the damsel, tossing her head. "Then I should not care about having it!"

"You are right," said the stranger.

Going on with his story, he told the maidens that as strange an adventure as ever happened was when he fought with Geryon, the six-legged man. This was a very odd and frightful sort of figure, as you may well believe. Any person looking at his tracks in the sand or snow would suppose that three companions had been walking along together. On hearing his footsteps at a little distance, it was no more than reasonable to judge that several people must be coming. But it was only the strange man Geryon clattering onward with his six legs!

Six legs and one gigantic body! Certainly, he must have been a very queer monster to look at.

When the stranger had finished the story of his adventures, he looked round at the attentive faces of the maidens.

"Perhaps you may have heard of me before," said he, modestly. "My name is Hercules!"

"We had already guessed it," replied the maidens; "for your wonderful deeds are known all over the world. We do not think it strange any longer that you should set out in quest of the golden apples of the Hesperides. Come, sisters, let us crown the hero with flowers!"

Then they flung beautiful wreaths over his stately head and mighty shoulders, so that the lion's skin was almost entirely covered with roses. They took possession of his ponderous club, and so entwined it about with the brightest, softest, and most fragrant blossoms, that not a finger's breadth of its oaken substance could be seen. It looked all like a huge bunch of flowers. Lastly, they joined hands, and danced around him, chanting words which became poetry of their own accord, and grew into a choral song in honour of the illustrious Hercules.

And Hercules was rejoiced, as any other hero would have been, to know that these fair young girls had heard of the valiant deeds which it had cost him so much toil and danger to achieve. But still he was not satisfied. He could not think that what he had already done was worthy of so much honour while there remained any bold or difficult adventure to be undertaken.

"Dear maidens," said he, when they paused to take breath, "now that you know my name, will you not tell me how I am to reach the garden of the Hesperides?"

"Ah! must you go so soon?" they exclaimed. "You that have performed so many wonders, and spent such a toilsome life—cannot you content yourself to rest a little while on the margin of this peaceful river?"

Hercules shook his head.

"I must go now," said he.

"We will, then, give you the best directions we can," replied the damsels. "You must go to the sea-shore, and find out the Old One, and compel him to inform you where the golden apples are to be found."

"The Old One!" repeated Hercules, laughing at this odd name. "And, pray, who may the Old One be?"

"Why, the Old Man of the Sea, to be sure!" answered one of the damsels. "He has fifty daughters, whom some people

call very beautiful; but we do not think it proper to be acquainted with them, because they have sea-green hair, and taper away like fishes. You must talk with this Old Man of the Sea. He is a seafaring person, and knows all about the garden of the Hesperides; for it is situated in an island which he is often in the habit of visiting."

Hercules then asked whereabouts the Old One was most likely to be met with. When the damsels had informed him, he thanked them for all their kindness—for the bread and grapes with which they had fed him, the lovely flowers with which they had crowned him, and the songs and dances wherewith they had done him honour—and he thanked them, most of all, for telling him the right way,—and immediately set forth upon his journey.

But before he was out of hearing one of the maidens called after him—


"Keep fast hold of the Old One when you catch him!" cried she, smiling, and lifting her finger to make the caution more impressive. "Do not be astonished at anything that may happen. Only hold him fast, and he will tell you what you wish to know."

Hercules again thanked her, and pursued his way, while the maidens resumed their pleasant labour of making flower-wreaths. They talked about the hero long after he was gone.

"We will crown him with the loveliest of our garlands," said they, "when he returns hither with the three golden apples, after slaying the dragon with a hundred heads."

Meanwhile Hercules travelled constantly onward, over hill and dale, and through the solitary woods. Sometimes he swung his club aloft, and splintered a mighty oak with a downright blow. His mind was so full of the giants and monsters with whom it was the business of his life to fight, that perhaps he mistook the great tree for a giant or a monster. And so eager was Hercules to achieve what he had undertaken, that he almost regretted to have spent so much time with the damsels, wasting idle breath upon the story of his adventures.

Persons who happened to be passing through the forest **must have been affrighted** to see him smite the trees with his



great club. With but a single blow, the trunk was riven as by the stroke of lightning, and the broad boughs came rustling and crashing down.

Hastening forward, without ever pausing or looking behind, he by-and-by heard the sea roaring at a distance. At this sound he increased his speed, and soon came to a beach, where the great surf-waves tumbled upon the hard sand in a long line of snowy foam. At one end of the beach, however, there was a pleasant spot, where some green shrubbery clambered up a cliff, making its rocky face look soft and beautiful. A carpet of verdant grass, mixed with sweet-smelling clover, covered the narrow space between the bottom of the cliff and the sea. And what should Hercules espy there but an old man fast asleep!

But was it really and truly an old man? Certainly, at first sight, it looked very like one; but, on looking closer, it seemed rather to be some kind of a creature that lived in the sea. For on his legs and arms there were scales, such as fishes have; he was web-footed and web-fingered, after the fashion of a duck; and his long beard, being of a greenish tinge, had more the appearance of a tuft of sea-weed than of an ordinary beard. Have you never seen a stick of timber, that has been long tossed about by the waves, and has got all overgrown with barnacles, and at last, drifting ashore, seems to have been thrown up from the very deepest bottom of the sea? Well, the old man would have put you in mind of just such a wave-tossed spar! But Hercules, the instant he set his eyes on this strange figure, was convinced that it could be no other than the Old One, who was to direct him on his way.

Yes, it was the self-same Old Man of the Sea, whom the hospitable maidens had talked to him about. Rejoicing in the lucky accident of finding the old man asleep, Hercules stole on tiptoe towards him, and caught him by the arm and leg.

"Tell me," cried he, before the Old One was well awake, "which is the way to the garden of the Hesperides?"

As you may easily imagine, the Old Man of the Sea awoke in a fright. But his astonishment could hardly have been



greater than was that of Hercules the next moment. For, all of a sudden, the Old One seemed to disappear out of his grasp, and he found himself holding a stag by the fore and hind legs! But still he kept fast hold. Then the stag disappeared, and in its stead there was a sea-bird, fluttering and screaming, while Hercules clutched it by the wing and claw! But the bird could not get away. Immediately afterwards, there was an ugly three-headed dog, which growled and barked at Hercules, and snapped fiercely at the hands by which he held him! But Hercules would not let him go. In another minute, instead of the three-headed dog, what should appear but Geryon, the six-legged man-monster, kicking at Hercules with five of his legs, in order to get the remaining one at liberty! But Hercules held on. By-and-by no Geryon was there, but a huge snake, like one of those which Hercules had strangled in his babyhood, only a hundred times as big. And it twisted and twined about the hero's neck and body, and threw its tail high into the air, and opened its deadly jaws as if to devour him outright; so that it was really a very terrible spectacle! But Hercules was no whit disheartened, and squeezed the great snake so tightly that he soon began to hiss with pain.

You must understand that the Old Man of the Sea, though he generally looked so much like the wave-beaten figure-head of a vessel, had the power of taking any shape he pleased. When he found himself so roughly seized by Hercules, he had been in hopes of putting him into such surprise and terror by these magical transformations, that the hero would be glad to let him go. If Hercules had relaxed his grasp, the Old One would certainly have plunged down to the very bottom of the sea, whence he would not soon have given himself the trouble of coming up in order to answer any questions. Ninety-nine people out of a hundred, I suppose, would have been frightened out of their wits by the very first of his ugly shapes, and would have taken to their heels at once.

But, as Hercules held on so stubbornly, and only squeezed the Old One so much the tighter at every change of shape, and really put him to no small torture, he finally thought it best to reappear in his own figure. So there he was again, a

fishy, scaly, web-footed sort of personage, with something like a tuft of sea-weed at his chin.

"Pray what do you want with me?" cried the Old One, as soon as he could take breath; for it was quite a tiresome affair to go through so many false shapes. "Why do you squeeze me so hard? Let me go this moment, or I shall begin to consider you an extremely uncivil person!"

"My name is Hercules!" roared the mighty stranger; "and you will never get out of my clutch until you tell me the nearest way to the garden of the Hesperides!"

When the Old One heard who it was that had caught him, he saw that it would be necessary to tell him everything that he wanted to know. The Old One was an inhabitant of the sea, you must recollect, and roamed about everywhere, like other seafaring people. Of course he had often heard of the fame of Hercules, and of the wonderful things that he was constantly performing in various parts of the earth, and how determined he always was to accomplish whatever he undertook. He therefore made no more attempts to escape, but told the hero how to find the garden of the Hesperides, and likewise warned him of many difficulties which must be overcome before he could arrive thither.

"You must go on, thus and thus," said the Old Man of the Sea, "till you come in sight of a very tall giant, who holds the sky on his shoulders. And the giant, if he happens to be in a pleasant humour, will tell you exactly where the garden of the Hesperides lies."

"And if the giant happens not to be in a pleasant humour," remarked Hercules, balancing his club on the tip of his finger, "perhaps I shall find means to persuade him!"

Thanking the Old Man of the Sea, and begging his pardon for having squeezed him so roughly, the hero resumed his journey. He met with a great many strange adventures, which would be well worth your hearing, if I had leisure to narrate them as minutely as they deserve.

Passing through the deserts of Africa, and going as fast as he could, he arrived at last on the shore of the great ocean. And here, unless he could walk on the crests of the billows, it seemed as if his journey must needs be at an end.

Nothing was before him save the foaming, dashing, measureless ocean. But suddenly, as he looked towards the horizon, he saw something a great way off which he had not seen the moment before. It gleamed very brightly, almost as you may have beheld the round golden disk of the sun when it rises or sets over the edge of the world. It evidently drew nearer, for at every instant this wonderful object became larger and more lustrous. At length it had come so near that Hercules discovered it to be an immense cup or bowl, made either of gold or burnished brass. How it had got afloat upon the sea is more than I can tell you. There it was, at all events, rolling on the foaming billows, which tossed it up and down, and heaved their great tops against its sides, but without ever throwing their spray over its brim.

"I have seen many giants in my time," thought Hercules, "but never one that would need to drink his wine out of a cup like this!"

And, true enough, what a cup it must have been! It was as large—as large—but, in short, I am afraid to say how immeasurably large it was. To speak within bounds, it was ten times larger than a great mill-wheel; and, all of metal as it was, it floated over the heaving surges more lightly than an acorn-cup adown a brook. The waves tumbled it onward, until it grazed against the shore within a short distance of the spot where Hercules was standing

Without a moment's delay he clambered over the brim, and slid down on the inside, where, spreading out his lion's skin, he proceeded to take a little rest. He had scarcely rested until now, since he bade farewell to the damsels on the margin of the river. The waves dashed with a pleasant and ringing sound against the outside of the hollow cup; it rocked lightly to and fro, and the motion was so soothing that it speedily rocked Hercules into an agreeable slumber.

His nap had probably lasted a good while, when the cup chanced to graze against a rock, and in consequence immediately resounded through its golden or brazen substance a hundred times as loudly as ever you heard a church bell. The noise awoke Hercules, who instantly started up and gazed around him, wondering whereabouts he was. He was not

long in discovering that the cup had floated across a great part of the sea, and was approaching the shore of what appeared to be an island. And on that island he saw the most marvellous spectacle that had ever been seen by him in the whole course of his wonderful travels and adventures. It was a greater marvel than the hydra with nine heads, which kept growing twice as fast as they were cut off; greater than the six-legged man-monster; greater than anything that was ever beheld by anybody before or since the days of Hercules, or than anything that remains to be beheld by travellers in all time to come. It was a giant.

But such a giant! A giant as tall as a mountain; so vast a giant that the clouds rested about his midst like a girdle, and hung like a hoary beard from his chin, and flitted before his huge eyes, so that he could neither see Hercules nor the golden cup in which he was voyaging. And, most wonderful of all, the giant held up his great hands and appeared to support the sky, which, so far as Hercules could discern through the clouds, was resting upon his head!

Meanwhile the bright cup continued to float onward, and at last touched the strand. Just then a breeze wafted away the clouds from before the giant's visage, and Hercules beheld it with all its enormous features: eyes each of them as big as a lake; a nose a mile long, and a mouth of the same width. It was a countenance terrible from its great size, but sad and weary, even as you may see the faces of many people who are compelled to sustain burdens above their strength.

Poor fellow! He had evidently stood there a long while. An ancient forest had been growing and decaying around his feet; and oak-trees of six or seven centuries old had sprung from the acorn, and forced themselves up between his toes.

The giant now looked down from the far height of his great eyes, and perceiving Hercules, roared out in a voice that sounded like thunder coming out of the cloud that had just flitted away from his face—

“Who are you, down at my feet there? And whence do you come, in that little cup?”

“I am Hercules!” thundered back the hero, in a voice

nearly as loud as the giant's own ; "and I am seeking for the garden of the Hesperides !"

"Ho ! ho ! ho !" roared the giant, in a fit of laughter ; "that is a wise adventure, truly !"

"And why not ?" cried Hercules, getting a little angry at the giant's mirth. "Do you think I am afraid of the dragon with a hundred heads ?"

Just at this time, while they were talking together, some black clouds gathered about the giant's middle, and burst into a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, causing such a noise that Hercules found it impossible to distinguish a word. Only the giant's immeasurable legs were to be seen, standing up into the darkness of the tempest, and now and then a momentary glimpse of his whole figure, mantled in a volume of mist. He seemed to be speaking most of the time ; but his big, deep, rough voice chimed in with the echoes of the thunder-claps, and rolled away over the hills, like them.

At last the storm swept over as suddenly as it had come. And there again was the clear sky, and the weary giant holding it up, and the pleasant sunshine beaming over his vast height, and illuminating it against the background of the sullen thunder-clouds. So far above the shower had been his head, that not a hair of it was moistened by the rain-drops !

When the giant could see Hercules still standing on the sea-shore, he roared out to him anew—

"I am Atlas, the mightiest giant in the world ! And I hold the sky upon my head !"

"So I see," answered Hercules. "But can you show me the way to the garden of the Hesperides ?"

"What do you want there ?" asked the giant.

"I want three of the golden apples," shouted Hercules, "for my cousin the king."

"There is nobody but myself," quoth the giant, "that can go to the garden of the Hesperides and gather the golden apples. If it were not for this work of holding up the sky, I would make half-a-dozen steps across the sea, and get them for you."

"You are very kind," replied Hercules. "And cannot you rest the sky upon a mountain ?"

"None of them are quite high enough," said Atlas, shaking his head. "But if you were to take your stand on the summit of that nearest one, your head would be pretty nearly on a level with mine. You seem to be a fellow of some strength. What if you should take my burden on your shoulders, while I do your errand for you?"

Now Hercules was a remarkably strong man; and though it certainly requires a great deal of strength to uphold the sky, yet, if any mortal could be supposed capable of such an exploit, he was that one. Nevertheless, it seemed so difficult an undertaking, that, for the first time in his life, he hesitated.

"Is the sky very heavy?" he inquired.

"Why, not particularly so at first," answered the giant, shrugging his shoulders. "But it gets to be a little burthen-some after a thousand years!"

"And how long a time," asked the hero, "will it take you to get the golden apples?"

"Oh, that will be done in a few moments," cried Atlas. "I shall take ten or fifteen miles at a stride, and be at the garden and back again before your shoulders begin to ache."

"Well, then," answered Hercules, "I will climb the mountain behind you there, and relieve you of your burden."

Accordingly, without more words, the sky was shifted from the shoulders of Atlas and placed upon those of Hercules.

When this was safely accomplished, the first thing that the giant did was to stretch himself; and you may imagine what a prodigious spectacle he was then. Next, he slowly lifted one of his feet out of the forest that had grown up around it; then the other. Then all at once he began to caper, and leap, and dance for joy at his freedom—flinging himself nobody knows how high into the air, and floundering down again with a shock that made the earth tremble. Then he laughed—ho! ho! ho!—with a thunderous roar that was echoed from the mountains far and near, as if they and the giant had been so many rejoicing brothers. When his joy had a little subsided, he stepped into the sea; ten miles at the first stride, which brought him mid-leg deep; and ten miles at the second, when the water came just above his knees; and ten miles more at

the third, by which he was immersed nearly to his waist. This was the greatest depth of the sea.

Hercules watched the giant as he still went onward; for it was really a wonderful sight this immense human form, more than thirty miles off, half hidden in the ocean, but with his upper half as tall and misty and blue as a distant mountain. At last the gigantic shape faded entirely out of view. And now Hercules began to consider what he should do, in case Atlas should be drowned in the sea, or if he were to be stung to death by the dragon with the hundred heads, which guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides. If any such misfortune were to happen, how could he ever get rid of the sky? And, indeed, its weight began already to be a little tiresome to his head and shoulders.

"I really pity the poor giant," thought Hercules. "If it wearies me so much in ten minutes, how must it have wearied him in a thousand years!"

No one has any idea what a weight there was in that same blue sky, which looks so soft and aerial above our heads! And there, too, was the bluster of the wind, and the chill and watery clouds, and the blazing sun, all taking their turns to make Hercules uncomfortable! He began to be afraid that the giant would never come back. He gazed wistfully at the world beneath him, and acknowledged to himself that it was a far happier kind of life to be a shepherd at the foot of a mountain, than to stand on its dizzy summit and bear up the firmament with his might and main. For, of course, as you will easily understand, Hercules had an immense responsibility on his mind, as well as a weight on his head and shoulders. Why, if he did not stand perfectly still, and keep the sky immovable, the sun would perhaps be put out of its place! or, after nightfall, a great many of the stars might be loosened from their places, and shower down like fiery rain upon the people's heads! And how ashamed would the hero be if, owing to his unsteadiness beneath its weight, the sky should crack, and show a great fissure quite across it!

I know not how long it was before, to his unspeakable joy, he beheld the huge shape of the giant, like a cloud, on the far-off edge of the sea. At his nearer approach Atlas held up his

hand, in which Hercules could perceive three magnificent golden apples, all hanging from one branch.

"I am glad to see you again," shouted Hercules, when the giant was within hearing. "So you have got the golden apples?"

"Certainly, certainly," answered Atlas; "and very fair apples they are. I took the finest that grew on the tree, I assure you. Ah! it is a beautiful spot that garden of the Hesperides. Yes; and the dragon with a hundred heads is a sight worth any man's seeing. After all, you had better have gone for the apples yourself."

"No matter," replied Hercules; "you have had a pleasant ramble, and have done the business as well as I could. I heartily thank you for your trouble. And now, as I have a long way to go, and am rather in haste—and as the king my cousin is anxious to receive the golden apples—will you be kind enough to take the sky off my shoulders again?"

"Why, as to that," said the giant, chucking the golden apples into the air twenty miles high or thereabouts, and catching them as they came down—"as to that, my good friend, I consider you a little unreasonable. Cannot I carry the golden apples to the king, your cousin, much quicker than you could? As his majesty is in such a hurry to get them, I promise you to take my longest strides. And besides, I have no fancy for burthening myself with the sky just now."

Here Hercules grew impatient, and gave a great shrug of his shoulders. It being now twilight, you might have seen two or three stars tumble out of their places. Everybody on earth looked upward in affright, thinking that the sky might be going to fall next.

"Oh, that will never do!" cried Giant Atlas, with a great roar of laughter. "I have not let fall so many stars within the last five centuries. By the time you have stood there as long as I did, you will begin to learn patience!"

"What!" shouted Hercules, very wrathfully, "do you intend to make me bear this burden for ever?"

"We will see about that one of these days," answered the giant. "At all events, you ought not to complain if you have to bear it the next hundred years, or perhaps the next thousand.



I bore it a good while longer, in spite of the aching of my back and shoulders. Well, then, after a thousand years, if I happen to feel in the mood, we may possibly shift about again. You are certainly a very strong man, and can never have a better opportunity to prove it. Posterity will talk of you, I warrant it!"

"A fig for its talk!" cried Hercules, with another hitch of his shoulders. "Just take the sky upon your head one instant, will you? I want to make a cushion of my lion's skin for the weight to rest upon. It really chafes me, and will cause a good deal of inconvenience in so many centuries as I am to stand here."

"That is no more than fair," said the giant; for he had no unkind feeling towards Hercules, and was merely acting with a too selfish consideration of his own ease. "For just five minutes, then, I'll take back the sky. Only for five minutes, recollect! I have no idea of spending another thousand years as I spent the last. Variety is the spice of life."

He threw down the golden apples, and received back the sky from the head and shoulders of Hercules upon his own, where it rightly belonged. And Hercules picked up the three golden apples, and straightway set out on his journey homeward, without paying the slightest heed to the thundering tones of the giant, who bellowed after him to come back. Another forest sprang up around his feet, and grew ancient there; and again might be seen oak-trees of six or seven centuries old, that had waxed thus aged betwixt his enormous toes.

And there stands the giant to this day—or, at any rate, there stands a mountain as tall as he, and which bears his name; and when the thunder rumbles about its summit, we may imagine it to be the voice of Giant Atlas bellowing after Hercules!



“Hercules picked up the three golden apples, and straightway set out on his journey homeward.”—Page 56.



## THE DRAGON'S TEETH.



ADMUS, PHŒNIX, and CILIX, the three sons of King Agēnor, and their little sister Eurōpa (who was a very beautiful child), were at play together, near the sea-shore, in their father's kingdom of Phœnicia. They had rambled to some distance from the palace where their parents dwelt, and were now in a verdant meadow, on one side of which lay the sea, all sparkling and dimpling in the sunshine, and murmuring gently against the beach. The three boys were very happy, gathering flowers, and twining them into garlands, with which they adorned the little Eurōpa. Seated on the grass, the child was almost hidden under an abundance of buds and blossoms, whence her rosy face peeped merrily out, and, as Cadmus said, was the prettiest of all the flowers.

Just then, there came a splendid butterfly fluttering along the meadow; and Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix set off in pursuit of it, crying out that it was a flower with wings. Eurōpa, who was a little wearied with playing all day long, did not chase the butterfly with her brothers, but sat still where they had left her, and closed her eyes. For a while she listened to the pleasant murmur of the sea, which was like a voice saying "Hush!" and bidding her go to sleep. But the pretty child, if she slept at all, could not have slept more than a moment, when she heard something trample on the grass not far from her, and peeping out from the heap of flowers, beheld a snow-white bull.

And whence could this bull have come? Eurōpa and her brothers had been a long time playing in the meadow, and had seen no cattle, nor other living thing, either there or on the neighbouring hills.

"Brother Cadmus!" cried Eurōpa, starting up out of the midst of the roses and lilies. "Phœnix! Cilix! Where

are you all? Help! help! Come and drive away this bull!"

But her brothers were too far off to hear—especially as the fright took away Europa's voice, and hindered her from calling very loudly. So there she stood, with her pretty mouth wide open, as pale as the white lilies that were twisted among the other flowers in her garlands.

Nevertheless, it was the suddenness with which she had perceived the bull, rather than anything frightful in his appearance, that caused Europa so much alarm. On looking at him more attentively, she began to see that he was a beautiful animal, and even fancied a kindly expression in his face. As for his breath—the breath of cattle is always sweet—it was as fragrant as if he had been grazing on rosebuds, or the most delicate of clover blossoms. Never before did a bull have such bright and tender eyes, and such smooth horns of ivory, as this one. And the bull ran little races, and played sportively around the child; so that she quite forgot how big and strong he was, and, from the gentleness and playfulness of his actions, soon came to consider him as innocent a creature as a pet lamb.

