Stories

FROM

HEATHEN MYTHOLOGY

AND

Greek History

FOR THE USE OF CHRISTIAN CHILDREN.

BY THE

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LONDON:

JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET.

MDCCCXLVII.

"THEY BOTH SEEMED TO BE LISTENING WITH DEEP ATTENTION TO THEÆNETUS THE AUGUR."—PAGE 137.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS,
ALDERSGATE STREET.

PREFACE.

It may be proper to state that the peculiar style of the following tales, which, to an English reader might seem a mere imitation of the measured prose of Ossian, arises from the fact that many paragraphs are wellnigh only translations from Homer, whom, in his general style of narration, and (so to speak) technicalities of expression, the writer has endeavoured to imitate. It seemed desirable to familiarize those for whom this little book is intended, with the peculiar forms of language and expressions of sentiment which belong to the older Greek poets, so far as it might be done through the medium of a foreign language. Thus, the Homeric conventionalisms for the coming on of morning and evening, the appearance of the gods, and the like, have been carefully retained.

It seems hardly necessary to defend the tone which has been adopted in the tales, as inculcating reverence for the truth and beauty of the myths themselves, disturbed though that truth and

beauty too often are. If children are to be taught Mythology at all,—and that they must be under the present state of things, none will deny,—surely nothing can be more pernicious to their minds than the perpetual ridicule in which the general run of mythological books indulge, when treating on a subject which on the one hand shows the earnest yearnings of the natural sense after the One True God; on the other, the depths of wickedness into which unilluminated human nature must of necessity fall; a subject, therefore, which, whether viewed from its bright or dark side, ought to excite every other emotion rather than ridicule.

It has been most truly observed, that Mythology is one of the subjects which the Church has failed to turn to her own purposes. The writer would be most thankful if this little book should tend, in any degree, to obviate this difficulty with members of the English Church.

In conclusion, the writer has only to observe that he should never have attempted the stories relating to Ulysses, had he been acquainted, at the time of writing them, with Charles Lamb's Tales from the Odyssey.

Sackville College,
October, 1847.

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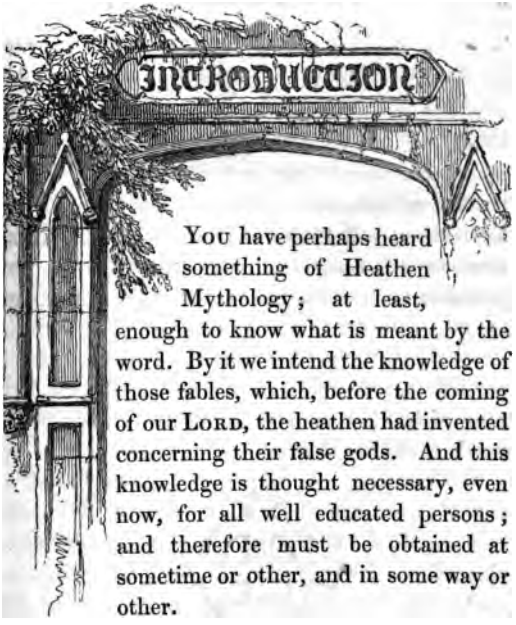


You have perhaps heard something of Heathen Mythology; at least, enough to know what is meant by the word. By it we intend the knowledge of those fables, which, before the coming of our Lord, the heathen had invented concerning their false gods. And this knowledge is thought necessary, even now, for all well educated persons; and therefore must be obtained at sometime or other, and in some way or other.

Now it may at first sight seem strange that we, who live in a Christian land, and who "know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no god but One," should be forced to spend our time in studying the foolish stories that Pagans invented,—those very stories, for denying which, so many holy Martyrs laid down their lives. But, like many other things which seem strange, there

is more than one very good reason why such studies are needful. I do not mean that people may not spend, and that many persons have not spent, far too much time over them;—nor do I mean that people may not, if they are foolish or wicked enough, get much harm from this kind of knowledge. But, also, it is possible to get much good therefrom. It is just as if you were compelled to walk through a garden, where there were many sweet flowers, and many poisonous weeds. Go through the garden you must;—the thing is not left to your choice:—but it depends on your own will, whether you gather the flowers or the weeds that grow there.

But you may ask, why is it necessary that we should have a knowledge of these fables? For many reasons. In the first place, no *man* among the upper classes can be properly educated, who does not understand Latin and Greek. Latin, because it is the language which learned men have agreed in making their common tongue: so that, as it is impossible for one man to learn every language, there should be one language which should be common to all. Greek, because it is the most perfect of all languages,—and, better than any other, teaches us the principles of speech: also, because it is the language in which the New Testament is written;

and both Latin and Greek, because so many poets, and historians, and orators, and above all so many Holy Fathers have written in them. But to understand any language, it is necessary to understand the religion of the people that spoke it; and, therefore, to understand Latin and Greek, we must know something of Latin and Grecian Mythology.

But some one may say, Surely those who have no occasion to learn Latin and Greek, like girls, can do very well without mythology. Not so very well: for our own poets are so full of references to it, that those who know nothing of it, will often be puzzled to make out what they mean. For example, where Milton says of Eve that

> To Pales or Pomona thus adorned
> Likeliest she seemed,—Pomona when she fled
> Vertumnus, or to Ceres in her prime:

unless you knew who Pales, and Pomona, and Vertumnus were, these are three lines which convey no meaning whatever to you. And the case is the same again and again. I do not say but that most of the allusions to mythology in our writers, had better have been omitted;—that is a very different question. But there they are, and while they are there to be found, we must either learn something of mythology, or remain in igno-

rance of the meaning of many passages in our best authors.

Again, unless we know something of the darkness in which the world lay before the Coming of our LORD, we cannot so well judge of the great victory which the Church gained during the first three hundred years of her struggle. We cannot judge how difficult in itself that struggle must have been; nor how clearly it is that nothing which was not divine could have triumphed in it. All these are very good reasons for the study of mythology: but there is another, which is, perhaps, stronger than these.

When after the confusion of tongues at Babel the knowledge of the true GOD began to die away, wise men thought it well to invent fables, or parables, or, as they are sometimes called, *myths*, to keep up the remembrance of some great truths among their fellow countrymen. For they well knew that those who will forget a truth set down before them in so many words, will remember it if it be told to them in the form of a parable. Our Blessed LORD, Who knew what was in man, has given us full proof of this in His own discourses. And some of the myths so invented are exceedingly beautiful, if we take them as they were meant. But unhappily the common people

soon learned to look on these stories as true in themselves, and quite to forget the truth they were intended to teach. The myths, too, became corrupted, and additions were made to them, with no meaning, or worse than none. I will give you an example. Homer, who lived a thousand years before the coming of our LORD, beautifully says of the gods, that they eat and drink immortality. Later poets will have it that their food was *ambrosia*, and their drink nectar; and this brought them much nearer to the nature of mortal men. And so in many other things, the older that the Grecian religion grew, the worse it became, till it ended by being so absurd in its fables, and so wicked in its worship, that men felt it could not be believed, and ought not to be practised.

And, indeed, the number of gods whom the Greeks worshipped was rather a corruption of what was true, than the invention of what was false. They felt that the GOD Who made heaven and earth and all that is in them, must be a GOD of strength; so, to represent that character of Him, they invented Ares, the god of war; they felt that He must be a GOD of Beauty,—and they falsely imagined the goddess Aphrodite (Venus). They knew that He must be able to foretel things to come; and so they thought of Phœbus Apollo,

who had knowledge of the past, present, and future. Each of these gods, then, represented some attribute of the True GOD: but the True GOD Himself the Greeks set forth as Zeus, King of gods and men, far above all the other divinities, and ruling them as he chose. And you may observe, that here also Paganism grew worse as it grew older. Homer knew nothing of such a deity as Bacchus, the god of wine. His worship was introduced from the East; and there seems to have been a fearful struggle before the Greeks would allow it to be practised.

It is worthy of notice, too, that the Greeks had no distinct idea of Angels. Hesiod, indeed, a poet some time later than Homer, says, that when the men died who lived in the golden age, as the Greeks called it,—that is the first age of the earth, which they also thought the best,—they became "divinities through the will of great Zeus, good, having their conversation on earth, the guardians of mortal men." This comes very near to the doctrine of guardian Angels; but it was not generally received among the Greeks. Homer says, that the gods take upon themselves the shapes of strangers, and wander up and down through the cities, overlooking deeds of wrong and right. The Greeks therefore felt, when they wished to pray

to the One GOD over all, their need of a Mediator, just as Job did, when he said, "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment: neither is there any daysman between us, that might lay his hand upon us both." And it was in part this feeling which gave rise to *polytheism*, that is, the worship of many deities, that sinful and mortal man might have some kind of being to stand between himself and the great GOD over all.

I will mention another thing which we may learn from mythology, and it is this,—that man feels his need, in some form or other, of the blessed doctrine of the Communion of Saints. Even the Greeks could not endure that men whom they believed to have been great and good in past ages, should be forgotten as though they had never been. They loved to talk of them, to think of them, to look for their help, to feel that they had a kind of connection with them; and so, at last, they ended by worshipping them. So it was with many, but with Hercules more especially. He is set forth by the poets as the perfect image of a good and brave man, struggling with all kind of troubles and misfortunes, and doing the will of the gods;—as the fullest representation of what the Church calls a confessor. In a tragedy written

by Sophocles, he thus speaks to one who is suffering misfortune: "First," says Hercules, "I will tell you my own fortunes,—how many toils I laboured through, and thoroughly came out of, and then obtained immortal virtue, as you may see. And you, be well assured, have to suffer the same thing, and by means of these labours to make your life illustrious." Nothing can be more beautiful than this: the comfort bestowed by one good man after death upon another,—the encouraging him, by his own example, to run with patience the same race set before him, and to hope for the same reward.

After all, the great thing to be learned from mythology, is also that which is naturally the first to be thought of, namely, thankfulness that "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Let us compare two passages together. Ulysses goes down into the house of Hades, and there sees Achilles, the bravest of the Greeks. "None," he says, "of those in times past, or in time to come, shall be held more blessed than thou art: we honoured thee as a god while thou wert living, and now thou rulest among the dead." "Comfort me not," answered Achilles, "comfort me not in respect of death; I had rather be a tiller of the ground, and the slave of another, with a poor

man for my master, who had but little provision, than rule over all the departed dead." Compare this with what S. Paul says; "Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the LORD. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the LORD."

In telling you the stories which follow, I have said at the end of each what meaning the fable may be supposed to have. I do not mean in all cases, that it was intended by its inventors to mean all that I say; only that we may very well take it in that sense, and so turn it to good account.

The Story
OF
Perseus & the Gorgons.

A LONG, long time ago, there reigned in the little Island of Seriphos, a King named Polydectes. One day, as he was feasting in his palace, and his nobles were with him, word was brought, that a lady and a little child had been shipwrecked on the seashore, that they seemed in need of every thing, and had been therefore brought by the fisherman who had first seen them, to the King's dwelling. "And so, my Lord," said the messenger who bore the news, "they are waiting at the gate, in hopes that you will have pity on them." "Bid them come in," said good King Polydectes; "they shall fare no worse than we

do ourselves. Or stay, they are strangers; I will go to them myself and comfort them: it is a sad thing to be a stranger in an unknown country."

So Polydectes went down to the gate, and there stood a lady very beautiful to look upon, but full of grief. In her arms she held a baby, that seemed but a few weeks old; and as it lay quietly on its mother's bosom, its peace was strange to compare with her trouble. She would have said somewhat to the King, but her voice failed her, and she could only kneel before him, and hold out her baby, as if to ask his protection for it.

"This is very sad," said the kind-hearted King; "but whoever you are, and whatever you need, you shall find protection with me. I know that the immortal gods are good to those that have compassion on strangers, and for their sakes, as well as for your own, you shall be safe under my roof. Another time you shall tell me your name and your history; but now you shall eat and drink, and rest yourself." For it was then the custom, not to inquire the name of a visitor, till he had spent some time with his host.

The next day, Polydectes sent a gentleman of his court to inquire of the lady, whether he

might come and see her. And she made answer, that he might. So the King, with his great officers, went to that part of the palace in which she was lodged. They spoke together at first of common matters, and at last the stranger told him her history. She was called Danae, and her little son Perseus; and she had been put into a boat by her cruel father, who wished to slay his little grandson, and hoped that the fury of the sea would swallow them up. Where she was to go next, and what she was to do, she could not tell; she, a King's daughter, was poorer than the poorest beggar, and could never hope to return to her own people, and to the place of her birth.

"Be of good cheer, Lady," said Polydectes, when he had heard her story; "I will be a father to your son, and a brother to yourself. Seriphos is rich in corn, and in barley, in vineyards, and olive-yards, in herds, and in flocks. You shall dwell in the best of the land, and while I rule, you shall know no want."

And the King kept his word. Perseus grew up strong, brave, and active; he could hurl the quoit, and throw the lance better than any of his fellows; and above all, he was beloved by the gods, whose dwelling is not with men. When he had grown to be a man, King Polydectes, on his

birthday, made a great feast to all his servants; and it was expected that all should bring some present, as a token of their love to this good King. But what could poor Perseus do? He had nothing of his own; all that he possessed had been given to him; and he had no power of making any return. Day after day he would sit by himself, and devise some means of shewing his love to the King, but for a long time he could think of nothing.

Now at that time, there dwelt beyond the Western Ocean three monsters that were the enemies of Polydectes. They were called the three Gorgons; they had the faces of beautiful women, but the rest of their bodies was like to dragons. They were very dangerous to be approached, for they had the power of turning every thing into stone on which they fixed their eyes. Two of them were immortal, and therefore it was hopeless to think of attacking them; but the third, whose name was Medusa, was mortal. Therefore Perseus said to himself, "I will cut off the head of Medusa, the Gorgon, and that will be a present which the King will be glad to receive at my hands."

When he had thus resolved within himself, he went to Polydectes, and spoke to him thus:

"My Lord," he said, "I owe you more than I can ever pay. You saved me from death when I was a child; you had compassion on me when I was a stranger; you have brought me up to man's estate; you have never suffered me to be in want of any thing, and all that I have came from you first. I can give you nothing, because I have nothing of my own; but I am determined, if you will give me leave, to go and fight with your enemy Medusa, who is also mine enemy, because she is yours."

Then answered Polydectes, "To fight with Medusa is indeed a thing that would please me much, but it is far above your strength, or the strength of any other man: and instead of slaying her, you will yourself be rent in pieces by her."

"I know," answered Perseus, "that Medusa is stronger than I am; but the immortal gods are my friends, and if I have their assistance, I can fear nothing."

"If the gods fight for you," replied Polydectes, "you will indeed conquer, and you will not only have my thanks and my good will, but will win to yourself immortal renown and honour. And so I commit you to their care."

Perseus went back to his house, and prayed to the gods to assist him. And they were not long

in hearing his prayers. First came Athene, the goddess of wisdom, and she gave him a shield, which was as clear as a mirror, and beautifully reflected every thing to which it was held. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, gave him two wings for his shoulders, and two for his heels. Dis lent him his helmet, which made those that wore it invisible; and Hephæstus, the god of art, gave him a short dagger, called herpe, the hilt of which was set with diamonds. When he had received all these presents, Perseus felt himself to be another man, and bidding good bye to Danae, he bravely set forth on his expedition.

And he had no occasion for a ship, when he left the island. He trusted to his wings, and raised himself high in the air, among the beautiful pink wreaths of cloud that you may see in a summer's sky, and far above the sounds of men, and the dash of the salt waves. Westward and westward he flew, and the Mediterranean was spread below him like a blue lake; and many a little bark, here and there, specked it with a spot of snow. At length he came to the place which was afterwards called the Pillars of Hercules, and by us, the Strait of Gibraltar: and then he knew that he was near to the place for which he was seeking. And so, before long, he saw the blue

mountains of an island rising out of the horizon, and then he knew that it behoved him to be careful, for he was coming close to the scene of his conflict.

Athene, filling him with wisdom, taught him to what part of the island to go, and he presently alighted on the seashore. The cliffs ran down to the beach, forming many coves and creeks, among which the waters dashed and gurgled with a pleasant sound. And there, in the mouth of a huge dark cavern, lay the three Gorgons fast asleep.

Perseus trod softly on the shingle, and drew near to the entrance of the cave, that he might examine those dreadful monsters more closely. Their bodies ended in the tail of a serpent, and were covered with great scales of iron, as large as the tiles of a cottage, that made a fearful clattering when they moved or turned; their hands and arms were of solid brass, and Medusa had living snakes instead of hair. Perseus trembled, as well he might, for what if they should wake while he was killing Medusa? They would set their eyes upon him, and he would become stone. He crept softly round a corner of one of the rocks, and put on the helmet of Dis, so that even if they woke, they would not be able to see him.

But still, if he fixed his eyes on theirs, he would be petrified, and he must look steadily at them, in order to be able to aim a true blow. Then he discovered why Athene had given him a buckler of glass. An old tree hung down over the cavern: it had once, perhaps, shaded it with a fair arbour of leaves; but now it was dead, dry, and sapless. On one of the branches of this tree, Perseus hung his buckler, so that in it he might see the monsters plainly reflected, without looking at the Gorgons themselves. Then he drew his sword, and commended himself to the gods, and looked steadily at the buckler.

The snakes on Medusa's head twined and twisted themselves together, as if they were afraid of the stranger: they hissed with their long forked tongues, and seemed to shoot fire out of their eyes. But Perseus wreathed his hand in three of them, as you would do to a flowering grass by the stream side, that you wanted to break off. Medusa awoke, and uttered a furious yell, and tried to entwine her scaly body around him. If she had done that, nothing could have saved him, but he was too quick for her. For as her long tail came rattling over the stones to enfold him, he, pulling at the snakes, made her stretch her neck out to its full length. Then he

smote it manfully with his sword, and it came off in his hand.

But though Medusa was dead, the danger of Perseus was not over. The other Gorgons had awoke at her dying yell, and terrible was their fury and their violence. They roared, they screamed, they struck the ground with their tails; they sought in all directions for the slayer of their sister monster. Their outcries were echoed by the cliffs above, and died away among the winding valleys of the island. Perseus, meanwhile, invisible in the helmet of Dis, smiled at their rage. And when their fury had exhausted itself, he took Medusa's head in his hands, and winged his way back towards Seriphos.

This is, when rightly explained, a very true story, and what is stranger, it is or ought to be true of every one of those who read it. We have all of us a Medusa, against whom we are bound to go forth, and whom we must kill, if we would not have her kill us. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are the three Gorgons with whom we have to fight. Of these, the world and the devil are beyond our power to destroy: we must be content to resist them. But though we shall never be able, while we live, entirely to overcome our own evil wills; we

may begin to do so, we may little by little destroy them daily. And this is what is meant, when it is said that two of the Gorgons were immortal, but that Medusa was mortal.

And why are we bound to fight manfully against ourselves? Why, but for the same reason as the hero of my story had? To shew our love to the Great King That made us His own when we were infants, and has all our lives long fed, and guarded us. And we cannot go forth to battle in our own strength. We must take the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith, which will be as a mirror to us, shewing us sin in its true light, whereas, if we look at it as it seems, we shall be, as Lot's wife was, turned to stone, and have no power to flee from it. We also must have wings given us, wherewith we may rise far above this world, and "and set our affections on things above."

If we have all this armour, and manfully go forth to fight with our Medusa, we shall assuredly overcome it: and though the other two Gorgons may seek to hurt us, they will not be able. And, finally, when the battle is over, we shall go to our FATHER'S House with peace and glory.

The First Story about Hercules;

HOW HE FOUGHT WITH THE GREAT HYDRA THAT HAD AN HUNDRED HEADS.

Of all the gods that reigned on Mount Olympus, Zeus, whom we often call Jupiter, was lord and king. He ordained that which was to come to pass: he sent war or peace upon the earth; he commanded and the other gods obeyed. They dwelt in their golden halls, eating and drinking immortality: they had swift-footed Hermes to their messenger, and beautiful youths to fill their cups; they had the Nine Muses to sing before them, and Apollo himself to strike his lyre of many strings. But the Father of gods and men sat apart on the highest peak of the mountain,

and cast in his mind that which had already been, and that which was hereafter to be.

On a certain day, he called to him his brave son Hercules, and spake to him on this wise:

"My son," said Zeus, king of the immortal gods, "you have grown up from your childhood like a fair palm in the valley of Mount Ida, and now, rejoicing in your strength, you have reached the years of manhood. That strength I gave you: and of it I shall require a proof and long exercise. The way to immortality, my son, is not an easy way; it is not to be gained by living delicately, like the kings of the earth, who slay oxen and pour forth the red wine from morning till evening. He that will attain to it must gird himself for a long struggle: he must fight with himself as well as others: he must do great deeds for the good of his fellow-creatures: and after long labour he may look for long rest."

"O Father," answered Hercules, "gatherer of the clouds of heaven, thy words are as the decrees of fate, that cannot be overthrown. But to what labour am I to turn my strength, which I have from thee? with what enemies am I to enter into this hard struggle?"

"I have ordained," said Zeus, (and as he spoke he gave the nod which proved that his words

should surely come to pass,) "I have ordained that thou shalt serve Eurystheus, king of Mycenæ, for the space of twelve years. Whatever he commands thou wilt obey, as if I spoke it, and not he. He will bid thee to take in hand great works; and such as shall make thy name famous to all ages."

"But hear me, O king and father," said Hercules, "for I dispute not thy commands. Eurystheus, as thou knowest, is an evil man and a coward: were it not more fitting that thy son, if he has to serve at all, should be in bondage to a king that is good and brave; not to one that is cruel and of faint heart?"

