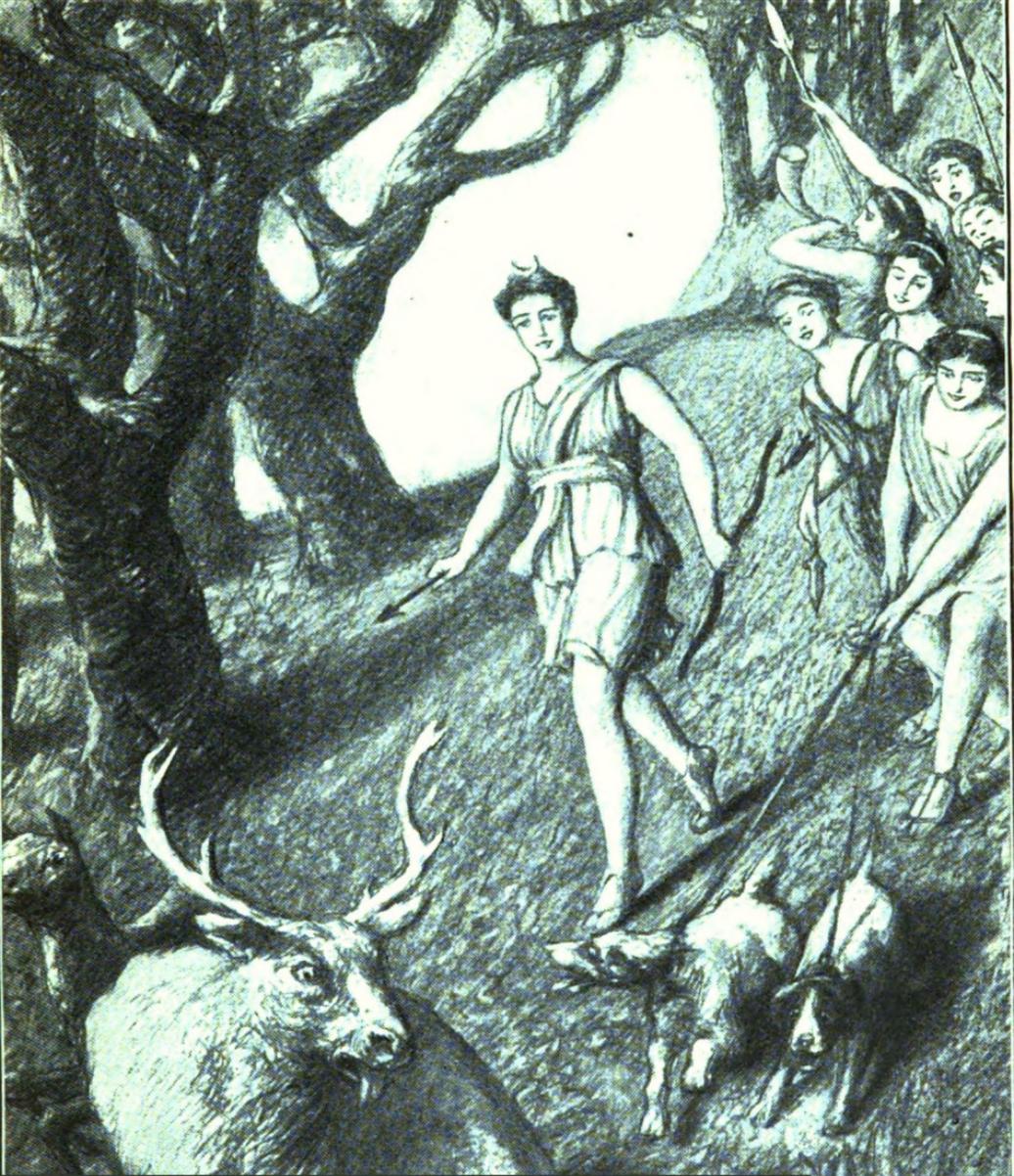

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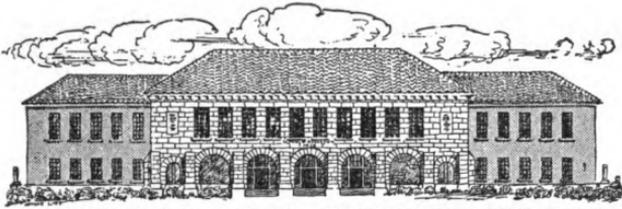




The golden fleece

James Baldwin

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THE GOLDEN FLEECE

MORE OLD GREEK STORIES.

BY

JAMES BALDWIN

AUTHOR OF "OLD GREEK STORIES," "A STORY OF THE
GOLDEN AGE," "BALDWIN'S READERS," ETC.

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GOLDEN FLEECE.

W. P. I

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FOREWORD

THIS is a tale of heroes and their fearless deeds, of grievous wrongs not wholly righted, and of a strange first voyage through perilous seas. Whether it be true or untrue, of that you must judge for yourselves; but it is not very different from certain old, old stories which wise men once believed and which poets and scholars have repeated in many varying forms. When you have read it, you surely will agree that the heroes performed their parts with courage and right good will, as manful men would act when moved by adventurous and worthy aims. They lived when the world was in its childhood and life was a wondrous holiday. Therefore they saw in earth and air many strange and awe-inspiring things invisible to us of this workaday age, and they were stirred by heroic impulses unknown to men whose lives are cast in these later times of science and unpoetic fact.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE



ADVENTURE I



DRIVEN INTO EXILE

THERE was in Greece a very old city called Orchomenus, which was famous for neither its houses nor its walls, but for its men. It had been built in the early days by the Minyan folk, whom King Æolus had brought from a distant land beyond the western mountains. Æolus himself had ruled over it many, many years, and the people had prospered mightily and were happy.

But now the good king was dead, and his son, Athamas the false-hearted, ruled in his stead. Things were no longer as they should be in the old city of the Minyæ, and men went about the streets with downcast eyes and heavy hearts. For a beautiful woman, Ino of Thebes, had bewitched King Athamas and so wrought upon his feeble mind that it was her hand and not his that wielded the power. The white-walled palace that had been the home of joy and peace was now a place of confusion and

dread. The voices of strangers were heard in the halls. The faces of those best loved by the Minyæ were no longer seen.

To the lad Cretheus, the youngest of the sons of Æolus, all this seemed unbearable. He missed the friends of former days. He missed their loving service. He shrank before the cold looks and harsh words that greeted him day by day.

At length he said to his brother the king: "I have no longer a home. I would rather go out into the great woods and live with the wild things there than dwell in this cheerless place."

The face of Athamas grew black with anger, and he answered: "Begone, and be it so! Go, live with the wild things, and let not to-morrow's sun see you within the city walls."

The young prince had no mind to disobey. At the break of day he set out, to journey he knew not whither. With a stout stick in his hand and his father's sword by his side, he went forth to seek his fortune among strangers. Yet no fear had he of the end, for in those early days no man nor boy knew what fear was.

Down the narrow streets of the Minyan city he strode, whistling a careless tune and taking no thought of what the day might bring to him. He neither paused nor looked behind, for he knew that

evil eyes were watching him and that bitter hate was tracking his footsteps.

The hour was yet early, and but few people were stirring. Yet soon it was whispered that the young prince had been driven from home and that even now he was on his way to some distant land. But whither was he bound? Would he seek his fortune in the wild regions of the West, or would he take ship and sail to the pleasant islands of the eastern sea? He himself could not answer. He knew only that he was going away, and that he would meet things as they came and trust to the Mighty Ones for victory.

Young men watched him secretly from the street corners and whispered, "Would that we might follow him!" And one more daring than the rest called, "Let me be your henchman."

Mothers and maidens peeping from their doorways murmured, "May the Mighty Ones keep him safe from harm!" But none dared call aloud or greet the young prince openly, lest the spies of Athamas should hear. And to none of them did Cretheus give any sign or answer, but he strode straight onward along the way that led out to the hills and the wild western woods.

As he drew near to the city gate he saw that which pleased him much and brought back many

a pleasant memory. It was a shady grove where as a child he had often played beneath the blossoming trees. In this grove there was a little temple where men and women prayed to Diana, the queen of hunters and of the woods, and beyond it was a little meadow where yellow daffodils were in bloom.

So peaceful seemed the place that Cretheus paused to look. Then, remembering that he might need help when journeying through savage places, he went in to pay his duty to the huntress queen.

“O swift-footed one, who careth even for the beasts and the birds in the pathless woods,” he prayed, “be thou my guide and protector as I pass alone through thy wild domains.”

As he raised his eyes he was aware that some one was calling his name. He looked, and in the little meadow behind the temple he saw a sight so strange that for a moment he stood spellbound, unable to move or speak. For there, grazing among the daffodils, stood a mighty ram, the most wonderful that has ever lived. He was large, so large that he seemed the king of all his kind. His horns were of whitest ivory, and from his shoulders grew two wings which looked as though wrought of beaten gold. His fleece was the richest that men have ever seen, for it was all of yellow gold, and it grew in soft folds a hand's breadth in thick-

ness, like layers of finest lace doubled a thousand times.

And who was the sad-faced shepherdess who stood beside the ram and was at that moment calling the name of Cretheus softly, as though in fear?

Nephele was her name, and she was by right the queen of the Minyan people. Until three months ago she was the mistress of the white-walled palace, and she it was who sat on the ivory throne by the side of false Athamas. But now she was so changed that Cretheus scarcely knew her. Quickly he bounded forward to greet her.

"O Nephele, fair sister," he cried, "who would have thought to find you here? Is this the task that my cruel brother has imposed upon you?"

"Speak softly, prince," said Nephele, "for even the walls and trees have ears. It is indeed my task to care for this noble beast, which Neptune, the lord of the sea, presented to the king. Each day I bring him red clover blossoms and sweet herbs and every dainty food. I comb his wondrous fleece and polish his ivory horns. And for my poor service he loves me. See him lick my hand. Hear him bleat with joy as I speak his name. He comes at my call. He obeys my slightest wish. I do believe that he would go to the world's end for me if I did but ask it."

"Surely he is a rare beast," said Cretheus, "but I cannot stop to admire him. I am, like you, an outcast from home. I have been bidden not to let the rising sun find me within the city."

"Ah, brother," said Nephele, "I would pity you, were you not so strong and brave. Let us not judge King Athamas too harshly. There was a time when he was loving and true, a man of honor and fair fame. Then it was that both you and I lived happily with our loved ones in the white-walled palace that King Æolus builded. But in an evil day came that dark-haired beauty, Ino, the daughter of the Theban king, and then all was changed."

"Call her not a beauty," cried young Cretheus; "call her a wicked witch; for it was she who caused all our woe. It was she who turned the heart of your husband against you. It was she who drove you and your two children out of house and home to toil in the fields and eat the bread of strangers. And it is she who now sits in your place on the ivory throne by the side of the king."

"All that you say is true," answered Nephele, "and you need not tell me that it is she also who drives you into exile. Blame not King Athamas too harshly. He may be weak, he may be false; but when he was himself he was loving and kind."

“Yes, when he was himself,” said Cretheus, bitterly. “Yesterday I saw your son Phrixus, the lad who ought some day to be king of the Minyæ, pulling weeds in the garden of his master. I saw also his sister, beautiful little Helle, drudging in the kitchen of a sordid farmer, and like any other slave shrinking and shivering for fear of the lash. And yet you say that we must not judge too harshly the father who has condemned his children to this bondage. They told me that you were helping the reapers in the wheat fields of the king.”

“So I was until ten days ago,” answered Nephele. “But when this ram was brought to Athamas from some strange place across the sea and given to him in the name of Neptune, there was no man among the Minyæ who dared go near him. Then Ino, thinking she might thus bring about my death, whispered to the king, ‘Let Nephele be the shepherdess of this royal sheep!’ The king consented, and the ram, instead of trampling me under his feet, welcomed me as his mistress. You know the rest.”

“I know that evil shall not always prevail,” said Cretheus. “But see, the sun is rising and I must hasten.”

“Then go, young brother,” said Nephele, “go out into exile, and be strong. Win friends. Make your-

self a name. Afterwards, if the gods will it, come back and avenge your wrongs and mine. Farewell."

She turned sadly away to gather sweet herbs for the golden ram; and Cretheus, with a bold heart, resumed his journey.

ADVENTURE II

THE FOREST JOURNEY

It was indeed a savage land through which young Cretheus journeyed. Day after day he wandered in the wildwood, where the trees stood close together and the sunlight scarcely found its way through the tangled mass of leaves and branches. Day after day he toiled along untraveled ways. He climbed hills and mountains. He waded rivers. He lost himself in the silent places of the forest.

Everywhere there were wild things. Wolves snarled at him in the thickets. He startled the wild boar from its lair. The mountain lion growled defiance as he passed. Strange, uncanny creatures peered from their hiding places among the rocks and trees.

Sometimes the lad fancied that he saw wood nymphs dancing in some sunny glade, or horned satyrs with cloven hoofs scampering across his pathway. But he was not afraid; he was not so much as surprised. For, even as he had said to King Athamas, life was pleasanter with these creatures

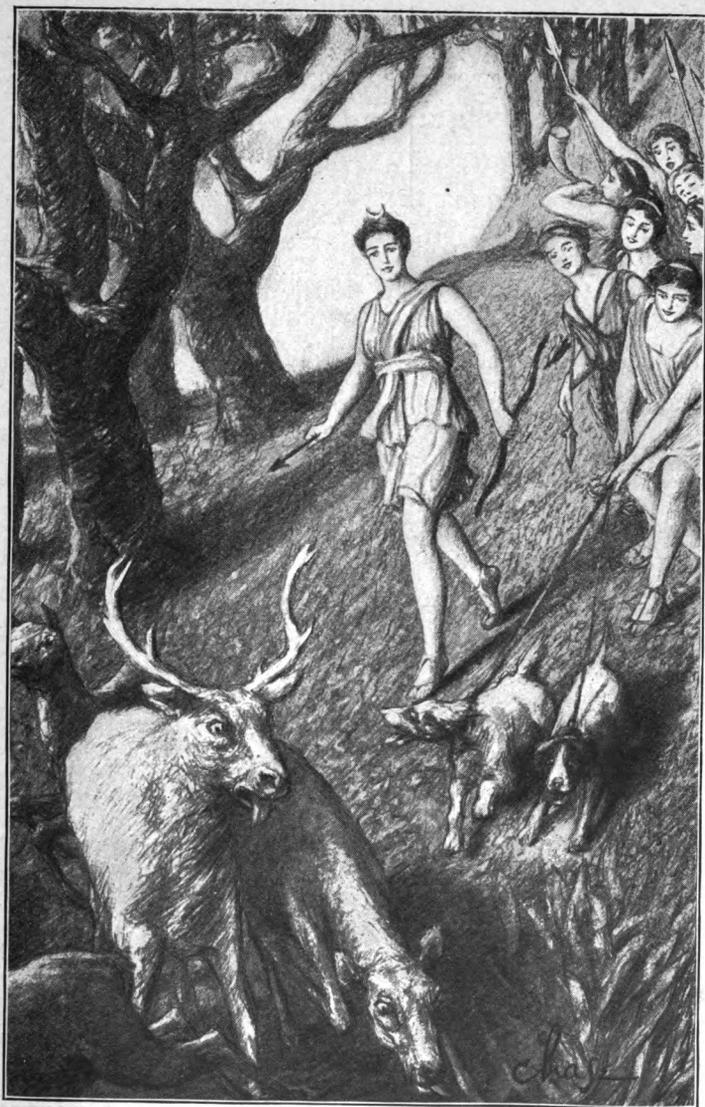
than it had been in the white-walled palace with all its confusion and cruel words.