Thus, frightened as she at first was, you might by-and-by have seen Europa stroking the bull's forehead with her small white hand, and taking the garlands from her own head to hang them on his neck and ivory horns. Then she pulled up some blades of grass, and he ate them out of her hand, not as if he were hungry, but because he wanted to be friends with the child, and took pleasure in eating what she had touched. Was there ever such a gentle, sweet, pretty, and amiable creature as this bull, and ever such a nice playmate for a little girl?

When the animal saw that Europa was no longer afraid of him, he grew overjoyed, and could hardly contain himself for delight. He frisked about the meadow, now here, now there, making sprightly leaps, with as little effort as a bird expends in hopping from twig to twig. Indeed his motion was as light as if he were flying through the air, and his hoofs seemed hardly to leave their print in the grassy soil over which he trod. With his spotless hue, he resembled a snow-

drift, wafted along by the wind. Once he galloped so far away that Europa feared lest she might never see him again; so, straining her childish voice, she called him back.

"Come back, pretty creature!" she cried. "Here is a nice clover blossom for you."

And then it was delightful to witness the gratitude of this amiable bull, and how he was so full of joy and thankfulness that he leaped higher than ever. He came running, and bowed his head before Europa, as if he knew her to be a king's daughter. And not only did the bull bend his neck; he absolutely knelt down at her feet, and made such intelligent nods, and other inviting gestures, that Europa understood what he meant just as well as if he had put it in so many words.

"Come, dear child," was what he wanted to say, "let me give you a ride on my back."

At the first thought of such a thing, Europa drew back. But then she considered in her wise little head that there could be no possible harm in taking just one gallop on the back of this docile and friendly animal, who would certainly set her down the very instant she desired it. And how it would surprise her brothers to see her riding across the green meadow! And what merry times they might have, either taking turns for a gallop, or clambering on the gentle creature, all four children together, and careering round the field with shouts of laughter that would be heard as far off as King Agenor's palace!

"I think I will do it," said the child to herself.

And, indeed, why not? She cast a glance around, and caught a glimpse of Cadmus, Phoenix, and Cilix, who were still in pursuit of the butterfly, almost at the other end of the meadow. It would be the quickest way of rejoining them, to get upon the white bull's back. She came a step nearer to him, therefore; and he showed so much joy at this, that the child could not find it in her heart to hesitate any longer. Making one bound (for this little princess was as active as a squirrel), there sat Europa on the beautiful bull, holding an ivory horn in each hand, lest she should fall off.


"Softly, pretty bull—softly!" she said, rather frightened at what she had done. "Do not gallop too fast."

Having got the child on his back, the animal gave a leap into the air, and came down so like a feather that Europa did not know when his hoofs touched the ground. He then began a race to that part of the flowery plain where her three brothers were, and where they had just caught their splendid butterfly. Europa screamed with delight; and Phœnix, Cilix, and Cadmus stood gaping at the spectacle of their sister mounted on a white bull, not knowing whether to be frightened, or to wish the same good luck for themselves. The gentle and innocent creature pranced round among the children as playfully as a kitten. Europa all the while looked down upon her brothers, nodding and laughing, but yet with a sort of stateliness in her rosy little face. As the bull wheeled about to take another gallop across the meadow, the child waved her hand, and said, "Good-bye," playfully pretending that she was now bound on a distant journey, and might not see her brothers again for nobody could tell how long.

"Good-bye!" shouted Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix, all in one breath.

But together with her enjoyment of the sport, there was still a little remnant of fear in the child's heart; so that her last look at the three boys was a troubled one, and made them feel as if their dear sister were really leaving them for ever. And what do you think the snowy bull did next? Why, he set off as swift as the wind straight down to the sea-shore, scampered across the sand, took an airy leap, and plunged right in among the foaming billows. The white spray rose in a shower over him and little Europa, and fell spattering down upon the water.

Then what a scream of terror did the poor child send forth! The three brothers screamed manfully likewise, and ran to the shore as fast as their legs would carry them, with Cadmus at their head. But it was too late. When they reached the margin of the sand, the treacherous animal was already far away in the wide blue sea, with only his snowy head and tail emerging, and poor little Europa between them, stretching her hand towards her dear brothers, while she grasped



the bull's ivory horn with the other. And there stood Cadmus, Phoenix, and Cilix, gazing at this sad spectacle, through their tears, until they could no longer distinguish the bull's snowy head from the white-capped billows that seemed to boil up out of the sea's depths around him. Nothing more was ever seen of the white bull—nothing more of the beautiful child.

This was a sad and mournful story for the three boys to carry home to their parents. King Agenor, their father, was the ruler of the whole country; but he loved his little daughter Europa better than his kingdom, or than all his other children, or than anything else in the world. Therefore, when Cadmus and his two brothers came crying home, and told him how that a white bull had carried off their sister, and swam with her over the sea, the king was quite beside himself with grief and rage. Although it was now twilight, and fast growing dark, he bade them set out instantly in search of her.

"Never shall you see my face again," he cried, "unless you bring me back my little Europa, to gladden me with her smiles and her pretty ways! Begone, and enter my presence no more, till you come leading her by the hand!"

As King Agenor said this, his eyes flashed fire (for he was a very passionate king), and he looked so terribly angry that the poor boys did not even venture to ask for their suppers, but slunk away out of the palace, and only paused on the steps a moment to consult whither they should go first. While they were standing there, all in dismay, their mother, Queen Telephassa (who happened not to be by when they told the story to the king), came hurrying after them, and said that she too would go in quest of her daughter.

"Oh no, mother!" cried the boys. "The night is dark, and there is no knowing what troubles and perils we may meet with."

"Alas! my dear children," answered poor Queen Telephassa, weeping bitterly, "that is only another reason why I should go with you. If I should lose you too, as well as my little Europa, what would become of me?"

"And let me go likewise!" said their playfellow Thasus, who came running to join them.



Thasus was the son of a seafaring man in the neighbourhood: he had been brought up with the young princes, and was their intimate friend, and loved Europa very much; so they consented that he should accompany them. The whole party, therefore, set forth together. Cadmus, Phœnix, Cilix, and Thasus clustered round Queen Telephassa, grasping her skirts, and begging her to lean upon their shoulders whenever she felt weary. In this manner they went down the palace-steps, and began a journey which turned out to be a great deal longer than they dreamed of. The last that they saw of King Agenor was when he came to the door, with a servant holding a torch beside him, and called after them into the gathering darkness—

“Remember! Never ascend these steps again without the child!”

“Never!” sobbed Queen Telephassa; and the three brothers and Thasus answered, “Never! Never! Never! Never!”

And they kept their word. Year after year, King Agenor sat in the solitude of his beautiful palace, listening in vain for their returning footsteps, hoping to hear the familiar voice of the queen, and the cheerful talk of his sons and their play-fellow Thasus, entering the door together, and the sweet childish accents of little Europa in the midst of them. But so long a time went by, that at last, if they had really come, the king would not have known that this was the voice of Telephassa, and these the younger voices that used to make such joyful echoes when the children were playing about the palace. We must now leave King Agenor to sit on his throne, and must go along with Queen Telephassa and her four youthful companions.

They went on and on, and travelled a long way, and passed over mountains and rivers, and sailed over seas. Here and there, and everywhere, they made continual inquiry if any person could tell them what had become of Europa. The rustic people, of whom they asked this question, paused a little while from their labours in the field, and looked very much surprised. They thought it strange to behold a woman in the garb of a queen (for Telephassa, in her haste, had for-

gotten to take off her crown and her royal robes) roaming about the country, with four lads around her, on such an errand as this seemed to be. But nobody could give them any tidings of Europa; nobody had seen a little girl dressed like a princess, and mounted on a snow-white bull, which galloped as swiftly as the wind.

I cannot tell you how long Queen Telephassa and Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix, her three sons, and Thasus, their play-fellow, went wandering along the highways and bypaths, or through the pathless wildernesses of the earth, in this manner. But certain it is, that before they reached any place of rest, their splendid garments were quite worn out.

As fast as their princely robes got torn and tattered, they exchanged them for such mean attire as ordinary people wore. By-and-by they came to have a wild and homeless aspect, so that you would much sooner have taken them for a gipsy family than a queen and three princes and a young man, who had once a palace for their home, and a train of servants to do their bidding. The four boys grew up to be tall young men, with sunburnt faces. Each of them girded on a sword, to defend himself against the perils of the way. When the husbandmen, at whose farmhouses they sought hospitality, needed their assistance in the harvest-field, they gave it willingly; and Queen Telephassa (who had done no work in her palace, save to braid silk threads with golden ones) came behind them to bind the sheaves. If payment was offered, they shook their heads, and only asked for tidings of Europa. "There are bulls enough in my pasture," the old farmers would reply; "but I never heard of one like this you tell me of. A snow-white bull with a little princess on his back! Ho! ho! I ask your pardon, good folks; but there never was such a sight seen hereabouts."

At last Phœnix grew weary of rambling hither and thither to no purpose. So one day, when they happened to be passing through a pleasant and solitary tract of country, he sat himself down on a heap of moss.

"I can go no farther," said Phœnix. "It is a mere foolish waste of life to spend it as we do, in always wandering up and down, and never coming to any home at nightfall. Our sis-

ter is lost, and never will be found. She probably perished in the sea; or to whatever shore the white bull may have carried her, it is now so many years ago, that there would be neither love nor acquaintance between us should we meet again. My father has forbidden us to return to his palace; so I shall build me a hut of branches, and dwell here."

"Well, son Phœnix," said Telephassa, sorrowfully, "you have grown to be a man, and must do as you judge best. But for my part, I will still go in quest of my poor child."

"And we three will go along with you!" cried Cadmus and Cilix, and their faithful friend Thasus.

But before setting out they all helped Phœnix to build a house. When completed, it was a sweet rural bower, roofed overhead with an arch of living boughs. Inside, there were two pleasant rooms, one of which had a soft heap of moss for a bed, while the other was furnished with a rustic seat or two, curiously fashioned out of the crooked roots of trees. So comfortable and home-like did it seem, that Telephassa and her three companions could not help sighing, to think that they must still roam about the world, instead of spending the remainder of their lives in some such cheerful abode as they had there built for Phœnix. But when they bade him farewell, Phœnix shed tears, and probably regretted that he was no longer to keep them company.

However, he had fixed upon an admirable place to dwell in. And, by-and-by, there came other people who chanced to have no homes; and seeing how pleasant a spot it was, they built themselves huts in the neighbourhood of Phœnix's abode. Thus, before many years went by, a city had grown up there, in the centre of which was seen a stately palace of marble, wherein dwelt Phœnix, clothed in a purple robe, and wearing a golden crown upon his head. For the inhabitants of the new city, finding that he had royal blood in his veins, had chosen him to be their king. The very first decree of state which King Phœnix issued was, that, if a maiden happened to arrive in the kingdom, mounted on a snow-white bull, and calling herself Europa, his subjects should treat her with the greatest kindness and respect, and immediately bring her to the palace.

Often and often, at the close of a weary day's journey, did Telephassa and Cadmus, Cilix and Thasus, remember the pleasant spot in which they left Phœnix. It was a sorrowful prospect for these wanderers, that on the morrow they must again set forth, and that, after many nightfalls, they would perhaps be no nearer the close of their toilsome pilgrimage than now. These thoughts made them all melancholy at times, but appeared to torment Cilix more than the rest of the party. At length, one morning when they were taking their staffs in hand to set out, he thus addressed them :—

“ My dear mother, and you good brother Cadmus, and my friend Thasus, methinks we are like people in a dream. There is no substance in the life which we are leading. It is such a dreary length of time since the white bull carried off my sister Europa, that I have quite forgotten how she looked, and the tones of her voice, and indeed almost doubt whether such a little girl ever lived in the world. And whether she once lived or no, I am sure that she no longer survives, and that it is the merest folly to waste our own lives and happiness in seeking her. Were we to find her, she would now be a woman, and would look upon us all as strangers. So I have resolved to take up my abode here ; and I entreat you, mother, brother, and friend, to follow my example.”

“ Not I, for one,” said Telephassa ; although the poor queen, firmly as she spoke, was so travel-worn that she could hardly put her foot to the ground. “ Not I, for one ! In the depths of my heart, little Europa is still the rosy child who ran to gather flowers so many years ago. She has not grown to womanhood, nor forgotten me. At noon, at night, journeying onward, sitting down to rest, her childish voice is always in my ears, calling ‘ Mother ! mother ! ’ Stop here who may, there is no repose for me.”

“ Nor for me,” said Cadmus, “ while my dear mother pleases to go onward.”

And the faithful Thasus, too, was resolved to bear them company. They remained with Cilix a few days, however, and helped him to build a rustic bower, resembling the one which they had formerly built for Phœnix.

When they were bidding him farewell, Cilix burst into tears,

and told his mother that it seemed just as melancholy a dream to stay there, in solitude, as to go onward. If she really believed that they would ever find Europa, he was willing to continue the search with them even now. But Telephassa bade him remain there, and be happy, if his own heart would let him. So the pilgrims took their leave of him, and departed, and were hardly out of sight before some other wandering people came along that way, and saw Cilix's habitation, and were greatly delighted with the appearance of the place. There being plenty of unoccupied ground in the neighbourhood, these strangers built huts for themselves, and were soon joined by a multitude of new settlers, who quickly formed a city. In the middle of it was seen a magnificent palace of coloured marble, on the balcony of which, every noontide, appeared Cilix, in a long purple robe, and with a jewelled crown upon his head; for the inhabitants, when they found out that he was a king's son, had considered him the fittest of all men to be a king himself.

One of the first acts of King Cilix's government was to send out an expedition, consisting of a grave ambassador and an escort of bold and hardy young men, with orders to visit the principal kingdoms of the earth, and inquire whether a young maiden had passed through those regions, galloping swiftly on a white bull. It is therefore plain that Cilix secretly blamed himself for giving up the search for Europa as long as he was able to continue the search.

As for Telephassa, and Cadmus, and the good Thasus, they still kept up that weary pilgrimage. The two young men did their best for the poor queen, helping her over the rough places, often carrying her across rivulets in their faithful arms, and seeking to shelter her at nightfall, even when they themselves lay upon the ground. Sad, sad it was to hear them asking of every passer-by if he had seen Europa, so long after the white bull had carried her away. But though the grey years thrust themselves between, and made the child's figure dim in their remembrance, neither of these true-hearted three ever dreamed of giving up the search.

One morning, however, poor Thasus found that he had sprained his ankle, and could not possibly go farther.

"After a few days, to be sure," said he mournfully, "I might make shift to hobble along with a stick. But that would only delay you, and perhaps hinder you from finding dear little Europa, after all your pains and trouble. Do you go forward, therefore, my beloved companions, and leave me to follow as I may."

"Thou hast been a true friend, dear Thasus," said Queen Telephassa, kissing his forehead. "Being neither my son, nor the brother of our lost Europa, thou hast shown thyself truer to me and her than Phœnix and Cilix did, whom we have left behind us. Without thy loving help, and that of my son Cadmus, my limbs could not have borne me half so far as this. Now, take thy rest, and be at peace. For—and it is the first time I have owned it to myself—I begin to doubt whether we shall ever find my beloved daughter in this world."

Saying this, the poor queen shed tears, because it was a grievous trial to the mother's heart to confess that her hopes were growing faint. From that day forward Cadmus noticed that she never travelled with the same brightness of spirit that had heretofore supported her. Her weight was heavier upon his arm.

Before setting out, Cadmus helped Thasus to build a bower; while Telephassa, being too infirm to give any great assistance, advised them how to fit it up and furnish it, so that it might be as comfortable as a hut of branches could. Thasus, however, did not spend all his days in this green bower. For it happened to him, as to Phœnix and Cilix, that other homeless people visited the spot, and liked it, and built themselves houses in the neighbourhood. So here, in the course of a few years, was another thriving city, with a red sandstone palace in the centre of it, where Thasus sat upon a throne, dealing out justice to the people, with a purple robe over his shoulders, a sceptre in his hand, and a crown upon his head. The inhabitants had made him king, not for the sake of any royal blood (for none was in his veins), but because Thasus was an upright, true-hearted, and courageous man, and therefore fit to rule.

But, when the affairs of his kingdom were all settled, King Thasus laid aside his purple robe and crown and sceptre, and

bade his worthiest subject deal out justice to the people in his stead. Then, grasping the pilgrim's staff that had supported him so long, he set forth again, hoping still to discover some hoof-mark of the snow-white bull, some trace of the vanished child. He returned after a lengthened absence, and sat down wearily upon his throne. To his latest hour, nevertheless, King Thasus showed his true-hearted remembrance of Europa, by ordering that a fire should always be kept burning in his palace, and a bath steaming hot, and food ready to be served up, and a bed with snow-white sheets, in case the maiden should arrive and require immediate refreshment. And though Europa never came, the good Thasus had the blessings of many a poor traveller, who profited by the food and lodging which were meant for the little playmate of the king's boyhood.

Telephassa and Cadmus were now pursuing their weary way, with no companion but each other. The queen leaned heavily upon her son's arm, and could walk only a few miles a-day. But, for all her weakness and weariness, she would not be persuaded to give up the search. It was enough to bring tears into the eyes of bearded men to hear the melancholy tone with which she inquired of every stranger whether he could tell her any news of the lost child.

"Have you seen a little girl—no, no, I mean a young maiden of full growth—passing by this way, mounted on a snow-white bull, which gallops as swiftly as the wind?"

"We have seen no such wondrous sight," the people would reply; and very often, taking Cadmus aside, they whispered to him, "Is this stately and sad-looking woman your mother? Surely she is not in her right mind; and you ought to take her home and make her comfortable, and do your best to get this dream out of her fancy."

"It is no dream," said Cadmus. "Everything else is a dream, save that."

But, one day, Telephassa seemed feebler than usual, and leaned almost her whole weight on the arm of Cadmus, and walked more slowly than ever before. At last they reached a solitary spot, where she told her son that she must needs lie down and take a good long rest.

"A good long rest," she repeated, looking Cadmus tenderly in the face. "A good long rest, thou dearest one!"

"As long as you please, dear mother," answered Cadmus.

Telephassa bade him sit down on the turf beside her, and she then took his hand.

"My son," said she, fixing her dim eyes most lovingly upon him, "this rest that I speak of will be very long indeed! You must not wait till it is finished. Dear Cadmus, you do not comprehend me. You must make a grave here, and lay your mother's weary frame into it. My pilgrimage is over."

Cadmus burst into tears, and, for a long time, refused to believe that his dear mother was now to be taken from him. But Telephassa reasoned with him, and kissed him, and at length made him discern that it was better for her spirit to pass away out of the toil, the weariness, the grief, and disappointment which had burdened her on earth, ever since the child was lost. He therefore repressed his sorrow, and listened to her last words.

"Dearest Cadmus," said she, "thou hast been the truest son that ever mother had, and faithful to the very last. Who else would have borne with my infirmities as thou hast? It is owing to thy care, thou tenderest child, that my grave was not dug long years ago, in some valley or on some hillside, that lies far, far behind us. It is enough. Thou shalt wander no more on this hopeless search. But, when thou hast laid thy mother in the earth, then go, my son, to Delphi, and inquire of the oracle what thou shalt do next."

"O mother, mother!" cried Cadmus, "couldst thou have but seen my sister before this hour!"

"It matters little now," answered Telephassa, and there was a smile upon her face. "I go now to the better world, and, sooner or later, shall find my daughter there."

I will not sadden you with telling how Telephassa died and was buried, but will only say, that her dying smile grew brighter, instead of vanishing from her dead face; so that Cadmus felt convinced that, at her very first step into the better world, she had caught Europa in her arms. He planted some flowers on his mother's grave, and left them to grow there, and make the place beautiful, when he should be far away.



After performing this last sorrowful duty, he set forth alone, and took the road towards the famous oracle of Delphi, as Telephassa had advised him. On his way thither, he still inquired of most people whom he met whether they had seen Europa; for, to say the truth, Cadmus had grown so accustomed to ask the question, that it came to his lips as readily as a remark about the weather. He received various answers. Some told him one thing and some another. Among the rest, a mariner affirmed, that, many years before, in a distant country, he had heard a rumour about a white bull, which came swimming across the sea with a child on his back, dressed up in flowers that were blighted with the sea-water. He did not know what had become of the child or the bull; and Cadmus suspected, indeed, by a look in the mariner's eye, that he was only joking, and had never really heard anything about the matter.

Poor Cadmus found it more wearisome to travel alone than to bear all his dear mother's weight while she had kept him company. His heart, you will understand, was now so heavy that it seemed impossible sometimes to carry it any farther. But his limbs were strong and active, and well accustomed to exercise. He walked swiftly along, thinking of King Agenor and Queen Telephassa, and his brothers, and the friendly Thasus, all of whom he had left behind him at one point of his pilgrimage or another, and never expected to see them any more. Full of these remembrances, he came within sight of a lofty mountain, which the people thereabouts told him was called Parnassus. On the slope of Mount Parnassus was the famous Delphi, whither Cadmus was going.

This Delphi was supposed to be the very midmost spot of the whole world. The place of the oracle was a certain cavity in the mountain-side, over which, when Cadmus came thither, he found a rude bower of branches. It reminded him of those which he had helped to build for Phoenix and Cilix, and afterwards for Thasus. In later times, when multitudes of people came from great distances to put questions to the oracle, a spacious temple of marble was erected over the spot. But in the days of Cadmus there was only this rustic bower, with its abundance of green foliage and a tuft of shrubbery, that ran wild over the mysterious hole in the hillside

When Cadmus had thrust a passage through the tangled boughs, and made his way into the bower, he did not at first discern the half-hidden cavity. But soon he felt a cold stream of air rushing out of it with so much force that it shook the ringlets of his hair. Pulling away the shrubbery which clustered over the hole, he bent forward, and spoke in a distinct but reverential tone, as if addressing some unseen personage inside of the mountain.

"Sacred oracle of Delphi," said he, "whither shall I go next in quest of my dear sister Europa?"

There was at first a deep silence, and then a rushing sound, or a noise like a long sigh, proceeding out of the interior of the earth. This cavity was looked upon as a sort of fountain of truth, which sometimes gushed out in audible words. By-and-by the rushing noise began to sound like articulate language. It repeated, over and over again, the following sentence, which, after all, was so like the vague whistle of a blast of air, that Cadmus really did not quite know whether it meant anything or not:—

"Seek her no more! Seek her no more! Seek her no more!"

"What, then, shall I do?" asked Cadmus.

For, ever since he was a child, it had been the great object of his life to find his sister. From the very hour that he left following the butterfly in the meadow near his father's palace, he had done his best to follow Europa over land and sea. And now, if he must give up the search, he seemed to have no more to do in this world.

But again the sighing gust of air grew into something like a hoarse voice.

"Follow the cow!" it said. "Follow the cow! Follow the cow!"

And when these words had been repeated until Cadmus was tired of hearing them (especially as he could not imagine what cow it was, or why he was to follow her), the gusty hole gave vent to another sentence.

"Where the stray cow lies down, there is your home."