"Not so, my son," said Zeus; "the more thou art humbled now, the more thou shalt be exalted hereafter. And know, that there is no sight more pleasant to the gods than when they behold the good man striving against adversity. To make an end; if for the twelve years whereof I have spoken, thou shalt faithfully and valiantly fulfil all the commandments of Eurystheus, thou shalt after that be received into the number of the immortal and most blessed gods; thou shalt dwell with them in their goodly palaces; thou shalt feed with them on immortality. And on earth men shall hold thee in honour for ever:

they shall call on thee in straits and dangers,—they shall stir themselves up by the remembrance of thy deeds; of thee shall orators speak, of thee shall poets sing; and it shall be said to all generations—'Thus did Hercules, son of Zeus; once a troubled mortal—now a blessed divinity.'"

So Hercules set forth to Mycenæ. He took no weapon with him but a great club of brass: but his arm was strong, and his mind set on doing and on bearing all things, that so he might gain to himself an immortal life.

King Eurystheus sat in his palace: the most cowardly king that reigned in Greece. While others went forth to chase the wild beast, he sat at home in the hall of his palace: when his soldiers were fighting against his enemies, he was feasting in his marble halls. And he rejoiced when they told him that Hercules was come: for now he would have one whom he might command to do that which he was afraid to take in hand for himself. Now there was a fearful lion that ravaged the country far and near: and against him Hercules was sent. He slew him with his club, stripped off his skin, and ever afterwards wore it for his own covering.

And now he was to set forth on his second

trial. And it was far more dreadful than the first: insomuch that he called to mind all the words of his father, and needed them too, before he took the matter in hand.

And so he went on his way, taking Iolaus for his companion. Forth they went from Mycenæ, and travelled over pathless mountains and through desolate valleys; exposed to the sun by day, and the bitter cold by night. And at length they drew nigh to the Lake of Lerna, the place where the monster dwelt whom they were sent to slay. They wound along through a deep ravine, where the path grew darker and narrower every moment: the pines that hung overhead sung their solemn song, as if a lament for the hero that was about to expose himself to certain death: the stream that ran down to the lake murmured mournfully, and the bittern cried dolefully from the marsh. High up in the air a carrion vulture was hovering: and his scream echoed and echoed wildly among the desolate crags.

"Dost thou not tremble?" said Iolaus: "is not this dark path fearful to tread? and is not every sound that we hear an omen, as it were, of destruction?"

"There is one omen that is the best of all," answered Hercules, "and that is to do my duty:

I was warned that my life in this world would be full of dangers; and I accepted them gladly. And now, be witness, Ares, and Athene, and Apollo, who give strength and wisdom, and inspiration to mortal man! my heart is but the more full of hope, by how much nearer our great danger hath approached."

"But this monster," said Iolaus, "this Hydra that dwells by the lake,—of what form is it? and how shall we be able to overthrow it?"

"I know not its form," replied Hercules, "save that it has an hundred heads: and if it had a thousand, the son of Zeus would not tremble at them. How shall we overcome it, sayest thou? By force, if force be needful: by art, if art will do us the better service. But by force, or art, or both, overcome it we will."

"Lead on," said Iolaus, "and in the time of your need, I will render you all the aid that lies in my power."

And lo! as he spoke, they stood on the borders of the lake. On all sides it was overhung by steep and dreary crags, except where the path that the heroes were treading led down to the beach. The water was still and black from its very depth—no fish could live in it; no plant

could grow by it; no bird could fly across it. For night and day a poisonous vapour ascended from it, destroying all things that had life. And as Hercules stood by the lake, the air came chill and deadly around him: his limbs trembled, and his heart sunk within him. Iolaus, fearing the end, would have besought him to draw back, but the hero would not even listen to such counsel.

As thus they stood on the shore, there was a troubled motion in the dark waters. A shape arose forth from them: and half flying, half swimming, it drew nigh to the son of Zeus. Its body was as large as the last wagon that leaves the field at harvest home, when the sun is sinking in the red horizon, and the weary team are longing for the village pond. Its hundred necks were like leathern pipes, dark, and sinewy, and flexible. Its countless eyes were like the live coals of the fire; its tongues like two-edged swords; its claws, like the bowsprit of a vessel: and its huge wings like the mainsails of a man-of-war. As it came it roared terribly; and the echo rolled up the mountain ravines, dying away in the far distance. The waters foamed around the scaly breast of the monster; until, coming up out of the deep, it waded through the

shallowest part of the lake, eager to devour him that had ventured to disturb its repose. Then Iolaus forgot his promise and fled away.

But Hercules gathered up all his courage. He drew his lion's skin closer around him; he grasped his terrible club, and raised it high above his left shoulder: and so he awaited the oncoming of his enemy.

And now it was but twenty paces from him: and darting out one of its long necks, it sought to pierce him with its sword-like tongue. But the hero was on his guard: and he smote so true a blow on the scaly head, that scales and skull were crushed beneath his club. And the long neck moved convulsively to and fro; as a worm writhes in agony that has been wounded by the garden-roller.

"Thus," said Hercules, "the son of Zeus conquers his enemies. Return, Iolaus, return! As I have done to this head, so will I do to the ninety-nine that remain."

But lo! as he boasted, a wonder! From the end of the neck that had been crushed, two fresh heads sprang forth more terrible than their fellows. Their eyes glared more brightly: their tongues quivered more fiercely; and the hero confessed that he had boasted too soon. Again he smote

them with his brazen club; he struck two, an sprang up in their place. He entered into bat with the other heads; and still, the valiant deeds he did, the more numerous en rose up against him. And thus he stood midst of the furious necks of the hydra defending himself as he could; they, twinin with another, hissing, snarling, and bell around him. At last his arms began to faint, and his knees to tremble, and still ke his face to his enemy, he withdrew to a distance. There, knowing that strength onl in vain, he called on Athene.

"Goddess," he said, "thou that art a in sea-girt Attica, and to whom a thousand fices are offered in thy Brazen House at L Lacedæmon; thou that didst spring armed thy father's head, and now graspest the the heavy, the mighty, the unbending, which thou, mighty in thy father's might quellest the ranks of heroes: hear me now, my soul with wisdom, and my arm with stre So shall a hecatomb of oxen bleed on thy at Mycenæ: so shalt thou be celebrated i song and the dance, when the maidens of ponnesus meet to do thee honour."

Thus prayed he, nor was the blue-eyed go

inattentive. And she put a thought in his mind, and gave him the wisdom that he desired. And Zeus, father of men and gods, thundered mightily on the left hand; and the hero exulted in the sign of victory, and forthwith he spake to his companion:

"Gather wood, O, Iolaus, heap it high, and kindle a fire: I, if the hydra comes on, will shield you from its fury."

So Iolaus gathered wood,—the dry pine, and the aged cedar: he kindled it with speed, and the flames leaped up to heaven. Then again spake Hercules, son of Zeus and Alcmene:

"Loose thy sword, O Iolaus, and heat it in the flame: let it glow like the blacksmith's forge, and then follow me."

Then Hercules went forth to meet the monster, and Iolaus followed. The hero dashed in pieces one of the hundred heads, and ere it could sprout again, his friend seared the neck with a hot iron, and stopped its growth. Then the Hydra waxed dismayed: and Athene cast darkness over its eyes, and struck terror into its heart. But they two, exulting in their strength, went on in the conflict: head after head was struck down, and neck after neck seared. Often were their hands weary—often did the iron wax cold: but still

they renewed the fire, and still they stirred themselves up to battle.

And now there remained but three of the hundred heads: now there are but two; now but one; and now the huge beast breathes forth its spirit in one loud roar, and falls like a crag from a precipice. The lake trembled; the valleys resounded; even Hercules himself drew back.

"To thee, O Zeus," said he, "I dedicate this labour: do thou be still with me: give me favourable signs, and guard thy son evermore!"

And are not we, too, sent into the world to labour for a while, that we may rest for ever? Are we not promised, if we suffer for a little space, that we shall attain the Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away? Have we not an Hydra to fight, with "that old dragon, called the Devil and Satan, that deceiveth the world"? Yes: and as fast as we destroy one of his temptations, he will have two ready to send in its place. Of our own strength we can do nothing; with that Grace which is indeed like fire, subduing and melting all things, we shall be more than conquerors through Him That loved us.

The Second Story about Hercules;

HOW HE ENTERED INTO THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES.

THE abours of Hercules were drawing to an end. Ten times he had been sent forth to difficulty and danger, and ten times, behaving himself like a true son of Zeus, he had returned victorious. And now the eleventh year of his slavery came on; and with the new year, new perils.

"Son of Zeus," said King Eurystheus, "hitherto thou hast fought valiantly and successfully; but success doth not always continue, and valour is sometimes wanting, when most needed. I am minded, therefore, to try thee once more; peradventure thou art not always invincible."

"I am ready, O son of Sthenelus," answered Hercules; "for serving thee, I serve my father. And I never looked, in this mortal life, for ease

or rest; it suffices me to labour here, and to have my portion among the gods hereafter."

"Be it so," King Eurystheus made answer: "but now hearken to my words: there is a garden in the southern boundaries of the earth, where the Hesperides inhabit. They are three in number, and fair beyond the daughters of men. Full of all lovely plants is that garden: but renowned above all is the Tree of the Golden Apples. These apples I desire to possess; but to gain them is a hard task. A dragon, terrible, scaly, breathing fire, and the hater of men, guards the tree; and by his death only can that fruit be obtained."

"I obey, King of Mycenæ," said Hercules; "to-night shall see me on my journey. But I would fain inquire where the Hesperides dwell? for till that be known, small chance have I of entering their garden."

"All I know I have said," answered Eurystheus; "they dwell in the southern limits of earth, beyond the waters of the Great Sea. If thou wouldst know more, thou must seek it for thyself." And he turned and went into his palace.

Then was Hercules in a sore strait; but his courage failed him not. "Again and again," he

said, "I have been victorious; the strength of Zeus was with me. And I feel that strength still; it puts might into my arm, and swiftness into my foot; it is to me as a great breast-plate, and stirs me up to do battle with the dragon. I may wander far before I can reach the garden: but Athene, who cannot be deceived, will guide my steps."

And so day after day he travelled on, till he came to fruitful Italy. It drew towards evening on the mountains; and still he was journeying to the South. At last he sat down to rest at the head of a ravine: right and left huge precipices opened out to his eye, and a stream went winding along at their foot. Trees, the giants of the forest, hung over the path by which he was to descend; the cork and the cedar, the oak and the chesnut; thousands of insects were singing their drowsy evening song; the sun shot long rays of hazy light through breaks of the foliage and crevices of the rocks: and here and there in the grass were little eyes of gold. The hero leaned on a breastwork of rock, and looked down into the abyss. Just below, on the brow of the ravine, was a plot of the smoothest turf; neither flowers nor plants grew on it: not a leaf lay there; it seemed as if it were tended by invisible hands. A

tall ash on one side, a stately oak on the other, sheltered it from sun and wind. And as Hercules looked, the nymphs of the mountains came forth to their evening dance. There were *Dryads*, that lurk in the deepest recesses of the woods, and never endure the glare of day; that dwell among dewy branches, and thick green arcades, and arbours of the thickest shade; there were *Hamadryades*, that are born with an oak, watch over the tree as it grows to perfection, and die when it dies; there were *Oreades*, who delight in the steepest crags, and stand where the wild goat would grow dizzy: there were *Napææ*, who love the slope of the hill side, and the bosom of the sunny valley. They then mingled in the song and dance, till twilight gathered in over the cliffs.

Hercules, meanwhile, communed with his heart, and he spake boldly to the divinities.

"Nymphs," he said, "of the mountains, and forests, dwellers of the hill and the valley; ye that outspeed the deer in fleetness, and have haunts unknown to the woodman; hear me a wanderer upon earth, although a son of Zeus. I seek the abode of your sister nymphs; I am bound to the garden of the Hesperides. Where dwell they? for ye know their habitations:

whither must I bend my course? Tell me, immortal nymphs; I will prove my thankfulness for your counsel. At my return, I will pour forth oblations of milk and honey in your praise; or, if it please you better, I will slay a goat at your altars."

Then answered Aganippe, the brightest of the bright-eyed nymphs, "Stranger," she said, "that by difficult paths art hastening to a lovely garden, thou askest that of us which is known only to the Heavenly Gods. But, if thou canst bind Nereus, the eldest of the divinities of the sea, he will tell thee what thou seekest, for he knows both present and past. He dwells on the sea-shore, in the southernmost coast of Italy."

"Thanks, O nymph," answered Hercules; "I will set forth in search of the god."

"Stay yet," said fair Aganippe, "for I have not told thee all. Nereus can tell thee if he will, but, unless thou compellest him, he will not. Bind him, and keep him close; he can change himself into all shapes. Sometimes he will roar as a lion; then he will stretch his wings as an eagle; then he will become raging fire; then destructive water. But still hold him bound, and at length he will tell thee all."

So spake she, and retreated with her sisters

among the darkening foliage; for holy night came on. And Hercules lay down and slept, and longed for the morrow.

Day after day, day after day, wearily toiling onward, the hero journeyed southward. He passed the green fields by the Tiber, where Rome was afterwards to rise. And as the ploughman labours unweariedly, urging his wine-dark oxen through the heavy furrows, but ever and anon turns to the sun, and watches his descent: because he longs for the evening, and his cottage, and his wife and children: so Hercules yearned for the end of his journey, that he might come to battle with the dragon.

And so, on a sunny morning, he drew nigh to the place where Nereus dwelt. It was a cave on the seashore. A pile of dark and jutting rocks girded in the place: at their foot lay a strip of the whitest sand; and the green waves, green beyond the deepest green of summer, kissed the edge of the beach, and seemed to laugh on the shore. The little bay was rippling far and nigh—but it was well sheltered from the wind. In the bosom of the waters there were the attendants of King Nereus; mermaids, combing their long purple hair; nautiluses, spreading forth their sail to the breeze, and dancing over the waters in their paper

shell; fishes of all hues cut their way through the depths, and received the rays of the sun, trembling through the green billows, on their golden scales. On the sand itself lay Nereus fast asleep. He seemed an aged man, but his hair and his beard were long and flowing, and blue as a summer sky.

Then Hercules called to mind the words of Aganippe, and prepared himself for perseverance in toil. The night before he had offered sacrifice to Zeus; and had consumed three oxen on the altar. From their hides he had cut thongs, which he now had ready; and which he knew could not be broken. In a moment he threw himself on the god, and bound him hand and foot.

"Tell me," he said, "O Nereus, son of Ocean and Earth, where dwell the Hesperides? Thou canst tell me, if thou wilt. Tell me, and I will release thee; tell me not, and thou shalt remain my prisoner."

While he spoke, there was a change. The blue locks of Nereus grew tawny and rough—his hands were transformed into paws: his eyes glared horribly, his body became mightier, and a lion was in the arms of Hercules. Terribly struggled the beast, but the holy strength of the hero pre-

vailed. He grasped him tightly in his arms: he pressed him hard to his breast; till the monster grew weary with the toil, and lay quiet as a sleeping infant. On a sudden, the four legs were changed into wings and claws; feathers took the place of hair; the broad face of the lion narrowed into a beak: it was an eagle that Hercules held. He grasped its neck with one hand, and its scaly legs with the other; the bird fluttered as harmlessly in his hold, as a sparrow in the hands of a boy. Again the god put forth his art: fire flashed around Hercules. His head and his beard were singed: but still he persevered. Nereus dissolved himself into water; and the hero imprisoned him in a trench.

While it was yet morning, and the sacred day was increasing, so long the god remembered his art, and betook himself to all his wiles: but when the Sun turned his horses to the West, and drove them down to the sea, Nereus despaired of victory, and owned himself subdued.

"What wouldest thou, son of Zeus and Alcmena, in the lovely gardens of the Hesperides?" Thus spake he returning to his shape, and putting on his godlike beauty. "If thou seekest the golden apples, thou hast a task of terrible jeopardy. Seek Mount Atlas in Libya; at its foot dwell the

nymphs thou requirest. And now loose me: thou knowest thy way, and needest nought but courage for thine end."

The son of Zeus asked no more: he chose a boat, and committed himself to the sea. Then the father of gods and men sent a favouring gale: and the prow of the vessel cleft the foam, and the purple wave roared behind. Westward he guided the bark to the straits, that afterwards bore the hero's name.* And where Africa and Europe stretch forth their arms across the sea, and Calpe and Abyla stand as the guardians of the strait, he turned his boat's head to the south, and leaped, joyful, on the strand. None may guess, save those that have seen it for themselves, the solemn loveliness of that strait at sunset; how every heavenly colour sits on the two mountain ranges; how on the one side, Spain throws up ridge behind ridge, burning in purple, or flushing in pink, or glowing in crimson; how, on the other, the grey peaks of Africa go towering away, till they are crowned in distant Atlas. But Hercules cared not for these things; he pressed steadily forward. He passed the giant Atlas, who bore the world on his shoulders; he journeyed through the burning

* The Straits of Gibraltar: called, in old time, the Pillars of Hercules.

plains, and trod leagues of shifting sand. And at length, in the summer twilight, the gardens of the Hesperides were before him. They lay under the hollow of a hill; its mighty shadow evermore refreshed them: a thousand fountains played in the air; a thousand streams ran through their marble channels. All fruits of all seasons grew there at once. There was the red-cheeked apple, blushing from its arbour of green: there was the golden orange, peeping from its snowy blossoms; the tall banana unfurled its tender petals, the quince and the mango hung from their lovely trees. Turfy avenues stretched right and left; havens for the weary, shades for the heated; and everywhere, and all around was the green dimness, that to a tropical eye is Paradise. But high in the midst towered the precious tree; and its branches were bowed down with their gold.

Hercules grasped his club: and he grasped it no whit too soon. As he came beneath the sacred shade, the dragon rushed forth to meet him. Long and terribly they fought; but the hero waxed glorious in his might. The monster struggled in vain; he was wounded to the death. His body lay stretched on the ground; his soul went to the House of Hades. And Hercules gathered the fruit, and girded his loins for Mycenæ.

We, too, are charged by our Father, to gather the fruit of True Wisdom. The garden where it is to be found is tended by three fair sisters, the true Hesperides: their names are Faith, Hope, and Charity. Ere we can learn how to reach it, we also have to conquer a Nereus. His name is Difficulty; and when we master him in one form, he rises against us in another. He will never yield at first; he will never hold out against perseverance. And then, that we may not gather of the fruit of Wisdom, Satan will come forth against us. Him we must resist, steadfast in the faith; and our labour shall not be in vain. We shall enjoy the heavenly tree, and feed on the fruit of Immortality.

The Story
OF
Admetus & Alcestis.

THERE was wailing and lamentation in the palace of Admetus, King of Thessaly. He had reigned long over a happy people: thousands of flocks fed on his many hills: thousands of herds lowed in his sunny valleys. But now his hour was come, and it was ordained by the Fates, that he must leave life and kingdom, and go down into the cold shades. The old men came to his palace gates and wept. The women wrung their hands for sorrow, and beat their breasts; the very children ceased their sports, and lamented for good King Admetus. He himself was without a tear, though he looked forward to the gloomy palace of Dis, and the river over which none may return. But when he thought of Alcestis, his own, his beautiful Alcestis, the bride that he had won through so

much danger, and had loved but for so short a time, then all his courage melted away, and he would have given all that he had for longer life.

By chance, Apollo came by that way, and the god was grieved at heart for the sorrow of Admetus. When he had been banished from heaven, he had fed the king's flocks, and Admetus gave him a royal welcome, and laid up a friend in the lover of the bow. And now he came to the palace mourning, but beautiful in his strength. His lyre of many strings was in his hand, his long hair curled over his shoulders, and bright streams of light flashed gloriously from his head. "I have heard of thy grief, O Admetus," thus spake the son of Lato, "and would I could give comfort in deeds, instead of exhorting to patience by words. But the Fates are mightier than Phœbus; what marvel, when Zeus himself obeys their commands? It is fixed that thou must die; it is fixed also that thou must die now. There remains but one hope, and that a vain hope indeed, but yet, if thou biddest me, I will speak it."

"Speak on, son of Zeus and Lato," said Alcestis. "If there be a hope for Admetus, I will journey far and wide to seek it. I will go to the ageless Hyperboreans, that inhabit the distant

north; I will hasten to the Fortunate Islands, where there is never drought, and never storm: I will do all that ever was done, and bear all that ever was borne, so I may but deliver my husband in this sore strait."

"Alas, lady," said Phœbus Apollo, "it is not by labours like these, that royal Admetus can be helped. The Fates allow but one offer, and that none will be willing to make. If, indeed, any were hardy enough to die for the king, that man's life should be accepted in his stead. But who will change this pleasant light for the lower shades, until the time comes, that neither courage nor skill can avoid?"

"I will," said fair Alcestis, "and I joy in the sacrifice. Live, beloved Admetus, live and reign over sweet Thessaly. I will journey to the pale regions, which the shades inhabit.

"Not so," said valiant Admetus, "if I die, I can bear my fate. But I cannot bear that thou shouldest be cut off, in the flower of thy beauty; that thou shouldest lay down thy life for one that is bound, did the gods so will it, to die for thee. Shall not men say, as they gaze on my tomb, even when many ages have passed away, Here lies Admetus, the coward, who saved his life by the death of his bride? Thus shall some man

speak, and my dishonour shall never be forgotten."

"Admetus," thus spake Apollo, and as he spake, his glory was terrible, "thou canst not refuse the gift; the Fates will accept the offer. If thy queen resolves to die for thee, it is not in thy power to gainsay her."

"I am well resolved," said Alcestis; "be witnesses the two goddesses. But since, in the prime of my strength, I go below the earth; do thou, O god of the silver bow, slay me with thy gentle arrows. If I must die, let it be death without pain, and an easy passage into Hades."

