

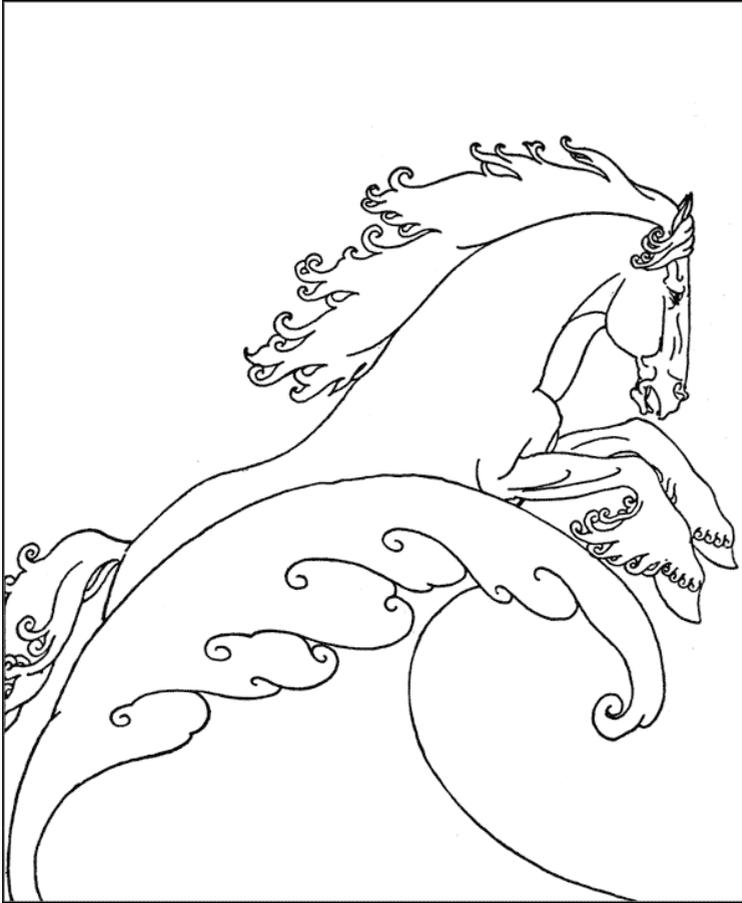
[150] them in the night. They wrapped their heads in their cloaks, and, fasting, they laid themselves down.

Jason crouched beside the ship, so troubled that his life nearly went from him. He saw Medea huddled against a rock and with her hair streaming on the sand. He saw the men who, with all the bravery of their lives, had come with him, stretched on the desert sand, weary and without hope. He thought that they, the best of men, might die in this desert with their deeds all unknown; he thought that he might never win home with Medea, to make her his queen in Iolcus.

He lay against the side of the ship, his cloak wrapped around his head. And there death would have come to him and to the others if the nymphs of the desert had been unmindful of these brave men. They came to Jason. It was midday then, and the fierce rays of the sun were scorching all Libya. They drew off the cloak that wrapped his head; they stood near him, three nymphs girded around with goatskins.

“Why art thou so smitten with despair?” the nymphs said to Jason. “Why art thou smitten with despair, thou who hast wrought so much and hast won so much? Up! Arouse thy comrades! We are the solitary nymphs, the warders of the land of Libya, and we have come to show a way of escape to you, the Argonauts.

[151] “Look around and watch for the time when Poseidon’s great horse shall be unloosed. Then make ready to pay recompense to the mother that bore you all. What she did for you all, that you all must do for her; by doing it you will win back to the land of Greece.” Jason heard them say these words and then he saw them no more; the nymphs vanished amongst the desert mounds.



Then Jason rose up. He did not know what to make out of what had been told him, but there was courage now and hope in his heart. He shouted; his voice was like the roar of a lion calling to his mate. At his shout his comrades roused themselves; all squalid with the dust of the desert the Argonauts stood around him.

“Listen, comrades, to me,” Jason said, “while I speak of a strange thing that has befallen me. While I lay by the side of our

ship three nymphs came before me. With light hands they drew away the cloak that wrapped my head. They declared themselves to be the solitary nymphs, the warders, of Libya. Very strange were the words they said to me. When Poseidon's great horse shall be unloosed, they said, we were to make the mother of us all a recompense, doing for her what she had done for us all. This the nymphs told me to say, but I cannot understand the meaning of their words."

There were some there who would not have given heed to Jason's words, deeming them words without meaning. But even as he spoke a wonder came before their eyes. Out of the far-off sea a great horse leaped. Vast he was of size and he had a golden mane. He shook the spray of the sea off his sides and mane. Past them he trampled and away toward the horizon, leaving great tracks in the sand.

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Then Nestor spoke rejoicingly. "Behold the great horse! It is the horse that the desert nymphs spoke of, Poseidon's horse. Even now has the horse been unloosed, and now is the time to do what the nymphs bade us do.

"Who but *Argo* is the mother of us all? She has carried us. Now we must make her a recompense and carry her even as she carried us. With untiring shoulders we must bear *Argo* across this great desert.

"And whither shall we bear her? Whither but along the tracks that Poseidon's horse has left in the sand! Poseidon's horse will not go under the earth—once again he will plunge into the sea!"

So Nestor said and the Argonauts saw truth in his saying. Hope came to them again—the hope of leaving that desert and coming to the sea. Surely when they came to the sea again, and spread the sail and held the oars in their hands, their sacred ship would make swift course to their native land!

VIII. The Carrying of the Argo



WITH the terrible weight of the ship upon their shoulders the Argonauts made their way across the desert, following the tracks of Poseidon's golden-maned horse. Like a wounded serpent that drags with pain its length along, they went day after day across that limitless land.

A day came when they saw the great tracks of the horse no more. A wind had come up and had covered them with sand. With the mighty weight of the ship upon their shoulders, with the sun beating upon their heads, and with no marks on the desert to guide them, the heroes stood there, and it seemed to them that the blood must gush up and out of their hearts. [153]



Then Zetes and Calais, sons of the North Wind, rose up upon their wings to strive to get sight of the sea. Up, up, they soared. And then as a man sees, or thinks he sees, at the month's beginning, the moon through a bank of clouds, Zetes and Calais, looking over the measureless land, saw the gleam of water. They shouted to the Argonauts; they marked the way for them, and wearily, but with good hearts, the heroes went upon the way.

They came at last to the shore of what seemed to be a wide inland sea. They set *Argo* down from off their over-wearied shoulders and they let her keel take water once more.

All salt and brackish was that water; they dipped their hands into and tasted the salt. Orpheus was able to name the water they had come to; it was that lake that was called after Triton, the son of Nereus, the ancient one of the sea. They set up an altar and they made sacrifices in thanksgiving to the gods.

They had come to water at last, but now they had to seek for other water—for the sweet water that they could drink. All around them they looked, but they saw no sign of a spring. And then they felt a wind blow upon them—a wind that had in it not the dust of the desert but the fragrance of growing things. Toward where that wind blew from they went.

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As they went on they saw a great shape against the sky; they saw mountainous shoulders bowed. Orpheus bade them halt and turn their faces with reverence toward that great shape: for this was Atlas the Titan, the brother of Prometheus, who stood there to hold up the sky on his shoulders.

Then they were near the place that the fragrance had blown from: there was a garden there; the only fence that ran around it was a lattice of silver. “Surely there are springs in the garden,” the Argonauts said. “We will enter this fair garden now and slake our thirst.”

Orpheus bade them walk reverently, for all around them, he said, was sacred ground. This garden was the Garden of the Hesperides that was watched over by the Daughters of the Evening Land. The Argonauts looked through the silver lattice; they saw trees with lovely fruit, and they saw three maidens moving through the garden with watchful eyes. In this garden grew the tree that had the golden apples that Zeus gave to Hera as a wedding gift.

They saw the tree on which the golden apples grew. The maidens went to it and then looked watchfully all around them.

They saw the faces of the Argonauts looking through the silver lattice and they cried out, one to the other, and they joined their hands around the tree.

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But Orpheus called to them, and the maidens understood the divine speech of Orpheus. He made the Daughters of the Evening Land know that they who stood before the lattice were men who revered the gods, who would not strive to enter the forbidden garden. The maidens came toward them. Beautiful as the singing of Orpheus was their utterance, but what they said was a complaint and a lament.

Their lament was for the dragon Ladon, that dragon with a hundred heads that guarded sleeplessly the tree that had the golden apples. Now that dragon was slain. With arrows that had been dipped in the poison of the Hydra's blood their dragon, Ladon, had been slain.

The Daughters of the Evening Land sang of how a mortal had come into the garden that they watched over. He had a great bow, and with his arrow he slew the dragon that guarded the golden apples. The golden apples he had taken away; they had come back to the tree they had been plucked from, for no mortal might keep them in his possession. So the maidens sang—Hespere, Eretheis, and Ægle—and they complained that now, unhelped by the hundred-headed dragon, they had to keep guard over the tree.

The Argonauts knew of whom they told the tale—Heracles, their comrade. Would that Heracles were with them now!

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The Hesperides told them of Heracles—of how the springs in the garden dried up because of his plucking the golden apples. He came out of the garden thirsting. Nowhere could he find a spring of water. To yonder great rock he went. He smote it with his foot and water came out in full flow. Then he, leaning on his hands and with his chest upon the ground, drank and drank from the water that flowed from the rifted rock.

The Argonauts looked to where the rock stood. They

caught the sound of water. They carried Medea over. And then, company after company, all huddled together, they stooped down and drank their fill of the clear good water. With lips wet with the water they cried to each other, "Heracles! Although he is not with us, in very truth Heracles has saved his comrades from deadly thirst!"

They saw his footsteps printed upon the rocks, and they followed them until they led to the sand where no footsteps stay. Heracles! How glad his comrades would have been if they could have had sight of him then! But it was long ago—before he had sailed with them—that Heracles had been here.

Still hearing their complaint they turned back to the lattice, to where the Daughters of the Evening Land stood. The Daughters of the Evening Land bent their heads to listen to what the Argonauts told one another, and, seeing them bent to listen, Orpheus told a story about one who had gone across the Libyan desert, about one who was a hero like unto Heracles.

The Story of Perseus

Beyond where Atlas stands there is a cave where the strange women, the ancient daughters of Phorcys, live. They have been gray from their birth. They have but one eye and one tooth between them, and they pass the eye and the tooth, one to the other, when they would see or eat. They are called the Graiai, these two sisters. [157]

Up to the cave where they lived a youth once came. He was beardless, and the garb he wore was torn and travel-stained, but he had shapeliness and beauty. In his leathern belt there was an exceedingly bright sword; this sword was not straight like the swords we carry, but it was hooked like a sickle. The strange youth with the bright, strange sword came very quickly and very

silently up to the cave where the Graiai lived and looked over a high boulder into it.

One was sitting munching acorns with the single tooth. The other had the eye in her hand. She was holding it to her forehead and looking into the back of the cave. These two ancient women, with their gray hair falling over them like thick fleeces, and with faces that were only forehead and cheeks and nose and mouth, were strange creatures truly. Very silently the youth stood looking at them.

“Sister, sister,” cried the one who was munching acorns, “sister, turn your eye this way. I heard the stir of something.”

The other turned, and with the eye placed against her forehead looked out to the opening of the cave. The youth drew back behind the boulder. “Sister, sister, there is nothing there,” said the one with the eye.

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Then she said: “Sister, give me the tooth for I would eat my acorns. Take the eye and keep watch.”

The one who was eating held out the tooth, and the one who was watching held out the eye. The youth darted into the cave. Standing between the eyeless sisters, he took with one hand the tooth and with the other the eye.

“Sister, sister, have you taken the eye?”

“I have not taken the eye. Have you taken the tooth?”

“I have not taken the tooth.”

“Some one has taken the eye, and some one has taken the tooth.”

They stood together, and the youth watched their blinking faces as they tried to discover who had come into the cave, and who had taken the eye and the tooth.

Then they said, screaming together: “Who ever has taken the eye and the tooth from the Graiai, the ancient daughters of Phorcys, may Mother Night smother him.”

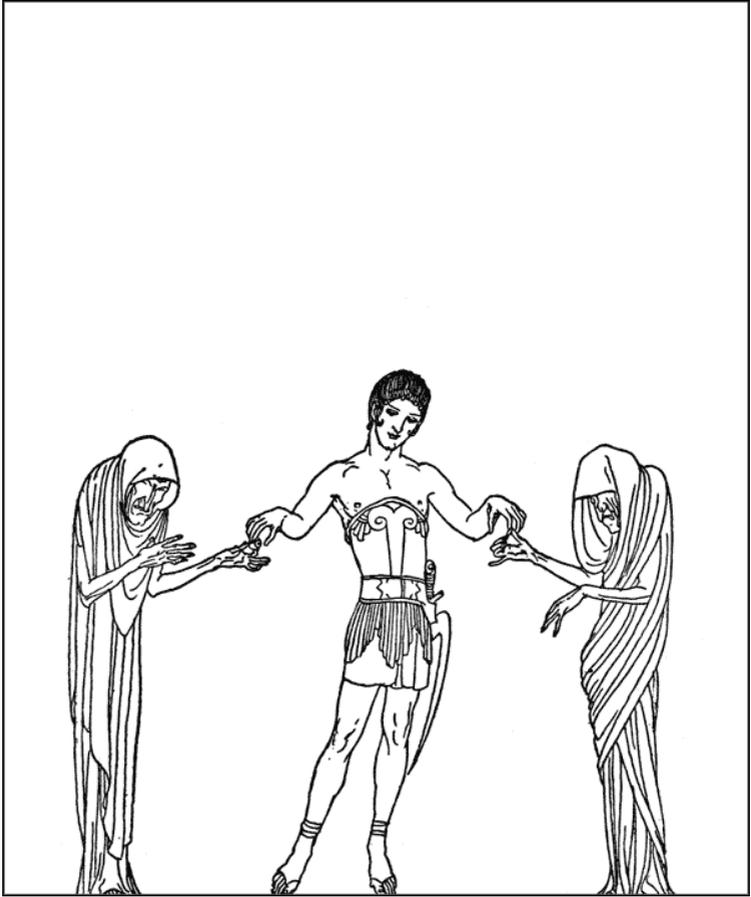
The youth spoke. “Ancient daughters of Phorcys,” he said, “Graiai, I would not rob from you. I have come to your cave only to ask the way to a place.”

“Ah, it is a mortal, a mortal,” screamed the sisters. “Well, mortal, what would you have from the Graiai?”

“Ancient Graiai,” said the youth, “I would have you tell me, for you alone know, where the nymphs dwell who guard the three magic treasures—the cap of darkness, the shoes of flight, and the magic pouch.”

“We will not tell you, we will not tell you that,” screamed the two ancient sisters.

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“I will keep the eye and the tooth,” said the youth, “and I will give them to one who will help me.”

“Give me the eye and I will tell you,” said one. “Give me the tooth and I will tell you,” said the other. The youth put the eye in the hand of one and the tooth in the hand of the other, but he held their skinny hands in his strong hands until they should tell him where the nymphs dwelt who guarded the magic treasures. The Gray Ones told him. Then the youth with the bright sword

left the cave. As he went out he saw on the ground a shield of bronze, and he took it with him.

To the other side of where Atlas stands he went. There he came upon the nymphs in their valley. They had long dwelt there, hidden from gods and men, and they were startled to see a stranger youth come into their hidden valley. They fled away. Then the youth sat on the ground, his head bent like a man who is very sorrowful.

The youngest and the fairest of the nymphs came to him at last. "Why have you come, and why do you sit here in such great trouble, youth?" said she. And then she said: "What is this strange sickle-sword that you wear? Who told you the way to our dwelling place? What name have you?"

"I have come here," said the youth, and he took the bronze shield upon his knees and began to polish it, "I have come here because I want you, the nymphs who guard them, to give to me the cap of darkness and the shoes of flight and the magic pouch. I must gain these things; without them I must go to my death. [160] Why I must gain them you will know from my story."

When he said that he had come for the three magic treasures that they guarded, the kind nymph was more startled than she and her sisters had been startled by the appearance of the strange youth in their hidden valley. She turned away from him. But she looked again and she saw that he was beautiful and brave looking. He had spoken of his death. The nymph stood looking at him pitifully, and the youth, with the bronze shield laid beside his knees and the strange hooked sword lying across it, told her his story.

"I am Perseus," he said, "and my grandfather, men say, is king in Argos. His name is Acrisius. Before I was born a prophecy was made to him that the son of Danaë, his daughter, would slay him. Acrisius was frightened by the prophecy, and

when I was born he put my mother and myself into a chest, and he sent us adrift upon the waves of the sea.

“I did not know what a terrible peril I was in, for I was an infant newly born. My mother was so hopeless that she came near to death. But the wind and the waves did not destroy us: they brought us to a shore; a shepherd found the chest, and he opened it and brought my mother and myself out of it alive. The land we had come to was Seriphus. The shepherd who found the chest and who rescued my mother and myself was the brother of the king. His name was Dictys.

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“In the shepherd’s wattle house my mother stayed with me, a little infant, and in that house I grew from babyhood to childhood, and from childhood to boyhood. He was a kind man, this shepherd Dictys. His brother Polydectes had put him away from the palace, but Dictys did not grieve for that, for he was happy minding his sheep upon the hillside, and he was happy in his little hut of wattles and clay.

“Polydectes, the king, was seldom spoken to about his brother, and it was years before he knew of the mother and child who had been brought to live in Dictys’s hut. But at last he heard of us, for strange things began to be said about my mother—how she was beautiful, and how she looked like one who had been favored by the gods. Then one day when he was hunting, Polydectes the king came to the hut of Dictys the shepherd.

“He saw Danaë, my mother, there. By her looks he knew that she was a king’s daughter and one who had been favored by the gods. He wanted her for his wife. But my mother hated this harsh and overbearing king, and she would not wed with him. Often he came storming around the shepherd’s hut, and at last my mother had to take refuge from him in a temple. There she became the priestess of the goddess.

“I was taken to the palace of Polydectes, and there I was brought up. The king still stormed around where my mother was,

more and more bent on making her marry him. If she had not been in the temple where she was under the protection of the goddess he would have wed her against her will. [162]

“But I was growing up now, and I was able to give some protection to my mother. My arm was a strong one, and Polydectes knew that if he wronged my mother in any way, I had the will and the power to be deadly to him. One day I heard him say before his princes and his lords that he would wed, and would wed one who was not Danaë. I was overjoyed to hear him say this. He asked the lords and the princes to come to the wedding feast; they declared they would, and they told him of the presents they would bring.

“Then King Polydectes turned to me and he asked me to come to the wedding feast. I said I would come. And then, because I was young and full of the boast of youth, and because the king was now ceasing to be a terror to me, I said that I would bring to his wedding feast the head of the Gorgon.

“The king smiled when he heard me say this, but he smiled not as a good man smiles when he hears the boast of youth. He smiled, and he turned to the princes and lords, and he said: ‘Perseus will come, and he will bring a greater gift than any of you, for he will bring the head of her whose gaze turns living creatures into stone.’

“When I heard the king speak so grimly about my boast the fearfulness of the thing I had spoken of doing came over me. I thought for an instant that the Gorgon’s head appeared before me, and that I was then and there turned into stone. [163]

“The day of the wedding feast came. I came and I brought no gift. I stood with my head hanging for shame. Then the princes and the lords came forward, and they showed the great gifts of horses that they had brought. I thought that the king would forget about me and about my boast. And then I heard him call my name. ‘Perseus,’ he said, ‘Perseus, bring before us now the Gorgon’s head that, as you told us, you would bring for

the wedding gift.’

“The princes and lords and people looked toward me, and I was filled with a deeper shame. I had to say that I had failed to bring a present. Then that harsh and overbearing king shouted at me. ‘Go forth,’ he said, ‘go forth and fetch the present that you spoke of. If you do not bring it remain forever out of my country, for in Seriphus we will have no empty boasters.’ The lords and the princes applauded what the king said; the people were sad for me and sad for my mother, but they might not do anything to help me, so just and so due to me did the words of the king seem. There was no help for it, and I had to go from the country of Seriphus, leaving my mother at the mercy of Polydectes.

“I bade good-by to my sorrowful mother and I went from Seriphus—from that land that I might not return to without the Gorgon’s head. I traveled far from that country. One day I sat down in a lonely place and prayed to the gods that my strength might be equal to the will that now moved in me—the will to take the Gorgon’s head, and take from my name the shame of a broken promise, and win back to Seriphus to save my mother from the harshness of the king.

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“When I looked up I saw one standing before me. He was a youth, too, but I knew by the way he moved, and I knew by the brightness of his face and eyes, that he was of the immortals. I raised my hands in homage to him, and he came near me. ‘Perseus,’ he said, ‘if you have the courage to strive, the way to win the Gorgon’s head will be shown you.’ I said that I had the courage to strive, and he knew that I was making no boast.

“He gave me this bright sickle-sword that I carry. He told me by what ways I might come near enough to the Gorgons without being turned into stone by their gaze. He told me how I might slay the one of the three Gorgons who was not immortal, and how, having slain her, I might take her head and flee without being torn to pieces by her sister Gorgons.

“Then I knew that I should have to come on the Gorgons

from the air. I knew that having slain the one that could be slain I should have to fly with the speed of the wind. And I knew that that speed even would not save me—I should have to be hidden in my flight. To win the head and save myself I would need three magic things—the shoes of flight and the magic pouch, and the dogskin cap of Hades that makes its wearer invisible.

“The youth said: ‘The magic pouch and the shoes of flight and the dogskin cap of Hades are in the keeping of the nymphs whose dwelling place no mortal knows. I may not tell you where their dwelling place is. But from the Gray Ones, from the ancient daughters of Phorcys who live in a cave near where Atlas stands, you may learn where their dwelling place is.’ [165]

“Thereupon he told me how I might come to the Graiai, and how I might get them to tell me where you, the nymphs, had your dwelling. The one who spoke to me was Hermes, whose dwelling is on Olympus. By this sickle-sword that he gave me you will know that I speak the truth.”

Perseus ceased speaking, and she who was the youngest and fairest of the nymphs came nearer to him. She knew that he spoke truthfully, and besides she had pity for the youth. “But we are the keepers of the magic treasures,” she said, “and some one whose need is greater even than yours may some time require them from us. But will you swear that you will bring the magic treasures back to us when you have slain the Gorgon and have taken her head?”

Perseus declared that he would bring the magic treasures back to the nymphs and leave them once more in their keeping. Then the nymph who had compassion for him called to the others. They spoke together while Perseus stayed far away from them, polishing his shield of bronze. At last the nymph who had listened to him came back, the others following her. They brought to Perseus and they put into his hands the things they had guarded—the cap made from dogskin that had been brought [166]

up out of Hades, a pair of winged shoes, and a long pouch that he could hang across his shoulder.

And so with the shoes of flight and the cap of darkness and the magic pouch, Perseus went to seek the Gorgons. The sickle-sword that Hermes gave him was at his side, and on his arm he held the bronze shield that was now well polished.

He went through the air, taking a way that the nymphs had shown him. He came to Oceanus that was the rim around the world. He saw forms that were of living creatures all in stone, and he knew that he was near the place where the Gorgons had their lair.

Then, looking upon the surface of his polished shield, he saw the Gorgons below him. Two were covered with hard serpent scales; they had tusks that were long and were like the tusks of boars, and they had hands of gleaming brass and wings of shining gold. Still looking upon the shining surface of his shield Perseus went down and down. He saw the third sister—she who was not immortal. She had a woman's face and form, and her countenance was beautiful, although there was something deadly in its fairness. The two scaled and winged sisters were asleep, but the third, Medusa, was awake, and she was tearing with her hands a lizard that had come near her.

