

HARRAP'S  
MODERN  
READERS

# THE BOOK OF MYTHS





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THE  
BOOK OF MYTHS



## HARRAP'S MODERN READERS

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THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS  
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# THE BOOK OF MYTHS

BY

AMY CRUSE

AUTHOR OF

"THE BOOK OF EPIC HEROES"

"ENGLISH LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES"

"THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE" ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE  
AND BLACK AND WHITE



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## TO THE READER

**Y**OU can remember a time, not so very long ago, when this world was quite new and strange to you, and when everything you saw—the sun and moon and stars, the wind and the rain, the buds that came on the trees in spring-time, the flowers growing up from seed in your garden—seemed to you so wonderful that you felt you must know how it all came to pass. You were constantly asking questions of anyone you thought might be able to explain these mysteries to you. “Where does the sun go to in the night-time?” “How many stars are there, and what are they made of?” “What makes the wind blow?” “How does a plant come out of a tiny seed?” These and a hundred others you asked many times, and the answers you received never quite satisfied you. You were given reasons which seemed to you just as difficult to understand as the thing that had puzzled you, and much less interesting; or you were perhaps told to wait until you were older and you would learn all you wanted to know at school. Now you are older, and you have begun to understand a very little about the wonderful laws that govern the universe and give a place to each of the myriad stars and a time for the appearance of each tiny herb of the field. Yet the world has not grown less wonderful; but, whereas once you saw only the great and obvious marvels, you are now gradually becoming aware that everything—the stone by the wayside scarcely less than the great sun itself—has a story which is as interesting and exciting as any fairy-tale that was ever written.

When you read the myths and legends that are set down in this book, remember how you felt before you knew that science had some sort of explanation to give of the things that puzzled and delighted you; and remember that in the early days of a nation's history the people, even when they were grown men



## The Book of Myths

and women, felt, in this respect, just as you felt when you were a very little child. In those days the first lesson of science had not been learnt. No one had any idea that there was a means of finding out the laws that governed the universe; or, indeed, that there were any laws at all. There was no one of whom a man could ask questions, for no one knew any more than he knew himself. He saw the marvels and he could not rest without some explanation of them; so he made an explanation, and answered his own questions.

If you think for a little you will, I am sure, be able to guess the kind of explanation that he made. You will remember how very apt children are to think of the objects around them as if they were persons—how they will talk of the unkind stone that hurt them when they fell, and the dear little star that is looking at them from the sky. The men who lived in the early stages of the world's history had just this childlike way of looking at things. It seemed to them natural to believe that the sun which they saw every day travelling across the sky in glory marked the passage of a great and splendid sovereign; that the thunder was the voice of an angry deity; that the earth lay cold and dead in winter because a stern and terrible being had bound it in iron chains; and that between this being and the milder, kindlier god who brought the grass and flowers and trees upon the earth a continual conflict was going on, in which first one and then the other was victorious—and so on through all the works of nature. For them the world was peopled not only by the men and women they could see, but by a vast crowd of higher beings who did not make themselves visible, but the signs of whose presence could be perceived on the land and on the water, in the air and in the sky.

From such a beginning, it is believed, all the mythologies of the world have been built up. It is easy to see how, as time went on, they would grow and develop. Names were given to these gods, and they were described according to the picture which naturally rose before the eyes of those who worshipped them. A home was imagined for them, full of such glory and splendour as befitted its great inhabitants. The more important

## To the Reader

gods were enthroned as rulers over the others, and relationships between them, such as husband and wife, father and son, were established.

As the world grew older, legend was added to myth. Each nation had its heroes whose great deeds were sung by the minstrels, and these songs were handed on from one generation to the next. The stories, like the myths, grew and developed. Sometimes the deeds of two or even more heroes were put together to make one story; sometimes a legend became attached to a myth, so that the actions and qualities of a real person were given to one of the imagined nature gods. So from age to age the stories grew, myth and legend together, until it became impossible to separate one from the other.

All mythologies, we believe, grew up much in this way, and so, naturally, we find that there are many points in which one resembles another. For example, the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis (p. 193) has several incidents which recall the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone (p. 34). The reason why the mythologies are not even more alike than they are lies in the differences between the peoples who made them. Each nation made its gods in its own likeness, that is, according to its own ideal of what a god should be, and each told the story in its own way. You will see as you read the stories in this book how strikingly the differences in national character are illustrated by them, and you will understand, partly at least, why some of them—and especially the myths of the Greeks and the Romans—have become great, immortal classics, entering into the life of the whole world; and why others have remained merely interesting stories and are comparatively unknown.

Yet all of them are worth reading and remembering. They are stories from the great World Fairy Book which took hundreds of years to make and hundreds of men and women to make it; or perhaps we should rather say hundreds of children, for the men and women of those days were really just wonderful children.

A. C.



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# THE BOOK OF MYTHS

## CHAPTER I

### MYTHS OF THE GREEKS AND THE ROMANS

With airs and lineaments divine.  
ADDISON

THE Greeks who made these myths lived in a sunny land in southern Europe. Their country was full of beauty; the blue waters of the lovely and peaceful Mediterranean Sea washed their shores. Their climate was warm and delightful and they knew little of the hardships of winter. Their soil was fertile, producing such food as was sufficient for their wants in return for short and easy labour. They had time to enjoy the beauty that lay all around them; and they became a beauty-loving, almost a beauty-worshipping people. Their ambition and delight was to create and increase beauty. They were naturally a finely formed and well-proportioned race, and they set themselves to attain bodily perfection by every means in their power, and especially by regular and carefully planned exercise, so that the standard of grace and beauty among them rose to a height such as no other nation has ever reached. The powers of their minds as well as of their bodies were set toward the attainment of beauty; so that, as the ages went on, they produced works of art—poetry, drama, sculpture, architecture—which are still among the world's greatest treasures.

The gods of such a race would naturally be, before all things, physically beautiful. "As beautiful as a Greek god" is a phrase which is still used among us. They were largely conceived, and given an air of majesty and power which makes them stand in the imagination as beings great and noble in spite of the fact that they did not always act in a noble fashion. For the Greeks, like all the early peoples, did not imagine a god to be a being



## The Book of Myths

all-righteous and all-powerful. He was, they thought, in many ways like themselves, sharing their weaknesses and desires, and feeling their temptations; it did not seem to them, as it would seem to us, an unnatural and even an impossible thing for a god to be sometimes cruel or selfish or untruthful. Cunning was with them a quality to be admired, and vengeance an act befitting a deity.