These words were pronounced but a single time, and died away into a whisper before Cadmus was fully satisfied that he

had caught the meaning. He put other questions, but received no answer; only the gust of wind sighed continually out of the cavity, and blew the withered leaves rustling along the ground before it.

"Did there really come any words out of the hole?" thought Cadmus; "or have I been dreaming all this while?"

He turned away from the oracle, and thought himself no wiser than when he came thither. Caring little what might happen to him, he took the first path that offered itself, and went along at a sluggish pace; for, having no object in view, nor any reason to go one way more than another, it would certainly have been foolish to make haste. Whenever he met anybody, the old question was at his tongue's end—

"Have you seen a beautiful maiden, dressed like a king's daughter, and mounted on a snow-white bull, that gallops as swiftly as the wind?"

But, remembering what the oracle had said, he only half uttered the words, and then mumbled the rest indistinctly; and from his confusion, people must have imagined that this handsome young man had lost his wits.

I know not how far Cadmus had gone, nor could he himself have told you, when, at no great distance before him, he beheld a brindled cow. She was lying down by the wayside, and quietly chewing the cud; nor did she take any notice of the young man until he had approached pretty nigh. Then, getting leisurely upon her feet, and giving her head a gentle toss, she began to move slowly along, often pausing just long enough to crop a mouthful of grass. Cadmus loitered behind, whistling idly to himself, and scarcely noticing the cow; until the thought occurred to him whether this could possibly be the animal which, according to the oracle's response, was to serve him for a guide. But he smiled at himself for fancying such a thing. He could not seriously think that this was the cow, because she went along so quietly, behaving just like any other cow. Evidently she neither knew nor cared about Cadmus, and was only thinking how to get her living along the wayside, where the herbage was green and fresh. Perhaps she was going home to be milked.

"Cow—cow—cow!" cried Cadmus. "Hey, Brindle, hey! Stop, my good cow!"

He wanted to come up with the cow, so as to examine her, and see if she would appear to know him, or whether there were anything to mark her out from a thousand other cows, whose only business is to fill the milk-pail. But still the brindled cow trudged on, whisking her tail to keep the flies away, and taking as little notice of Cadmus as she well could. If he walked slowly, so did the cow, and seized the opportunity to graze. If he quickened his pace, the cow went just so much the faster; and once, when Cadmus tried to catch her by running, she set off at a quick gallop.

When Cadmus saw that it was impossible to come up with her, he walked on moderately as before. The cow, too, went leisurely on, without looking behind. Wherever the grass was greenest, there she cropped a mouthful or two. When a brook glistened brightly across the path, there the cow drank, and breathed a comfortable sigh, and drank again, and trudged onward at the pace that best suited herself and Cadmus.

"I do believe," thought Cadmus, "that this may be the cow that was foretold to me. If it be the one, I suppose she will lie down somewhere hereabouts."

Whenever they reached a particularly pleasant spot on a breezy hillside, or in a sheltered vale, or flowery meadow on the shore of a calm lake, or along the bank of a clear stream, Cadmus looked eagerly around to see if the situation would suit him for a home. But still, whether he liked the place or no, the brindled cow never offered to lie down. On she went at the quiet pace of a cow going homeward to the barnyard; and every moment Cadmus expected to see a milkmaid approaching with a pail, or a herdsman running to stop the stray animal, and turn her back towards the pasture. But no milkmaid came; no herdsman drove her back; and Cadmus followed the stray cow till he was almost ready to drop down with fatigue.

"O brindled cow," cried he, in a tone of despair, "do you never mean to stop?"

He had now grown too intent on following her to think of lagging behind, however long the way, and whatever might

be his fatigue. Indeed it seemed as if there were something about the animal that bewitched people. Several persons who happened to see the brindled cow, and Cadmus following behind, began to trudge after her precisely as he did. Cadmus was glad of somebody to converse with, and therefore talked very freely to these good people. He told them all his adventures, and how he had left King Agenor in his palace, and Phoenix at one place, and Cilix at another, and Thasus at a third, and his dear mother, Queen Telephassa, under a flowery sod, so that now he was quite alone, both friendless and homeless. He mentioned, likewise, that the oracle had bidden him to be guided by a cow, and inquired of the strangers whether they supposed that this brindled animal could be the one.

"Why, 'tis a very wonderful affair," answered one of his new companions. "I am pretty well acquainted with the ways of cattle, and I never knew a cow of her own accord go so far without stopping. If my legs will let me, I'll never leave following the beast till she lies down."

"Nor I!" said a second.

"Nor I!" cried a third. "If she goes a hundred miles farther, I'm determined to see the end of it."

They kept trudging stoutly forward, and talking as they went. The strangers grew very fond of Cadmus, and resolved never to leave him, but to help him to build a city wherever the cow might lie down. In the centre of it there should be a noble palace, in which Cadmus might dwell, and be their king, with a throne, a crown and sceptre, a purple robe, and everything else that a king ought to have; for in him there was the royal blood and the royal heart, and the head that knew how to rule.

While they were talking of these schemes, and beguiling the tediousness of the way with laying out the plan of the new city, one of the company happened to look at the cow.

"Joy! joy!" cried he, clapping his hands. "The cow is going to lie down."

They all looked; and sure enough the cow had stopped, and was staring leisurely about her as other cows do when on the point of lying down. And slowly, slowly did she recline

herself on the soft grass, first bending her fore legs, and then crouching her hind ones. When Cadmus and his companions came up with her, there was the brindled cow taking her ease, chewing her cud, and looking them quietly in the face, as if this was just the spot she had been seeking for, and as if it were all a matter of course.

"This, then," said Cadmus, gazing around him—"this is to be my home."

It was a fertile and lovely plain, with great trees flinging their sun-speckled shadows over it, and hills fencing it in from the rough weather. At no great distance they beheld a river gleaming in the sunshine. A home feeling stole into the heart of poor Cadmus. He was very glad to know that here he might awake in the morning without having to put on his dusty sandals to travel farther and farther. The days and the years would pass over him and find him still in this pleasant spot. If he could have had his brothers with him, and his friend Thasus, and could have seen his dear mother under a roof of his own, he might here have been happy, after all their disappointments. Some day or other, too, his sister Europa might have come quietly to the door of his home, and smiled round upon the familiar faces. But, indeed, since there was no hope of regaining the friends of his boyhood, or ever seeing his dear sister again, Cadmus resolved to make himself happy with these new companions who had grown so fond of him while following the cow.

"Yes, my friends," said he to them, "this is to be our home. Here we will build our habitations. The brindled cow, which has led us hither, will supply us with milk. We will cultivate the neighbouring soil, and lead an innocent and happy life."

His companions joyfully assented to the plan; and, in the first place, being very hungry and thirsty, they looked about them for the means of providing a comfortable meal. Not far off they saw a tuft of trees, which appeared as if there might be a spring of water beneath them. They went thither to fetch some, leaving Cadmus stretched on the ground along with the brindled cow; for, now that he had found a place of rest, it seemed as if all the weariness of his pilgrimage ever

since he left King Agenor's palace had fallen upon him at once. But his new friends had not long been gone when he was suddenly startled by cries, shouts, and screams, and the noise of a terrible struggle, and in the midst of it all a most awful hissing, which went right through his ears like a rough saw.

Running towards the tuft of trees, he beheld the head and fiery eyes of an immense serpent or dragon, with the widest jaws that ever a dragon had, and many rows of horribly sharp teeth. Before Cadmus could reach the spot, this pitiless reptile had killed his poor companions, and was busily devouring them, making but a mouthful of each man.

It appears that the fountain of water was enchanted, and that the dragon had been set to guard it, so that no mortal might ever quench his thirst there. As the neighbouring inhabitants carefully avoided the spot, it was now a long time (not less than a hundred years or thereabouts) since the monster had broken his fast; and, as was natural enough, his appetite had grown to be enormous, and was not half satisfied by the poor people whom he had just eaten up. When he caught sight of Cadmus, therefore, he set up another abominable hiss, and flung back his immense jaws until his mouth looked like a great red cavern.

But Cadmus was so enraged at the destruction of his friends, that he cared neither for the size of the dragon's jaws nor for his hundreds of sharp teeth. Drawing his sword, he rushed at the monster, and flung himself right into his cavernous mouth. This bold method of attacking him took the dragon by surprise; for, in fact, Cadmus had leaped so far down into his throat that the rows of terrible teeth could not close upon him, nor do him the least harm in the world. Thus, though the struggle was a tremendous one, and though the dragon shattered the tuft of trees into small splinters by the lashing of his tail, yet, as Cadmus was all the while slashing and stabbing at his very vitals, it was not long before the scaly wretch bethought himself of slipping away. He had not gone his length, however, when the brave Cadmus gave him a sword-thrust that finished the battle; and, creeping out of the gateway of the creature's jaws, there he beheld him still quivering

through his vast bulk, although there was no longer life enough in him to harm a little child.

But do not you suppose that it made Cadmus sorrowful to think of the melancholy fate which had befallen those poor, friendly people who had followed the cow along with him? It seemed as if he were doomed to lose everybody whom he loved, or to see them perish in one way or another. And here he was, after all his toils and troubles, in a solitary place, with not a single human being to help him to build a hut.

"What shall I do?" cried he aloud. "It were better for me to have been devoured by the dragon, as my poor companions were."

"Cadmus," said a voice—but whether it came from above or below him, or whether it spoke within his own breast, the young man could not tell—"Cadmus, pluck out the dragon's teeth, and plant them in the earth."

This was a strange thing to do; nor was it very easy to dig out all those deep-rooted fangs from the dead dragon's jaws. But Cadmus toiled and tugged, and after pounding the monstrous head almost to pieces with a great stone, he at last collected nearly all the teeth. The next thing was to plant them. This, likewise, was a tedious piece of work, especially as Cadmus was already exhausted with killing the dragon, and knocking his head to pieces, and had nothing to dig the earth with, except his own sword-blade. Finally, however, a large enough piece of ground was turned up, and sown with this new kind of seed; although half of the dragon's teeth still remained to be planted some other day.

Cadmus, quite out of breath, stood leaning upon his sword, and wondering what was to happen next. He had waited but a few moments, when he began to see a sight, which was as great a marvel as the most marvellous thing I ever told you about.

The sun was shining slantwise over the field, and showed all the moist, dark soil, just like any other newly planted piece of ground. All at once, Cadmus fancied he saw something glisten very brightly, first at one spot, then at another, and then at a hundred and a thousand spots together. Soon he perceived them to be the steel heads of spears, sprouting up



everywhere like so many stalks of grain, and continually growing taller and taller. Next appeared a vast number of bright sword-blades, thrusting themselves up in the same way. A moment afterwards, the whole surface of the ground was broken by a multitude of polished brass helmets, coming up like a crop of enormous beans. So rapidly did they grow, that Cadmus now discerned the fierce countenance of a man beneath every one. In short, before he had time to think what a wonderful affair it was, he beheld an abundant harvest of what looked like human beings, armed with helmets and breastplates, shields, swords, and spears; and before they were well out of the earth, they brandished their weapons, and clashed them one against another, seeming to think, little while as they had yet lived, that they had wasted too much of life without a battle. Every tooth of the dragon had produced one of these fierce-looking warriors.

Up sprouted, also, a great many trumpeters; and with the first breath that they drew, they put their brazen trumpets to their lips, and sounded a tremendous and ear-shattering blast; so that the whole space, just now so quiet and solitary, reverberated with the clash and clang of arms, the bray of warlike music, and the shouts of angry men. So enraged did they all look, that Cadmus fully expected them to put the whole world to the sword.

"Cadmus," said the same voice which he had before heard, "throw a stone into the midst of the armed men."

So Cadmus seized a large stone, and, flinging it into the middle of the earth-army, saw it strike the breastplate of a gigantic and fierce-looking warrior. Immediately on feeling the blow, he seemed to take it for granted that somebody had struck him; and uplifting his weapon, he smote his next neighbour a blow that cleft his helmet asunder, and stretched him on the ground. In an instant, those nearest the fallen warrior began to strike at one another with their swords, and stab with their spears. The confusion spread wider and wider. Each man smote down his brother, and was himself smitten down before he had time to exult in his victory. The trumpeters, all the while, blew their blasts shriller and shriller; each soldier shouted a battle-cry, and often fell with it on his lips.

Well, this memorable battle continued to rage until the ground was strewn with helmeted heads that had been cut off. Of all the thousands that began the fight, there were only five left standing. These now rushed from different parts of the field, and, meeting in the middle of it, clashed their swords, and struck at each other's hearts as fiercely as ever.

"Cadmus," said the voice again, "bid those five warriors sheathe their swords. They will help you to build the city."

Without hesitating an instant, Cadmus stepped forward, with the aspect of a king and a leader, and extending his drawn sword amongst them, spoke to the warriors in a stern and commanding voice.

"Sheathe your weapons!" said he.

And forthwith, feeling themselves bound to obey him, the five remaining sons of the dragon's teeth returned their swords to the scabbards, and stood before Cadmus in rank, eyeing him as soldiers eye their captain, while awaiting the word of command.

These five men had probably sprung from the biggest of the dragon's teeth, and were the boldest and strongest of the whole army. They were almost giants, indeed, and had good need to be so, else they never could have lived through so terrible a fight. They still had a very furious look; and if Cadmus happened to glance aside, would glare at one another with fire flashing out of their eyes. It was strange, too, to observe how the earth, out of which they had so lately grown, was incrustated here and there on their bright breastplates, and even begrimed their faces.

They looked him earnestly in the face, waiting for his next order, and evidently desiring no other employment than to follow him from one battle-field to another all over the wide world. But Cadmus was wiser than these earth-born creatures, with the dragon's fierceness in them, and knew better how to use their strength and hardihood.

"Come!" said he, "you are sturdy fellows; make yourselves useful! Quarry some stones with those great swords of yours, and help me to build a city."

The five soldiers grumbled a little, and muttered that it was their business to overthrow cities, not to build them up. But

Cadmus looked at them with a stern eye, and spoke to them in a tone of authority, so that they knew him for their master, and never again thought of disobeying his commands. They set to work in good earnest, and toiled so diligently, that in a very short time a city began to make its appearance. At first, to be sure, the workmen showed a quarrelsome disposition. Like savage beasts, they would doubtless have done one another mischief, if Cadmus had not kept watch over them, and quelled the fierce old serpent that lurked in their hearts when he saw it gleaming out of their wild eyes. But, in course of time, they got accustomed to honest labour, and had sense enough to feel that there was more true enjoyment in living at peace, and doing good to one's neighbour, than in striking at him with a two-edged sword.

And now the city was built, and there was a home in it for each of the workmen. But the palace of Cadmus was not yet erected, because they had left it till the last, in order to make it very commodious, as well as stately and beautiful. After finishing the rest of their labours, they all went to bed betimes, in order to rise in the grey of the morning, and to get at least the foundation of the edifice laid before nightfall. But when Cadmus arose and took his way towards the site where the palace was to be built, followed by his five sturdy workmen, there stood the most magnificent palace that had ever been seen in the world.

It was built of marble and other beautiful kinds of stone, and rose high into the air, with a splendid dome and a portico along the front, and carved pillars, and everything else that befitted the palace of a mighty king. It had grown up out of the earth in almost as short a time as it had taken the armed host to spring from the dragon's teeth.

When the five workmen beheld the dome, with the morning sunshine making it look golden and glorious, they gave a great shout.

"Long live King Cadmus," they cried, "in his beautiful palace!"

And the new king, with his five faithful followers, ascended the palace-steps. Halting at the entrance, they gazed through *a long vista of lofty pillars* that were ranged from end to end

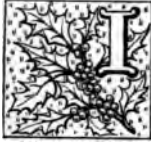
of a great hall. At the farther extremity of this hall, approaching slowly towards him, Cadmus beheld a female figure, wonderfully beautiful, and adorned with a royal robe, and a crown of diamonds over her golden ringlets, and the richest necklace that ever a queen wore. His heart thrilled with delight. He fancied her his long-lost sister Europa, now grown to womanhood, coming to make him happy, and to repay him with her sweet sisterly affection for all those weary wanderings in quest of her since he left King Agenor's palace—for the tears that he had shed on parting with Phoenix, and Cilix, and Thasus—for the heart-breakings that had made the whole world seem dismal to him over his dear mother's grave.

But, as Cadmus advanced to meet the beautiful stranger, he saw that her features were unknown to him, although, in the little time that it required to tread along the hall, he had already felt a sympathy betwixt himself and her.

"No, Cadmus," said the same voice that had spoken to him in the field of the armed men, "this is not that dear sister Europa whom you have sought so faithfully all over the wide world. This is Harmōnia, a daughter of the sky, who is given you instead of sister, and brothers, and friend, and mother. You will find all those dear ones in her alone."

So King Cadmus dwelt in the palace with his new friend, Harmonia. Before many years went by, there was a group of rosy little children sporting in the great hall, and on the marble steps of the palace, and running joyfully to meet King Cadmus, when affairs of state left him at leisure to play with them. They called him father, and Queen Harmonia mother. The five old soldiers of the dragon's teeth grew very fond of these small children, and were never weary of showing them how to flourish wooden swords and march in military order.

## THE MINOTAUR.



IN the old city of Troezen, at the foot of a lofty mountain, there lived, a very long time ago, a little boy named Theseus. His grandfather, King Pittheus, was the sovereign of that country, and was looked upon as a very wise man ; so that Theseus, being brought up in the royal palace, and being naturally a bright lad, could hardly fail to profit by the old king's instructions. His mother's name was Æthra. As for his father, the boy had never seen him. But, from his earliest remembrance, Æthra used to go with little Theseus into a wood, and sit down upon a moss-grown rock, which was sunk deep into the earth. Here she often talked with her son about his father, and said that he was called Ægeus, and that he was a great king, and ruled over Attica, and dwelt at Athens, which was as famous a city as any in the world. Theseus was very fond of hearing about King Ægeus, and often asked his good mother Æthra why he did not come and live with them at Troezen.

"Ah, my dear son," answered Æthra, with a sigh, "a monarch has his people to take care of. The men and women over whom he rules are in the place of children to him ; and he can seldom spare time to love his own children as other parents do. Your father will never be able to leave his kingdom for the sake of seeing his little boy."

"Well, but, dear mother," asked the boy, "why cannot I go to this famous city of Athens, and tell King Ægeus that I am his son ?"

"That may happen by-and-by," said Æthra. "Be patient, and we shall see. You are not yet big and strong enough to set out on such an errand."

"And how soon shall I be strong enough ?" Theseus asked.

"You are but a tiny boy as yet," replied his mother. "See *if you can lift this rock on which we are sitting.*"

The little fellow had a great opinion of his own strength. So, grasping the rough rock, he tugged and toiled amain, and got himself quite out of breath, without being able to stir the heavy stone. It seemed to be rooted into the ground. No wonder he could not move it ; for it would have taken all the force of a very strong man to lift it out of its earthy bed.

His mother stood looking on, with a sad kind of smile on her lips and in her eyes, to see the zealous and yet puny efforts of her little boy. She could not help being sorrowful at finding him already so impatient to begin his adventures in the world.

"You see how it is, my dear Theseus," said she ; "you must have far more strength before I can trust you to go to Athens, and tell King Ægeus that you are his son. But when you can lift this rock, and show me what is hidden beneath it, I promise you I will give you leave to go."

Often and often, after this, did Theseus ask his mother whether it was yet time for him to go to Athens ; and still his mother pointed to the rock, and told him that, for years to come, he could not be strong enough to move it. And again and again the rosy-cheeked and curly-headed boy would tug and strain at the huge mass of stone, striving, child as he was, to do what a giant could hardly have done without taking both of his great hands to the task. Meanwhile the rock seemed to be sinking farther and farther into the ground. The moss grew over it thicker and thicker, until at last it looked almost like a soft green seat, with only a few grey knobs of granite peeping out. The overhanging trees, also, shed their brown leaves upon it, as often as the autumn came ; and at its base grew ferns and wild flowers, some of which crept quite over its surface. To all appearance, the rock was as firmly fastened as any other part of the earth.

But, difficult as the matter looked, Theseus was now growing up to be so strong a lad, that, in his own opinion, the time would quickly come when he might hope to move this ponderous lump of stone.

"Mother, I do believe it has started !" cried he, after one of his attempts. "The earth around it is certainly a little cracked !"

"No, no, child!" his mother hastily answered. "It is not possible you can have moved it, boy as you still are."

Nor would she be convinced, although Theseus showed her the place where he fancied that the stem of a flower had been partly uprooted by the movement of the rock. But Æthra sighed and looked disquieted; for now she began to be conscious that her son was no longer a child, and that in a little while hence, she must send him forth among the perils and troubles of the world.

It was not more than a year afterwards when they were again sitting on the moss-covered stone. Æthra had once more told him the oft-repeated story of his father, and how gladly he would receive Theseus at his palace, and how he would present him to his courtiers and the people, and tell them that here was the heir of his dominions. The eyes of Theseus glowed with joy and longing, and he could hardly sit still to hear his mother speak.

"Dear mother Æthra," he exclaimed, "I never felt half so strong as now! I am no longer a child, nor a boy, nor a mere youth! I feel myself a man! It is now time to make one earnest trial to move the stone."

"Ah, my dearest Theseus," replied his mother, "not yet! not yet!"

"Yes, mother," said he, resolutely, "the time has come!"

Then Theseus bent himself in good earnest to the task, and strained every sinew, with manly strength and resolution. He put his whole brave heart into the effort. He wrestled with the big and sluggish stone, as if it had been a living enemy. He heaved, he lifted, he resolved now to succeed, or else to perish there, and let the rock be his monument for ever! Æthra stood gazing at him, and clasped her hands, partly with a mother's pride, and partly with a mother's sorrow. The great rock stirred! Yes; it was raised slowly from the bedded moss and earth, uprooting the shrubs and flowers along with it, and was turned upon its side. Theseus had conquered!

While taking breath, he looked joyfully at his mother, and she smiled upon him through her tears.

"Yes, Theseus," she said, "the time has come, and you *must stay* no longer at my side! See what King Ægeus,

your royal father, left for you, beneath the stone, when he lifted it in his mighty arms, and laid it on the spot whence you have now removed it."

Theseus looked, and saw that the rock had been placed over another slab of stone, containing a cavity within it; so that it somewhat resembled a roughly made chest or coffer, of which the upper mass had served as the lid. Within the cavity lay a sword with a golden hilt, and a pair of sandals.

"That was your father's sword," said Æthra, "and those were his sandals. When he went to be King of Athens, he bade me treat you as a child until you should prove yourself a man by lifting this heavy stone. That task being accomplished, you are to put on his sandals, in order to follow in your father's footsteps, and to gird on his sword, so that you may fight giants and dragons, as King Ægeus did in his youth."

"I will set out for Athens this very day!" cried Theseus.

But his mother persuaded him to stay a day or two longer, while she got ready some things necessary for his journey. When his grandfather, the wise King Pittheus, heard that Theseus intended to present himself at his father's palace, he earnestly advised him to get on board a vessel, and go by sea, because he might thus arrive within fifteen miles of Athens, without either fatigue or danger.