As for food, there was no lack of wild fruits and juicy nuts and the eggs of partridges and wood pigeons. When Cretheus was thirsty, he drank from some gushing spring. When darkness came, he found a bed of moss or leaves under some sheltering tree, and slept without thought of fear.

Thus, for many days, he journeyed, scarcely wishing to reach any particular place, and yet feeling that he must go forward, that he must find a country of busy men and win a name among them. And so, although he was never stirred by haste, a nameless something spurred him on and would not let him tarry.

One day, in a wild glen among the mountains, he suddenly heard the baying of hounds and the winding notes of a hunting horn. In a moment a herd of deer swept like a whirlwind past him, with the hounds close on their track; and behind them followed, in swift pursuit, a band of fleet-footed maidens more beautiful than dreams had ever pictured.

So sudden and so dazzling was the vision that the lad had scarcely time to look ere it had vanished. But, in the forefront of the flying company, he was aware of one maiden taller and fairer than the rest,



Diana and Her Maidens.

so splendid in form and feature that no eyes could long bear to look at her.

“It is the huntress queen!” cried Cretheus, joyfully. “It is Dianá, the lady of the woods,—Diana, the bright, the fair, the pure,—Diana, the matchless mistress of the wild!”

Already the sound of the chase had melted away in the far distance; but the wild dash of the deer, the music of the horn and hounds, the bewitching beauty of the swift huntresses—what a peerless vision! As, nowadays, some grand old painting or some glorious burst of music often lifts our thoughts and touches our hearts, so did this vision fill the mind of the young prince with noble aims and nameless longings never felt before.

“I have been told,” said he to himself, “that in Dodona, the great father of gods and men whispers true answers to the questions of earnest people who ask for wisdom. I will seek him there. I will ask him what my duty is, and then I will try to be something and somebody.”

So, with firmer steps than before, he went on his way, shaping his course toward the northwest, where he knew Dodona lay. Little by little the dense forest gave way to more thinly wooded tracts and to flowery meadows between the slopes of rugged

hills. At length the woodland seemed to cease, and the lad knew that he had reached the boundaries of the famed Thessalian land. On his right, stretching for miles and miles, was a vast level plain where droves of wild horses roamed and fed, and knew neither bit nor master. In the blue distance, the wooded slopes of Mount Pelion showed dark against the morning sky, and the gray sea lay silent in the sunlight. Cretheus gazed long upon this scene, and as his eyes rested upon the fertile land where as yet there were no dwellings, he cried, "What a grand place in which to build a city and found a kingdom!"

On his left the country was still broken and hilly, and in the distance a long range of mountains rose to meet the western sky. Thitherward the wanderer turned his steps, for to reach Dodona he must cross these rugged heights.

And now he was in the land of the Centaurs, the rough riders of those ancient times, who dwelt in the fastnesses of the hills, and pastured their herds on the grassy plains. A strange, wise people were they, and many were the strange stories that were told of their cunning and their prowess. Seldom were they seen except on horseback, and so skillful were they when riding that man and beast seemed one; and therefore to this day the Centaur is pic-

tured as human to the waist, but with the body and legs of a horse.

Still farther on, where the mountains rose abrupt and steep, the young prince came among the Lapiths, a rude tribe, the remnants of an older race. They dwelt in caves and in rude huts hidden deep among the rocks and in the gorges where no foe might follow them. They were stone throwers, hunters of birds and beasts, and neither tilled the ground nor pastured flocks or herds.

Among all these wild, uncultured people, Cretheus passed unharmed, as safe as he had been among the wild creatures of the woods. Whether he sought shelter in the hut of a Centaur or paused for rest in the cave of a Lapith, he was always welcome. He was given the warmest seat by the fire; the best food that could be procured was set before him; the softest bed was his. For who among any of these ancient peoples would dare to turn a stranger from his door, or treat him with neglect? That humble stranger, for aught they knew, might be some Mighty One come down to live awhile with men; he might, indeed, be great Jupiter himself, the ruler of earth and sky. And so it was an unwritten law among them to be always mindful of strangers; and this law was enforced by their own kindness of heart.

Thus the young traveler was helped on his journey, and when he asked the way to Dodona, there were always willing hands to point out the road.

At length the ridge of the mountains was passed, and the land began to slope the other way. Soon Cretheus perceived that the streams flowed toward the west; the air was milder; the fruits and flowers seemed more abundant than before. The way was easier now, for each step was downward.

Suddenly, as the lad came out upon an open space, he saw that which filled him with delight. Below him was a broad plain with green fields of corn and many a pleasant orchard; and not far away, nestling in a narrow valley between overhanging hills, were the white cottages of a little village. He knew at once that the land before him was the ancient home of his race, and he rightly guessed that the drowsy village in the valley was none other than Dodona, the object of his quest.

With quickened steps he went forward, trilling a little song of gladness because his long journey was nigh its end. It was a perfect afternoon. The air was crisp and bracing. The sun was none too warm. Soft breezes floated up from the meadows. The birds were singing, and the cicadas were re-

hearsing their old, old tunes. Was it any wonder that the tired young hero felt merry?

But, ere he was halfway down into the valley, the face of nature was changed. The sky was suddenly overcast. In the west, black clouds arose and like moving mountains rolled upward to the zenith. The sun was hidden; dense shadows came hurtling over the plain; the hills and crags were wrapped in mist.

Then from cloud to mountain peak, and from peak to floating cloud, the lightnings flashed; the whole valley was lit up by their dazzling glow. Far away the thunder muttered. It came nearer, crashing first here, then there. With peal on peal it shook the very ground; it echoed long in the glens and gorges; then, growing feebler, it died slowly away among the mountain tops. Cretheus had scarcely time to find shelter under an overhanging rock before the rain began to fall.

For a few moments the big drops pattered noisily down; then the storm ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The sun came out; the clouds melted away; the blue sky smiled merrily upon the fields; and the fields, new-washed, looked up with sparkling faces to the sky.

Cretheus went on, thoughtfully, down into the valley.

“Men speak the truth,” he said to himself, “when they call this place the favorite haunt of mighty Jupiter. For have I not seen the gleam of his thunderbolts as he cast them hither and thither from the clouds? And have I not heard his fearful voice filling the valley and shaking the mountains as he spoke?”

ADVENTURE III

THE OAKS OF DODONA

It was a pleasant road that led into the little village. On each side of the way grew rows of elms and oaks whose branches met and formed a leafy canopy overhead. Like a green arch, supported by a hundred columns in two long rows, it seemed. How cool and restful it was, like the entrance to some wonderful temple not made with hands!

As Cretheus went slowly along he was aware of a gentle cooing among the branches overhead. It was not a mournful and complaining sound, but it was soothing and kind, like a mother's lullaby. The lad looked up and listened. There was a rustling among the leaves. Soft, small eyes peered down upon him, not at all afraid. Gray wings flitted from branch to branch; and mother doves looked out from their nests and cooed to their mates.

Suddenly a company of young girls, robed in

white and bearing garlands of wild olives, came up the path to meet him.

“Noble stranger,” said one, “the doves of Dodona welcome you. Are you a messenger from Father Jupiter? Or are you a mortal like ourselves, come hither to ask for wisdom at his sacred shrine?”

“I am an exile, without home or friends,” answered Cretheus. “I have come to Dodona to learn what the Fates have destined me to do.”

“Then the doves will teach you, for they speak the messages which Jupiter gives them,” answered the tallest of the maidens. “Do but tell us your name and your ancestry, and we will interpret what the wise birds say.”

“My name is Cretheus, and I am the son of world-renowned Æolus, who for a long time was king of the Minyan folk in distant Orchomenus. Well beloved of Jupiter he was and blessed beyond the lot of common men. But now he is dead, and sorrow rules in his halls.”

Then there was a great cooing among the doves, and a flash of light as from the sun lit up the green archway. And the maidens, dancing and scattering flowers before him, took the young prince by the hand and led him toward the village.

“What do the doves say?” he asked.

“We will tell you later on,” they answered.

“Father Jupiter is not hasty in imparting wisdom. You must wait.”

Then Cretheus saw that he was already in the midst of the village. On either side of the way moss-covered cottages nestled half hidden among vines and shrubs. Children were playing on the lawns, and men and women stood in the doorways and with smiles welcomed the young stranger to Dodona. At the end of the short street was a white temple, so beautiful in form and outline that when Cretheus saw it he forgot everything else — he could do nothing but stand and gaze. On the right and left of this marvelous building grew two rows of ancient trees, their gnarled branches covered with lichens and gray moss. Very old were they, for they had been planted in the golden days of Saturn, ere men had learned to live in houses or build temples to the gods.

From the drooping branches of these trees hung many a tripod of brass and polished bronze, the gifts of kings and heroes who in times gone by had sought in this sacred place to learn the will of the Mighty Ones who shape the lives of men.

As the lad stood wondering and admiring, three gray women came out of the grove to greet him. Their faces were pale and wrinkled with age, their lips were thin and pinched, and their eyes sparkled strangely beneath their knitted brows. They were

the priestesses who kept the world-old shrine of Jupiter in the darksome shadows of the wood.

"Hail to the young prince! Hail to the son of King Æolus!" they cried. "We know you, and we bid you welcome to Dodona. If you would know the will of Jupiter, ask him. He will answer you through the singing tripods."

"Indeed, good mothers," said the lad, "it is to learn his will that I have come to Dodona. I wish to know my duty and the destiny that is before me."

While he yet spoke he was aware that a gentle breeze was beginning to blow through the valley. It stirred the leaves of the oaks and bent the tall grass by the roadside. It grew stronger until the twigs and slender branches of the trees swayed back and forth, and the gnarled trunks themselves quivered. The tripods, swinging to and fro, clashed one against another and gave forth a shrill, weird music like the jangling of sweet bells out of tune.

"Hearken," said the first of the gray women, "the tripods are singing."

"They are voicing the will of mighty Jupiter," said the second.

"They are revealing your destiny," said the third.

"What do they say?" asked Cretheus. "Tell me the secrets they are whispering."

"Have patience," was the answer. "Do not

hasten to know what the future has in store. Stay for a while in Dodona, and in due time we will interpret the song of the tripods."

As Cretheus went nearer to the temple he saw that in front of its great door there stood an oak much larger and more ancient than any of the rest. Its long, low-spreading branches made a canopy under which a thousand men might find shelter from the scorching sun or the beating rain. Within its green shadows the birds nested and sang, and from its gray branches hung many rich offerings, the gifts of famous men from every town in Greece.

From beneath this oak a white-haired priest came forth to meet the young stranger. He was old, very old, but he stood straight as a mountain pine, and his eyes shone bright with the fire of youth.

"Welcome, welcome, prince of the Minyan folk," he said. "Welcome to the home of your fathers. You have been expected long; the guest chamber waits for you; the feast is ready, and your seat is prepared. But first, let us make our due offerings to mighty Jupiter, the lord of all."

"I should like to offer him some rich gift like those which hang from the oak," said Cretheus; "but I have nothing of the kind. All that I own is this old sword which my father aforetime wielded in many a hard-fought battle."

He drew the weapon from his belt. He glanced at its sun-bright edge and its hilt of bronze so richly carved. Then he went boldly forward and hung it upon one of the branches of the ancient oak.

“It is a noble gift,” said the priest, “and it is quite worthy of its giver.”

Then suddenly a wonderful thing took place. Every leaf on the great tree began to quiver and dance, and each seemed to have a voice, sweet, low, and full of meaning. But what the voices whispered Cretheus could in no wise guess.

“Come,” said the priest, “come now into the temple with me. At another time I will tell you the message which the Mighty One sends through the leaves of the sacred oak. You must not know it now.”

The lad followed his guide into the dimly lighted temple. He followed him to the altar, and stood with bared head while wine and oil and white barley were burned as an oblation to the Mighty Ones. Then the priest raised his hands and prayed:—

“O Father Jupiter, bless this young wanderer, the son of that Æolus who in days now long past worshipped thee at this same altar. . Make him wise and strong and fit to become the founder of a race of heroes.”

As he ceased, a sudden flash of lightning lit up

the whole interior of the temple. A fearful crash of thunder followed, seeming to shake the very walls and the massive roof above. Cretheus, looking out, saw that another storm had gathered. The sky was hidden, the wind blew furiously, the rain was falling in torrents; mountains and valley were wrapped in darkness.

Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the whole uproar ceased. The sun burst out and shone warm and bright through the dripping branches. The twittering of birds and the laughter of children were heard in the joyous outdoors.

"Jupiter has spoken again," said the priest. "Come, let us be going."

Cretheus followed him to his home, which was one of the cottages he had before seen among the trees. At the door they were met by the old man's wife and children, all eager to welcome the stranger.

"This lad," said the priest, "is of the race of heroes. He shall dwell with us until the time is ripe for him to go forth to the doing of worthy deeds."

Thus Cretheus found a home and friends in Dodona. And there he lived for five whole years, until the dawn began to darken on his cheeks and lip, and he had grown to the full strength and valor of manhood.

ADVENTURE IV

THE CURSE OF ATHAMAS

ON a day when the orchards were white with blossoms and the oaks were purple with young leaves, a stranger came to Dodona. He was of the race of minstrels whom all men honor, and he came singing songs of the golden age and telling the news of the world, even of every town and country of Greece.

“How fares it with Athamas, the king of the Minyan folk?” asked Cretheus. “How fares it with him who sits on the throne of Æolus, the hero?”