But in spite of these things the spirit of Greek mythology is high and splendid. When we have read its stories the things we remember most clearly are not the fickleness of Zeus, the jealousy of Hera, the cunning of Hermes and the riotousness of Dionysius; we think, rather, of the great and noble qualities such as make Prometheus, Demeter, Apollo, Orpheus, and many other of its heroes the embodiment of that beauty which the Greeks so dearly loved.

Roman mythology is substantially the same as that of the Greeks, for the Romans took over the whole company of the Greek deities, with their myths belonging to them, and added only a small number of their own.

### *Prometheus and his Gift to Man*

There had been ten long years of war between the gods who dwelt on high Olympus and the giant Titans who had rebelled against their rule. At last the war was over, and the triumphant gods, serene and unmolested once more, took up the work of creation which this strife had interrupted. The earth which they had made lay before them, green and fresh and lovely, though in places cruelly torn by the mighty Titans, who had hurled rocks from their places and piled mountain upon mountain in their mad efforts to reach the stronghold of their foes. Above the earth spread the blue sky, with the lights that the gods had made set in it to mark the day and the night; and the river Oceanus flowed round its shores, as they had bidden it do. They had created also the trees and herbs and flowers which covered it and the wild animals that roamed over it, seeking their food from the plenty spread before them.

## Prometheus and his Gift to Man

So far all was good; but the work was not finished. The animals were simply living creatures, with no marked qualities and very little to distinguish them from each other. They were stupid and dull, certainly not fitted to make the best of the beautiful world that had been given them to live in. Some further gifts must be bestowed upon them, and a new race of beings must be created, of a higher intelligence, fitted to worship and serve the gods in a manner pleasing to their greatness.

Looking round to see who was fittest to help him in completing this work of creation, Zeus, king of the gods, chose two of the conquered Titans—brothers, named Prometheus and Epimetheus. He put a great store of gifts at their disposal, and Epimetheus at once set to work to allot these to the different animals, while Prometheus overlooked and directed his work. The animals were endowed first with such bodily organs as would enable them to get their food and to defend themselves in the position in which they had been placed, some being given wings, some claws, some scales, some teeth, or beaks, or tusks. Afterward they were given the qualities which would help them to make use of these things—strength, courage, sagacity, patience, fidelity. Epimetheus gave so generously that soon the store entrusted to him by Zeus, great as it was, was exhausted; and the higher beings designed by the god had not yet been created.

Prometheus and Epimetheus consulted very earnestly together before they began this work of creation. "We will make this new being," said Prometheus, "in the likeness of the gods themselves. He shall not bend his face to the earth, but shall stand erect and turn his eyes heavenward." So he took a handful of the dust of the earth, and mixed it with water, and kneaded it into clay; then he shaped of it a figure in the likeness of the gods, which he called man. Next, he appealed to Eros, the god who had first brought life upon the earth, to breathe into this image that it might live; and to Athene he appealed also, begging that the great daughter of Zeus, the goddess of wisdom, would grant to mortal man an immortal, indwelling soul. Eros and Athene, greatly interested in this new work of creation, willingly consented; so now upon



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the earth appeared a race of beings who, because they had souls as well as bodies, could love and worship as well as serve.

Prometheus, the wise and tender, looked proudly upon man as he walked the earth with his face turned to the stars. The heart of the creator yearned over the being he had created, and longed to give to him more and greater gifts; to light up the soul within him that it might glow with a noble ardour; to make him lord over the lower creation; to lead him from height to height of wisdom and knowledge and power. He thought long of what he could do to bring these things to pass, and at last a great and terrible idea came into his mind. "In the dwelling of the gods," he thought, "is the divine fire which helps to make them all-powerful; it is by means of this fire that the thunderbolts of Zeus are forged. On the earth no fire exists; if I could obtain some and bestow it upon men, all that I desire might be accomplished. But Zeus would never consent to give to man a portion of the sacred fire. I must not dream that such a thing could be."

Yet Prometheus could not drive the idea from his mind. By day and by night he brooded over it, debating how the fire could be obtained. "Could he steal it from the abode of the gods?" The very thought brought terror. "Swift and merciless would be the vengeance of Zeus on such a thief, more fearful would be his agonies than those already inflicted upon the rebellious Titans. Yet, the fire once given to man, even Zeus could not take it back. Man would be raised for ever above the beasts, and could go on from achievement to achievement, from glory to glory. What, if this could be done, would it matter though Prometheus should suffer the worst tortures the angry god could inflict? Would not the thought of the godlike race he had nurtured comfort him in his pain, so that he would triumph still?"

For many days Prometheus brooded over his great plan, until he quite lost sight of his own certain punishment in the splendid vision that rose before him of man inspired and ennobled by the divine fire; and at last he determined to undertake the great adventure. He chose a night when heavy clouds were

## Prometheus and his Gift to Man

hung across the sky, so that not a glimpse of the moon goddess's bright chariot could be seen upon the earth. In the thick darkness he set out, going softly and stealthily across the plains lest any should meet and question him. At the foot of Olympus he paused and looked upward to where he knew the shining city of the gods stood on the summit that pierced the heavens.



PROMETHEUS BRINGING FIRE FROM OLYMPUS

Then with dogged courage up and up he went, climbing steadily until he passed through the dark, enfolding clouds and stood in the clear and lovely light that shone upon the dwelling-place of the gods. Twelve fair palaces he saw, their walls like burnished gold; in their midst the palace of Zeus, highest and most glorious of all. Trees and flowers grew around, so wonderful and so beautiful that Prometheus longed to step aside to touch and smell them; but he remembered the peril and the greatness of his errand, and he wasted not another instant in gazing on the glories of that heavenly realm. Everything was quiet, and



## The Book of Myths

he could see no watchmen on the shining walls. Treading quickly and lightly for all his great stature, he passed into the city which none except the gods might enter, on pain of death.

In a moment he was out again, carrying a reed which he had lighted at the fire of the immortals. The great deed was done.

Back by the way he had come went Prometheus, guarding with fearful care that wavering, sacred flame. If any watchers from heaven or earth had seen that small point of light travelling through the night's blackness there would have been great marvel and questioning, for no light save that of the sun and the moon and the stars had ever shone on the earth. But none saw him, and he returned safely with the divine flame.

Yet Prometheus knew that he had not escaped, and that his punishment was certain. It could not be very long before Zeus would discover that there was fire upon the earth, and to find the thief would be easy for the god of all the world; then, swift and terrible, his bolt would fall. The assurance of this did not frighten Prometheus or lead him to extinguish the sacred flame. He had counted the cost beforehand, and was prepared to pay it to the uttermost. Now he only felt a great desire to spread the fire through all the world, to kindle hopes and aspirations in man and set him in the way of attaining them.