"The roads are very bad by land," quoth the venerable king; "and they are terribly infested with robbers and monsters. A mere lad, like Theseus, is not fit to be trusted on such a perilous journey, all by himself. No, no; let him go by sea!"

But when Theseus heard of robbers and monsters, he became all open-eyed and earnest attention, and was so much the more eager to take the road along which they were to be met with. On the third day, therefore, he bade a respectful farewell to his grandfather, thanking him for all his kindness; and, after affectionately embracing his mother, he set forth, with a good many of her tears glistening on his cheeks, and some, if the truth must be told, that had gushed out of his own eyes. But he let the sun and wind dry them, and walked stoutly on, playing with the golden hilt of his sword, and taking very manly strides in his father's sandals.



I can only tell you very shortly of the adventures that befell Theseus on the road to Athens. It is enough to say, that he quite cleared that part of the country of the robbers, about whom King Pittheus had been so much alarmed. One of these bad people was named Procrustes. He was indeed a terrible fellow, and had an ugly way of making fun of the poor travellers who happened to fall into his clutches. In his cavern he had a bed, on which, with great pretence of hospitality, he invited his guests to lie down ; but if they happened to be shorter than the bed, this wicked villain stretched them out by main force ; or, if they were too tall, he lopped off their heads or feet, and laughed at what he had done, as an excellent joke. Thus, however weary a man might be, he would rather journey slowly along than lie in the bed of Procrustes. Another of these robbers, named Scron, must likewise have been a very great scoundrel. He was in the habit of flinging his victims off a high cliff into the sea ; and, in order to give him exactly his deserts, Theseus tossed him off the very same place. But the sea would not pollute itself by receiving such a bad person into its bosom ; neither would the earth, having once got rid of him, consent to take him back ; so that between the cliff and the sea, Scron stuck fast in the air, which was forced to bear the burden of his wickedness.

After these memorable deeds, Theseus heard of an enormous sow, which ran wild, and was the terror of all the farmers round about ; and, as he did not consider himself above doing any good thing that came in his way, he killed this monstrous creature, and gave the carcass to the poor people for food.

Thus, by the time he reached his journey's end, Theseus had done many valiant feats with his father's golden-hilted sword, and had gained the renown of being one of the bravest young men of the day. His fame travelled faster than he did, and reached Athens before him. As he entered the city, he heard the inhabitants talking at the street-corners and saying that Hercules was brave, and Jason too, and Castor and Pollux likewise, but that Theseus, the son of their own king, would turn out as great a hero as the best of them. Theseus took longer *strides on hearing this*, and fancied himself sure of a magnifi-

cent reception at his father's court, since he came thither with fame to blow her trumpet before him, and cry to King Ægeus, "Behold your son!"

He little suspected, that here in this very Athens, where his father reigned, a greater danger awaited him than any which he had encountered on the road. Yet this was the truth. You must understand that the father of Theseus, though not very old in years, was almost worn out with the cares of government, and had thus grown aged before his time. His nephews, not expecting him to live a very great while, intended to get all the power of the kingdom into their own hands. But, when they heard that Theseus had arrived in Athens, and learned what a gallant young man he was, they saw that he would not be at all the kind of person to let them steal away his father's crown and sceptre, which ought to be his own by right of inheritance. Thus these bad-hearted nephews of King Ægeus, who were the cousins of Theseus, at once became his enemies. A still more dangerous enemy was Medea, the wicked enchantress; for she was now the king's wife, and wanted to give the kingdom to her son Medus, instead of letting it be given to the son of Æthra, whom she hated.

It so happened that the king's nephews met Theseus, and found out who he was, just as he reached the entrance to the royal palace. With all their evil designs against him, they pretended to be their cousin's best friends, and expressed great joy at making his acquaintance. They proposed to him that he should come into the king's presence as a stranger, in order to try whether Ægeus would discover in the young man's features any likeness either to himself or his mother Æthra, and thus recognise him for a son. Theseus consented; for he fancied that his father would know him in a moment, by the love that was in his heart. But, while he waited at the door, the nephews ran and told King Ægeus that a young man had arrived in Athens, who, to their certain knowledge intended to put him to death, and get possession of his royal crown.

"And he is now waiting for admission to your majesty's presence," added they.

"Aha!" cried the old king, on hearing this. "Why, he must be very wicked indeed! Pray, what would you advise me to do with him?"

In reply to this question, the wicked Medea put in her word. As I have already told you, she was a famous enchantress. According to some stories, she was in the habit of boiling old people in a large caldron, under pretence of making them young again; but King Ægeus, I suppose, did not fancy such an uncomfortable way of growing young, or perhaps was contented to be old, and therefore would never let himself be put into the caldron. If there were time to spare from more important matters, I should be glad to tell you of Medea's fiery chariot, drawn by winged dragons, in which the enchantress used often to take an airing among the clouds. It was this chariot, in fact, that first brought her to Athens, where she had done nothing but mischief ever since her arrival. But these and many other wonders must be left untold; and it is enough to say, that Medea, amongst a thousand other bad things, knew how to prepare a poison, that was instantly fatal to any one who might so much as touch it with his lips.

So when the king asked what he should do with Theseus, this naughty woman had an answer ready at her tongue's end.

"Leave that to me, please your majesty," she replied. "Only admit this evil-minded young man to your presence, treat him civilly, and invite him to drink a goblet of wine. Your majesty well knows that I sometimes amuse myself with distilling very powerful medicines. Here is one of them in this small phial. As to what it is made of, that is one of my secrets of state. Do but let me put a single drop into the goblet and let the young man taste it, and I will answer for it, he will quite lay aside the bad designs with which he comes hither."

As she said this, Medea smiled; but, for all her smiling face, she meant nothing less than to poison the poor innocent Theseus before his father's eyes. And King Ægeus, like most other kings, thought any punishment mild enough for a person *who was accused* of plotting against his life. He therefore

made little or no objection to Medea's scheme, and as soon as the poisonous wine was ready, gave orders that the young stranger should be admitted into his presence. The goblet was set on a table beside the king's throne; and a fly, meaning just to sip a little from the brim, immediately tumbled into it, dead. Observing this, Medea looked round at the nephews and smiled again.

When Theseus was ushered into the royal apartment, the only object that he seemed to behold was the white-bearded old king. There he sat on his magnificent throne, a dazzling crown on his head, and a sceptre in his hand. His aspect was stately and majestic, although his years and infirmities weighed heavily upon him, as if each year were a lump of lead, and each infirmity a ponderous stone, and all were bundled up together, and laid upon his weary shoulders. Tears both of joy and sorrow sprang into the young man's eyes; for he thought how sad it was to see his dear father so infirm, and how sweet it would be to support him with his own youthful strength, and to cheer him up with the alacrity of his loving spirit. When a son takes his father into his warm heart, it renews the old man's youth in a better way than by the heat of Medea's magic caldron. And this was what Theseus resolved to do. He could scarcely wait to see whether King Ægeus would recognise him, so eager was he to throw himself into his arms.

Advancing to the foot of the throne, he attempted to make a little speech, which he had been thinking about, as he came up the stairs. But he was almost choked by a great many tender feelings that gushed out of his heart and swelled into his throat, all struggling to find utterance together. And therefore, unless he could have laid his full, over-brimming heart into the king's hand, poor Theseus knew not what to do or say. The cunning Medea observed what was passing in the young man's mind. She was more wicked at that moment than ever she had been before; for she did her worst to turn all this unspeakable love with which Theseus was agitated, to his own ruin and destruction.

"Does not your majesty see his confusion?" she whispered in the king's ear. "He is so conscious of guilt, that he trem-

bles and cannot speak. The wretch lives too long! Quick! offer him the wine!"

Now King Ægeus had been gazing earnestly at the young stranger, as he drew near the throne. There was something, he knew not what, either in his white brow, or in the fine expression of his mouth, or in his beautiful and tender eyes, that made him indistinctly feel as if he had seen this youth before; as if, indeed, he had trotted him on his knee when a baby, and had beheld him growing to be a stalwart man, while he himself grew old. But Medea guessed how the king felt, and would not suffer him to yield to these kindly feelings; although they were the voice of his deepest heart, telling him as plainly as it could speak, that here was his dear son, and Æthra's son, coming to claim him for a father. The enchantress again whispered in the king's ear, and compelled him, by her witchcraft, to see everything under a false aspect.

He made up his mind, therefore, to let Theseus drink off the poisoned wine.

"Young man," said he, "you are welcome! I am proud to show hospitality to so heroic a youth. Do me the favour to drink the contents of this goblet. It is brimming over as you see, with delicious wine, such as I bestow only on those who are worthy of it! None is more worthy to drink it than yourself!"

So saying, King Ægeus took the golden goblet from the table, and was about to offer it to Theseus. But partly through his infirmities, and partly because it seemed so sad a thing to take away this young man's life, however wicked he might be, and partly, no doubt, because his heart was wiser than his head, and quaked within him at the thought of what he was going to do—for all these reasons, the king's hand trembled so much that a great deal of the wine slopped over. In order to strengthen his purpose, and fearing lest the whole of the precious poison should be wasted, one of his nephews now whispered to him—

"Has your majesty any doubt of this stranger's guilt? There is the very sword with which he meant to slay you. How sharp, and bright, and terrible it is! Quick!—let him *taste the wine*; or perhaps he may do the deed even yet."

At these words, Ægeus drove every thought and feeling out of his breast, except the one idea how justly the young man deserved to be put to death. He sat erect on his throne, and held out the goblet of wine with a steady hand, and bent on Theseus a frown of kingly severity: for, after all, he had too noble a spirit to murder even a treacherous enemy with a deceitful smile upon his face.

“Drink!” said he, in the stern tone with which he was wont to condemn a criminal to be beheaded. “You have well deserved of me such wine as this!”

Theseus held out his hand to take the wine. But, before he touched it, King Ægeus trembled again. His eyes had fallen on the gold-hilted sword that hung at the young man’s side. He drew back the goblet.

“That sword!” he exclaimed; “how came you by it?”

“It was my father’s sword,” replied Theseus, with a tremulous voice. “These were his sandals. My dear mother (her name is Æthra) told me his story while I was yet a little child. But it is only a month since I grew strong enough to lift the heavy stone, and take the sword and sandals from beneath it, and come to Athens to seek my father.”

“My son! my son!” cried King Ægeus, flinging away the fatal goblet, and tottering down from the throne to fall into the arms of Theseus. “Yes, these are Æthra’s eyes. It is my son.”

I know not what became of the king’s nephews. But when the wicked Medea saw this new turn of affairs, she hurried out of the room, and going to her private chamber, lost no time in setting her enchantments to work. In a few moments she heard a great noise of hissing snakes outside the chamber window; and, behold! there was her fiery chariot, with its four huge-winged serpents, wriggling and twisting in the air, flourishing their tails higher than the top of the palace, and all ready to set off on an aerial journey. Medea stayed only long enough to take with her her son, and to steal the crown jewels, together with the king’s best robes, and whatever other valuable things she could lay hands on; and getting into the chariot, she whipped up the snakes, and ascended high over the city.

The king, hearing the hiss of the serpents, scrambled as fast as he could to the window, and cried out to the abominable enchantress never to come back. The whole people of Athens, too, who had run out of doors to see this wonderful spectacle, set up a shout of joy at the prospect of getting rid of her. Medea, almost bursting with rage, uttered precisely such a hiss as one of her own snakes, only ten times more venomous and spiteful; and glaring fiercely out of the blaze of the chariot, she shook her hands over the multitude below, as if she were scattering a million of curses among them. In so doing, however, she happened to let fall about five hundred diamonds of the first water, together with a thousand great pearls, and two thousand emeralds, rubies, sapphires, opals, and topazes, to which she had helped herself out of the king's strong-box. All these came pelting down, like a shower of many-coloured hailstones, upon the heads of grown people and children, who forthwith gathered them up, and carried them back to the palace. But King Ægeus told them that they were welcome to the whole, and to twice as many more, if he had them, for the sake of his delight at finding his son, and losing the wicked Medea. And, indeed, if you had seen how hateful was her last look, as the flaming chariot flew upward, you would not have wondered that both king and people should think her departure a good riddance.

And now Prince Theseus was taken into great favour by his royal father. The old king was never weary of having him sit beside him on his throne (which was quite wide enough for two), and of hearing him tell about his dear mother and his childhood, and his many boyish efforts to lift the ponderous stone. Theseus, however, was much too brave and active a young man to be willing to spend all his time in relating things which had already happened. His ambition was to perform other and more heroic deeds, which should be better worth telling in prose and verse. Nor had he been long in Athens before he caught and chained a terrible mad bull, and made a public show of him, greatly to the wonder and admiration of good King Ægeus and his subjects. *But pretty soon* he undertook an affair that made all his

foregone adventures seem like mere boy's play. The occasion of it was as follows :—

One morning when Prince Theseus awoke, he fancied that he must have had a very sorrowful dream, and it was still running in his mind, even now that his eyes were open. For it appeared as if the air was full of a melancholy wail; and when he listened more attentively, he could hear sobs, and groans, and screams of woe, mingled with deep, quiet sighs, which came from the king's palace, and from the streets, and from the temples, and from every habitation in the city. And all these mournful noises, issuing out of thousands of separate hearts, united themselves into the one great sound of affliction which had startled Theseus from slumber. He put on his clothes as quickly as he could (not forgetting his sandals and gold-hilted sword), and, hastening to the king, inquired what it all meant.

“Alas, my son!” quoth King Ægeus, heaving a long sigh, “there is a very great sorrow before us! This is the most woful anniversary in the whole year. It is the day when we annually draw lots to see which of the youths and maidens of Athens shall go to be devoured by the horrible Minotaur!”

“The Minotaur!” exclaimed Prince Theseus; and like a brave young prince as he was, he put his hand to the hilt of his sword. “What kind of a monster may that be? Is it not possible, at the risk of one's life, to slay him?”

But King Ægeus shook his venerable head, and, to convince Theseus that it was quite a hopeless case, he gave him an explanation of the whole affair. He told him that in the island of Crete there lived a certain dreadful monster, called a Minotaur, which was shaped partly like a man and partly like a bull, and was altogether a very hideous sort of creature. If he were suffered to exist at all, it should have been on some desert island, or in the duskiness of some deep cavern, where nobody would ever be tormented by his abominable aspect. But King Minos, who reigned over Crete, laid out a vast deal of money in building a habitation for the Minotaur, and took great care of his health and comfort, merely for mischief's sake. A few years before this time, there had been a war between the city of Athens and the island of Crete, in which the Athenians



were beaten and compelled to beg for peace. No peace could they obtain, however, except on condition that they should send seven young men and seven maidens, every year, to be devoured by the pet monster of the cruel King Minos. For three years past this grievous calamity had been borne. And the sobs, and groans, and shrieks, with which the city were now filled, were caused by the people's woe, because the fatal day had come again, when the fourteen victims were to be chosen by lot. And the old people feared lest their sons or daughters might be taken, and the youths and damsels dreaded lest they themselves might be destined to glut the ravenous maw of that horrible man-brute.

But when Theseus heard the story, he straightened himself up, so that he seemed taller than ever before; and as for his face, it was indignant, spiteful, bold, tender, and compassionate, all in one look.

"Let the people of Athens, this year, draw lots for only six young men, instead of seven," said he. "I will myself be the seventh; and let the Minotaur devour me, if he can!"

"O my dear son," cried King Ægeus, "why should you expose yourself to this horrible fate? You are a royal prince, and have a right to hold yourself above the destinies of common men."

"It is because I am a prince, your son, and the rightful heir of your kingdom, that I freely take upon me the calamity of your subjects," answered Theseus. "And you, my father, being king over this people, and answerable to heaven for their welfare, are bound to sacrifice what is dearest to you, rather than that the son or daughter of the poorest citizen should come to any harm."

The old king shed tears, and besought Theseus not to leave him desolate in his old age, more especially as he had but just begun to know the happiness of possessing a good and valiant son. Theseus, however, felt that he was right, and therefore would not give up his resolution. But he assured his father that he did not intend to be eaten up, unresistingly, like a sheep, and that if the Minotaur devoured him, it should not be without a battle to the death. And finally, since he *could not* help it, King Ægeus consented to let him go. So

a vessel was got ready, and rigged with black sails; and Theseus, with six other young men, and seven tender and beautiful damsels, came down to the harbour to embark. A sorrowful multitude accompanied them to the shore. There was the poor old king, too, leaning on his son's arm, and looking as if his single heart held all the grief of Athens.

Just as Prince Theseus was going on board, his father be-  
thought himself of one last word to say.

"My beloved son," said he, grasping the prince's hand, "you observe that the sails of this vessel are black; as indeed they ought to be, since it goes upon a voyage of sorrow and despair. Now, being weighed down with infirmities, I know not whether I can survive till the vessel shall return. But, as long as I do live, I shall creep daily to the top of yonder cliff, to watch if there be a sail upon the sea. And, dearest Theseus, if, by some happy chance, you should escape the jaws of the Minotaur, then tear down those dismal sails, and hoist others that shall be bright as the sunshine. Beholding them on the horizon, myself and all the people will know that you are coming back victorious, and will welcome you with such a festal shout as Athens never heard before."

Theseus promised that he would do so. Then going on board, the mariners trimmed the vessel's black sails to the wind. But by-and-by, when they had got fairly out to sea, there came a stiff breeze from the north-west, and drove them along as merrily over the white-capped waves as if they had been going on the most delightful errand. At length the high blue mountains of Crete began to show themselves among the far-off clouds.

Theseus stood among the sailors gazing eagerly towards the fast-approaching land; although, as yet, it seemed hardly more substantial than the clouds, amidst which the mountains were looming up. Once or twice he fancied that he saw a glare of some bright object, a long way off, flinging a gleam across the waves.

"Did you see that flash of light?" he inquired of the master of the vessel.

"No, prince; but I have seen it before," answered the master. "It came from Talus, I suppose."

As the breeze came fresher just then, the master was busy trimming his sails, and had no more time to answer questions. But, while the vessel flew faster and faster towards Crete, Theseus was astonished to behold a human figure, gigantic in size, which appeared to be striding, with a measured movement, along the margin of the island. It stepped from cliff to cliff, and sometimes from one headland to another, while the sea foamed and thundered on the shore beneath, and dashed its jets of spray over the giant's feet. What was still more remarkable, whenever the sun shone on this huge figure, it flickered and glimmered. Its vast countenance, too, had a metallic lustre, and threw great flashes of splendour through the air. The folds of its garments, moreover, instead of waving in the wind, fell heavily over its limbs, as if woven of some kind of metal.

The nearer the vessel came, the more Theseus wondered what this immense giant could be, and whether it actually had life or no. For, though it walked, and made other life-like motions, there yet was a kind of jerk in its gait, which, together with its brazen aspect, caused the young prince to suspect that it was no true giant, but only a wonderful piece of machinery. The figure looked all the more terrible because it carried an enormous brass club on its shoulder.

"What is this wonder?" Theseus asked of the master of the vessel, who was now at leisure to answer him.

"It is Talus, the Man of Brass," said the master.

"And is he a live giant, or a brazen image?" asked Theseus.

"That, truly," replied the master, "is the point which has always perplexed me. Some say, indeed, that this Talus was hammered out for King Minos by Vulcan himself, the most skilful of all workers in metal. But who ever saw a brazen image that had sense enough to walk round an island three times a-day, as this giant walks round the island of Crete, challenging every vessel that comes nigh the shore? And, on the other hand, what living thing, unless his sinews were made of brass, would not be weary of marching eighteen hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, as Talus does, without ever sitting down to rest?"

*Still the vessel went bounding onward; and now Theseus*

could hear the brazen clang of the giant's footsteps, as he trod heavily upon the sea-beaten rocks, some of which were seen to crack and crumble into the foamy waves beneath his tread. As they approached the entrance of the port, the giant straddled clear across it, with a foot firmly planted on each headland, and uplifting his club to such a height that its butt-end was hidden in a cloud, he stood in that formidable posture, with the sun gleaming all over his metallic surface. There seemed nothing else to be expected but that, the next moment, he would fetch his great club down, and smash the vessel into a thousand pieces, without heeding how many innocent people he might destroy. But just when Theseus and his companions thought the blow was coming, the brazen lips unclosed themselves, and the figure spoke.

"Whence come you, strangers?"

And when the ringing voice ceased, there was just such a reverberation as you may have heard within a great church bell, for a moment or two after the stroke of the hammer.

"From Athens!" shouted the master in reply.

"On what errand?" thundered the Man of Brass.

And he whirled his club aloft more threateningly than ever, as if he were about to smite them with a thunderstroke right amidships, because Athens, so little while ago, had been at war with Crete.

"We bring the seven youths and the seven maidens," answered the master, "to be devoured by the Minotaur!"

"Pass!" cried the brazen giant.

That one loud word rolled all about the sky, while again there was a booming echo within the figure's breast. The vessel glided between the headlands of the port, and the giant resumed his march. In a few moments, this wondrous sentinel was far away, flashing in the distant sunshine, and marching with immense strides around the island of Crete, as it was his never-ceasing task to do.

No sooner had they entered the harbour than a party of the guards of King Minos came down to the water-side, and took charge of the fourteen young men and damsels. Surrounded by these armed warriors, Prince Theseus and his companions were led to the king's palace, and ushered into his

presence. Now Minos was a stern and pitiless king. If the figure that guarded Crete was made of brass, then the monarch who ruled over it might be thought to have a still harder metal in his breast, and might have been called a man of iron. He bent his shaggy brows upon the poor Athenian victims. Any other mortal, beholding their fresh and tender beauty, and their innocent looks, would have felt himself sitting on thorns until he had made every one of them happy, by bidding them go free as the summer wind. But this heartless Minos cared only to examine whether they were plump enough to satisfy the Minotaur's appetite.

One after another, King Minos called these pale, frightened youths and sobbing maidens to his footstool, examined them carefully, and dismissed them with a nod to his guards. But when his eyes rested on Theseus, the king looked at him more attentively, because his face was calm and brave.

"Young man," asked he, with his stern voice, "are you not appalled at the certainty of being devoured by this terrible Minotaur?"

"I have offered my life in a good cause," answered Theseus, "and therefore I give it freely and gladly. But thou, King Minos, art thou not thyself appalled, who, year after year, hast perpetrated this dreadful wrong, by giving seven innocent youths and as many maidens to be devoured by a monster? Dost thou not tremble, wicked king, to turn thine eyes inward on thine own heart? Sitting there on thy golden throne, and in thy robes of majesty, I tell thee to thy face, King Minos, thou art a more hideous monster than the Minotaur himself!"

"Aha! do you think me so?" cried the king, laughing in his cruel way. "To-morrow, at breakfast-time, you shall have an opportunity of judging which is the greater monster, the Minotaur or the king! Take them away, guards; and let this free-spoken youth be the Minotaur's first morsel!"

Near the king's throne stood his daughter Ariadne. She was a beautiful and tender-hearted maiden, and looked at these poor doomed captives with very different feelings from those of the iron-breasted King Minos. She really wept, *indeed*, at the idea of how much human happiness would

be needlessly thrown away, by giving so many young people, in the first bloom and rose-blossom of their lives, to be eaten up by a creature who, no doubt, would have preferred a fat ox, or even a large pig, to the plumpest of them. And when she beheld the brave, spirited figure of Prince Theseus bearing himself so calmly in his terrible peril, she grew a hundred times more pitiful than before. As the guards were taking him away she flung herself at the king's feet, and besought him to set all the captives free, and especially this one young man.