“Have you not heard?” answered the minstrel. “Why, the story is in everybody’s mouth. There is nothing talked of in Greece but the curse of Athamas.”

“We have heard nothing,” said Cretheus. “Dodona is but a little place hidden far away from the busy haunts of men. Seldom do we have any news from the rest of the world. We know how Athamas took the witch Ino into his house and was

ruled by her; and we know how he drove Queen Nephele from his door, and forced her and her children to toil in the fields. But five summers have passed since these things happened, and we have heard no further word from Orchomenus. Come, if there be anything in the tale of the curse of Athamas, tell it to us."

"Right willingly will I do so," said the minstrel.

Then, sitting under the whispering oak, with the men and women of Dodona as his hearers, he told this wonderful tale:—

I

Sad was the day for the Minyan folk when Ino, the beauteous Theban, came into the palace of their king. Sad, indeed, was the lot of Nephele and her children, doomed to wander homeless in the city where it should have been their right to rule. But who dared murmur when Ino was wedded to Athamas as his second wife, and sat smiling beside him on the ivory throne?

In time there came into the palace two lovely babes,—a girl much like her mother in beauty, and a boy so strong and noble that men likened him to his grandsire Æolus. As Ino looked upon these babes her hate grew stronger toward Nephele's children, Phrixus and Helle.

“What if the king should die?” she said. “Would not the people rise up and say that Phrixus must sit upon the throne? And then what would become of me and mine? But if Phrixus were out of the way, then my child would be king.”

And so each day she pondered and plotted how she might destroy young Phrixus and his sister Helle. At last she hit upon a plan as strange as it was cruel.

It was near the time of the spring sowing, and all the men were in the fields getting the ground ready for the seed. Ino called certain of the women to her and said, “Last year the corn did not grow well in your fields, did it?”

“Ah, no,” they answered. “The seed was poor, and full half of it rotted in the ground. The other half seemed lacking, too; for the stalks grew up thin and weak, and bore but little grain. We have had but small loaves the past year.”

“Is the seed corn you expect to plant this spring any better?” asked Ino.

“Alas! we fear it is not,” was the answer. “The grains are small and ill-formed.”

“Then you should do something to make them stronger of life,” said Ino. “I can tell you how to make every grain grow and produce large and

healthy stalks. Indeed, I can tell you how your husbands may raise this year the finest crops that were ever known."

"Oh, tell us, tell us!" cried the women.

"It is a secret," answered crafty Ino.

"But we will never tell. We will never whisper it even to our husbands."

"Then I will tell you," said Ino; "and if you forget your promise, you shall be punished. For if even one man is told, the charm will not work."

"We swear to keep the secret," said the women.

Then Ino told them to take all the seed corn that was in their houses and steep it in boiling water.

"This is the secret," she said; "and you must do it while your husbands are in the field or while they are asleep; for they must never know."

The women thanked her and went to their homes. That very night all the seed corn in the country was scalded with boiling water. Of course the life of the grain was killed, and it could not grow.

Great, indeed, was the dismay of the farmers that spring. They had planted with more care than ever before, and yet the grain lay in the ground and showed no signs of sprouting. Neither the soft showers of the early spring nor the warm sun

and coaxing breezes of the later months could bring forth a single stalk. Midsummer came and passed, and the fields were bare.

"The Mighty Ones are angry with us! The Mighty Ones are angry with us!" cried every one, in despair.

Then men and women went weeping and wailing to King Athamas, and begged him to do something to turn away the wrath of the Mighty Ones.

"What have you done that they should be offended?" he asked.

"Alas! we do not know," they answered. "We have all tried to be just and true and honest. But we have been told that our grandfathers, ages ago, did something that displeased Jupiter; and it must be for this that we are punished."

"I do not doubt it," said the king. "And I will ask the soothsayers what we must do to win back the favor of the Mighty Ones."

But cunning Ino had already seen the soothsayers. She had given a piece of gold to each, and had told them the very words they were to speak. And so, when the king came, they were ready with an answer.

"It is Diana, the huntress queen, who is angry," said they. "For Nephele was a long time ago one of her maidens and followed the chase with her in

the green wood. Then, without asking leave, she threw aside her quiver and bow and wedded Athamas. For this the huntress queen is greatly grieved, and for this she has vowed to punish the Minyan folk most grievously."

"And is there no way by which to appease her wrath?"

"There is one way, and only one. Nephele has two children, Phrixus and Helle. Let them be offered as a sacrifice to Diana, and the guilt of their mother will be forgotten. Then the fields will grow green again and there will be an abundant harvest."

When Athamas heard this answer he was grieved to the heart; for weak and wicked though he was, he loved his children and was secretly planning how, in time, he would restore them to their home.

"It shall never be done," he cried. "Let Diana punish us as she will, her vengeance shall not fall upon these two innocent children."

Then Ino with her beautiful babes came weeping before him. "O King," she said, "will you thus defy the mighty huntress queen and so bring famine into the land and death to all your people? For the sake of these babes I pray you to obey the will of the gods."

And then there was a great outcry by the palace

gates, and Athamas looking out saw the street filled with a clamoring mob.

"Down with the king!" he heard the angry people cry. "Down with the king who will do naught to lessen our distress!"

The weak man bowed his head. "Tell them that I will do as they wish," he said. "Tell them to disperse to their homes, and the deed which Diana requires will be performed."

Forthwith the king's jailer with a band of men was sent to find Phrixus and Helle and fetch them for the sacrifice. The boy, now grown to be a tall and comely lad, they found driving his master's oxen along the dusty road. The girl, fair Helle, was seated at a loom, wearily doing the task which her heartless mistress had meted out for her. With rude words and much lack of gentleness, these two innocent ones were led to the king's prison to await the hour of their sacrifice. There, sitting side by side, they cheered each other's sorrow, wondering for what fault they were thus so roughly treated, and never dreaming of the fate that was before them.

"Since this thing must be done," said King Athamas, "let there be no delay. The sooner it were finished, the better."

"It shall be at noon to-morrow," said Ino, beaming with glad content.

“Yes, it shall be at noon to-morrow,” said her hired minions, the false soothsayers.

II

The sun stood high above the white-walled palace of King Athamas, and men and women with solemn faces turned their footsteps toward Diana's shrine. In the heat and the dust a strange procession marched slowly down the street. In front were the minstrels and the singing girls, all clad in white and decked most beautifully with garlands of roses and many dainty flowers. Then followed Diana's maidens, with bared feet, and skirts tucked up to the knees, and long hair floating in the wind. Each bore in her hand a bow entwined with flowering vines, and on her shoulder was a golden quiver filled with arrows.

Behind these walked the soothsayers and the priests, all robed in flowing white. One carried a knife of bronze, new-whetted; one bore in his hands a bowl daintily carved with figures of the gods; and one had in his arms a bundle of sacred twigs cut from the whispering oak at Dodona. These men walked with slow and solemn steps, chanting a hymn to Jupiter and the huntress queen, while the maidens danced and the singing girls joined wildly in the chorus.

The king himself came next, with bowed head and folded hands and brows knit hard as though in pain. Beside him walked Ino, her dark eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed with the joy of victory. And following these two marched the king's guards, their short swords in their hands, and their horsehide shields athwart their breasts.

Then came the victims, hand in hand and wondering. Young Phrixus, straight and tall and comely, walked with firm step as became a prince, and with steady eye looked into the faces of the curious crowd. But Helle, whom they had clad in garments rich with jewels as a princess going to a feast, walked sobbing by his side, her cheeks all wet with weeping.

"Courage, sister," said brave Phrixus. "Diana will yet save us. She will not suffer us to be harmed for her sake."

But Helle sobbed all the more piteously, while the low-browed guards who watched them hung their heads in shame of their task and tried to look the severity they did not feel.

At length they reached the grove wherein the temple stood. The minstrels and the singing girls and Diana's dancing maidens paused at the gate. The priests and soothsayers raised their hands and began to chant a louder hymn before ascending to



"The ram rose swiftly from the earth,"

the altar. Then suddenly a wondrous thing took place. Out from the shadows of the grove the wondrous ram, which some say Neptune gave to Athamas, came bounding forth to meet the victims, with Nephele, the one-time queen, running swiftly by his side.

“Now do as I have bidden thee, sweet beast,” she cried, and with that he leaped into the crowd.

The soothsayers fled in terror, knowing their guilt. But all the rest stood still in dumb amazement, moving neither hand nor foot. The ram paused not until he reached the side of Phrixus. There he knelt gently and bleated softly, as though he would say, “I will deliver you; come with me.”

Phrixus understood. He lifted his fainting sister upon the creature's back. He seated himself quickly between those marvelous golden wings. Then, like an eagle, the glorious ram rose swiftly from the earth. For a few moments he circled in the air, rising higher with every movement of his wings. Then, with the two children clinging to his yellow fleece, he struck out boldly toward the sea.

The assembled people stood spellbound, neither moving nor speaking, but watching with strained eyes the flight of the wondrous beast. Very rapidly did he speed through the air; smaller and smaller he seemed to become as he left the city of the

Minyæ behind him; at length he appeared as a mere speck in the sky, and then he was lost to sight forever.

Suddenly the astonished lookers-on regained their senses. There was a murmur as of wonder and relief, and most of them were glad that things had happened so. "It was not right," they said, half fearfully, "that those two innocent children should suffer for the crime some other has committed."

"And who is that other?" cried a strange, wild voice. "Whose crime has been the cause of all this woe?"

They looked and saw that it was the king who spoke. But, oh, how changed he was! His face was pale, his lips were set, his eyes gleamed like those of a madman.

He glanced swiftly about him. He gazed one moment upon Ino, cowering pale and speechless before him. Then he cried, "Ah, this is the cunning, cruel serpent that has brought ruin and grief upon us all. Where is my sword? Death to the serpent!"

Ino, screaming in her terror, fled through the gaping crowd, and was out of reach ere he could lay his hands upon her. He snatched a sword from one of the guardsmen standing near and rushed in hot pursuit of her. Then all the horror-

stricken people saw that their king was indeed bereft of his senses, and none dared lift a hand to hinder his wild course.

Like a hare before the hound, Ino fled across the meadows, and ever as she looked over her shoulder she saw the king pursuing, with his whetted blade held high in air to strike her down. She looked to right and left, but no place of safety could she discover. And now the gray sea was before her, and the lapping waves were at her feet.

“I have thee now, vile serpent!” cried the madman, leaping forward.

Then she, to save herself, sprang into the pitiless deep. The waves closed over her; and the wild-eyed king, looking down, saw only a dolphin swimming out toward the open sea. He stood a moment as if in a trance. Then he wiped the sword blade upon his hand and stuck it in his belt. He turned and looked calmly back at the distracted crowd that had followed him, fearfully, to see what he would do.

“Hearken, O people!” he cried. “The curse of madness is upon me. It will rest upon me and the firstborn of my house until some hero rises to make amends for the evil deeds of this day. Thus it is that the Mighty Ones deal punishment to the doers of wrong.”

Then the wild look came again into his face, and with terrible shoutings and savage gestures he drove the people back into the city. With leaps and strides he returned alone to his white-walled palace. He closed the great gate behind him. He entered the silent hall, and, moaning as one in terror and distress, sat down upon his ivory throne. And men say that he still sits there, harmless to those who come to minister to him, but always moaning and refusing to be comforted.

You will wonder what became of Phrixus and Helle and the golden ram, and so did the people of the Minyan city for many and many a day. The ram, as you have heard, flew straight out over the eastern sea. Then it winged its way northward many a league, looking down upon pleasant islands and shores which no man of Greece had ever visited. And right bravely did Phrixus and his little sister cling to their places on his back.

“Do not look downward, Helle,” said the lad; “but look always upward at the sheltering sky and the hopeful stars.”

“That I will do, brother,” said the little princess; and then they talked pleasantly together, wondering whither the ram would carry them.

Thus for hours they sped onward, swifter than the summer clouds when driven by the strong

south wind. But toward evening Helle began to grow tired. Her arms ached with holding on to the golden fleece, and her hands were numb. Her eyes, too, were heavy, and she felt very drowsy.

"I wonder how soon we shall come to land," she said.

"Have courage, Helle, and be patient," said her brother.

But she was not patient, for how could she be so? At length she leaned over a little and looked down. Far, far below she saw the raging waters of the sea. How they tumbled and tossed in wild uproar! She grew dizzy as she looked, yet she could not lift her eyes from the fearful scene.

The ram swerved suddenly to the right, and Helle lost her balance. With her numbed hands and stiffened arms she could not regain her place. She felt that she was falling.

"O brother, help!" she screamed.

He reached quickly back to save her, but, alas! he was too late. His hand grasped her girdle as she fell; it broke, and, like a star dropping from the dome of the sky, she shot swiftly down into the sea. The waves closed over her, and her eyes beheld no more the light of day.

But the kind creatures of the sea bore up the beauteous body of the child, that no rude thing

should touch it. They carried her gently to the southern shore of that narrow sea which men call evermore in her honor the Hellespont. There they laid her on the dry, white beach, wrapped like a king's child in her jeweled robes. And there some country people found her that same day as they were wandering by the sea.

"How sad that one so beautiful should perish thus!" they said, sorrowing.

They built a pyre of sweet-scented woods upon the shore and poured oil and costly wine upon it. Then they laid the body of fair Helle thereon and consumed it with fire, while all wept because of her untimely fate.

In the meanwhile the golden ram, with Phrixus still clinging between his wings, flew onward past Propontis and the stream Bosphorus, and over the great sea that lies at the rising of the sun. All night he pursued his way with steady wings, and in the early morning alighted near a fair, rich city with strong walls and many a well-built tower. Dizzy and stiffened with the cold, Phrixus joyfully set his feet once more upon the solid earth. Slowly, through avenues of trees, he walked to the city gate, while like a dog the ram followed in his steps.

"Who are you, and what city is this?" he asked of the watchers at the gate.

"More seemly it would have been for us to ask who you are and whence you come," was the answer. "For surely you must be a rare stranger not to know that this city is called ÆEa, and that our country is known as Colchis by the Sea. And now, if you would enter, tell us of yourself and of that strange beast that seems to love you so."

Then Phrixus told them his whole story, just as I have told it to you. And when Æetes, the king of the city, came out to sit in the gate and deal justice to those who asked for it, he saw the manly lad still waiting outside, and the ram standing by him and licking his hand.

"Ah, what do I see?" asked the king. "What rare animal has this boy brought to gladden my poor eyes? It is surely a ram, but so gloriously bright it is that I would almost believe it a piece of the sun brought down by my father Helios to illumine our city."