Thus spake she:—nor was the god regardless of her prayer. But he sware by the king of gods and men, and by the Furies, who avenge perjury, and by the ninefold Styx,* inviolable oath, that he and his sister Artemis would slay Alcestis with their gentle arrows.

And so day by day, she pined away with a painless disease, and her husband stood by and wept, and the elders of the city gathered round, and her two children stood by her couch and kissed her hands and her lips. And when the colour was fading from her cheeks, and the eyes grew heavy, and the breath came shorter, Her-

* Whoever swore falsely by the Styx, was condemned for a hundred years, to the Infernal Regions.

mes came from heaven, to conduct her soul to Hades. The spirit came forth from the body, and the god addressed himself to his journey. They sped over the surface of the ocean, to its uttermost western bounds, until they came to the city of the Cimmerians. There the sun never shines: there is perpetual cloud and shade. And the shadowy nations of the dead gathered round them, and the souls that dwelt in Erebus; brides that were cut off in their beauty, old men that had seen hard toil; tender virgins that had scarcely known the world they left, and warriors that had fallen by the sword. Thither went Alcestis, leaving her beauty and her strength.

But Admetus wept continually, and forbade any to console him. He called to mind all that Alcestis had said, all that she had done: he embraced the corpse again and again; he embraced the children that she had given him. The elders dared not speak to him; they stood afar off, and looked on his grief. Thus all that day he spent in affliction, while his servants gathered wood for the funeral pile. For till the body of Alcestis was consumed, her spirit could not rest. And the sun set, and all ways were shaded.

Hercules came to the palace, the son of Zeus *and* Alcmena. He knew not of the grief of

Admetus; he came hungry and weary, and besought food and lodging.

"I will go forth and entertain him," said noble Admetus; "I will conceal my grief in my heart, I will never leave a wanderer without hospitality."

"Hail, O Admetus!" said Hercules. "How fares it with all in thy house?"

"Well," Admetus made answer:—"for what the gods will is well. But now sit down to the banquet: thou art weary and hungry, eat and be refreshed. To-morrow thou shalt depart if thou wilt, but give to-night to the feast."

So they two sat down to the banquet, and poured forth the dark-faced wine. Admetus fought hard against himself, and though his heart was bursting with grief, his face was cheerful. And Hercules waxed merry with wine, and feasted till the night was deep.

That night, as he lay down to rest, an aged servant of Admetus came to him. "What hast thou done," he asked, "O stranger? Why wouldst thou thus despise the dead? Why wouldst thou wring the soul of our king?"

"What dead?" said Hercules, the equal of the gods. "What grief? Thou speakest to me in riddles."

Then the servant told him all, and Hercules stood awhile, as one speechless. He remembered how he had feasted in the house of mourning, and he wist not what to say, nor whither to turn. At length he arose from the hall, and went forth alone. None knew whither he went, and in that hour of grief there were few to inquire. Meanwhile the elders of the land assembled; for they were eager to do honour to the memory of Alcestis. The old men had loved her as a daughter, since the day when, forsaking her father's house, she had first come to Thessaly in her beauty. So they now assembled mournfully, and poured forth libations to Persephone, goddess of the shades. The first time they poured forth wine and honey: the second wine alone. The third libation was of pure water. And they prayed that the spirit of Alcestis might fare well, even now that she had passed under the earth.

And now the morning was come for the sacred ceremonies. The fire was prepared for the funeral pile. The people of Thessaly were assembled, and the priests had done sacrifice to Dis, god of gloomy Tartarus. Lo! on a sudden, Hercules draws near with speed, and in his hand he leads a lady. As he passed through the crowd,

though her form was veiled, the people gazed on her in wonder, for in height and walk and appearance, she was the image of the departed queen. "Such," they said, "was Alcestis while she lived, but now the earth hides her."

But Hercules passed right on, till he stood before the king of Thessaly. "Admetus," he said, "thou didst receive me with joy, when thy heart was bitter with grief; and I, knowing nothing that had passed, feasted in thy palace, and thou wouldst not say me nay. Receive me again with joy; this time I have no shame in rejoicing. Doth she whom I hold, resemble Alcestis? look well, and answer."

"She is like her," said Admetus, "but my wife is far off, on the shores of the dark Styx. Even now she waits for the funeral pile, that she may cross the waters and be at rest."

"Thus then I answer," said Hercules, throwing back his companion's veil. It was Alcestis that stood by him, with a smile of perfect happiness.

Admetus clasped her in his arms, and it was no vain shade that he held. She breathed, she was warm, she lived, and fondly she returned his embrace.

"Marvel not," said Hercules, "that as yet she speaks not to thee: that also shall be in due

season. But first she must be purified by sacrifices: for so is the will of the gods."

"What shall I say, son of Zeus?" answered Admetus, "how shall I thank thee aright? How didst thou venture into Tartarus? How didst thou snatch his prey from Dis?"

"I fought with him, and I overcame him," Hercules answered: "thou shouldest thank my father, who gave me my strength. But now slay oxen, and pour forth the dark-faced wine. Let Thessaly rejoice in the joy of Admetus."

Many a time, in the Mythology of the Greeks, we have a dim and faint tradition of the resurrection from the dead. There were those, it was taught, who were mightier than the grave; even as here, Dis was conquered by the son of Zeus. Even so, death may be overcome by every true child of our Heavenly FATHER. And the story beautifully sets forth another duty, even the third of the Spiritual Works of Mercy: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained Angels unawares."

The Story

OF

Melampus & Bias.

NEVER were there brothers in Elis, who loved each other better than Melampus and Bias, sons of godlike Amythaon. When the wild boar was to be chased, they bore their spears side by side: when the hall was merry with the banquet, side by side they were to be found there also. It fell out on a day that Melampus stood at the side of an aged oak, that flourished near his house. It stretched its arms in many curious twists; its stem was rugged and full of knots; its heart was hollow with age, and yielded a safe home for the wild beasts of the forest. Forth from this oak came two serpents, and would have attacked Melampus. But he, calling to mind his courage, crushed them with a

club that he bore: he gave their bodies to the fire which was burning on his hearth, but brought up their young at home.

And when the young serpents had attained their full size, they still dwelt in his house. It chanced that, one night, as he lay on his bed, he heard a rustling in his chamber. They came, one serpent on each side, and gently licked his ears. Then the heart of Melampus sank within him, for he feared to suffer from their venom; and he lay in sadness of heart, till Aurora came forth in her beauty.

But when the land was covered with light, and the morning breeze was making its pleasant melody, up sprang from his couch the holy strength of Melampus. Forth went he into the fields, at the time of the birds' first song. And from many a thicket, and many a summer copse, he heard their sweet notes. The jay sang from the wood, the turtle from the valley-side; the redstart chirped in the hedge, the lark warbled in the sky. But not as he had heard them before, Melampus heard them now; every note had its own meaning, and he understood the language of the birds. And he learned from them the future as well as the present; such skill have they from Phœbus Apollo.

Bias came to the house of Melampus, sorely troubled in his soul. "I love," he said, "beautiful Pero;—Pero the daughter of king Neleus. I asked her at her father's hands; but he gave me this answer; 'He that will bring home to me the fair kine that Iphiclus of Phylace unjustly withholds from me, he shall receive Pero, and with her wealth enough.' But I am hopeless to gain the kine, unless thou, O Melampus, will help me: they are guarded by so terrible a dog, fearful both to gods and men. Not even Hercules, son of Zeus, could behold him without trembling; how much less may I, who am not of the seed of the gods? But wisdom is better than strength, and Phœbus hath bestowed wisdom upon thee; give me the kine, and I ask thee no more; let them be the proof of thy love to thy brother."

"It is a hard adventure," thus said Melampus, "but harder for me than for thee. Yet will I take it in hand, and bring it to a happy ending. But this hear, that I must suffer much and be imprisoned for a year. And when the sun hath run through the heavens, and twelve months have passed away, I shall be set free from my chains, and shall return with the kine before me. Thou, therefore, sacrifice to the gods; for success is only of them."

So saying, he took his staff and set forth towards rocky Thessaly. And when he drew nigh to Phylace, the herdmen of Iphiclus seized him. And he, well knowing the future, and patient for the sake of his brother, was cast into a mighty dungeon, and bound with chains of iron. Thus passed a year of his life; but he complained not, for he thought of Bias; and he knew that thus only could he gain the kine, and bear beautiful Pero to his brother's house.

But when the months had passed, and the year was drawing to its end, Melampus heard voices, and he knew that his liberty was near. The voices were weak and thin, and not like those of mortals: a faint, rustling sound, like reeds by the water edge. And the soothsayer knew them to be the language of the worms that abode in the beams of the roof.

"Is our task almost done, brother?" asked the one worm of his fellow. "Have we almost consumed the heart of oak? Is it time for us to fly, and leave the prison to fall?"

"In six hours," the other made answer, "the roof will fall to the ground. In the meantime feast and spare not; the decaying oak is sweet."

Melampus cast this in his mind; and he knew that the end should be happy. There were two

that had tended him in his dungeon, and had brought him all that he needed, Glaucus, son of Periclymenus, and harshminded Theano. And the soothsayer was minded to revenge himself on Theano, for she had caused him many sorrows; but Glaucus he resolved to reward, because he had been kind to the prisoner.

Therefore, when the six hours were drawing to an end, he called in haste to his keepers. "Hasten," he said, "O Glaucus, and thou, illminded Theano. Raise me in the couch whereto I am chained, and bear me hence with speed. The prison is about to fall;—take the head, O Glaucus."

They bore him forth as he said, still chained to his couch. Glaucus went first with the head; Theano bore the feet. And when they were passed the threshold the timbers of the roof gave way; and the prison fell with a mighty crash, and slew Theano in its ruins.

King Iphiclus sat at the banquet; and they brought him strange tidings of Melampus. "If he be a prophet," said the King, "he can tell me how I may gain a son. I sit on the throne of Phylace, but there is none to hold the sceptre after me."

They brought Melampus to the monarch, and

he promised to aid him in his need. "But swear to me first," he said, "by the gods above and below, and by those who preside over mortal men, and by the Furies that avenge perjuries, that thou wilt give me the kine of King Neleus, and thou shalt have a son to sit on thy throne."

Iphiclus sware the dreadful oath; and Melampus told him that which he asked. Then he released the kine, and the soothsayer drove them southwards. Bias received them with joy, and yielded them up to Neleus. And beautiful Pero was given him for his bride, and the gods blessed their marriage.

The Story of Theseus

AND THE

Minotaur.

Old King Ægeus reigned in Athens. He had conquered many enemies, and he was dearly loved by his people. There was but one thing that interrupted his prosperity, and made every ninth spring a time of mourning in Athens. Minos, king of Crete, received a tribute from Ægeus every nine years; not a tribute of gold and silver, which it had been easy to pay, but a tribute of seven youths and seven maidens, who were torn from their parents and friends, sent into a foreign country, and there exposed to be eaten by the Minotaur. This was a dreadful monster, half man, half bull; and none, that was given to be his food, had ever escaped from his fury.

Ægeus had a son, by name Theseus. He was a young prince of a courageous heart; and he could not endure that his fellow-countrymen should suffer from so dreadful a slavery. So he went, on a day, to his father Ægeus, and thus spake to him:—

"My father, the time draws nigh when Athens must send her tribute to Crete. Even now there is grief and fear among the best families of the city; even now, mothers are clasping their daughters to their breasts, and weeping over them; and fathers look on their sons, as yet in all the pride of youth, and think how soon they may be rent in pieces by a ravenous and unsparing monster. Hear me now; it is our wont, as thou knowest, to cast lots for those that must go. Let us do, as we are accustomed, for the maidens, and for six of the youths; for the seventh I freely offer myself. If ever I reign in Athens, I will reign as a free king: if I cannot deliver my people, I can at least perish for them."

King Ægeus looked on his son, and knew not whether to joy or to sorrow. He feared to lose him in the pride of his strength; but the love of his people prevailed. "Go forth, my son," he said, "and the immortal gods protect you. For me, till you return I shall not know one happy

hour: shorten, therefore, as far as you can, the time of my sorrow. It is our custom that the ship which bears my subjects to Crete, should carry black sails. If you return with triumph, let them be white;—if they are still black, I shall know too well what hath befallen."

Theseus promised as his father bade, and went out into the city. The Athenians, when they heard of the courage of their prince, gave him a thousand blessings. They hardly dared to hope that he would conquer; and yet they hardly knew how to fear that he could fail. The day came. The black vessel lay at anchor in the harbour: the chosen youths and maidens came down to the sea-shore; and their friends, while they wept bitterly, could not weep inconsolably. Theseus came down from the palace, and Ægeus, king of men. The signal was given: the rowers bent to their oars, the trireme cleft her way through the waters; the crowd on the shore grew small as specks; the shore itself, the cliffs, and the hills, faded into the blue distance, and still the vessel sped onwards to her journey's end.

Crete is in sight. First a long line of coast rose from the sea; then mountains swelled above the valleys, and hills took form and shape; then trees were seen on the downs, and houses by the

side of the roads. And lastly, Gnossus, the royal city, beautiful with its hundred temples, glowed red in the setting sun.

Then there was wailing among the maidens, and silent terror among the youths. Only Theseus was firm and calm. He looked well to his armour, and saw that his sword was bright. His helmet was of dog's skin, plated and wrought with brass. For its crest it had a winged horse: its cheek-pieces were sculptured with the deeds of Zeus; and the penthouse frowned horribly over the eye. His brazen *mitré*, or shirt of mail, shone like the sun; he had his zone and brigandine; and his *thorax*, or breastplate, was coupled with studs of gold.

They told king Minos that the strangers were come, as he sat with his nobles at the banquet. "Give them good cheer," he said, "to-night, and lodge them well in my palace. To-morrow they will have crossed the river whence there is no return, and be judged by gloomy Dis."

"Be of good cheer, companions and friends," said Theseus, the equal of the gods. "We shall yet escape, by the favour of Zeus, and return to sea-girt Attica, and to Ægeus, king of men."

Apart in her chamber sat Ariadne, the golden-haired daughter of Minos. She had heard of

coming of the strangers, and the tears were in her eyes. She knew that Theseus had come with the rest, offered by himself to death. So she cast in her mind how she might save him, and called on Athene to inspire her. And while she thought on the matter, this seemed the best resolve. She called Gorgo, her ancient nurse, and spake a word in her ear.

With steps that trembled through age, Gorgo went down from the chamber. She entered the hall where Theseus sat, and beckoned him forth from his companions.

"Ariadne,"—thus spoke she,—"greets you well, the golden-haired daughter of Minos. From her I come a messenger; and I pray you to hear my words. You trust in your helmet and your sword; and of helmet and sword you will have need. But they alone cannot deliver you;—deliverance must come from elsewhere."

"I know," said Theseus, "that help is of the gods, who preside over mortal men. On them I have called for aid, and my supplications shall not be in vain."

"But they give assistance by men, and they work by human hands. The Minotaur, hideous monster, dwells in the heart of a labyrinth. If you conquer him your task is but half done; for who

will guide you forth? You will wander for ever in the mazes of the labyrinth, till you perish with hunger and weariness."

Then the heart of Theseus sank within him; and he looked for speedy death. "Better," he said, "to die at once, than to perish at leisure by famine. The monster shall devour us all;—destruction that is bitter, will be speedy."

"Not so, my son," said Gorgo; "I have better counsel than this. Of yourself, you can never escape; but there are those that know the labyrinth. Ariadne will fix a golden thread from the entrance to the monster's abode. Follow it surely, for it cannot err: trust it, for it cannot mislead. So shall you return to fertile Attica, and to Ægeus, king of men."

Thus having spoken, she went forth; and the heart of the hero was gladdened. Then he returned to his companions, and they crowned the cups with wine. And now the sun was in the west, and immortal night came on.

When Aurora, with her saffron-coloured garments, led forth the holy day, up from his couch sprang Theseus, Prince of lovely Athens. And Minos gave orders to his servants; and they formed the procession of death. A phalanx of stout-limbed Cretans girt in the Athenian captives;

and the king himself looked on, and deemed that they were marked for destruction.

Thus, with mournful steps, they trod the plain of Gnossus. The maidens trembled and wept; the youths were full of hope. But Athene, mindful of the hero, sent a heron on the right hand; and, with clanging wings, he accompanied their journey to the labyrinth. And Theseus exulted in the omen, and called on the blue-eyed goddess.

At length they reached the labyrinth; and the phalanx opened in front. A chosen guard received the prisoners, and conducted them through the maze; and evermore as they proceeded, the bellowings of the Minotaur waxed more dreadful. When they were near its den, the guard fell behind. With pikes and javelins and angry words, they urged on the captives that shrank. Theseus, the equal of the gods, went on as to certain victory; and his friends looked to their leader, and gathered courage from his sight. But when they were close to the monster, the guard retired with speed; for they feared lest he should rush forth in his fury, and slay them with the rest.

Theseus came forward in front, and bade his comrades hold back. They clustered together at a distance, and awaited the end of the battle. Forth came the monster, breathing fire, and

wounding the ground with his brazen hoofs. He lashed his side with his tail: he ploughed the earth with his horns: he looked this way and that for an enemy to be conquered; till at last, with a sidelong bound, he leaped upon the Prince of Athens. But Theseus was ready for the attack; he sprang nimbly out of the path of the beast, and smote him behind the neck with his mighty sword. The Minotaur bellowed yet more horribly, but withdrew a little space; and Theseus, turning to his comrades, bade them be of good cheer.

"Youths," he said, "have patience yet awhile; the Minotaur is, like ourselves, of flesh. Maidens, long joy after short sorrow; yet shall ye see the holy hearth, and the household gods; yet shall ye be received to the tender arms of your mothers."

More he would perchance have added, but the monster came on more terribly. He was bleeding fast, but had gathered fresh cunning from defeat. He avoided Theseus, for he knew his strength, but he rushed furiously on the band of maidens. But the hero was swifter than his swift enemy, and he compelled him to turn again. So they two stood facing each other, the man and the monstrous beast. Each watched, till his

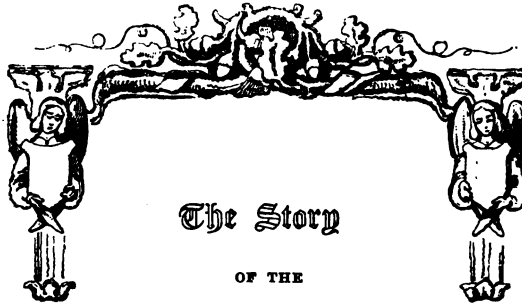
adversary should lay himself open to a wound. Long they watched, long they waited; neither would give advantage to the other. At length, weary of suspense, the Minotaur bent its head for a sideways blow; and Theseus, calling on Athene, plunged his sword to the hilt in the heart of the monster. It stood for a moment as still as a rock; blood poured from its nostrils and mouth; then it fell with a sullen bellow, and breathed out its life on the sand.

There was joy and exultation in that little band, till the voice of Theseus was heard: "Seek for the golden thread; our task, till that be found, is but half complete." They sought it with care, and they found it, glittering among the mossy walls of the labyrinth. And they tracked it forward evermore; when it seemed to guide by the most unlikely road, there they trusted in it most fully. Sometimes one of the band would counsel that they should leave it, and choose a path that seemed clearer; but Theseus strictly forbade it, for he trusted in the guidance of Ariadne. And, by degrees, the road grew plainer,—they were manifestly coming forth from the labyrinth. Still they held on unwearyingly, and at length they stood on the shore.

Old King Ægeus sat on his tower, looking out

over the wine-dark sea. "The sail," said the watchman, "the sail from Crete: it is black as the house of Erebus." For Theseus had forgotten, in his joy, to obey his father's words:—and Ægeus deemed that his son had fallen, and he cast himself into the water and perished. On came the ship, with a favouring gale, and brought life to them that looked for death. Maidens were enfolded in the arms of their mothers; fathers wept with joy over their sons. He only that had saved his people, was sad; for his heart was heavy for Ægeus.

We, who have, like Theseus, to do battle with a great enemy, are also like him, encircled about with a labyrinth,—the difficult paths of this world. Oftentimes we know not which way to take: oftentimes we are in danger of mistaking wrong for right. But our Ariadne is called Wisdom, and she has not left us without a guide. The golden line that we must follow, is conscience: to that we must trust, for it is the Voice of GOD. He has made it; He, if we call on Him, will enlighten it; so it will lead us in safety through the winding paths of this world, till we reach the sea, which we must of necessity cross, before we can behold our FATHER'S House.



The Story

OF THE

Lotus-Eaters.

You have heard, I have no doubt, of the siege of Troy; how King Priam and his people for nine years resisted the whole power of Greece; and how, in the tenth, when Hector, the brave son of Priam, was dead, the city fell into the hands of its enemies, and its King was slain, and its women sold for slaves, and only a heap of sand remained, to mark where Troy had been.

The chiefs of the Greeks sailed away to their different homes. Many were the adventures through which they passed, many were their dangers by sea and land. But he that suffered longest, and suffered most bravely, was Ulysses of many counsels, King of rocky Ithaca.

He had left his island-home, he had left his beloved wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus, then an infant, to fight in a war in which he had little interest. And when the other chieftains were resting themselves, after their long toils, in their rich palaces, he was still a prisoner in some little island, or tossed up and down on the mighty sea. He had led twelve ships to the siege of Troy; he was to return home alone and friendless, save that he had the immortal gods for his friends and his allies.

It happened that one day, his ship touched on an unknown shore. It was a fair country; there were green hills and woody valleys, and streams, that with a pleasant murmur ran down to the sea. The shipmen were rejoiced, after long battling with the waves, to have reached so fair a haven; the sun shone out in the blue sky,—birds of bright feathers and sweet voices flitted around them,—fruit of every kind hung on the trees,—flowers of all colours grew in the meadows,—every breeze that came from that pleasant country, brought with it the scent of a thousand blossoms,—every peep between the green hills, shewed sunlit mountains in the blue distance.