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Upon her head was a tangle of serpents all with heads raised as though they were hissing. Still looking into the mirror of his shield Perseus came down and over Medusa. He turned his head away from her. Then, with a sweep of the sickle-sword he took her head off. There was no scream from the Gorgon, but the serpents upon her head hissed loudly.

Still with his face turned from it he lifted up the head by its tangle of serpents. He put it into the magic pouch. He rose up in the air. But now the Gorgon sisters were awake. They had heard the hiss of Medusa's serpents, and now they looked upon her headless body. They rose up on their golden wings, and their

brazen hands were stretched out to tear the one who had slain Medusa. As they flew after him they screamed aloud.

Although he flew like the wind the Gorgon sisters would have overtaken him if he had been plain to their eyes. But the dogskin cap of Hades saved him, for the Gorgon sisters did not know whether he was above or below them, behind or before them. On Perseus went, flying toward where Atlas stood. He flew over this place, over Libya. Drops of blood from Medusa's head fell down upon the desert. They were changed and became the deadly serpents that are on these sands and around these rocks. On and on Perseus flew toward Atlas and toward the hidden valley where the nymphs who were again to guard the magic treasures had their dwelling place. But before he came to the nymphs Perseus had another adventure.

In Ethiopia, which is at the other side of Libya, there ruled a king whose name was Cepheus. This king had permitted his queen to boast that she was more beautiful than the nymphs of the sea. In punishment for the queen's impiety and for the king's folly Poseidon sent a monster out of the sea to waste that country. Every year the monster came, destroying more and more of the country of Ethiopia. Then the king asked of an oracle what he should do to save his land and his people. The oracle spoke of a dreadful thing that he would have to do—he would have to sacrifice his daughter, the beautiful Princess Andromeda. [168]

The king was forced by his savage people to take the maiden Andromeda and chain her to a rock on the seashore, leaving her there for the monster to devour her, satisfying himself with that prey.

Perseus, flying near, heard the maiden's laments. He saw her lovely body bound with chains to the rock. He came near her, taking the cap of darkness off his head. She saw him, and she bent her head in shame, for she thought that he would think that it was for some dreadful fault of her own that she had been

left chained in that place.

Her father had stayed near. Perseus saw him, and called to him, and bade him tell why the maiden was chained to the rock. The king told Perseus of the sacrifice that he had been forced to make. Then Perseus came near the maiden, and he saw how she looked at him with pleading eyes.

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Then Perseus made her father promise that he would give Andromeda to him for his wife if he should slay the sea monster. Gladly Cepheus promised this. Then Perseus once again drew his sickle-sword; by the rock to which Andromeda was still chained he waited for sight of the sea monster.



Perseus and Andromeda

It came rolling in from the open sea, a shapeless and unsightly thing. With the shoes of flight upon his feet Perseus rose above it. The monster saw his shadow upon the water, and savagely it went to attack the shadow. Perseus swooped down as an eagle swoops down; with his sickle-sword he attacked it, and he struck the hook through the monster's shoulder. Terribly it reared up from the sea. Perseus rose over it, escaping its

wide-opened mouth with its treble rows of fangs. Again he swooped and struck at it. Its hide was covered all over with hard scales and with the shells of sea things, but Perseus's sword struck through it. It reared up again, spouting water mixed with blood. On a rock near the rock that Andromeda was chained to Perseus alighted. The monster, seeing him, bellowed and rushed swiftly through the water to overwhelm him. As it reared up he plunged the sword again and again into its body. Down into the water the monster sank, and water mixed with blood was spouted up from the depths into which it sank.

Then was Andromeda loosed from her chains. Perseus, the conqueror, lifted up the fainting maiden and carried her back to the king's palace. And Cepheus there renewed his promise to give her in marriage to her deliverer.

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Perseus went on his way. He came to the hidden valley where the nymphs had their dwelling place, and he restored to them the three magic treasures that they had given him—the cap of darkness, the shoes of flight, and the magic pouch. And these treasures are still there, and the hero who can win his way to the nymphs may have them as Perseus had them.

Again he returned to the place where he had found Andromeda chained. With face averted he drew forth the Gorgon's head from where he had hidden it between the rocks. He made a bag for it out of the horny skin of the monster he had slain. Then, carrying his tremendous trophy, he went to the palace of King Cepheus to claim his bride.

Now before her father had thought of sacrificing her to the sea monster he had offered Andromeda in marriage to a prince of Ethiopia—to a prince whose name was Phineus. Phineus did not strive to save Andromeda. But, hearing that she had been delivered from the monster, he came to take her for his wife; he came to Cepheus's palace, and he brought with him a thousand armed men.

The palace of Cepheus was filled with armed men when Perseus entered it. He saw Andromeda on a raised place in the hall. She was pale as when she was chained to the rock, and when she saw him in the palace she uttered a cry of gladness.

Cepheus, the craven king, would have let him who had come with the armed bands take the maiden. Perseus came beside Andromeda and he made his claim. Phineus spoke insolently to him, and then he urged one of his captains to strike Perseus down. Many sprang forward to attack him. Out of the bag Perseus drew Medusa's head. He held it before those who were bringing strife into the hall. They were turned to stone. One of Cepheus's men wished to defend Perseus: he struck at the captain who had come near; his sword made a clanging sound as it struck this one who had looked upon Medusa's head. [171]

Perseus went from the land of Ethopia taking fair Andromeda with him. They went into Greece, for he had thought of going to Argos, to the country that his grandfather ruled over. At this very time Acrisius got tidings of Danaë and her son, and he knew that they had not perished on the waves of the sea. Fearful of the prophecy that told he would be slain by his grandson and fearing that he would come to Argos to seek him, Acrisius fled out of his country.

He came into Thessaly. Perseus and Andromeda were there. Now, one day the old king was brought to games that were being celebrated in honor of a dead hero. He was leaning on his staff, watching a youth throw a metal disk, when something in that youth's appearance made him want to watch him more closely. About him there was something of a being of the upper air; it made Acrisius think of a brazen tower and of a daughter whom he had shut up there.

He moved so that he might come nearer to the disk-thrower. But as he left where he had been standing he came into the line of the thrown disk. It struck the old man on the temple. He fell down dead, and as he fell the people cried out his name—"Acrisius, [172]

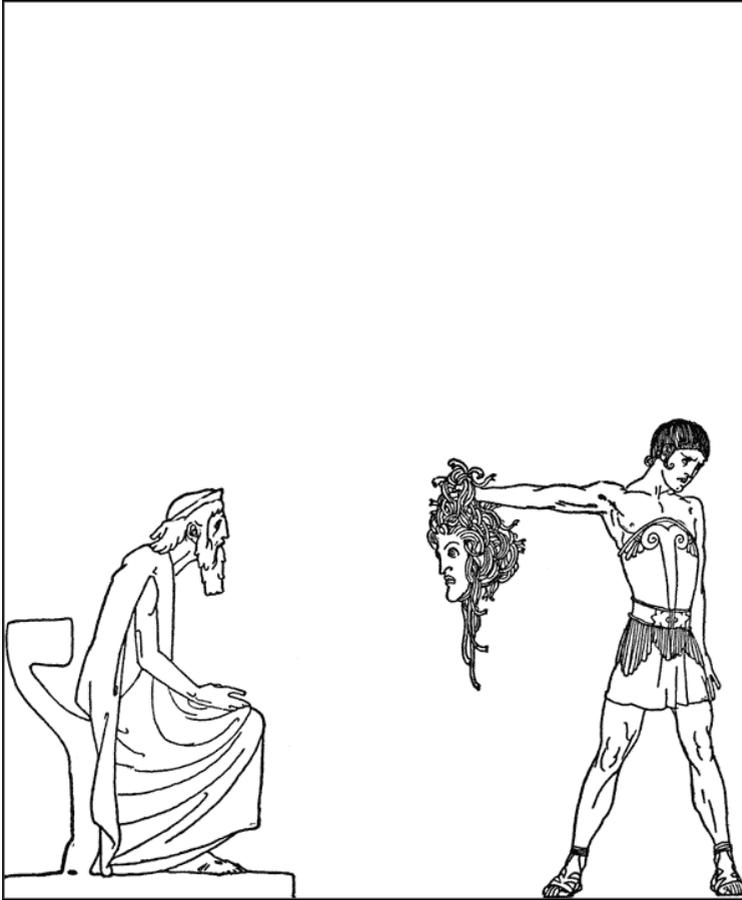
King Acrisius!” Then Perseus knew whom the disk, thrown by his hand, had slain.

And because he had slain the king by chance Perseus would not go to Argos, nor take over the kingdom that his grandfather had reigned over. With Andromeda he went to Seriphus where his mother was. And in Seriphus there still reigned Polydectes, who had put upon him the terrible task of winning the Gorgon’s head.

He came to Seriphus and he left Andromeda in the hut of Dictys the shepherd. No one knew him; he heard his name spoken of as that of a youth who had gone on a foolish quest and who would never again be heard of. To the temple where his mother was a priestess he came. Guards were placed all around it. He heard his mother’s voice and it was raised in lament: “Walled up here and given over to hunger I shall be made go to Polydectes’s house and become his wife. O ye gods, have ye no pity for Danaë, the mother of Perseus?”

Perseus cried aloud, and his mother heard his voice and her moans ceased. He turned around and he went to the palace of Polydectes, the king.

The king received him with mockeries. “I will let you stay in Seriphus for a day,” he said, “because I would have you at a marriage feast. I have vowed that Danaë, taken from the temple where she sulks, will be my wife by to-morrow’s sunset.”



So Polydectes said, and the lords and princes who were around him mocked at Perseus and flattered the king. Perseus went from them then. The next day he came back to the palace. But in his hands now there was a dread thing—the bag made from the hide of the sea monster that had in it the Gorgon’s head.

He saw his mother. She was brought in white and fainting, thinking that she would now have to wed the harsh

and overbearing king. Then she saw her son, and hope came into her face.

The king seeing Perseus, said: “Step forward, O youngling, and see your mother wed to a mighty man. Step forward to witness a marriage, and then depart, for it is not right that a youth that makes promises and does not keep them should stay in a land that I rule over. Step forward now, you with the empty hands.”

But not with empty hands did Perseus step forward. He shouted out: “I have brought something to you at last, O king—a present to you and your mocking friends. But you, O my mother, and you, O my friends, avert your faces from what I have brought.” Saying this Perseus drew out the Gorgon’s head. Holding it by the snaky locks he stood before the company. His mother and his friends averted their faces. But Polydectes and his insolent friends looked full upon what Perseus showed. “This youth would strive to frighten us with some conjuror’s trick,” they said. They said no more, for they became as stones, and as stone images they still stand in that hall in Seriphus.

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He went to the shepherd’s hut, and he brought Dictys from it with Andromeda. Dictys he made king in Polydectes’s stead. Then with Danaë and Andromeda, his mother and his wife, he went from Seriphus.

He did not go to Argos, the country that his grandfather had ruled over, although the people there wanted Perseus to come to them, and be king over them. He took the kingdom of Tiryns in exchange for that of Argos, and there he lived with Andromeda, his lovely wife out of Ethiopia. They had a son named Perses who became the parent of the Persian people.

The sickle-sword that had slain the Gorgon went back to Hermes, and Hermes took Medusa’s head also. That head Hermes’s divine sister set upon her shield—Medusa’s head upon the shield of Pallas Athene. O may Pallas Athene guard us all, and bring us out of this land of sands and stone where are the deadly serpents that have come from the drops of blood that fell

from the Gorgon's head!

They turned away from the Garden of the Daughters of the Evening Land. The Argonauts turned from where the giant shape of Atlas stood against the sky and they went toward the Tritonian Lake. But not all of them reached the *Argo*. On his way back to the ship, Nauplius, the helmsman, met his death.

A sluggish serpent was in his way—it was not a serpent that would strike at one who turned from it. Nauplius trod upon it, and the serpent lifted its head up and bit his foot. They raised him on their shoulders and they hurried back with him. But his limbs became numb, and when they laid him down on the shore of the lake he stayed moveless. Soon he grew cold. They dug a grave for Nauplius beside the lake, and in that desert land they set up his helmsman's oar in the middle of his tomb of heaped stones. [175]

And now like a snake that goes writhing this way and that way and that cannot find the cleft in the rock that leads to its lair, the *Argo* went hither and thither striving to find an outlet from that lake. No outlet could they find and the way of their homegoing seemed lost to them again. Then Orpheus prayed to the son of Nereus, to Triton, whose name was on that lake, to aid them.

Then Triton appeared. He stretched out his hand and showed them the outlet to the sea. And Triton spoke in friendly wise to the heroes, bidding them go upon their way in joy. "And as for labor," he said, "let there be no grieving because of that, for limbs that have youthful vigor should still toil."

They took up the oars and they pulled toward the sea, and Triton, the friendly immortal, helped them on. He laid hold upon *Argo's* keel and he guided her through the water. The Argonauts saw him beneath the water; his body, from his head down to his waist, was fair and great and like to the body of one of the other immortals. But below his body was like a great fish's, forking [176]

this way and that. He moved with fins that were like the horns of the new moon. Triton helped *Argo* along until they came into the open sea. Then he plunged down into the abyss. The heroes shouted their thanks to him. Then they looked at each other and embraced each other with joy, for the sea that touched upon the land of Greece was open before them.

IX. Near to Iolcus Again



HE sun sank; then that star came that bids the shepherd bring his flock to the fold, that brings the wearied plowman to his rest. But no rest did that star bring to the Argonauts. The breeze that filled the sail died down; they furled the sail and lowered the mast; then, once again, they pulled at the oars. All night they rowed, and all day, and again when the next day came on. Then they saw the island that is halfway to Greece—the great and fair island of Crete.

It was Theseus who first saw Crete—Theseus who was to come to Crete upon another ship. They drew the *Argo* near the great island; they wanted water, and they were fain to rest there.

Minos, the great king, ruled over Crete. He left the guarding of the island to one of the race of bronze, to Talos, who had lived on after the rest of the bronze men had been destroyed. Thrice

a day would Talos stride around the island; his brazen feet were tireless.

Now Talos saw the *Argo* drawing near. He took up great rocks and he hurled them at the heroes, and very quickly they had to draw their ship out of range.

They were wearied and their thirst was consuming them. But still that bronze man stood there ready to sink their ship with the great rocks that he took up in his hands. Medea stood forward upon the ship, ready to use her spells against the man of bronze.

In body and limbs he was made of bronze and in these he was invulnerable. But beneath a sinew in his ankle there was a vein that ran up to his neck and that was covered by a thin skin. If that vein were broken Talos would perish.

Medea did not know about this vein when she stood forward upon the ship to use her spells against him. Upon a cliff of Crete, all gleaming, stood that huge man of bronze. Then, as she was ready to fling her spells against him, Medea thought upon the words that Arete, the wise queen, had given her—that she was not to use spells and not to practice against the life of any one.

But she knew that there was no impiety in using spells and practicing against Talos, for Zeus had already doomed all his race. She stood upon the ship, and with her Magic Song she enchanted him. He whirled round and round. He struck his ankle against a jutting stone. The vein broke, and that which was the blood of the bronze man flowed out of him like molten lead. He stood towering upon the cliff. Like a pine upon a mountaintop that the woodman had left half hewn through and that a mighty wind pitches against, Talos stood upon his tireless feet, swaying to and fro. Then, emptied of all his strength, Minos's man of bronze fell into the Cretan Sea. [178]

The heroes landed. That night they lay upon the land of Crete and rested and refreshed themselves. When dawn came they drew water from a spring, and once more they went on board the *Argo*.

A day came when the helmsman said, "To-morrow we shall see the shore of Thessaly, and by sunset we shall be in the harbor of Pagasæ. Soon, O voyagers, we shall be back in the city from which we went to gain the Golden Fleece."

Then Jason brought Medea to the front of the ship so that they might watch together for Thessaly, the homeland. The Mountain Pelion came into sight. Jason exulted as he looked upon that mountain; again he told Medea about Chiron, the ancient centaur, and about the days of his youth in the forests of Pelion.

[179] The *Argo* went on; the sun sank, and darkness came on. Never was there darkness such as there was on that night. They called that night afterward the Pall of Darkness. To the heroes upon the *Argo* it seemed as if black chaos had come over the world again; they knew not whether they were adrift upon the sea or upon the River of Hades. No star pierced the darkness nor no beam from the moon.



After a night that seemed many nights the dawn came. In the sunrise they saw the land of Thessaly with its mountain, its forests, and its fields. They hailed each other as if they had met after a long parting. They raised the mast and unfurled the sail.

But not toward Pagasæ did they go. For now the voice of *Argo* came to them, shaking their hearts: Jason and Orpheus, Castor and Polydeuces, Zetes and Calais, Peleus and Telamon, Theseus, Admetus, Nestor, and Atalanta, heard the cry of their

ship. And the voice of *Argo* warned them not to go into the harbor of Pagasæ.

As they stood upon the ship, looking toward Iolcus, sorrow came over all the heroes, such sorrow as made their hearts nearly break. For long they stood there in utter numbness.

Then Admetus spoke—Admetus who was the happiest of all those who went in quest of the Golden Fleece. “Although we may not go into the harbor of Pagasæ, nor into the city of Iolcus,” Admetus said, “still we have come to the land of Greece. There are other harbors and other cities that we may go into. And in all the places that we go to we will be honored, for we have gone through toils and dangers, and we have brought to Greece the famous Fleece of Gold.”

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So Admetus said, and their spirits came back again to the heroes—came back to all of them save Jason. The rest had other cities to go to, and fathers and mothers and friends to greet them in other places, but for Jason there was only Iolcus.

Medea took his hand, and sorrow for him overcame her. For Medea could divine what had happened in Iolcus and why it was that the heroes might not go there.

It was to Corinth that the *Argo* went. Creon, the king of Corinth, welcomed them and gave great honor to the heroes who had faced such labors and such dangers to bring the world’s wonder to Greece.

The Argonauts stayed together until they went to Calydon, to hunt the boar that ravaged Prince Meleagrus’s country. After that they separated, each one going to his own land. Jason came back to Corinth where Medea stayed. And in Corinth he had tidings of the happenings in Iolcus.

King Pelias now ruled more fearfully in Iolcus, having brought down from the mountains more and fiercer soldiers. And Æson, Jason’s father, and Alcimide, his mother, were now dead, having been slain by King Pelias.

This Jason heard from men who came into Corinth from Thessaly. And because of the great army that Pelias had gathered there, Jason might not yet go into Iolcus, either to exact a vengeance, or to show the people THE GOLDEN FLEECE that he had gone so far to gain.

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Part III. The Heroes of the Quest

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I. Atalanta the Huntress

I



HEY came once more together, the heroes of the quest, to hunt a boar in Calydon—Jason and Peleus came, Telamon, Theseus, and rough Arcas, Nestor and Helen's brothers Polydeuces and Castor. And, most noted of all, there came the Arcadian huntress maid, Atalanta.

Beautiful they all thought her when they knew her aboard the *Argo*. But even more beautiful Atalanta seemed to the heroes when she came amongst them in her hunting gear. Her lovely hair hung in two bands across her shoulders, and over her breast hung an ivory quiver filled with arrows. They said that her face with its wide and steady eyes was maidenly for a boy's, and boyish for a maiden's face. Swiftly she moved with her head held high, and there was not one amongst the heroes who did not say, "Oh, happy would that man be whom Atalanta the unwedded would take for her husband!"

All the heroes said it, but the one who said it most feelingly was the prince of Calydon, young Meleagrus. He more than the other heroes felt the wonder of Atalanta's beauty.

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Now the boar they had come to hunt was a monster boar. It had come into Calydon and it was laying waste the fields and orchards and destroying the people's cattle and horses. That boar had been sent into Calydon by an angry divinity. For when Æneus, the king of the country, was making sacrifice to the gods in thanksgiving for a bounteous harvest, he had neglected to make sacrifice to the goddess of the wild things, Artemis. In her anger Artemis had sent the monster boar to lay waste Æneus's realm.

It was a monster boar indeed—one as huge as a bull, with tusks as great as an elephant's; the bristles on its back stood up like spear points, and the hot breath of the creature withered the growth on the ground. The boar tore up the corn in the fields and trampled down the vines with their clusters and heavy bunches of grapes; also it rushed against the cattle and destroyed them in the fields. And no hounds the huntsmen were able to bring could stand before it. And so it came to pass that men had to leave their farms and take refuge behind the walls of the city because of the ravages of the boar. It was then that the rulers of Calydon sent for the heroes of the quest to join with them in hunting the monster.

Calydon itself sent Prince Meleagrus and his two uncles, Plexippus and Toxeus. They were brothers to Meleagrus's mother, Althæa. Now Althæa was a woman who had sight to see mysterious things, but who had also a wayward and passionate heart. Once, after her son Meleagrus was born, she saw the three Fates sitting by her hearth. They were spinning the threads of her son's life, and as they spun they sang to each other, "An equal span of life we give to the newborn child, and to the billet of wood that now rests above the blaze of the fire." Hearing what the Fates sang and understanding it Althæa had sprung up from her bed, had seized the billet of wood, and had taken it out of the fire before the flames had burnt into it. [185]

That billet of wood lay in her chest, hidden away. And Meleagrus nor any one else save Althæa knew of it, nor knew that the prince's life would last only for the space it would be kept from the burning. On the day of the hunting he appeared as the strongest and bravest of the youths of Calydon. And he knew not, poor Meleagrus, that the love for Atalanta that had sprung into his heart was to bring to the fire the billet of wood on which his life depended.

II

As Atalanta went, the bow in her hands, Prince Meleagrus pressed behind her. Then came Jason and Peleus, Telamon, Theseus and Nestor. Behind them came Meleagrus's dark-browed uncles, Plexippus and Toxeus. They came to a forest that covered the side of a mountain. Huntsmen had assembled here with hounds held in leashes and with nets to hold the rushing quarry. And when they had all gathered together they went through the forest on the track of the monster boar. [186]

It was easy to track the boar, for it had left a broad trail through the forest. The heroes and the huntsmen pressed on. They came to a marshy covert where the boar had its lair. There

was a thickness of osiers and willows and tall bullrushes, making a place that it was hard for the hunters to go through.

They roused the boar with the blare of horns and it came rushing out. Foam was on its tusks, and its eyes had in them the blaze of fire. On the boar came, breaking down the thicket in its rush. But the heroes stood steadily with the points of their spears toward the monster.

The hounds were loosed from their leashes and they dashed toward the boar. The boar slashed them with its tusks and trampled them into the ground. Jason flung his spear. The spear went wide of the mark. Another, Arcas, cast his, but the wood, not the point of the spear, struck the boar, rousing it further. Then its eyes flamed, and like a great stone shot from a catapult the boar rushed on the huntsmen who were stationed to the right. In that rush it flung two youths prone upon the ground.

Then might Nestor have missed his going to Troy and his part in that story, for the boar swerved around and was upon him in an instant. Using his spear as a leaping pole he vaulted upward and caught the branches of a tree as the monster dashed the spear down in its rush. In rage the beast tore at the trunk of the tree. The heroes might have been scattered at this moment, for Telamon had fallen, tripped by the roots of a tree, and Peleus had had to throw himself upon him to pull him out of the way of danger, if Polydeuces and Castor had not dashed up to their aid. They came riding upon high white horses, spears in their hands. The brothers cast their spears, but neither spear struck the monster boar.