"Peace, foolish girl!" answered King Minos. "What hast thou to do with an affair like this? It is a matter of state policy, and therefore quite beyond thy weak comprehension. Go, water thy flowers, and think no more of these Athenian caitiffs, whom the Minotaur shall as certainly eat up for breakfast as I will eat a partridge for my supper."

So saying, the king looked cruel enough to devour Theseus and all the rest of the captives himself, had there been no Minotaur to save him the trouble. As he would hear not another word in their favour, the prisoners were now led away and thrown into a dungeon, where the jailer advised them to go to sleep as soon as possible, because the Minotaur was in the habit of calling for breakfast early. The seven maidens and six of the young men soon sobbed themselves to slumber. But Theseus was not like them. He felt conscious that he was wiser, and braver, and stronger than his companions, and that therefore he had the responsibility of all their lives upon him, and must consider whether there was no way to save them, even in this last extremity. So he kept himself awake, and paced to and fro across the gloomy dungeon in which they were shut up.

Just before midnight, the door was softly unbarred, and the gentle Ariadne showed herself, with a torch in her hand.

"Are you awake, Prince Theseus?" she whispered.

"Yes," answered Theseus. "With so little time to live, I do not choose to waste any of it in sleep."

"Then follow me," said Ariadne, "and tread softly."

What had become of the jailer and the guards, Theseus never knew. But, however that might be, Ariadne opened all

the doors, and led him forth from the darksome prison into the pleasant moonlight.

"Theseus," said the maiden, "you can now get on board your vessel, and sail away for Athens."

"No," answered the young man; "I will never leave Crete unless I can first slay the Minotaur, and save my poor companions, and deliver Athens from this cruel tribute."

"I knew that this would be your resolution," said Ariadne. "Come, then, with me, brave Theseus. Here is your own sword, which the guards deprived you of. You will need it; and pray Heaven you may use it well."

Then she led Theseus along by the hand until they came to a dark, shadowy grove, where the moonlight wasted itself on the tops of the trees, without shedding hardly so much as a glimmering beam upon their pathway. After going a good way through this obscurity, they reached a high marble wall, which was overgrown with creeping plants, that made it shaggy with their verdure. The wall seemed to have no door, nor any windows, but rose up, lofty, and massive, and mysterious, and was neither to be clambered over, nor, so far as Theseus could perceive, to be passed through. Nevertheless, Ariadne did but press one of her soft little fingers against a particular block of marble, and, though it looked as solid as any other part of the wall, it yielded to her touch, disclosing an entrance just wide enough to admit them. They crept through, and the marble stone swung back into its place.

"We are now," said Ariadne, "in the famous labyrinth which Dædalus built before he made himself a pair of wings, and flew away from our island like a bird. That Dædalus was a very cunning workman; but of all his artful contrivances this labyrinth is the most wondrous. Were we to take but a few steps from the doorway, we might wander about all our lifetime, and never find it again. Yet in the very centre of this labyrinth is the Minotaur; and, Theseus, you must go thither to seek him."

"But how shall I ever find him," asked Theseus, "if the labyrinth so bewilders me as you say it will?"

Just as he spoke, they heard a rough and very disagreeable roar, which greatly resembled the lowing of a fierce bull, but

yet had some sort of sound like the human voice. Theseus even fancied a rude articulation in it, as if the creature that uttered it were trying to shape his hoarse breath into words.

"That is the Minotaur's bellowing," whispered Ariadne, closely grasping the hand of Theseus, and pressing one of her own hands to her heart, which was all in a tremble. "You must follow that sound through the windings of the labyrinth, and by-and-by you will find him. Stay! take the end of this silken string—I will hold the other end; and then, if you win the victory, it will lead you again to this spot. Farewell, brave Theseus!"

So the young man took the end of the silken string in his left hand, and his gold-hilted sword, ready drawn from its scabbard, in the other, and trod boldly into the inscrutable labyrinth. How this labyrinth was built is more than I can tell you, but so cunningly contrived a maze was never seen in the world, before nor since. Theseus had not taken five steps before he lost sight of Ariadne; and in five more his head was growing dizzy. But still through these hollow avenues, now nearer, now farther off again, resounded the cry of the Minotaur; and the sound was so fierce, so cruel, so ugly, so like a bull's roar, and withal so like a human voice, and yet like neither of them, that the brave heart of Theseus grew sterner and angrier at every step. For he felt it an insult to the moon and sky, and to our kindly and simple Mother Earth, that such a monster should be allowed to exist.

As he passed onward the clouds gathered over the moon, and the labyrinth grew so dusky that Theseus could no longer discern the bewilderment through which he was passing. He would have felt quite lost, and utterly hopeless of ever again walking in a straight path, if, every little while, he had not been conscious of a gentle twitch at the silken cord. Then he knew that the tender-hearted Ariadne was still holding the other end, and that she was fearing for him and hoping for him, and giving him just as much of her sympathy as if she were close by his side. But still he followed the dreadful roar of the Minotaur, which now grew louder and louder, and finally so very loud that Theseus fully expected to come close upon



him at every new zigzag and wriggle of the path. And at last, in an open space, at the very centre of the labyrinth, he did discern the hideous creature.

Sure enough it was an ugly monster! Only his horned head belonged to a bull; and yet, somehow or other, he looked like a bull all over, waddling on his hind legs; or, if you happened to view him in another way, he seemed wholly a man, and all the more monstrous for being so. And there he was, the wretched thing, with no society, no companion, no kind of a mate, living only to do mischief, and incapable of knowing what affection means. Theseus hated him and shuddered at him, and yet could not but be sensible of some sort of pity; and all the more, the uglier and more detestable the creature was. For he kept striding to and fro, in a solitary frenzy of rage, continually emitting a hoarse roar, which was oddly mixed up with half-shaped words; and, after listening a while, Theseus understood that the Minotaur was saying to himself how miserable he was, and how hungry, and how he hated everybody, and how he longed to eat up the whole human race.

Was Theseus afraid? By no means. What! a hero like Theseus afraid! Not, had the Minotaur had twenty bulls' heads instead of one. Bold as he was, however, it strengthened his valiant heart, just at this crisis, to feel a tremulous twitch at the silken cord, which he was still holding in his left hand. It was as if Ariadne were giving him all her might and courage; and much as he already had, and little as she had to give, it made his own seem twice as much. And to confess the honest truth, he needed the whole, for now the Minotaur, turning suddenly about, caught sight of Theseus, and instantly lowered his horribly sharp horns, exactly as a mad bull does when he means to rush against an enemy. At the same time, he gave forth a tremendous roar, in which there was something like the words of human language, but all disjointed and shaken to pieces by passing through the gullet of a miserably enraged brute.

Theseus could only guess what the creature intended to say, and that rather by his gestures than his words. Probably this was *the sense* of what he uttered:—

"Ah, wretch of a human being ! I'll stick my horns through you, and toss you fifty feet high, and eat you up the moment you come down."

"Come on, then, and try it !" was all that Theseus deigned to reply ; for he was far too magnanimous to assault his enemy with insolent language.

Without more words on either side, there ensued the most terrible fight between Theseus and the Minotaur that ever happened beneath the sun or moon. I really know not how it might have turned out, if the monster, in his first headlong rush against Theseus, had not missed him, by a hair's-breadth, and broken one of his horns short off against the stone wall. On this mishap he bellowed so intolerably that a part of the labyrinth tumbled down, and all the inhabitants of Crete mistook the noise for a very heavy thunderstorm. Smarting with the pain, he galloped around the open space in so ridiculous a way that Theseus laughed at the memory of it long afterwards, though not precisely at the moment. After this, the two antagonists stood valiantly up to one another, and fought sword to horn for a long while. At last, the Minotaur made a run at Theseus, grazed his left side with his horn, and flung him down ; and thinking that he had stabbed him to the heart, he cut a great caper in the air, opened wide his bull mouth, and prepared to snap his head off. But Theseus by this time had leaped up, and caught the monster off his guard. Fetching a sword-stroke at him with all his force, he hit him fair upon the neck, and made his bull head roll six yards from his human body, which fell down flat upon the ground.

So now the battle was ended. Immediately the moon shone out as brightly as if all the troubles of the world, and all the wickedness and the ugliness that infest human life, were past and gone for ever. And Theseus as he leaned on his sword taking breath, felt another twitch of the silken cord ; for all through the terrible encounter, he had held it fast in his left hand. Eager to let Ariadne know of his success, he followed the guidance of the thread, and soon found himself at the entrance of the labyrinth.

"Thou hast slain the monster," cried Ariadne, clasping her hands.

"Thanks to thee, dear Ariadne," answered Theseus, "I return victorious."

"Then," said Ariadne, "we must quickly summon thy friends, and get them and thyself on board the vessel before dawn. If morning finds thee here, my father will avenge the Minotaur."

To make my story short, the poor captives were awakened, and, hardly knowing whether it was not a joyful dream, were told of what Theseus had done, and that they must set sail for Athens before daybreak. Hastening down to the vessel, they all clambered on board, except Prince Theseus, who lingered behind them on the strand, holding Ariadne's hand clasped in his own.

"Dear maiden," said he, "thou wilt surely go with us. Thou art too gentle and sweet a child for such an iron-hearted father as King Minos. He cares no more for thee than a granite rock cares for the little flower that grows in one of its crevices. But my father, King Ægeus, and my dear mother, Æthra, and all the fathers and mothers in Athens, and all the sons and daughters too, will love and honour thee as their benefactress. Come with us, then; for King Minos will be very angry when he knows what thou hast done."

"No, Theseus," the maiden said, pressing his hand, and then drawing back a step or two, "I cannot go with you. My father is old, and has nobody but myself to love him. Hard as you think his heart is, it would break to lose me. At first King Minos will be angry; but he will soon forgive his only child; and by-and-by he will rejoice, I know, that no more youths and maidens must come from Athens to be devoured by the Minotaur. I have saved you, Theseus, as much for my father's sake as for your own. Farewell! Heaven bless you!"

All this was so true, and so maiden-like, and was spoken with so sweet a dignity, that Theseus could urge her no longer. Nothing remained for him, therefore, but to bid Ariadne an affectionate farewell, and to go on board the vessel, and set sail.

In a few moments the white foam was hissing before their prow, as Prince Theseus and his companions sailed out of the harbour, with a whistling breeze behind them. Talus, the



“He hit him fair upon the neck, and made his bull head roll six yards from his human body, which fell down flat upon the ground.”—Page 103.



brazen giant, on his never-ceasing sentinel's march, happened to be approaching that part of the coast; and they saw him, by the glimmering of the moonbeams on his polished surface, while he was yet a great way off. As the figure moved like clock-work, however, and could neither hasten his enormous strides nor retard them, he arrived at the port when they were just beyond the reach of his club. Nevertheless, straddling from headland to headland, as his custom was, Talus attempted to strike a blow at the vessel, and, overreaching himself, tumbled at full length into the sea, which splashed high over his gigantic shape, as when an iceberg falls down headlong.

On the homeward voyage, the fourteen youths and damsels were in excellent spirits, as you may easily suppose. They spent most of their time in dancing, unless when the sidelong breeze made the deck slope too much. In due season they came within sight of the coast of Attica, which was their native country. But here happened a sad misfortune.

You will remember (what Theseus unfortunately forgot) that his father, King Ægeus, had enjoined it upon him to hoist sunshiny sails, instead of black ones, in case he should overcome the Minotaur, and return victorious. In the joy of their success, however, and amidst the sports, dancing, and other merriment, with which these young folks wore away the time, they never once thought whether their sails were black, white, or rainbow-coloured, and, indeed, left it entirely to the mariners whether they had any sails at all. Thus the vessel returned, like a raven, with the same sable wings that had wafted her way. But poor King Ægeus, day after day, infirm as he was, had clambered to the summit of a cliff that overhung the sea, and there sat watching for Prince Theseus, homeward bound. No sooner did he behold the fatal blackness of the sails, than he concluded that his dear son, whom he loved so much, and felt so proud of, had been eaten by the Minotaur. He could not bear the thought of living any longer; so, first flinging his crown and sceptre into the sea (useless baubles that they were to him now!) King Ægeus stooped forward, fell headlong over the cliff, and was drowned in the waves that foamed at its base!

This was melancholy news for Prince Theseus, who when he

stepped ashore, found himself king of all the country, whether he would or no. However, he sent for his dear mother to Athens, and, by taking her advice in matters of state, became a very excellent monarch, and was greatly beloved by his people.



## THE GOLDEN FLEECE.



JASON, the son of the dethroned King of Iolchos, was, when a little boy, sent away from his parents, and placed under the queerest schoolmaster that ever you heard of. This learned person was one of the people, or quadrupeds, called Centaurs. He lived in a cavern, and had the body and legs of a white horse, with the head and shoulders of a man. His name was Chiron; and, in spite of his odd appearance, he was a very excellent teacher, and had several scholars, who afterwards did him credit by making a great name in the world. The famous Hercules was one, and so was Achilles, and Philoctetes, likewise, and Æsculapius, who acquired immense repute as a doctor. The good Chiron taught his pupils how to play upon the harp, and how to cure diseases, and how to use the sword and shield, together with various other branches of education, in which the boys of those days used to be instructed, instead of writing and arithmetic.

So Jason dwelt in the cave, with this four-footed Chiron, from the time that he was an infant only a few months old, until he had grown to the full height of a man. He became a very good harper, and skilful in the use of weapons, and tolerably acquainted with herbs and other doctor's stuff, and, above all, an admirable horseman; for, in teaching young people to ride, the good Chiron must have been without a rival among schoolmasters. At length, being now a tall and *athletic youth*, Jason resolved to seek his fortune in the world,

without asking Chiron's advice, or telling him anything about the matter. This was very unwise. But, you are to understand, he had heard how that he himself was a prince royal, and how his father, King Æson, had been deprived of the kingdom of Iolchos by a certain Pelias, who would also have killed Jason, had he not been hidden in the Centaur's cave. And, being come to the strength of a man, Jason determined to set all this business to rights, and to punish the wicked Pelias for wronging his dear father, and to cast him down from the throne, and seat himself there instead.

With this intention, he took a spear in each hand, and threw a leopard's skin over his shoulders, to keep off the rain, and set forth on his travels, with his long yellow ringlets waving in the wind. The part of his dress on which he most prided himself was a pair of sandals, that had been his father's. They were handsomely embroidered, and were tied upon his feet with strings of gold. But his whole attire was such as people did not very often see; and, as he passed along, the women and children ran to the doors and windows, wondering whither this beautiful youth was journeying, with his leopard's skin and his golden-tied sandals, and what heroic deeds he meant to perform, with a spear in his right hand and another in his left.

I know not how far Jason had travelled, when he came to a turbulent river, which rushed right across his pathway, with specks of white foam among its black eddies, hurrying tumultuously onward, and roaring angrily as it went. Though not a very broad river in the dry seasons of the year, it was now swollen by heavy rains, and by the melting of the snow on the sides of Mount Olympus; and it thundered so loudly, and looked so wild and dangerous, that Jason, bold as he was, thought it prudent to pause upon the brink. The bed of the stream seemed to be strewn with sharp and rugged rocks, some of which thrust themselves above the water. By-and-by, an uprooted tree, with shattered branches, came drifting along the current, and got entangled among the rocks. Now and then, a drowned sheep, and once the carcass of a cow floated past.

In short, the swollen river had already done a great deal of



mischievous. It was evidently too deep for Jason to wade, and too boisterous for him to swim; he could see no bridge; and as for a boat, had there been any, the rocks would have broken it to pieces in an instant.

"See the poor lad," said a cracked voice close by his side. "He must have had but a poor education, since he does not know how to cross a little stream like this. Or is he afraid of wetting his fine golden-stringed sandals? It is a pity his four-footed schoolmaster is not here to carry him safely across on his back!"

Jason looked round greatly surprised, for he did not know that anybody was near. But beside him stood an old woman, with a ragged mantle over her head, leaning on a staff, the top of which was carved into the shape of a cuckoo. She looked very aged, and wrinkled, and infirm; and yet her eyes, which were as brown as those of an ox, were so extremely large and beautiful, that, when they were fixed on Jason's eyes, he could see nothing else but them. The old woman had a pomegranate in her hand, although the fruit was then quite out of season.

"Whither are you going, Jason?" she now asked.

She seemed to know his name; and, indeed, those great brown eyes looked as if they had a knowledge of everything, whether past or to come. While Jason was gazing at her, a peacock strutted forward, and took his stand at the old woman's side.

"I am going to Iolchos," answered the young man, "to make the wicked King Pelias come down from my father's throne, and to reign in his stead."

"Ah, well, then," said the old woman, still with the same cracked voice, "if that is all your business, you need not be in a very great hurry. Just take me on your back, and carry me across the river. I and my peacock have something to do on the other side as well as yourself."

"Good mother," replied Jason, "your business can hardly be so important as the pulling down of a king from his throne. Besides, as you may see for yourself, the river is very boisterous; and if I should chance to stumble, it would sweep both of us away more easily than it has carried off yonder uprooted tree."

I would gladly help you if I could ; but I doubt whether I am strong enough to carry you across."

"Then," said she, very scornfully, "neither are you strong enough to pull King Pelias off his throne. And, Jason, unless you will help an old woman at her need, you ought not to be a king. What are kings made for, save to succour the feeble and distressed? But do as you please. Either take me on your back, or with my poor old limbs I shall try my best to struggle across the stream."

Saying this, the old woman poked with her staff in the river, as if to find the safest place in its rocky bed where she might make the first step. But Jason, by this time, had grown ashamed of his reluctance to help her. He felt that he could never forgive himself, if this poor feeble creature should come to any harm in attempting to wrestle against the headlong current. The good Chiron had taught him that the noblest use of his strength was to assist the weak ; and also, that he must treat every young woman as if she were his sister, and every old one like a mother. Remembering these maxims, the vigorous and beautiful young man knelt down, and requested the good dame to mount upon his back.

"The passage seems to me not very safe," he remarked. "But as your business is so urgent, I will try to carry you across. If the river sweeps you away, it shall take me too."

"That, no doubt, will be a great comfort to both of us," quoth the old woman. "But never fear ; we shall get safely across."

So she threw her arms around Jason's neck ; and lifting her from the ground, he stepped boldly into the raging and foaming current, and began to stagger away from the shore. As for the peacock, it alighted on the old dame's shoulder. Jason's two spears, one in each hand, kept him from stumbling, and enabled him to feel his way among the hidden rocks ; although every instant he expected that his companion and himself would go down the stream, together with the driftwood of shattered trees, and the carcasses of the sheep and cow. Down came the cold, snowy torrent from the steep side of Olympus, raging and thundering as if it were determined to snatch off

his living burden from his shoulders. When he was half-way across, the uprooted tree (which I have already told you about) broke loose from among the rocks, and bore down upon him, with all its splintered branches sticking out. It rushed past, however, without touching him. But the next moment, his foot was caught in a crevice between two rocks, and stuck there so fast, that in the effort to get free, he lost one of his golden-stringed sandals.

At this accident Jason could not help uttering a cry of vexation.

"What is the matter, Jason?" asked the old woman.

"Matter enough," said the young man; "I have lost a sandal here among the rocks. And how they will mock me when I appear at the court of King Pelias, with a golden-stringed sandal on one foot, and the other foot bare!"

"Do not take it to heart," answered his companion, cheerily. "You never met with better fortune than in losing that sandal. It satisfies me that you are the very person whom the Speaking Oak has been talking about."

There was no time, just then, to inquire what the Speaking Oak had said. But the briskness of her tone encouraged the young man; and besides, he had never in his life felt so vigorous and mighty as since taking this old woman on his back. Instead of being exhausted, he gathered strength as he went on; and, struggling up against the torrent, he at last gained the opposite shore, clambered up the bank, and set down the old dame and her peacock safely on the grass. As soon as this was done, however, he could not help looking rather despondently at his bare foot, with only a remnant of the golden string of the sandal clinging round his ankle.

"You will get a handsomer pair of sandals by-and-by," said the old woman, with a kindly look out of her beautiful brown eyes. "Only let King Pelias get a glimpse of that bare foot, and you shall see him turn as pale as ashes, I promise you. There is your path. Go along, my good Jason, and my blessing go with you. And when you sit on your throne, remember the old woman whom you helped over the river."

With these words she hobbled away, giving him a smile over her shoulder as she departed. Whether the light of her

beautiful brown eyes threw a glory round about her, or whatever the cause might be, Jason fancied that there was something very noble and majestic in her figure, after all, and that, though her gait seemed to be a rheumatic hobble, yet she moved with as much grace and dignity as any queen on earth. Her peacock, which had now fluttered down from her shoulder, strutted behind her in great pomp, and spread out its magnificent tail on purpose for Jason to admire it.

When the old dame and her peacock were out of sight, Jason set forward on his journey. After travelling a pretty long distance, he came to a town situated at the foot of a mountain, and not a great way from the shore of the sea. On the outside of the town there was an immense crowd of people, not only men and women, but children too, all in their best clothes, and evidently enjoying a holiday. The crowd was thickest towards the sea-shore; and in that direction, over the people's heads, Jason saw a wreath of smoke curling upward to the blue sky. He inquired of one of the multitude what town it was, near by, and why so many persons were here assembled together.

"This is the kingdom of Iolchos," answered the man, "and we are the subjects of King Pelias. Our monarch has summoned us together, that we may see him sacrifice a black bull to Neptune, who, they say, is his majesty's father. Yonder is the king, where you see the smoke going up from the altar."

While the man spoke, he eyed Jason with great curiosity; for his garb was quite unlike that of the Iolchians, and it looked very odd to see a youth with a leopard's skin over his shoulders, and each hand grasping a spear. Jason perceived, too, that the man stared particularly at his feet, one of which, you remember, was bare, while the other was decorated with his father's golden-stringed sandal.

"Look at him! only look at him!" said the man to his next neighbour. "Do you see? He wears but one sandal!"

Upon this, first one person, and then another, began to stare at Jason, and everybody seemed to be greatly struck with something in his aspect; though they turned their eyes much oftener towards his feet than to any other part of his

figure. Besides, he could hear them whispering to one another.

"One sandal! One sandal!" they kept saying. "The man with one sandal! Here he is at last! Whence has he come? What does he mean to do? What will the king say to the one-sandalled man?"

Poor Jason was greatly abashed, and made up his mind that the people of Iolchos were exceedingly ill-bred, to take such public notice of an accidental deficiency in his dress. Meanwhile, whether it were that they hustled him forward, or that Jason, of his own accord, thrust a passage through the crowd, it so happened that he soon found himself close to the smoking altar, where King Pelias was sacrificing the black bull. The murmur and hum of the multitude, in their surprise at the spectacle of Jason with his one bare foot, grew so loud that it disturbed the ceremonies; and the king, holding the great knife with which he was just going to cut the bull's throat, turned angrily about, and fixed his eyes on Jason. The people had now withdrawn from around him, so that the youth stood in an open space, near the smoking altar, front to front with the angry King Pelias.