Then said the companions of Ulysses, "We

have fought long enough with the rough seas. Here let us rest a little while; let us gather the ripe fruits, and bathe in the bright rivers, and sleep in the pleasant woods; let us wear garlands of the flowers, and listen to the voice of the birds. After that we will spread our sail to the wind, and hasten back to our home, Ithaca, lovely in twilight."

Ulysses, stormer of cities, made answer on this wise. "It is a far distance from hence to the island whither we are going, and a far distance will ask a long time. Better is it to gird up our loins now, and rest hereafter in Ithaca. These pleasant woods may be full of evil beasts; a wild race of men may dwell among these green hills. Let us offer a ram to Æolus, King of the winds, and then launch our vessel into the wine-dark sea."

But his companions would not hear, nor obey the voice of their leader. "Always labour!" they said, "always danger! our sinews are not of steel, nor our hearts of brass; we are but mortal men. A little quiet now, and we shall be stronger hereafter; and we shall do battle with the billows of the Ocean, and return to our home with joy."

So saying, like boys when school time is over, they dispersed themselves through the country. Some went east, some south, some west; all

hastened where their fancy led them. They plucked the fruit, they gathered the flowers, they wandered through the woods, they were glad to be at rest from the rolling of the waves, and to change the scent of the brine, for the sweet breath of the flowers. But godlike Ulysses remained on the beach, and cast his eyes to the far horizon. Here he was but a stranger; his home was far, far away. Beyond that huge waste of waters, beyond the clouds that settled down where sky and sea met, beyond all, was his own home. There were the sweet smiles of Penelope, and the strength of young Telemachus. What pleasure could he take in the flowers and the birds of a foreign land? Every hour that he loitered among them, was one hour longer from the dwelling-place where his heart was.

He lifted up his eyes, and a young man stood before him. And as he looked, he knew him by the rod whereon two serpents were entwined, by the wings on his shoulders, and those on his feet; it was Hermes, messenger of the immortal gods.

"I am come," he said, "as a herald to thee, Ulysses, son of Laertes: and the blue-eyed Athene hath sent me from heaven. Wander, if thou wilt, through the fields, or rest thee by the river's brink; but one thing alone forbear to do.

When thou seest the sweet *lotus* that grows on the waters of the stream, beware that thou eat it not. If thou tastest of its juicy leaves, thou shalt become another man. Thou shalt forget the joys of home, thou shalt forget Ithaca, lovely in twilight: thou shalt care nought for the love of Penelope, and the beauty of young Telemachus. Thy heart will cleave to this place, thou wilt desire here to live, and here to die; thy vessel will rot in the sea, thy oars will moulder on the shore; here thou wilt dwell, a Lotus-eater thyself, among the dreamy people of the Lotus-eaters."

So spake he, and departed to heaven, and mingled among the immortal gods. But Ulysses of many counsels called together twelve, the bravest of his companions, and expounded to them the heavenly vision.

"Hasten," he said, "east and west: and rouse our friends and companions. Warn them to forbear the lotus, and to regard the Divine Counsel. Else will they forget the wife of their youth, and the children that are longing for their return; they will forget the well-known home, and the fire of the holy hearth; they will live and die in this land, Lotus-eaters themselves, among the dreamy people of the Lotus-eaters."

Some heard, and laughed at the message; some believed it, but disobeyed it. And they plucked the lotus from its river bed, and ate its pleasant leaves. And as they ate, a new spirit came upon them: and they felt themselves like other men. "What is Ithaca," said they, "that we should go thither again?" Here the hills are fairer; here the flowers are brighter; here the rivers are clearer; here grows the lotus, the rich sweet lotus,—the lotus that Ithaca knows not. Others may return if they will; here will we abide."

Woe! woe! for the lotus-eater! He has no hope for the future; he has no memory for the past; love cannot speak to him; recollection cannot awaken him! He is lost, lost to the joys of home, lost to the feelings that others love. Who can arouse him? who can restore him? Can there yet be hope for the frenzied eater of the lotus?

Then fear fell on Ulysses, bearer of many toils. But there were yet a band around him, that had not tasted of the dreamy plant. Sorely had they been tempted, but bravely had they resisted. They saw their companions, how they fell, and they put not forth their hand to the lotus.

"If we cannot persuade them, we may yet compel them," said Ulysses of a thousand counsels. "Bind them with cords, scourge them

with thongs,—force them on board the ship; and let its prow be turned to Ithaca."

Then his faithful companions girded themselves to the task. They brought ropes and thongs; they drew their swords, and like a company of heroes they rushed on the dreamy band of the lotus eaters. Some they bound, some they scourged; some they carried by main force. And still there arose a cry of anguish, "Leave us, leave us here, to live and to die with the lotus eaters!" In vain they cried; in vain they resisted; the true-hearted men bore them onwards. Their hearts were set on Ithaca, and they would not leave their companions.

Some there were who burst from the cords, and plunged wildly among the lotuses. Long, long shall their wives and children expect them in rocky Ithaca!

But the greater part are hurried down to the beach; now they are forced up the ship's side: now they are shut fast in the hold. The shipmen seize their oars; the wind swells the sail; the ship goes bounding over the dark waves towards Ithaca.

We, too, while we are tossed on the waves of this troublesome world, are seeking our true Home, a better Home than this,—that is, a

heavenly. This world is, as it were, a foreign country; and however beautiful it may seem, it is a dangerous country to us. We long to taste its pleasures for a little while; so short a delay, we think, can make no difference to our progress. When we have enjoyed ourselves for a few days, we will again set onwards to our home. But beware, there is a lotus in this world also; and the name of this lotus is *sin*. Sin, if we indulge in it, will make us forget our home; we shall deserve to have our portion here, and care nothing for the world hereafter. We shall be content with the miserable enjoyments of earth, and forget the pleasures that are in GOD'S Right Hand for evermore. But thanks be to Him, that even so He will not suffer us to perish! He sends sharp afflictions,—He would pull us from our favourite sins,—He would scourge us, if need be, from them. If we will not hear the voice of His chastisement, we are lost indeed. If we hearken to it, there may be hope that, after many sufferings, we may yet reach our Father's House. But oh! how much happier are they who look on themselves as strangers here, and never enter into temptation; who resolutely fight against their desires, and never taste of the poisonous lotus!

The Story
OF
Ulysses and Circe.

"DRAW up the vessel on the shore," said Ulysses of a thousand counsels. "Since the gods have cast us on this coast, we must be content to tarry here this day; to-morrow we can spread the sail, and go bounding over the wine-faced sea."

Thus spoke he: nor were his companions regardless of his words. And first, they drew the ship high on the beach, and hid the oars and tackling in a cave near at hand; then, sitting down on the shore, they wept for Ithaca, and prayed the gods, if they were never to return, to remove them to the house of Hades.

Out then spake Ulysses, son of valiant Laertes. "We know not, companions, where

we are; we must send forth scouts east and west. We must discover if we be cast on an island, or on the mainland: if among savage people, or a gentle race. This we will do to-morrow: but we give the night to the banquet."

So they then all the day, until the setting of the sun, feasted on measureless viands, and poured out the sweet wine. And the sun set, and all ways were shaded.

But when the rosy-fingered morning arose from the couch of Tithonus, up rose from his slumber the holy strength of Ulysses: round him he cast his mantle and cloak, and other vestments; and he grasped his sword in his hand and called his companions to the council.

"Friends," he spoke, "we have suffered much, and our sufferings continue still: but we cannot descend to the house of Hades, before the day of fate shall come. We must divide ourselves into two bands, and we shall be safer for the division. I myself will be the chief of the one and thou, Eurylochus, shalt lead the other. Or of us shall abide by the ship; the other shall go forth to explore."

Forthwith the men of Ithaca were arranged two divisions. Two and twenty gathered ro Ulysses; two and twenty followed Eurylo

"Cast we lots," said the son of Laertes, "to decide which of us shall go forth." They brought a dogskin helmet, and two pieces of wood. One of them they marked for Ulysses; the other for prudent Eurylochus. And they shook them in the helmet, and they prayed the gods to direct the choice. Forthwith from the brazen helm sprang the lot of magnanimous Eurylochus.

So he and his followers departed from the shore, and entered the woods of the island. Pleasant were the branches to the seafaring men; soft was the turf to their feet. Birds of sweet voices sang among the boughs; insects of bright colours flitted from the thickets: the winds made a pleasant whispering in the branches, and the breath of the summer air was soft. And the hearts of the wanderers rejoiced within them, and they spake merrily one to another; for they knew not that they were in the island of Ææa, the realm of crafty Circe.

In a fair glade was the palace of the Queen, raised of polished stones. Bright it was and beautiful, as might beseem the palace of a goddess. But in the court yard were wolves and lions, leopards and mountain-bears: restlessly they roamed about, but did hurt to none. They

were men in old time, whom the goddess by her witchcraft had turned into beasts.

While Eurylochus and his friends were gazing at the monsters, and wondering what they might be, a sweet voice was heard in the palace, pouring itself out in song. It was Circe, as she sat at the loom; and they were not mortal strains. She sang of the pleasures of ease, and her song seemed lovely to the men of Ithaca. And these were her words:

Weary wanderers of the billow;
One and all, be welcome hither!
Rest, with flow'rets for your pillow,
Gather rosebuds ere they wither.

Long enough ye've roamed the ocean;
Long enough in war contended.
Cease awhile from toil and motion,
For awhile your cares be ended.

Here the sun is shining brightly;
Here the flowers are ever blowing;
Here the winds are whispering lightly;
Here the golden wine-cup flowing.

What's the worth of fame and glory,
Still in prospect, grasped at never?
What's a name that sounds in story
When your ear is closed for ever?

As she sang, the followers of Eurylochus listened in silence. But when she had ended the song, out spake Polites, ruler of men.

"It must be the voice of a goddess, companions and friends; let us enter her palace at once." Forward they hastened to the gate: Eurylochus only remained. He feared some hidden guile, and alone he awaited without.

So Polites and his companions entered, for they knew not that there was danger at hand. And Circe came forth to welcome them, holding a rod for a sceptre.

"Enter, enter," she said, "companions of prudent Ulysses. Enter, and taste of my provisions; and give to-day to the banquet." So saying, she went before them, and conducted them herself to the hall. There then they sat, feasting on her viands, and pouring out the Pramnian wine. And they knew not that they were eating enchanted meats, and that the end of the feast would be sorrow. But when they had eaten and drunk, she waved her rod over the revellers. "Hasten," she said, "to the sty, and mingle, like swine with swine."

As she spake, the change was wrought; the men became hairy swine. Swine in the form, and voice, and bodies, but their minds remained

as before. Thus, then, they remained in agony of heart, enchanted in the palace of Circe.

Back came to the ship the prudent strength of Eurylochus. "Fly, son of Laertes," he said, and leave this unholy shore." Our companions went forth with me, but will never more return: they entered a palace in yonder glade; but I know not what has befallen them. Long time I heard their voices loud in the banquet; then all became still as death.

Ulysses girded on his sword, and took his bow in his hand. And, in spite of the prayers of his companions, he went forth to the palace of Circe. But as he was passing through the wood, a young man stood at his side. It was Hermes, though he knew him not, the messenger of the immortal gods.

"Whither art thou hastening?" he said, "a stranger thou must surely be. Else not alone wouldst thou wander through these woods in the enchanted island of Ææa."

Ulysses of many counsels made answer on this wise. "What island? what danger dost thou speak of? It is hard for mortal man to know every thing."

"In yonder palace," said Hermes, "dwells the *goddess* Circe. She welcomes all wanderers to

her home, and sets before them meat and wine. But in her viands she mixes enchantments, that can alter the shape of men. And when they have eaten and drunk, she strikes the banqueters with her wand, and forthwith they lose the shape of men, and are endued with the form of beasts. Thus she hath charmed thy companions, and they are now hairy swine. If thou goest to save them, thou wilt lose thyself; for Circe is irresistible by man."

"Is there no help?" asked patient Ulysses. "Is there no antidote to her drugs?"

"There is," said Hermes, giver of wealth; "but the gods only know of it. Nevertheless I will bestow it on thee: for thou art beloved by blue-eyed Athene."

So saying, he stooped down, and pulled a plant from the earth: the root was dark, the flower milk-white, and Moly was the name it bore.

"Hold this, son of Laertes," said Hermes, "and Circe's charms cannot enchant thee. Eat and drink as she bids thee: thou mayest do it now with safety. But when she strikes thee with her wand, draw thy sword from thy thigh, and rush in on the goddess. Pity not her tears or her prayers, but demand that she disenchants thy companions."

He spake, and departed to Olympus, where they say is the abode of the gods. There the wind howls not, and the rain falls not, and the sun dulls not: there is a cloudless sky and a brilliant splendour around: there the immortal gods pass day by day in bliss.

Ulysses, stormer of cities, went on his way with joy. And he came to the Palace of Circe, and presented himself at the gate. And the goddess came forth to meet him; and prayed him to be seated at the banquet. He entered, and obeyed her words, and feasted on her viands and wine.

But when he had eaten enough, the goddess stretched forth her wand: "Go now to the sty, son of Laertes, and mingle among the swine thy companions."

She spake; but her enchantment failed: Ulysses remained himself. He drew his sword and rushed on the goddess; and the palace echoed with her shrieks. "Who art thou?" said treacherous Circe; "how hast thou escaped my wiles? Never mortal man avoided them before; but thou hast thy wisdom from the gods."

"Disenchant my companions, O goddess," said Ulysses of a thousand counsels, "else thy punish-

ment is at hand; and thou shalt not be treacherous again."

The goddess trembled and obeyed. She went forth into the court, and Ulysses followed her. With her wand she touched his companions, and spoke the mystic word, and their shape came again, and they stood before their mighty leader. Then was there joy in their hearts, and they gave the night to the feast.

We also, like Ulysses, are thrown into a world of dangers. They are many, and of many kinds; and we cannot resist them of ourselves. Chiefly we have to fear a Circe, whose name is Self-indulgence. If we once taste of her pleasures, trusting in our own strength, we shall forget our home above, our hopes, our struggles, our duties: we shall be like the beasts that perish; and have pleasures no higher than theirs. But grace is given us as an antidote, lest we listen to the voice of the charmer. With that we may meet her boldly; and her enchantments cannot harm us. Our Moly is called Self-denial, unsightly perhaps to look upon; but it will deliver us from the power of our enemy, and preserve us from the ruin of so many that once "did run well."

The Story of the Sirens.

"SPREAD the sails to the wind," said Ulysses of a thousand counsels. "Spread the sails to the wind, and let the ship bend her course to Ithaca."

The breeze sang in the shrouds above,—the waves foamed to the oars below: and swiftly and steadily they cleft the deep. And the shores of beautiful Circe grew dim in the distance;—of beautiful Circe, who could not make Ulysses forget his home. But when she saw that he would leave her, and that her charms availed not to stay him, she spoke a word in his ear, and gave him prudent counsel. "Avoid the Sirens," she said, "that dwell in the island of Pelorus. Their voice is sweet, but deadly,—none ever listened to it and lived. He that tarries to hear that song, can never tear himself from it. He is rooted as a tree to the island, till he pines and dies of

danger. But since thou must needs pass their dwelling, I will show thee a refuge from destruction. Fill the ears of thy comrades with wax, and bid them lean on the oars. Thyself, if thou willest it, listen to the song; but first be bound to the mast. For this is the fate of the Sirens; and they know it well of old. When one voyager has passed them unharmed, their life draws to an end."

Night came down on the sea, and Ulysses spake to his companions. He told them of the wiles of the Sirens, and of the counsel of the heavenly goddess. "And if," he said, "the melody beguiles me also, so that I make signs to you to stay your speed, I charge you to disobey my words, and to bend more strongly to your oars. I myself am a mortal man; and may err like mortal men."

So saying, he laid him down to sleep, and his comrades were stretched in the hold. But when Aurora drove forth her chariot from the glorious gates of the day, up sprang, from his hard couch, the holy strength of Ulysses. He called his companions around him, and gave pure wax to each. Then they bound him to the strong mast, fastened him with thongs and cables, lest he should yearn for the melody of the Sirens, and

should cast himself into the broad sea. And they filled their ears with the white wax, and addressed themselves to their daily labours.

Ulysses, bearer of many toils, stood imprisoned at his own mast. And when mid-day was bright in the sky, and the sun looked down fiercely on land and sea, Sicily arose, like a blue cloud from the horizon, lovely in the hazy distance. Capes there were and headlands, that jutted out upon the foaming sea: but chief among the thousand promontories, was the giant height of Pelorus. And less than a league from its foot, an island lifted itself up from the deep. Thither the vessel bent her way: for the gods sent a favouring gale.

But when he was as far from the beach as an archer, at three shots, might send a winged arrow, Ulysses caught a distant strain, sweet and luscious as honey. It stole into his mind,—it overpowered all his resolve,—he was captive to the melody of the Sirens. Louder it came and louder, and evermore sweeter still. Who can describe its loveliness? it was not as the melody of earth. And every moment that the hero listened, his love for Ithaca grew less. The voice of the three sisters came lovelier over the waters; the perils *of the* homeward return seemed more terrible.

Long time he struggled with his shame: at last the melody prevailed.

"Loose me, loose me," said the hero, shouting to his labouring companions. "Speed the vessel whither ye will; but let me abide with the Sirens."

In vain he commanded the crew; they could not hear his words. Steadily the vessel went forward; steadily the rowers laboured. And the mind of Ulysses was rent within him; for it was agony to depart from the island. And when they came to the nearest point, he raged like an imprisoned lion. Thrice he strained at the bands, and thrice the bands repressed him. But when for the fourth time he put forth his strength, and the thongs would perchance have yielded, up rose Perimedes, leader of men, and Eurylochus, the equal of the gods; and they bound him more closely to the mast, and confined him with threefold thongs. In vain he besought them to forbear, and stretched forth his hands to the gods. Onwards went the vessel and onwards, passing the dangerous shore. And as the melody died away, Ulysses returned to himself. And he longed, as before, for Ithaca,—and Penelope and young Telemachus. But not till the island had faded in the horizon, did his comrades unbind his

arms. Then they removed the waxen safeguard, and returned their thanks to the gods.

We also, while we are passing over the waters of this world, are beset with three Sirens. Their voice is sweeter than honey, but it is death to listen to them. They are called the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. Our only safety is in stopping our ears against their music. We need not think of listening, and yet remaining unharmed. And happy is he, who, when he is inclined to give ear to their voice, has a friend to restrain him from evil. And yet more happy is that friend, for he will save a soul from destruction.

THE

Story of Cleobis and Biton.

It was the great Festival of Here at Argos, and crowds were pressing towards the favourite Temple of the goddess. They passed along the green lane and the rocky steep. They hurried from the vine-covered cottage, and the lordlier house of the aristocrat. The victims were urged on to the Altar, and the pomp was about to begin. Only the priestess of the goddess was not there. The custom was that she should be drawn in pomp from her own house to the temple: the car stood by her door, but the oxen were a-field, and could not be found. The crowd grew impatient; the nobles murmured; the poorer sort whispered to each other; and still Cydippe came not.

Then said Cleobis, her elder son, to his brother Biton, "Let us yoke ourselves to the car, and draw our mother to the Temple. To her we shall perform the part of good sons: to the goddess, of faithful worshippers." Each laid aside his pal-

lium, and seized the drawing rope: and their mother mounted the car. A long and weary way it was: for there were forty-five stadia to pass, and the car was heavy, and the roads were rough and steep. The crowd divided to let the brothers pass, and everywhere voices were heard in their praise: how they thought nothing of labour, and considered no office too low or mean, so they might honour their mother, and do reverence to the goddess. Cydippe's heart was full of joy, as she looked down on her toiling sons, for she knew that she was the envy of all the mothers of Argos, and that the goddess was honoured in her servant.

And when they came to the Temple, that glittered with gold and marble, Cydippe alighted from the car, and performed the accustomed rites. And when the sacrifice was over, and the people were preparing for the feast, she approached the image of the goddess, and knelt before her in prayer. "Goddess," she said, "that art honoured in hollow Argos, to whom a thousand victims bleed in thy beloved Samos,—thou seest the honour that Cleobis and Biton, my two sons, have shown me; thou knowest that, honouring me, they have also honoured thee. Grant them in return for this,—if ever I have offered acceptably

at thy shrine, grant them the greatest good that can befall mortal man."

Thus spoke she: and white-armed Here heard her supplication. And a sweet perfume as of incense filled the temple, and the priestess knew that her prayer was accomplished. The crowd spake of her request, and marvelled what the best thing for man might be. Some said riches, some pleasure, some fame. Thus they erring, for they knew not the things that should be accomplished.

All day then they feasted in the Temple, and the song and the dance abounded. They offered to the goddess the marrow and the fat, and poured forth the dark-faced wine: and the sun set, and all ways were shaded. Then the multitude dispersed to their homes; but Cleobis and Biton slept in the temple.

When the morning was come forth from the east, leading out the holy day, they sought the brothers where they slept, for they were asleep overlong. They called them by name: they tried to raise them up: but they slept the sleep from which there is no awakening.

"And thus," as the philosopher Solon said to Crœsus, king of Lydia, "the god manifested in these brothers, that the state of death was better for a man than that of life."

The Story
OF
Arion and the Dolphin.