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Then the boar turned and was for drawing back into the thicket. They might have lost it then, for its retreat was impenetrable. But before it got clear away Atalanta put an arrow to the string, drew the bow to her shoulder, and let the arrow fly. It struck the boar, and a patch of blood was seen upon its bristles. Prince Meleagrus shouted out, "O first to strike the monster! Honor indeed shall you receive for this, Arcadian

maid.”

His uncles were made wroth by this speech, as was another, the Arcadian, rough Arcas. Arcas dashed forward, holding in his hands a two-headed axe. “Heroes and huntsmen,” he cried, “you shall see how a man’s strokes surpass a girl’s.” He faced the boar, standing on tiptoe with his axe raised for the stroke. Meleagrus’s uncles shouted to encourage him. But the boar’s tusks tore him before Arcas’s axe fell, and the Arcadian was trampled upon the ground.

The boar, roused again by Atalanta’s arrow, turned on the hunters. Jason hurled a spear again. It swerved and struck a hound and pinned it to the ground. Then, speaking the name of Atalanta, Meleagrus sprang before the heroes and the huntsmen. [188]

He had two spears in his hands. The first missed and stuck quivering in the ground. But the second went right through the back of the monster boar. It whirled round and round, spouting out blood and foam. Meleagrus pressed on, and drove his hunting knife through the shoulders of the monster.

His uncles, Plexippus and Toxeus, were the first to come to where the monster boar was lying outstretched. “It is well, the deed you have done, boy,” said one; “it is well that none of the strangers to our country slew the boar. Now will the head and tusks of the monster adorn our hall, and men will know that the arms of our house can well protect this land.”

But one word only did Meleagrus say, and that word was the name, “Atalanta.” The maiden came and Meleagrus, his spear upon the head, said, “Take, O fair Arcadian, the spoil of the chase. All know that it was you who inflicted the first wound upon the boar.”

Plexippus and Toxeus tried to push him away, as if Meleagrus was still a boy under their tutoring. He shouted to them to stand off, and then he hacked out the terrible tusks and held them toward Atalanta.

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She would have taken them, for she, who had never looked lovingly upon a youth, was moved by the beauty and the generosity of Prince Meleagrus. She would have taken from him the spoil of the chase. But as she held out her arms Meleagrus's uncles struck them with the poles of their spears. Heavy marks were made on the maiden's white arms. Madness then possessed Meleagrus, and he took up his spear and thrust it, first into the body of Plexippus and then into the body of Toxeus. His thrusts were terrible, for he was filled with the fierceness of the hunt, and his uncles fell down in death.

Then a great horror came over all the heroes. They raised up the bodies of Plexippus and Toxeus and carried them on their spears away from the place of the hunting and toward the temple of the gods. Meleagrus crouched down upon the ground in horror of what he had done. Atalanta stood beside him, her hand upon his head.

III

Althæa was in the temple making sacrifice to the gods. She saw men come in carrying across their spears the bodies of two men. She looked and she saw that the dead men were her two brothers, Plexippus and Toxeus.

Then she beat her breast and she filled the temple with the cries of her lamentation. "Who has slain my brothers? Who has slain my brothers?" she kept crying out.

Then she was told that her son Meleagrus had slain her brothers. She had no tears to shed then, and in a hard voice she asked, "Why did my son slay Plexippus and Toxeus, his uncles?"

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The one who was wroth with Atalanta, Arcas the Arcadian, came to her and told her that her brothers had been slain because of a quarrel about the girl Atalanta.

"My brothers have been slain because a girl bewitched my son; then accursed be that son of mine," Althæa cried. She took

off the gold-fringed robe of a priestess, and she put on a black robe of mourning.

Her brothers, the only sons of her father, had been slain, and for the sake of a girl. The image of Atalanta came before her, and she felt she could punish dreadfully her son. But her son was not there to punish; he was far away, and the girl for whose sake he had killed Plexippus and Toxeus was with him.

The rage she had went back into her heart and made her truly mad. "I gave Meleagrus life when I might have let it go from him with the burning billet of wood," she cried, "and now he has taken the lives of my brothers." And then her thought went to the billet of wood that was hidden in the chest.

Back to her house she went, and when she went within she saw a fire of pine knots burning upon the hearth. As she looked upon their burning a scorching pain went through her. But she went from the hearth, nevertheless, and into the inner room. There stood the chest that she had not opened for years. She opened it now, and out of it she took the billet of wood that had on it the mark of the burning.

She brought it to the hearth fire. Four times she went to throw it into the fire, and four times she stayed her hand. The fire was before her, but it was in her too. She saw the images of her brothers lying dead, and, saying that he who had slain them should lose his life, she threw the billet of wood into the fire of pine knots. [191]

Straightway it caught fire and began to burn. And Althæa cried, "Let him die, my son, and let naught remain; let all perish with my brothers, even the kingdom that Ceneus, my husband, founded."

Then she turned away and remained stiffly standing by the hearth, the life withered up within her. Her daughters came and tried to draw her away, but they could not—her two daughters, Gorge and Deianira.

Meleagrus was crouching upon the ground with Atalanta watching beside him. Now he stood up, and taking her hand he said, "Let me go with you to the temple of the gods where I shall strive to make atonement for the deed I have done to-day."

She went with him. But even as they came to the street of the city a sharp and a burning pain seized upon Meleagrus. More and more burning it grew, and weaker and weaker he became. He could not have moved further if it had not been for the aid of Atalanta. Jason and Peleus lifted him across the threshold and carried him into the temple of the gods.

They laid him down with his head upon Atalanta's lap. The pain within him grew fiercer and fiercer, but at last it died down as the burning billet of wood sank down into the ashes. The heroes of the quest stood around, all overcome with woe. In the street they heard the lamentations for Plexippus and Toxeus, for Prince Meleagrus, and for the passing of the kingdom founded by Ceneus. Atalanta left the temple, and attended by the two brothers on the white horses, Polydeuces and Castor, she went back to Arcady.

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II. Peleus and His Bride from the Sea

I



RINCE PELEUS came on his ship to a bay on the coast of Thessaly. His painted ship lay between two great rocks, and from its poop he saw a sight that enchanted him. Out from the sea, riding on a dolphin, came a lovely maiden. And by the radiance of her face and limbs Peleus knew her for one of the immortal goddesses.

Now Peleus had borne himself so nobly in all things that he had won the favor of the gods themselves. Zeus, who is highest amongst the gods, had made this promise to Peleus: he would honor him as no one amongst the sons of men had been honored before, for he would give him an immortal goddess to be his bride.

She who came out of the sea went into a cave that was overgrown with vines and roses. Peleus looked into the cave and he saw her sleeping upon skins of the beasts of the sea. His heart was enchanted by the sight, and he knew that his life would be broken if he did not see this goddess day after day. So he went back to his ship and he prayed: "O Zeus, now I claim the promise that you once made to me. Let it be that this goddess come with me, or else plunge my ship and me beneath the waves of the sea." [193]

And when Peleus said this he looked over the land and the water for a sign from Zeus.

Even then the goddess sleeping in the cave had dreams such as had never before entered that peaceful resting place of hers. She dreamt that she was drawn away from the deep and the wide sea. She dreamt that she was brought to a place that was strange and unfree to her. And as she lay in the cave, sleeping, tears that might never come into the eyes of an immortal lay around her heart.

But Peleus, standing on his painted ship, saw a rainbow touch upon the sea. He knew by that sign that Iris, the messenger of Zeus, had come down through the air. Then a strange sight came before his eyes. Out of the sea rose the head of a man; wrinkled and bearded it was, and the eyes were very old. Peleus

knew that he who was there before him was Nereus, the ancient one of the sea.

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Said old Nereus: “Thou hast prayed to Zeus, and I am here to speak an answer to thy prayer. She whom you have looked upon is Thetis, the goddess of the sea. Very loath will she be to take Zeus’s command and wed with thee. It is her desire to remain in the sea, unwedded, and she has refused marriage even with one of the immortal gods.”

Then said Peleus, “Zeus promised me an immortal bride. If Thetis may not be mine I cannot wed any other, goddess or mortal maiden.”

“Then thou thyself wilt have to master Thetis,” said Nereus, the wise one of the sea. “If she is mastered by thee, she cannot go back to the sea. She will strive with all her strength and all her wit to escape from thee; but thou must hold her no matter what she does, and no matter how she shows herself. When thou hast seen her again as thou didst see her at first, thou wilt know that thou hast mastered her.” And when he had said this to Peleus, Nereus, the ancient one of the sea, went under the waves.

II

With his hero’s heart beating more than ever it had beaten yet, Peleus went into the cave. Kneeling beside her he looked down upon the goddess. The dress she wore was like green and silver mail. Her face and limbs were pearly, but through them came the radiance that belongs to the immortals.

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He touched the hair of the goddess of the sea, the yellow hair that was so long that it might cover her all over. As he touched her hair she started up, wakening suddenly out of her sleep. His hands touched her hands and held them. Now he knew that if he should loose his hold upon her she would escape from him into the depths of the sea, and that thereafter no command from the immortals would bring her to him.

She changed into a white bird that strove to bear itself away. Peleus held to its wings and struggled with the bird. She changed and became a tree. Around the trunk of the tree Peleus clung. She changed once more, and this time her form became terrible: a spotted leopard she was now, with burning eyes; but Peleus held to the neck of the fierce-appearing leopard and was not affrighted by the burning eyes. Then she changed and became as he had seen her first—a lovely maiden, with the brow of a goddess, and with long yellow hair.

But now there was no radiance in her face or in her limbs. She looked past Peleus, who held her, and out to the wide sea. “Who is he,” she cried, “who has been given this mastery over me?”

Then said the hero: “I am Peleus, and Zeus has given me the mastery over thee. Wilt thou come with me, Thetis? Thou art my bride, given me by him who is highest amongst the gods, and if thou wilt come with me, thou wilt always be loved and revered by me.”

“Unwillingly I leave the sea,” she cried, “unwillingly I go with thee, Peleus.”

But life in the sea was not for her any more now that she was mastered. She went to Peleus’s ship and she went to Phthia, his country. And when the hero and the sea goddess were wedded the immortal gods and goddesses came to their hall and brought the bride and the bridegroom wondrous gifts. The three sisters who are called the Fates came also. These wise and ancient women said that the son born of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis would be a man greater than Peleus himself. [196]

III

Now although a son was born to her, and although this son had something of the radiance of the immortals about him, Thetis remained forlorn and estranged. Nothing that her husband did was pleasing to her. Prince Peleus was in fear that the wildness of

the sea would break out in her, and that some great harm would be wrought in his house.

One night he wakened suddenly. He saw the fire upon his hearth and he saw a figure standing by the fire. It was Thetis, his wife. The fire was blazing around something that she held in her hands. And while she stood there she was singing to herself a strange-sounding song.

And then he saw what Thetis held in her hands and what the fire was blazing around; it was the child, Achilles.

Prince Peleus sprang from the bed and caught Thetis around the waist and lifted her and the child away from the blazing fire. He put them both upon the bed, and he took from her the child that she held by the heel. His heart was wild within him, for the thought that wildness had come over his wife, and that she was bent upon destroying their child. But Thetis looked on him from under those goddess brows of hers and she said to him: "By the divine power that I still possess I would have made the child invulnerable; but the heel by which I held him has not been endued by the fire and in that place some day he may be stricken. All that the fire covered is invulnerable, and no weapon that strikes there can destroy his life. His heel I cannot now make invulnerable, for now the divine power is gone out of me."

[197]

When she said this Thetis looked full upon her husband, and never had she seemed so unforgiving as she was then. All the divine radiance that had remained with her was gone from her now, and she seemed a white-faced and bitter-thinking woman. And when Peleus saw that such a great bitterness faced him he fled from his house.

He traveled far from his own land, and first he went to the help of Heracles, who was then in the midst of his mighty labors. Heracles was building a wall around a city. Peleus labored, helping him to raise the wall for King Laomedon. Then, one night, as he walked by the wall he had helped to build, he heard voices speaking out of the earth. And one voice said: "Why has

Peleus striven so hard to raise a wall that his son shall fight hard to overthrow?" No voice replied. The wall was built, and Peleus departed. The city around which the wall was built was the great city of Troy.

In whatever place he went Peleus was followed by the hatred of the people of the sea, and above all by the hatred of the nymph who is called Psamathe. Far, far from his own country he went, and at last he came to a country of bright valleys that was ruled over by a kindly king—by Ceyx, who was called the Son of the Morning Star. [198]

Bright of face and kindly and peaceable in all his ways was this king, and kindly and peaceable was the land that he ruled over. And when Prince Peleus went to him to beg for his protection, and to beg for unfurrowed fields where he might graze his cattle, Ceyx raised him up from where he knelt. "Peaceable and plentiful is the land," he said, "and all who come here may have peace and a chance to earn their food. Live where you will, O stranger, and take the unfurrowed fields by the seashore for pasture for your cattle."

Peace came into Peleus's heart as he looked into the untroubled face of Ceyx, and as he looked over the bright valleys of the land he had come into. He brought his cattle to the unfurrowed fields by the seashore and he left herdsmen there to tend them. And as he walked along these bright valleys he thought upon his wife and upon his son Achilles, and there were gentle feelings in his breast. But then he thought upon the enmity of Psamathe, the woman of the sea, and great trouble came over him again. He felt he could not stay in the palace of the kindly king. He went where his herdsmen camped and he lived with them. But the sea was very near and its sound tormented him, and as the days went by, Peleus, wild looking and shaggy, became more and more unlike the hero whom once the gods themselves had honored. [199]

One day as he was standing near the palace having speech

with the king, a herdsman ran to him and cried out: “Peleus, Peleus, a dread thing has happened in the unfurrowed fields.” And when he had got his breath the herdsman told of the thing that had happened.

They had brought the herd down to the sea. Suddenly, from the marshes where the sea and land came together, a monstrous beast rushed out upon the herd; like a wolf this beast was, but with mouth and jaws that were more terrible than a wolf’s even. The beast seized upon the cattle. Yet it was not hunger that made it fierce, for the beasts that it killed it tore, but did not devour. It rushed on and on, killing and tearing more and more of the herd. “Soon,” said the herdsman, “it will have destroyed all in the herd, and then it will not spare to destroy the other flocks and herds that are in the land.”

Peleus was stricken to hear that his herd was being destroyed, but more stricken to know that the land of a friendly king would be ravaged, and ravaged on his account. For he knew that the terrible beast that had come from where the sea and the land joined had been sent by Psamathe. He went up on the tower that stood near the king’s palace. He was able to look out on the sea and able to look over all the land. And looking across the bright valleys he saw the dread beast. He saw it rush through his own mangled cattle and fall upon the herds of the kindly king.

[200]

He looked toward the sea and he prayed to Psamathe to spare the land that he had come to. But, even as he prayed, he knew that Psamathe would not harken to him. Then he made a prayer to Thetis, to his wife who had seemed so unforgiving. He prayed her to deal with Psamathe so that the land of Ceyx would not be altogether destroyed.

As he looked from the tower he saw the king come forth with arms in his hands for the slaying of the terrible beast. Peleus felt fear for the life of the kindly king. Down from the tower he came, and taking up his spear he went with Ceyx.

Soon, in one of the brightest of the valleys, they came upon

the beast; they came between it and a herd of silken-coated cattle. Seeing the men it rushed toward them with blood and foam upon its jaws. Then Peleus knew that the spears they carried would be of little use against the raging beast. His only thought was to struggle with it so that the king might be able to save himself.

Again he lifted up his hands and prayed to Thetis to draw away Psamathe's enmity. The beast rushed toward them; but suddenly it stopped. The bristles upon its body seemed to stiffen. The gaping jaws became fixed. The hounds that were with them dashed upon the beast, but then fell back with yelps of disappointment. And when Peleus and Ceyx came to where it stood they found that the monstrous beast had been turned into stone.

And a stone it remains in that bright valley, a wonder to all the men of Ceyx's land. The country was spared the ravages of the beast. And the heart of Peleus was uplifted to think that Thetis had harkened to his prayer and had prevailed upon Psamathe to forego her enmity. Not altogether unforgiving was his wife to him. [201]

That day he went from the land of the bright valleys, from the land ruled over by the kindly Ceyx, and he came back to rugged Phthia, his own country. When he came near his hall he saw two at the doorway awaiting him. Thetis stood there, and the child Achilles was by her side. The radiance of the immortals was in her face no longer, but there was a glow there, a glow of welcome for the hero Peleus. And thus Peleus, long tormented by the enmity of the sea-born ones, came back to the wife he had won from the sea.

III. Theseus and the Minotaur

I



HEREAFTER Theseus made up his mind to go in search of his father, the unknown king, and Medea, the wise woman, counseled him to go to Athens. After the hunt in Calydon he set forth. On his way he fought with and slew two robbers who harassed countries and treated people unjustly.

[202]

The first was Sinnias. He was a robber who slew men cruelly by tying them to strong branches of trees and letting the branches fly apart. On him Theseus had no mercy. The second was a robber also, Procrustes: he had a great iron bed on which he made his captives lie; if they were too long for that bed he chopped pieces off them, and if they were too short he stretched out their bodies with terrible racks. On him, likewise, Theseus had no mercy; he slew Procrustes and gave liberty to his captives.

The King of Athens at the time was named Ægeus. He was father of Theseus, but neither Theseus nor he knew that this was so. Æthra was his mother, and she was the daughter of the King of Trœzen. Before Theseus was born his father left a great sword under a stone, telling Æthra that the boy was to have the sword when he was able to move that stone away.

King Ægeus was old and fearful now: there were wars and troubles in the city; besides, there was in his palace an evil woman, a witch, to whom the king listened. This woman heard that a proud and fearless young man had come into Athens, and she at once thought to destroy him.

So the witch spoke to the fearful king, and she made him believe that this stranger had come into Athens to make league

with his enemies and destroy him. Such was her power over Ægeus that she was able to persuade him to invite the stranger youth to a feast in the palace, and to give him a cup that would have poison in it.

Theseus came to the palace. He sat down to the banquet with the king. But before the cup was brought something moved him to stand up and draw forth the sword that he carried. Fearfully the king looked upon the sword. Then he saw the heavy ivory hilt with the curious carving on it, and he knew that this was the sword that he had once laid under the stone near the palace of the King of Trœzen. He questioned Theseus as to how he had come by the sword, and Theseus told him how Æthra, his mother, had shown him where it was hidden, and how he had been able to take it from under the stone before he was grown a youth. More and more Ægeus questioned him, and he came to know that the youth before him was his son indeed. He dashed down the cup that had been brought to the table, and he shook all over with the thought of how near he had been to a terrible crime. The witchwoman watched all that passed; mounting on a car drawn by dragons she made flight from Athens. [203]

And now the people of the city, knowing that it was he who had slain the robbers Sinnias and Procrustes, rejoiced to have Theseus amongst them. When he appeared as their prince they rejoiced still more. Soon he was able to bring to an end the wars in the city and the troubles that afflicted Athens.

II

The greatest king in the world at that time was Minos, King of Crete. Minos had sent his son to Athens to make peace and friendship between his kingdom and the kingdom of King Ægeus. But the people of Athens slew the son of King Minos, and because Ægeus had not given him the protection that a king should have given a stranger come upon such an errand he was deemed to have some part in the guilt of his slaying. [204]

Minos, the great king, was wroth, and he made war on Athens, wreaking great destruction upon the country and the people. Moreover, the gods themselves were wroth with Athens; they punished the people with famine, making even the rivers dry up. The Athenians went to the oracle and asked Apollo what they should do to have their guilt taken away. Apollo made answer that they should make peace with Minos and fulfill all his demands.

All this Theseus now heard, learning for the first time that behind the wars and troubles in Athens there was a deed of evil that Ægeus, his father, had some guilt in.

The demands that King Minos made upon Athens were terrible. He demanded that the Athenians should send into Crete every year seven youths and seven maidens as a price for the life of his son. And these youths and maidens were not to meet death merely, nor were they to be reared in slavery—they were to be sent that a monster called the Minotaur might devour them.

Youths and maidens had been sent, and for the third time the messengers of King Minos were coming to Athens. The tribute for the Minotaur was to be chosen by lot. The fathers and mothers were in fear and trembling, for each man and woman thought that his or her son or daughter would be taken for a prey for the Minotaur.

[205]

They came together, the people of Athens, and they drew the lots fearfully. And on the throne above them all sat their pale-faced king, Ægeus, the father of Theseus.

Before the first lot was drawn Theseus turned to all of them and said, “People of Athens, it is not right that your children should go and that I, who am the son of King Ægeus, should remain behind. Surely, if any of the youths of Athens should face the dread monster of Crete, I should face it. There is one lot that you may leave undrawn. I will go to Crete.”

His father, on hearing the speech of Theseus, came down from his throne and pleaded with him, begging him not to go.

But the will of Theseus was set; he would go with the others and face the Minotaur. And he reminded his father of how the people had complained, saying that if Ægeus had done the duty of a king, Minos's son would not have been slain and the tribute to the Minotaur would have not been demanded. It was the passing about of such complaints that had led to the war and troubles that Theseus found on his coming to Athens.

Also Theseus told his father and told the people that he had hope in his hands—that the hands that were strong enough to slay Sinnias and Procrustes, the giant robbers, would be strong enough to slay the dread monster of Crete. His father at last consented to his going. And Theseus was able to make the people willing to believe that he would be able to overcome the Minotaur, and so put an end to the terrible tribute that was being exacted from them. [206]

With six other youths and seven maidens Theseus went on board of the ship that every year brought to Crete the grievous tribute. This ship always sailed with black sails. But before it sailed this time King Ægeus gave to Nausitheus, the master of the ship, a white sail to take with him. And he begged Theseus, that in case he should be able to overcome the monster, to hoist the white sail he had given. Theseus promised he would do this. His father would watch for the return of the ship, and if the sail were black he would know that the Minotaur had dealt with his son as it had dealt with the other youths who had gone from Athens. And if the sail were white Ægeus would have indeed cause to rejoice.

III

And now the black-sailed ship had come to Crete, and the youths and maidens of Athens looked from its deck on Knossos, the marvelous city that Dædalus the builder had built for King Minos. And they saw the palace of the king, the red and black

palace in which was the labyrinth, made also by Dædalus, where the dread Minotaur was hidden.

[207] In fear they looked upon the city and the palace. But not in fear did Theseus look, but in wonder at the magnificence of it all—the harbor with its great steps leading up into the city, the far-spreading palace all red and black, and the crowds of ships with their white and red sails. They were brought through the city of Knossos to the palace of the king. And there Theseus looked upon Minos. In a great red chamber on which was painted the sign of the axe, King Minos sat.

On a low throne he sat, holding in his hand a scepter on which a bird was perched. Not in fear, but steadily, did Theseus look upon the king. And he saw that Minos had the face of one who has thought long upon troublesome things, and that his eyes were strangely dark and deep. The king noted that the eyes of Theseus were upon him, and he made a sign with his head to an attendant and the attendant laid his hand upon him and brought Theseus to stand beside the king. Minos questioned him as to who he was and what lands he had been in, and when he learned that Theseus was the son of Ægeus, the King of Athens, he said the name of his son who had been slain, “Androgeus, Androgeus,” over and over again, and then spoke no more.