"Who are you?" cried the king, with a terrible frown. "And how dare you make this disturbance, while I am sacrificing a black bull to my father Neptune?"

"It is no fault of mine," answered Jason. "Your majesty must blame the rudeness of your subjects, who have raised all this tumult because one of my feet happens to be bare."

When Jason said this, the king gave a quick, startled glance down at his feet.

"Ha!" muttered he, "here is the one-sandalled man, sure enough! What can I do with him?"

And he clutched more closely the great knife in his hand, as if he had half a mind to slay Jason, instead of the black bull. The people round about caught up the king's words, indistinctly as they were uttered; and first there was a murmur among them, and then a loud shout.

"The one-sandalled man has come! The prophecy must be fulfilled!"

Many years before, King Pelias had been told by the

Speaking Oak of Dodōna, that a man with one sandal should cast him down from his throne. On this account, he had given strict orders that nobody should ever come into his presence, unless both sandals were securely tied upon his feet ; and he kept an officer in his palace, whose sole business it was to examine people's sandals, and to supply them with a new pair, at the expense of the royal treasury, as soon as the old ones began to wear out. In the whole course of the king's reign, he had never been thrown into such a fright and agitation as by the spectacle of poor Jason's bare foot. But, as he was naturally a bold and hard-hearted man, he soon took courage, and began to consider in what way he might rid himself of this terrible one-sandalled stranger.

"My good young man," said King Pelias, assuming the softest tone imaginable, in order to throw Jason off his guard, "you are very welcome to my kingdom. Judging by your dress you must have travelled a long distance, for it is not the fashion to wear leopard-skins in this part of the world. Pray, what may I call your name ? and where did you receive your education ?"

"My name is Jason," answered the young stranger. "Ever since my infancy, I have dwelt in the cave of Chiron the Centaur. He was my instructor, and taught me music and horsemanship, and how to cure wounds, and likewise how to inflict wounds with my weapons !"

"I have heard of Chiron, the schoolmaster," replied King Pelias, "and how that there is an immense deal of learning and wisdom in his head, although it happens to be set on a horse's body. It gives me great delight to see one of his scholars at my court. But, to test how much you have profited under so excellent a teacher, will you allow me to ask you a single question ?"

"I do not pretend to be very wise," said Jason ; "but ask me what you please, and I will answer to the best of my ability."

Now King Pelias meant cunningly to entrap the young man, and to make him say something that should be the cause of mischief and destruction to himself. So, with a crafty and evil smile upon his face, he spoke as follows :—

"What would you do, brave Jason," asked he, "if there were a man in the world, by whom, as you had reason to believe, you were doomed to be ruined and slain—what would you do, I say, if that man stood before you, and in your power?"

When Jason saw the malice and wickedness which King Pelias could not prevent gleaming out of his eyes, he probably guessed that the king had discovered what he came for, and that he intended to turn his own words against himself. Still he scorned to tell a falsehood. Like an upright and honourable prince, as he was, he determined to speak out the real truth. Since the king had chosen to ask him the question, and since Jason had promised him an answer, there was no right way, save to tell him precisely what would be the most prudent thing to do, if he had his worst enemy in his power. Therefore after a moment's consideration, he spoke up with a firm and manly voice.

"I would send such a man," said he, "in quest of the Golden Fleece!"

This enterprise was, of all others, the most difficult and dangerous in the world. In the first place, it would be necessary to make a long voyage through unknown seas. There was hardly a hope, or a possibility, that any young man who should undertake this voyage would either succeed in obtaining the Golden Fleece, or would survive to return home, and tell the perils he had run. The eyes of King Pelias sparkled with joy, therefore, when he heard Jason's reply.

"Well said, wise man with the one sandal!" cried he. "Go, then, and at the peril of your life, bring me back the Golden Fleece."

"I go," answered Jason, composedly. "If I fail, you need not fear that I will ever come back to trouble you again. But if I return to Iolchos with the prize, then, King Pelias, you must hasten down from your lofty throne, and give me your crown and sceptre."

"That I will," said the king, with a sneer. "Meantime, I will keep them very safely for you."

The first thing that Jason did, after he left the king's presence, was to go to Dodōna, and inquire of the Talking

Oak what course it was best to pursue. This wonderful tree stood in the centre of an ancient wood. Its stately trunk rose up a hundred feet into the air, and threw a broad and dense shadow over more than an acre of ground. Standing beneath it, Jason looked up among the knotted branches and green leaves, and into the mysterious heart of the old tree, and spoke aloud, as if he were addressing some person who was hidden in the depths of the foliage.

“What shall I do,” said he, “in order to win the Golden Fleece?”

At first there was a deep silence, not only within the shadow of the Talking Oak, but all through the solitary wood. In a moment or two, however, the leaves of the oak began to stir and rustle, as if a gentle breeze were wandering amongst them, although the other trees of the wood were perfectly still. The sound grew louder, and became like the roar of a high wind. By-and-by Jason imagined that he could distinguish words, but very confusedly, because each separate leaf of the tree seemed to be a tongue, and the whole myriad of tongues were babbling at once. But the noise waxed broader and deeper, until it resembled a tornado sweeping through the oak, and making one great utterance out of the thousand and thousand of little murmurs which each leafy tongue had caused by its rustling. And now, though it still had the tone of a mighty wind roaring among the branches, it was also like a deep bass voice, speaking distinctly the following words:—

“Go to Argus, the ship-builder, and bid him build a galley with fifty oars.”

Then the voice melted again into the indistinct murmur of the rustling leaves, and died gradually away. When it was quite gone, Jason felt inclined to doubt whether he had actually heard the words, or whether his fancy had not shaped them out of the ordinary sound made by a breeze, while passing through the thick foliage of the tree.

But on inquiry among the people of Iolchos, he found that there was really a man in the city, of the name of Argus, who was a very skilful builder of vessels. This showed some intelligence in the oak; else how should it have known that any such person existed? At Jason's request, Argus readily



consented to build him a galley so big that it should require fifty strong men to row it ; although no vessel of such a size and burden had heretofore been seen in the world. So the carpenters began their work ; and for a good while afterwards they were busily employed hewing out the timbers, and making a great clatter with their hammers ; until the new ship, which was called the *Argo*, seemed to be quite ready for sea. And as the Talking Oak had already given him such good advice, Jason thought that it would not be amiss to ask for a little more. He visited it again, therefore, and standing beside its huge, rough trunk, inquired what he should do next.

This time there was no such universal quivering of the leaves, throughout the whole tree, as there had been before. But after a while, Jason observed that the foliage of a great branch which stretched above his head had begun to rustle, as if the wind were stirring that one bough, while all the other boughs of the oak were at rest.

"Cut me off !" said the branch, as soon as it could speak distinctly ; "cut me off ! cut me off ! and carve me into a figure-head for your galley."

Accordingly, Jason took the branch at its word, and lopped it off from the tree. A carver in the neighbourhood engaged to make the figure-head. What was very strange, the carver found that his hand was guided by some unseen power, and by a skill beyond his own, and that his tools shaped out an image which he had never dreamed of. When the work was finished it turned out to be the figure of a beautiful woman, with a helmet on her head, from beneath which the long ringlets fell down upon her shoulders. On the left arm was a shield, and in its centre appeared a lifelike representation of the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. The right arm was extended, as if pointing onward. The face of this wonderful statue, though not angry or forbidding, was so grave and majestic, that perhaps you might call it severe ; and as for the mouth, it seemed just ready to uncloset its lips, and utter words of the deepest wisdom.

Jason was delighted with the oaken image, and gave the carver no rest until it was completed, and set up where a

figure-head has always stood, from that time to this, in the vessel's prow.

"And now," cried he, as he stood gazing at the calm majestic face of the statue, "I must go to the Talking Oak, and inquire what next to do."

"There is no need of that, Jason," said a voice which, though it was far lower, reminded him of the mighty tones of the great oak. "When you desire good advice, you can seek it of me."

Jason had been looking straight into the face of the image when these words were spoken. But he could hardly believe either his ears or his eyes. The truth was, however, that the oaken lips had moved, and, to all appearance, the voice had proceeded from the statue's mouth. Recovering a little from his surprise, Jason bethought himself that the image had been carved out of the wood of the Talking Oak, and that, therefore, it was really no great wonder, but, on the contrary, the most natural thing in the world, that it should possess the faculty of speech. It would have been very odd, indeed, if it had not. But certainly it was a great piece of good fortune that he should be able to carry so wise a block of wood along with him in his perilous voyage.

"Tell me, wondrous image," exclaimed Jason,—“since you inherit the wisdom of the Speaking Oak of Dodōna, whose daughter you are,—tell me, where shall I find fifty bold youths who will take each of them an oar of my galley? They must have sturdy arms to row and brave hearts to encounter perils, or we shall never win the Golden Fleece.”

"Go," replied the oaken image—"go, summon all the heroes of Greece!"

And, in fact, considering what a great deed was to be done, could any advice be wiser than this which Jason received from the figure-head of his vessel? He lost no time in sending messengers to all the cities, and making known to the whole people of Greece, that Prince Jason, the son of King Æson, was going in quest of the Fleece of Gold, and that he desired the help of forty-nine of the bravest and strongest young men alive, to row his vessel and share his dangers. And Jason himself would be the fiftieth.

At this news, the adventurous youths all over the country began to bestir themselves. Some of them had already fought with giants, and slain dragons ; and the younger ones, who had not yet met with such good fortune, thought it a shame to have lived so long without getting astride of a flying serpent, or sticking their spears into a Chimæra, or, at least, thrusting their right arms down a monstrous lion's throat. There was a fair prospect that they would meet with plenty of such adventures before finding the Golden Fleece. As soon as they could furbish up their helmets and shields, therefore, and gird on their trusty swords, they came thronging to Iolchos, and clambered on board the new galley. Saluting Jason, they assured him that they valued not their lives if adventures were to be had, but would help to row the vessel to the remotest edge of the world.

Many of these brave fellows had been educated by Chiron, the four-footed pedagogue, and were therefore old schoolmates of Jason, and knew him to be a lad of spirit. The mighty Hercules, whose shoulders afterwards held up the sky, was one of them. And there were Castor and Pollux, the twin brothers, who had been hatched out of an egg ; and Theseus, who was so renowned for killing the Minotaur ; and Lynceus, with his wonderful sharp eyes, which could see through a millstone, or look right down into the depths of the earth, and discover the treasures that were there ; and Orpheus, the very best of harpers, who sang and played upon his lyre so sweetly that the brute beasts and birds of prey followed him quiet and subdued. Yes, and at some of his more moving tunes, the rocks bestirred their moss-grown bulk out of the ground, and a grove of forest-trees waved their tall tops keeping time with the music.

One of the rowers was a beautiful young woman, named Atalanta, who had been nursed among the mountains by a bear. So light of foot was this fair damsel, that she could step from the foamy crest of one wave to the foamy crest of another, without wetting more than the sole of her sandal. She had grown up in a very wild way, and loved hunting and war far better than her needle. But, in my opinion, the most remarkable of this famous company were two sons of the North Wind

(airy young fellows, and of rather a blustering disposition), who had wings on their shoulders, and in case of a calm, could puff out their cheeks, and blow almost as fresh a breeze as their father. I ought not to forget the seers and conjurors, of whom there were several in the crew, and who could foretell what would happen to-morrow, or the next day, or a hundred years hence.

Jason appointed Tiphys to be helmsman, because he was a star-gazer, and knew the points of the compass. Lynceus, on account of his sharp sight, was stationed as a look-out in the prow. He could tell you exactly what kind of rocks or sands were at the bottom of the sea; and he often cried out to his companions, that they were sailing over heaps of sunken treasure, which yet he was none the richer for beholding.

Well! But when the Argonauts, as these fifty brave adventurers were called, had prepared everything for the voyage, an unforeseen difficulty threatened to end it before it was begun. The vessel, you must understand was so long, and broad, and ponderous, that the united force of all the fifty was insufficient to shove her into the water. Hercules, I suppose, had not grown to his full strength, else he might have set her afloat as easily as a little boy launches his boat upon a puddle. But here were these fifty heroes, pushing, and straining, and growing red in the face, without making the Argo start an inch. At last, quite wearied out, they sat themselves down on the shore, exceedingly disconsolate, and thinking that the vessel must be left to rot and fall in pieces, and that they must lose the Golden Fleece.

All at once, Jason bethought himself of the galley's miraculous figure-head.

"O daughter of the Talking Oak," cried he, "how shall we set to work to get our vessel into the water?"

"Seat yourselves," answered the image—"seat yourselves, and handle your oars, and let Orpheus play upon his harp."

Immediately the fifty heroes got on board, and seizing their oars, held them perpendicularly in the air, while Orpheus swept his fingers across the harp. At the first ringing note of the music, they felt the vessel stir. Orpheus played one of his most moving strains, and the galley slid at once into the

sea, dipping her prow so deeply that the figure-head drank the wave with its marvellous lips, and rising again as buoyant as a swan. The rowers plied their fifty oars; the white foam boiled up before the prow; the water gurgled and bubbled in their wake; while Orpheus continued to play so lively a strain of music, that the vessel seemed to dance over the billows by way of keeping time to it. Thus triumphantly did the Argo sail out of the harbour, amidst the huzzas and good wishes of everybody, except the wicked old Pelias, who stood on a promontory, scowling at her, and wishing that he could blow out of his lungs the tempest of wrath that was in his heart, and so sink the galley with all on board. When they had sailed about fifty miles over the sea, Lynceus happened to cast his sharp eyes behind, and said that there was this bad-hearted king, still perched upon the promontory, and scowling so gloomily that it looked like a black thunder-cloud in that quarter of the horizon.

In order to make the time pass away more pleasantly during the voyage, the heroes talked about the Golden Fleece. It originally belonged, it appears, to a Bœotian ram, who had taken on his back two children, when in danger of their lives, and fled with them over land and sea, as far as Colchis. One of the children, whose name was Helle, fell into the sea and was drowned. But the other (a little boy named Phrixus) was brought safe to shore by the faithful ram, who, however, was so exhausted that he immediately lay down and died. In memory of this good deed, and as a token of his true heart, the fleece of the poor dead ram was miraculously changed to gold, and became one of the most beautiful objects ever seen on earth. It was hung upon a tree in a sacred grove, where it had now been kept I know not how many years, and was the envy of mighty kings, who had nothing so magnificent in any of their palaces.

To tell all the adventures of the Argonauts would fill a large book. Two or three adventures, however, I will relate. There was no lack of wonderful events, as you may judge from what you have already heard. At a certain island they were hospitably received by King Cyzicus, its sovereign, who made a feast for them, and treated them like brothers. But the Ar-

gonauts saw that this good king looked downcast and very much troubled, and they therefore inquired of him what was the matter. King Cyzicus hereupon informed them that he and his subjects were greatly abused and incommoded by the inhabitants of a neighbouring mountain, who made war upon them, and killed many people, and ravaged the country. And while they were talking about it, Cyzicus pointed to the mountain and asked Jason and his companions what they saw there.

"I see some very tall objects," answered Jason; "but they are at such a distance that I cannot distinctly make out what they are. To tell your majesty the truth, they look so very strange that I am inclined to think them clouds, which have chanced to take something like human shapes."

"I see them very plainly," remarked Lynceus. "They are a band of enormous giants, all of whom have six arms apiece, and a club, a sword, or some other weapon in each of their hands."

"You have excellent eyes," said King Cyzicus. "Yes; they are six-armed giants, as you say, and these are the enemies whom I and my subjects have to contend with."

The next day when the Argonauts were about to set sail, down came these terrible giants, stepping a hundred yards at a stride, brandishing their six arms apiece, and looking very formidable, so far aloft in the air. Each of these monsters was able to carry on a whole war by himself; for with one of his arms he could fling immense stones, and wield a club with another, and a sword with a third, while with the fourth he kept the enemy off with a long spear, and the fifth and sixth were for shooting with a bow and arrow. But luckily, though the giants were so huge, and had so many arms, they had each but one heart, and that no bigger nor braver than the heart of an ordinary man. Jason and his friends went boldly to meet them, slew a great many, and made the rest take to their heels.

Another strange adventure happened when the voyagers came to Thrace, where they found a poor blind king, named Phineus, deserted by his subjects, and living in a very sorrowful way, all by himself. On Jason's inquiring whether they could do him any service, the king answered that he was terribly tormented by three great winged creatures, called Har-

pies, who had the faces of women, and the wings, bodies, and claws of vultures. These ugly wretches were in the habit of snatching away his dinner, and allowed him no peace of his life. Upon hearing this, the Argonauts spread a plentiful feast on the sea-shore, well knowing, from what the blind king said of their greediness, that the Harpies would snuff up the scent of the victuals, and quickly come to steal them away. And so it turned out; for hardly was the table set, before the three hideous vulture-women came flapping their wings, seized the food in their talons, and flew off as fast as they could. But the two sons of the North Wind drew their swords, spread their pinions, and set off through the air in pursuit of the thieves, whom they at last overtook among some islands, after a chase of some hundreds of miles. The two winged youths blustered terribly at the Harpies (for they had the rough temper of their father), and so frightened them with their drawn swords, that they solemnly promised never to trouble King Phineus again.

Then the Argonauts sailed onward, and met with many other marvellous incidents, any one of which would make a story by itself. At one time they landed on a island, and were reposing on the grass, when they suddenly found themselves assailed by what seemed a shower of steel-headed arrows. Some of them stuck in the ground, while others hit against their shields, and several penetrated their flesh. The fifty heroes started up, and looked about them for the hidden enemy, but could find none, nor see any spot, on the whole island, where even a single archer could lie concealed. Still, however, the steel-headed arrows came whizzing among them; and at last, happening to look upward, they beheld a large flock of birds, hovering and wheeling aloft, and shooting their feathers down upon the Argonauts. These feathers were the steel-headed arrows that had so tormented them. There was no possibility of making any resistance; and the fifty heroic Argonauts might all have been killed or wounded by a flock of troublesome birds, without ever setting eyes on the Golden Fleece, if Jason had not thought of asking the advice of the oaken image.

“O daughter of the Speaking Oak,” cried he, “we need

your wisdom more than ever before ! We are in great peril from a flock of birds, who are shooting us with their steel-pointed feathers. What can we do to drive them away ?”

“ Make a clatter on your shields,” said the image.

On receiving this excellent counsel, Jason hurried back to his companions (who were far more dismayed than when they fought with the six-armed giants), and bade them strike with their swords upon their brazen shields. Forthwith the fifty heroes set heartily to work, and raised such a terrible clatter, that the birds made what haste they could to get away ; and though they had shot half the feathers out of their wings, they were soon seen skimming among the clouds, a long distance off, and looking like a flock of wild geese. Orpheus celebrated this victory by playing a triumphant anthem on his harp, and sang so melodiously that Jason begged him to desist, lest, as the steel-feathered birds had been driven away by an ugly sound, they might be enticed back again by a sweet one.

While the Argonauts remained on this island, they saw a small vessel approaching the shore, in which were two young men of princely demeanour, and exceedingly handsome. Now, who do you imagine these two voyagers turned out to be ? Why, if you will believe me, they were the sons of that very Phrixus, who, in his childhood, had been carried to Colchis on the back of the golden-fleeced ram. Since that time, Phrixus had married the king's daughter ; and the two young princes had been born and brought up at Colchis, and had spent their play-days in the outskirts of the grove, in the centre of which the Golden Fleece was hanging upon a tree. They were now on their way to Greece, in hopes of getting back a kingdom, that had been wrongfully taken from their father.

When the princes understood whither the Argonauts were going, they offered to turn back, and guide them to Colchis. At the same time, however, they spoke as if it were very doubtful whether Jason would succeed in getting the Golden Fleece. According to their account, the tree on which it hung was guarded by a terrible dragon, who never failed to devour, at one mouthful, every person who might venture within his reach.

“ There are other difficulties in the way,” continued the



young princes. "But is not this enough? Ah, brave Jason, turn back before it is too late! It would grieve us to the heart, if you and your nine-and-forty brave companions should be eaten up by this hateful dragon."

"My young friends," quietly replied Jason, "I do not wonder that you think the dragon very terrible. You have grown up from infancy in the fear of this monster, and therefore still regard him with the awe that children feel for the bugbears and hobgoblins which their nurses have talked to them about. But, in my view of the matter, the dragon is merely a pretty large serpent, who is not half so likely to snap me up at one mouthful as I am to cut off his ugly head, and strip the skin from his body. At all events, turn back who may, I will never see Greece again, unless I carry with me the Golden Fleece."

"We will none of us turn back!" cried his nine-and-forty brave comrades. "Let us get on board the galley this instant and set out!"

And Orpheus (whose custom it was to set everything to music) began to harp and sing most gloriously, and made every one of them feel as if nothing in this world were so delightful as to fight dragons.

After this (being now under the guidance of the two princes, who were well acquainted with the way), they quickly sailed to Colchis. When the king of the country, whose name was *Æetes*, heard of their arrival, he instantly summoned Jason to court. The king was a stern and cruel-looking potentate; and though he put on as polite and hospitable an expression as he could, Jason did not like his face a whit better than that of the wicked King Pelias, who had de-throned his father.

"You are welcome, brave Jason," said King *Æetes*. "Pray, are you on a pleasure voyage?—or do you meditate the discovery of unknown islands?—or what other cause has procured me the happiness of seeing you at my court?"

"Great sir," replied Jason, with an obeisance, "I have come hither with a purpose which I now beg your majesty's permission to execute. King Pelias, who sits on my father's throne, has engaged to come down from it, and to give me his

crown and sceptre, provided I bring him the Golden Fleece. This, as your majesty is aware, is now hanging on a tree here at Colchis ; and I humbly solicit your gracious leave to take it away."

In spite of himself, the king's face twisted itself into an angry frown ; for, above all things else in the world, he prized the Golden Fleece, and was even suspected of having done a very wicked act, in order to get it into his own possession. It put him into the worst possible humour, therefore, to hear that the gallant Prince Jason and forty-nine of the bravest young warriors of Greece, had come to Colchis with the sole purpose of taking away his chief treasure.

"Do you know," asked King Æetes, eyeing Jason very sternly, "what are the conditions which you must fulfil before getting possession of the Golden Fleece?"

"I have heard," rejoined the youth, "that a dragon lies beneath the tree on which the prize hangs, and that whoever approaches him runs the risk of being devoured at a mouthful."

"True," said the king, with a smile that did not look particularly good-natured ; "very true, young man. But there are other things as hard, or perhaps a little harder, to be done before you can even have the privilege of being devoured by the dragon. For example, you must first tame my two brazen-footed and brazen-lunged bulls, which Vulcan, the wonderful blacksmith, made for me. There is a furnace in each of their stomachs ; and they breathe such hot fire out of their mouths and nostrils, that nobody has hitherto gone nigh them without being instantly burned to a small black cinder. What do you think of this, my brave Jason?"

"I must encounter the peril," answered Jason, composedly, "since it stands in the way of my purpose."

"After taming the fiery bulls," continued King Æetes, who was determined to scare Jason if possible, "you must yoke them to a plough, and must plough the sacred earth in the grove of Mars, and sow some of the same dragon's teeth from which Cadmus raised a crop of armed men. They are an unruly set of reprobates, those sons of the dragon's teeth ; and unless you treat them suitably, they will fall upon you sword

in hand. You and your nine-and-forty Argonauts, my bold Jason, are hardly numerous or strong enough to fight with such a host as will spring up."