Once on a time, there lived in the city of Corinth a famous musician, named Arion. He had such skill on his harp, that kings and princes invited him to their banquet; when he played, all who stood round him were as silent as if it were death to speak; when he made an end, the guests yet seemed to listen to his sweet melody. But chiefly Periander, king of Corinth, was his friend. He would send for him evening after evening, and pass hours in giving ear to the harp of the musician. Then would Arion sing of the tales of other days: how Troy was taken in the tenth year,—how Ulysses, of a thousand wiles, after enduring many labours, returned to Penelope and young Telemachus: how Codrus, king of Athens, laid down his life for the good of his land; and those other tales which Grecian bards were wont to sing, and Grecian warriors to delight in.

Now it fell out that Arion had a desire to see the fair valleys of Italy, and sailing from Corinth, he landed in a Sicilian port. Many months he lived there, going from palace to palace, and from hall to hall: and wherever he went, who so much praised, who so much loved, as Arion the harper of Corinth? Thence he crossed to Italy, and still he was a welcome guest: one monarch would give him a pound weight of gold, another a tripod of silver; this chief presented him with a sword, whereof the hilt glittered with jewels; that prince gave him a mirror of polished steel of untold value. But when Arion had heaped up to himself wealth and fame, he longed to return to his own land. So he travelled to Tarentum, intending to sail from thence; and ever when he passed along the road and struck his lyre, the matrons of Apulia laid aside the spinning wheel, and the maidens of Calabria left the dance: all followed the wonderful musician to catch one sound of the notes that they must never hear again.

A ship of Corinth was riding in the port; and Arion sent for the master. "I am about to return to Corinth," he said: "I am weary of this foreign land. To your care I shall commit myself and my wealth; for the gods have given me riches in abundance, gold and bronze enough, and shining

steel." The master rejoiced in his heart,—for evil thoughts arose in it. He devised how he might slay Arion, and become lord of all his wealth. "We have heard of your fame, O Arion," he made answer, "that Orpheus excelled thee not in the song. Trust thyself, with a good courage, to our bark; a better Italy never saw. But first offer sacrifice to Poseidon, and to the old god of the deep."

Nor did Arion disobey. He did sacrifice to Poseidon, and called the crew to the feast. They, when they had made their prayers, and thrown down the barley cakes, drew back the head of the ox and passed the steel through his throat. But when they had flayed the carcase, and divided the thighs of the victim, they kindled a fire of billets, and the flame leapt through the kindling mass. Then they wrapped the legs in the cawl, and gave the god his portion; but the entrails they spitted with care, and roasted them after the accustomed wont. Thus, all day long they sat at the feast, and quaffed the red wine from their goblets.

But when the evening was coming on, they made ready the vessel for her voyage. And Arion spread a carpet on the deck, and laid himself *down to* sleep; and sleep fell upon him, most

sweet, most tranquil, most like the rest of death. And the prow of the ship went bounding over the waves, and the purple billows roared behind.

When Aurora came forth in her beauty, the land was far away. Then Arion awoke from his sleep, and looked round on the quiet sea. Soon the master came close to him, and the sailors followed their chief.

"O Arion," he said, "we are weary of the storms and the cold of a sailor's life: many years we have toiled for money, and now it is within our reach. Thou hast boundless wealth on board; we need it for ourselves, and we must take it. The happiest life must end in time; and thou hast seen thy last light."

Then Arion trembled, for he perceived that death was near. "Hear me," he said, "O Corinthians! take, if you will, all my wealth—my gold, and my bronze, and my steel, and let me live. And, if ye dread that I should complain of your deed, I will swear the inviolable oath, never to reveal what ye have done, and to leave you in peace with your gains."

Thus spoke he, and the master paused, for he knew not whether to do; to spare Arion's life, and to exact the inviolable oath, or to slay him where he stood, and to enjoy his goods at ease. At

length he resolved to slay him; and he bid him prepare to die.

"And if thou desirest burial," he said, "we will bury thee when thou reachest the shore; or if thou wilt leap into the sea, the way is open for thee."

"At least," said Arion, "grant me this:—let me strike my harp once more. Then I will leap into the sea, and my spirit shall enter the gloomy house of Hades."

They granted his request, and stood apart; and he struck his harp once more. Marvellously sweet were the strains it poured forth; and the hearts of his murderers were almost touched. But their lust for gold prevailed; and when he had made an end, they bade him leap from the ship. Forth he leapt, with his harp in his hand; and the sailors thought that he was lost.

But a dolphin had heard the music, and came gambolling over the waves. And Arion mounted his back, and continued his sweet strain. The dolphin speeded westward all that day, more fleetly than the fleetest ship. And all that day and all that night Arion pursued his strain. With the early morning he saw the cliffs of Tænarus; and the dolphin speeded onward to the shore: and the minstrel gladly sprung upon the beach, and paid his thanks to Poseidon.

Straightway he journeyed to Corinth, and told his tale to Periander. The king would hardly believe him. "Tarry in my palace," he said, "till the crew returns to Greece. I will examine them in thy presence, and we shall discover the whole truth."

Ere long the vessel reached the port of Corinth; and the king sent for the crew. "How fares Arion?" he inquired; "we have heard that he still sojourns in Italy."

"He is dwelling at Tarentum," they answered, "O king; he hath fame and riches more than those of mortals."

"Doth he not long for Corinth?" demanded Periander. "The love of a native land is strong."

"Nay, O king," returned the master, "the love of money is stronger."

"It is stronger than virtue in some," said Periander. "Come forth, Arion, and confront them that would have been thy murderers."

Arion came forth from his retreat, and fear fell on the evil crew. They fell on their knees, and begged for mercy: and Arion joined his prayers with theirs. "We will grant it," said Periander at length, "when the goods of Arion are returned."

And ages after, a small brazen statue was to be seen at Tænarus: a man riding on a dolphin.

THE

Story of Antigone.

Beautiful were the walls, and stately the towers, of Thebes, with her seven gates. High in the midst of the city rose the temple of Zeus, father of gods and men. Fair, with its marble columns, was the shrine of Phœbus Apollo, and of Poseidon, container of the earth. But now around the gates rang the clang of war, and the shouting of heroes: for the curse of a father was on the city, and his sons were devoted to the sword.

Œdipus, king of Thebes, had committed a grievous crime. In ignorance he had committed it; but his remorse was without measure. With his own hand he tore out his eyes; and dwelt in sorrow and darkness amidst his palace. Up rose, *then,* his sons, the daring Eteocles, and the fiery

strength of Polynices. They drove their father forth in the bitterness of his soul, and he roamed as a wanderer over the earth. Yet he went not forth alone; for the leader of his blindness, and the staff of his weary steps, was the love of Antigone, his daughter. Onwards they travelled through Greece, till they rested in sea-girt Attica. But ere he left his country, the old man called on the gods: and he prayed them to bring vengeance on his evil sons, on Eteocles and hard-hearted Polynices. "They have driven me forth," he said, "unbefriended, and they look to enjoy my crown. Let dissension and division come among them; let their breasts be filled with hate instead of love; let them divide their possessions with the Scythian stranger; and go down to the grave by each other's sword!"

So spake the old man: nor was his prayer unheard. But he himself tarried awhile in the temple of the benevolent goddesses;* and they removed him, by an easy fate, from the earth. Then, with hasty steps, Antigone returned to her own land: she had heard the curse of her father, and she was now to see it accomplished.

Many were the oaths that the brothers sware; many were the vows that they made. Both could

* *I. e.* The Furies.

not reign at once; yet each desired the throne. "I will wield the sceptre first," said the might of royal Eteocles: "I will administer justice to Thebes, and rule the people of Cadmus. But when the days shall have passed, and the returning sun shall have brought about a year, I will retire from the city, and thou shalt ascend the throne. For a year thou also shalt ascend it: but then thou shalt resign it to me. Thus, year by year, will we two reign in Thebes, till old age comes down upon us, and we cross the river over which is no return."

"I am content," said mighty Polynices, "for there is wisdom in thy words. But swear to me, first, by Zeus, and Ares, and Athene, that thou wilt verily fulfil thy promise, and restore to me the throne in due season; else, I shall lose my birthright, and become the laughing-stock of all Hellenes."

Thus he spoke: and Eteocles obeyed his words, and he sware by Cadmean Jupiter, and by Ares the turner of the battle, he sware also by blue-eyed Athene, and by the holy streams of Dirce, that he would, in his turn, yield the throne to his brother, and himself depart from Thebes.

Polynices departed to Argos, and remained there the appointed year. But then he sent a

herald to Thebes, to claim the sceptre and the crown. "Not so," said Eteocles: "I am king of Thebes, and I will not resign my throne. Let Polynices, if he will, assemble an host, and call for the aid of foreigners. Yet we will meet him with good courage, and dedicate his spoils to Jove of the trophies." For the curse of his father was upon him, and he was lifted up to his own harm.

Polynices gathered together an army in Argos, and went forth to war with his brother. Six chiefs accompanied him to the fight; he himself was the seventh. There was Tydeus, savage as the lion of the deserts, and Capaneus, the reviler of the gods, and Eteoclus, mighty in the chariot race, and the giant strength of Hippomedon, and Parthenopæus, in the pride of his youth, and the wise seer, Amphiaraus. The champions of Thebes went forth to the gates, and the fight waxed long and dreadful.

At length the brothers met in arms: and the curse was upon them still. By each other's swords they fell; and the army of the invaders fled away. And Creon ascended the throne: for it belonged of right to him. Then he called together his princes and his nobles, and the dwellers by the fountain of Dirce.

"Hear me," he said, "men of Thebes, for it shall be death to transgress my words. Eteocles, who fell valiantly for his country, for the gods of the land, for his people and for their homes, he shall be buried with honour and pomp, that the glorious may depart with glory. But for Polynices, who came with an army of aliens to lay waste his fatherland, who lifted up his spear against our walls, and threatened the temples of our gods, he shall be cast out a prey to the dogs, and shall remain unburied where he fell. And if any shall dare to disobey, and to give his body to the ground, swift and bitter shall be his fate, for he himself shall be buried alive."

So saying, he departed into his palace: but great was the indignation of his people. For though Polynices had been an enemy to the land, yet they venerated the gods who dwell beneath the earth; for dishonour to a corpse is dishonour to them, and with a fallen enemy there should be peace.

Up to her bower went Antigone, the fair-haired daughter of Œdipus: and thither, too, came in her beauty, her sister, the royal Ismene. Long they spoke of the decree of Creon, and there was division of heart between them. "I will undertake the danger," said Antigone: "I will commit

my brother to the earth. Then will his spirit pass the Styx, and will be at rest with the heroes of old."

"The law," said Ismene, "forbids us to bury him; and I dare not break the law. It has its strength from the divinities above; for kings are vicegerents of the gods."

"This law," returned her sister, "is of to-day, and by a mortal: be its power whatsoever it may, there are unwritten laws on high; laws that have had their being from everlasting, laws approved by the gods themselves, and binding on the mightiest of kings. These are the statutes that I shall obey, for these are superior to all."

"But think," said Ismene, "of the danger; remember the fate that Creon threatened. A brother's memory is dear; but life is dearest of all."

"The time," Antigone answered, "that we must dwell below, is greater than that which is our portion above. I shall descend beloved to a beloved one; and shall be at rest with him. Leave me alone to my task: I shall need help from none but the gods."

King Creon sate in his palace; and his nobles stood around. An officer drew near to his throne, and led Antigone forward. "Thou hast commanded, O king, that the corpse of Polynices

should lie unburied on the sand; thou hast threatened death to them that disobey: yet the princess hath violated thy statute. She hath committed the body to the ground, alone, and in the darkness of the night."

Then king Creon waxed wroth, and spoke to the princess in his rage, "Knowest thou not," he said, "the proclamation? or didst thou know it and despise it?"

"I knew it," said Antigone, "and I despised it; for the gods themselves reject it."

"Thou art alone in thy judgments," said the king: "a girl opposing thy elders."

"I have Zeus himself on my side," said Antigone, "and justice, the partner of the gods."

"Then be they thy help," said Creon, "for thy fate hath long ago been sealed. Lead her, guards, to the lonely cavern, by the springs of holy Dirce: there leave her, and wall up the entrance, and let her see if the gods will assist her."

Antigone went forth on her way, leaving the pleasant light: and, as she went, thus she bewailed her fate:—*

"My tomb, my bridal chamber,—O most dark
And everlasting mansion, where I go

* Sophocl. Antigone, 891.

To join mine own sad race, whose greater part
Persephone has written as her own;
Of whom the last, and far the feeblest, I
Descend, before my life's appointed term;
Yet thither hastening, no faint hope I hold
That dear to thee, my father, I shall come,
Beloved by thee, my mother, most of all
Ill-fated Polynices, dear to thee:
Since every funeral rite I gave thy corpse,
And poured libations meetly o'er thy tomb:
For such an act, my meed is such a fate."

Then came Hæmon, the son of Creon, and prayed for the life of his Antigone; for he loved her dearly as himself: but his father would not hear. At last the blind prophet Teiresias came to the merciless king, and threatened him with the vengeance of the gods. "A corpse in thy family," he said, "shall repay the corpse of Polynices: a violent death in thy house the murder of Antigone."

Then Creon repented: but repented not till it was too late. He hastened to the cavern where Antigone was imprisoned, and burst open the wall. She lay in the sleep of death: and Hæmon had slain himself at her side.

The Story

OF

PELOPS AND ŒNOMAUS.

At Pisa, in pleasant Elis, dwelt Hippodameia, the daughter of king Œnomaus. Far and wide through Hellas had spread the fame of her beauty; and from every province noble youths sought to make her their wife. But they could not prevail with Œnomaus; for his daughter was the light of his house: and he cast in his mind how he could refuse her in marriage, and devised a ready plan.

The horses of Œnomaus were swift as the wind, and came not of mortal breed. Everywhere were they victorious in the race, and they had won great honour for their master. Thus, then, spoke Œnomaus, chief of rocky Elis:—

"Whoever would win my daughter, and would call Hippodameia his bride, must first vanquish me in the race, and forthwith I will give him her *hand*. But great is the value of the reward, and

great must be the risk of him that seeks it. If he succeeds, his prize is a bride whom Hellas cannot match for beauty; if he fails, his sentence shall be death, and the house of gloomy Hades. And this shall be the manner of the race:—he shall mount his chariot first, and my daughter shall be at his side; I will follow some space behind, and will grasp my javelin in my hand. If the gods give me success, and grant me to reach the flyers, I will smite the youth with my javelin, and send him to the house of Hades; if not, let him take my daughter, and with her wealth enough—gold, and silver, and bronze, and steel, well wrought in the furnace."

Hard was the speech of the chief; but the beauty of Hippodameia prevailed. Thirteen had sought her for their bride, and had fallen in the dreadful race. At last came Pelops to Elis, son of the ill-fated Tantalus. He saw Hippodameia, and he loved her; and he deemed that the maiden might be won. "My horses," he said, "are also swift in the race; and the gods have favoured me ever."

So he went to the palace of Œnomaus, and demanded his daughter in marriage. And the king felt compassion for the youth; for he was tall, and brave, and comely.

"Think yet again," he said, "O Pelops, son of crafty Tantalus: thou art rushing upon certain fate; for my horses are invincible in the race. Nor deem that I will spare thee, though I may grieve for thy death, for I have sworn an inviolable oath. He that contends with me and is vanquished, shall cross the gloomy Styx."

"I am well resolved, O king; and thou shalt know that thy power is at an end. The gods have seen thy cruelty, and will nerve me with strength for the race."

"To-morrow be it then," said the king, in his wrath; "to-morrow thou shalt sup with Hades. Banquet in my palace to-night, and take thy fill of pleasure. Behold Hippodameia for the last time, ere thou findest thy bridal chamber in the grave."

Silent and sad by the ocean shore roamed Pelops, son of Tantalus. He knew of the victories of Œnomaus, and his heart waxed heavy within him.

"Hear me," he said, "O ruler of the sea, that art honoured in seagirt Corinth; thou to whom a thousand victims bleed at Trœzen and on the shores of steep Tænarus,—thou that didst bring forth the horse from the ground with thy trident, *when thou* strovest with Athene for Attica; hear me,

and come to my aid, for I need the counsel of the gods."

Far off at Ægæ was earth-containing Poseidon, in the depth of the wine-dark sea. Forth went he from his palace, and yoked his brazen-footed steeds to his car. He seized the golden reins, and they flew across the deep. The waves dimpled for joy; the whales sported round their king: the brazen axletree was not bedewed by the surge, so light was the speed of the chariot. And the god directed his course to Pisa, and descended on the ocean shore.

"What ails thee, son of Tantalus," said the earth-shaking monarch: "wherefore hast thou called for my aid? That which I can I am ready to accomplish for thee: speak boldly, and tell me thy mind."

Then Pelops took courage, and told his griefs to the god. And Poseidon listened in silence, and took counsel with himself ere he spake.

"Hard is thy petition, son of Tantalus; for the horses of Œnomaus are divine. Not even mine could contend with them in the race, though swift as the winds of Æolus. Take them, nevertheless; I bestow them on thee freely: but thou wilt need further assistance. Hardly would they bear thee from the spear of Œnomaus: and thou wouldst give thy life for thy love."

"So be it then, son of Cronus," said Pelops, the beloved of the gods. "I shall go down to the grave with glory: with glory I shall be received in Hades. And in ages to come men will say, as they bound over the wine-dark sea, 'yonder is the tomb of Pelops, who died for fair-haired Hippodameia.'"

"Stay yet," answered earth-containing Poseidon: "counsel may be better than strength. Thou knowest the might of gold: bribe the charioteer of Œnomaus. The steeds are invincible, but the chariot may be destroyed: be swift and secret, and prosperous."

So saying, he left his car and his horses, and plunged, like a dolphin, into the sea. Back he hastened to Ægæ, and mingled among the ocean nymphs.

But Pelops, mounted in the chariot, returned to the palace of Œnomaus. And he called Myrtilus, the charioteer of the king, and spake a word in his ear. He promised him sheep and oxen, and gold and bronze enough, if he would so order the chariot of his lord, that it might fail in the perilous race.

"Sleep then secure, son of Tantalus, and leave the event to me. I will follow the wishes of thy heart, but the counsel must be my own." So

spake false-hearted Myrtilus, and departed to the chariot stalls of Œnomaus. And Pelops went to the palace, and they crowned the cups with wine.

But as soon as rosy-fingered Aurora came out with the glorious day, up rose Œnomaus, tamer of steeds, and the god-like strength of Pelops. And the ground for the race was staked out, and the horses champed on the bit; and the warriors were ready for the contest, and they grasped their golden scourges.

The morning dawned, and the crowd assembled: they gathered by hundreds and by thousands. There were the dwellers of Buprasium, and they that drank of the Alysian Fountain; there were the citizens of Olenia, and the vine-dressers of the Hyrmenian plain. Then forth came Œnomaus, the prince of charioteers, and Pelops, the equal of the gods. The chariots stood ready for the race; they were embossed with silver and gold. Low was the seat, and massy the pole, and beautiful the two steeds of each. Then Pelops made his prayer to the gods, but chiefly to Poseidon, ruler of horses, and to Pallas Athene, who gives wisdom to men.

Apart in her bower sat Hippodameia, and she prayed to smile-loving Aphrodite. "Blind are the eyes of mortals," said the maiden, "and little

can they know of the future. If the son of Tantalus loves me well, and is no feigner of false words, give him to escape the spear of my father, and to win the doubtful race!" Forth then she came in her beauty, and stood by the side of Pelops.

Meanwhile, Œnomaus grasped his spear, and thus he spake to Pelops: "Mount now, son of Tantalus, with speed,—and thou, Hippodameia, by his side. Thou seest that stone, that lies midway in the course, the memorial of a departed hero: when thou art half way thither, I give the word to my steeds; then look that thy horses be fleet."

Fair-haired Hippodameia mounted the car, and the hero sat down by her side. And he seized the reins and gave the word, and the divine steeds obeyed. Up rose the whirl of dust before the wheels; and the brazen axletree groaned. And Hippodameia called on the gods to save her champion in the venture, for she saw that his courage was high, and she feared to see it quenched.

"Fear not, daughter of Œnomaus," said the manly voice of Pelops. "My steeds are of no mortal breed; they are the gift of Poseidon himself."

The dust rose in a thick dark cloud: the cha-

riots jumped and leaped onward: the manes of the horses streamed out to the wind; and ever and anon the charioteers encouraged the flying steeds.

"Lampetius, and thou, Æthon," said Pelops, "now reward your master for his care: for the winnowed barley he hath so often given you, and the pride that he hath taken in your strength."

They then, fearing the rebuke of the king, leaped forward more swiftly to the goal. But the steeds of Œnomaus came fleeter and fleeter: and already the spear was raised. Pelops saw the glittering javelin; and he deemed that his hours were numbered.

Thus they two flew forward in the course, the hero and the mortal maid. But when they had reached the stone where slept the departed hero, Œnomaus stood up in his car, and brandished his brazen spear. Far on the wind floated the manes of his steeds; and his chariot quivered and jumped. Swift were the steeds of the flier, but swifter far of him that pursued. Nor contended they for a vulgar prize, an ox, or a caldron, or a tripod: but they contended for the life of a hero, of Pelops, tamer of horses. And now he had gained the goal round which the course bent, and grazing it with his chariot wheel, he restrained

the left-hand horse: but he urged to his utmost his fellow. Meanwhile thundered behind the god-like strength of Œnomaus: thrice he had raised his hand to smite Pelops, and thrice Hippodameia bewailed. But when for the fourth time he raised the javelin, the craft of Myrtilus prevailed.

Forth flew the loosened linchpin, and the chariot was dashed on the ground. The axle snapped like a winter bough, and the frightened steeds flew off. And the mighty lay mightily overthrown, and forgetful of his skill in the chariot race. His body was bruised and shattered,—his soul went to the house of Hades.

And Pelops wedded Hippodameia, and the gods came down to the banquet. And Poseidon built for him on the strand of the sea a bridal chamber of the waves: and they arched above the hero and the maiden, like a wall of the purest green.