Phrixus repeated his story while the king and his wise men listened spellbound with wonder. And when he had finished, Æetes bade him come and sit beside him while his servants brought strengthening food and drink that he might break his long fast.

"Thou shalt live with me and be as one of my own sons," said the king; "and in time of war thou

shalt be our standard bearer. As for this strange beast, there is gold enough in his fleece to buy another kingdom like my own. We must consider what to do with him."

"It were a pity," said one of the wise men, "to let such wealth wander at will about the streets. It might spread its wings and fly suddenly away."

"True," answered the king; "and for that reason his young master shall lead him to the palace, where we must keep him close confined behind bolts and bars."

But the wise men declared that even then the golden prize might escape. "Some careless keeper might leave the gate ajar," they said, "and then in a twinkling the creature might leap out into the darkness and soar away like a summer cloud. Would it not be better to sacrifice the ram to Father Jupiter? The ruler of earth and sky will be pleased with the tender flesh and the juicy fat, offered smoking upon his altar; and the priceless fleece shall be yours, O King, to keep, safe-guarded, among your other treasures."

These words won favor with Æetes, for indeed he loved the sight of yellow gold. Therefore, with much ado, the ram was led into the noble temple that stood beside the market place; and there it was slain upon the altar of Jupiter, and the glori-

ous fleece was given to Æetes. And Phrixus, grieving for the kind creature's death, was clothed in princely garments and given a home in the lordly palace of the king, where he was not long in winning love and honor and troops of friends.

Such is the story of the curse of Athamas as it is told in Orchomenus, the city of the Minyan folk. But it does not end here, for Athamas still sits stricken with madness and moaning upon his ivory throne, and the people are without a ruler. The story will not be ended until some hero arises to undo the evil that has been done, and thereby remove the curse that rests upon the house of the unhappy king.

With these words the stranger ceased speaking, and his hearers arose and went thoughtfully to their homes. But young Cretheus betook himself into the temple and there whispered a prayer to great Jupiter to answer the desires of his heart and tell him of his duty and his destiny.

ADVENTURE V

SALMONEUS THE THUNDERER

THE next day at peep of dawn Cretheus was awakened by a voice softly calling his name. Opening his eyes, he saw in the purple haze of the morning the dim outlines of a glorious being too ethereal for mortal mould. The figure was that of a lady clad in bright armor with a helmet of bronze upon her head and a burnished shield in her hand. Her eyes were gray and sparkling, and to look at them was like looking into the depths of the summer sky. Her face was plain but nobly beautiful; and her voice, though strong, was sweeter than any music.

"Young prince," said the lady, "you may pray Jupiter to tell you of your destiny, but it is I alone who can tell you of your duty. Tarry no longer in Dodona, but go forth this very hour to seek a field of worthy labor, to do the deeds that are expected of you, and to win a name among men. Fear not, for I will be with you to guide and instruct. Only be brave and steadfast in right doing. Arise, gird yourself, and be gone."

Then a cloud of amber light inwrapped the glorious lady and the vision faded from his sight; and Cretheus knew that it was Athena, the queen of wisdom, who had spoken to him.

He arose from his couch quickly, and as he did so he was aware of princely garments lying beside him; and by them were strong sandals such as travelers wear, and a jeweled belt, and a new sword, short and sharp-edged and strong. He knew that these were the gift of Athena, and so, without fear or doubt, he clad himself in the raiment, and with the sword by his side sallied forth as a prince in quest of a kingdom.

No sooner was he out of doors than he perceived that all the folk of Dodona were assembled in the street to bid him farewell and cheer him on his way. The old priest, his white hair streaming in the morning breeze, was the first to speak.

“Son of Æolus,” said he, “you have sought wisdom at the sacred oak, and you have waited long. Hear now the words of the whispering leaves: —

“‘If o’er the Minyan folk the prince would reign,
He first must build a city on the plain.’

Go forth, and may Jupiter and Athena protect and guide you!”

Cretheus, with many thanks on his lips, both to the priest and to the good people of Dodona, passed on between the rows of purpling oaks. Then the three gray women, priestesses of the wood, met him with outstretched hands and mystic greetings, such as only the wise can understand.

"Son of the west wind and of the morning's calm," said they, "may your journey be happy and the end of it glorious. Would you know now what the singing tripods of Dodona say in answer to your questions propounded long years ago?"

"By old Mount Pelion near the surging sea,
There shall the city of the future be.'

There's wisdom for you. Ponder it well."

"I doubt you not," said Cretheus, "but such mystic sayings are hard to understand."

"If every one could understand them, they would lose their value," was the answer. "But speed you forth, and in good time all mysteries will become plain."

Then Cretheus went on until he came to the leafy arcade at the entrance to the village. There the air was odorous with spring blossoms, and the trees were populous with birds making ready for the merry summer time and the nesting duties of an-

other year. And now the dancing maidens came to bid the young prince godspeed on his journey. They scattered violets in his pathway, and sang a song of hope and joy and the overbrimming life of youth.

“It has been long,” they said, “since you asked the cooing doves to make known the destiny of your life. You have waited patiently and bravely, and now we will tell you the message which they murmur in their nests:—

“‘In kingly hall, some day, thou’lt stand arrayed,
And fame and fortune both shall wait on thee,
From thy true love thou shalt not be delayed;
A captive to a captive thou shalt be.’

It is the message of Father Jupiter. Ponder it well as you go on your lonely way. Farewell!”

“Farewell,” answered Cretheus, warmly. “Your message is at least longer and more like a riddle than that of the others, and I shall not forget it.”

Then he went onward and upward across the great mountain ridge, while the people of Dodona returned to their homes and the daily rounds of a quiet life.

The course which the young prince took was eastward, for he knew that the promise of his life lay toward the rising sun. It is not for us to follow

him in all his wanderings, for they were many and tedious and do not concern the purpose of our story.

At length, however, he came into a pleasant land watered by many streams and walled in by rolling hills, while toward the south the rich plains of Thesaly lay like a green carpet beneath the sun. And all around were guardian mountains: Olympus, favored of the gods, and gray-topped Ossa, and wooded Pelion battling evermore with the restless sea.

There, one day, he saw in a narrow valley a little city, with new-built walls and gray towers half concealed among the trees. As he went on boldly toward the city gate, he was suddenly aware of a strange noise approaching along the road which skirted the river below him. It was a sound unlike any other, and yet like all others combined—a rattling, a banging, a squealing, a shrieking, a booming, a roaring, a snapping, a clapping. Cretheus, in surprise, concealed himself and waited to see the cause of this uncommon uproar. Soon he beheld a chariot with four horses rushing down the dusty road. A warrior stood in it, beating his shield with a club, while the driver shouted wildly and with furious lashings urged his team to greater speed. As the chariot passed with its deafening noise, Cretheus saw that upon it and also upon the horses were hung all sorts

of things that could make a noise. There were bells, and pots, and pans, and drums; and rolling behind was a cylinder of brass, with dried oxhides stretched tightly across the ends of it like a huge drum. Added to the noise of all these were the shoutings of the men, the cracking of the driver's whip, the rattling of the harness, the squeaking of the axles, and the rumbling of the great chariot itself.

Cretheus held his hands to his ears, the uproar was so fearful. The chariot sped right onward and made no pause until it passed through the city gate, which was opened to receive it. A moment later the noise ceased, and a strange and peaceful quiet seemed to settle down upon the beautiful valley.

"What river is this, and whose little city is it that nestles there so cozily among the trees?" asked Cretheus of a countryman who was passing by.

"You must, indeed, be a stranger in Thessaly," answered the man; "for everybody knows that this river is the Peneius and that it flows through the Vale of Tempe into the sea. And this little city is but newly built by great Salmoneus, who until of late was king of certain of the Minyæ who dwell in far-away Elis."

This answer pleased Cretheus more than he was willing to let appear. For he had often heard of

Salmoneus and knew that he was of the family of Æolus and a near kinsman of his own. He felt that in this little city he would find friends and perhaps the means to carry out some worthy enterprise that would win renown and the esteem of men. So he asked the countryman still other questions.

“Who is that senseless fellow who rode this way just now with such horrid clamor?”

“It is well that we are where you cannot be overheard,” was the answer; “for the man in the chariot was none other than King Salmoneus himself.”

“Indeed! And why does he conduct himself in that strange fashion?”

“Well, if you will have me tell you,” said the man, looking cautiously about him, “it is said that Salmoneus is a man who has no fear of the gods. He has come to this place to challenge the power of great Jupiter who sits enthroned above Mount Olympus and rules the earth and sky. And so when he drives out, he makes as great a noise as he can and dares Jupiter to make as much with his thunderbolts.”

“How strange!” said Cretheus.

“Yes, it is strange,” answered the countryman; “and he must be a brave man to dare act so wickedly. Yet they say that the gods are kind and long-suffering.”

“How many people are there in this new city of Salmoneus?” asked the prince.

“As yet there are only a few hundreds,” was the reply, “for the place is very new. But every man is of the Minyan race, some being from distant Elis and some from the old city of Orchomenus.”

As Cretheus and the countryman talked, they approached the city gate, and the young traveler was challenged by the guard.

“Who are you, stranger? And what is your errand to this city of Salmoneus?” he demanded.

“I am a Minyan like yourself, and I am the son of a Minyan hero,” answered Cretheus. “I come from Dodona, the ancient home of our race, and I have much to say to King Salmoneus, who is my near kinsman.”

When the gatekeeper heard these words and observed the princely bearing of him who spoke them, he quickly threw open the barriers and bade the young traveler enter.

“Never yet has our king been rude to strangers or refused them shelter and food,” he said.

As Cretheus passed through the gate, he saw that the city was indeed new. There were neither streets nor market place nor temple of any kind, and the only completed building was the king's palace. Great piles of stone and timber filled every

open space; and about them were workingmen of all sorts, busy with ax and saw and trowel and spade. In the square behind the palace were clustered the little huts in which the people ate and slept and found shelter from the storm.

"Welcome! Welcome to this new city of the Minyæ," said King Salmoneus, as Cretheus made himself known. "The more heroes I can gather into this place, the better; and you, being my kinsman, are thrice welcome."

"May the Mighty Ones prosper you and your city," said Cretheus, warmly. "I am here to serve you in whatsoever way I may."

The old king stroked his gray beard and muttered a bitter curse.

"As for the Mighty Ones, as you call them," he said, "they are no friends of mine, neither do I wish them to be. Of what use are they to any man? Summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, daylight and darkness, all come and go, and the gods neither help nor hinder. As for that old fellow Jupiter, does any one know where he is or what he is? Men say that he makes the thunder and hurls the lightning hither and thither. But what of that? I can do the same; and I challenge this king of air and earth, as they call him, to make more thunder than I make with my chariot."

“You are certainly a powerful king,” said Cretheus.

“Yes,” answered the old man; “there is none in Greece that can be likened to me. But come, you shall make your home with me and see for yourself how much mightier I am than any of the so-called Mighty Ones.”

ADVENTURE VI

THE MAIDEN AND THE RIVER GOD

THERE is in Thessaly a little river of uncertain name, which takes its rise among the low-lying hills of the south and then, meandering through leafy woods and broad, grassy meadows, finds its way at last into the Peneius. To the banks of this river, Tyro, the beautiful daughter of old Salmoneus, often wandered; for it was a pleasant stream and not far from her father's new-built city. Dressed in the garb of one of Diana's maidens, her feet bare and skirts gathered up out of the way, she delighted to wade in its shallow pools, to pluck the flowers that grew by its reedy brink, to pass whole days under the drooping trees upon its banks. No better pastime could there be for a girl who, having no playmates, had grown up half wild in that new and half-wild land.

One day as she was sitting thoughtlessly upon the bank and bathing her feet in the sunny ripples of the stream, she was startled by a slight splashing of the water among some reeds before her. She looked

up quickly and saw that which made her heart beat lustily and the red blood rush quickly to her cheeks; for there, where parted reeds made a green frame as for a picture, she saw the face and shoulders of a young man more noble and fair than any she had ever looked upon in her father's little kingdom. In her surprise she uttered a maidenly scream and rose quickly, as though she would flee away. Then, looking again, she saw that the vision had vanished, and she beheld only the green wall of reeds and the checkered shadows of the trees dancing upon the water.

"It was a river god," she whispered to herself as she hastened home.

That evening, as she sat on her father's knee and lovingly stroked his beard, she asked, "Father, did you ever see a river god?" And the rude old fellow laughed and said: "Nonsense, child! How often must I tell you that there are no gods?"

The next day, and every day for a week, Tyro returned to the same spot, hoping to catch sight of her river god again. But the reeds stood close and thick and tall, every one in its place, and no ripple disturbed the shadows on the pool. On the eighth day, however, as she was sitting there and feeling sorely disappointed, she heard a light foot-

step behind her. She turned quickly, and there was her river god standing on the bank!

He was tall, very tall; and he was dressed in the gray garb of a stone-throwing Lapith. His black hair hung thickly about his neck and shoulders, and his eyes beamed kindly as they looked upon the maiden. In one hand he carried a small net, such as fishermen use, and in the other a string of speckled fish.

“Are you a river god?” asked Tyro.

“You may think so if you wish,” he said. “My name is Enipeus, and for the present I live in this beautiful stream.”

“Oh, I am so glad to meet a river god,” said the girl. “Do you know that my father says there are no gods?”

Enipeus laughed heartily, and soon the two were sitting side by side on the river bank and talking of the thousand nothings which all people talk about when they have no thoughts to tell and there is nothing worth saying.

When Tyro went home she carried the string of fish with her. “See, father,” she said; “see what a river god gave me to-day.”

The brow of the old king darkened, and he said, “My child, beware of such gods and take no gifts from them.”

Every day after that, until the summer began to wane, Tyro went out to meet Enipeus by the river, which he said was his own. Most commonly she found him at their trysting place, but sometimes, after vainly waiting long hours for his coming, she went home sad at heart, and wondering if he had forgotten her.

Then, one evening, she did not come home at all, and Salmoneus, now sobbing with grief and now storming with anger, paced his lonely halls and anxiously listened for her footsteps.

“I wonder if the river god has carried her away,” he said, and early in the morning he sent out men to search the country through for the child whom he loved.

That very evening, in the house of a stone-throwing Lapith hidden deep in the fastnesses of the hills, there was a merry wedding to which but few guests were invited. The bride was beautiful Tyro, and the groom was the so-called Enipeus, no river god at all, but a rude and lawless mountain chief.