[208] While he stood there beside the king there came into the chamber three maidens; one of them, Theseus knew, was the daughter of Minos. Not like the maidens of Greece were the princess and her two attendants: instead of having on flowing garments and sandals and wearing their hair bound, they had on dresses of gleaming material that were tight at the waists and bell-shaped; the hair that streamed on their shoulders was made wavy; they had on high shoes of a substance that shone like glass. Never had Theseus looked upon maidens who were so strange.

They spoke to the king in the strange Cretan language; then Minos’s daughter made reverence to her father, and they went from the chamber. Theseus watched them as they went through

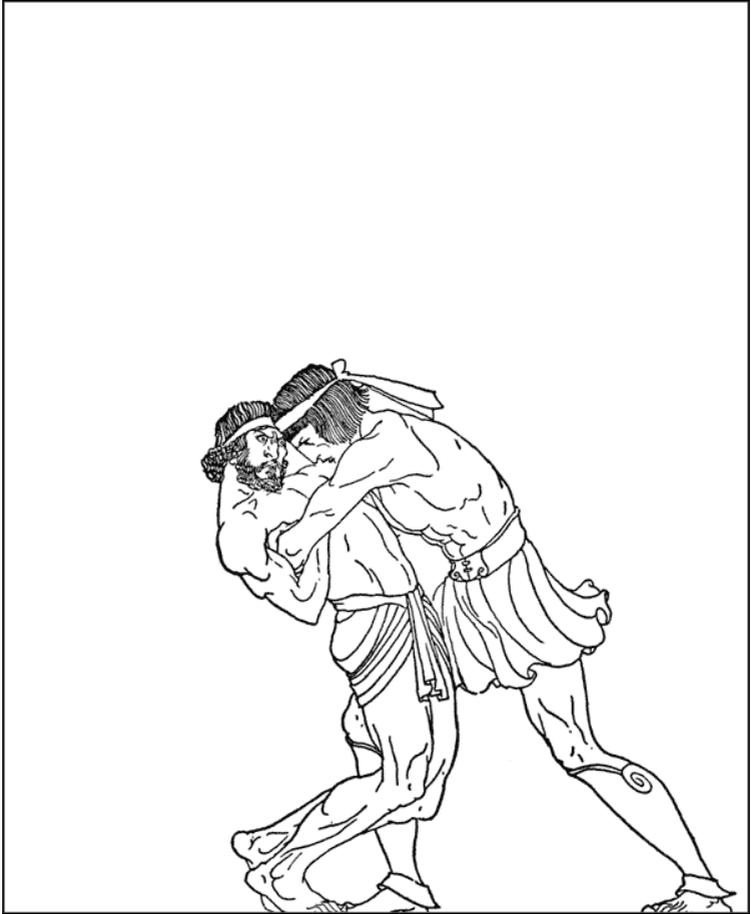
a long passage, walking slowly on their high-heeled shoes.

Through the same passage the youths and maidens of Athens were afterward brought. They came into a great hall. The walls were red and on them were paintings in black—pictures of great bulls with girls and slender youths struggling with them. It was a place for games and shows, and Theseus stood with the youths and maidens of Athens and with the people of the palace and watched what was happening.

They saw women charming snakes; then they saw a boxing match, and afterward they all looked on a bout of wrestling. Theseus looked past the wrestlers and he saw, at the other end of the hall, the daughter of King Minos and her two attendant maidens.

One broad-shouldered and bearded man overthrew all the wrestlers who came to grips with him. He stood there boastfully, and Theseus was made angry by the man's arrogance. Then, when no other wrestler would come against him, he turned to leave the arena.

But Theseus stood in his way and pushed him back. The boastful man laid hands upon him and pulled him into the arena. He strove to throw Theseus as he had thrown the others; but he soon found that the youth from Greece was a wrestler, too, and that he would have to strive hard to overthrow him. [209]



More eagerly than they had watched anything else the people of the palace and the youths and maidens of Athens watched the bout between Theseus and the lordly wrestler. Those from Athens who looked upon him now thought that they had never seen Theseus look so tall and so conquering before; beside the slender, dark-haired people of Crete he looked like a statue of one of the gods.

Very adroit was the Cretan wrestler, and Theseus had to use all his strength to keep upon his feet; but soon he mastered the tricks that the wrestler was using against him. Then the Cretan left aside his tricks and began to use all his strength to throw Theseus.

Steadily Theseus stood and the Cretan wrestler was spent and gasping in the effort to throw him. Then Theseus made him feel his grip. He bent him backward, and then, using all his strength suddenly, forced him to the ground. All were filled with wonder at the strength and power of this youth from overseas.

Food and wine were given the youths and maidens of Athens, and they with Theseus were let wander through the grounds of the palace. But they could make no escape, for guards followed them and the way to the ships was filled with strangers who would not let them pass. They talked to each other about the Minotaur, and there was fear in every word they said. But Theseus went from one to the other, telling them that perhaps there was a way by which he could come to the monster and destroy it. And the youths and maidens, remembering how he had overthrown the lordly wrestler, were comforted a little, thinking that Theseus might indeed be able to destroy the Minotaur and so save all of them. [210]

IV

Theseus was awakened by some one touching him. He arose and he saw a dark-faced servant, who beckoned to him. He left the little chamber where he had been sleeping, and then he saw outside one who wore the strange dress of the Cretans.

When Theseus looked full upon her he saw that she was none other than the daughter of King Minos. "I am Ariadne," she said, "and, O youth from Greece, I have come to save you from the dread Minotaur."

He looked upon Ariadne's strange face with its long, dark eyes, and he wondered how this girl could think that she could

save him and save the youths and maidens of Athens from the Minotaur. Her hand rested upon his arm, and she led him into the chamber where Minos had sat. It was lighted now by many little lamps.

[211] "I will show the way of escape to you," said Ariadne.

Then Theseus looked around, and he saw that none of the other youths and maidens were near them, and he looked on Ariadne again, and he saw that the strange princess had been won to help him, and to help him only.

"Who will show the way of escape to the others?" asked Theseus.

"Ah," said the Princess Ariadne, "for the others there is no way of escape."

"Then," said Theseus, "I will not leave the youths and maidens of Athens who came with me to Crete to be devoured by the Minotaur."

"Ah, Theseus," said Ariadne, "they cannot escape the Minotaur. One only may escape, and I want you to be that one. I saw you when you wrestled with Deucalion, our great wrestler, and since then I have longed to save you."

"I have come to slay the Minotaur," said Theseus, "and I cannot hold my life as my own until I have slain it."

Said Ariadne, "If you could see the Minotaur, Theseus, and if you could measure its power, you would know that you are not the one to slay it. I think that only Talos, that giant who was all of bronze, could have slain the Minotaur."

"Princess," said Theseus, "can you help me to come to the Minotaur and look upon it so that I can know for certainty whether this hand of mine can slay the monster?"

[212] "I can help you to come to the Minotaur and look upon it," said Ariadne.

"Then help me, princess," cried Theseus; "help me to come to the Minotaur and look upon it, and help me, too, to get back the sword that I brought with me to Crete."

“Your sword will not avail you against the Minotaur,” said Ariadne; “when you look upon the monster you will know that it is not for your hand to slay.”

“Oh, but bring me my sword, princess,” cried Theseus, and his hands went out to her in supplication.

“I will bring you your sword,” said she.

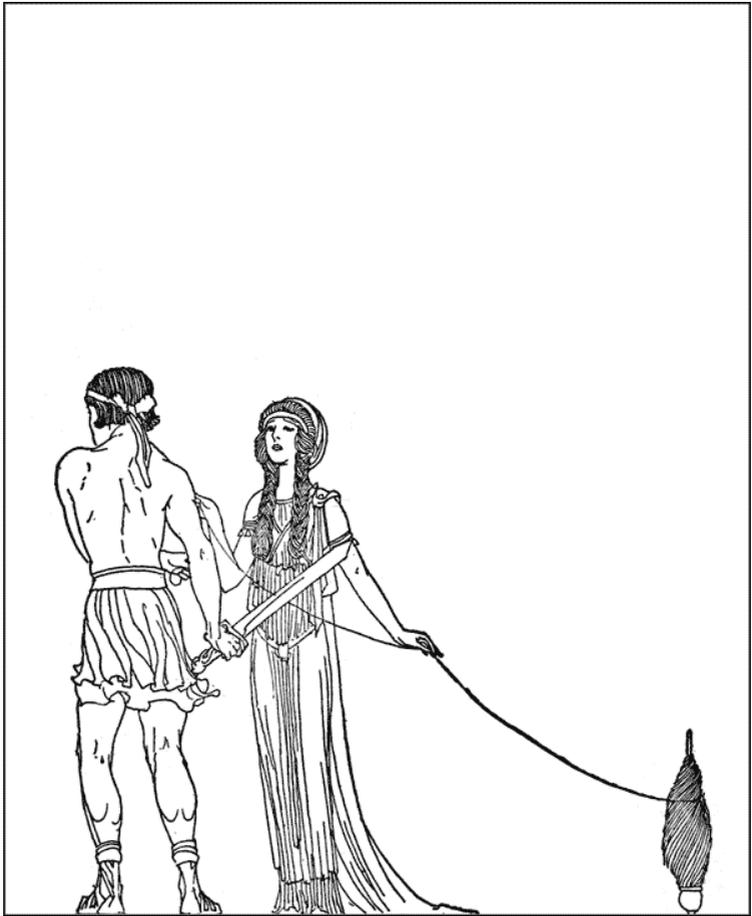
She took up a little lamp and went through a doorway, leaving Theseus standing by the low throne in the chamber of Minos. Then after a little while she came back, bringing with her Theseus’s great ivory-hilted sword.

“It is a great sword,” she said; “I marked it before because it is your sword, Theseus. But even this great sword will not avail against the Minotaur.”

“Show me the way to come to the Minotaur, O Ariadne,” cried Theseus.

He knew that she did not think that he would deem himself able to strive with the Minotaur, and that when he looked upon the dread monster he would return to her and then take the way of his escape.

She took his hand and led him from the chamber of Minos. She was not tall, but she stood straight and walked steadily, and Theseus saw in her something of the strange majesty that he had seen in Minos the king.



They came to high bronze gates that opened into a vault. “Here,” said Ariadne, “the labyrinth begins. Very devious is the labyrinth, built by Dædalus, in which the Minotaur is hidden, and without the clue none could find a way through the passages. But I will give you the clue so that you may look upon the Minotaur and then come back to me. Theseus, now I put into your hand the thread that will guide you through all the windings of the

labyrinth. And outside the place where the Minotaur is you will find another thread to guide you back.”

A cone was on the ground and it had a thread fastened to it. Ariadne gave Theseus the thread and the cone to wind it around. The thread as he held it and wound it around the cone would bring him through all the windings and turnings of the labyrinth.

She left him, and Theseus went on. Winding the thread around the cone he went along a wide passage in the vault. He turned and came into a passage that was very long. He came to a place in this passage where a door seemed to be, but within the frame of the doorway there was only a blank wall. But below that doorway there was a flight of six steps, and down these steps the thread led him. On he went, and he crossed the marks that he himself had made in the dust, and he thought he must have come back to the place where he had parted from Ariadne. He went on, and he saw before him a flight of steps. The thread did not lead up the steps; it led into the most winding of passages. So sudden were the turnings in it that one could not see three steps before one. He was dazed by the turnings of this passage, but still he went on. He went up winding steps and then along a narrow wall. The wall overhung a broad flight of steps, and Theseus had to jump to them. Down the steps he went and into a wide, empty hall that had doorways to the right hand and to the left hand. Here the thread had its end. It was fastened to a cone that lay on the ground, and beside this cone was another—the clue that was to bring him back.

[214]

Now Theseus, knowing he was in the very center of the labyrinth, looked all around for sight of the Minotaur. There was no sight of the monster here. He went to all the doors and pushed at them, and some opened and some remained fast. The middle door opened. As it did Theseus felt around him a chilling draft of air.

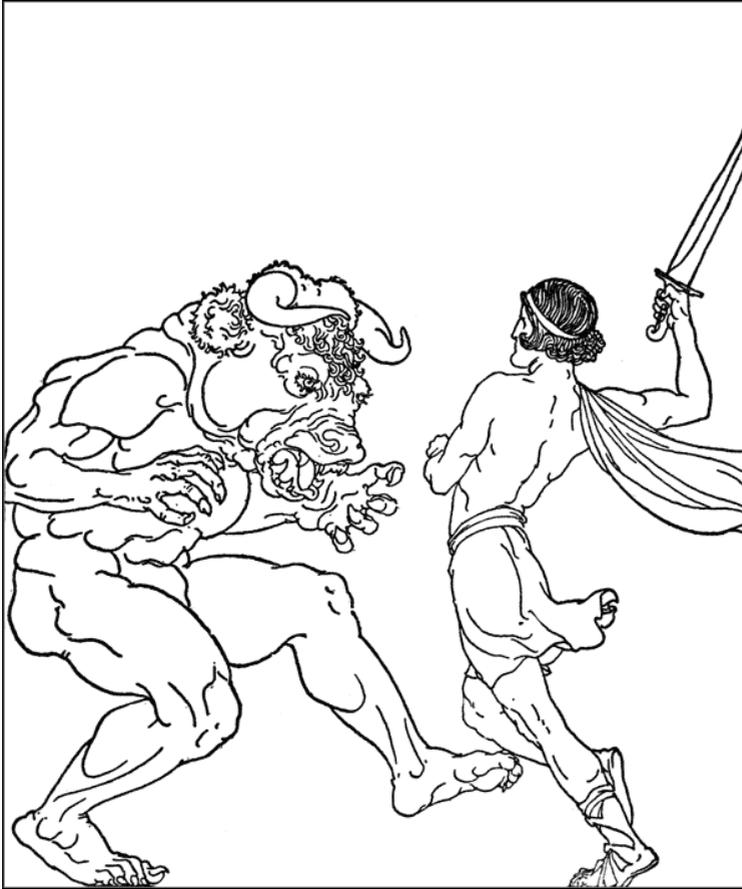
That chilling draft was from the breathing of the monster. Theseus then saw the Minotaur. It lay on the ground, a strange,

bull-faced thing.

When the thought came to Theseus that he would have to fight that monster alone and in that hidden and empty place all delight left him; he grew like a stone; he groaned, and it seemed to him that he heard the voice of Ariadne calling him back. He could find his way back through the labyrinth and come to her. He stepped back, and the door closed on the Minotaur, the dread monster of Crete.

[215]

In an instant Theseus pushed the door again. He stood within the hall where the Minotaur was, and the heavy door shut behind him. He looked again on that dark, bull-faced thing. It reared up as a horse rears and Theseus saw that it would crash down on him and tear him with its dragon claws. With a great bound he went far away from where the monster crashed down. Then Theseus faced it: he saw its thick lips and its slobbering mouth; he saw that its skin was thick and hard.



He drew near the monster, his sword in his hand. He struck at its eyes, and his sword made a great dint. But no blood came, for the Minotaur was a bloodless monster. From its mouth and nostrils came a draft that covered him with a chilling slime.

Then it rushed upon him and overthrew him, and Theseus felt its terrible weight upon him. But he thrust his sword upward, and it reared up again, screaming with pain. Theseus drew himself away, and then he saw it searching around and around,

and he knew he had made it sightless. Then it faced him; all the more fearful it was because from its wounds no blood came.

Anger flowed into Theseus when he saw the monster standing frightfully before him; he thought of all the youths and maidens that this bloodless thing had destroyed, and all the youths and maidens that it would destroy if he did not slay it now. Angrily he rushed upon it with his great sword. It clawed and tore him, and it opened wide its most evil mouth as if to draw him into it. But again he sprang at it; he thrust his great sword through its neck, and he left his sword there.

[216]

With the last of his strength he pulled open the heavy door and he went out from the hall where the Minotaur was. He picked up the thread and he began to wind it as he had wound the other thread on his way down. On he went, through passage after passage, through chamber after chamber. His mind was dizzy, and he had little thought for the way he was going. His wounds and the chill that the monster had breathed into him and his horror of the fearful and bloodless thing made his mind almost forsake him. He kept the thread in his hand and he wound it as he went on through the labyrinth. He stumbled and the thread broke. He went on for a few steps and then he went back to find the thread that had fallen out of his hands. In an instant he was in a part of the labyrinth that he had not been in before.

He walked a long way, and then he came on his own footmarks as they crossed themselves in the dust. He pushed open a door and came into the air. He was now by the outside wall of the palace, and he saw birds flying by him. He leant against the wall of the palace, thinking that he would strive no more to find his way through the labyrinth.

V

That day the youths and maidens of Athens were brought through the labyrinth and to the hall where the Minotaur was. They went through the passages weeping and lamenting. Some

cried out for Theseus, and some said that Theseus had deserted them. The heavy door was opened. Then those who were with the youths and maidens saw the Minotaur lying stark and stiff with Theseus's sword through its neck. They shouted and blew trumpets and the noise of their trumpets filled the labyrinth. Then they turned back, bringing the youths and maidens with them, and a whisper went through the whole palace that the Minotaur had been slain. The youths and maidens were lodged in the chamber where Minos gave his judgments. [217]

VI

Theseus, wearied and overcome, fell into a deep sleep by the wall of the palace. He awakened with a feeling that the claw of the Minotaur was upon him. There were stars in the sky above the high palace wall, and he saw a dark-robed and ancient man standing beside him. Theseus knew that this was Dædalus, the builder of the palace and the labyrinth. Dædalus called and a slim youth came—Icarus, the son of Dædalus. Minos had set father and son apart from the rest of the palace, and Theseus had come near the place where they were confined. Icarus came and brought him to a winding stairway and showed him a way to go.

A dark-faced servant met and looked him full in the face. Then, as if he knew that Theseus was the one whom he had been searching for, he led him into a little chamber where there were three maidens. One started up and came to him quickly, and Theseus again saw Ariadne. [218]

She hid him in the chamber of the palace where her singing birds were, and she would come and sit beside him, asking about his own country and telling him that she would go with him there. "I showed you how you might come to the Minotaur," she said, "and you went there and you slew the monster, and now I may not stay in my father's palace."

And Theseus thought all the time of his return, and of how he might bring the youths and maidens of Athens back to their

own people. For Ariadne, that strange princess, was not dear to him as Medea was dear to Jason, or Atalanta the Huntress to young Meleagrus.

One sunset she led him to a roof of the palace and she showed him the harbor with the ships, and she showed him the ship with the black sail that had brought him to Knossos. She told him she would take him aboard that ship, and that the youths and maidens of Athens could go with them. She would bring to the master of the ship the seal of King Minos, and the master, seeing it, would set sail for whatever place Theseus desired to go.

Then did she become dear to Theseus because of her great kindness, and he kissed her eyes and swore that he would not go from the palace unless she would come with him to his own country. The strange princess smiled and wept as if she doubted what he said. Nevertheless, she led him from the roof and down into one of the palace gardens. He waited there, and the youths and maidens of Athens were led into the garden, all wearing cloaks that hid their forms and faces. Young Icarus led them from the grounds of the palace and down to the ships. And Ariadne went with them, bringing with her the seal of her father, King Minos.

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And when they came on board of the black-sailed ship they showed the seal to the master, Nausitheus, and the master of the ship let the sail take the breeze of the evening, and so Theseus went away from Crete.

VII

To the Island of Naxos they sailed. And when they reached that place the master of the ship, thinking that what had been done was not in accordance with the will of King Minos, stayed the ship there. He waited until other ships came from Knossos. And when they came they brought word that Minos would not slay nor demand back Theseus nor the youths and maidens of

Athens. His daughter, Ariadne, he would have back, to reign with him over Crete.

Then Ariadne left the black-sailed ship, and went back to Crete from Naxos. Theseus let the princess go, although he might have struggled to hold her. But more strange than dear did Ariadne remain to Theseus.

And all this time his father, Ægeus, stayed on the tower of his palace, watching for the return of the ship that had sailed for Knossos. The life of the king wasted since the departure of Theseus, and now it was but a thread. Every day he watched for the return of the ship, hoping against hope that Theseus would return alive to him. Then a ship came into the harbor. It had black sails. Ægeus did not know that Theseus was aboard of it, and that Theseus in the hurry of his flight and in the sadness of his parting from Ariadne had not thought of taking out the white sail that his father had given to Nausitheus. [220]

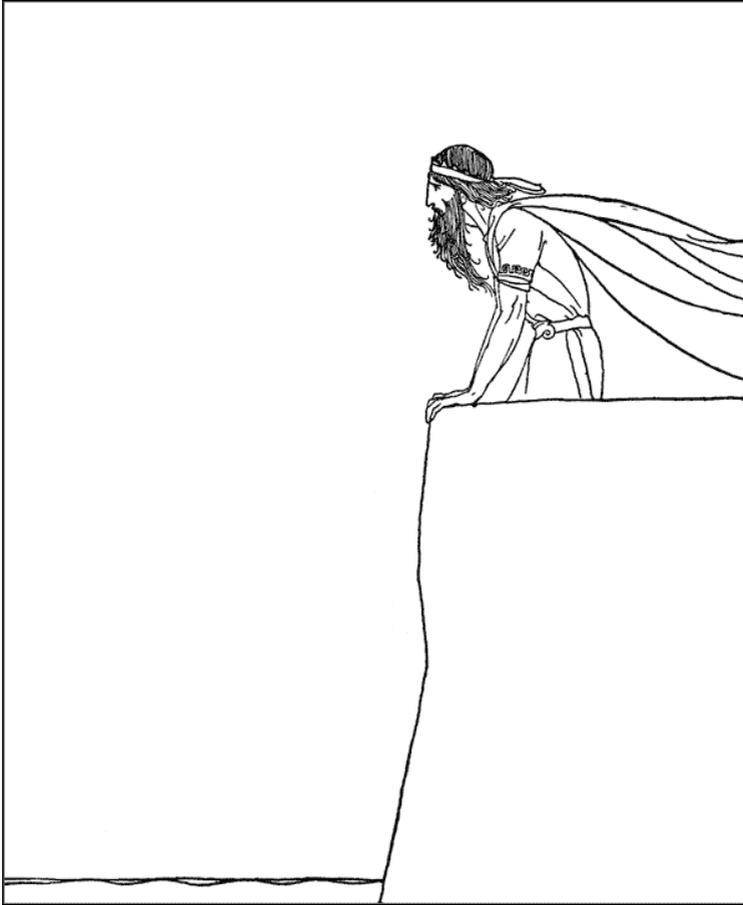
Joyously Theseus sailed into the harbor, having slain the Minotaur and lifted for ever the tribute put upon Athens. Joyously he sailed into the harbor, bringing back to their parents the youths and maidens of Athens. But the king, his father, saw the black sails on his ship, and straightway the thread of his life broke, and he died on the roof of the tower which he had built to look out on the sea.

Theseus landed on the shore of his own country. He had the ship drawn up on the beach and he made sacrifices of thanksgiving to the gods. Then he sent messengers to the city to announce his return. They went toward the city, these joyful messengers, but when they came to the gate they heard the sounds of mourning and lamentation. The mourning and the lamentation were for the death of the king, Theseus's father. They hurried back and they came to Theseus where he stood on the beach. They brought a wreath of victory for him, but as they put it into his hand they told him of the death of his father. Then Theseus left the wreath on the ground, and he wept for the death

of Ægeus—of Ægeus, the hero, who had left the sword under the stone for him before he was born.

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The men and women who came to the beach wept and laughed as they clasped in their arms the children brought back to them. And Theseus stood there, silent and bowed; the memory of his last moments with his father, of his fight with the Minotaur, of his parting with Ariadne—all flowed back upon him. He stood there with head bowed, the man who might not put upon his brows the wreath of victory that had been brought to him.