So he began, and laboured without ceasing. He revealed to man the divine fire, and showed him how it would help him in his labours; how it would burn wood and melt metals and fashion tools; how it would cook food and make life bearable in the frozen days of winter; how it would give light in darkness so that men might labour and travel in the night-time as well as by day. He taught them how to dig the fields and grow corn and herbs, how to build houses and cover their roofs with thatch, how to tame the beasts of the forest and make them minister to their master's needs.

And the sacred flame did also a greater work than all these. It gave inspiration and enthusiasm, and urged men on to gain ever higher and greater things. Marvellously the work progressed. Men seized on each art that the teacher introduced

## Prometheus and his Gift to Man

to them with a wonderful ardour and energy; no difficulties daunted them and no toil depressed their eager spirits. The whole earth thrilled with their activities, and in the midst moved Prometheus, teaching, guiding, opening out before men's delighted eyes fresh fields for effort and attainment.

Zeus, being occupied with other things, looked but little upon the earth at that time, but there came a day when the points of light scattered over its surface caught his attention, and with a shock of terrible anger he realized that daring hands had stolen heaven's fire. In a voice that sent echoing thunders throughout all creation great Zeus made his accusation, and heaven and earth trembled. Poseidon, ruler of the Ocean, and Pluto, ruler of the Underworld, from their kingdoms thought it well to appear and assure their brother of their innocence; and the other gods and goddesses made haste to protest that they knew nothing of the theft. Yet Zeus was certain that no mortal could have put his foot over the shining threshold of the gods, and very soon his suspicions rested on the mighty Titan, the creator of man. Prometheus was summoned and appeared before him. "Who is it that has stolen fire from heaven?" thundered Zeus; and the Titan calmly answered, "It is I."

Then the anger of Zeus turned to fury, and he seized a thunder-bolt to destroy the daring thief; but Prometheus stood so calmly, holding his head high, and looking at death with such fearless eyes, that the father of the gods dropped his bolt and asked in wonder, "Why did you do this thing?"

"Because," answered Prometheus, "I loved man, whom with the help of the gods I had created; I longed to give him some gift that would raise him high above the brute creation and bring him nearer to the gods. I knew of nought that could do this save fire from heaven, and to ask the boon from you, O Zeus, would have been to ask in vain. So I scaled the walls of your city and lit my reed at the flame, and now all over the earth fires are kindled; and in men's hearts too has arisen the flame of a pure and high ambition. Not all your power, O ruler of heaven and earth, can put out those fires, or bring men back to the easy content which marks the beasts of the field."



## The Book of Myths

As Zeus listened to these proud words his fury died, and there came in its place a cold and bitter hatred of the being who had thus defied his power; so that he no longer thought of hurling a thunderbolt, deeming that would bring a death too easy for the deserving of such a rebel. He wished to see Prometheus suffer slow and awful and unending tortures, that would not only wring his body, but would seize on his proud spirit and lay it low in agony. So he called to his son, Hephæstus, the god of the forge, who had marvellous skill in the working of metals.

"Take this Titan, this Prometheus, and stretch him upon a rock in the mountains of Caucasus, and fasten him to it with chains that cannot be broken. There shall he lie through endless ages, and none shall succour him. Also I will send an eagle who each day shall devour his liver, causing him fearful torments; and each night the liver shall grow again, so that in the morning his suffering may be renewed."

The gods of Olympus were used to Zeus's fits of passion, and to the terrible punishments that he ordered for those who resisted his will; but at this sentence, which condemned Prometheus to unending agony, even they were aghast. But the Titan himself stood calm and proud, never flinching as he heard the dreadful words.

"Let it be so, O tyrant," he said; "because you are strong you are merciless. My theft has done you no harm; there is still fire and to spare on Olympus. In your selfishness you will not share a privilege though it be to advance the whole race of mankind. Chain me to the rock and leave me to my cruel fate. It may be that not for long you will sit in the high seat of the gods. The word has been spoken, and the fate of Zeus is in the balance."

By this time Hephæstus, ugly and deformed and covered with soot from his forge beneath Mount Etna, had come with his dusky servants, the Cyclopes, to carry out his father's will. Prometheus did not resist, but allowed the god, misshapen yet of tremendous strength, to bear him to his place of punishment. There they fastened him to the rock with chains that could not be broken, and left him to lie without shelter from the sun



THE PUNISHMENT OF PROMETHEUS  
Gilbert James



## Prometheus and his Gift to Man

or the rain, and with none to succour him, through countless ages.

But Zeus, though he had worked his will on his enemy, was troubled. He could not forget the words of Prometheus that threatened him with some vague, dark evil to come. What could harm the lord of heaven and earth? and how had the Titan learnt what was hidden from the gods themselves? He did not guess that the saying of Prometheus concerned a certain nymph<sup>1</sup> named Thetis, whom Zeus had set his heart on marrying. An oracle had declared that the son of this nymph should be greater than his father; if therefore that father were Zeus, the king of the gods would be overthrown by his son. Prometheus had heard of the oracle's prediction, while as yet it had not reached the ears of Zeus, and so he had uttered his warning.

At last his unrest and foreboding determined Zeus to go to the Caucasus and speak with Prometheus once more. There lay the Titan, his great body stretched helpless on the rock, and showing already cruel marks where the sun had burnt and the wind had scourged it. There was the great eagle with horrid beak thrust through the torn flesh devouring the liver within, while the victim writhed in anguish. Yet when he saw Zeus he made no sign of submission, and when the god spoke to him offering him release from torture if he would explain his dark sayings Prometheus refused.

"I suffer," he said, "for the whim of a jealous tyrant. Unjustly I suffer, and I submit because the strength of my oppressor is greater than my own. But I will not acknowledge his power or do his bidding; and I will not accept release as an act of favour rather than of justice."

In vain Zeus bowed his pride, entreating Prometheus to tell him of the dark and terrible danger that threatened his power. The Titan always gave the same answer, and at last Zeus left him and went back to Olympus. Again and again, tormented by the fear which Prometheus had implanted, he returned and

<sup>1</sup> A nymph was a female deity who possessed a lower form of divinity than the gods of Olympus.



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tried to wring the secret from the tortured giant, but in vain. So through countless ages Prometheus remained chained to the rock, until at last a hero came and released him, as will be told in a later story. And all the while men blessed him as their friend, and the sacred fire still burned and worked among them.