“Now you may call me Neptune, the god of the sea,” he said boastfully.

When the men of King Salmoneus returned, they said that, although they had searched in every nook and corner of Thessaly for the lost maiden,

they could nowhere learn any word of her or find any person who had so much as heard of her. They declared that either some beast had devoured her or the Mighty Ones had carried her away to dwell with them in bliss on high Olympus.

Then the king grew more and more morose, and his bitterness toward the gods waxed greater every day. "There is now no one in all the world for me to love," he said to himself. "There is no one in all the world that cares aught for me." And he shook his fists toward Mount Olympus, and muttered aloud his defiance of great Jupiter.

ADVENTURE VII

AN UNEQUAL CONTEST

It was scarcely a week after this that young Cretheus came, as we have seen, to the new-built city by the Peneius. At once the old man's heart warmed toward him, and in the cheerful companionship of the prince he seemed for a time to forget his grief. He made known to Cretheus all his plans for the building of his city, and told him how it was his purpose to found, in the very shadow of Olympus, a kingdom so grand that Jupiter in his high abode would look down upon it with envious despair.

"Yet if it were not for dealing despite to the hated gods," he said, "I would not toil to bring these things about. For I am old, and I have no son to succeed me, nor any child save lovely Tyro, whom perhaps these very gods have stolen from me."

And then he fell into a great fit of anger and grief and dared great Jupiter to come down and

meet him in fair fight with weapons which both could wield. Afterward, when he grew calmer, he upbraided himself for his folly, and said: "Why should I be angry with that which does not exist? For there is no Jupiter, there are no gods."

Little by little his confidence in Cretheus increased until at last he intrusted him with the management of all his affairs. Then, one day, he called his people together and said: —

"Men of the Minyan race, hearken to your king. Behold, I am growing old, and although none may excel me in power, yet I am not immortal. Some day you will say among yourselves, 'The king is dead,' and you will look around for another hero to rule over you. Lo, here he is, Cretheus my kinsman, whom I now declare to be my heir. Obey him, for he shall be your king."

Then all the men who heard him shouted their joy, and declared that they would be true to Cretheus as they were true to Salmoneus, although they could never believe that the old king would be vanquished, even by death.

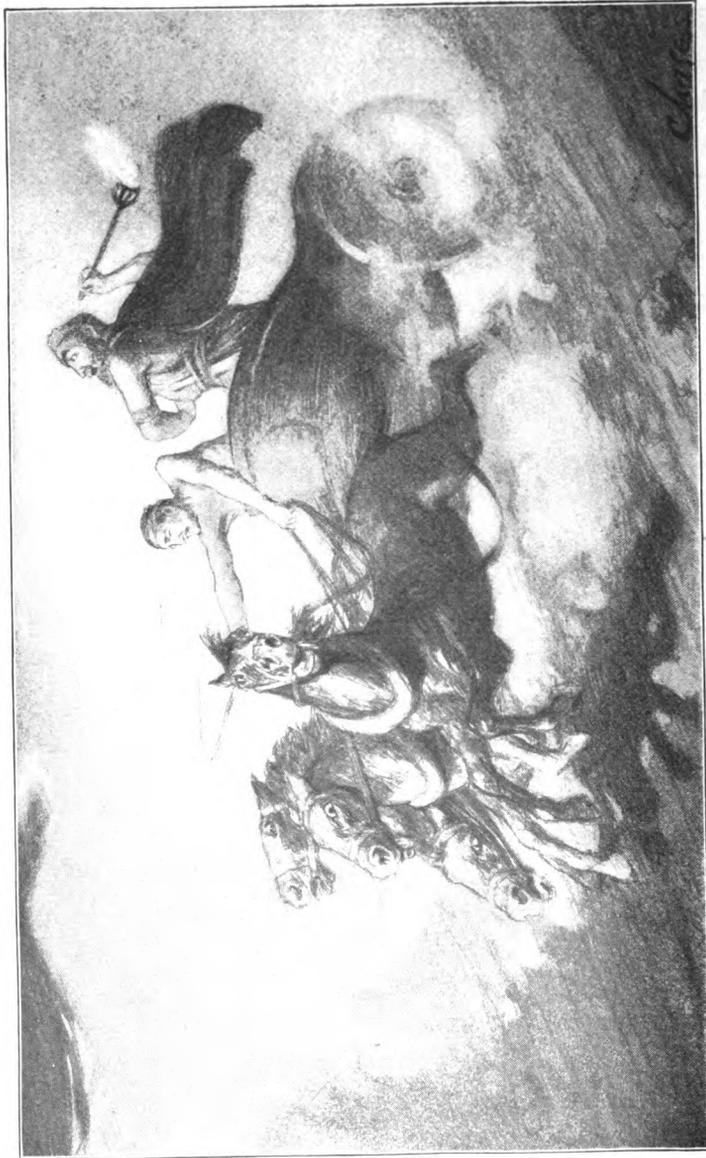
That very afternoon a dark storm cloud was seen gathering among the peaks of Mount Olympus. Blacker and blacker it grew, and it spread to right and left until it covered the mountain tops and rolled with threatening murmurs up into the path-

way of the sun. From one cloud fold to another swift lightnings darted, and the roll of distant thunder foretold a fearful storm.

“Ha!” cried old Salmoneus, “my challenge has been accepted. Now for the grand fight!”

He called for his chariot, with its drums and kettles and all its noisy hangings. Torches containing oil-soaked balls of flax were placed upon it at his command. Then, with his sword in his belt, he leaped up beside the driver and gave the word. The charioteer wielded his long whip. The horses sprang forward. The car, with unearthly uproar, rolled out through the gate and sped away in the gathering gloom to meet the storm. And the old king, standing upright like a warrior in the fierce charge of battle, cast one flaming torch after another into the clouds and shouted bitter defiance to the wielder of the thunderbolts.

The storm thickened. The tumult in the air grew louder. It became so deafening that all the noise which the king could make was drowned into silence. The lightnings were so vivid that his brightest torches seemed like shadowy blotches against a background of flame. Soon there came a deafening crash which shook the earth. From his high seat Jupiter hurled a thunderbolt straight at his foe, and in that same moment the vaunting



Salmonius shouting Defiance to Jupiter.

king, with his horses and chariot and strange trappings, was laid low.

Seared and senseless and silent, he lay prone upon the earth, while the rain beat upon his gray face and the wind howled derision in his ear. Nevermore would the fallen boaster breathe the sweet air or see the light of day.

Again a blinding flash lit up the heavens and glowed among the rocks and trees; another stunning crash shook the mountains and jarred the earth, and another bolt sped from Jupiter's unerring hand. It struck the mark, and the roomy palace with its gray towers and all that had been reared within the gates of the new-built city were shattered and cast down in hopeless ruin. Then, in the wake of the thundering uproar, came the wind, tearing up trees by the roots, hurling rocks from the mountain side, and leveling to the ground the four high walls which the workmen of the king had raised with long and painful labor.

Fortunate, indeed, were the few who escaped that terrible storm which men still remember as the punishment of Salomoneus. When, at length, the tumult ceased and the sunlight struggled down through the quivering trees, Cretheus found himself standing alone near a disordered pile of timber and stone and ruined mason work. Then, one by one, as the

gloom lifted, men came creeping out from beneath rocks and from holes in the ground where they had taken refuge. Women also came, and a few children, saved by some wonderful chance from the falling beams and posts of their humble dwellings. Some came with scarred and bleeding bodies, and some with broken limbs, and all making most piteous moans, not so much for their own hurts as for the loved ones who were lying mangled and dead beneath the tangled ruins.

When all who were still alive had been gathered together, it was found that they numbered scarcely a hundred. With beseeching eyes and despairing voices, they stood before Cretheus like frightened sheep looking up to their shepherd for protection.

“O King,” they said, “for now thou art indeed our king, have pity on us and save us from the Thunderer’s wrath. For behold he has destroyed our homes and all that we had, and nothing is spared to us but our lives. Do but lead us away from this accursed spot, and we will serve thee as thou wilt have us. We will be thy faithful slaves.”

Then there came into the mind of the young man the words which the old priest of Dodona had repeated as coming from the whispering oak:—

“If o’er the Minyan folk the prince would reign,
He first must build a city on the plain.”

As he whispered these words to himself, other memories came crowding into his mind. He thought of his first view of the Thessalian plain, years ago, when, standing on a hilltop, he looked eastward over it and saw the wild horses roaming undisturbed in its green pastures, and there were no dwellings nor sign of man in all its wide extent. He remembered how at the same time he had seen Mount Pelion with its wooded slopes rising grandly against the morning sky, while the sea lay calm and gray in the more distant background.

“What a glorious place to build a city and found a kingdom!” he repeated; and then the words of the singing tripods, as interpreted by the three gray women, came into his mind:—

“By old Mount Pelion near the surging sea,
There shall the city of the future be.”

He stood silent, as in a trance, while all these memories came rushing upon him. At length, rousing up suddenly, he was aware of the distracted people crowding around him and still beseeching him to lead them away to some place of safety.

“Have courage,” he cried, “and soon your troubles will be ended. Follow me, and we will build a new city and found a kingdom.”

ADVENTURE VIII

“A CAPTIVE TO A CAPTIVE”

THUS Cretheus, with his little company of Minyæ who had escaped the storm, went down into the unsettled plain. They came at length to a pleasant spot between the foot of old Mount Pelion and a bay of the sea, and there they began to build their city. The sound of the ax and the hammer and the voices of busy men echoed among the trees and in the mountain glens, and startled the wild horses pasturing upon the plain. Soon the walls were built, and then houses arose and spaces were marked off for streets and a market place and a temple to Father Jupiter.

“What shall we name our new city?” asked the busy toilers, as they laid stone upon stone, and raised the lordly towers of the king’s palace.

“It shall be called Iolcus,” answered Cretheus, “and we will build it so well that men in foreign lands shall hear of its strength and beauty, and shall come to make their homes within its walls.”

And it was so; for the news was carried in ships to the towns along the coasts of Greece, and men talked of nothing else but the new city of Iolcus by the sea. When the Minyan people in old Orchomenus heard of it, and learned that its king was none other than Cretheus, whom they had once known and loved, they wondered greatly. Then a ship load of young men sailed secretly for Iolcus; and after this, many of the Minyæ took their wives and their children and stole out of Orchomenus by night and made their way, some by land and some by sea, to the same city of promise.

Thus Cretheus soon found himself the ruler of a rich and powerful people. The plain before Iolcus was no longer a wild and solitary waste, but it was dotted with fields and orchards and many pleasant homes. But farther away the wild herds still roamed in their boundless pastures; in the mountain valleys the rough-riding Centaurs lived, enjoying their native freedom; and among the remoter hills the Lapiths clung to their ancient homes and held to the rude manners of their fathers.

Now there was a lasting enmity between the Centaurs and Lapiths, and many were the deeds of blood that were committed by them. Sometimes the stone throwers, creeping stealthily up at night, would capture and lead away whole droves

of the rough riders' horses. Sometimes the Centaurs, with savage yells and death-dealing clubs, would swoop suddenly upon a Lapith village to slay the men and carry the women and maidens into captivity. It was a wild and pitiless warfare, and no man knew the cause of it or remembered its beginning.

One day there came down into Iolcus a Centaur chieftain, leading by the hand a beautiful captive. This Centaur was unlike any other of his race. He was very tall, and as straight as the mountain pine. His eyes were sharp and piercing; his white beard fell in glossy waves to his waist; his face shone with kindness and wisdom. His name was Cheiron, and he claimed kinship with the gods. He held himself aloof from others of his race, and dwelt alone in a royal cavern near the summit of Mount Pelion. And all men honored him for his noble manners and the uprightness of his life.

The captive whom he led into Iolcus was a lady, tall and very fair, who walked beside him with tear-filled eyes and trembling footsteps, like one going to some sorrowful doom. He led her into the king's great hall, and without waste of words began his story.

"Yesterday, O King," he said, "a band of my people rode into a secluded glen on the farther side of

the mountain, where they found a stronghold of the Lapiths. The place was but poorly guarded, because no enemy was expected. The Lapith chief, however, fought bravely, and not until three of our riders were slain was he himself laid low. Then the Centaurs destroyed all that came into their hands, not sparing any save this woman, whom they brought away as captive. Her twin babes they had not the heart to slay, but they left them by the roadside to perish. Now, O King, I have brought the captive to you, for, as you can see, she is not of the race of the stone throwers; but her face and speech declare that she is a Minyan and your own kinswoman. I leave her with you, knowing that you will do that which is just and right."

Then, as Cretheus looked at the trembling lady, he thought that in all the world he had never seen any one so lovely. His heart went out in pity towards her as he took her by the hand and asked her to tell her name and story.

"My name," she said, "is Tyro, and my father was King Salmoneus, who ruled for a long time both in Thessaly and in distant Elis. My husband was a mountain chief, who wooed me under the name of Enipeus, persuading me that he was a river god, or perhaps great Neptune himself. But, though he deceived me and stole me from my

doting father, yet he was ever kind and mindful of my comfort. Two noble boys we had. They were twins, the one dark-haired and swarthy and grasping, like his father, the other fair-skinned and very loving. But, alas! they are now no more, and I am all alone."

And with that she fell to weeping with such violence that the king could not restrain his tears for very sympathy.

But sorrow is fleeting, and time heals the deepest wounds. Twelve months had scarcely fled when there was great rejoicing in Iolcus, with merry-making such as the Minyan folk had never known before. For there was a grand wedding in the halls of the king, and lovely Tyro was again a bride. And thus the cooing of the Dodonan doves came true:—

"In kingly hall, some day, thou'lt stand arrayed,
And fame and fortune both shall wait on thee,
From thy true love thou shalt not be delayed;
A captive to a captive thou shalt be."

ADVENTURE IX

THE LAD WITH THE LIVID FACE

AT Iolcus the years passed swiftly, and every day was so fraught with pleasant labor and duties well performed that the time seemed to Cretheus like one perpetual summer. In all Greece there was no happier king than he, and in all the world there was no lovelier queen than Tyro, the gentle mistress of his home.

Three children came to them in their marble halls. They were all boys. The eldest was Æson, so gentle and forgiving that he would suffer great wrong rather than contend for his just dues; the second was Pheres, sturdy and strong-willed; the youngest was Amythaon, gay-hearted and brimming with mirth. Each had his own winning ways that caused all who knew him to love and admire him. But the wiser of the Minyæ shook their heads and said, "What a pity that Æson is not more like Pheres! The lad that is to be a king should have a steady hand and a determined mind."