VIII

There had come into the city a youth of great valor whose name was Peirithous: from a far country he had come, filled with a desire of meeting Theseus, whose fame had come to him. The youth was in Athens at the time Theseus returned. He went down to the beach with the townsfolk, and he saw Theseus standing

alone with his head bowed down. He went to him and he spoke, and Theseus lifted his head and he saw before him a young man of strength and beauty. He looked upon him, and the thought of high deeds came into his mind again. He wanted this young man to be his comrade in dangers and upon quests. And Peirithous looked upon Theseus, and he felt that he was greater and nobler than he had thought. They became friends and sworn brothers, and together they went into far countries.

Now there was in Epirus a savage king who had a very fair daughter. He had named this daughter Persephone, naming her thus to show that she was held as fast by him as that other Persephone was held who ruled in the Underworld. No man might see her, and no man might wed her. But Peirithous had seen the daughter of this king, and he desired above all things to take her from her father and make her his wife. He begged Theseus to help him enter that king's palace and carry off the maiden.

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So they came to Epirus, Theseus and Peirithous, and they entered the king's palace, and they heard the bay of the dread hound that was there to let no one out who had once come within the walls. Suddenly the guards of the savage king came upon them, and they took Theseus and Peirithous and they dragged them down into dark dungeons.

Two great chairs of stone were there, and Theseus and Peirithous were left seated in them. And the magic powers that were in the chairs of stone were such that the heroes could not lift themselves out of them. There they stayed, held in the great stone chairs in the dungeons of that savage king.

Then it so happened that Heracles came into the palace of the king. The harsh king feasted Heracles and abated his savagery before him. But he could not forbear boasting of how he had trapped the heroes who had come to carry off Persephone. And he told how they could not get out of the stone chairs and how they were held captive in his dark dungeon. Heracles listened,

his heart full of pity for the heroes from Greece who had met with such a harsh fate. And when the king mentioned that one of the heroes was Theseus, Heracles would feast no more with him until he had promised that the one who had been his comrade on the *Argo* would be let go.

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The king said he would give Theseus his liberty if Heracles would carry the stone chair on which he was seated out of the dungeon and into the outer world. Then Heracles went down into the dungeon. He found the two heroes in the great chairs of stone. But one of them, Peirithous, no longer breathed. Heracles took the great chair of stone that Theseus was seated in, and he carried it up, up, from the dungeon and out into the world. It was a heavy task even for Heracles. He broke the chair in pieces, and Theseus stood up, released.

Thereafter the world was before Theseus. He went with Heracles, and in the deeds that Heracles was afterward to accomplish Theseus shared.

IV. The Life and Labors of Heracles

I



ERACLES was the son of Zeus, but he was born into the family of a mortal king. When he was still a youth, being overwhelmed by a madness sent upon him by one of the goddesses, he slew

the children of his brother Iphicles. Then, coming to know what he had done, sleep and rest went from him: he went to Delphi, to the shrine of Apollo, to be purified of his crime.

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At Delphi, at the shrine of Apollo, the priestess purified him, and when she had purified him she uttered this prophecy: “From this day forth thy name shall be, not Alcides, but Heracles. Thou shalt go to Eurystheus, thy cousin, in Mycenæ, and serve him in all things. When the labors he shall lay upon thee are accomplished, and when the rest of thy life is lived out, thou shalt become one of the immortals.” Heracles, on hearing these words, set out for Mycenæ.

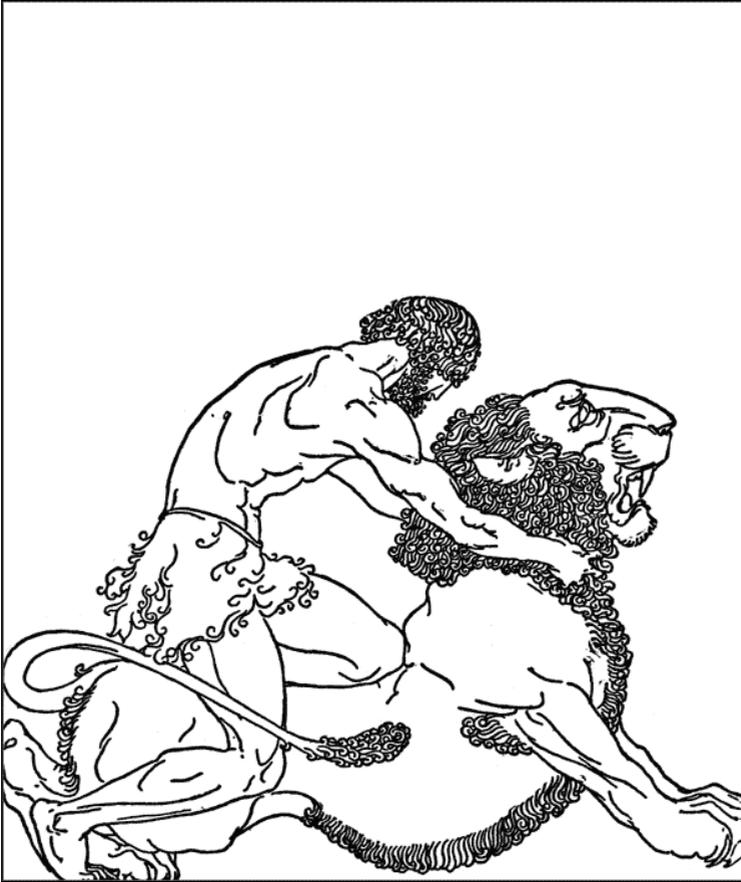
He stood before his cousin who hated him; he, a towering man, stood before a king who sat there weak and trembling. And Heracles said, “I have come to take up the labors that you will lay upon me; speak now, Eurystheus, and tell me what you would have me do.”

Eurystheus, that weak king, looking on the young man who stood as tall and as firm as one of the immortals, had a heart that was filled with hatred. He lifted up his head and he said with a frown:

“There is a lion in Nemea that is stronger and more fierce than any lion known before. Kill that lion, and bring the lion’s skin to me that I may know that you have truly performed your task.” So Eurystheus said, and Heracles, with neither shield nor arms, went forth from the king’s palace to seek and to combat the dread lion of Nemea.

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He went on until he came into a country where the fences were overthrown and the fields wasted and the houses empty and fallen. He went on until he came to the waste around that land: there he came on the trail of the lion; it led up the side of a mountain, and Heracles, without shield or arms, followed the trail.



He heard the roar of the lion. Looking up he saw the beast standing at the mouth of a cavern, huge and dark against the sunset. The lion roared three times, and then it went within the cavern.

Around the mouth were strewn the bones of creatures it had killed and carried there. Heracles looked upon them when he came to the cavern. He went within. Far into the cavern he went, and then he came to where he saw the lion. It was sleeping.

Heracles viewed the terrible bulk of the lion, and then he looked upon his own knotted hands and arms. He remembered that it was told of him that, while still a child of eight months, he had strangled a great serpent that had come to his cradle to devour him. He had grown and his strength had grown too.

So he stood, measuring his strength and the size of the lion. The breath from its mouth and nostrils came heavily to him as the beast slept, gorged with its prey. Then the lion yawned. Heracles sprang on it and put his great hands upon its throat. No growl came out of its mouth, but the great eyes blazed while the terrible paws tore at Heracles. Against the rock Heracles held the beast; strongly he held it, choking it through the skin that was almost impenetrable. Terribly the lion struggled; but the strong hands of the hero held around its throat until it struggled no more.

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Then Heracles stripped off that impenetrable skin from the lion's body; he put it upon himself for a cloak. Then, as he went through the forest, he pulled up a young oak tree and trimmed it and made a club for himself. With the lion's skin over him—that skin that no spear or arrow could pierce—and carrying the club in his hand he journeyed on until he came to the palace of King Eurystheus.

The king, seeing coming toward him a towering man all covered with the hide of a monstrous lion, ran and hid himself in a great jar. He lifted the lid up to ask the servants what was the meaning of this terrible appearance. And the servants told him that it was Heracles come back with the skin of the lion of Nemea. On hearing this Eurystheus hid himself again.

He would not speak with Heracles nor have him come near him, so fearful was he. But Heracles was content to be left alone. He sat down in the palace and feasted himself.

The servants came to the king; Eurystheus lifted the lid of the jar and they told him how Heracles was feasting and devouring all the goods in the palace. The king flew into a rage, but still he was fearful of having the hero before him. He issued

commands through his heralds ordering Heracles to go forth at once and perform the second of his tasks.

It was to slay the great water snake that made its lair in the swamps of Lerna. Heracles stayed to feast another day, and then, with the lion's skin across his shoulders and the great club in his hands, he started off. But this time he did not go alone; the boy Iolaus went with him. [227]



Heracles and Iolaus went on until they came to the vast swamp of Lerna. Right in the middle of the swamp was the water snake that was called the Hydra. Nine heads it had, and it raised them up out of the water as the hero and his companion came near. They could not cross the swamp to come to the monster, for man or beast would sink and be lost in it.

The Hydra remained in the middle of the swamp belching mud at the hero and his companion. Then Heracles took up his bow and he shot flaming arrows at its heads. It grew into such a rage that it came through the swamp to attack him. Heracles swung his club. As the Hydra came near he knocked head after head off its body.

But for every head knocked off two grew upon the Hydra. And as he struggled with the monster a huge crab came out of the swamp, and gripping Heracles by the foot tried to draw him in. Then Heracles cried out. The boy Iolaus came; he killed the crab that had come to the Hydra's aid.

Then Heracles laid hands upon the Hydra and drew it out of the swamp. With his club he knocked off a head and he had Iolaus put fire to where it had been, so that two heads might not grow in that place. The life of the Hydra was in its middle head; that head he had not been able to knock off with his club. Now, with his hands he tore it off, and he placed this head under a great stone so that it could not rise into life again. The Hydra's life was now destroyed. Heracles dipped his arrows into the gall of the monster, making his arrows deadly; no thing that was struck by these arrows afterward could keep its life.

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Again he came to Eurystheus's palace, and Eurystheus, seeing him, ran again and hid himself in the jar. Heracles ordered the servants to tell the king that he had returned and that the second labor was accomplished.

Eurystheus, hearing from the servants that Heracles was mild in his ways, came out of the jar. Insolently he spoke. "Twelve labors you have to accomplish for me," said he to

Heracles, “and eleven yet remain to be accomplished.”

“How?” said Heracles. “Have I not performed two of the labors? Have I not slain the lion of Nemea and the great water snake of Lerna?”

“In the killing of the water snake you were helped by Iolaus,” said the king, snapping out his words and looking at Heracles with shifting eyes. “That labor cannot be allowed you.”

Heracles would have struck him to the ground. But then he remembered that the crime that he had committed in his madness would have to be expiated by labors performed at the order of this man. He looked full upon Eurystheus and he said, “Tell me of the other labors, and I will go forth from Mycenæ and accomplish them.”

Then Eurystheus bade him go and make clean the stables of King Augeias. Heracles came into that king’s country. The smell from the stables was felt for miles around. Countless herds of cattle and goats had been in the stables for years, and because of the uncleanness and the smell that came from it the crops were withered all around. Heracles told the king that he would clean the stables if he were given one tenth of the cattle and the goats for a reward. [229]

The king agreed to this reward. Then Heracles drove the cattle and the goats out of the stables; he broke through the foundations and he made channels for the two rivers Alpheus and Peneius. The waters flowed through the stables, and in a day all the uncleanness was washed away. Then Heracles turned the rivers back into their own courses.

He was not given the reward he had bargained for, however.

He went back to Mycenæ with the tale of how he had cleaned the stables. “Ten labors remain for me to do now,” he said.

“Eleven,” said Eurystheus. “How can I allow the cleaning of King Augeias’s stables to you when you bargained for a reward for doing it?”

Then while Heracles stood still, holding himself back from striking him, Eurystheus ran away and hid himself in the jar. Through his heralds he sent word to Heracles, telling him what the other labors would be.

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He was to clear the marshes of Stymphalus of the man-eating birds that gathered there; he was to capture and bring to the king the golden-horned deer of Coryneia; he was also to capture and bring alive to Mycenæ the boar of Erymanthus.

Heracles came to the marshes of Stymphalus. The growth of jungle was so dense that he could not cut his way through to where the man-eating birds were; they sat upon low bushes within the jungle, gorging themselves upon the flesh they had carried there.

For days Heracles tried to hack his way through. He could not get to where the birds were. Then, thinking he might not be able to accomplish this labor, he sat upon the ground in despair.

It was then that one of the immortals appeared to him; for the first and only time he was given help from the gods.

It was Athena who came to him. She stood apart from Heracles, holding in her hands brazen cymbals. These she clashed together. At the sound of this clashing the Stymphalean birds rose up from the low bushes behind the jungle. Heracles shot at them with those unerring arrows of his. The man-eating birds fell, one after the other, into the marsh.

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Then Heracles went north to where the Coryneian deer took her pasture. So swift of foot was she that no hound nor hunter had ever been able to overtake her. For the whole of a year Heracles kept Golden Horns in chase, and at last, on the side of the Mountain Artemision, he caught her. Artemis, the goddess of the wild things, would have punished Heracles for capturing the deer, but the hero pleaded with her, and she relented and agreed to let him bring the deer to Mycenæ and show her to King Eurystheus. And Artemis took charge of Golden Horns while Heracles went off to capture the Erymanthean boar.

He came to the city of Psophis, the inhabitants of which were in deadly fear because of the ravages of the boar. Heracles made his way up the mountain to hunt it. Now on this mountain a band of centaurs lived, and they, knowing him since the time he had been fostered by Chiron, welcomed Heracles. One of them, Pholus, took Heracles to the great house where the centaurs had their wine stored.

Seldom did the centaurs drink wine; a draft of it made them wild, and so they stored it away, leaving it in the charge of one of their band. Heracles begged Pholus to give him a draft of wine; after he had begged again and again the centaur opened one of his great jars.

Heracles drank wine and spilled it. Then the centaurs that were without smelt the wine and came hammering at the door, demanding the drafts that would make them wild. Heracles came forth to drive them away. They attacked him. Then he shot at them with his unerring arrows and he drove them away. Up the mountain and away to far rivers the centaurs raced, pursued by Heracles with his bow.

One was slain, Pholus, the centaur who had entertained him. By accident Heracles dropped a poisoned arrow on his foot. He took the body of Pholus up to the top of the mountain and buried the centaur there. Afterward, on the snows of Erymanthus, he set a snare for the boar and caught him there.

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Upon his shoulders he carried the boar to Mycenæ and he led the deer by her golden horns. When Eurystheus had looked upon them the boar was slain, but the deer was loosed and she fled back to the Mountain Artemision.

King Eurystheus sat hidden in the great jar, and he thought of more terrible labors he would make Heracles engage in. Now he would send him oversea and make him strive with fierce tribes and more dread monsters. When he had it all thought out he had Heracles brought before him and he told him of these other labors.

He was to go to savage Thrace and there destroy the man-eating horses of King Diomedes; afterward he was to go amongst the dread women, the Amazons, daughters of Ares, the god of war, and take from their queen, Hippolyte, the girdle that Ares had given her; then he was to go to Crete and take from the keeping of King Minos the beautiful bull that Poseidon had given him; afterward he was to go to the Island of Erytheia and take away from Geryoneus, the monster that had three bodies instead of one, the herd of red cattle that the two-headed hound Orthus kept guard over; then he was to go to the Garden of the Hesperides, and from that garden he was to take the golden apples that Zeus had given to Hera for a marriage gift—where the Garden of the Hesperides was no mortal knew.

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So Heracles set out on a long and perilous quest. First he went to Thrace, that savage land that was ruled over by Diomedes, son of Ares, the war god. Heracles broke into the stable where the horses were; he caught three of them by their heads, and although they kicked and bit and trampled he forced them out of the stable and down to the seashore, where his companion, Abderus, waited for him. The screams of the fierce horses were heard by the men of Thrace, and they, with their king, came after Heracles. He left the horses in charge of Abderus while he fought the Thracians and their savage king. Heracles shot his deadly arrows amongst them, and then he fought with their king. He drove them from the seashore, and then he came back to where he had left Abderus with the fierce horses.

They had thrown Abderus upon the ground, and they were trampling upon him. Heracles drew his bow and he shot the horses with the unerring arrows that were dipped with the gall of the Hydra he had slain. Screaming, the horses of King Diomedes raced toward the sea, but one fell and another fell, and then, as it came to the line of the foam, the third of the fierce horses fell. They were all slain with the unerring arrows.

Then Heracles took up the body of his companion and he

buried it with proper rights, and over it he raised a column. Afterward, around that column a city that bore the name of Heracles's friend was built.

Then toward the Euxine Sea he went. There, where the River Themiscyra flows into the sea he saw the abodes of the Amazons. And upon the rocks and the steep place he saw the warrior women standing with drawn bows in their hands. Most dangerous did they seem to Heracles. He did not know how to approach them; he might shoot at them with his unerring arrows, but when his arrows were all shot away, the Amazons, from their steep places, might be able to kill him with the arrows from their bows. [234]

While he stood at a distance, wondering what he might do, a horn was sounded and an Amazon mounted upon a white stallion rode toward him. When the warrior-woman came near she cried out, "Heracles, the Queen Hippolyte permits you to come amongst the Amazons. Enter her tent and declare to the queen what has brought you amongst the never-conquered Amazons."

Heracles came to the tent of the queen. There stood tall Hippolyte with an iron crown upon her head and with a beautiful girdle of bronze and iridescent glass around her waist. Proud and fierce as a mountain eagle looked the queen of the Amazons: Heracles did not know in what way he might conquer her. Outside the tent the Amazons stood; they struck their shields with their spears, keeping up a continuous savage din.

"For what has Heracles come to the country of the Amazons?" Queen Hippolyte asked.

"For the girdle you wear," said Heracles, and he held his hands ready for the struggle.

"Is it for the girdle given me by Ares, the god of war, that you have come, braving the Amazons, Heracles?" asked the queen. [235]

"For that," said Heracles.

“I would not have you enter into strife with the Amazons,” said Queen Hippolyte. And so saying she drew off the girdle of bronze and iridescent glass, and she gave it into his hands.

Heracles took the beautiful girdle into his hands. Fearful he was that some piece of guile was being played upon him, but then he looked into the open eyes of the queen and he saw that she meant no guile. He took the girdle and he put it around his great brows; then he thanked Hippolyte and he went from the tent. He saw the Amazons standing on the rocks and the steep places with bows bent; unchallenged he went on, and he came to his ship and he sailed away from that country with one more labor accomplished.

The labor that followed was not dangerous. He sailed over sea and he came to Crete, to the land that King Minos ruled over. And there he found, grazing in a special pasture, the bull that Poseidon had given King Minos. He laid his hands upon the bull’s horns and he struggled with him and he overthrew him. Then he drove the bull down to the seashore.

His next labor was to take away the herd of red cattle that was owned by the monster Geryoneus. In the Island of Erytheia, in the middle of the Stream of Ocean, lived the monster, his herd guarded by the two-headed hound Orthus—that hound was the brother of Cerberus, the three-headed hound that kept guard in the Underworld.

Mounted upon the bull given Minos by Poseidon, Heracles fared across the sea. He came even to the straits that divide Europe from Africa, and there he set up two pillars as a memorial of his journey—the Pillars of Heracles that stand to this day. He and the bull rested there. Beyond him stretched the Stream of Ocean; the Island of Erytheia was there, but Heracles thought that the bull would not be able to bear him so far.

And there the sun beat upon him, and drew all strength away from him, and he was dazed and dazzled by the rays of the sun. He shouted out against the sun, and in his anger he wanted

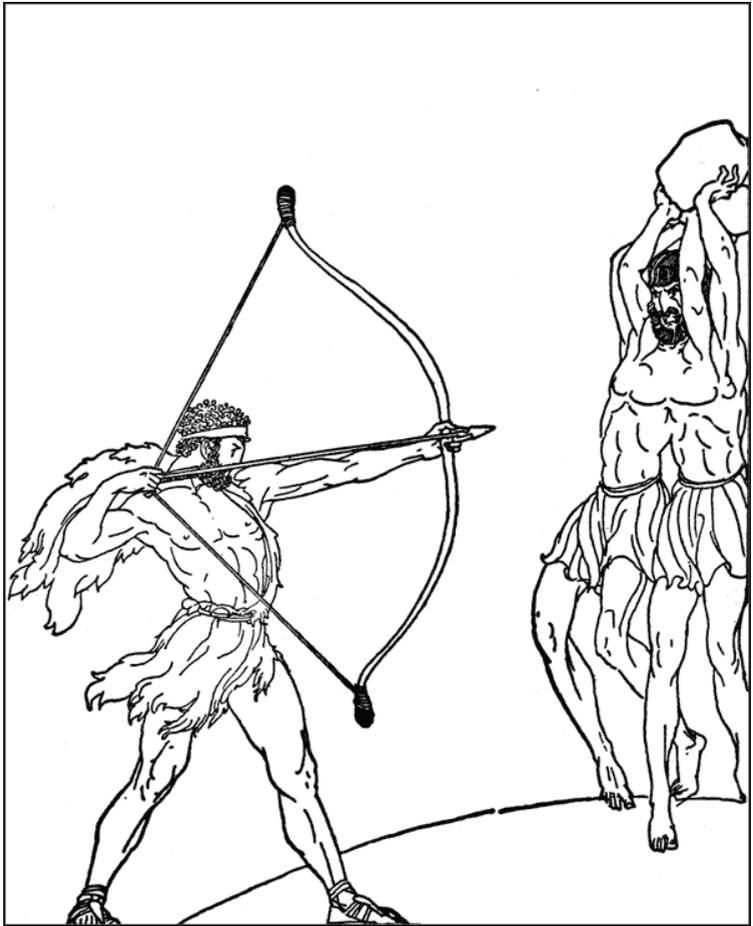
to strive against the sun. Then he drew his bow and shot arrows upward. Far, far out of sight the arrows of Heracles went. And the sun god, Helios, was filled with admiration for Heracles, the man who would attempt the impossible by shooting arrows at him; then did Helios fling down to Heracles his great golden cup.

Down, and into the Stream of Ocean fell the great golden cup of Helios. It floated there wide enough to hold all the men who might be in a ship. Heracles put the bull of Minos into the cup of Helios, and the cup bore them away, toward the west, and across the Stream of Ocean.

Thus Heracles came to the Island of Erytheia. All over the island straggled the red cattle of Geryoneus, grazing upon the rich pastures. Heracles, leaving the bull of Minos in the cup, went upon the island; he made a club for himself out of a tree and he went toward the cattle.

The hound Orthus bayed and ran toward him; the two-headed hound that was the brother of Cerberus sprang at Heracles with poisonous foam upon his jaws. Heracles swung his club and struck the two heads off the hound. And where the foam of the hound's jaws dropped down a poisonous plant sprang up. Heracles took up the body of the hound, and swung it around and flung it far out into the Ocean.

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Then the monster Geryoneus came upon him. Three bodies he had instead of one; he attacked Heracles by hurling great stones at him. Heracles was hurt by the stones. And then the monster beheld the cup of Helios, and he began to hurl stones at the golden thing, and it seemed that he might sink it in the sea, and leave Heracles without a way of getting from the island. Heracles took up his bow and he shot arrow after arrow at the

monster, and he left him dead in the deep grass of the pastures.