The Story

OF

Demeter and Persephone.

Among the divinities that dwelt on Mount Olympus, none was more friendly to the husbandman than Demeter, goddess of corn. She it was who watched over the young seed when first dropped into the ground, who moistened the clods with rain, who pushed the tender shoot from the earth, who reared it to ripeness, who filled the milky ear, and browned the ripening stem. And therefore did the husbandman offer sacrifice in her honour; and the maidens led the dance at harvest-home in her praise. Therefore was she celebrated in the mysteries of Eleusis, and in the valleys of rocky Paros; therefore they hymned her praise at Antron, and in gleby Arcadia.

Demeter had one daughter, the fair Persephone: a maiden unmatched for beauty among the dwellers

of the mansions of Olympus, save only by golden Aphrodite, for who might compare with her? On a day she went forth with her companions to join in the song and the dance. Joyfully they bent their way to the lovely fields of Enna. For Sicily was beloved by Demeter, above all the islands that cluster in the wine-faced sea.

It was in the joyful spring of the year; the birds sang sweetly in the bright day: the green of the boughs was freshest, and the blue of the sky was brightest; there was breeze enough to whisper among the leaves, but scarce enough to curl the billows of the distant sea. They wandered among the fair spring flowers, that fairer band of maidens; they gathered the rose, and the lily, and the beauty of the pale daffodil: they filled their baskets with the violet and the crocus; and so, in joy and mirth, they passed the sweet hours of that bright morning.

Far off, in his gloomy abode, sat Hades, the king of the shades. Dark it was, and gloomy and cheerless: and they who entered it could return no more. Many rivers ran round it, and closed it with an impassable band: Styx, and Cocytus, the stream of lamentation; and Lethe, of which whoso drank lost all remembrance of past things: and Phlegethon, that flamed with

fire. There were those who had offended the gods, and done wrong to their fellow men; there was Tantalus plunged to his chin in water, with fair fruits and sweet leaves hanging over and around his head. Tormented he was with hunger and thirst; but when he stooped to drink of the water, or stretched forth his hand to gather the fruits, the stream and the boughs fled from him, and he pined on in misery as before. There was Ixion, condemned to roll a rock up hill; evermore he rolled it up, and evermore it bounded down upon him. There was Tityus, on whose liver a vulture was ever preying, and which grew as fast as eaten; there also were the daughters of Danaus, whose task was to fill a sieve with water.

On the borders of the stream were a pale crowd of spirits longing to cross the gloomy river: and Charon, the dark ferryman, who piloted them to the further shore. Before the house of Hades was Cerberus, the three-headed dog. Sad and gloomy was the house, and gloomy the underworld. But at a distance from the palace of Hades lay the fortunate groves, and the abodes of the blest: a purple light gleamed over those fields, and the air was lighter and clearer. Here were the heroes that had fallen in fight, for their nation, and their families, and their temples;

here were priests of the gods, who had offered their sacrifices daily, and bards that had sung the praises of the divinities, and spoken worthily of Phœbus; and those that had left a memory on earth by doing deeds of glory. They wore crowns of myrtle, as they wandered through the amaranthine meadows; they mingled in the dance among the rosy fields, and sang the praises of the divinities.

But Hades shared not in their joy, but sat alone in his palace: his brow was dark with care, and his thoughts harassed his mind. "Shall I only," he said, "of the gods reign alone in my gloomy hall? Shall Zeus possess Here for his bride and queen, and Poseidon fair Amphitrite? Hercules, after his many toils, has fair-ancled Hebe for his own: even Hephæstus, lame though he be, calls Aphrodite his wife. I only am solitary and sad, because none will share with me this abode. If I cannot succeed by love, I will try force: let Zeus be enraged if he will."

Hermes came to the under-world, the messenger of the immortal gods. To him Hades told his grief; and from him he asked for counsel. "Knowest thou not, people-collecting Hades, that Persephone is the fairest of the immortal *goddesses*? Knowest thou not that she is sport-

ing with her companions in the lovely fields of Enna? Thou, tamer of horses, art fleet in the chase; surely thou art able to obtain a bride."

Thus spake Hermes, messenger of the gods, remembering his ancient wiles. And Hades smiled a gloomy smile; and revolved the deceit in his heart. Forthwith his golden chariot was made ready, and he grasped the splendid reins.

Meanwhile Persephone thought not of ill, but was foremost in the sports of the maidens. Lo! in the midst of the meadow, a narcissus arose in beauty, a wonder to men and to gods; for a hundred heads sprung from its stem. The green earth smiled and the briny sea, as it bloomed in the noonday sun. But fatal was the beauty of that narcissus, for earth bore it to deceive the maiden. She raised it from her bosom, at the prayer of Hades; that Persephone might draw nigh to wonder.

The fair-haired maiden saw it; and with light feet she hurried towards it. She outstripped her companions in the race; and she stretched out her hand to the flower.

She stretched it forth;—and the mountains echoed; for an earthquake rent the earth. The meadow was rent asunder in the midst; and a yawning chasm opened. Forth drove Hades in

his chariot of gold, and seized on fair-haired Persephone. Vainly the maiden shrieked; her companions were far away. Two only heard her cries: Hecate of the shining veil, and far-seeing Phœbus Apollo.

As long as she saw the earth and the starry heaven, the rays of the sun, and the briny sea, so long she hoped to behold her mother again, and the halls of the immortal gods: and mountains and valleys echoed to her cries, as pitiless Hades hurried her along. But when she sank beneath the earth, hope departed from her mind; the fields and the rocks closed over her head, and she entered the under-world. So Hades brought her to his palace, an unwilling and mournful bride: and Persephone bowed down to her fate, and became Queen of gloomy Erebus.

When Demeter had thus lost her daughter, she wept, and could not be consoled. She knew not who had carried her away; but she resolved to wander over the earth till she could hear tidings of her daughter. With a dark mantle over her shoulders, and a torch in her hands, she wandered forth over land and sea: nor did she ever banquet on ambrosia, nor ever enter the bath. Nine days she went on unwearyingly;

but none could give her tidings of her whom she sought. But when the tenth sacred morning came forth in its beauty, the goddess lighted on a nymph, the fair-ancled Hecate. "I cannot tell thee, fair-haired Demeter, who hath borne Persephone away: I only beheld the golden chariot, and heard the cries of thy daughter. But Helius, the sun-god, knows, for he sees all things that are done upon the earth. Hasten to him, and tell him thy grief: he will tell thee who hath wrought for thee this sorrow."

They went together to the sun-god, the goddess and the fair-ancled nymph. And they found him driving forth his chariot, at the entrance of the gates of the day. Glorious were the clouds above and below him, where he drove forth his steeds of fire. Earth, below, was wakening into beauty; the dark sea was glistening in the light. And they stood at the head of his horses, and Demeter addressed him thus: "Helius, for thou seest all things that are done in the measureless earth, tell me who hath borne away my daughter, the fair-haired Persephone? Pity me, a goddess and in grief, and tell me all the truth."

So spake she, and Helius pitied her, and told her all the truth. "And know," he said, "this was not done but by the counsel and permission

of Zeus. He ordained thy child to be the bride of Hades; submit thyself therefore to the will of the Thunderer."

Demeter returned to the earth, heavy and discontented of heart. And thenceforth she forsook the abodes of Olympus, and the habitations of the immortal gods: and she roamed over the vast earth, taking shelter with whoever offered it. It chanced that on a day she came to Eleusis, in the land of rocky Attica. She sat under an olive-tree by the well, till the time that the maidens should come forth to draw water. Forth came the daughters of King Celeus, each with her pitcher on her shoulder. And to them Demeter feigned herself another; and she was taken into their house. And Queen Metaneira hired her for her nurse, and gave the babe Demophoon to her arms.

Demeter loved Demophoon well, and she determined to make him immortal. She breathed on him as he lay on her breast, and he throve by her care like a god. And at night, when others slept, she would hold the infant in the flame that played harmlessly around him, to purge away his earthly parts, and to endue him with immortality. And this gift she would have bestowed on him, had not Metaneira, by her rash-

ness, prevented it. She saw the babe in the fire, and shrieked aloud in the house. And Demeter in her anger cast Demophoon down, and revealed herself to the mother. "Now," she said, "he must remain a mortal, but he shall be great and honoured, because he has lain on the breast of a goddess, and has slept in her arms." Forthwith the palace was filled with a flood of golden light; and a sweet fragrance distilled from the steps of the departing divinity. They raised her a temple on the hill Callichorus, and there she dwelt in her sorrow.

Then came a year of scarcity on the earth, for Demeter would suffer no plants to grow. Famine walked among men; and there were no offerings for the dwellers of Olympus. Then had the race of man perished, and utterly come to an end, unless Zeus, father of men and gods, had cast this counsel in his mind. He sent Hermes, messenger of the gods, to invite Demeter to Olympus, and he sware that he would give her honour and gifts, such as she had never received before. But Demeter constantly refused, till she should receive her daughter again. And at length Zeus gave his consent that Persephone should return to her mother. "If she have tasted nothing below, she shall dwell in Olympus

for ever; if she have eaten in the house of Hades, two-thirds of the year she shall tarry with us,—the third she must remain with her husband."

Hermes came to Erebus, to the house of gloomy Hades. And he told the words of Zeus, and besought that Persephone might return. And Hades gave permission, and Persephone sprang up with joy. Then Hades gave her a pomegranate, and she ate one grain of the fruit.

Hermes seized the reins of the chariot, and Persephone mounted by his side. Forthwith to Eleusis they drove, like the wind when it rushes in a storm. And Persephone flew like a bird to the arms of her mother, and heard from her her doom. Eight months she abides in Olympus, four in the house of Hades.

This is one of those stories which have no moral meaning, but are an emblem of something which happens in the yearly course of nature. Persephone is the seedcorn, which is cast into the earth, and thus may be said to go to the house of Hades. But it remains not in the earth for ever. It soon springs above the ground, and, by dying, receives life. Four months it lies hid under the earth; eight months it waves in the light.

The Story of Phaeton.

EPAPHUS, the son of Zeus, gloried in his father, the king of gods and men. And he boasted before Phaeton, son of Helius, that none could match him in the dignity of his birth.

"I, too," said Phaeton, "boast a god for my father: the all-seeing sun, who surveys the earth and the heaven, and the furthest recesses of the hoary deep. I, too, am therefore descended from Zeus: the father of my father is the Thunderer."

"Vain boasting!" cried haughty Epaphus. "Thou art the son of Clymene and of a mortal sire. All-seeing Helius knows thee not, and will never own thee for his."

So words waxed high between them, and each supported his cause. "This shall be proof," said Epaphus at length; "if thou hast courage to put it to the venture. Go to Helius, and adjure him, by the love he bears thee as a parent,

to grant thee some hard favour. See then if he will acknowledge thy claim; or not rather send thee back with disgrace."

"I take thee at thy word," said Phaeton: "I will go to my father at once."

He girded up his loins for the long journey, and travelled on through many lands. At length he came to the far east, where the sun-god has built his palace.

Have you ever, on a bright June morning, risen to see the sun arise? Have you marked the rays of gold, that shoot up through the rifts of the rocky clouds? how every crevice in the black vapour is glowing like a mighty furnace? Have you watched how the mists waxed fuller and fuller of light, till, like precious caskets, they seemed to burst? how the splendour of the morning was poured out upon the earth, and the east kindled more and more, till the broad disk of the sun came up, bringing the perfect day? Then have you seen the palace to which Phaeton bent his steps.

There sat Helius in splendour, with light and beauty by his side. Spring was there with a garland of flowers, Summer with the fruits of the earth; Autumn, brown and hale old man, was wreathed with the laurels of the grape.

"What brings thee hither, Phaeton?" said Helius. "Seldom mortal foot hath passed this threshold. What seekest thou, my son? ask boldly; if it be in my power, I will give it thee?"

"If I am indeed thy son," said Phaeton, "and I claim that honour not vainly, swear to me the inviolable oath that thou wilt grant me the request I shall ask."

So spake he: nor did Helius deny. But he sware by the father of men and gods, and by the inviolable waters of the Styx, that he would verily grant the request of Phaeton, if it lay within the power of a god."

"Give me," said Phaeton, "thy chariot and thy steeds: let me drive one day through the heavens. I have marked thee going forth in splendour, and have longed to mount thy car."

"Alas! my son," answered bright crowned Helius: "thou knowest not what thou askest. Thou, though my son, art mortal; and thou desirest the lot of an immortal. What knowest thou of the path by which I go? of the might of my brazen-footed steeds? How canst thou guide the chariot, that needs my utmost skill? Ask what thou wilt, but ask not this, it is praying for certain destruction. Yet, if thou wilt

insist upon it, I must grant it: the irrevocable oath is sworn."

Phaeton persisted in his demand; he would receive no other gift. And now the morning drew on, and it was time to drive forth from the east. The stars grew pale through the sky: the clouds grew brighter and brighter; and Helius led forth his steeds, and yoked them to his car. The car was of solid gold, decked with gems brighter than those of this earth; the steeds were shod with brass, and breathed fire from their flashing nostrils. And Phaeton well nigh drew back in dismay; but his foolhardiness prevailed to his ruin.

He mounted the chariot, and seized the reins, and the horses flew through the air. Through the clouds, above the mountains, over sea and land, they urged on their course; the hills and valleys, far, far below them, grew grey and indistinct; the world itself seemed lost in the vapours that surrounded it; the great ocean lay stretched beneath like a huge green field; all was still, for not a sound rolled up into the airy desert around. Faster and faster flew the steeds: Phaeton could neither check nor guide them: sometimes they almost mingled with the ocean waves; sometimes they soared aloft, bearing the light far away from

the world. Again they plunged downwards towards the earth; many an ancient forest kindled into a blaze; many a puny stream was dried up at the fountain head: terror and anguish beset the inhabitants of the earth, and Demeter feared for the harvest of the coming year.

Zeus, father of gods and men, looked down from the serene sky. He saw the wild ruin that was overspreading the earth: he marked the ignorance and the terror of Phaeton. He laid his hand on the triple thunderbolt, and cast it at the son of Helius. Headlong he fell from the sky, like a falling star on a frosty night; and the river Eridanus received his mangled corpse.

Such is one of the tales that are founded on some faint remembrance and tradition of that great miracle, when Joshua bade the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon: that day that "there was none like it, before it nor after it, when the LORD hearkened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel."

The Story

OF

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

Orpheus, the son of Phœbus Apollo, had skill on the harp beyond the skill of man. When he passed through the forests, and struck his lyre, the wild beasts forgot their nature, and gambolled after him like a flock of lambs: the flowers bent forward as if to listen to his strains; the trees moved from their places, and followed his steps; and men, far and near, talked of his fame, and gave him the honour of a god.

In process of time, he took to wife Eurydice, the fairest of the maidens of Hellas. Dearly did they love each other; and their home was bright and happy. And so they lived on through many

fair years; and still the fame of Orpheus spread wider and wider, and Eurydice rejoiced in the joy of her husband.

But at length the Fates grew envious of their happiness, and resolved to end it. It chanced that one fair morning of Spring, when the sun was shining as brightly as he only shines in Hellas, Eurydice went forth to walk in the fields. Every blade of grass glistened with dew: from every hedge the birds sang merrily: there was a gentle breeze to whisper to the branches: the distant sound of the torrent came pleasantly from the mountain ravines; and Eurydice sat down beneath an aged oak, on a bank of soft turf. And while she rejoiced in the summer breeze that played with her long hair, and was weaving a garland of spring flowers to twine around her head, she beheld a hyacinth among the tall grass, beautiful as the blue of a mountain sky. She stretched forth her hand for the flower, and a sharp, bitter pain shot up through her arm. For a serpent lay concealed by the hyacinth, and touched her with his deadly tooth.

Orpheus came by that way, and his heart was rent with sorrow. For mortal skill could avail nothing: his Eurydice must go to the House of Hades. Not even could Phœbus Apollo save her,

though he knew the virtues of every plant beneath the sun; not even could Hermes, the friend of man, and the giver of mortal wealth.

For, when the Sun turned his horses to the west, and the heavens were fiery with heat, the hour drew nigh for Eurydice to depart, and her breath came short, and her eyes waxed dim; and darkness gathered around her, and she scarcely knew that Orpheus was beside her. He wept his beloved wife taken away in her youth and beauty; who must change the cheerful light and the pleasant day for the sunless abode of Hades; who must pass the river over which there is no return, and mingle among the gloomy shades. And the Fates cut the thread of her life, and she departed beneath the earth.

For days and months Orpheus wandered through Hellas, flying from the assemblies of men, and dwelling in wild mountains and green glades. His lyre was neglected; he sang no more the wars of men and the praises of the gods; his heart was with his own Eurydice, and he had no pleasure but in thinking of her.

At length he took counsel with himself, and determined to descend alive to the house of Hades. "I will return with Eurydice," he said, "*or* I will remain with her: better to dwell in

her company among the shades, than with others in the light of the sun." He took his lyre in his hand, and went down to the under-world. But when he struck it among those desolate regions, there came peace over the shades; Tantalus and Ixion rested for a little while; and the vulture ceased from devouring the liver of Tityus. The nations of the departed gathered around the bard, and marvelled at the sweetness of his lyre; and among them came Eurydice, and threw her shadowy arms around her husband.

Onward he went, armed with his love, till he came to the palace of Hades. The King of the Shades sat on his throne, and Persephone was by his side; and Orpheus struck his lyre, and prayed them to have pity on his sorrows, and either to restore his Eurydice to his arms or to receive himself into Erebus.

The skill of the bard prevailed, and the heart of Hades was touched. "Take thy wife again," he said, "thou that hast alone of mortals dared to visit the habitations where the More dwell. Take her, and return to the light: but I make one condition to thy success. If thou shalt look back on her as she follows thee, till ye are clear from my realm, she shall again return hither, never more to be won by thy art. Thou art

warned: and if thou shalt neglect my admonition think not to prevail a second time, for I swear by the inviolable Styx, that Eurydice shall abide with me for ever."

Orpheus, in the joy of his heart, began his return to the light. And behind him, trembling with speed and gladness, came the steps of his regained Eurydice. The shades marvelled at the unwonted sight,—that a mortal man should return from Erebus. And still the travellers pressed on their way, till they had almost reached the sunlight.

Then Orpheus could no longer restrain his impatience, and he looked back to the form that he loved so well. That instant Eurydice stretched her arms towards him with a shriek, for the shades drew her backward into Erebus. A moment longer, and he might have gazed his fill: now she was lost to him for ever.

Thenceforward he roamed disconsolately over the earth, and shunned the cities of men, till the Mænades tore him in pieces, because he contemned the rites of Dionysus. And even in the pangs of death, the last word that he uttered was "Eurydice."

The Siege of Platæa.

It was a stormy night in January, four hundred and twenty years before the Christian era. The north wind, sweeping down from the far mountains of Thessaly, roared over the fertile plains of Bœotia, and fell furiously on the besieged garrison, and the besieging army at Platæa. All Greece was then divided into two parties,—that of the Athenians, and that of the Lacedæmonians; for it was the time of what is generally known as the Peloponnesian War. All thoughts of peace had long been cast away: it was plain that the struggle must go on, till one of the parties engaged in it were crushed, and the other completely victorious. At present, the hopes of both were even: no great advantage had been gained by either side; but success seemed gradually favouring the Athenians, and all the great feats of the war had been performed by them.

With the Athenians, the inhabitants of the little town of Platæa had thrown in their portion. Faithfully had they clung to them, through weal and through woe, in the midst of a hostile country: and, too weak to hope to be able to defend themselves, they nevertheless dared every risk, rather than fail in their engagement, and desert their friends.

On this, the Lacedæmonians and Thebans marched against the city with an allied army. The Platæans sent away the women and children, laid in all sorts of provisions, strengthened their fortifications, and determined to hold out to the last. In vain the besiegers tried to take the place by storm: the little garrison beat them back, and they saw that their only hope of taking the town would be by famine.

So they blockaded it in the manner which was usual in those days. They built a strong wall all round the town, sixteen feet in thickness. On the top of this wall were houses and tents for the soldiers, sheltered on both sides by battlements and ramparts; and at intervals of ten battlements, towers were raised on the wall, and of the same width with it; and here the stores were kept, and in bad weather, the sentries sheltered themselves.

By degrees, famine began to do its work; and at last the Platæans found that they must either surrender, or be starved to death. What they determined to do we shall perhaps learn, if we follow one of the many parties which, late as it is, are threading their way by torchlight through the narrow and splashing streets to the Prytaneum or Town Hall, where something of great importance is going on.

The Prytaneum was crowded with the principal men of the garrison, most of them completely armed. There you might see the Bœotian helmet, reckoned the best in Greece; the thorax with its two wings of metal, buttoned at the side with studs of silver or steel; the greaves of massy tin, and the iron gauntlets. Eupompidas, the commander of the forces, stood at the upper end of the hall: by his side was Callias the son of Jason, governor of the city: and they both seemed to be listening with deep attention to Theænetus the augur.

"Platæans," said Callias at length, "why we are now met, ye one and all know, as well as those who summoned you. To-morrow night there will be no bread in the city, and even now there is but a meal of three ounces for each man. What we proposed long ago to do, time and the gods have

brought to perfection: the hour is come in which we must free ourselves; the omens are favourable, and the great risk must be run to-night. We propose to obtain possession of that part of the wall which faces the road to Thebes, and lies just opposite to the temple of Athene of the brazen buckler. If we can carry that, and take the two towers which flank it, then, with the help of the gods, we shall find ourselves in safety: if we fail, it will be better for us to fall by the swords of the enemy, than to pine away by famine in the city."

"Have scaling ladders and all other requisites been provided?" asked Philippides, a man of great influence in the town.