It chanced one day in midsummer that there was a strange uproar in the streets of Iolcus. Some countrymen had brought game and fruit to be sold at the market, and among them was a tall lad one side of whose face was marked by a large and livid scar. The sight of such a deformity was new to the Minyan boys, and one after another, as they were passing, stopped to stare at the ragged fellow, who stood barefooted and scowling beside his small basket of wild plums.

“Buy a plum! Buy a plum!” mockingly cried the Minyan boys.

“He’s turning to a plum,” said the wit among them. “One side of his face is already of the color of the fruit,” and they all laughed at the unmannerly joke.

Then one of the bolder ones ran up and snatched a handful of the fruit. Quick as an arrow, the country boy was in the midst of his tormentors, raining blows this way and that and raging like a wild beast in his fury. But they were many and he was but one, and he would soon have been overcome by numbers had not a lithe, white-haired lad whom he called his brother rushed in to help him. The tussle now began in earnest, and more than one young ruffian was sent tumbling into the dust. Then the father of the boys, a lubberly herdsman

from the northern pastures, joined in the fray, and the fight would soon have been a bloody one had not two soldiers of the king chanced to be passing that way. They ran forward with their clubs, and in a moment the countryman and his sons were overcome and helpless.

“We’ll teach you how to come into the city and attack our unoffending children,” they said. “Come, now! You shall plead your case before the king, and if we mistake not, you will have sorrow for many a day.”

The three, with their hands bound behind them, were roughly led away, while a hooting crowd of boys and men followed them to the very gates of the palace.

“Ha! What have we here?” said Cretheus, as, with lovely Tyro on his arm, he walked into his hall and saw the culprits ranged up against the wall and the soldiers standing guard over them.

“We found these fellows fighting in the street,” answered the soldiers; “and, worst of all, they were fighting helpless children. Their very looks will tell you that they are dangerous fellows. In fact—”

A startled cry from Queen Tyro interrupted the accuser. All eyes were turned toward her in surprise. She was very pale and leaned heavily upon the arm of the king. She was gazing fixedly at the

two lads, as though recalling some half-forgotten memory of other days.

“What is it, my dear?” asked Cretheus.

“Pardon me, it is nothing but a foolish thought,” she answered. “Those faces, those eyes, those lips — I remember them as though they were painted in my soul, and these seem the very same. But it cannot be so — it cannot be so.”

“Tell me what you mean, Tyro,” said the king, leading her to a seat. “Your words seem rambling, and I do not understand them.”

“Oh, it is nothing,” answered the queen, now grown quite calm again. “It was only a passing fancy, a silly freak of the mind. I pray you heed me not, but hear the rest of this case.”

The king, assured by her words, sat down upon his judgment seat and began to question the prisoners.

“Are these two lads your sons?” he asked the herdsman.

“They pass for such,” was the answer; “but in truth they are not. I found them when they were barely twelve months old, and I have brought them up as though they were my own.”

The queen’s hand was resting heavily upon the king’s shoulder. She was trembling. She breathed heavily as though the air oppressed her.

"Tell us how you found them," she said hoarsely, and never lifting her eyes from the faces of the affrighted lads.

"Well, it is a short story," said the man. "Twelve years ago this very month my brother and I were taking a drove of horses to a new pasture far up the glen where the river Anaurus takes its rise. At one place we came upon the smoking ruins of some Lapith huts, and I judged that a marauding band of Centaurs had lately been that way. So we turned aside to go by a longer and steeper path to another pasture which I knew of on the other slope of the mountain. But just as we reached the beginning of the path the horses became frightened at something in the grass; they shied suddenly and then went on quite orderly, as I would have them. 'It must be a serpent in the grass,' I said to myself, and I went forward to see. How surprised I was when I found that it was no serpent at all, but two baby boys! The light-haired one looked up at me with his blue eyes and smiled. But the black-haired one was squirming fearfully and screaming with all his might as though in pain.

"I picked him up and saw at once the cause of his distress. One of the horses had stepped on his face, making an ugly scar from which the blood was slowly trickling. It was a painful wound, but luck-

ily neither eye nor nose was harmed. I bade my brother go on with the horses, while I wrapped the babies in my cloak and carried them home to my wife.

“We had never had any babies of our own, and so you may be sure that we took good care of these foundlings. We laid a salve of sweet herbs on the wounded face of the black-eyed one, and it healed quickly, leaving of course the big hoof mark. It left, also, more than the scar; for that whole side of the child’s face became livid, and, in spite of all that we could do, it remained livid as you see it now.” Then addressing the lad, he said sharply, “Turn your face this way, Pelias, and let them see it.”

The lad obeyed, and the queen saw for the first time the livid cheek and the strange scar that had brought about the trouble in the market place. She shuddered as she looked; and the king, now knowing the whole cause of her excitement, gently caressed her.

“You called him Pelias,” said the king. “Is that his name?”

“Yes,” answered the herdsman, “we named him **Pelias**, because that is the word which means livid, and it is easy to remember. The other lad, with the long, white hair, we named Neleus. I told my wife that they were only the children of some wild

Lapith; but she would never believe me. She said that they looked like the gods; but I could see no resemblance. As Pelias grew up, he made plenty of trouble in the house, for he wanted everything for himself. But Neleus was exactly the other way, and so we have managed to bring them up quite well."

And now the mother could restrain herself no longer. She rushed forward and with loving cries threw her arms about the necks of the two astonished lads. The soldiers and the herdsman were alarmed, for they thought that she had lost her senses; but Cretheus understood the whole matter, and he was scarcely less joyful than she. And so the herdsman instead of being punished was dismissed with a rich present, and the two lads were received into the king's household as the sons of Queen Tyro. How odd it must have seemed to them to lay aside the rags in which they had been clothed and to don in place of them the princely garb becoming their new-found rank! How strange the first days of their life in the palace after their childhood years in the squalid hut of their foster parents!

But Pelias took all his new-found honors as belonging to him by right, and though he tried to keep the scarred side of his face well out of view,

he was never backward at taking the foremost place. And whenever it was hinted that he was not the king's son, he would draw himself up proudly and say: "What does that matter? My father was greater than a king. He was a river god."

As the years passed, and he grew into a swarthy, dark-browed young man, his wild and reckless nature led him into many selfish acts and many wicked deeds. And the men of Iolcus whispered among themselves: "What a pity that our prince Æson is not stronger! This stepbrother of his will never be content until he has wrested his heritage from him." And all the people prayed that Jupiter would grant to King Cretheus a long life and an old age full of honor and renown.

ADVENTURE X

A GARDEN BETTER THAN A THRONE

IN Iolcus at the foot of old Mount Pelion there was great grief, and for thirty days there was mourning in every house. For Cretheus, the good, the wise, the founder of the city, was dead, having ruled wisely and well for more than fifty years. Scarcely, however, were the days of mourning ended when the troubles which men had long feared began to arise in the once happy city.

Æson, who by right became king in place of his father, was mild-hearted and kind and too ready to please others, even to his own hurt. Moreover, he liked not the bustle and the worrying cares of public life, but would never spend his days in his garden, pruning his vines and weeding his beds of choice flowers.

“I like not this governing of men,” he said; “yet since it is my fate to rule, I will try to serve my people well, and thus honor the memory of my father.”

But all the while Pelias, the king's stepbrother, was plotting to do him harm. For he was selfish and grasping and full of guile; and like a young cuckoo in a sparrow's nest he was ever striving to cast out those who had received and nurtured him, that so he might possess all things for himself.

One day, having bribed the soldiers and the younger men of the city, he walked boldly into the king's council hall and seated himself upon the throne. Then when Æson entered to take his accustomed place, the usurper bade him begone.

"Know you," said he, "that I, Pelias, the son of Neptune, am king of Iolcus, and no man shall dare dispute my right."

And Æson, pale and trembling, though not through fear, stood before him and lifted not a hand in his own defense.

"If you are indeed king," he said, "grant that I may ask one little boon of you."

"Say on," said Pelias, "but beware that you do not ask too much."

"I pray you give me leave," said Æson, "to spend my days in my quiet country home near where the rushing stream of Anaurus pours down into the plain. There I would fain till my garden in peace and forget that I am the son of a king."

"'Tis well," answered Pelias. "Get you gone to

your garden, and remember that should you ever again set your foot within the gates of Iolcus, your life shall pay the forfeit."

And Æson, sad-hearted and yet feeling relieved of a distressing burden, went out of the halls which his father had made so glorious and turned his steps toward the humble home that was sweeter to him than kingly power.

Then Pelias sent out his armed men and drove his other stepbrothers, Pheres and Amythaon, from the city. But Pheres gathered a company of noble young men about him, and they built in the midst of the Thessalian plain a walled city, strong and great, which they named Pheræ. As for fair-haired Neleus, the twin brother of Pelias, he took ship and sailed far away to the land of Messenia, where he built the afterward famous city of Pylos on the sandy shore of the western sea.

When at length Pelias had rid himself of all that might do him harm in Iolcus, he began to fear that some secret foe might arise to drive him from his throne. The longer he thought about this the more was he troubled. Whenever he stepped outside of his door he trembled lest some one with dagger or club should suddenly leap upon him. At night he lay awake for hours, fearing to close his eyes lest an assassin might attack him unawares.

His distress became so great that at last he called a trusted friend into his bedroom and said: "I am sadly perplexed because of something that I wish to know. No mortal, but the gods alone, can answer the question I would ask. To which one of them, think you, would it be better to apply?"

"They all tell that which is true," was the answer, "but some speak more plainly than others. Now there are the doves and the oaks at Dodona —"

"I will ask nothing of them," interrupted Pelias. "They speak only in riddles."

"Then why not send to the oracle at Delphi? Send a goodly gift to the priestess there, and she will ask Apollo to answer your question."

"It shall be done," cried Pelias; and that very day a messenger was sent with rich offerings to the famous oracle at Delphi. "The question I would have answered," said the king, "is this: 'Will any one do Pelias harm or ever drive him from his kingdom?'"

Anxious days and weary months passed by, and then the messenger returned.

"Did you ask the oracle the question that I gave you to propound?" asked Pelias.

"I did," said the messenger, "and after long delays and the giving of other presents I received Apollo's answer."

“ Let me hear it quickly,” demanded the king.

“ Well, it was this :—

“ ‘ Rest easy, Pelias, now ; but of that man beware
Who comes with one foot sandaled and the other bare.’ ”

“ Ha ! ” cried Pelias, as his dark face lighted up with joy. “ All is well with me, and no half-sandaled man shall ever wrest my kingdom from me.”

Then he gave orders that if any man should ever be found walking on the streets of Iolcus with one foot bare and the other covered, he should at once and without trial be thrown into prison.

Now Æson, after he had been driven from his throne, went peacefully through the city on his way to the little country place that was hereafter to be his home. Very many were the sad eyes that followed him as he walked along the dusty street. Many also were the whispered farewells that fell upon his ear from darkened doorways, while from the half-closed windows sweet flowers and other tokens were rained upon him to tell how dear he yet was held in the hearts of his loving people.

When at length he reached the gateway which opened into his garden, Alcimedé, his wife, came forth to meet him, leading by the hand their little son, Jason.



.. He lifted little Jason in his arms.."

“Now, indeed,” cried Æson, greeting them, “we shall live happily in this quiet place. For at last I am free from all those distressing things that have of late made life so joyless.”

He lifted little Jason in his arms, and thence upon his shoulders, and with the boy astride of his neck he carried him, merrily laughing, toward the house. And as Alcimede walked trippingly beside him, he told her all that had happened. He told her how Pelias had pushed him from the throne, thus taking upon himself the burdensome cares that bear so heavily upon a king. But when he spoke of the silent acts by which the people had assured him of their love, his voice trembled and the tears came unbidden to his eyes.

“I am glad for your sake that it has happened so,” said Alcimede. “Pelias, knowing that you are better pleased to be a gardener than a king, will never think to do you any further harm. But there is another one of whom we should think, rather than of ourselves.”

“Yes, I know of whom you are thinking,” said Æson. “You are thinking of this little lad,” and he set the child down in the doorway and played that he was a hungry bear from some mountain cave, ready to devour the little princely morsel. But the child, with his fists and toy sword, drove

the make-believe beast from the door, and all joined in merry laughter at his brave deed.

"He will be a noble warrior when he grows up," said the proud mother.

"I will be a king," lisped the child.

The parents looked one at the other, and neither spoke; but it was easy to guess the thoughts that disturbed their minds.

That evening, when the child was asleep in his bed, Alcimede said to her husband: "Jason says he will be a king, and indeed we must not hinder him. His father and his grandfather, and all his ancestors back to Jupiter himself, were kings. No cruel Pelias shall keep him from the throne that is rightfully his."

"Speak softly, wife," said Æson, while anxious shadows darkened his kindly face. "I see now my mistake in yielding so readily to the demands of Pelias. Even though I cared not for the kingdom for myself, I ought to have held it for the boy's sake. And now another fearful thought has taken hold of me. Pelias is not the man to take any dangerous risks. He will seek to destroy our child, who has a better right to be king of Iolcus than he himself can ever have."

"That is the very thought that has troubled me from the start," said Alcimede. "Pelias may send

for him this very night, and we must save our child."

"We must," said Æson; "but how?"

"Take the lad and carry him up the mountain to the cave of Cheiron the Centaur. He will be safe there; for Cheiron is your friend, and he will suffer no harm to befall your child. Make haste, and do not delay, for every moment brings the danger nearer."

"You are wise, Alcimede," said Æson. "Get the lad ready, and I will go at once."

ADVENTURE XI

THE HIDING OF THE PRINCE

AT daybreak of the second day, Æson, with little Jason in his arms, stood at the foot of a gray cliff far up the side of mighty Pelion. Below them were thick woods of oak and chestnut and dark undergrowths of vine and shrub, through which they had made their perilous way in the silence of the night. On their left, far away, the gray sea lay sleeping in the morning twilight. On their right, in the misty distance, they could see the wild plains and the dark, low woods that border the narrow valley of the Anaurus. Behind them, looming up against the horizon, were the dim and gloomy outlines of the famous mountains, Ossa and Olympus.

“Shall we go farther, father?” said little Jason.

“No, my child,” said Æson, “we will rest here, and wait till the sun rises upon the sea.”

They sat in silence by the side of the great rock, the tired lad pillowing his head upon his father's bosom. The day grew brighter every moment.

The gray eastern clouds became golden, and then changed to a fleeting crimson and melted softly into nothingness. A ray of gold shot quickly upward, and then another and another and thousands more, and like a flash the sun peeped out of the sea far away at its meeting with the sky.