Then he rounded up the red cattle, the bulls and the cows, and he drove them down to the shore and into the golden cup of Helios where the bull of Minos stayed. Then back across the Stream of Ocean the cup floated, and the bull of Crete and the cattle of Geryoneus were brought past Sicily and through the straits called the Hellespont. To Thrace, that savage land, they came. Then Heracles took the cattle out, and the cup of Helios sank in the sea. Through the wild lands of Thrace he drove the herd of Geryoneus and the bull of Minos, and he came into Mycenæ once more.

But he did not stay to speak with Eurystheus. He started off to find the Garden of the Hesperides, the Daughters of the Evening Land. Long did he search, but he found no one who could tell him where the garden was. And at last he went to Chiron on the Mountain Pelion, and Chiron told Heracles what journey he would have to make to come to the Hesperides, the Daughters of the Evening Land. [238]

Far did Heracles journey; weary he was when he came to where Atlas stood, bearing the sky upon his weary shoulders. As he came near he felt an undreamt-of perfume being wafted toward him. So weary was he with his journey and all his toils that he would fain sink down and dream away in that evening land. But he roused himself, and he journeyed on toward where the perfume came from. Over that place a star seemed always about to rise.

He came to where a silver lattice fenced a garden that was full of the quiet of evening. Golden bees hummed through the air, and there was the sound of quiet waters. How wild and laborious was the world he had come from, Heracles thought! He felt that it would be hard for him to return to that world.

He saw three maidens. They stood with wreaths upon their heads and blossoming branches in their hands. When the maidens saw him they came toward him crying out: "O man who has

come into the Garden of the Hesperides, go not near the tree that the sleepless dragon guards!” Then they went and stood by a tree as if to keep guard over it. All around were trees that bore flowers and fruit, but this tree had golden apples amongst its bright green leaves.

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Then he saw the guardian of the tree. Beside its trunk a dragon lay, and as Heracles came near the dragon showed its glittering scales and its deadly claws.

The apples were within reach, but the dragon, with its glittering scales and claws, stood in the way. Heracles shot an arrow; then a tremor went through Ladon, the sleepless dragon; it screamed and then lay stark. The maidens cried in their grief; Heracles went to the tree, and he plucked the golden apples and he put them into the pouch he carried. Down on the ground sank the Hesperides, the Daughters of the Evening Land, and he heard their laments as he went from the enchanted garden they had guarded.

Back from the ends of the earth came Heracles, back from the place where Atlas stood holding the sky upon his weary shoulders. He went back through Asia and Libya and Egypt, and he came again to Mycenæ and to the palace of Eurystheus.

He brought to the king the herd of Geryoneus; he brought to the king the bull of Minos; he brought to the king the girdle of Hippolyte; he brought to the king the golden apples of the Hesperides. And King Eurystheus, with his thin white face, sat upon his royal throne and he looked over all the wonderful things that the hero had brought him. Not pleased was Eurystheus; rather was he angry that one he hated could win such wonderful things.

He took into his hands the golden apples of the Hesperides. But this fruit was not for such as he. An eagle snatched the branch from his hand, and the eagle flew and flew until it came to where the Daughters of the Evening Land wept in their garden. There the eagle let fall the branch with the golden apples, and

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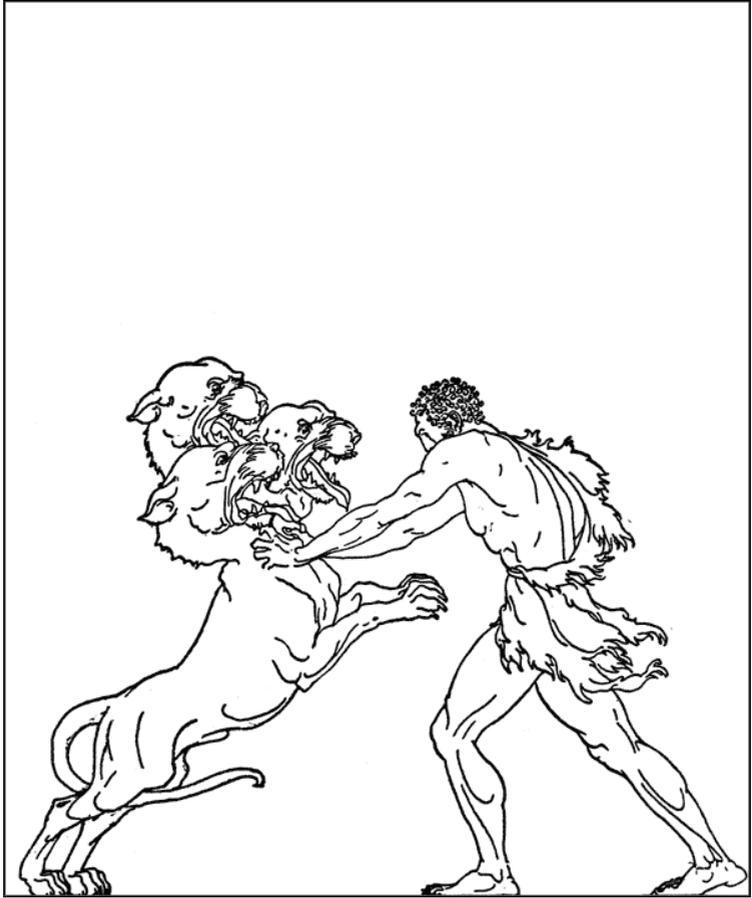
the maidens set it back upon the tree, and behold! it grew as it had been growing before Heracles plucked it.

The next day the heralds of Eurystheus came to Heracles and they told him of the last labor that he would have to set out to accomplish—this time he would have to go down into the Underworld, and bring up from King Aidoneus's realm Cerberus, the three-headed hound.

Heracles put upon him the impenetrable lion's skin and set forth once more. This might indeed be the last of his life's labors: Cerberus was not an earthly monster, and he who would struggle with Cerberus in the Underworld would have the gods of the dead against him.

But Heracles went on. He journeyed to the cave Tainaron, which was an entrance to the Underworld. Far into that dismal cave he went, and then down, down, until he came to Acheron, that dim river that has beyond it only the people of the dead. Cerberus bayed at him from the place where the dead cross the river. Knowing that he was no shade, the hound sprang at Heracles, but he could neither bite nor tear through that impenetrable lion's skin. Heracles held him by the neck of his middle head so that Cerberus was neither able to bite nor tear nor bellow.

Then to the brink of Acheron came Persephone, queen of the Underworld. She declared to Heracles that the gods of the dead would not strive against him if he promised to bring Cerberus back to the Underworld, carrying the hound downward again as he carried him upward. [241]



This Heracles promised. He turned around and he carried Cerberus, his hands around the monster's neck while foam dripped from his jaws. He carried him on and upward toward the world of men. Out through a cave that was in the land of Troezen Heracles came, still carrying Cerberus by the neck of his middle head.

From Troezen to Mycenæ the hero went and men fled before him at the sight of the monster that he carried. On he went toward

the king's palace. Eurystheus was seated outside his palace that day, looking at the great jar that he had often hidden in, and thinking to himself that Heracles would never appear to affright him again. Then Heracles appeared. He called to Eurystheus, and when the king looked up he held the hound toward him. The three heads grinned at Eurystheus; he gave a cry and scrambled into the jar. But before his feet touched the bottom of it Eurystheus was dead of fear. The jar rolled over, and Heracles looked upon the body that was all twisted with fright. Then he turned around and made his way back to the Underworld. On the brink of Acheron he loosed Cerberus, and the bellow of the three-headed hound was heard again.

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II

It was then that Heracles was given arms by the gods—the sword of Hermes, the bow of Apollo, the shield made by Hephæstus; it was then that Heracles joined the Argonauts and journeyed with them to the edge of the Caucasus, where, slaying the vulture that preyed upon Prometheus's liver, he, at the will of Zeus, liberated the Titan. Thereafter Zeus and Prometheus were reconciled, and Zeus, that neither might forget how much the enmity between them had cost gods and men, had a ring made for Prometheus to wear; that ring was made out of the fetter that had been upon him, and in it was set a fragment of the rock that the Titan had been bound to.

The Argonauts had now won back to Greece. But before he saw any of them he had been in Oichalia, and had seen the maiden Iole.

The king of Oichalia had offered his daughter Iole in marriage to the hero who could excel himself and his sons in shooting with arrows. Heracles saw Iole, the blue-eyed and childlike maiden, and he longed to take her with him to some place near the Garden of the Hesperides. And Iole looked on him, and he knew that she wondered to see him so tall and so

strongly knit even as he wondered to see her so childlike and delicate.

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Then the contest began. The king and his sons shot wonderfully well, and none of the heroes who stood before Heracles had a chance of winning. Then Heracles shot his arrows. No matter how far away they moved the mark, Heracles struck it and struck the very center of it. The people wondered who this great archer might be. And then a name was guessed at and went around—Heracles!

When the king heard the name of Heracles he would not let him strive in the contest any more. For the maiden Iole would not be given as a prize to one who had been mad and whose madness might afflict him again. So the king said, speaking in judgment in the market place.

Rage came on Heracles when he heard this judgment given. He would not let his rage master him lest the madness that was spoken of should come with his rage. So he left the city of Oichalia declaring to the king and the people that he would return.

It was then that, wandering down to Crete, he heard of the Argonauts being near. And afterward he heard of them being in Calydon, hunting the boar that ravaged Æneus's country. To Calydon Heracles went. The heroes had departed when he came into the country, and all the city was in grief for the deaths of Prince Meleagrus and his two uncles.

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On the steps of the temple where Meleagrus and his uncles had been brought Heracles saw Deianira, Meleagrus's sister. She was pale with her grief, this tall woman of the mountains; she looked like a priestess, but also like a woman who could cheer camps of men with her counsel, her bravery, and her good companionship; her hair was very dark and she had dark eyes.

Straightway she became friends with Heracles; and when they saw each other for a while they loved each other. And

Heracles forgot Iole, the childlike maiden whom he had seen in Oichalia.

He made himself a suitor for Deianira, and those who protected her were glad of Heracles's suit, and they told him they would give him the maiden to marry as soon as the mourning for Prince Meleagrus and his uncles was over. Heracles stayed in Calydon, happy with Deianira, who had so much beauty, wisdom, and bravery.

But then a dreadful thing happened in Calydon; by an accident, while using his strength unthinkingly, Heracles killed a lad who was related to Deianira. He might not marry her now until he had taken punishment for slaying one who was close to her in blood.

As a punishment for the slaying it was judged that Heracles should be sold into slavery for three years. At the end of his three years' slavery he could come back to Calydon and wed Deianira.

And so Heracles and Deianira were parted. He was sold as a slave in Lydia; the one who bought him was a woman, a widow named Omphale. To her house Heracles went, carrying his armor and wearing his lion's skin. And Omphale laughed to see this tall man dressed in a lion's skin coming to her house to do a servant's tasks for her.

She and all in her house kept up fun with Heracles. They would set him to do housework, to carry water, and set vessels on the tables, and clear the vessels away. Omphale set him to spin with a spindle as the women did. And often she would put on Heracles's lion skin and go about dragging his club, while he, dressed in woman's garb, washed dishes and emptied pots. [245]

But he would lose patience with these servant's tasks, and then Omphale would let him go away and perform some great exploit. Often he went on long journeys and stayed away for long times. It was while he was in slavery to Omphale that he liberated Theseus from the dungeon in which he was held with

Peirithous, and it was while he still was in slavery that he made his journey to Troy.

At Troy he helped to repair for King Laomedon the great walls that years before Apollo and Poseidon had built around the city. As a reward for this labor he was offered the Princess Hesione in marriage; she was the daughter of King Laomedon, and the sister of Priam, who was then called, not Priam but Podarces. He helped to repair the wall, and two of the Argonauts were there to aid him: one was Peleus and the other was Telamon. Peleus did not stay for long: Telamon stayed, and to reward Telamon Heracles withdrew his own claim for the hand of the Princess Hesione. It was not hard on Heracles to do this, for his thoughts were ever upon Deianira.

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But Telamon rejoiced, for he loved Hesione greatly. On the day they married Heracles showed the two an eagle in the sky. He said it was sent as an omen to them—an omen for their marriage. And in memory of that omen Telamon named his son “Aias”; that is, “Eagle.”

Then the walls of Troy were repaired and Heracles turned toward Lydia, Omphale’s home. Not long would he have to serve Omphale now, for his three years’ slavery was nearly over. Soon he would go back to Calydon and wed Deianira.

As he went along the road to Lydia he thought of all the pleasantries that had been made in Omphale’s house and he laughed at the memory of them. Lydia was a friendly country, and even though he had been in slavery Heracles had had his good times there.

He was tired with the journey and made sleepy with the heat of the sun, and when he came within sight of Omphale’s house he lay down by the side of the road, first taking off his armor, and laying aside his bow, his quiver, and his shield. He wakened up to see two men looking down upon him; he knew that these were the Cercopes, robbers who waylaid travelers upon this road. They were laughing as they looked down on him, and Heracles

saw that they held his arms and his armor in their hands.

They thought that this man, for all his tallness, would yield to them when he saw that they had his arms and his armor. But Heracles sprang up, and he caught one by the waist and the other by the neck, and he turned them upside down and tied them together by the heels. Now he held them securely and he would take them to the town and give them over to those whom they had waylaid and robbed. He hung them by their heels across his shoulders and marched on. [247]

But the robbers, as they were being bumped along, began to relate pleasantries and mirthful tales to each other, and Heracles, listening, had to laugh. And one said to the other, “O my brother, we are in the position of the frogs when the mice fell upon them with such fury.” And the other said, “Indeed nothing can save us if Zeus does not send an ally to us as he sent an ally to the frogs.” And the first robber said, “Who began that conflict, the frogs or the mice?” And thereupon the second robber, his head reaching down to Heracles’s waist, began:

The Battle of the Frogs and Mice

A warlike mouse came down to the brink of a pond for no other reason than to take a drink of water. Up to him hopped a frog. Speaking in the voice of one who had rule and authority, the frog said:

“Stranger to our shore, you may not know it, but I am Puff Jaw, king of the frogs. I do not speak to common mice, but you, as I judge, belong to the noble and kingly sort. Tell me your race. If I know it to be a noble one I shall show you my kingly friendship.”

The mouse, speaking haughtily, said: “I am Crumb Snatcher, and my race is a famous one. My father is the

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heroic Bread Nibbler, and he married Quern Licker, the lovely daughter of a king. Like all my race I am a warrior who has never been wont to flinch in battle. Moreover, I have been brought up as a mouse of high degree, and figs and nuts, cheese and honey-cakes is the provender that I have been fed on.”

Now this reply of Crumb Snatcher pleased the kingly frog greatly. “Come with me to my abode, illustrious Crumb Snatcher,” said he, “and I shall show you such entertainment as may be found in the house of a king.”

But the mouse looked sharply at him. “How may I get to your house?” he asked. “We live in different elements, you and I. We mice want to be in the driest of dry places, while you frogs have your abodes in the water.”

“Ah,” answered Puff Jaw, “you do not know how favored the frogs are above all other creatures. To us alone the gods have given the power to live both in the water and on the land. I shall take you to my land palace that is the other side of the pond.”

“How may I go there with you?” asked Crumb Snatcher the mouse, doubtfully.

“Upon my back,” said the frog. “Up now, noble Crumb Snatcher. And as we go I will show you the wonders of the deep.”

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He offered his back and Crumb Snatcher bravely mounted. The mouse put his forepaws around the frog’s neck. Then Puff Jaw swam out. Crumb Snatcher at first was pleased to feel himself moving through the water. But as the dark waves began to rise his mighty heart began to quail. He longed to be back upon the land. He groaned aloud.

“How quickly we get on,” cried Puff Jaw; “soon we shall be at my land palace.”

Heartened by this speech, Crumb Snatcher put his tail into the water and worked it as a steering oar. On and on they went, and Crumb Snatcher gained heart for the adventure. What a wonderful tale he would have to tell to the clans of the mice!

But suddenly, out of the depths of the pond, a water snake raised his horrid head. Fearsome did that head seem to both mouse and frog. And forgetful of the guest that he carried upon his back, Puff Jaw dived down into the water. He reached the bottom of the pond and lay on the mud in safety.

But far from safety was Crumb Snatcher the mouse. He sank and rose, and sank again. His wet fur weighed him down. But before he sank for the last time he lifted up his voice and cried out and his cry was heard at the brink of the pond:

“Ah, Puff Jaw, treacherous frog! An evil thing you have done, leaving me to drown in the middle of the pond. Had you faced me on the land I should have shown you which of us two was the better warrior. Now I must lose my life in the water. But I tell you my death shall not go unavenged—the cowardly frogs will be punished for the ill they have done to me who am the son of the king of the mice.”

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Then Crumb Snatcher sank for the last time. But Lick Platter, who was at the brink of the pond, had heard his words. Straightway this mouse rushed to the hole of Bread Nibbler and told him of the death of his princely son.

Bread Nibbler called out the clans of the mice. The warrior mice armed themselves, and this was the grand way of their arming:

First, the mice put on greaves that covered their forelegs. These they made out of bean shells broken in two. For shield, each had a lamp’s centerpiece. For spears they had the long bronze needles that they had carried out of the houses of men. So armed and so accoutered they were ready to war upon the frogs. And Bread Nibbler, their king, shouted to them: “Fall upon the cowardly frogs, and leave not one alive upon the bank of the pond. Henceforth that bank is ours, and ours only. Forward!”

And, on the other side, Puff Jaw was urging the frogs to battle. “Let us take our places on the edge of the pond,” he said, “and when the mice come amongst us, let each catch hold of one

and throw him into the pond. Thus we will get rid of these dry bobs, the mice.”

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The frogs applauded the speech of their king, and straightway they went to their armor and their weapons. Their legs they covered with the leaves of mallow. For breastplates they had the leaves of beets. Cabbage leaves, well cut, made their strong shields. They took their spears from the pond side—deadly pointed rushes they were, and they placed upon their heads helmets that were empty snail shells. So armed and so accoutered they were ready to meet the grand attack of the mice.

When the robber came to this part of the story Heracles halted his march, for he was shaking with laughter. The robber stopped in his story. Heracles slapped him on the leg and said: “What more of the heroic exploits of the mice?” The second robber said, “I know no more, but perhaps my brother at the other side of you can tell you of the mighty combat between them and the frogs.” Then Heracles shifted the first robber from his back to his front, and the first robber said: “I will tell you what I know about the heroic combat between the frogs and the mice.” And thereupon he began:

The gnats blew their trumpets. This was the dread signal for war.

Bread Nibbler struck the first blow. He fell upon Loud Crier the frog, and overthrew him. At this Loud Crier’s friend, Reedy, threw down spear and shield and dived into the water. This seemed to presage victory for the mice. But then Water Larker, the most warlike of the frogs, took up a great pebble and flung it at Ham Nibbler who was then pursuing Reedy. Down fell Ham Nibbler, and there was dismay in the ranks of the mice.

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Then Cabbage Climber, a great-hearted frog, took up a clod of mud and flung it full at a mouse that was coming furiously

upon him. That mouse's helmet was knocked off and his forehead was plastered with the clod of mud, so that he was well-nigh blinded.

It was then that victory inclined to the frogs. Bread Nibbler again came into the fray. He rushed furiously upon Puff Jaw the king.

Leeky, the trusted friend of Puff Jaw, opposed Bread Nibbler's onslaught. Mightily he drove his spear at the king of the mice. But the point of the spear broke upon Bread Nibbler's shield, and then Leeky was overthrown.

Bread Nibbler came upon Puff Jaw, and the two great kings faced each other. The frogs and the mice drew aside, and there was a pause in the combat. Bread Nibbler the mouse struck Puff Jaw the frog terribly upon the toes.

Puff Jaw drew out of the battle. Now all would have been lost for the frogs had not Zeus, the father of the gods, looked down upon the battle.

"Dear, dear," said Zeus, "what can be done to save the frogs? They will surely be annihilated if the charge of yonder mouse is not halted."

For the father of the gods, looking down, saw a warrior mouse coming on in the most dreadful onslaught of the whole battle. Slice Snatcher was the name of this warrior. He had come late into the field. He waited to split a chestnut in two and to put the halves upon his paws. Then, furiously dashing amongst the frogs, he cried out that he would not leave the ground until he had destroyed the race, leaving the bank of the pond a playground for the mice and for the mice alone. [253]

To stop the charge of Slice Snatcher there was nothing for Zeus to do but to hurl the thunderbolt that is the terror of gods and men.

Frogs and mice were awed by the thunder and the flame. But still the mice, urged on by Slice Snatcher, did not hold back from their onslaught upon the frogs.

Now would the frogs have been utterly destroyed; but, as they dashed on, the mice encountered a new and a dreadful army. The warriors in these ranks had mailed backs and curving claws. They had bandy legs and long-stretching arms. They had eyes that looked behind them. They came on sideways. These were the crabs, creatures until now unknown to the mice. And the crabs had been sent by Zeus to save the race of the frogs from utter destruction.

Coming upon the mice they nipped their paws. The mice turned around and they nipped their tails. In vain the boldest of the mice struck at the crabs with their sharpened spears. Not upon the hard shells on the backs of the crabs did the spears of the mice make any dint. On and on, on their queer feet and with their terrible nippers, the crabs went. Bread Nibbler could not rally them any more, and Slice Snatcher ceased to speak of the monument of victory that the mice would erect upon the bank of the pond.

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With their heads out of the water they had retreated to, the frogs watched the finish of the battle. The mice threw down their spears and shields and fled from the battleground. On went the crabs as if they cared nothing for their victory, and the frogs came out of the water and sat upon the bank and watched them in awe.

Heracles had laughed at the diverting tale that the robbers had told him; he could not bring them then to a place where they would meet with captivity or death. He let them loose upon the highway, and the robbers thanked him with high-flowing speeches, and they declared that if they should ever find him sleeping by the roadway again they would let him lie. Saying this they went away, and Heracles, laughing as he thought upon the great exploits of the frogs and mice, went on to Omphale's house.

Omphale, the widow, received him mirthfully, and then set

him to do tasks in the kitchen while she sat and talked to him about Troy and the affairs of King Laomedon. And afterward she put on his lion's skin, and went about in the courtyard dragging the heavy club after her. Mirthfully and pleasantly she made the rest of his time in Lydia pass for Heracles, and the last day of his slavery soon came, and he bade good-by to Omphale, that pleasant widow, and to Lydia, and he started off for Calydon to claim his bride Deianira.

Beautiful indeed Deianira looked now that she had ceased to mourn for her brother, for the laughter that had been under her grief always now flashed out even while she looked priestesslike and of good counsel; her dark eyes shone like stars, and her being had the spirit of one who wanders from camp to camp, always greeting friends and leaving friends behind her. Heracles and Deianira wed, and they set out for Tiryns, where a king had left a kingdom to Heracles. [255]

They came to the River Evenus. Heracles could have crossed the river by himself, but he could not cross it at the part he came to, carrying Deianira. He and she went along the river, seeking a ferry that might take them across. They wandered along the side of the river, happy with each other, and they came to a place where they had sight of a centaur.

Heracles knew this centaur. He was Nessus, one of the centaurs whom he had chased up the mountain the time when he went to hunt the Erymanthean boar. The centaurs knew him, and Nessus spoke to Heracles as if he had friendship for him. He would, he said, carry Heracles's bride across the river.