"They have," replied Callias; "and they are even now waiting us at the gate of Hercules the Preserver."

"And how was the right length known?" continued Philippides.

"That was easy," answered Eupompidas. "I counted the rows of bricks in the wall of circumvallation nine or ten times over: I made them each time forty-three or forty-four: that, at six inches each, gives a height of twenty-two feet; and I have caused the ladders therefore to be made twenty-five feet in length."

"I also," said Ammeas, the son of Corœbus, a

young officer of great promise, "have counted the bricks, and my tale of them is the same: nothing has been left undone that the time and our means allow."

"You said," continued Philippides, "that the omens had been consulted. I will pray you, worthy Theænetus, to say what they were."

"I will so," replied the soothsayer. "The ox, that was this morning sacrificed to Jupiter the Preserver, followed of his own accord the minister to the place of slaughter, and seemed almost to stretch out his neck for the stroke. By one blow he fell: the heart was large and full; the liver sound; the blood poured out in a plentiful stream on the ground. The flame rose brightly from the altar: the smoke ascended in a clear volume to heaven; never did I behold more certain signs of assured success."

"Besides," said Ammeas, "grant they had been otherwise, who knows not how Homer sings, that there is one best omen,—the fighting for our country?"

"Aye, by the twin gods," returned Philippides, "but when Hector said that, he was fighting with some hope of success: for us, the attempt is absolutely hopeless. Grant that we cross the ditch unperceived, and are fortunate enough to storm

the wall;—what follows then? Why, the whole army will be alarmed; and it may be very possible that on that selfsame wall we may be blockaded ourselves to-night and taken prisoners to-morrow."

"Well said, by Apollo!" cried three or four voices.

"And I say, O men, singularly ill said," cried Callias; "what hope is there if we remain here? We shall each offer our vow, I suppose, to famine, that like the Cyclops, he may destroy us last."

"Succour may come from Athens," said Philippides: "it is for that I would wait."

"Aye, by Athene, it may, when Cleon can find time to look this way; and that will be about this time next year. No, no! if we wait for that, it will be on the shores of Styx, Philippides."

"I," said Callias, "for one, shall make the attempt, though I make it alone. Who is for sharing it?"

The boldest officers came round him: conspicuous among whom were Ammeas, Theænetus, and Eupompidas. Inquiry was made of the *hoplitæ* (heavy-armed soldiers) without, and among the light-armed; and the muster roll numbered about two hundred and twenty. Nearly as many declared that they had not courage and strength for the attempt.

"At all events, Philippides," said Callias, when the result became known, "you will give us what help you can?"

"By Ares, yes. I may be mistaken, but you shall never call me coward."

"I look not for that, noble Philippides. But you can advantage us much. In the first place, if any outcry or alarm takes place while we are scaling the wall, be ready with a hundred *hoplitæ*, to make a sally on the other side. If the gods favour us, and we make our escape unnoticed, then it will be better for you to remain quiet, and keep within the walls."

"I understand," answered the other. "But the second thing?"

"The second thing is this. If we succeed in our enterprise, the watch-fires will probably give notice of it to Thebes. If you shall see any token of kindling them, do you kindle fires on our own ramparts, and Hephæstus speed you. Thus we shall perplex them, and render their scheme useless."

"All shall be done, most noble Callias, as you have ordered. And for what time does the plan hold?"

"For an hour after midnight," said Callias. "Till then, farewell: I go to arrange my men, and to give final orders."

Still the storm continued. And now the wind shifting to the north-west, and ranging over the bleak mountains of Epirus, came colder and sharper: snow and sleet came driving down together: the sky was black as pitch; and the torches here and there carried about through the streets, glared and flared with ghastly and unnatural brightness.

"By Zeus," said one of the sentinels on the wall, "I can bear this no longer. If I walk here till morning, I shall be a burden for Charon's boat by midday, and I were loth to trouble him yet."

"So were I, by Iolaus," said his fellow, speaking in the broad Bœotian dialect, which bears a nearer resemblance to our Northumbrian than to any other English patois.

"Let us go into the sentinel's house," cried the first speaker, whose name was Xanthias. "I have a good piece of a collix left there, and we will wash it down with a cup of Chian."

"Agreed," said the other. "But what will the Taxiarch say?"

"To the crows with the Taxiarch," cried Xanthias. "He will never trouble himself to come out such a night as this. Hark! did you hear nothing?"

"*Not* I," replied Lysimachus. "Let us go *in; it is* very cold."

So they retreated into the house, and presently woke up the three or four soldiers who were already there; and after bringing forth the collix and the Chian, they betook themselves to playing at dice: it being now about eleven o'clock.

About an hour later, Callias had marshalled his men by the gate of Hercules. He told them of the absolute certainty of an inglorious death by starvation, if they remained in the city; he set before them the great probability of success, if they now made one desperate attempt: he reminded them that the gods favoured the bold; he encouraged them by the hope, in a few short hours, of joining their wives and children at Athens. "Do you then," he concluded, "imitating those great and good men, who, giving their lives for their families, and for our common state, and for the gods of the country, had acquired a deathless renown, who trusting the uncertainty of success to hope, bore with their bodies the brunt of the battle, and after a short crisis of their fate, at the height of glory, not of fear, yielded up their lives,—do you, imitating them, and remembering the virtue of your ancestors, do each that which in you lies, and either lose your lives on the rampart, or win with your own good swords a passage to Athens."

There was a shout of applause among the gallant little band that listened to the speech. "It is well," said Callias: "and we must now lose no time in acting. It is thought good that a small party of light-armed shall first cross the ditch, to plant the ladders: Eupompidas will lead them. Who is for the service?"

Twenty men were soon found; and amidst the roar of the wind, the driving of the sleet, and the pitch darkness, their brave leader marshalled them in the open street, and they moved forward to the Theban gate. There he halted for a moment.

"Now," said he, "every man bare his right foot; it will give him a surer footing in the mud of the ditch, where to fall might be to perish And this above all things: keep we at such distance one from another that our arms may n clash. I firmly believe, it is true, that the sen nels, this bitter night, will have retreated ir their forts; but they are not deaf, though, thar to Zeus the Rainy, the storm is enough to m them blind: and let our watchword to-nigh Hercules the Preserver."

Silently and cautiously they moved acros intervening piece of ground to the enemy's c Softly and deliberately they descended int

the ladders were planted against the walls, and just reached the top; and the little vanguard paused a moment, till the next detachment came up from the city. This was a band of twelve men, armed with short swords. Their leader was Ammeas the son of Corœbus.

"Is it all well done, Eupompidas?" inquired Ammeas in a whisper, as he descended the ditch.

"It is all well," replied the other. "But where have your men left their shields?"

"Their comrades are carrying them behind," said Ammeas. "We shall easily gain these two towers without them: and they might have clashed, and so given the alarm. Callias will be up instantly." And he ordered his men to advance to the ladders.

In the meantime, the sentinels on the wall, Xanthias and his friends, were making themselves merry.

"I wonder," said Xanthias, "how long those Platæan dogs mean to hold out. It is too bad to give us this trouble. They must come out at last; not a man can possibly escape."

"And then such a state as they are in," added Diodotus. "I would not give an obol to live such a life as they have yonder. Why, they say a good-sized rat fetches four drachmæ."

"Pah!" cried Xanthias. "Another cup of Chian, Xenodochus, just to wash away the thought."

"By Iolaus," said Diodotus, breaking off a piece of the collix, "I think the flour gets worse than it was. This cake tastes to me uncommonly musty."

"How pitch dark it is!" cried Xenodochus, looking out along the wall from the door of the turret.

"Dark as Avernus," replied Xanthias. "Put on another log. No chance of the Taxiarch round to-night."

"No, no; Zeus be praised for it," cried Diodotus. "Come, Xenodochus, fill up once more, and let's have a song."

"But if the Taxiarch ——"

"Who can hear such a night as this, twenty yards off? Come, the song."

"Well, then," said Xenodochus. "But first, fill up."

ARISTOMENES AND THE FOX.

A health to all, good comrades mine! now listen while I sing
A song of Aristomenes, Messene's hero king;

How Sparta far and wide he vexed, and Sparta's sons distressed,
Till mothers frightened with his name the infant at the breast.

To-day he was at Pylos: to Pylos went the foe;
And fast and furious came the scouts, with "Pheræ is laid low:"
To Pheræ, Lacedæmon's chiefs went hurrying as they might,
And at Eira Aristomenes was resting from the fight.

He marched to fair Amyclæ, and took the silent town:
He marched to Stenyclerus, and won him great renown:
How vainly then Tyrtæus sang let that Boar's Pillar tell
Where Lacedæmon's cowards fled, and all her bravest fell.

Then out went Sparta's horse and foot, and out went Sparta's kings,
As craftily and cunningly as the wolf on roebuck springs.
They turned Messene's flank by night, and at the break of day
They forced her Aristomenes to halt and stand at bay.

He matched his tens with hundreds, and then made good his fame,
When to the aid of Sparta's ranks the Great Twin Brothers came:
Zeus thundered mightily above, and rain, and fire, and hail
Drave full upon Messene's troops, and made their courage fail.

They have taken Aristomenes, their bravest bind him fast;
And him and all his comrades into Ceadas they cast:
A dark and noisome pit was that, full fifty fathom deep;
And all were dashed to pieces, save their chieftain, on the steep.

Three days and nights, expecting death, Messene's hero lay;
Into the pit, the fourth grey morn, a fox hath found his way:
"'Tis well," quoth Aristomenes, as he turned his head about;
"Where'er a fox can get him in, a man may get him out."

Fast hath he seized him by the tail, and followed where he went,
And through the rocky crannies his winding course he bent:
The kings of Sparta thought him dead,—until there came a scout,
"Aristomenes is leading Messene's thousands out."

"Well sung, by Bacchus," said Xanthias.—"Hush! did you hear nothing?"

"Why, to tell you the truth," said Diodotus, "once or twice, during the last few minutes, I fancied that I heard a sound."

"Pooh, pooh!" cried Xenodochus, "what can there be to be heard?"

"True," said Xanthias, "it must be my *fancy*."

"Hark!" cried Diodotus; "that was not fancy, however." And as he spoke, the clash of a tile was heard, accidentally loosened by one of the ascending Platæans, and falling into the ditch.

"Out, out!" shouted Xanthias.—And at the same moment, Ammeas and six of his men fell in on the sentinels.

"That is well," said Ammeas, as after a short conflict, the three soldiers were cut down.—"Are our friends mounting quickly?"

"Like bees," answered Eupompidas.

"So had they need," said the other; "this noise will alarm the enemy." And presently the blast of a trumpet showed that he spoke truly.

"It is the reserved body," cried Callias, who now came up. "Our men are almost all on the summit of the wall. Then we have but to lower the ladders on the other side."

"Look, look!" cried Eupompidas; "they are sending the fire signals to Thebes."

As he spoke, a column of fire shot up from the middle of the besieging army; and was answered by another beacon on the hill called from Amphion, near the gate of Hercules.

"By the twin gods," said Callias, "they will bring them down upon us, if Philippides be not quick with his counter signal."

"There it goes then," exclaimed Theænetus. And from the heart of the city a long, thin tongue of fire quivered up into the sky.

"We take the road to Thebes," said Callias, as the vanguard were making preparations for the descent. "Then we will strike off by Hysiæ and Erythræ to the Attic border."

Philippides was on the rampart by the gate of Hercules, when seven of the soldiers who had been alarmed by the falling tile, and turned back, craved for admittance.

"What news, comrades?" asked Philippides.

"The worst," said one of the soldiers; "Callias and his friends are now supping in Hades."

Sadly and slowly, next morning, a flag of truce went to the besieging army; and Philippides, who bore it, was admitted to the tent of Archidamus.

"Ye war not with the dead," said the Platæan. "I come to ask for a truce of one day, that we commit the bodies of those who fell in the vain attempt of last night to the flame."

Archidamus looked at him sternly. "Your looks cannot belie you," he said; "you must lie under a mistake. If I thought you were taunting me, by Ares, your character should scarcely *protect* you."

"Taunting you?" said Philippides; "I am amazed."

"Your comrades made their escape," said Archidamus; "and though an enemy I must say that it was admirably contrived. One only fell into our hands: his body shall be given to you as you ask."

And the two hundred and ten safely reached Athens; and, in gratitude for their faithfulness, were enrolled among its free citizens.

The Deliverance of Thebes.

It was a calm moonlight night in Spring. The crags and peaks of Mount Cithæron sometimes stood gloriously forth in the splendour of the full moon: sometimes hid themselves in the dark shadow of oak, laurel-grove, or cork-tree. There was not a sound to be heard save the distant rushing of the mountain torrent; and the occasional hooting of the owl from the darker recesses of the ravines. The dew lay thick on the tender grass that skirted the mountain path: cactus and foxglove and wild rose were clad in its thick white vest. It was three hours past midnight, and in more northern climes day would long ago have broken; but here all was still perfectly dark, and

there was not one streak of silver in the eastern sky.

On the mountain path that leads from Attica to Thebes, some half-mile on the southern side before the road attains the summit of the pass, two men on horseback might have been seen slowly and cautiously ascending, one behind the other. They wore the appearance of hunters, and were followed by three or four dogs: yet, on a second glance you would have noticed that they were much more completely armed than there ever could be occasion for hunters to be; that their horses, animals of great strength, though now wearied and jaded out, were much better qualified for the field of battle than for the chase, and that the faces of the riders wore an expression of stern fixed resolution, not unmixed with something very much like despair, as far as possible removed from the frank and jovial countenance of the hunter, at the daybreak of a long day of sport. They pursued the mountain path, which wound along the edge of the precipice, for some little way, till it passed a little piece of table land, in which, from under the shadow of a high rock, a clear streamlet sprang forth, and where the tall rank grass amply testified the richness of the soil.

"Excellent Pelopidas," said the hindermost

rider, "if I do not give my horse some rest, he will never see Thebes to-day. He has tasted nothing since we left Eleusis, and I fear me he cannot hold out without food half-an-hour longer. Pray you let us rest here awhile : it will be none the worse for your steed, too, though he holds out better than mine."

"Be it as you wish, worthy Mellon," said Pelopidas, reining in his horse and alighting. "Take off their bits, and let them make a good meal. And we ourselves may as well share the flask of Lesbian that Theopompus gave us at Athens. These night dews strike cold."

"They do," returned Mellon; "it is cold work without, and cold within, too. Never did exiles devise a more desperate scheme than ours; and never, I fear, was any plan carried into execution with less hope of success."

"I say not that," replied Pelopidas. "You know not how strong is the popular feeling at Thebes against Sparta, because you were not in the city when Phœbidas so treacherously seized our citadel. Never was there so flagrant a violation of all rights of nations, of all law and justice, of all fear of an avenging Erinnys, as when he, a Lacedæmonian officer, the general of a nation professedly at peace with us, seized our Cadmea

without pretence of reason, and from allies converted us into slaves. Why, even at Sparta itself the very dread of shame obliged them to disclaim that action. They punished the officer for the crime; but the gain of the crime they retained, and retain it still."

"Even so," said Mellon, "and they have ruled with an iron rod ever since. What hope is there that we, exiles at Athens for so long, can, by our return, bring any solid advantage to this conspiracy of the popular party?"

"Things are not so quiet," answered Pelopidas, "as you deem. I am told that the popular feeling is strongly in favour of some attempt; that the Bœotian Polemarchs in the Prytaneum, and the Lacedæmonian Harmosts in the citadel, are alike hateful; and that there needs but the leaders, and the troops will speedily be found."

"How comes it to pass, then," inquired Mellon, "that your great and good friend Epaminondas will not be of us?"

"I cannot tell," answered the other; "but from no motive of fear, of that be certain. I am in hopes that I shall prevail upon him to join us, when I see him: words of mouth are wont to be much more persuasive than letters."

"Hark!" cried Mellon: "heard you nothing from the north?"

"No," said Pelopidas, laying his hand however on his sword; "did you?"

"I thought I distinguished a horse; but I might be mistaken. No! there it is again."

"By Athene, you are right! Better mount: we shall be the better prepared."

"Better still lead the horses up yonder cleft: no one will suspect that there is room to hide there."

The two friends accordingly took refuge in the place of concealment that Mellon had mentioned; and waited there with patience for some ten minutes.

"It is but a single horseman," observed Pelopidas, as the sound of the horsehoofs grew plainer.

"What if it should be our own messenger?" said Mellon.

"Hardly possible," replied the other, "that he should have returned so soon: however, let us forth and see."

They issued back into the road accordingly; and in a few moments their doubts were at an end.

"Welcome, good Cleisthenes!" cried Pelopidas. "Why, Hermes must have lent you his wings!"

"Not quite, excellent Pelopidas: but I have *not spared* my horse."

"And what news?"

"Brave tidings, brave tidings indeed! Our friends meet at Charon's house, down in the street of Dionysus: you remember worthy Charon; an excellent man, notwithstanding his ill-omened name; and the attempt is to be made to-night. Our worthy friend Phyllidas gives a banquet to the Polemarchs, Archias and Philippus: and when they are heated with wine, the conspirators are to fall on them, and to proclaim liberty. All are anxious for you, and the rest of the exiles."

"We separated on the other side of the mountain," said Mellon: "thinking that many small parties would be safer than one large one. We are ready to press on at once. And look! day is breaking yonder, and reminding us that no time is to be lost."

That same evening, the conspirators, to the number of forty-eight, met in the hall of Charon's house. It was a gallant struggle in which they were about to be engaged. Forty-eight men undertook to restore liberty to an enslaved city: to master the Theban Polemarchs, then in the height of their power; to reduce the Lacedæmonian garrison, then in possession of the Cadmea; to turn the popular will, and to install themselves in the government. They met, like men about to throw

for a great stake, and knowing that they had no right to complain if they failed; but yet full of hopes, and resolved to stand by each other till the last.

"The plan that has been deemed best," said Charon, "I will now briefly explain, though to some of you it is already well known. Our noble friend Phyllidas entertains the Polemarchs, Archias and Philippus, to-night."

"Why does he not entertain also Leontiades, the most dangerous of the Polemarchs?" asked a conspirator.

"That was arranged by us," said Charon, "for this reason. Archias and Philippus are given to excess: they are mere brutal revellers, given up to riot and debauchery of every kind; and the other members of the government will follow their example, so that we may expect to have no difficulty in overpowering them. But with Leontiades the case is very different. He is as abstemious as a prophet; and though an enemy and a tyrant, I will do him the justice to say, that as he is temperate in all things himself, so he is the perpetual enemy of all excess in others. He would not only have been a bar to the intoxication of Callias and Philippus, but he would have had open eyes for any suspicious movement, which Phyllidas, or any

other of our friends, might have found it necessary to make. We shall find Leontiades at home, and overpower him as a single man: the strength of the government will be with the revellers."

"It is wisely ordered," said Pelopidas. "And who is to undertake the leadership of the attack on Archias? and at what signal?"

"We had arranged," replied Charon, "that that office should be allotted to Mellon and to myself. Phyllidas has promised, at a late hour of the evening, to send for some Theban matrons to amuse the licentious Archias with their dances. As matrons, then, some of us are to be disguised; some as mere revellers; and we doubt not thus to elude observation till we are in the hall. Yourself, noble Pelopidas, if you so will, are to lead the party, that is to attack Leontiades; there is no stratagem there,—all honest straightforward work; and therefore I know that it will please you better."

"You have judged rightly, excellent Charon. And, supposing us successful in both these attacks, what follows next?"

"Set all the political prisoners at liberty, put arms in their hands, and then scour the streets, and summon all true Thebans to rise in the cause of freedom."

"And will the summons be listened to?" asked Cephisodoras, one of the conspirators.

"Doubt it not," answered Charon. "I have no dread of failure: if we are but true to ourselves, the gods will be true to us."

At this moment one of the slaves of Charon entered the room.

"What is it, Sosias?" demanded his master.

"A Toxotes (policeman) from the Polemarchs has a message for your honour."

Charon turned pale. "All must be discovered," he said. "What shall we do? Sally out at once, and fall on the Polemarchs as we are? It may be our only chance."

"Best wait," said Pelopidas, "till we hear what the message is which the Toxotes may bring. It may not be connected with our plot."

"Bring him in, Sosias," said Charon.

The Toxotes, a broad-built burly Scythian, was ushered in. "His excellency the Polemarch," said he, in his patois, "requests that Charon will have the goodness to step down to him at the house of Phyllidas; something important has happened, in which he wishes to have his counsel."

"Step into the court, worthy Toxotes," answered Charon; "I will be with you anon. It

is too clear," he continued, when the man was gone. "All is discovered."

"It bears a strange aspect," said Pelopidas. "The question is, what is to be done? Shall we follow your first thought, and sally out?"

"It seems to me," observed Mellon, "that if any information had reached the Polemarchs, at least affecting Charon, they would have taken better precautions to secure him. One poor Toxotes could do nothing against us, were we disposed to fall on him."

"Moreover," said Cephisodorus, "I think our friend Phyllidas would have contrived to give us a hint, had there been any danger. He has his slaves about him, and could surely have despatched one here."

"Still," said Pelopidas, "I do not like Charon's going. To say the least, he is exposing himself to imminent danger."

"So I am," answered Charon: "but what other course? I will go. If I neither return nor send in the course of an hour, conclude that something has occurred, and use your own wisdom as to rising. You will be hardly worse off then than now: and therefore my going will give our plan another chance, because I may prove that it is altogether a false alarm. I leave my little son

Lysimachus as a pledge that, happen what may to me, I will not betray my friends."

"The gods preserve you!" cried three or four. And Charon, going out into the court, said to the Toxotes, "Let us go."