At that same moment a voice was heard at the mouth of a cavern in an angle of the cliff. It was the voice of a man, full, rich, and attuned to most wonderful harmonies.

“What is that, father?” asked Jason, wearily.

“It is Cheiron, the good Centaur, singing his morning hymn,” answered Æson.

They listened spellbound, for never had they heard a song so restful and so beautiful. It spoke of the sun, and of the day's dawning, and of the boundless sea, and of the wonderful earth and the protecting sky, and, last of all, of the Mighty Ones who sit in heavenly places and determine the destinies of men. It was a song which when once heard could never be forgotten, for it spoke of the things that are dearest to every man's heart and sweetest to the mind of every child.

When the song was finished, the singer stepped out from the shadows that had hitherto concealed him and stood in front of his dwelling in the full rays of the morning sun. He was very tall,

and every line of his body spoke of nobility and strength. His head was bare and his flowing hair was white as the drifted snow. His long beard fell in waves to his waist. His eyes were gray and piercing, and his face beamed with kindness and wisdom.

Then Æson arose, and, carrying the child in his arms, went forward to meet the wonderful Centaur.

When Cheiron saw them approaching, he held out his hands in welcome, and said: "Hail, king that was and king that is to be! I know your errand, and it shall not be in vain. The lad shall dwell with me, and no finger shall be raised to do him harm. He shall grow up in my mountain home, and I will teach him the lore of the world and train him in the ways of heroic men. And when the time is ripe for action and the voices of his kingly ancestors call to him, he shall go forth to claim his rightful heritage and to do the deeds that will cause his name to be remembered to the end of time."

Æson, with tears streaming from his eyes, kissed the lad on his cheeks and lips, and silently gave him into the arms of the aged Centaur. Then without pausing or uttering a word, he turned and went with faltering steps down the rocky path that led to the foot of the mountain.

When, early on the following morning, he arrived at his cottage home, thinking how lonely the place would be without the child to gladden it, he was surprised to see an earthen jar with water in it standing before the door. The jar was unlike any other in the house. It was painted red, with stripes and squares of jet black encircling it at the top and the bottom; and around the edge were mystic figures intertwined with delicate leaves and vines. Æson started in alarm when he saw it, for it told that there was mourning in the house.

"Woe is me," he said to himself. "Can it be that Alcimede is dead?"

But at that moment Alcimede herself, dressed in the garb of mourning, with tear-wet face and hair all tangled, came out to meet him.

"Who is it?" he asked hoarsely.

"Alas! alas!" cried she, in loud, shrill tones, broken by her sobs, "it is our darling Jason. Would that you had been here when he died."

Then, still weeping, she leaned her head on Æson's shoulder and whispered very low: "You know it is not so. But it is thus that we must deceive our enemies," and with that she again broke forth into loud lamentations.

Æson led her into the house and into the chamber that had been little Jason's. All round the

room the faithful servants stood, with reddened eyes and faces drawn with grief. Upon a bed strewn with spring flowers and sweet-smelling garden herbs lay what seemed to be the body of a child, dressed in robes of flowing white. Garlands of leafy vines encircled and concealed the face, which was turned toward the wall; and the folded hands were hidden beneath a wreath of orchard blossoms.

As Æson drew near and lifted one of the garlands as though looking at the face of the dead, all the women who were standing around began to weep most piteously. He replaced the flowers carefully, covered his face with his hands, and stood silent for a while by the side of the bed. Then he turned away and, going to his own chamber, shut the door behind him.

All that day and far into the following night the house was filled with mourning. Then, very early on the second morning, a sad procession moved away from the cottage and wound slowly down the pathway toward a distant part of the garden. First went the musicians, clad in white and garlanded with leaves of wild olives, playing mournful tunes upon their flutes. Behind these were four trusted slaves bearing the bed upon which the supposed dead body lay. The bed and its burden were cov-

ered with a rich purple pall strewn with wood violets and white meadow blossoms. Behind walked other slaves, bearing vessels of oil and an urn in which to place the ashes of the dead. Then followed Æson and Alcimedede and the older women of the household, with bowed heads and well-simulated grief.

In a pleasant corner of the garden stood the funeral pyre, built of sweet-scented woods and twined about with flowering vines. The bed was lifted upon it. The oil was poured over the dried branches at its base. Ornaments and gifts, such as a child would like, were hung here and there around the bed. While the company stood at a distance, the flutes began to play a mournful dirge, and a lighted torch was thrown among the heaped-up branches. The flames spread quickly, and as the sun arose and gilded the top of Mount Pelion, the consuming fire shot upward and in-wrapped the pyre as with a blazing mantle.

Two days thereafter an officer of the king, with a guard of soldiers, rode out to Æson's humble home. He came boldly into the house without invitation.

"Where is Jason, your young son?" he asked. "I have come to carry him to the king."

Alcimedede silently arose, and going into an inner room, returned, bearing a funeral urn. Upon its side were painted the symbols of Jason's name.

“Behold his ashes,” she said.

Then the officer observed the signs of mourning about the house and the black garbs and solemn faces of the serving women. He turned without further words and went back to Iolcus, bearing the report to Pelias that the child whom he sought to destroy was already dead.

ADVENTURE XII

THE TRAINING OF A HERO

Now Jason, far from being dead, was safe and well in Cheiron's fair-hewn cavern, high on the rugged steps of Pelion. Into that rocky home the morning sun shone brightly, driving the shadows far back and causing the walls and low-vaulted roof to glisten as though set with a thousand diamonds. Upon the uneven floor fragrant leaves and sweet-smelling herbs were cast, and here and there soft furry rugs were laid, the skins of mountain lions and of shaggy bears. Around the walls couches and pleasant seats were placed; and in the corner farthest from the door a great fireplace yawned, where, on chilly days or when the sun was hidden, a cheerful fire glowed and crackled and cast its ruddy light upon all within that comfortable place.

The wise Cheiron and the guileless child lived happily, like two devoted friends whom naught could separate. Sometimes a herdsman or a wild Centaur from the glens below would come, bring-

ing them meat and fruit, or some rare delicacy as honey from the wood bees' hive, or speckled trout from the mountain brooks. Sometimes others of his race would visit Cheiron, and these would dance on the moss-grown lawn before the door, while he would offer sweet sacrifice to their gods and tell them many a tale of ancient days.

Thus did Jason pass the joyous days of childhood, nor did he long remember his doting father or his gentle mother, whose prayers for him never ceased. Each day he grew in strength and comeliness, and each day he learned some new lesson of skill or wisdom. For Cheiron taught him the lore of the older days: how the world was formed, and how men came to live thereon; and he told him of the heroes who battled valiantly for the things that are just and true, and how they won lasting fame thereby.

He taught him also how to exercise his body so that his form would be graceful and his limbs strong and beautiful. He walked with him in the wild-wood and showed him how the birds built their nests, and how the plants grew and each had its own nature and use. They wandered together in the wild glens of the mountain, they descended into rocky gorges, and climbed to the tops of dizzy peaks; and wherever they went, the lad performed

some act or learned some lesson that added to his strength or his stature or his wisdom.

He learned how to choose the best wood for a bow, and how to shape it and season it into a useful and deadly thing. He learned what reeds were the best for arrows, and how to tip them with points of stone, and feather them so they would fly straight to the mark.

Then as he grew older he loved to ramble in the deeper and more dangerous parts of the woods, hunting the fiercest beasts from their hiding places; and woe to the surly bear or the lurking mountain lion that crossed his path. To the gentle things among the trees and rocks he was always gentle; but to things savage and rude he gave no mercy, dealing with them as he thought they deserved. Sometimes he carried home some nestling wood pigeons or a brace of baby squirrels, which he petted and taught to love him. Once he brought to the cavern a young leopard, spitting and fighting, which he tamed into such gentleness that it followed him like a dog. Thus all the wild things of the mountain came to know the young hero, and he lived in their midst and scarcely wished it otherwise.

At length, however, after he had grown to the stature of a man and the down on his cheek had begun to darken, his love for the woody solitudes grew

less. Sometimes he spent whole days gazing out upon the sea and wondering what mysteries were hidden far away beyond the ken of his eye. Sometimes, from the opposite slope of the mountain, he looked down upon the green pastures and blossoming orchards of the plain and upon the city of Iolcus nestling close at Pelion's base; and he wondered what manner of life was there. But all this time Cheiron had told him nothing of his birth or his parents or the mighty race from which he had sprung.

One day, in the very early spring, as he wandered lonely through the budding woods, he was suddenly aware of a sweetness in the air pleasanter by far than the perfume of rarest flowers. Then a burst of music fell upon his ear, so low, so full of all the harmonies, that he stood entranced and forgetful of his very self. As he listened, he saw a maiden with sandaled feet and skirts tucked up tripping down the path to meet him. Her long hair fell in golden waves upon her shoulders, and her cheeks were fairer than the dawn of a summer day. In her hands she held an unstrung bow, and on her back was a quiver filled with sharp-tipped arrows.

"It is one of Diana's maidens," thought Jason; "or mayhap it is Diana herself," and with thumping heart he stepped aside, not knowing how to greet her.

“Tell me,” she said, “have you seen any of my folk go down this way to-day?”

Then Jason saw that her eyes were heavenly blue; and when he looked into them he was filled with trembling wonder and awe. He stammered. His tongue seemed palsied. He could not speak a word.

Then she, smiling, but with a half-reproachful air, spoke again: “Is this the place for one like you to spend his days? Why do you stand here idle in the shade while the world is waiting for you to do some noble deed? Tell me your name and why you mingle not with other men; for surely your looks betray that you are of the race of heroes.”

The young man, grown braver, answered her awkwardly as one unused to talk with ladies. “My name is Jason,” he said; “and I live in a cave up here with mighty Cheiron. I know not what you mean by noble deeds; and it is pleasanter, I think, to spend the days here in the free air of Pelion than to mingle with men in the crowded town.”

“Hear me, Jason,” said the lady. “Life is not pleasure; it is duty. Labor is the lot of man, and fame is for him who will win it. Tarry here no longer. Go, and tell Cheiron that the time has come for you to be a man and the doer of worthy things. Tell him that I, Juno, the queen of gods and men,

have bidden you to go forth and win a name that shall never be forgotten."

As she spoke these words a cloud of rainbow hue inwrapped the glorious lady, and when Jason raised his eyes she had vanished. He stood for a while, dazed and trembling, like one awaking from a wondrous dream. Then he turned and went thoughtfully home. There he found Cheiron, sitting in his great armchair before the blazing fire and chanting a hymn to the gods.

"My good father," said Jason, "the time has come that I must leave you;" and then he told him all that he had seen and heard.

"It is well," answered the Centaur. "This is the day to which I have long looked forward. You must know now who you are and what the duty is that lies before you."

Then he told the young man the story of his birth and lineage, and how Æson, his father, had hidden him away from false Pelias until he should be strong enough to claim his heritage and win it. "When your father brought you to me and placed you in my arms, I knew you," said Cheiron, "and I knew that your life was to be a glorious one. So I taught you the lore of the gods and whatsoever might make you both wise and strong, a lover of truth and justice, and a doer of noble deeds. And

now your schooldays are ended and you are ready for the battle that you must fight and win. Tomorrow you shall leave me. Go boldly down into Iolcus, demand your kingdom from Pelias, and the Mighty Ones will help you to victory."

The Centaur arose from his chair, and going to his treasure chest took therefrom some glittering jewels which he handed to Jason. "Here," said he, "is a slender golden chain with precious stones attached to it and a tiny horn and ring hanging thereto. It was around your neck when your father brought you hither. Take the precious trinkets with you; they will be the sign by which your father and mother will know you."

All the rest of that day the two sat on the couches in that pleasant, lighted place, talking of the things that had been and the things that should be, and singing for the last time together the songs that had gladdened them so often before. And when the evening came they betook themselves with quiet minds to rest, feeling no regrets for the past and having no fears for the morrow.

ADVENTURE XIII

THE FORDING OF THE TORRENT

WHEN at length the sun again sent his morning beams through the broad door of Cheiron's cavern, Jason arose and clad himself for his journey. Over his shoulders he threw a short cloak, dyed richly blue and embroidered with threads of gold, and on his head he placed a jaunty cap, dark gray, with an eagle's plume above it. On his feet he buckled light sandals which Cheiron himself had fashioned from a wild boar's hide. In his hands he took the bow that had been his joy in many a hunt; and on his shoulder he slung his well-filled quiver, gay with the feathered tips of deadly arrows. Then, bidding farewell to Cheiron, bowing his head for the old man's blessing, he started forth to enter the busy world of which he had seen so little.

There had been rain during the night. The trees dripped moisture upon his head as he hopefully journeyed along the crooked path which led through the well-known wood. The earth and the crannies in the rocks were charged with water. Every moun-

tain stream was a roaring torrent. But from the soil the sweet odors of spring arose, and the woods were vocal with the blithesome music of birds and waterfalls and whispering breezes.

The way was long and hard. It was past noon when Jason reached the lower and gentler slopes of the mountain. The sun was halfway down to its place of setting when he left the forest behind and came out into the opener country. His road was still only a narrow footpath winding among rocks and trees, but he knew that by following it he was drawing nearer every moment to Iolcus.

At length, however, he came to that which seemed to bar his going farther. It was the Anaurus, in summer a shallow brook trickling in the sand, but now a mighty torrent rushing toward the sea. Jason stood on the bank and watched the dashing, yellow waves as they raged and swirled in the rocky channel. He went first up the stream and then down, looking for a place where the water flowed less furiously. As he was standing under the lee of a great rock and watching the eddies where the torrent paused in its swiftness, he heard a shrill, cracked voice behind him. He turned and saw an old, old woman approaching. She was wrinkled and gray and toothless, and she hobbled awkwardly along on a single crutch.

She came up trembling and breathless, and mumbling complaints from between her thin lips.

"Nobody has pity on a poor old thing like me," she said. "I might drown in this muddy stream and nobody would care."

"Good mother," said Jason, "I am only a stranger here, but I will help you if I can. What do you wish me to do?"

"Carry me across the Anaurus," was the answer. "I am old and lame and but a woman, and I cannot swim."

"Indeed," said Jason, "how can I carry you across? The finest swimmer in Greece would have enough to do to stem those eddies alone, and how could he carry another?"

"You may think so," answered the old woman, "but you have not tried it. If you leave me on this side of the stream, I shall perish with hunger and cold. But it is always so. Nobody cares for the ugly and the old," and with that she fell to weeping most bitterly.