"My master, Chiron," replied Jason, "taught me, long ago, the story of Cadmus. Perhaps I can manage the quarrelsome sons of the dragon's teeth as well as Cadmus did."

"I wish the dragon had him," muttered King Æetes to himself, "and the four-footed pedant, his schoolmaster, into the bargain. Why, what a foolhardy, self-conceited coxcomb he is! We'll see what my fire-breathing bulls will do for him. Well, Prince Jason," he continued aloud, and as pleasantly as he could, "make yourself comfortable for to-day, and to-morrow morning, since you insist upon it, you shall try your skill at the plough."

While the king talked with Jason, a beautiful young woman was standing behind the throne. She fixed her eyes earnestly upon the youthful stranger, and listened attentively to every word that was spoken; and when Jason withdrew from the king's presence, this young woman followed him out of the room.

"I am the king's daughter," she said to him, "and my name is Medea. I know a great deal of which other young princesses are ignorant, and can do many things which they would be afraid so much as to dream of. If you will trust to me, I can instruct you how to tame the fiery bulls, and sow the dragon's teeth, and get the Golden Fleece."

"Indeed, beautiful princess," answered Jason, "if you will do me this service, I promise to be grateful to you my whole life long."

Gazing at Medea, he beheld a wonderful intelligence in her face. She was one of those persons whose eyes are full of mystery; so that, while looking into them, you seem to see a very great way, as into a deep well, yet can never be certain whether you see into the farthest depths, or whether there be not something else hidden at the bottom. If Jason had been capable of fearing anything, he would have been afraid of making this young princess his enemy; for beautiful as she now looked, she might, the very next instant, become as terrible as the dragon that kept watch over the Golden Fleece.

"Princess!" he exclaimed, "you seem indeed very wise and very powerful. But how can you help me to do the things of which you speak? Are you an enchantress?"

"Yes, Prince Jason," answered Medea, with a smile, "you have hit upon the truth; I am an enchantress. Circe, my father's sister, taught me to be one, and I could tell you, if I pleased, who was the old woman with the peacock, the pomegranate, and the cuckoo staff, whom you carried over the river; and likewise, who it is that speaks through the lips of the oaken image that stands in the prow of your galley. I am acquainted with some of your secrets, you perceive. It is well for you that I am favourably inclined; for otherwise, you would hardly escape being devoured by the dragon."

"I should not so much care for the dragon," replied Jason, "if I only knew how to manage the brazen-footed and fiery-lunged bulls."

"If you are as brave as I think you, and as you have need to be," said Medea, "your own bold heart will teach you that there is but one way of dealing with a mad bull. What it is I leave you to find out in the moment of peril. As for the fiery breath of these animals, I have a charmed ointment here, which will prevent you from being burned up, and cure you if you chance to be a little scorched."

So she put a golden box into his hand, and directed him how to apply the perfumed unguent which it contained, and where to meet her at midnight.

"Only be brave," added she, "and before daybreak the brazen bulls shall be tamed."

The young man assured her that his heart would not fail him. He then rejoined his comrades, and told them what had passed between the princess and himself, and warned them to be in readiness in case there might be need of their help.

At the appointed hour he met the beautiful Medea on the marble steps of the king's palace. She gave him a basket, in which were the dragon's teeth, just as they had been pulled out of the monster's jaws by Cadmus, long ago. Medea then led Jason down the palace-steps, and through the silent streets of the city, and into the royal pasture-ground, where the two brazen-footed bulls were kept. It was a starry night, with

a bright gleam along the eastern edge of the sky, where the moon was soon going to show herself. After entering the pasture, the princess paused and looked around.

"There they are," said she, "resting themselves and chewing their fiery cud in that farthest corner of the field. It will be excellent sport, I assure you, when they catch a glimpse of your figure. My father and all his court delight in nothing so much as to see a stranger trying to yoke them, in order to come at the Golden Fleece. It makes a holiday in Colchis whenever such a thing happens. For my part, I enjoy nothing so much. You cannot imagine in what a mere twinkling of an eye their hot breath shrivels a young man into a black cinder."

"Are you sure, beautiful Medea," asked Jason, "quite sure, that the unguent in the gold box will prove a remedy against those terrible burns?"

"If you doubt, if you are in the least afraid," said the princess, looking him in the face by the dim starlight, "you had better never have been born than go a step nigher to the bulls."

But Jason had set his heart steadfastly on getting the Golden Fleece; and I positively doubt whether he would have gone back without it, even had he been certain of finding himself turned into a red-hot cinder, or a handful of white ashes, the instant he made a step farther. He therefore let go Medea's hand, and walked boldly forward in the direction whither she had pointed. At some distance before him he perceived four streams of fiery vapour, regularly appearing, and again vanishing, after dimly lighting up the surrounding obscurity. These were caused by the breath of the brazen bulls, which was quietly stealing out of their four nostrils, as they lay chewing the cud.

At the first two or three steps which Jason made, the four fiery streams appeared to gush out somewhat more plentifully; for the two brazen bulls had heard his foot-tramp, and were lifting up their hot noses to snuff the air. He went a little farther, and by the way in which the red vapour now spouted forth, he judged that the creatures had got upon their feet. Now he could see glowing sparks, and vivid jets of flame.

At the next step, each of the bulls made the pasture echo with a terrible roar, while the burning breath, which they thus belched forth, lit up the whole field with a momentary flash. One other stride did bold Jason make; and suddenly, as a streak of lightning, on came these fiery animals, roaring like thunder, and sending out sheets of white flame, which so lighted up the scene that the young man could discern every object more distinctly than by daylight. Most distinctly of all he saw the two horrible creatures galloping right down upon him, their brazen hoofs rattling and ringing over the ground, and their tails sticking up stiffly into the air. Their breath scorched the herbage before them. So intensely hot was it, indeed, that it caught a dry tree, under which Jason was now standing, and set it all in a light blaze. But as for Jason himself (thanks to Medea's enchanted ointment), the white flame curled around his body, without injuring him a jot.

Greatly encouraged at finding himself not yet turned into a cinder, the young man awaited the attack of the bulls. Just as the brazen brutes fancied themselves sure of tossing him into the air, he caught one of them by the horn, and the other by his tail, and held them in a gripe like that of an iron vice, one with his right hand, the other with his left.

It was now easy to yoke the bulls, and to harness them to the plough, which had lain rusting on the ground for a great many years gone by; so long was it before anybody could be found capable of ploughing that piece of land. Jason, I suppose, had been taught how to draw a furrow by the good old Chiron. At any rate, our hero succeeded perfectly well in breaking up the greensward; and, by the time that the moon was a quarter of her journey up the sky, the ploughed field lay before him, a large tract of black earth, ready to be sown with the dragon's teeth. So Jason scattered them broadcast, and took his stand on the edge of the field, anxious to see what would happen next.

"Must we wait long for harvest-time?" he inquired of Medea, who was now standing by his side.

"Whether sooner or later, it will be sure to come," answered the princess. "A crop of armed men never fails to spring up, when the dragon's teeth have been sown."

The moon was now high aloft in the heavens, and threw its bright beams over the ploughed field, where as yet there was nothing to be seen. Any farmer, on viewing it, would have said that Jason must wait weeks before the green blades would peep from among the sods, and whole months before the yellow grain would be ripened for the sickle. But by-and-by, all over the field, there was something that glistened in the moonbeams, like sparkling drops of dew. These bright objects sprouted higher, and proved to be the steel heads of spears. Then there was a dazzling gleam from a vast number of polished brass helmets, beneath which, as they grew farther out of the soil, appeared the dark and bearded visages of warriors, struggling to free themselves from the imprisoning earth. The first look that they gave at the upper world was a glare of wrath and defiance. Next were seen their bright breastplates; in every right hand there was a sword or spear, and on each left arm a shield; and when this strange crop of warriors had but half grown out of the earth, they struggled—such was their impatience of restraint—and, as it were, tore themselves up by the roots. Wherever a dragon's tooth had fallen, there stood a man armed for battle. They made a clang with their swords against their shields, and eyed one another fiercely; for they had come into this beautiful world, and into the peaceful moonlight, full of rage and stormy passions, and ready to take the life of every human brother, in recompense for the boon of their own existence.

For a while, the warriors stood flourishing their weapons, clashing their swords against their shields, and boiling over with the red-hot thirst for battle. Then they began to shout—"Show us the enemy!" "Lead us to the charge!" "Death or victory!" "Come on, brave comrades!" "Conquer or die!" and a hundred other outcries, such as men always shout forth on a battle-field, and which these dragon-people seemed to have at their tongues' ends. At last the front rank caught sight of Jason, who, beholding the flash of so many weapons in the moonlight, had thought it best to draw his sword. In a moment all the sons of the dragon's teeth appeared to take Jason for an enemy, and crying with one voice, "Guard the Golden Fleece!" they ran at him with uplifted swords and

protruded spears. Jason knew that it would be impossible to withstand this bloodthirsty battalion with his single arm, but determined, since there was nothing better to be done, to die as valiantly as if he himself had sprung from a dragon's tooth.

Medea, however, bade him snatch up a stone from the ground.

"Throw it among them quickly!" cried she. "It is the only way to save yourself."

The armed men were now so nigh that Jason could discern the fire flashing out of their enraged eyes, when he let fly the stone, and saw it strike the helmet of a tall warrior, who was rushing upon him with his blade aloft. The stone glanced from this man's helmet to the shield of his nearest comrade, and thence flew right into the angry face of another, hitting him smartly between the eyes. Each of the three who had been struck by the stone took it for granted that his next neighbour had given him a blow; and instead of running any farther towards Jason, they began a fight among themselves. The confusion spread through the host, so that it seemed scarcely a moment before they were all hacking, hewing, and stabbing at one another, lopping off arms, heads, and legs, and doing such memorable deeds that Jason was filled with immense admiration; although, at the same time, he could not help laughing to behold these mighty men punishing each other for an offence which he himself had committed. In an incredibly short space of time (almost as short, indeed, as it had taken them to grow up), all but one of the heroes of the dragon's teeth were stretched lifeless on the field. The last survivor, the bravest and strongest of the whole, had just force enough to wave his crimson sword over his head, and give a shout of exultation, crying, "Victory! Victory! Immortal fame!" when he himself fell down, and lay quietly among his slain brethren.

And there was the end of the army that had sprouted from the dragon's teeth. That fierce and feverish fight was the only enjoyment which they had tasted on this beautiful earth.

"Let them sleep in the bed of honour," said the Princess Medea, with a sly smile at Jason. "The world will always



have simpletons enough, just like them, fighting and dying for they know not what, and fancying that posterity will take the trouble to put laurel wreaths on their rusty and battered helmets. Could you help smiling, Prince Jason, to see the self-conceit of that last fellow, just as he tumbled down?"

"It made me very sad," answered Jason, gravely. "And, to tell you the truth, princess, the Golden Fleece does not appear so well worth the winning, after what I have here beheld."

"You will think differently in the morning," said Medea. "True, the Golden Fleece may not be so valuable as you have thought it; but then there is nothing better in the world; and one must needs have an object, you know. Come! Your night's work has been well performed; and to-morrow you can inform King Æetes that the first part of your allotted task is fulfilled."

Agreeably to Medea's advice, Jason went betimes in the morning to the palace of King Æetes. Entering the presence-chamber, he stood at the foot of the throne, and made a low obeisance.

"Your eyes look heavy, Prince Jason," observed the king; "you appear to have spent a sleepless night. I hope you have been considering the matter a little more wisely, and have concluded not to get yourself scorched to a cinder, in attempting to tame my brazen-lunged bulls."

"That is already accomplished, may it please your majesty," replied Jason. "The bulls have been tamed and yoked; the field has been ploughed; the dragon's teeth have been sown broadcast; the crop of armed warriors has sprung up, and they have slain one another, to the last man. And now I solicit your majesty's permission to encounter the dragon, that I may take down the Golden Fleece from the tree, and depart, with my nine-and-forty comrades."

King Æetes scowled, and looked very angry and excessively disturbed; for he knew that, in accordance with his kingly promise, he ought now to permit Jason to win the Fleece, if his courage and skill should enable him to do so. But, since the young man had met with such good luck in the matter of the brazen bulls and the dragon's teeth, the king feared that he would be equally successful in slaying the dragon. And there-

fore, though he would gladly have seen Jason devoured by the ravenous beast, he was resolved not to run any further risk of losing his beloved Fleece.

"You never would have succeeded in this business, young man," said he, "if my undutiful daughter Medea had not helped you with her enchantments. Had you acted fairly, you would have been, at this instant, a black cinder, or a handful of white ashes. I forbid you, on pain of death, to make any more attempts to get the Golden Fleece. To speak my mind plainly, you shall never set eyes on so much as one of its glistening locks."

Jason left the king's presence in great sorrow and anger. He could think of nothing better to be done than to summon together his forty-nine brave Argonauts, march at once to the grove of Mars, slay the dragon, take possession of the Golden Fleece, get on board the Argo, and spread all sail for Iolchos. The success of this scheme, depended, it is true, on the doubtful point whether all the fifty heroes might not be snapped up, at so many mouthfuls, by the dragon. But as Jason was hastening down the palace-steps, the Princess Medea called after him, and beckoned him to return. Her black eyes shone upon him with such a keen intelligence, that he felt as if there were a serpent peeping out of them; and although she had done him so much service only the night before, he was by no means very certain that she would not do him an equally great mischief before sunset.

"What says King Æetes, my royal and upright father?" inquired Medea, slightly smiling. "Will he give you the Golden Fleece, without any further risk or trouble?"

"On the contrary," answered Jason, "he is very angry with me for taming the brazen bulls and sowing the dragon's teeth. And he forbids me to make any more attempts, and positively refuses to give up the Golden Fleece, whether I slay the dragon or no."

"Yes, Jason," said the princess, "and I can tell you more. Unless you set sail from Colchis before to-morrow's sunrise, the king means to burn your fifty-oared galley, and put yourself and your forty-nine brave comrades to the sword. But be of good courage. The Golden Fleece you shall have, if it

lies within the power of my enchantments to get it for you. Wait for me here an hour before midnight."

At the appointed hour, you might again have seen Prince Jason and the Princess Medea, side by side, stealing through the streets of Colchis, on their way to the sacred grove, in the centre of which the Golden Fleece was suspended to a tree. While they were crossing the pasture-ground, the brazen bulls came towards Jason, lowing, nodding their heads, and thrusting forth their snouts, which, as other cattle do, they loved to have rubbed and caressed by a friendly hand. Their fierce nature was thoroughly tamed; and, with their fierceness, the two furnaces in their stomachs had likewise been extinguished; and now, instead of emitting jets of flame and streams of sulphurous vapour, they breathed the very sweetest of cow-breath.

After kindly patting the bulls, Jason followed Medea into the grove of Mars, where the great oak-trees, that had been growing for centuries, threw so thick a shade that the moonbeams struggled vainly to find their way through it. Only here and there a glimmer fell upon the leaf-strewn earth, or now and then a breeze stirred the boughs aside, and gave Jason a glimpse of the sky, lest, in that deep obscurity, he might forget that there was one, overhead. At length, when they had gone farther and farther into the heart of the duski-ness, Medea squeezed Jason's hand.

"Look yonder," she whispered. "Do you see it?"

Gleaming among the venerable oaks, there was a radiance, not like the moonbeams, but rather resembling the golden glory of the setting sun. It proceeded from an object, which appeared to be suspended at about a man's height from the ground, a little farther within the wood.

"What is it?" asked Jason.

"Have you come so far to seek it," exclaimed Medea, "and do you not recognise the meed of all your toils and perils, when it glitters before your eyes? It is the Golden Fleece."

Jason went onward a few steps farther, and then stopped to gaze. Oh how beautiful it looked, shining with a marvellous light of its own, that inestimable prize, which so many heroes had longed to behold, but had perished in quest of it, either

by the perils of their voyage, or by the fiery breath of the brazen-lunged bulls!

"How gloriously it shines!" cried Jason in a rapture. "It has surely been dipped in the richest gold of sunset. Let me hasten onward, and take it to my bosom."

"Stay," said Medea, holding him back. "Have you forgotten what guards it?"

To say the truth, in the joy of beholding the object of his desires, the terrible dragon had quite slipped out of Jason's memory. Soon, however, something came to pass, that reminded him what perils were still to be encountered. An antelope, that probably mistook the yellow radiance for sunrise, came bounding fleetly through the grove. He was rushing straight towards the Golden Fleece, when suddenly there was a frightful hiss, and the immense head and half the scaly body of the dragon was thrust forth (for he was twisted round the trunk of the tree on which the fleece hung), and seizing the poor antelope, swallowed him with one snap of his jaws.

After this feat, the dragon seemed sensible that some other living creature was within reach, on which he felt inclined to finish his meal. In various directions he kept poking his ugly snout among the trees, stretching out his neck a long way, now here, now there, and now close to the spot where Jason and the princess were hiding behind an oak. As the head came waving and undulating through the air, and reaching almost within arm's-length of Prince Jason, it was a very hideous and uncomfortable sight. The gape of his enormous jaws was nearly as wide as the gateway of the king's palace.

"Well, Jason," whispered Medea, "what do you think now of your prospect of winning the Golden Fleece?"

Jason answered only by drawing his sword and making a step forward.

"Stay, foolish youth," said Medea, grasping his arm. "Do not you see you are lost, without me as your guardian and good angel? In this gold box I have a magic potion, which will quell the dragon far more effectually than your sword."

The dragon had probably heard the voices; for, swift as lightning, his black head and forked tongue came hissing among the trees again, darting full forty feet at a stretch.

As it approached, Medea tossed the contents of the gold box right down the monster's wide-open throat. Immediately, with a terrible hiss and a tremendous wriggle,—flinging his tail up to the topmost branch of the tallest tree, and shattering all its branches as it crashed heavily down again,—the dragon fell at full length upon the ground, and lay quite motionless.

“It is only a sleeping potion,” said the enchantress to Prince Jason. “One always finds a use for these mischievous creatures, sooner or later; so I did not wish to kill him outright. Quick! snatch the prize, and let us begone. You have won the Golden Fleece.”

Jason caught the Fleece from the tree, and hurried through the grove, the deep shadows of which were illuminated as he passed, by the golden glory of the precious object that he bore along. A little way before him, he beheld the old woman whom he had helped over the stream, with her peacock beside her. She clapped her hands for joy, and beckoning him to make haste, disappeared among the duskiness of the trees. Espying the two winged sons of the North Wind (who were disporting themselves in the moonlight, a few hundred feet aloft), Jason bade them tell the rest of the Argonauts to embark as speedily as possible. But Lynceus, with his sharp eyes, had already caught a glimpse of him, bringing the Golden Fleece, although several stone walls, a hill, and the black shadows of the grove of Mars, came between. By his advice, the heroes had seated themselves on the benches of the galley, with their oars held perpendicularly, ready to let fall into the water.

As Jason drew near, he heard the Talking Image calling to him with more than ordinary eagerness, in its grave, sweet voice—

“Make haste, Prince Jason! For your life, make haste!”

With one bound he leaped aboard. At sight of the glorious radiance of the Golden Fleece, the nine-and-forty heroes gave a mighty shout, and Orpheus, striking his harp, sang a song of triumph, to the cadence of which the galley flew over the water, homeward bound, as if careering along with wings!

## NOTES.

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### THE GORGON'S HEAD.

P. 5. **Perseus** was one of the most famous of the Greek heroes.

Danaë, his mother, was the daughter of King Acrisius. It had been predicted to Acrisius that he would one day be killed by his own grandson, and so he turned Danaë and Perseus adrift on the sea in a chest.

**Seriphus**, a small rocky island, one of the Cyclâdes, in the Ægean Sea. It lies south-east from Athens, and measures about twelve miles in circumference.

**Humane**, kind ; having the feelings proper to man. (L. *humanus*.)

P. 6. **Hippodamia**, daughter of Cœnomaus, king of Pisa, in Elis.

Her father promised her in marriage to any one who should outrun him in a chariot-race. Pelops bribed the charioteer of Cœnomaus to take out the pins of his master's chariot. During the race Cœnomaus's chariot broke down, and he was thrown out and killed ; and so Pelops won the race, and married Hippodamia.

**Medusa**, one of the Gorgons.

There were three Gorgons—Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa. Medusa alone was mortal. She had once been a beautiful maiden, but had been turned into a monster, and her hair became serpents, which writhed about her head and brow.

**In quest of**, in search of ; seeking for.

P. 7. **Venomous tongues, with forked stings at the end**. It used to be supposed that serpents could sting with their tongues, which are forked at the ends. Their tongues, however, are really harmless.

They bite with long teeth, called fangs. These teeth are pierced by fine tubes, and have small bags of poison near their roots. When they bite, the venom or poison is pressed into the tubes, flows into the wound, mixes with the blood, and thus causes death. Some serpents are not poisonous.

P. 9. **Mercury**, the messenger of the gods.

The Greek name for Mercury was Hermes. He was very skilful in invent-

ing all sorts of things, and often took care of travellers. He wore a broad travelling-hat with wings, and a pair of winged sandals, which carried him over land or sea with the swiftness of wind.

P. 10. **Three Grey Women**, The Graiai or Grey Women were sisters of the Gorgons.

They had grey hair from their birth; and had only one tooth and one eye in common. These they borrowed from each other when they wanted them.

**Nymphs**. This was the general name given to many kinds of beings, generally supposed to haunt springs, rivers, and woods in the shape of beautiful maidens.

P. 12. **Wisdom personified**. The goddess who represented Wisdom and Power among the Greeks was called **Athēna**, and among the Romans **Minerva**.

She took special care of Athens, which was named after her. She was also the protectress of many of the great heroes in their adventures.

P. 15. **Wallet**, a bag for carrying anything in.

P. 17. **Buoyant**, light; inclined to rise upward.

P. 18. **Sprightliness**, liveliness.

**Dexterity**, manual cleverness. (L. *dexter*, the right hand.)

P. 20. **Emitting**, sending forth. (L. *e*, out of; *mittere*, to send.)

**Drowsy**, heavy with sleep; sleepy.

**Gigantic**, of giant size. (Gr. *gigas*, *gigantos*, a giant.)

P. 21. **Melodious**, full of sweet and pleasant sounds.

**Unclose** is the opposite of *close*.

*Un* has this meaning generally before adjectives, as *unable*. Before verbs it often means 'to deprive of,' as *undress*, *uncrown*; although sometimes it has only an intensive force—thus *loose* and *unloose* have much the same meaning.

P. 22. **Magic**, from Gr. *magos*, one of the Magi; an enchanter.

**Embroider**, to ornament with needlework.

It means literally to work on the border, and with it is connected the English word *border*.

**Venomous**, *lit.* poisonous; spiteful.

**Talons**, the sharp claws of a bird of prey.

P. 23. **Sea-monster**. This monster had been sent by Neptune, the god of the sea, to ravage the country of Ethiopia. Deliverance from it was promised if the king's daughter Andromeda were given up to the monster. She was chained to a rock to be devoured; but Perseus found her before it came, set her free, and slew the monster. He afterwards married Andromeda.