### *The Apple of Discord*

One day when the ocean nymphs were sporting in the water they saw a beautiful little girl baby lying in the hollow of a great wave as happily as if she were in her cradle. In high delight they carried her down to their coral caves at the bottom of the sea, and there they tended and taught her with loving care. They called her Aphrodite, from a Greek word that means 'foam,' and they said that she was a goddess, born of the sea-waves.

Aphrodite, or Venus as she is more often called, grew into the loveliest maiden that had ever been seen by gods or by men. All the ocean deities loved her, and wished her to stay with them always, but the nymphs decided that the time had come for her to know something of the world above the sea. They took her to the surface and very tenderly laid her down again on a great blue wave; and then they called Zephyrus, the gentle south wind, and prayed him to take care of her and bear her safely to land.

With his soft breath Zephyrus carried her toward the island of Cyprus, where a group of fair nymphs stood on the shore ready to receive her. Zephyrus laid her gently down upon the golden sand, and the maidens gathered round in wonder. Beautiful as they were, they saw that she was far more beautiful, and they bent before her, doing homage to her as their queen. They combed out her golden hair and dressed her in shining robes; and then they took her to Mount Olympus and presented her before the high gods.

A throne had been prepared for her and the gods assembled to see this beauty of whom such wonderful accounts had reached Olympus. They did not quite believe all they had been told,

## The Apple of Discord

and they were eager to see for themselves how much was true. When she came they freely owned that her loveliness was greater than could be described. The whole company was enraptured. Each one of the gods desired her for his wife. Even Zeus, in defiance of jealous Hera, wooed her openly. But dainty Venus would have none of them, and turned up her bewitching nose even at the great king of the gods himself.

Then Zeus in great anger declared that she should marry the one whom he, whose will all must obey, should choose. He called his son, Hephæstus, from his workshop and commanded the proud beauty to take this man—misshapen and sooty from the forge—as her husband. It was useless to rebel, and with a very bad grace Venus consented.

The marriage took place, but she refused to live in her husband's underground home, and had very little to do with him. She spent most of her time in befriending true lovers upon earth, and the youths and maidens were her devoted worshippers, and raised many temples in her honour.

It happened very often that Venus and Athene were opposed to one another in the affairs of men with which they concerned themselves. Venus nearly always sympathized with the young and beautiful, while Athene had more regard to thoughtfulness and nobility of character. So a sort of rivalry in power grew up between them, and at last they came to an open quarrel.

It happened that a great feast was made at the marriage of Thetis, a beautiful sea-nymph, with King Peleus. Zeus, with all the gods of Olympus, was present. He brought his splendid train to the coral caves under the sea where the wedding was to take place, and the banquet was begun with much rejoicing. In the midst of the merriment there walked into the hall an uninvited guest. It was Ate, the goddess of discord. She had not been asked with the other deities because she was so sour and bad-tempered that wherever she went merriment and good-fellowship were changed into bitter strife. She was very angry at having been slighted and was bent on revenge. Her venomous looks made everybody feel uncomfortable, and when, after a few minutes, she went rudely away, she left discord behind her;



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for she threw upon the table a golden apple upon which was written, "To the fairest."

At once many voices claimed the apple, for there were maidens and nymphs and goddesses present at the feast whose title to be considered beautiful none could dispute; but after a time all save Hera, Athene, and Venus withdrew from the contest. Hera claimed the apple as the right of the acknowledged queen of Olympus; Athene urged that there was no beauty so precious as the beauty of mind and spirit; while Venus lifted up her fair face, surprised that there should be any question, for was she not, by the consent of all, queen of beauty?

Bitter words were said and angry looks exchanged. Each claimant called on one after another of the guests to give judgment in the matter, but all shrank from offering an opinion, for to please one must mean that the other two would be offended. At last Zeus, to end the dispute, bade his messenger, Hermes, take the three goddesses to Mount Ida, in Asia Minor, and call upon the shepherd whom they should find there to decide the question. The shepherd was really Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy. At his birth an oracle had predicted that he would bring great misfortune to his family and his native city, and to avoid this he had been taken to Mount Ida and left there to die. But a shepherd had found him and had taken him home and brought him up as his son. When Paris grew to be a man he also became a shepherd. He was a very beautiful youth and all three goddesses were at once charmed with him.

Athene spoke first. She promised him wisdom and glory in the eyes of gods and men if he would award the apple to her. Hera followed and promised wealth and power if she were chosen. Then came Venus. She looked sweetly at the shepherd and for a moment did not speak. Then, when she had given the young man time to realize her marvellous loveliness, she stepped softly up to him and whispered, "Give me the apple, shepherd, and you shall win a bride as beautiful as I am."

Paris could not resist this appeal. Venus's face made him forget wisdom and glory and riches and power and think only of love. Here was the fairest. He would give her the apple.

## Pallas Athene and Arachne

So Paris gave judgment in favour of Venus, and henceforward Hera and Athene hated their successful rival and hated Paris too. The decision which he made that day brought about the fulfilment of the oracle's prophecy that he should bring great woe upon his family and his native city, as you will see when some day you read the famous story of the siege of Troy.

### *Pallas Athene and Arachne*

Pallas Athene was, next to Hera, the greatest among the ancient Greek goddesses. She was the goddess of wisdom, and she watched over everything that had to do with the safety and prosperity of the state. She loved peace, but she helped the people to fight when their country was attacked; and though she bore no weapons, she went armoured in helmet and breastplate, and over her shoulders hung a goatskin to which was fastened a broad and shining shield. This was the ægis, and any person over whom it was cast was safe from all hurt or danger. Athene also taught the people many useful arts—how to till the ground and rear cattle. She invented the rake and the plough, and the bridle by means of which the people might tame the wild horses to their service. To the women she taught the arts of spinning, weaving, embroidering, and all kinds of needlework; so that as time went on the women of Greece became famed for the beautiful work that they produced.

There was one maiden, named Arachne, whose skill was greater than that of any other woman in the land. People would gather to watch her as she sat at her spinning-wheel and spun the soft, many-coloured wools into fine, even threads, and then wove them on her loom into a web enchanting both to the sight and to the touch. Most marvellous of all it was to see her take her needle and cover the web with pictures such as glow on the canvas of a great painter. Her lovely, smiling face, her white arms and slender, graceful body were as pleasant to look upon as the pictures she created. Nymphs stole from the streams and the woods, and stood on tiptoe looking over the shoulders of the mortals, marvelling at Arachne's wonderful skill.