The sun had set about half an hour; the sky was a clear deep cloudless blue, save that, where a break in the buildings gave here and there a glimpse to the west, the horizon, toward the mountains of Acarnania, was green as spring foliage. There were not many citizens about, though the gentle southern breeze seemed to invite them forth after the heat of the day; and Charon walked on, occupied with his own sad meditations, and hardly exchanging more than a word or two with the Toxotes, till they reached the house of Phyllidas, where the wreaths with which the entrance was hung, the concourse of slaves, and the sound of merriment from within, proved that the banquet was going on. In fact, Phyllidas, who, though so deeply engaged in the conspiracy, was secretary to the Polemarchs, was giving what would now-a-days be called a "grand ministerial dinner."

The room into which Charon was ushered presented rather a different appearance from that of such an entertainment in our times.

Round the table, which was of sandal wood, ornamented at the corners and centre with plates of silver, and not covered with any linen, were placed six sofas, covered with purple cloth, two at each side, and one at the top and bottom, respectively. In each of these sofas five guests reclined; the feet of the uppermost guest placed behind the back of the second, whose head was about on a level with the breast of the first. Archias occupied the highest seat at the top of the table: the other polemarch Philippus, the highest on the upper sofa at the right side of the table; and Phyllidas the same position on the left. So that Archias and Phyllidas were next to each other, the corner of the table intervening between them.

"Ha! good Charon," cried Archias, who, though the "second table" (i. e., dessert) had not long been served, was perceptibly the worse for what he had taken,—"Ha! good Charon! you are welcome. We can make room for you here somewhere. I sent for you on public business, but by Demeter I have almost forgotten what it was—another glass of Chian will refresh my memory."

"Lie down here, Charon," said his friend Phyllidas, making room for him next to, and

below himself. "All is safe," he whispered, as Charon did so; "all is safe, only be prudent when the polemarch speaks to you."

"Now that we have drunk to the Good Genius," cried Philippus, who was "king" of the feast, "I will give you a health, which you shall drink with six cups. I drink in pure wine to Archias."

After the confusion of doing honour to the health had passed by, and Archias had drunk to the host, "This is a strange business," he said, "Charon."

"To what does the Polemarch refer?" asked Charon.

"They say," he replied, "that some of those democratical vagabonds have returned from Athens, and Pelopidas among them; and that they are mad enough to think of a revolution."

"Not very likely," said Charon: "the government is too ably exercised to leave them much chance of that. Besides," he added, with great presence of mind, "though I entirely differ from them, I have, as you are aware, some relations among the exiles, and I think it hardly possible that they should be in the city without my having recognised them."

"Well," said the Polemarch, "my brain, somehow, is hardly fit for much business to-night.

Why, Demophoon," he cried, to a low hanger-on of the Government, at the further end of the table, "are you going to take off that goblet *amysti?*" (at a breath.)

"Even so, excellent Archias," replied the parasite: and, having accomplished the feat, he sank down insensible from the sofa.

"I propose a health," cried Archias—"Chariclea, a cup to a letter."

Just as the toast was finished, a slave entered, with considerable perturbation in his face.

"Sir," said he to Archias, "I have just received this paper from the hierophant, your namesake. The business is most important, and he prays you to read it instantly."

"It must wait till to-morrow," answered the Polemarch.

"He says, sir, that it cannot wait; it has reference to a conspiracy."

Phyllidas, who knew that Archias the hierophant, though an Athenian, was entirely opposed to all democratical attempts, was in agony lest, at the last moment, the whole scheme should be discovered. Perceiving that Archias was too much excited to be able to read the despatch, he said quickly,

"Shall I look through it?"

The Polemarch gave it him, and thereby signed his own death-warrant.

"Ah," said he, when he had looked at it, "this is important, very important indeed. We have the names, sir, of the conspirators; and to-morrow we may crush the whole plot."

"That's well," said the Polemarch. By this time, the noise of the debauch was so overpowering that no attempt at conversation was made; and in a few moments more, Phyllidas whispered to Charon, "Now go home, and bid Mellon come."

Charon stole away from the table, but not so quickly as not to excite the Polemarch's attention.

"Who's that?" he cried. "What! Charon gone?"

"Yes," replied Phyllidas, carelessly. "A drinking-bout does not suit his head."

"Oh the Agathodæmonista!"* cried Archias; and he thought no more about him.

Charon returned just within the hour; and his friends, who had begun to despair, were raised to the very height of hope. "On with your dis-

* A term of reproach to one who would not drink, as refusing all cups except that of the Agathos Dæmon,—the Good Genius.

guises," he cried; "both the revellers and the women! And you, Pelopidas, look to your armour: you will need it against Leontiades."

Meantime the revel went on; and in about half an hour Charon returned and took his place, saying to Phyllidas, "They are at the door."

"Noble Archias," said Phyllidas, "certain fair Theban dames are waiting admission to the banquet. Is it your pleasure that they enter?"

"By Zeus, yes," answered the Polemarch, attempting to rise, but immediately sitting down.

The door opened: the women and the revellers entered; and two of the former, remarkable for their great height (they were none other than Mellon and Cephisodorus) came forward with a garland, as if to place it on the head of Archias. The Polemarch turned towards them, and at the same moment received the dagger of Mellon in his breast. Another second, and Philippus was a corpse by his side; and one or two more of the most obnoxious of the oligarchical party were in like manner struck down.

"Friends and countrymen," said Mellon, throwing off his disguise, "this is a necessary sacrifice to Liberty. No one else here shall suffer: nay, I invite you all to share the happiness we have won for you: those who choose to join us, join

us: those who do not, stay and finish the banquet." And such deep hatred was felt to the Spartan cause, that nearly all the guests attached themselves to the body of the conspirators.

"Now then, to the prison!" cried Mellon.

In the meanwhile, a very different scene was going on in the house of Leontiades. He was seated in a room next to the gate, his usual apartment. His sword hung on a peg from the wall—so did his shield; for those were not times when it was safe to be long without, or far from them. But he himself was completely unarmed; a tall, noble-looking, somewhat stern man: at least, you would have called him stern, unless you had seen the affectionate looks he ever and anon cast at his wife, who was spinning at his side. She, scarcely beyond her girlhood, was just learning to assume the airs of a Grecian matron; sometimes busily pursuing her task, sometimes talking to her husband, sometimes bending over an infant that lay in a cradle by her side.

"No, no, Theugenis," said Leontiades, "they know their place, and I know mine. Archias is never happy but at the banquet; I am never so happy as when these Theban affairs, the management whereof, Zeus be my witness, I covet not, leave me an hour for my own hearth."

"Would that you could give them up with honour!" said Theugenis. "I am not a Lacedæmonian matron, but a poor little Bœotian 'hare;' and I live in continual dread of what these conspiracies, of which every day brings so many rumours, may bring forth."

"The post is not without danger," replied her husband; "but with honour I could not for the present leave it, and without that, I am sure you could not wish me to retire from it."

"No, by the twin goddesses," replied Theugenis. "At all events, I may wish a less stormy republic for my little Damocles here."

"So do I," said Leontiades. "Hark! what is that?" And, as he spoke, a demand for admittance was heard at the outer gate, followed, it seemed, by the entry of a body of men. Before Leontiades could reach his sword, the door of the room opened, and Cephisodorus, Pelopidas, and the rest of that party of the conspirators entered.

"What is the matter?" said the Polemarch, advancing towards them, and drawing his sword.

"Democracy has triumphed," replied Cephisodorus. "Go, and join Archias in Hades."

"Go you first thither," cried Leontiades, cutting him down. Theugenis threw herself between the conspirators and her husband, and might pro-

bably have fallen a victim to her love, had not Pelopidas humanely forced her from the room, till the bloody deed was completed, and she was a widow, and her baby fatherless.

Next morning, the success of the popular party was complete. In a few days, the Lacedæmonian garrison surrendered; and Thebes, from being the slave, became the most formidable rival of Sparta.

Alexander at Jerusalem.

It pleased God that the great kingdom of Persia, of the foundation of which we read in the book of Daniel,—how Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was slain in the selfsame night in which he had committed sacrilege, and Darius the Median took the kingdom, being threescore and two years old,—should now at length, after lasting about 200 years, be drawing to an end. He raised up Alexander, king of Macedon, who, not content with reigning over all Greece, crossed over into Persia, and determined to subdue it. And though he had but a handful of men, and Darius the emperor had many hundred thousand soldiers, the Greeks conquered the Persians in two great battles, at the Granicus and Issus, and now penetrated the very heart of the kingdom. Alexander laid siege to Tyre, one of the strongest cities in the world;

and after great difficulty, and greater loss, he took it. For you will remember that the destruction of Tyre had been foretold by the prophet Ezekiel: and therefore it was in vain that the inhabitants put forth all their skill in making engines to resist the attacks of the enemy, and did feats of valour which will make them for ever famous in history: their time was come: and, in opposing Alexander, they were, in reality, only fighting against GOD.

While he was pressing forward the siege, he needed not only provisions for his soldiers, but wood, and tools, and stone, to carry on the walls and bridges, by which he hoped to, and did at last, take the city. Now no city was so able to furnish these things as Jerusalem, which, as you know, lay at no great distance from Tyre. To Jerusalem he therefore sent an embassy, and the persons to whom he had given this business in charge called an assembly of the people, and told them what Alexander was doing and what he wanted; and called on them to furnish him with all things necessary for the undertaking.

Then the Jews were in sore distress. The ambassadors were requested to retire from the assembly for a little while, and the rulers of the people and the elders discussed the matter among

themselves. Jaddua, a venerable old man, was high priest at that time, and to him the Jews looked up for his advice and direction.

"My brethren," he began, "we are this day in a sore strait. Since our fathers returned from the captivity of Babylon, though it has never pleased GOD that we should be entirely free, as in the old time, when our dominion was from one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end, yet have we enjoyed peace, and plenty, and happiness, under the kings of Persia. They built for us the temple wherein we serve GOD: they have given us sundry great and unusual privileges: they have protected us against all our adversaries, and more especially against our cruel enemies the Samaritans: they are our true and well-deserving lords, and even from the time of Nehemiah downwards, we are bound in duty to pray for the life of the king and of his sons. Now GOD has raised up an enemy against the kingdom of Persia, who has defeated its armies, and put its king to flight, and, I think, will entirely subdue it to himself. For I doubt not that this Alexander is the he-goat whereof spake Daniel the prophet, which came in the fury of his choler upon the ram from the west, and smote him to the ground, and there was none that could deliver him out of his

power. Nevertheless, while Darius yet reigns, we are his subjects: neither can we, with an upright conscience, assist his enemy. My counsel therefore is, that we refuse to do that which these men demand. The issue of the matter is in GOD'S hands. Alexander, I well know, will be full of wrath; and when he has conquered Tyre, he will march against this holy city. But if it be GOD'S will that we shall suffer, it never can be His will that we should sin. He can, if He so please, hide us from the gathering together of the wicked, and from the insurrection of the wicked doers; but if not, we had better suffer the worst from the hands of the barbarians, than betray our lawful sovereign, and do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD."

To him the greater part of the people gave ear, and affirmed that he spake well, and like a true high priest of GOD. But there were not wanting some that gainsaid; and loudest among them was Simon, the son of Josaphat.

"What!" he cried, "are we to give up this city to destruction because we have hitherto obeyed the kings of Persia, and may not rebel against them now? What right had they at the first to rule over us? Were we not as free as they by nature? Answer me this, O Jaddua:

Did Hezekiah commit sin when he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not? Did he not rather thereby win for himself great honour, insomuch that it is written of him, that 'he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did?' and did not the LORD Himself work out a mighty salvation for him, and slay in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand men? And yet again: thou hast thyself confessed that this Alexander's success is spoken of by Daniel the prophet: if therefore we fight against him, we fight against GOD, and how can that be well pleasing to the LORD?"

The crowd, as all crowds, gave more ear to the last speaker, and affirmed that the counsel of Simon, the son of Josaphat, was better than the counsel of Jaddua, the high priest. Whereupon the old man rose up the second time.

"True it is," he said, "O Simon, that Hezekiah, in rebelling against the king of Assyria, did that which was well pleasing to GOD. But the sceptre was not then departed from Judah: kings had their court and their palace in Jerusalem: and the LORD manifestly showed both by other ways, and also by His servants the prophets, that it was they, and not any foreign princes, whom He

had appointed to be shepherds of His people Israel. But now the case is far other. For the sins of the people and the iniquity of the priests, the LORD hath broken the kingdom of Jerusalem. He gave us into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and decreed that we should serve him, neither hath He ever reversed that decree. So that as our fathers served him and his sons after him, so do we at this day serve the kings of Persia, who have succeeded to his throne: neither are we at liberty to cast off their yoke, unless we had some express command of GOD by a prophet. But who is there here present that will profess to have such a message for us? Rather is that come upon us which is written in the book of Psalms, 'We see not our tokens, there is not one prophet more: no, not one is there among us that understandeth any more.' And again, though it may be GOD'S will that Alexander should prevail—which is as yet only matter of belief—that cannot absolve us from our allegiance to Darius. It was GOD'S will,—that is, it was so ordered of His providence,—that Zimri should slay his master; but who will therefore be so bold as to say that he rightly and justly slew him?"

With such like arguments the old man per-

suaded the people to his will. The ambassadors were called in, and courteously prayed to forgive the Jews, if they could not comply with the request of Alexander. It was not, they said, out of any contempt to him; but only because they feared to violate an oath, and because they ought to obey GOD rather than man.

Full of wrath the ambassadors returned to Alexander; and he himself was furious when he heard the result of their message. "By Olympian Zeus," he said, "it is not to be tolerated that a few poor superstitious men, the scum of all nations, and the slaves of slaves, should dare to dispute the will of the conqueror of Persia. When I have overthrown Tyre, I will raze Jerusalem to the ground."

In process of time Tyre was taken, and Alexander called to mind his determination. And the Jews presently heard that the conquering Macedonians were in full march on the holy city. Assembly after assembly was held, but no resolution was come to. Some proposed to fortify the walls, which were much decayed, for it had never been permitted to repair them since the time of Nehemiah: some counselled to bury all the precious things that could easily be removed, and to retire into the southern wilderness till the storm

went by: some would fain send an embassy to the conqueror with rich presents, and thus endeavour to turn away his indignation. But the people were in great distress, and every one looked that the city must infallibly a second time be sacked and burned.

At last, when it was known for certain that Alexander was only one day's march from Jerusalem, Jaddua stood forth in the assembly with a joyful countenance. "My brethren," said he, "it is well written concerning the LORD, 'Thou spakest sometimes in visions.' For by a vision last night hath the manner been revealed to me how we may save this city. We are not to trust in our bow, it is not our shield that shall help us; we are not to give rich presents by way of a peace offering, nor yet to retire into the wilderness. We are to morrow to go forth in procession to the conqueror, and GOD will turn his heart to be our friend. For it is written, 'The heart of the king is in the hand of GOD; whithersoever He will, He turneth it.'"

None doubted the truth of the old man's words, and all departed to their homes with glad hearts. Bright and cloudless was the next sunrise. Far to the east, the hill country of Judea glowed like steel on the anvil: the tall palms waved their

heads in the soft spring air; the bananas rustled pleasantly to the breeze; the brook Cedron murmured on in its everlasting flow: and from the gate of Gaza a goodly band issued forth towards the south. First went Jaddua the high priest, in his robes of gold and crimson; the breastplate with its twelve precious stones on his breast; the golden mitre with the incommunicable name of the GOD of Israel on his forehead: behind him, four and four, came the priests in their robes of fine linen, pomegranates and bells, and lastly the Levites with their holy censers, and a great multitude of men, women, and children from the city. And evermore as they went they chanted—and the chant was undoubtedly not so far removed from our own Gregorians—what may be called the national anthem of the Jews, the anthem that had so often heralded a victory—"O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever." On they went, across the plain of Rephaim; and evermore as they proceeded their courage waxed higher and their hopes brighter, that He Who had in times past wrought such wonders for His chosen people, Who had smitten great kings, and slain famous kings, would remember His heritage in their low estate, and deliver them from the power of the enemy.

At length they began to ascend the rising ground at Sapha, — now called Beth-Safafa, — when they beheld the spears of the Macedonian phalanx advancing over its summit. Then indeed many a cheek grew pale, and many a heart beat fast, as they gazed on that terrible body, never conquered, never to be conquered; that had overthrown princes, potentates, and satraps, and all the flower of Asia; now furious at having been refused their demand, breathing slaughter, and eager for prey. What had they themselves to oppose to all this? Nothing but the unseen might of prayer; nothing but faith in That GOD Who is the LORD of armies; nothing but trust in His servant's revelation of His will. They that came behind Jaddua afterwards affirmed that even *his* steps faltered for a moment—but it was only for a moment. Then recovering himself, he said in a low and deep voice, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the GOD of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied."

And now the foremost ranks of the Macedonian phalanx were advancing in full sight over the hill. Brightly the sun glittered on shield and buckler; on *mitre* of brass and steel thorax; the golden rays seemed to dance on a dark and undulating sea of

metal, above which played the white crests, like foam on the wave. As soon as the officer in command of the guard beheld the advancing procession, not knowing whether it came for peace or for war, he called a halt, and gave orders for the military motion called the *Exeligmos cata zuga:* and when this dreaded Macedonian countermarch was begun, Jaddua gave orders that the Jewish procession should also halt.

A horseman was presently observed to be despatched to the rear: and in a few moments another officer, apparently of much higher rank, rode forward from the now stationary lines of the Macedonians. Mounted on the noble horse Bucephalus, he cantered onward; and the light circle of gold round his helmet, would have sufficiently marked him as Alexander, had not his general appearance, height, strength, grace, and commanding sufficiently pointed him out as the conqueror of the world.

"Let the king live for ever!" said Jaddua, moving forward to meet him. "We are the servants of the Most High GOD, who thought ourselves of late bound in conscience to refuse your royal commands; not that we wanted respect to your Majesty, but that we have learned to fear the King of kings rather than any earthly power.

Now we are come forth to submit ourselves to your will, whether it be to destroy us, or (which better befits a conqueror) to show us mercy. If our law bids us refuse that which it forbids, it bids us also suffer with patience the consequences of such a refusal."

To the astonishment of Macedonians and Jews, Alexander dismounted, and did reverence to the old man. "Marvel not at this, Parmenio," he said. "In a dream which I had when we lay at Dium, I beheld the very appearance of this aged Priest; and it was told me that he was a true servant of the High GOD, and that as I would prosper in this expedition, I must show him reverence. Lead me, old man, to your temple: I have heard much of it, and would fain do worship and sacrifice there to your GOD."

It was a glorious sight in Jerusalem, as the procession wound up Mount Moriah, Alexander and a few of his principal officers by the side of the High Priest. The white marble of the Temple walls glittered like snow in the noonday sun: the great altar in the court of the Gentiles was prepared for worship. Alexander stood by and bowed his head while the Priest offered a burnt-offering in his name: the smoke of the victim ascended to heaven, and the multitudes within

and without adored the GOD That had brought to pass this great wonder.

Then Jaddua brought forth the book of the law, and thus spake: "Hear, O King, what a Prophet of GOD, Daniel by name, spake two hundred years ago, concerning thee and thy conquests this day." And he read him the prophecy of the he-goat, and its interpretation concerning the King of Grecia.

Conclusion.

I HAVE now told you some few of the most beautiful stories of Heathen Mythology; and have tried to set before you some of the great truths which they contain, or may be supposed to contain. You have been taught in the fable of the Sirens, to shut your ears against all the pleasant temptations of our ghostly enemy: in the story of the Lotus Eaters, to look upon yourselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world, and to forbear from ever tasting the dangerous sweetness of sin: in that of Medusa, to "take to yourselves the whole armour of GOD," in fighting against the strength and the craft of the devil. In the tales of Alcestis and Orpheus you found some faint tradition of a resurrection from the dead: and so in different ways you have seen the heathen, in the midst of their darkness, feeling, as S. Paul

expresses it, "after GOD, if haply they might find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

This reflection of truth, in heathen fables, is very much such as the reflection of the sky on a stormy lake. You may just catch the blue heaven shining in its tumultuous waters; and you think that what they thus reflect must be in itself very fair. But the image is broken, disfigured, disturbed; it has lost not only all the peace and quiet of the original, but it throws it altogether out of proportion; it lengthens some parts, it foreshortens others; it is a very false copy of a most true type.

Now, in reading all such stories, it is necessary to bear in mind that, whatever in them is true and beautiful, comes from Him Who is the Fountain of truth and beauty; while all that is evil, all that is disgusting, all that is distressing in them is the inventor's own. How deep was the wickedness, how horrible the corruption that reigned in those same times, you happily know not yet; and when the time comes that you must learn, GOD give you grace so to look, that your eyes may be turned away from beholding vanity; so to walk that your white robes may not be defiled. Something of that wickedness S. Paul will tell

you: how "GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; backbiters, haters of GOD, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:" or, as he sums it up in another place, "serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful and hating one another."

But the greatest danger of reading such stories as I have been telling you arises from this. We are tempted to think, when we see so much truth and so much beauty in the fables of a vile and false religion that, after all, a man's faith cannot matter so very much; that there is some truth in all forms of belief, and that, so long as a man lives a virtuous life according to his creed, it is no great matter what that creed is. This is a most dangerous error: it is worse than heresy, because, so to speak, it embraces all heresies. It is enough to remember what our Church has pronounced of such a doctrine. "They also are to be held accursed that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he pro-

fesseth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature."

From these two dangers, that of having your imaginations polluted with the impure tales of heathen mythology, and that of being so enchanted with its beauties as to forget that it was an accursed system, GOD of His great mercy deliver you: so giving you to separate the good from the evil, so totally to abhor the evil, and so to view the good as the remains and tradition of a higher and holier system, that you may walk unhurt over this, one of the most perilous portions of our great enemy's kingdom.

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