**Giant**. This was Atlas, who was said to hold up the sky, and whom Perseus turned into a mountain of stone because he refused him shelter. For the story of Hercules and Atlas, see pages 51, 52.

**Vagabond**, *lit.* a wanderer; an idle, strolling fellow. (L. *vagari*, to wander.)

**Semicircle**, half a circle. (L. *semi*, half.)

P. 25. **Wiles**, tricks; cunning plots. *Wile* is a doublet of *guile*.

After Perseus had finished these mighty deeds, he gave the helmet and winged shoes to Mercury, who returned them to the Nymphs. The Gorgon's head he gave to Athena, who placed it in the middle of her shield or breastplate. He then returned to Argos, the kingdom of his grandfather Acrisius, and accidentally killed Acrisius while throwing the discus in the games. He is then said to have become king of Argos, and to have reigned there for many years.

#### THE GOLDEN TOUCH.

P. 26. **Midas**, king of Phrygia, was the richest of men.

It is quite true that nobody except the author of this story ever heard of his having a daughter; she does not appear in any version of the old story.

**Bequeath**, leave by will. The noun is *bequest*. It is connected with the verb *quoth*.

**Inhale**, to draw in with the breath. (L. *in*, in; *halāre*, to breathe.)

P. 27. **Basement**, foundation; ground-floor.

P. 28. **Intercepted**, caught by the way; kept back. (L. *inter*, between; *capere*, to seize; to take.)

**Beneficent**, kind; doing good. (L. *bene*, well; and *facere*, to do.)

**Lustrous**, shining; having lustre or brightness.

**Gratifying**, pleasing; complying with. (L. *gratus*, agreeable; *facere*, to make.)

P. 29. **Diminutive**, small. (L. *diminuere*, to become less.)

**Involuntarily**, without intending it; unintentionally. (L. *in*, not; and *volo*, I will or wish.)

P. 30. **Fabric**, something made, generally applied to cloth. (L. *faber*, a workman.)

**Texture**, web; anything woven. (L. *texere*, to weave.)

**Frenzy**, excitement; madness.

**Fluted**, furrowed; with hollow channels running up it.

P. 31. **Transformation**, a complete change into something different.

**Spectacles** were not invented till the thirteenth century—that is, about 600 years ago. See note on *potatoes*, p. 32.

**Balustrade**, the rail of a stair.

P. 32. **Potatoes**. It is hardly necessary to say that, as potatoes have only been known in Europe for somewhat less than 300 years, Midas could scarcely have had them for breakfast, since he must have lived more than 2000 years ago. Neither did the Greeks use coffee.

When such a supposition as this is made in writing, it is called an *anachronism*. For example, Shakspeare in *Julius Cæsar* makes one of the characters say, 'What is't o'clock?'

P. 34. **Mortification**, vexation.

**Dint**, force.



**Despatch**, haste ; quickness.

P. 35. **Victuals**, food.

**Fascinated**, bewitched ; charmed.

P. 36. **Congeeing**, freezing ; becoming solid. (L. *con*, together ; *gelare*, to freeze.)

**Inflexible**, unbending. (L. *in*, not ; *flexere*, to bend.)

**Insatiable**, very greedy ; not to be satisfied. (L. *in*, not ; *satis*, enough.)

P. 37. **Transmuted**, changed. (L. *trans*, across ; *mutare*, to change.)

P. 38. **Occasioned**, caused.

**River**, the river in which Midas was ordered to bathe was the Pactōlus, in Asia Minor. It has always had an abundance of gold in its sand.

P. 39. **Insensible**, without the power of feeling. (L. *in*, not ; *sentire*, to feel.)

#### THE THREE GOLDEN APPLES.

P. 40. **Hesperides**. These were nymphs appointed to guard the golden apples which were presented to Juno on her marriage. They dwelt in the extreme west of the world, as known to the Greeks, and were assisted in guarding the apples by a dragon.

P. 41. **A hero**.—Hercules, the most famous of all the heroes of antiquity. His exploits are recorded on pages 43, 44.

**Beautiful young women**, nymphs of the river. See note on *nymphs* p. 10.

**A certain king**.—Eurysthēus. Hercules had been commanded to serve Eurystheus for twelve years, and to do whatever Eurystheus ordered him.

P. 43. **Lion**. This lion lived in the valley of Nemēa, and was the terror of the district. Hercules attacked the lion with his club and his arrows, but finding them of no use, he strangled the animal with his hands.

**Hydra**. After conquering this monster, Hercules poisoned his arrows with its blood, which made the wounds he inflicted with them incurable.

**Stag**. This stag had golden antlers or horns and brazen feet. Hercules wounded it with an arrow, and then caught it and carried it home to Eurystheus.

**Half horses and half men**. These were called Centaurs. See note on *Centaurs*, p. 106.

**Stable**, the stable of Augēas.

This stable held 3000 oxen, whose stalls had not been cleaned for thirty years.

Hercules was ordered to clean it out in one day, which he did by causing a river to run through it.

P. 44. **Monstrous birds**, the Stymphalian birds.

They had brazen claws, wings, and beaks ; they used their feathers as

arrows, and ate human flesh. Hercules startled them with a rattle, and as they flew away, killed them with his arrows.

**Wild horses**, the horses of Diomēdes, which fed on human flesh. They became tame after eating the body of their master, whom Hercules killed.

**Amazons**, a race of brave and warlike women.

**Venus**, the goddess of love and beauty.

**Mars**, the god of war.

**Geryon**, a giant who lived in an island in the distant west. Hercules was sent to fetch his oxen, and did so, but had to kill Geryon first. On his way to fetch the oxen Hercules set up two great rocks, one on each side of the Strait of Gibraltar. They are still called the Pillars of Hercules.

P. 45. **Choral song**, a song sung by several persons together. (Gr. *choros*, a dancing band.)

**Old man of the sea**, Proteus, who tended the flocks of Neptune. These flocks were seals. He foretold the future to any one who caught him asleep and did not let him go, whatever shape he turned himself into. His daughters were probably mermaids.

P. 47. **Verdant**, green.

**Barnacles**, shell-fish that stick to the bottoms of ships, or to logs of wood floating in the sea.

P. 50. **Resounded**, sounded again. *Re* here has the meaning of *again* or *anew*, as *refill*, *recommence*, etc.; often it means, *back*, as *redeem*, *return*, etc.

P. 51. **Discern**, to see; to distinguish. (L. *dis*, apart; *cernere*, to separate.)

**Enormous**, very large. (L. *e*, out of or beyond; *norma*, a rule.)

**Acorn**, the fruit of the oak.

P. 52. **Mantled**, hidden; covered as with a mantle or cloak.

**Atlas**, a famous giant who was supposed to stand at the extreme boundary of the world—that is, near the Strait of Gibraltar—and hold up the sky upon his hands and head. He was changed into a mountain by Perseus, who showed him the head of Medusa. See note on p. 23. From him the Atlas Mountains in the north-west of Africa have been called.

P. 56. **Mountain**. The Atlas Mountains are in the north-west of Africa, and from them the Atlantic Ocean is named.

#### THE DRAGON'S TEETH.

P. 57. **Eurōpa**, daughter of Agēnor, king of Phœnicia.

Eurōpa was not so young as she is described in the story, when the events here told of are said to have happened.

**Phœnicia**, a country at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, north of Palestine.

P. 58. **Amiable**, friendly; loving. (L. *amāre*, to love.)

**Sprightly**, lively. It is from the English *sprite*, a spirit, and the suffix *ly* (AS. *lic*). It ought properly to be spelt *spritely*.

P. 59. **Docile**, easily managed; ready to learn. (L. *docere*, to teach.)

P. 60. **Emerging**, rising out of. (L. *ē*, out of; *mergere*, to dip.)

P. 61. **Nothing more was seen of the white bull**. The bull carried Europa over to the island of Crete in the Mediterranean, where she afterwards married the king of Crete, whose name was Asterion.

**Thasus**. Some people think that Thasus too was a brother of Europa, and son of Agenor and Telephassa.

P. 62. **Solitude**, loneliness. (L. *solus*, alone.)

**Rustic**, belonging to the country. (L. *rus*, the country.) So also we have *rural*.

P. 64. **New city**. The city and kingdom which Phoenix founded have been supposed by some to be Phœnicia. If this be true, then Agenor could not have been already king of Phœnicia.

P. 66. **City**. The city and kingdom founded by Cilix are said to have been called Cilicia—named after the founder.

P. 67. **City**. The city founded by Thasus was supposed to be in the island of Thasos, which lies in the north of the Ægean Sea, and was named from Thasus.

P. 69. **Pilgrimage**. From L. *peregrinus*, a traveller. It is found in Early English as *pelegrim* and *pilegrim*. A pilgrim was one who wandered into strange countries. A pilgrimage was the journey undertaken.

**Delphi**, one of the most famous places in Greece. It was situated on the side of Parnassus, a well-wooded mountain standing to the north of the Gulf of Corinth. It was chiefly celebrated for its oracle of Apollo, who was said to give answers through his priestess there, to any questions that were asked by mortals. It was said to be the centre of the earth; and here also the Pythian games were held, to which all the Greeks assembled every five years. The highest prize in these games was a laurel wreath.

**Oracle**, the speaking or answer of a deity. (L. *oraculum*, the answer of a god—from *orāre*, to speak.)

P. 70. **Brindled**, streaked; spotted. It is connected with the English words *brand* and *burn*.

P. 74. **Beguiling**, passing pleasantly. (O.E. *be*; *gylen*, to deceive.)

**Tediousness**, slowness; tiresomeness.

P. 76. **Enchanted**, charmed. (L. *in*; *cantāre*, to sing.)

**Vitals**, the parts necessary to life—the heart and lungs. (L. *vita*, life.)

P. 77. "**Cadmus**," said a voice. The voice was that of Athena, or Minerva as she was sometimes called, who often advised and took care of heroes. See note on *wisdom personified*, p. 12.

P. 78. **Reverberated**, resounded; echoed.

P. 79. **Incrusted**, sticking like a crust or covering.

**Begrimed**, soiled deeply all over.

P. 80. **City**. The city which Cadmus founded was Thebes. Thebes was the principal city in Boeotia, which lay in the east of Greece. The highest part or citadel of the city was called Cadmēa—after Cadmus. Cadmus is said to have introduced the alphabet into Greece, and to have taught the people the art of working mines.

**Dome**, a raised roof shaped like a cup turned upside down.

**Portico**, a porch ornamented with columns, in front of the entrance to a building.

**Vista**, a view as through an avenue of trees or pillars.

P. 81. **Harmonia**, daughter of one of the gods. She was herself half a goddess. Long afterwards, when Cadmus had to leave Thebes, she went with him, was with him in all his adventures, and never left him.

#### THE MINOTAUR.

P. 82. **Troezene**, a town in Argolis, in the N.E. of Greece.

**Theseus** was the great legendary hero of Attica.

His mother was Æthra, daughter of Pitthēus, king of Troezene. Pittheus brought him up until he was able to go to see his father, who was king over Attica. Most of his adventures are related in the story.

**Attica**, a small district in the east of Greece. Its capital was Athens. It became afterwards the great centre of learning and art in Greece.

**Ægeus**, son of Pandion, and king of Attica.

P. 86. **Procrustes**, a famous robber who dwelt near the Cephissus, a river in Attica. His name means "the stretcher."

**Sciron**, a famous robber who dwelt on the frontier of Attica. He not only robbed his victims, but compelled them to wash his feet on a high rock, and then kicked them into the sea.

**Enormous sow**. This wild sow belonged to the town of Crommyon, in Megāris, and its name was Phæa.

**Hercules** was famous for his immense strength. See notes on pp. 41, 43, and 44.

**Jason, Castor, Pollux**. For accounts of these heroes, see the story of "The Golden Fleece," p. 106.

P. 87. **Nephews of King Ægeus**, Clytus and Butes, sons of Pallas, brother of Ægeus.

**Medea**, daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis. She was famous for her skill in magic, and helped Jason to gain the Golden Fleece. She came to Athens, and married Ægeus, but afterwards grew wicked, and laid plots against Theseus.

P. 91. **Aërial journey**, journey through the air. (L. *aër*, the air.)

P. 92. **Diamonds of the first water**, diamonds of the purest lustre, or brightness.

**Emeralds**, precious stones of a green sparkling colour.

**Rubies**, precious stones of a bright red colour.

**Sapphires**, very brilliant precious stones—generally bluish—inferior in brightness only to diamonds.

**Opals**, precious stones remarkable for their changing colours.

**Topases**, precious stones of various colours, often brilliant yellow.

**Mad bull**, the Marathonian bull.

Marathon was a town on the east coast of Attica, rather more than twenty miles from Athens. Many years afterwards a great battle was fought here between the Persians and Athenians, in which the Athenians were victorious.

P. 93. **Foregone**, past.

**Anniversary**, a particular day which comes round every year. (L. *annus*, a year; and *vertère*, to turn.)

**Crete**, a large island in the Mediterranean Sea.

It lies S.E. from Greece, and is about equally distant from Europe, Asia, and Africa. It was to Crete that Europa was carried by the white bull. See note on p. 61.

**Minos**, king of Crete.

He was a son of Europa, who had been carried over to Crete by a white bull. See note on p. 61. Minos divided Crete into three districts, and gave them laws. Under him Crete was a powerful maritime state.

P. 94. **Glut the ravenous maw**, fill the hungry stomach.

**Despightful**, looking down with contempt.

P. 95. **Festal**, joyous. Connected with *feast*. (L. *festum*, a holiday.)

**Talus**, a man of brass, made by Vulcan.

He watched the island of Crete by walking round it three times every day.

One story told of him is, that whenever he saw strangers approaching, he made himself red-hot in fire, and then embraced the strangers when they landed.

P. 96. **Vulcan**, the god of fire.

As fire is necessary in the working of all metals, Vulcan came to be regarded as a very skilful worker in all kinds of metal. He was supposed to reside in Lemnos, a volcanic island in the Ægean Sea.

P. 97. **Reverberation**, echo. See note on p. 78.

P. 98. **Appalled**, terrified; pale with fear.

**Ariadne**, daughter of Minos, king of Crete.

She assisted Theseus in his expedition against the Minotaur.

P. 99. **Matter of state policy**, a matter concerning the government of the country.

**Caitiffs**, mean, cowardly people. The word caitiff originally meant a captive, and is derived from the Lat. *capère*, to take.

P. 100. **Labyrinth**, a place full of winding passages through which it is very difficult to find one's way.

**Dædalus**, a famous workman who brought about many improvements in sculpture and architecture. He instructed his nephew Perdix,

who surpassed him so much in skill that Dædalus killed him through envy. He then fled to Crete, where his skill gained him the favour of King Minos. Here he constructed the famous Cretan labyrinth in which the Minotaur was kept. Having made wings for himself and his son Icarus, they flew away from Crete. Dædalus flew safely over the Ægean Sea, but Icarus flew too near the sun, which melted the wax with which his wings were fastened, and he fell into the sea and was drowned. The part where he fell was named after him, the Icarian Sea.

P. 101. **Articulation**, the forming of distinct syllables. (L. *artus*, a joint; *articulus*, a little joint.)

**Inscrutable**, unsearchable; that cannot be understood. (Lat. *in*, not, and *scrutari*, to search into.)

P. 102. **Gullet**, throat. *Gully* is a doublet of this.

P. 103. **Magnanimous**, great-souled; noble. (Lat. *magnus*, great; *animus*, the mind.)

P. 105. **Sable**, black; dark.

The sable is a small animal found in the north of Europe and Asia, much valued for its glossy black fur. The name sable was first applied to the animal, then to its fur, and lastly is used to describe anything of the same colour as the sable's fur.

#### THE GOLDEN FLEECE.

P. 106. **Jason**, a famous Greek hero, son of Æson, king of Iolchos.

While Jason was still an infant, Pelias, his uncle, came against Æson, and took possession of the kingdom. He wanted to kill Jason; but some of his friends pretended that he was dead, and hid him in a cave, under the care of Chiron.

**Iolchos**, an ancient town of Thessaly in the north-east of Greece. It is near the sea, and is now called Volo.

**Centaurs**, a curious race of people who lived on Mount Pelion in Thessaly.

They are said to have been half horses and half men. They had the body and four legs of a horse, but instead of a horse's neck and head, they had the body, arms, and head of a man. Most of them led a wild and savage life. The idea probably arose from the excellent horsemanship of the Thessalians, who rode so well that horse and man seemed to be one animal.

**Chiron**, the wisest and justest of all the Centaurs.

He had been taught by Apollo and Diana, and was famous for his skill in teaching others. Most of the famous Greek heroes were said to have been his pupils. He lived in a cave on Mount Pelion.

**Hercules**, see notes on pp. 41, 43, and 44.

**Achilles**, the great leader of the Greeks in the famous siege of Troy.

**Philoctetes**, also a hero in the Trojan war, and a friend of Hercules.

**Esculapius**, a very famous doctor among the ancient Greeks.

He was said not only to be able to cure diseases, but to make the dead come to life again. He was afterwards looked upon as the god of medicine.

**Athletic**, strong.

An athlete is one who contends for victory in feats of strength. (Gr. *athlos*, a contest.)

P. 107. **Pelias**, half-brother of King **Æson**.

He put **Æson** off the throne of Iolchos, and took possession of the kingdom for himself.

**Sandals**, shoes.

The Greeks did not wear shoes like ours. Their sandals consisted merely of soles, which were fastened on to the feet by straps or strings.

**Mount Olympus**, a mountain in the north-east of Greece, between Thessaly and Macedonia.

It is nearly 10,000 feet high, and its top is covered with perpetual snow.

The gods were supposed to dwell on the top of Olympus in their palaces, and to be shut in from the view of men upon earth by a wall of clouds. The river which Jason had to cross was the Anaurus.

P. 108. **Old woman**.—Juno, who appeared in this form to Jason.

She was the wife of Jupiter, and queen of the gods. She had beautiful eyes, and the cuckoo, peacock, and pomegranate were sacred to her.

P. 110. **The Speaking Oak**. At Dodōna, in the north-west of Greece, was the most ancient oracle in the land. The answers of the oracle were given from lofty oaks by the wind rustling through their branches.

P. 114. **The Golden Fleece**. See p. 120 and note.

P. 115. **Argus**, a famous ship-builder, who made for Jason a ship which was named the *Argo*, after its maker.

**Galley**, a long, low-built ship, driven through the water by oars as well as by sails.

P. 116. **Figure-head**, a figure or piece of carved wood placed at the head or bow of a ship.

**Figure of a beautiful woman**. The figure into which the wood was carved by the unseen power guiding the hand of the carver, was that of Athena. See notes on pp. 12 and 77.

P. 118. **Chimæra**, a fire-breathing monster, the fore part of whose body was that of a lion, the hind part that of a dragon, and the middle that of a goat.

The word is now applied to any very fanciful idea.

**Furbish**, polish; brighten up by rubbing.

**Pedagogue**, a teacher or schoolmaster. The word means *the leader of a boy*.

**Castor and Pollux**, twin brothers, sons of Jupiter.

Castor was famous for his skill in taming and managing horses, Pollux for his skill in boxing.

**Theseus.** See the story of "The Minotaur," p. 82.

**Lyncæus**, son of the king of Messenia, was famous for his keen sight.

**Orphæus**, the most famous musician of ancient times.

He was presented with the lyre by Apollo, and instructed by the Muses in its use; and he so enchanted with its music not only the wild beasts, but the trees and rocks upon Olympus, that they moved from their places to follow the sound of his golden harp.

**Atalanta**, daughter of Iasus, who, not wishing her to live, had caused her to be left among the mountains, where she was taken care of by a bear.

Afterwards her father wished her to marry. She agreed to marry whoever should beat her in a race. Nobody succeeded in doing so except Milanion, who let fall three golden apples during the race. Atalanta stopped to pick them up, and lost the race.

**Two sons of the North Wind**,—Zetes and Caläis, sons of Boreas, the North Wind.

P. 119. **Tiphys**, helmsman of the Argo, died before they reached Colchis, where the Golden Fleece was, and his place was taken by Ancaeus.

**Argonauts**, the sailors of the Argo. (Lat. *navata*, a sailor.)

P. 120. **Bœotian ram**. Bœotia was a district in the east of Greece, to the north of Attica.

**Colchis**, a country in Asia, at the eastern end of the Black Sea, and with the Caucasus Mountains on the north.

**The children**,—Phrixus and Hellē, the son and daughter of Athāmas, king of Bœotia.

They were to be sacrificed, but were rescued by their mother, and carried by the ram to Colchis. The part of the sea into which Helle fell was called after her, the Hellespont.

**Sacred grove**, a grove or wood sacred to Mars.

**Cyzicus**, king of the island of Cyzicus, in what is now called the Sea of Marmora.

P. 121. **Phineus**, king of Salmydessus, in the country of Thrace, on the shore of the Black Sea.

He was a blind prophet; and in return for the kindness the Argonauts had done him, he gave them some valuable advice about the rest of their journey.

P. 122. **Vultures**, large birds of prey.

**Flock of birds**, the Stympalian birds, afterwards killed by Hercules. See note, p. 44.

P. 124. **Potentate**, prince; sovereign; one who has power. (Lat. *potens*, powerful.)

**Obeisance**, a bow; something promising obedience.

P. 125. **Vulcan**, see note on p. 96.

**Reprobates**, ruffians; lawless men.



P. 126. **Pedant**, one who makes a vain and useless display of his knowledge.

**Medea**, daughter of *Æetes*, king of Colchis.

She was celebrated for her skill in magic, and assisted Jason in obtaining possession of the Golden Fleece. Years afterwards, she came to Athens in a chariot drawn by winged dragons, and married King Ageus. How she left Athens may be read in the story of "The Minotaur," p. 91. There is a mistake by the writers of these Greek stories in the story of *Medea*. When Theseus first went to Athens, he found her there married to his father. But when some time after he joined the Argonauts and came to Colchis, he found her a young princess in her father's palace, not yet having been to Athens. A mistake like this, making a thing happen at a time when it could not have happened, is called an *anachronism*.

P. 127. **Circē**, a famous sorceress, daughter of the Sun, and sister of *Æetes*.

She lived in the island of *Æeæ*, and often used to amuse herself by turning men into beasts.

**Unguent**, ointment. (Lat. *unguere*, to anoint.)

P. 129. **Belched**, vomited; threw out of their mouths.

P. 131. **Protruded**, thrust forward.

P. 132. **Betimes**, in good time; early.

P. 135. **Meed**, reward.

**Antelope**, an animal of a kind somewhat between a goat and a deer.

**Undulating**, moving up and down like waves. (Lat. *unda*, a wave.)

P. 136. **Potion**, a medicine to be drunk. (Lat. *potare*, to drink.)

P. 137. After obtaining possession of the Golden Fleece, Jason and his companions sailed homewards, and at last, after meeting with various adventures on the way, they arrived at Iolchos. Jason took possession of the kingdom, and put Pelias to death, as a punishment for what he had done to *Æson*, Jason's father. He reigned happily for many years, and at last was killed by the poop or stern of the ship *Argo* falling upon him and crushing him as he lay under it.

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