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"Athene herself must have taught her!" exclaimed an admiring onlooker one day.

Arachne turned round quickly. Her face was not so beautiful now, there was such an ugly look of pride and scorn upon it.

"Athene teach me, indeed! My skill is equal to hers, and that I would prove if she would match herself against me."

The hearers cried out in astonishment and alarm that a mortal should speak in such terms of the great goddess. But Arachne held to what she had said, and repeated it again and again to other listeners, until all through the land it was known that the boastful maiden had challenged Athene to a contest. Soon the goddess herself heard of it, and though she was very much displeased, she resolved to warn the girl and give her a chance to escape the punishment she deserved.

So, taking the form of an old woman, Athene joined the group assembled to watch Arachne at work. Quietly she made her way to the girl's side.

"Is it true that you have said that your skill is equal to Athene's?" she asked.

"Indeed it is," answered the girl proudly, "and I only wish she could hear me. If she should beat me in the trial I should be quite willing to pay the penalty."

"Maiden," said the old woman kindly, "listen to the words of one who has lived long in the world and seen much. Boast if you will that no mortal can excel you, but do not match yourself against the high gods. Rather, ask pardon of Athene for your presumptuous words. She will forgive you if your repentance is sincere."

Arachne was very angry, and spoke rudely to the old woman. "Keep your advice for those who ask it," she said; "as for me, I repeat that my greatest wish is that Athene should come and let me show what I can do."

"Athene is here," said the old woman, in tones that startled the graceless girl. She turned and saw a tall and gracious figure with noble brow, and deep grey eyes that looked sternly upon her. For a moment she was overawed, but quickly recovered herself and spoke boldly.

## Pallas Athene and Arachne

"Then I say once more that I am ready for the contest."

The looms were set up and the goddess and the maiden began their work. The bystanders bent in awe before Athene, then watched silently as the deft fingers of the two weavers moved swiftly among wools of rare and brilliant dyes. Soon the pictures began to grow before them. Arachne's showed a sunlit stretch of sea where swelling waves tumbled and splashed so that the onlookers almost felt the salt spray in their faces. Swimming among the waves was a magnificent white bull, his golden horns, round which were twined a careless garland of meadow flowers, glinting in the sun. On his back, holding to one of his horns, lay a girl. Her eyes were wide with fear, but it seemed that the cry of terror coming from her parted lips was arrested as she bent her head to listen to the words of the lordly bull, while a faint flush was creeping back into her whitened cheeks. The girl was Europa and the bull was Zeus himself, who had taken that form because he wished to woo the maiden unnoted by Hera's jealous eye.

Arachne knew, even before she heard the delighted and astonished cries of those who watched, that this was the best piece of work she had ever done. She turned triumphantly and looked at the web of Athene. Then her heart sank, for, conceited as she was, she was yet a true artist, and she recognized that here was work beyond anything that she could accomplish.

Athene had chosen as the subject of her picture the contest that she had held, in the presence of Zeus and all the dwellers on Olympus, with Poseidon, god of the sea. Zeus had decreed that a new and beautiful city, lately founded in Greece, should bear the name of whichever deity could produce the gift most useful to man, and Athene and Poseidon met in rivalry for the honour which both coveted.

Poseidon struck the ground with his trident, and a horse, finely formed, noble and spirited, sprang up. The assembled gods shouted in delight, and declared that nothing Athene could produce could surpass this wonderful animal. When Athene, in her turn, caused an olive-tree to spring up, there were cries of derision and scornful laughter. The goddess,



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unmoved, proceeded to explain the manifold uses of the tree; and when she had finished, the assembled gods agreed that it was far more valuable than the horse of Poseidon. The city was therefore called Athens.

All this Athene had shown upon her web, with the details as lovely and as lifelike as in the picture of Arachne; but here was a radiance and a glory which clearly showed that the work was done by no mortal hand. The onlookers had admired the web of Arachne; they were awed and enraptured by that of Athene.

No need to ask who was the victor. Arachne knew only too well. She felt she could not live to bear the humiliation she had brought upon herself. A rope was hanging from a beam above her head; she seized it and drew a noose about her neck, intending to hang herself.

But Athene would not allow her thus to perish. "Live," commanded the goddess, "that you may be a warning for all time to those who bear themselves proudly toward the high gods. Live, and spin and weave without ceasing; not as you will, but in the way that the gods have chosen."

She raised her hand and sprinkled upon the girl a few drops of the juice of aconite. At once the lovely colours died out of the maiden's face and hair and hands, and they became a dingy grey. Her head, limbs, and body shrank until only a tiny grey mass was left; her fingers grew threadlike and stood out round this grey mass raising and supporting it. Arachne had become a spider.

### *Artemis and Orion*

Artemis, or Diana, the moon-goddess, was the sister of Apollo, and, like him, loved all woodland pastimes, so that she became also the goddess of hunting. She was tall and straight and strong and very beautiful, and she had many suitors; but she would not marry, declaring that she loved best to be free and live with her nymphs in the forest. Her nymphs also vowed to remain unmarried.

It was a fair sight to see the train of lovely maidens who,

## Artemis and Orion

dressed in short green tunics and carrying each a bow and sheaf of arrows, ranged gaily through the forest glades. Artemis went in front, a shining crescent on her head to mark her out as moon-goddess and leader of the band.

One day seven of the nymphs—the daughters of Atlas, and known as the Pleiades—had left the others and were walking by themselves through the shady woodland, when they heard a shout, and saw coming toward them a gigantic youth, comely and handsome in his hunter's dress. This was Orion, son of Poseidon, and he was followed by his dog, Sirius. The Pleiades turned quickly and ran away in the opposite direction, for the nymphs of Artemis were vowed to shun the society of man. The hunter caught only a glimpse of their faces before they turned from him, but in that one glimpse he saw that they were young and beautiful, that their eyes sparkled and their lips smiled. He followed quickly, calling to them to stop, but they only fled the faster. They were strong and lithe and trained to running, so that Orion found it very difficult to catch up to them. On and on they ran, speeding down forest paths and across open glades, and still Orion followed, until at length the strength of the nymphs began to fail, and they called upon Artemis to help them.

Orion saw them flag and came on triumphantly; but the goddess heard the prayer of her followers, and when Orion put out his hand, thinking to touch the fair form of a maiden, a white pigeon fluttered from his grasp and flew swiftly, with six companions like itself, toward the heavens. Orion watched them in amazement as they mounted higher and higher until they became seven white dots against the blue sky. Then, to his astonishment, the white dots turned to points of light, and there, shining in the heavens above him, he saw a group of seven stars.