Then Heracles crossed the river, and he waited on the other side for Nessus and Deianira. Nessus went to another part of the river to make his crossing. Then Heracles, upon the other bank, heard screams—the screams of his wife, Deianira. He saw that the centaur was savagely attacking her.

Then Heracles leveled his bow and he shot at Nessus. Arrow after arrow he shot into the centaur's body. Nessus loosed his

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hold on Deianira, and he lay down on the bank of the river, his lifeblood streaming from him.

Then Nessus, dying, but with his rage against Heracles unabated, thought of a way by which the hero might be made to suffer for the death he had brought upon him. He called to Deianira, and she, seeing he could do her no more hurt, came close to him. He told her that in repentance for his attack upon her he would bestow a great gift upon her. She was to gather up some of the blood that flowed from him; his blood, the centaur said, would be a love philter, and if ever her husband's love for her waned it would grow fresh again if she gave to him something from her hands that would have this blood upon it.

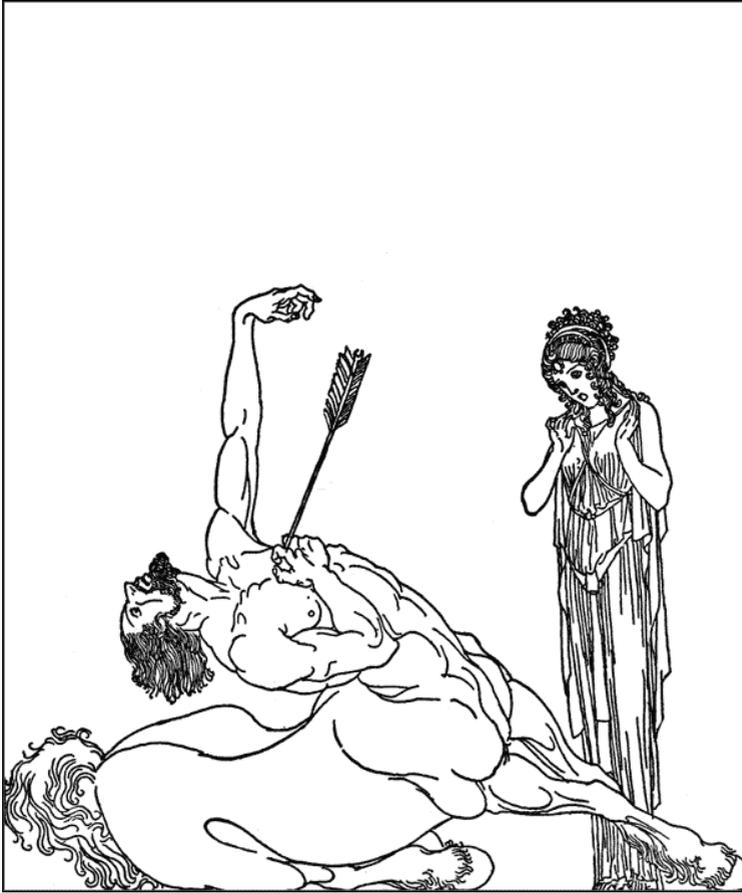
Deianira, who had heard from Heracles of the wisdom of the centaurs, believed what Nessus told her. She took a phial and let the blood pour into it. Then Nessus plunged into the river and died there as Heracles came up to where Deianira stood.

She did not speak to him about the centaur's words to her, nor did she tell him that she had hidden away the phial that had Nessus's blood in it. They crossed the river at another point and they came after a time to Tiryns and to the kingdom that had been left to Heracles.

There Heracles and Deianira lived, and a son who was named Hyllos was born to them. And after a time Heracles was led into a war with Eurytus—Eurytus who was king of Oichalia.

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Word came to Deianira that Oichalia was taken by Heracles, and that the king and his daughter Iole were held captive. Deianira knew that Heracles had once tried to win this maiden for his wife, and she feared that the sight of Iole would bring his old longing back to him.



She thought upon the words that Nessus had said to her, and even as she thought upon them messengers came from Heracles to ask her to send him a robe—a beautifully woven robe that she had—that he might wear it while making a sacrifice. Deianira took down the robe; through this robe, she thought, the blood of the centaur could touch Heracles and his love for her would revive. Thinking this she poured Nessus's blood over the robe.

Heracles was in Oichalia when the messengers returned to him. He took the robe that Deianira sent, and he went to a mountain that overlooked the sea that he might make the sacrifice there. Iole went with him. Then he put on the robe that Deianira had sent. When it touched his flesh the robe burst into flame. Heracles tried to tear it off, but deeper and deeper into his flesh the flames went. They burned and burned and none could quench them.

Then Heracles knew that his end was near. He would die by fire, and knowing that he piled up a great heap of wood and he climbed upon it. There he stayed with the flaming robe burning into him, and he begged of those who passed to fire the pile that his end might come more quickly.

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None would fire the pile. But at last there came that way a young warrior named Philoctetes, and Heracles begged of him to fire the pile. Philoctetes, knowing that it was the will of the gods that Heracles should die that way, lighted the pile. For that Heracles bestowed upon him his great bow and his unerring arrows. And it was this bow and these arrows, brought from Philoctetes, that afterward helped to take Priam's city.

The pile that Heracles stood upon was fired. High up, above the sea, the pile burned. All who were near that burning fled—all except Iole, that childlike maiden. She stayed and watched the flames mount up and up. They wrapped the sky, and the voice of Heracles was heard calling upon Zeus. Then a great chariot came and Heracles was borne away to Olympus. Thus, after many labors, Heracles passed away, a mortal passing into an immortal being in a great burning high above the sea.

V. Admetus

I



It happened once that Zeus would punish Apollo, his son. Then he banished him from Olympus, and he made him put off his divinity and appear as a mortal man. And as a mortal Apollo sought to earn his bread amongst men. He came to the house of King Admetus and took service with him as his herdsman.

For a year Apollo served the young king, minding his herds of black cattle. Admetus did not know that it was one of the immortal gods who was in his house and in his fields. But he treated him in friendly wise, and Apollo was happy whilst serving Admetus. [259]

Afterward people wondered at Admetus's ever-smiling face and ever-radiant being. It was the god's kindly thought of him that gave him such happiness. And when Apollo was leaving his house and his fields he revealed himself to Admetus, and he made a promise to him that when the god of the Underworld sent Death for him he would have one more chance of baffling Death than any mortal man.

That was before Admetus sailed on the *Argo* with Jason and the companions of the quest. The companionship of Admetus brought happiness to many on the voyage, but the hero to whom it gave the most happiness was Heracles. And often Heracles would have Admetus beside him to tell him about the radiant god Apollo, whose bow and arrows Heracles had been given.

After that voyage and after the hunt in Calydon Admetus went back to his own land. There he wed that fair and loving woman, Alcestis. He might not wed her until he had yoked

lions and leopards to the chariot that drew her. This was a feat that no hero had been able to accomplish. With Apollo's aid he accomplished it. Thereafter Admetus, having the love of Alcestis, was even more happy than he had been before.

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One day as he walked by fold and through pasture field he saw a figure standing beside his herd of black cattle. A radiant figure it was, and Admetus knew that this was Apollo come to him again. He went toward the god and he made reverence and began to speak to him. But Apollo turned to Admetus a face that was without joy.

“What years of happiness have been mine, O Apollo, through your friendship for me,” said Admetus. “Ah, as I walked my pasture land to-day it came into my mind how much I loved this green earth and the blue sky! And all that I know of love and happiness has come to me through you.”

But still Apollo stood before him with a face that was without joy. He spoke and his voice was not that clear and vibrant voice that he had once in speaking to Admetus. “Admetus, Admetus,” he said, “it is for me to tell you that you may no more look on the blue sky nor walk upon the green earth. It is for me to tell you that the god of the Underworld will have you come to him. Admetus, Admetus, know that even now the god of the Underworld is sending Death for you.”

Then the light of the world went out for Admetus, and he heard himself speaking to Apollo in a shaking voice: “O Apollo, Apollo, thou art a god, and surely thou canst save me! Save me now from this Death that the god of the Underworld is sending for me!”

But Apollo said, “Long ago, Admetus, I made a bargain with the god of the Underworld on thy behalf. Thou hast been given a chance more than any mortal man. If one will go willingly in thy place with Death, thou canst still live on. Go, Admetus. Thou art well loved, and it may be that thou wilt find one to take thy place.”

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Then Apollo went up unto the mountaintop and Admetus stayed for a while beside the cattle. It seemed to him that a little of the darkness had lifted from the world. He would go to his palace. There were aged men and women there, servants and slaves, and one of them would surely be willing to take the king's place and go with Death down to the Underworld.

So Admetus thought as he went toward the palace. And then he came upon an ancient woman who sat upon stones in the courtyard, grinding corn between two stones. Long had she been doing that wearisome labor. Admetus had known her from the first time he had come into that courtyard as a little child, and he had never seen aught in her face but a heavy misery. There she was sitting as he had first known her, with her eyes bleared and her knees shaking, and with the dust of the courtyard and the husks of the corn in her matted hair. He went to her and spoke to her, and he asked her to take the place of the king and go with Death.

But when she heard the name of Death horror came into the face of the ancient woman, and she cried out that she would not let Death come near her. Then Admetus left her, and he came upon another, upon a sightless man who held out a shriveled hand for the food that the servants of the palace might bestow upon him. Admetus took the man's shriveled hand, and he asked him if he would not take the king's place and go with Death that was coming for him. The sightless man, with howls and shrieks, said he would not go. [262]

Then Admetus went into the palace and into the chamber where his bed was, and he lay down upon the bed and he lamented that he would have to go with Death that was coming for him from the god of the Underworld, and he lamented that none of the wretched ones around the palace would take his place.

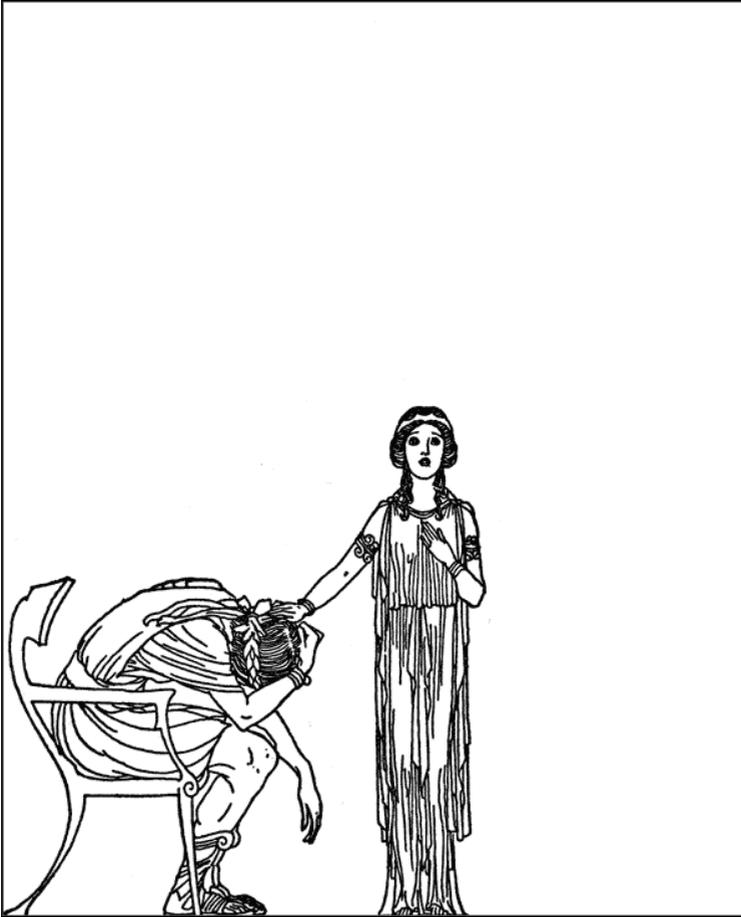
A hand was laid upon him. He looked up and he saw his tall and grave-eyed wife, Alcestis, beside him. Alcestis spoke to him slowly and gravely. "I have heard what you have said, O my

husband,” said she. “One should go in your place, for you are the king and have many great affairs to attend to. And if none other will go, I, Alcestis, will go in your place, Admetus.”

It had seemed to Admetus that ever since he had heard the words of Apollo that heavy footsteps were coming toward him. Now the footsteps seemed to stop. It was not so terrible for him as before. He sprang up, and he took the hands of Alcestis and he said, “You, then, will take my place?”

“I will go with Death in your place, Admetus,” Alcestis said.

Then, even as Admetus looked into her face, he saw a pallor come upon her; her body weakened and she sank down upon the bed. Then, watching over her, he knew that not he but Alcestis would go with Death. And the words he had spoken he would have taken back—the words that had brought her consent to go with Death in his place.



Paler and weaker Alcestis grew. Death would soon be here for her. No, not here, for he would not have Death come into the palace. He lifted Alcestis from the bed and he carried her from the palace. He carried her to the temple of the gods. He laid her there upon the bier and waited there beside her. No more speech came from her. He went back to the palace where all was silent—the servants moved about with heads bowed, lamenting

silently for their mistress.

II

As Admetus was coming back from the temple he heard a great shout; he looked up and saw one standing at the palace doorway. He knew him by his lion's skin and his great height. This was Heracles—Heracles come to visit him, but come at a sad hour. He could not now rejoice in the company of Heracles. And yet Heracles might be on his way from the accomplishment of some great labor, and it would not be right to say a word that might turn him away from his doorway; he might have much need of rest and refreshment.

Thinking this Admetus went up to Heracles and took his hand and welcomed him into his house. "How is it with you, friend Admetus?" Heracles asked. Admetus would only say that nothing was happening in his house and that Heracles, his hero-companion, was welcome there. His mind was upon a great sacrifice, he said, and so he would not be able to feast with him.

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The servants brought Heracles to the bath, and then showed him where a feast was laid for him. And as for Admetus, he went within the chamber, and knelt beside the bed on which Alcestis had lain, and thought of his terrible loss.

Heracles, after the bath, put on the brightly colored tunic that the servants of Admetus brought him. He put a wreath upon his head and sat down to the feast. It was a pity, he thought, that Admetus was not feasting with him. But this was only the first of many feasts. And thinking of what companionship he would have with Admetus, Heracles left the feasting hall and came to where the servants were standing about in silence.

"Why is the house of Admetus so hushed to-day?" Heracles asked.

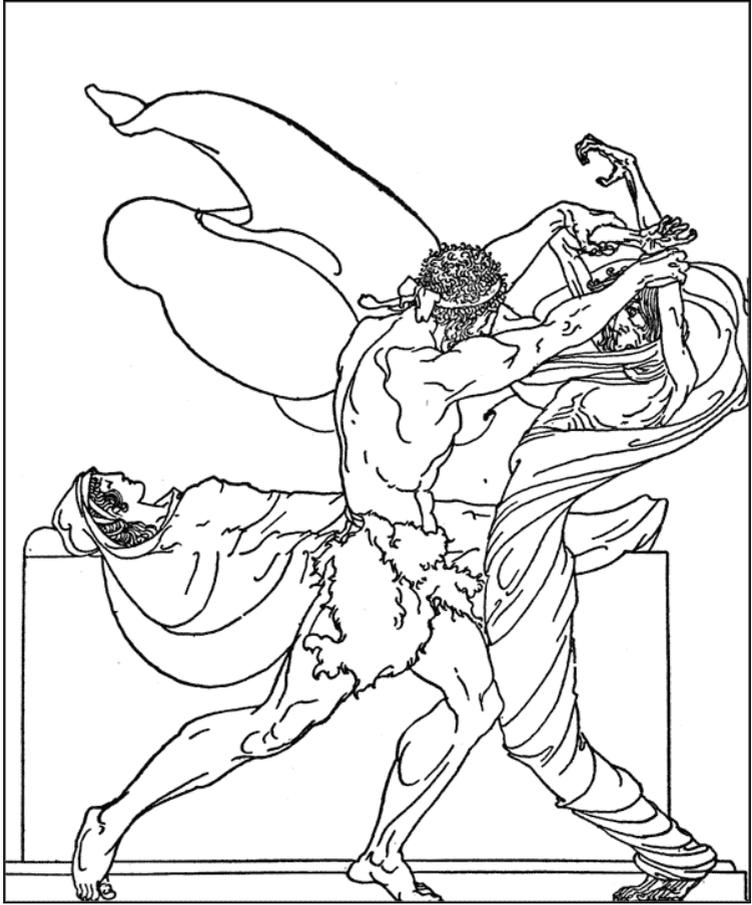
"It is because of what is befalling," said one of the servants.

"Ah, the sacrifice that the king is making," said Heracles.

"To what god is that sacrifice due?"

“To the god of the Underworld,” said the servant. “Death is coming to Alcestis the queen where she lies on a bier in the temple of the gods.”

Then the servant told Heracles the story of how Alcestis had taken her husband’s place, going in his stead with Death. Heracles thought upon the sorrow of his friend, and of the great sacrifice that his wife was making for him. How noble it was of Admetus to bring him into his house and give entertainment to him while such sorrow was upon him. And then Heracles felt that another labor was before him. [265]



“I have dragged up from the Underworld,” he thought, “the hound that guards those whom Death brings down into the realm of the god of the Underworld. Why should I not strive with Death? And what a noble thing it would be to bring back this faithful woman to her house and to her husband! This is a labor that has not been laid upon me, and it is a labor I will undertake.” So Heracles said to himself.

He left the palace of Admetus and he went to the temple of the gods. He stood inside the temple and he saw the bier on which Alcestis was laid. He looked upon the queen. Death had not touched her yet, although she lay so still and so silent. Heracles would watch beside her and strive with Death for her.

Heracles watched and Death came. When Death entered the temple Heracles laid hands upon him. Death had never been gripped by mortal hands and he strode on as if that grip meant nothing to him. But then he had to grip Heracles. In Death's grip there was a strength beyond strength. And upon Heracles a dreadful sense of loss came as Death laid hands upon him—a sense of the loss of light and the loss of breath and the loss of movement. But Heracles struggled with Death although his breath went and his strength seemed to go from him. He held that stony body to him, and the cold of that body went through him, and its stoniness seemed to turn his bones to stone, but still Heracles strove with him, and at last he overthrew him and he held Death down upon the ground. [266]

“Now you are held by me, Death,” cried Heracles. “You are held by me, and the god of the Underworld will be made angry because you cannot go about his business—either this business or any other business. You are held by me, Death, and you will not be let go unless you promise to go forth from this temple without bringing one with you.” And Death, knowing that Heracles could hold him there, and that the business of the god of the Underworld would be left undone if he were held, promised that he would leave the temple without bringing one with him. Then Heracles took his grip off Death, and that stony shape went from the temple.

Soon a flush came into the face of Alcestis as Heracles watched over her. Soon she arose from the bier on which she had been laid. She called out to Admetus, and Heracles went to her and spoke to her, telling her that he would bring her back to her husband's house.

III

Admetus left the chamber where his wife had lain and stood before the door of his palace. Dawn was coming, and as he looked toward the temple he saw Heracles coming to the palace. A woman came with him. She was veiled, and Admetus could not see her features.

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“Admetus,” Heracles said, when he came before him, “Admetus, there is something I would have you do for me. Here is a woman whom I am bringing back to her husband. I won her from an enemy. Will you not take her into your house while I am away on a journey?”

“You cannot ask me to do this, Heracles,” said Admetus. “No woman may come into the house where Alcestis, only yesterday, had her life.”

“For my sake take her into your house,” said Heracles. “Come now, Admetus, take this woman by the hand.”

A pang came to Admetus as he looked at the woman who stood beside Heracles and saw that she was the same stature as his lost wife. He thought that he could not bear to take her hand. But Heracles pleaded with him, and he took her by the hand.

“Now take her across your threshold, Admetus,” said Heracles.

Hardly could Admetus bear to do this—hardly could he bear to think of a strange woman being in his house and his own wife gone with Death. But Heracles pleaded with him, and by the hand he held he drew the woman across his threshold.

“Now raise her veil, Admetus,” said Heracles.

“This I cannot do,” said Admetus. “I have had pangs enough. How can I look upon a woman’s face and remind myself that I cannot look upon Alcestis’s face ever again?”

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“Raise her veil, Admetus,” said Heracles.

Then Admetus raised the veil of the woman he had taken across the threshold of his house. He saw the face of Alcestis. He looked again upon his wife brought back from the grip of Death

by Heracles, the son of Zeus. And then a deeper joy than he had ever known came to Admetus. Once more his wife was with him, and Admetus the friend of Apollo and the friend of Heracles had all that he cared to have.

VI. How Orpheus the Minstrel Went Down to the World of the Dead

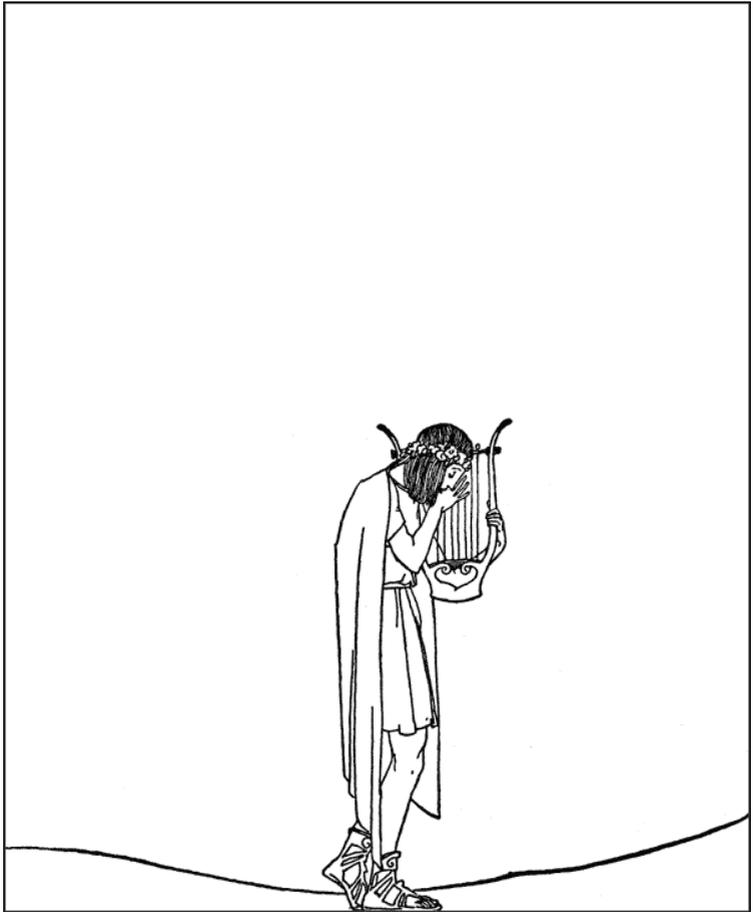


ANY were the minstrels who, in the early days, went through the world, telling to men the stories of the gods, telling of their wars and their births. Of all these minstrels none was so famous as Orpheus who had gone with the Argonauts; none could tell truer things about the gods, for he himself was half divine.

But a great grief came to Orpheus, a grief that stopped his singing and his playing upon the lyre. His young wife Eurydice was taken from him. One day, walking in the garden, she was bitten on the heel by a serpent, and straightway she went down to the world of the dead.

Then everything in this world was dark and bitter for the minstrel Orpheus; sleep would not come to him, and for him food had no taste. Then Orpheus said: "I will do that which no mortal has ever done before; I will do that which even the immortals might shrink from doing: I will go down into the world of the

dead, and I will bring back to the living and to the light my bride Eurydice.”