Orion turned away in great vexation, but he soon forgot his disappointment and went off on other adventures. Some time after he met Artemis herself, and the two became great friends. Both loved hunting, and were daring and fearless in their favourite sport. Artemis found all her pastimes far more



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enjoyable when they were shared with this mighty hunter than when her more timid nymphs were her only companions.

Apollo looked with great disfavour upon his sister's friendship with Orion. He feared that she was about to forget her vows as a maiden-goddess, and marry this son of Poseidon who had just the qualities to win her love. He laid his plans very carefully, resolving to put an end to the friendship. He knew that Poseidon had given his son the power of wading or walking through the waves, and that Orion might often be seen far out at sea. He waited for one of these occasions, and then he went to his sister, and talking pleasantly to her, drew her toward the seashore. Then he began to talk of the wonderful marksmanship of himself and his companions, and Artemis, jealous for the honour of her maiden-band, told in her turn of the feats that they had performed.

"All very well!" said Apollo, pretending doubt, "but show me what you can do. Can you hit that black spot far out at sea?" and he pointed to Orion's head, which showed dark above the waters.

Eager to prove her skill, Artemis at once took her bow and shot with such exactness of aim that the black spot disappeared beneath the waves. The goddess turned triumphantly to her brother, who praised her warmly, being delighted that his scheme had succeeded so well.

But the waves lifted the body of Orion and bore it toward the shore, where they laid it gently down in the sight of Artemis; and there, piercing the dark head, was her own arrow.

Artemis wept bitterly, reproaching her brother, and reproaching herself also that she had fallen so readily into his trap. But she could not bring Orion back to life. So she placed him among the stars, and there he shines to this day, with his dog Sirius following and the Pleiades flying before him.

### *Demeter and Persephone*

When the good Prometheus, who had loved men and suffered in their cause, was taken from them men did not forget the arts

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that he had taught them. Year by year the earth grew more fruitful as men diligently dug and ploughed and sowed, so that when the time of harvest came they gathered in bounteous supplies of corn and fruit. Demeter, the sister of Zeus, took the crops under her charge and helped man in all his efforts to turn barren lands into golden cornfields and gardens fair with flowers. She helped him, too, to leave off his rough ways and uncouth customs, and to become gentler and more courteous; to love beauty and find it everywhere—in earth and sea and sky.

Demeter was a tall and stately woman with hair the colour of the ripe corn and kind, smiling, blue eyes. She had tender, motherly ways, and she and her daughter Persephone loved one another dearly. Persephone was like her mother, except that she was slither and fairer, and her hair made one think of spring daffodils rather than of autumn corn. The two led a busy, happy life, going to and fro in the beautiful valleys and shining uplands of Greece, caring for the crops, blessing man's efforts, and encouraging him to go on to still greater things. Wherever they went soft airs and sweet scents followed them; and shining tracks gay with green grass and rosy blossom showed where they had been working.

Persephone loved especially the flowers. She loved to tend a sunny glade until bright patches broke through the dark earth and spread and glowed and the whole place became a glory of colour and fragrance. There was a vale in the island of Sicily in which her blithe spirit particularly delighted. In that vale it was always spring; the flowers of spring bloomed all through the year—flowers such as Shakespeare has described for us:

#### Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phoebus in his strength. . . .

#### Bold oxlips, and

The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-de-luce being one.

*Mary Butts*



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This valley was Persephone's favourite playground, and on the days when her mother said to her, "Go, my darling, take a holiday to-day and play among the flowers; it is not good for girls like you to work through all the sunny hours," she would dance gaily off to find her playmates, beautiful, happy maidens like herself; and they would all go merrily to the valley and laugh and dance and sing and weave bright garlands through the long glad hours.

The world was very fair to Persephone, and she knew nothing of things ugly or sad. She had no idea that far down below the earth lay a region where the sun never shone; where everything was dark and gloomy. She had seen some of the bright deities who were akin to her mother, but she had never seen dread Pluto, the god of the underworld; she had never even imagined a being so stern and dark and terrible. But there came a day when she was to see him and to see the kingdom which he ruled.

It was seldom that Pluto appeared on the upper earth, but now and then he came, casting a dark shadow over the fair day. On one of these excursions he came to Sicily and passed by the vale of Enna where Persephone and her friends were playing. When he heard the sound of merry voices he stopped the four coal-black horses that drew his chariot of jet and listened. The happy laughter of light-hearted girls was never heard in his dark kingdom, and it sounded pleasantly in his ear. He left his chariot and walked softly over the springing grass; then, standing hidden behind a fragrant, blossoming hawthorn, he looked out.

The girls had tired now of their play and were scattered about the lovely valley picking flowers, searching out the sweet violets, filling their hands with yellow daffodils. As they picked they called to one another, and now and then one laughed out gaily; or some one started a snatch of happy song and the others joined in, clear and full-throated like the birds.

The whole scene made Pluto feel how dark and bare and joyless his own life was; and then suddenly he saw Persephone, most beautiful amid all the beauty about her, and at once he loved her, and made up his mind to carry her away that she

## Demeter and Persephone

might live with him for ever. He crept nearer and nearer to her behind the sheltering hawthorn bushes, then stood still, waiting. Persephone looked up from her flower picking and saw a dark, beautiful face, its great, shining, awful eyes looking at her with an eagerness that seemed like fierceness to the startled girl; but before she could cry out the strong arms of the god had seized her, and were bearing her swiftly to where the four noble horses tossed their impatient heads.

Then indeed she cried out—such piteous, heart-moving cries that her companions raised themselves from their flowers and listened with whitening faces; then rushed toward the place whence the cries came. But by that time Pluto had climbed into his chariot, and still holding Persephone in his arms had taken up the reins and urged his horses forward. The terrified girls saw nothing but a dark object fast vanishing in the distance, heard nothing but the far-away beat of horses' hoofs. Persephone was gone. There lay a trail of crushed and broken flowers that she had dropped, but nowhere was there any trace of her captor. Weeping and trembling the maidens stood, while the bright day waned and the cool breeze of evening sprang up; and when the sky began to redden in the west they saw Demeter coming toward them over the grassy slopes, moving serene and stately, happy in the thought of her day's work well done and the coming meeting with her daughter.

She drew near, and one look at the little group showed her that Persephone was not there; a second look showed her tearful eyes and white, anxious faces, so that even before the frightened girls began to pour out their story she knew that some harm had befallen her darling. She listened and questioned, then quietly turned away, her mind set on the recovery of her sweet daughter. Swiftly she travelled over the island, searching fields and glades, rocks and caverns; and when the darkness came she lit a great torch at the flaming summit of Mount Etna and continued her search.

Morning dawned, and Aurora, the rosy goddess of the day, saw the poor mother, haggard and miserable, still searching for her lost child. Of every one she met, of the winds, the rivers,



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and the trees, Demeter asked the same question, "Have you seen my daughter Persephone? O tell me where she is gone." But there was no trace of the lost girl to be found through all the sunlit land. It seemed as if the earth must have opened and received her, then closed again, holding her fast.

This, in truth, was what had actually happened. Pluto, driving furiously, in fear lest Demeter should follow him and force him to give back her daughter, saw before him a river, flowing quietly between its flower-strewn banks, so that it seemed to him an easy thing to cross it in his smooth-running chariot. But as the foremost of his horses touched its edge, the river rose as if a great wind had stirred it, and swirled and raged and foamed in such fierce strength that Pluto knew the crossing would be long and dangerous. He did not shrink from danger, but he feared delay; and so raising the great two-pronged fork that he always carried he struck with it a mighty blow on the earth. Instantly a great chasm opened, and Pluto turned his horses toward it.

A sick horror seized Persephone. What dark and dreadful region was she now to enter? A moment before she had felt a faint hope rise within her, for she had seen by the raging of the waters that the nymph of the stream was trying to help her, and even now in her uttermost terror she held this hope in her heart. With a swift movement of her deft fingers she unclasped her girdle and flung it far out on the stream, bidding the nymph carry it to her mother; but she could not see what happened to it, for at that instant the horses leapt into the dark gulf. Down, down, and the earth closed above them, shutting out the little strip of blue sky on which, to the last, poor Persephone had fixed her despairing gaze. Down through steep, dark, narrow passages raced the black horses, until at last their feet stayed upon level ground, and the maid, whose home had been always in the freest, loveliest places of the bright earth, looked round upon the sad and sunless kingdom of Pluto.

Black-robed, stern-faced attendants lifted her from the chariot and brought her into a dark and splendid room in the palace of the king. Servants bearing rich jewelled robes came to wait

## Demeter and Persephone

upon her, and others in haste prepared a banquet of rare and costly dishes. King Pluto himself bowed before her, promising if she would be his queen all the riches of his kingdom should be hers. He told her that he was very lonely here in this sad place, but that if she would live with him its gloom would be turned to brightness. His dark face looked kind and sad, and for a moment she pitied and longed to comfort him, but then she thought of her gentle, beautiful mother now heart-broken at her daughter's loss, and she hid her face again and hated the cruelty which had dragged her to this unhappy place. She would not look at the rich robes, she would not taste the wonderful dishes, she did not wish to be the bride of a great king; she only wanted to be with her mother again in her happy home among the flowers.

Poor Demeter was heart-broken indeed when day after day passed and she could find no trace of her daughter. All her time was spent in searching. She neglected the work in which she had delighted, and the corn drooped, the flowers languished, the earth brought forth weeds and thistles. She left Sicily and wandered over Italy and Greece, taking the form of a poor old woman that she might pursue her search without being suspected by those who had taken away her daughter. At last she came to the city of Eleusis, which stands on the seashore near to Athens. Tired and despairing she sat down by the wayside, not heeding the wind or the rain, not caring whether it was night or day, never looking up either at the burning sun or the silver moon; and thus she sat for nine days and nine nights. Then it happened that the daughters of the king of that country passed by and were sorry for this old, forlorn woman, whose aspect was so noble and whose face was so pitiful in its sadness. They spoke gently to her. "Mother," they said, using the word as a title of respect, "why do you sit here all alone? Come with us, and in our father's palace you shall rest and be comforted."

Demeter looked at the fair young princesses, and they reminded her of her own daughter; and so she went with them, though she did not hope for comfort. At the palace she was kindly received, and her noble, stately bearing made the king and



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queen feel that here was no common servant, but one who could be trusted with the highest work in their household.

The princesses had a baby brother, named Triptolemus, who was so delicate and sickly that his parents feared he would never grow up to inherit his father's kingdom. The charge of this baby was offered to Demeter, and she accepted it willingly,



DEMETER AND THE BABE OF METANEIRA

for as soon as she saw his little white face and heard his wailing cry her loving heart longed to do something to help him. She took him in her arms and kissed him, and at once his crying ceased, and it seemed to the anxious parents that his face looked less wan and his eyes brighter. Day by day under Demeter's care he grew rosier and stronger. Demeter soon loved him dearly and determined to give him the gift of immortality. One night she took him from his bed, anointed his limbs with nectar, and gently laid him on the red-hot embers of the fire, murmuring over him powerful charms. But his mother had never been

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quite easy at leaving her darling son in the charge of a stranger, and from time to time she came to watch over him and see that all was well. It happened that just as Demeter laid Triptolemus on the fire she opened the door, and screaming with terror at her child's danger, she rushed in and snatched him from the flames. Then she turned in anger on the nurse, but her words died unspoken when she saw, not the humble woman whom she had befriended, but a radiant goddess robed in splendour.

"Had you trusted me," said Demeter gently, "I would have given your son the greatest gift that the gods can bestow upon man. But now I must leave him, and he will grow up mortal, as his fathers. Yet I will watch over him, and some day I will return."<sup>1</sup>

Then she left the queen, swiftly and silently, and they saw her no more. Once again she took up her search, wandering from Greece to Italy and back again to her own island of Sicily. One day she came to the banks of the river Cyane, and the nymph of the river saw and recognized her. Taking the girdle of Persephone, which she had carefully guarded, she cast it gently at the mother's feet. Demeter knew it at once as her daughter's, the first trace she had found in all her wanderings, and she looked eagerly round, longing to know more. But the nymph dared not speak, for fear of Pluto, and Demeter walked on, intent on finding some further token, until she came to a beautiful crystal fountain. By its side she sat down to think, and as she sat the murmur of the fountain gradually formed itself into words.

"I have seen your daughter," said the voice, "and I can tell you where she is and how she fares; but first I must tell you my own story. I was once a woodland nymph in Elis, following in the train of the goddess Diana, and I was called Arethusa. One hot day I went to bathe in the river Alphæus, and while the cool water gently lapped my limbs I was happy, deeming myself seen of none. But suddenly the waters were ruffled so that I could no longer see the golden sand below, and there came a sighing sound that turned to a voice calling my name—

<sup>1</sup> See the story of Isis and the babe of Queen Astarte, page 198.