Then Orpheus went on his way to the valley of Acherusia which goes down, down into the world of the dead. He would never have found his way to that valley if the trees had not shown him the way. For as he went along Orpheus played upon his lyre

and sang, and the trees heard his song and they were moved by his grief, and with their arms and their heads they showed him the way to the deep, deep valley of Acherusia.

Down, down by winding paths through that deepest and most shadowy of all valleys Orpheus went. He came at last to the great gate that opens upon the world of the dead. And the silent guards who keep watch there for the rulers of the dead were affrighted when they saw a living being, and they would not let Orpheus approach the gate.

But the minstrel, knowing the reason for their fear, said: "I am not Heracles come again to drag up from the world of the dead your three-headed dog Cerberus. I am Orpheus, and all that my hands can do is to make music upon my lyre."

And then he took the lyre in his hands and played upon it. As he played, the silent watchers gathered around him, leaving the gate unguarded. And as he played the rulers of the dead came forth, Aidoneus and Persephone, and listened to the words of the living man. [270]

"The cause of my coming through the dark and fearful ways," sang Orpheus, "is to strive to gain a fairer fate for Eurydice, my bride. All that is above must come down to you at last, O rulers of the most lasting world. But before her time has Eurydice been brought here. I have desired strength to endure her loss, but I cannot endure it. And I come before you, Aidoneus and Persephone, brought here by Love."

When Orpheus said the name of Love, Persephone, the queen of the dead, bowed her young head, and bearded Aidoneus, the king, bowed his head also. Persephone remembered how Demeter, her mother, had sought her all through the world, and she remembered the touch of her mother's tears upon her face. And Aidoneus remembered how his love for Persephone had led him to carry her away from the valley in the upper world where she had been gathering flowers. He and Persephone bowed their heads and stood aside, and Orpheus went through the gate and

came amongst the dead.

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Still upon his lyre he played. Tantalus—who, for his crimes, had been condemned to stand up to his neck in water and yet never be able to assuage his thirst—Tantalus heard, and for a while did not strive to put his lips toward the water that ever flowed away from him; Sisyphus—who had been condemned to roll up a hill a stone that ever rolled back—Sisyphus heard the music that Orpheus played, and for a while he sat still upon his stone. And even those dread ones who bring to the dead the memories of all their crimes and all their faults, even the Eumenides had their cheeks wet with tears.

In the throng of the newly come dead Orpheus saw Eurydice. She looked upon her husband, but she had not the power to come near him. But slowly she came when Aidoneus called her. Then with joy Orpheus took her hands.

It would be granted them—no mortal ever gained such privilege before—to leave, both together, the world of the dead, and to abide for another space in the world of the living. One condition there would be—that on their way up through the valley of Acherusia neither Orpheus nor Eurydice should look back.

They went through the gate and came amongst the watchers that are around the portals. These showed them the path that went up through the valley of Acherusia. That way they went, Orpheus and Eurydice, he going before her.

Up and up through the darkened ways they went, Orpheus knowing that Eurydice was behind him, but never looking back upon her. But as he went, his heart was filled with things to tell—how the trees were blossoming in the garden she had left; how the water was sparkling in the fountain; how the doors of the house stood open, and how they, sitting together, would watch the sunlight on the laurel bushes. All these things were in his heart to tell her, to tell her who came behind him, silent and unseen.

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And now they were nearing the place where the valley of Acherusia opened on the world of the living. Orpheus looked on the blue of the sky. A white-winged bird flew by. Orpheus turned around and cried, "O Eurydice, look upon the world that I have won you back to!"

He turned to say this to her. He saw her with her long dark hair and pale face. He held out his arms to clasp her. But in that instant she slipped back into the depths of the valley. And all he heard spoken was a single word, "Farewell!" Long, long had it taken Eurydice to climb so far, but in the moment of his turning around she had fallen back to her place amongst the dead.

Down through the valley of Acherusia Orpheus went again. Again he came before the watchers of the gate. But now he was not looked at nor listened to, and, hopeless, he had to return to the world of the living.

The birds were his friends now, and the trees and the stones. The birds flew around him and mourned with him; the trees and stones often followed him, moved by the music of his lyre. But a savage band slew Orpheus and threw his severed head and his lyre into the River Hebrus. It is said by the poets that while they floated in midstream the lyre gave out some mournful notes and the head of Orpheus answered the notes with song.

And now that he was no longer to be counted with the living, Orpheus went down to the world of the dead, not going now by that steep descent through the valley of Acherusia, but going down straightway. The silent watchers let him pass, and he went amongst the dead and saw his Eurydice in the throng. [273] Again they were together, Orpheus and Eurydice, and as they went through the place that King Aidoneus ruled over, they had no fear of looking back, one upon the other.

VII. Jason and Medea



JASON and Medea, unable to win to Iolcus, stayed at Corinth, at the court of King Creon. Creon was proud to have Jason in his city, but of Medea the king was fearful, for he had heard how she had brought about the death of Apsyrtus, her brother.

Medea wearied of this long waiting in the palace of King Creon. A longing came upon her to exercise her powers of enchantment. She did not forget what Queen Arete had said to her—that if she wished to appease the wrath of the gods she should have no more to do with enchantments. She did not forget this, but still there grew in her a longing to use all her powers of enchantment.

And Jason, at the court of King Creon, had his longings, too. He longed to enter Iolcus and to show the people the Golden Fleece that he had won; he longed to destroy Pelias, the murderer of his mother and father; above all he longed to be a king, and to rule in the kingdom that Cretheus had founded.

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Once Jason spoke to Medea of his longing. “O Jason,” Medea said, “I have done many things for thee and this thing also I will do. I will go into Iolcus, and by my enchantments I will make clear the way for the return of the *Argo* and for thy return with thy comrades—yea, and for thy coming to the kingship, O Jason.”

He should have remembered then the words of Queen Arete to Medea, but the longing that he had for his triumph and his revenge was in the way of his remembering. He said, “O Medea, help me in this with all thine enchantments and thou wilt be more dear to me than ever before thou wert.”

Medea then went forth from the palace of King Creon and she made more terrible spells than ever she had made in Colchis. All night she stayed in a tangled place weaving her spells. Dawn came, and she knew that the spells she had woven had not been in vain, for beside her there stood a car that was drawn by dragons.

Medea the Enchantress had never looked on these dragon shapes before. When she looked upon them now she was fearful of them. But then she said to herself, "I am Medea, and I would be a greater enchantress and a more cunning woman than I have been, and what I have thought of, that will I carry out." She mounted the car drawn by the dragons, and in the first light of the day she went from Corinth.

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To the places where grew the herbs of magic Medea journeyed in her dragon-drawn car—to the Mountains Ossa, Pelion, Æthrys, Pindus, and Olympus; then to the rivers Apidanus, Enipeus, and Peneus. She gathered herbs on the mountains and grasses on the rivers' banks; some she plucked up by the roots and some she cut with the curved blade of a knife. When she had gathered these herbs and grasses she went back to Corinth on her dragon-drawn car.

Then Jason saw her; pale and drawn was her face, and her eyes were strange and gleaming. He saw her standing by the car drawn by the dragons, and a terror of Medea came into his mind. He went toward her, but in a harsh voice she bade him not come near to disturb the brewing that she was going to begin. Jason turned away. As he went toward the palace he saw Glauce, King Creon's daughter; the maiden was coming from the well and she carried a pitcher of water. He thought how fair Glauce looked in the light of the morning, how the wind played with her hair and her garments, and how far away she was from witcheries and enchantments.

As for Medea, she placed in a heap beside her the magic herbs and grasses she had gathered. Then she put them in a bronze pot and boiled them in water from the stream. Soon froth came on the boiling, and Medea stirred the pot with a withered branch of an apple tree. The branch was withered—it was indeed no more than a dry stick, but as she stirred the herbs and grasses with it, first leaves, then flowers, and lastly, bright gleaming apples came on it. And when the pot boiled over and drops from it fell upon the ground, there grew up out of the dry earth soft grasses and flowers. Such was the power of renewal that was in the magical brew that Medea had made. [276]

She filled a phial with the liquid she had brewed, and she scattered the rest in the wild places of the garden. Then, taking the phial and the apples that had grown on the withered branch, she mounted the car drawn by the dragons, and she went once more from Corinth.

On she journeyed in her dragon-drawn car until she came to a place that was near to Iolcus. There the dragons descended. They had come to a dark pool. Medea, making herself naked, stood in that dark pool. For a while she looked down upon herself, seeing in the dark water her white body and her lovely hair. Then she bathed herself in the water. Soon a dread change came over her: she saw her hair become scant and gray, and she

saw her body become bent and withered. She stepped out of the pool a withered and witchlike woman; when she dressed herself the rich clothes that she had worn before hung loosely upon her, and she looked the more forbidding because of them. She bade the dragons go, and they flew through the air with the empty car. Then she hid in her dress the phial with the liquid she had brewed and the apples that had grown upon the withered branch. She picked up a stick to lean upon, and with the gait of an ancient woman she went hobbling upon the road to Iolcus.

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On the streets of the city the fierce fighting men that Pelias had brought down from the mountains showed themselves; few of the men or women of the city showed themselves even in the daytime. Medea went through the city and to the palace of King Pelias. But no one might enter there, and the guards laid hands upon her and held her.

Medea did not struggle with them. She drew from the folds of her dress one of the gleaming apples that she carried and she gave it to one of the guards. "It is for King Pelias," she said. "Give the apple to him and then do with me as the king would have you do."

The guards brought the gleaming apple to the king. When he had taken it into his hand and had smelled its fragrance, old trembling Pelias asked where the apple had come from. The guards told him it had been brought by an ancient woman who was now outside seated on a stone in the courtyard.

He looked on the shining apple and he felt its fragrance and he could not help thinking, old trembling Pelias, that this apple might be the means of bringing him back to the fullness of health and courage that he had had before. He sent for the ancient woman who had brought it that she might tell him where it had come from and who it was that had sent it to him. Then the guards brought Medea before him.

She saw an old man, white-faced and trembling, with shaking hands and eyes that looked on her fearfully. "Who are

you,” he asked, “and from whence came the apple that you had [278] them bring me?”

Medea, standing before him, looked a withered and shrunken beldame, a woman bent with years, but yet with eyes that were bright and living. She came near him and she said: “The apple, O King, came from the garden that is watched over by the Daughters of the Evening Land. He who eats it has a little of the weight of old age taken from him. But things more wonderful even than the shining apples grow in that far garden. There are plants there the juices of which make youthful again all aged and failing things. The apple would bring you a little way toward the vigor of your prime. But the juices I have can bring you to a time more wonderful—back even to the strength and the glory of your youth.”

When the king heard her say this a light came into his heavy eyes, and his hands caught Medea and drew her to him. “Who are you?” he cried, “who speak of the garden watched over by the Daughters of the Evening Land? Who are you who speak of juices that can bring back one to the strength and glory of his youth?”

Medea answered: “I am a woman who has known many and great griefs, O king. My griefs have brought me through the world. Many have searched for the garden watched over by the Daughters of the Evening Land, but I came to it unthinkingly, and without wanting them I gathered the gleaming apples and took from the plants there the juices that can bring youth back.” [279]

Pelias said: “If you have been able to come by those juices, how is it that you remain in woeful age and decrepitude?”

She said: “Because of my many griefs, king, I would not renew my life. I would be ever nearer death and the end of all things. But you are a king and have all things you desire at your hand—beauty and state and power. Surely if any one would desire it, you would desire to have youth back to you.”

Pelias, when he heard her say this, knew that besides youth

there was nothing that he desired. After crimes that had gone through the whole of his manhood he had secured for himself the kingdom that Cretheus had founded. But old age had come on him, and the weakness of old age, and the power he had won was falling from his hands. He would be overthrown in his weakness, or else he would soon come to die, and there would be an end then to his name and to his kingship.

How fortunate above all kings he would be, he thought, if it could be that some one should come to him with juices that would renew his youth! He looked longingly into the eyes of the ancient-seeming woman before him, and he said: "How is it that you show no gains from the juices that you speak of? You are old and in woeful decrepitude. Even if you would not win back to youth you could have got riches and state for that which you say you possess."

Then Medea said: "I have lost so much and have suffered so much that I would not have youth back at the price of facing the years. I would sink down to the quiet of the grave. But I hope for some ease before I die—for the ease that is in king's houses, with good food to eat, and rest, and servants to wait upon one's aged body. These are the things I desire, O Pelias, even as you desire youth. You can give me such things, and I have come to you who desire youth eagerly rather than to kings who have a less eager desire for it. To you I will give the juices that bring one back to the strength and the glory of youth."

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Pelias said: "I have only your word for it that you possess these juices. Many there are who come and say deceiving things to a king."

Said Medea: "Let there be no more words between us, O king. To-morrow I will show you the virtue of the juices I have brought with me. Have a great vat prepared—a vat that a man could lay himself in with the water covering him. Have this vat filled with water, and bring to it the oldest creature you can get—a ram or a goat that is the oldest of their flock. Do this,

O king, and you will be shown a thing to wonder at and to be hopeful over.”

So Medea said, and then she turned around and left the king's presence. Pelias called to his guards and he bade them take the woman into their charge and treat her considerately. The guards took Medea away. Then all day the king mused on what had been told him and a wild hope kept beating about his heart. He had the servants prepare a great vat in the lower chambers, and he had his shepherd bring him a ram that was the oldest in the flock.

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Only Medea was permitted to come into that chamber with the king; the ways to it were guarded, and all that took place in it was secret. Medea was brought to the closed door by her guard. She opened it and she saw the king there and the vat already prepared; she saw a ram tethered near the vat.

Medea looked upon the king. In the light of the torches his face was white and fierce and his mouth moved gaspingly. She spoke to him quietly, and said: “There is no need for you to hear me speak. You will watch a great miracle, for behold! the ram which is the oldest and feeblest in the flock will become young and invigorated when it comes forth from this vat.”

She untethered the ram, and with the help of Pelias drew it to the vat. This was not hard to do, for the beast was very feeble; its feet could hardly bear it upright, its wool was yellow and stayed only in patches on its shrunken body. Easily the beast was forced into the vat. Then Medea drew the phial out of her bosom and poured into the water some of the brew she had made in Creon's garden in Corinth. The water in the vat took on a strange bubbling, and the ram sank down.

Then Medea, standing beside the vat, sang an incantation.

“O Earth,” she sang, “O Earth who dost provide wise men with potent herbs, O Earth help me now. I am she who can drive the clouds; I am she who can dispel the winds; I am she who can break the jaws of serpents with my incantations; I am

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she who can uproot living trees and rocks; who can make the mountains shake; who can bring the ghosts from their tombs. O Earth, help me now.” At this strange incantation the mixture in the vat boiled and bubbled more and more. Then the boiling and bubbling ceased. Up to the surface came the ram. Medea helped it to struggle out of the vat, and then it turned and smote the vat with its head.

Pelias took down a torch and stood before the beast. Vigorous indeed was the ram, and its wool was white and grew evenly upon it. They could not tether it again, and when the servants were brought into the chamber it took two of them to drag away the ram.

The king was most eager to enter the vat and have Medea put in the brew and speak the incantation over it. But Medea bade him wait until the morrow. All night the king lay awake, thinking of how he might regain his youth and his strength and be secure and triumphant thereafter.

At the first light he sent for Medea and he told her that he would have the vat made ready and that he would go into it that night. Medea looked upon him, and the helplessness that he showed made her want to work a greater evil upon him, or, if not upon him, upon his house. How soon it would have reached its end, all her plot for the destruction of this king! But she would leave in the king’s house a misery that would not have an end so soon.

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So she said to the king: “I would say the incantation over a beast of the field, but over a king I could not say it. Let those of your own blood be with you when you enter the vat that will bring such change to you. Have your daughters there. I will give them the juice to mix in the vat, and I will teach them the incantation that has to be said.”

So she said, and she made Pelias consent to having his daughters and not Medea in the chamber of the vat. They were sent for and they came before Medea, the daughters of King

Pelias.

They were women who had been borne down by the tyranny of their father; they stood before him now, two dim-eyed creatures, very feeble and fearful. To them Medea gave the phial that had in it the liquid to mix in the vat; also she taught them the words of the incantation, but she taught them to use these words wrongly.

The vat was prepared in the lower chambers; Pelias and his daughters went there, and the chamber was guarded, and what happened there was in secret. Pelias went into the vat; the brew was thrown into it, and the vat boiled and bubbled as before. Pelias sank down in it. Over him then his daughters said the magic words as Medea had taught them.

Pelias sank down, but he did not rise again. The hours went past and the morning came, and the daughters of King Pelias raised frightened laments. Over the sides of the vat the mixture boiled and bubbled, and Pelias was to be seen at the bottom with his limbs stiffened in death.

Then the guards came, and they took King Pelias out of the vat and left him in his royal chamber. The word went through the palace that the king was dead. There was a hush in the palace then, but not the hush of grief. One by one servants and servitors stole away from the palace that was hated by all. Then there was clatter in the streets as the fierce fighting men from the mountains galloped away with what plunder they could seize. And through all this the daughters of King Pelias sat crouching in fear above the body of their father.

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And Medea, still an ancient woman seemingly, went through the crowds that now came on the streets of the city. She told those she went amongst that the son of Æson was alive and would soon be in their midst. Hearing this the men of the city formed a council of elders to rule the people until Jason's coming. In such way Medea brought about the end of King Pelias's reign.

In triumph she went through the city. But as she was passing

the temple her dress was caught and held, and turning around she faced the ancient priestess of Artemis, Iphias. “Thou art Æetes’s daughter,” Iphias said, “who in deceit didst come into Iolcus. Woe to thee and woe to Jason for what thou hast done this day! Not for the slaying of Pelias art thou blameworthy, but for the misery that thou hast brought upon his daughters by bringing them into the guilt of the slaying. Go from the city, daughter of King Æetes; never, never wilt thou come back into it.”

But little heed did Medea pay to the ancient priestess, Iphias. Still in the guise of an old woman she went through the streets of the city, and out through the gate and along the highway that led from Iolcus. To that dark pool she came where she had bathed herself before. But now she did not step into the pool nor pour its water over her shrinking flesh; instead she built up two altars of green sods—an altar to Youth and an altar to Hecate, queen of the witches; she wreathed them with green boughs from the forest, and she prayed before each. Then she made herself naked, and she anointed herself with the brew she had made from the magical herbs and grasses. All marks of age and decrepitude left her, and when she stood over the dark pool and looked down on herself she saw that her body was white and shapely as before, and that her hair was soft and lovely.



She stayed all night between the tangled wood and the dark pool, and with the first light the car drawn by the scaly dragons came to her. She mounted the car, and she journeyed back to Corinth.

Into Jason's mind a fear of Medea had come since the hour when he had seen her mount the car drawn by the scaly dragons. He could not think of her any more as the one who had been his

companion on the *Argo*. He thought of her as one who could help him and do wonderful things for him, but not as one whom he could talk softly and lovingly to. Ah, but if Jason had thought less of his kingdom and less of his triumphing with the Fleece of Gold, Medea would not have had the dragons come to her.

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And now that his love for Medea had altered, Jason noted the loveliness of another—of Glauce, the daughter of Creon, the King of Corinth. And Glauce, who had red lips and the eyes of a child, saw in Jason who had brought the Golden Fleece out of Colchis the image of every hero she had heard about in stories. Creon, the king, often brought Jason and Glauce together, for his hope was that the hero would wed his daughter and stay in Corinth and strengthen his kingdom. He thought that Medea, that strange woman, could not keep a companionship with Jason.

Two were walking in the king's garden, and they were Jason and Glauce. A shadow fell between them, and when Jason looked up he saw Medea's dragon car. Down flew the dragons, and Medea came from the car and stood between Jason and the princess. Angrily she spoke to him. "I have made the kingdom ready for your return," she said, "but if you would go there you must first let me deal in my own way with this pretty maiden." And so fiercely did Medea look upon her that Glauce shrank back and clung to Jason for protection. "O, Jason," she cried, "thou didst say that I am such a one as thou didst dream of when in the forest with Chiron, before the adventure of the Golden Fleece drew thee away from the Grecian lands. Oh, save me now from the power of her who comes in the dragon car." And Jason said: "I said all that thou hast said, and I will protect thee, O Glauce."

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And then Medea thought of the king's house she had left for Jason, and of the brother whom she had let be slain, and of the plot she had carried out to bring Jason back to Iolcus, and a great fury came over her. In her hand she took foam from the jaws of the dragons, and she cast the foam upon Glauce, and the princess fell back into the arms of Jason with the dragon foam

burning into her.

Then, seeing in his eyes that he had forgotten all that he owed to her—the winning of the Golden Fleece, and the safety of *Argo*, and the destruction of the power of King Pelias—seeing in his eyes that Jason had forgotten all this, Medea went into her dragon-borne car and spoke the words that made the scaly dragons bear her aloft. She flew from Corinth, leaving Jason in King Creon's garden with Glauce dying in his arms. He lifted her up and laid her upon a bed, but even as her friends came around her the daughter of King Creon died.

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ND Jason? For long he stayed in Corinth, a famous man indeed, but one sorrowful and alone. But again there grew in him the desire to rule and to have possessions. He called around him again the men whose home was in Iolcus—those who had followed him as bright-eyed youths when he first proclaimed his purpose of winning the Fleece of Gold. He called them around him, and he led them on board the *Argo*. Once more they lifted sails, and once more they took the *Argo* into the open sea.

Toward Iolcus they sailed; their passage was fortunate, and in a short time they brought the *Argo* safely into the harbor of Pagasæ. Oh, happy were the crowds that came thronging to see the ship that had the famous Fleece of Gold upon her masthead, and green and sweet smelling were the garlands that the people brought to wreath the heads of Jason and his companions! Jason looked upon the thrones, and he thought that much had gone

from him, but he thought that whatever else had gone something remained to him—to be a king and a great ruler over a people.

And so Jason came back to Iolcus. The *Argo* he made a blazing pile of in sacrifice to Poseidon, the god of the sea. The Golden Fleece he hung in the temple of the gods. Then he took up the rule of the kingdom that Cretheus had founded, and he became the greatest of the kings of Greece.

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And to Iolcus there came, year after year, young men who would look upon the gleaming thing that was hung there in the temple of the gods. And as they looked upon it, young man after young man, the thought would come to each that he would make himself strong enough and heroic enough to win for his country something as precious as Jason's GOLDEN FLEECE. And for all their lives they kept in mind the words that Jason had inscribed upon a pillar that was placed beside the Fleece of Gold—the words that Triton spoke to the Argonauts when they were fain to win their way out of the inland sea:—

THAT IS THE OUTLET TO THE SEA, WHERE THE DEEP
WATER LIES UNMOVED AND DARK; ON EACH SIDE
ROLL WHITE BREAKERS WITH SHINING CRESTS;
AND THE WAY BETWEEN FOR YOUR PASSAGE OUT
IS NARROW. BUT GO IN JOY, AND AS FOR LABOR LET
THERE BE NO GRIEVING THAT LIMBS IN YOUTHFUL
VIGOR SHOULD STILL TOIL.

Transcriber's Note

The book received a Newbery Honor Award (1922).

Illustrations in the original appear on separate, unnumbered pages. In this transcription, wherever an illustration would break a paragraph, it was moved after the paragraph.

Obvious typographical errors were silently corrected.

***END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE
GOLDEN FLEECE AND THE HEROES WHO LIVED
BEFORE ACHILLES***

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