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'Arethusa! Arethusa!' I sprang from the water in affright, but the voice went on: 'I am Alphæus, the god of the stream I love you. Do not flee from me.' Fast I ran, but the fleet god came behind. Over hill and valley, forest and glade, I fled until my strength was almost spent, and still I heard his voice calling to me, and his footsteps close behind. 'Diana, great goddess, help your poor servant!' I cried; and Diana heard, and sent a mist that hid me from sight. Yet through it I still heard the voice of Alphæus calling. Cold terror took hold of me, cold drops fell from my body. Faster and faster they fell, until my body turned into crystal drops, and I became a fountain. Then I thought I was safe, but a soft wind came from Zephyrus and blew away the mist, and at once Alphæus saw and recognized me. Swiftly he changed himself into a stream, and came hurrying to mingle his waters with mine; but I sprang from my place and rushed over the rocky ground until Diana, pitying me, opened a crevice in the rocks, and into it I plunged. Then for a long time I flowed in silence and darkness within the earth, and I came to the realm of Pluto; and there I saw Persephone sitting on the throne by the side of the dread king. Sad she looked, but queenly, and older than when she played on the sunny fields of earth. I longed to ask how she came to that place, but I feared to stay, and so I flowed on and on until at last I came out once more into the blessed sunlight, in the fair land of Sicily."

Demeter listened eagerly to the tale, and when at length she heard where her daughter was she stood for a while stupefied with amazement; then, recovering, she called aloud for her chariot. Her cry was heard by the nymphs of the field, who hastened to do her will, and in a few moments Demeter was driving with all speed toward Olympus. She did not stay until she was in the presence of Zeus himself; then, alighting, she bowed before him, and said, "Great Zeus, my daughter is a captive in the dark land of Pluto, dragged thither against her will. Send your command therefore to this king of the underworld that he release Persephone and send her back to me, her mother."

## Demeter and Persephone

Zeus heard and was troubled. He was unwilling to arouse the anger of Pluto, and would give no assurance to the grief-torn mother. Then Demeter in anger vowed that until her daughter was restored to her the earth should bring forth no fruits, but should lie bare and hard, so that man's labour should fail to bring him food. So the crops, which all this time had been languishing for lack of Demeter's care, now blackened and died, the leaves fell from the trees, the flowers disappeared; everywhere the earth lay bare and hard, and men starved for want of its kindly fruits. Then the people joined their prayers to the prayers of Demeter that Zeus would release Persephone; and at last the great god consented.

"You shall receive your daughter again," he said, "if she has not tasted food while she has been in the kingdom of Pluto; but if she has eaten, the Fates forbid that she should be released."

Full of hope Demeter made haste along the dark way that led to the underworld. There seated on the throne she saw her daughter, no longer the happy maid who had tended the bright flowers by her mother's side, but sad and queenly as Arethusa had said. But when she saw her mother, Persephone sprang toward her with the old love and delight; and Demeter clasped her closely, calling her by the tender, familiar names she had known on earth.

"Who is this that intrudes unbidden into my realm?" demanded a stern voice. Demeter turned and saw the dark face of Pluto, awful in its anger.

"It is I, Demeter," she replied, undaunted. "I come from high Olympus bearing the command of Zeus that you give me back my daughter."

"That will I not," said Pluto; and Demeter, brave as she was, shrank at the terrible voice. "Tell me, what message did the great Zeus send to me, his brother?"

"That it was his will that Persephone should return if, while she stayed in your realm, she had not eaten of your food," replied Persephone.

Pluto frowned, for he knew well that Persephone had refused all food that had been set before her, though she had been



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tempted with many rich and delicious dishes. But at that moment one of his subjects stepped forward.

"This morning," he declared, "I brought to the queen a ripe pomegranate, and of that she ate six seeds. Is it not true, Queen Persephone?"

It was true indeed, and Persephone could only bow her head, weeping bitterly, when she heard the fated words. Pluto laid his hand upon her arm, and drew her back to her place beside him.



PERSEPHONE RETURNS TO THE UNDERWORLD

But the brave Demeter would not give up her attempt to regain her daughter. Once more she made her way to Olympus and appealed to Zeus; and Zeus decreed that for every seed Persephone had eaten she must remain for one month of the year in the underworld, the rest of the year she might spend with her mother. Persephone, though she longed for the brightness of her old home, felt a little glad that she was not to leave Pluto to live always by himself in his gloomy kingdom. His kindness and his sadness had won her pity, and almost her love; she had grown used to the realm of shades, so that it had lost much of its terror.

Thenceforward Persephone lived on earth with Demeter for six months in the year, and during that time mother and daughter went about their old work, and the land blossomed and was fruitful. But when Persephone returned to Hades Demeter sorrowed for her daughter and refused to bless the earth, so that it lay bare and hard, and brought forth no fruits for the food of man.

## Phaeton and the Fiery Steeds

### *Phaeton and the Fiery Steeds*

In one of the lovely valleys of Greece dwelt the nymph Clymene, wife of Apollo, god of the sun. She had four children—three tall, graceful daughters and one little golden-haired son, named Phaeton. His mother when she looked at him thought of her husband and sighed because he could not see this boy who was so like himself; for Apollo because of his many duties came but seldom to the quiet home in the valley, and Hera would not suffer his wife and children to dwell near high Olympus. So it happened that Phaeton could not remember his father, whose latest visit had been paid when his son was but a babe.

Clymene, however, talked every day to the children about their father. On summer days as they wandered in the valley she would point to the glowing sun and say, "See, your father drives his glorious chariot across the heavens, giving light and warmth to the world. None is as great as he, none as good, for without him all things on earth would fade and perish, and man himself would die. You are the children of the mighty Sun-god, bright and beautiful, from whom come all good things. Rejoice and honour your father, who is loved by gods and men."

It was natural that the children should grow up proud of their parentage and accounting themselves raised above other less fortunate children, whose fathers were but mortals. Phaeton especially gloried in his high birth; for him his father was the greatest of all the gods, greater than Zeus himself. Deep in his heart the boy cherished a great ambition. He never spoke of it even to his mother, for he knew that to others it must appear a foolish idea. But often as he watched the rosy glow of dawn, the crimson glory of evening, or the shining pomp of noonday, he would say softly to himself, "Some day perhaps I may drive my father's chariot across the heavens," and the thought of that swift, triumphant passage would make his heart throb with fearful joy. He could not help talking to his playmates of the father of whom he was so proud, and after a time this angered them, and they began to jeer at him.