The heart of the young hero was touched. "Come here, then," he said. "Put your arms about my neck, and as I leap into the torrent throw yourself upon my shoulders."

The old woman did so, and as Jason felt her long, gaunt arms about him, and saw her skinny



“He leaped boldly into the swirling eddies.”

hands clasped across his breast, he muttered a brief prayer to Jupiter to save him from the flood. Then he leaped boldly into the swirling eddies and struck out with all his strength for the farther shore. At first the weight of the old woman upon his shoulders hindered him and dragged him down; but as he battled with the waves she seemed to grow lighter, and soon, when he was almost overwhelmed in the fury of a whirlpool, he felt the scrawny arms holding him up and bearing him safely along.

At length the farther bank was reached. Jason, breathless and dazed, crept out upon the dry land and fell gasping upon the grass. He felt the arms of the old woman relax; he heard her mumbled thanks as she shook the water from her garments; but for some moments he was too weak to stir or look around.

As strength returned to him, however, he opened his eyes and arose staggering, as one just roused from sleep. He glanced toward the place where the woman stood, and lo! instead of an old hag, he saw the glorious being who had accosted him on the mountain side. Her face beamed with heavenly beauty, and her blue eyes smiled sweetly upon him as she spoke.

“Jason,” she said, “I thank you again for carrying me across the raging stream. He that is mind-

ful of the old and poor knows not whom he is befriending.”

But Jason stood trembling and amazed before the wondrous lady, and his lips could find no words for utterance. Then she spoke again:—

“The time is ripe for action, Jason, and I will be your strong helper. Rest to-night at some wayside cottage, and to-morrow go bravely into the city. Seek the king as he sits in his great hall, and demand from him the kingdom that he wrested from your father, Æson. I will go before you and prepare the people to receive you. And no matter what perils may threaten you, remember that I, Juno, am always near to help you.”

Then suddenly she faded in a cloud of violet mist, and Jason found himself shivering with cold and standing alone on the bank of raging Anaurus. And now he noticed for the first time that he had lost one of his sandals while struggling with the stream. But he was not unused to such accidents, and he scarcely deemed it worth a thought, whether his feet were bare or shod.

He easily regained the footpath, which soon widened into a pleasant road; and walking briskly onward he came at sunset to the brow of a little hill from which he could see the walls and the high towers of Iolcus. Below the hill there was a gray

farmhouse nestling among fruit trees, and around it was a pretty garden, gay with the first flowers of spring. In the garden an old man with kindly face was leaning upon his hoe, seeming pleased with the day's work just completed. When Jason drew near and asked him for a night's lodging, his eyes looked the welcome which his tongue expressed, and he led the young man straightway into the cottage.

"We live a simple life," said he, "far from the city's busy strife; and it gladdens our hearts to entertain travelers whether they be known to us or strange."

Then the old man's wife came forward to welcome their guest. She was tall and fair and seeming younger than her years, and her words and manners plainly showed that she was gentle born.

With these kind people Jason spent the night. And as they sat at meals they talked of many things both strange and common, and neither asked the other any questions concerning his name or history. Yet Jason knew that it was his father and mother who were his hosts that night; and strange memories that had lain long slumbering in his mind came dimly to him as he looked around upon the varied objects which his childhood had known so well.

ADVENTURE XIV

“ONE FOOT SANDALED AND THE OTHER BARE”

EARLY on the morrow Jason made ready to renew his journey. He stood in the doorway, hesitating whether he should make himself known to his parents or wait until another time. It was then that old Æson first noticed that his guest wore a single sandal, and he spoke of it, delicately, as fearing to give offense.

“It does not matter,” said Jason, lightly. “I lost the other in the Anaurus, and I would cast this one away were it not a keepsake from my foster father.”

“Let me lend you a pair of my own,” said the old man; but as he looked at Jason’s broad ankles and sturdy limbs, and thought how large the sandals must be to fit such feet, he saw the foolishness of his offer.

“I thank you,” answered Jason. “To walk with one foot bare does not trouble me half so much as

the thought of going alone to Iolcus. Come, put on your cloak and bear me company awhile."

The old man cheerfully assented and, leaning upon his staff, went hobbling along by the side of his guest, talking garrulously about his garden vegetables and the prospects of the growing crops. To walk with one so young and strong and, withal, so pleasant and attentive, was a thing so rare to him that he forgot himself entirely. It was not until the high walls and the city gates loomed up before them that he realized how far he had come.

"Alas!" he said, stopping short in the middle of the road, "I must now bid you good-by. It is many years since I last passed through those gates, banished from my kingdom by the usurping Pelias. I dare not go a step farther."

Then Jason took from his neck the jeweled chain and the ring and horn that Cheiron had given him, and held them up before the eyes of Æson.

"Father," he cried, "do you remember these and the lisping child who wore them round his neck when you hid him away with wise Cheiron on Pelion's woody heights?"

The old man gazed speechless, first at the princely trinkets and then into the eyes of his princely son. Then, with a wild cry, he threw his arms about Jason's neck and kissed him again and again, softly

murmuring the pet names by which he had called him in his babyhood. And Jason, supporting his bent and trembling form, spoke soothingly to him and returned his loving caresses.

"Now come with me," he said, as Æson grew calmer and he himself regained his courage. "Come with me, and this day shall Pelias restore your rights and mine."

"I have no mind of my own, my son," answered Æson. "I will go wherever you may lead."

So the two went boldly through the gates, and no man questioned them.

As they passed along the street they saw the people standing here and there in anxious groups and talking low among themselves as if fearful of being overheard. They noticed that the shops were closed and no labor was being done, while idle workmen lounged in the doorways, muttering and complaining about the tyranny of the rich. Then, as they came to the market place, they observed a great crowd gathered around an old, white-haired man, who was speaking to them from the base of Jupiter's statue.

"In the days of Cretheus and of Æson," he was saying, "men lived happily in Iolcus, nor ever felt the touch of poverty or feared the tyrant's hand; but since this false-hearted Pelias seized the throne,

all is changed. You are scourged to your tasks, your wives and children perish with hunger, the gods themselves are forgotten. Will you endure such things longer? Will you suffer this tyrant still to crush you in the dust?"

"No, no, no!" cried the crowd.

"Down with Pelias, the usurper!" cried some.

The old man went on speaking.

"This day," he said, "there is a hero in your midst, none other than Jason, the son of King Æson, whom all supposed to be dead. He will restore the glorious kingdom of his grandfather. He will free you from the chains of bondage. Stand by him. Trust him to deliver you."

The crowd shouted and swayed hither and thither, and every man seemed as though bereft of his senses. In the midst of the great tumult the speaker disappeared, and Jason, as he looked to see which way he had gone, was aware of a glorious being passing near him,—blue-eyed and golden-haired, and with garments more beautiful than the rainbow or the sunset clouds in summer.

"Did I not say that I would prepare the way for you?" she whispered.

Then she was gone; but Jason knew that it was Juno, and that she and the old man haranguing the people were the same.

The surging crowd became denser and wilder; but as Jason mingled with the multitude there were few who noticed that he was a stranger in Iolcus. Fully a head taller than any of those who jostled against him, strong-limbed and broad-shouldered, he was the very man whom you would have chosen for a hero. Yet none who observed him in his uncouth garb or heard his soft, low words deemed him anything but an awkward herdsman fresh from the green pastures of Thessaly. Nevertheless, full of his high purpose, he strode onward toward the palace of the king; while his father, poor old Æson, clung to his arm and hobbled helplessly by his side.

As though moved by one thought the crowd was already gathering before the palace. But Jason pushed his way through, and with a look that spoke of power, strode past the guards and straight into the hall where Pelias sat unmindful of the storm without.

Clad in scarlet robes, with a jeweled crown upon his head, the false king looked down from his ivory throne and gayly jested with his friends.

"I am told that the people want their rights," he said. "Tell them they shall have the only right that belongs to them,—the right to labor like slaves and to die like dogs at the king's command."

Just then a noise at the door caused him to look

around. There, striding toward the throne, was a tall, young stranger clad in a blue cloak and a cap of gray and — and “with one foot sandaled and the other bare!”

In his surprise and fright the king sprang up, as though to rush in terror from his throne. Then bethinking himself, he sat down again and roughly accosted the intruder.

“Who are you that dare come into the presence of the king without his due permission?” he cried.

But Jason paused not until he stood with his unsandaled foot on the marble step before the throne. Then, while the people came crowding in behind him, he answered: “Pelias, I am he whose heritage you have stolen, and I have come to bid you give up the throne that you have held so long by fraud and force. I am Jason, the son of your brother Æson. He is the rightful king of Iolcus, and he it is who stands here by my side. Come down from the high seat from which you drove him so unlawfully, and let him be restored to the place that is justly his own.”

Pelias saw the crowd of angry workmen surging into the hall, and as he heard their mutterings and half-concealed threats, his heart failed him through fear. “Surely,” he thought to himself, “it will profit nothing to resist by force this one-

sandaled man of whom the gods warned me long time ago."

He tried to appear calm and unconcerned. He tried to appear terrible, like a king dealing vengeance upon his foes. But his hands trembled, and the livid scar upon his cheek glowed horribly in its ghastly ugliness. He was about to speak, but his lips trembled, and he knew not what to say. Then an officer who stood behind him whispered: "Put them off with fair promises, if you can. It is your only hope, for all Iolcus has risen against you."

Now Pelias was well skilled in cunning, and this advice pleased him well. So with well-pretended joy he stepped down from his high seat and grasped the hand of Jason.

"O nephew, so long mourned as dead," he cried warmly, "I greet you as a hero returned to claim and enjoy that which is his own. Right gladly will I lay aside the burdens that have so long robbed me of the joys of life. Right gladly will I resign to your father the throne which he long ago gave up to me, and which I have held in loving trust for him and you."

Then, seeing old Æson standing pale and trembling before him, he embraced him lovingly and said: "And you, my dear honored brother, let me welcome you also to the halls wherein your face has

been too long a stranger. How happy you must be that thus your noble son has at length returned to be the prop of your declining years! This throne is still yours, and in due time you shall again sit upon it."

Poor Æson feebly returned the false king's greetings, forgetting all the past and remembering only that it was his brother who stood before him.

"I thank you, Pelias, for your welcome," he said. "I thank you also for your offer of the throne. But I have no wish to change my present way of life or try again the thankless task of ruling men. Here is my son; the heritage is his. Resign the throne in due time to him, but be not overhasty. Hold the trust a little longer, if you wish, until Jason shall become acquainted with the city and the people, and shall know their needs. A day or two, or a week, will make little difference."

"True, brother," said Pelias, "it is not well that so great a business should be performed too hastily. We are old men, and our years are few. But this your son has long life before him, and there is much glory for him to win outside of the narrow walls of Iolcus. As for the matter of the kingship, it can well rest, as you say, for a day or two, while you sit as guests in my halls and we recall the memories of

other years. Then I will step quietly down, and Jason shall have his own."

This smooth-tongued speech seemed well pleasing both to Jason and his father, and it had no small effect upon the men of Iolcus, who stood listening and wondering whether, after all, Pelias were so bad a king as they had thought. One by one the leaders of the crowd, who had come expecting to make trouble, turned silently around and went homeward, saying to one another, "Let us trust the young hero, Jason. He will redress our wrongs."

Thus Jason and his father became the guests of Pelias in the pleasant halls that were by right their own. But the thought that lay uppermost in the mind of the false king was how he might rid himself of the troublesome young hero who had come so suddenly to disturb his pleasure. "I shall have no peace nor safety," he said, "while this one-sandaled man remains in Iolcus."

ADVENTURE XV

THE PERILOUS QUEST

As the sun went down that day, there was much merriment in the marble home of Pelias; for the false king had made a feast in honor of his nephew, whose name was on every tongue in Iolcus. Merrily the hours passed. The torches were lighted, and as darkness filled the streets they flared and smoked and glowed redly in the high-roofed halls. Flute and harp made music to the flitting feet of dancing maidens, and minstrels sang wondrous songs of the glory of ancient days or told of the deeds of deathless heroes and the doings of the gods. Young Jason, unconcerned, sat by his uncle's side, enjoying the strange, new pleasures of the hour; and the man of the livid face amused him with many an idle jest and many a tale of mirth that made him half forget the noble aims which had hitherto urged him forward.

“ I will next tell you a story which will make you weep rather than laugh,” said Pelias. “ It is of old

King Athamas, your grandfather's brother, and of the wonderful golden ram that carried his two children, Phrixus and Helle, over the sea. It is a rare, good story which stirs the heart of every one that listens to it."

"I have already heard it often," said Jason. "Cheiron the Centaur used to tell it to me as we sat by the cheerful fire in his cave far up the side of Pelion. But there are two things which his story did not explain and which I have often wished to know."

"What are they?" asked Pelias.

"First, I should like to know what was the end of mad King Athamas; and second, I should like to hear what became of Phrixus and of the golden fleece," answered Jason.

"Well, as for King Athamas," said Pelias, "his story is soon told. When you last heard of him was he not sitting in his white-walled palace, moaning and weeping and utterly bereft of his senses? Well, matters soon grew worse and worse in Orchomenus, and the people loudly complained because they had no king. At last the soothsayers declared that all their misfortunes had befallen them because of the anger of Jupiter concerning the fate of Phrixus and Helle; and they said that the Mighty One could never be appeased until

Athamas himself had been offered as a sacrifice on his altar.

“Then the Minyan people loudly demanded that this thing should be done. ‘For what is the life of a mad king,’ said they, ‘compared with the lives of our children?’ But when the soothsayers went to fetch poor Athamas to the sacrifice, behold, he had fled into the forest.

“He wandered long through the great woods, moaning and weeping and praying the Mighty Ones to remove the curse of madness from him. At length Jupiter took pity on him and declared that whenever the wild beasts should feed him, his senses would be restored, even though the curse against his family might not be removed.

“Now as Athamas was passing through a lone and savage place he saw some wolves devouring the body of a deer. He ran toward them, shouting, and the beasts fled, leaving the half-eaten carcass behind. Athamas, being almost famished with hunger, knelt down and greedily gnawed the flesh from the bones; and lo! his senses returned to him — the wild beasts had fed him.

“Nevertheless the curse that was laid upon his house remained. For it was decreed that no one of his race should sit upon his throne, and that all who claimed to be descended from him should be sacri-

ficed upon the altar of Jupiter, the relentless father of the gods. But this curse may be removed and the family of Athamas forgiven if only some hero shall bring back to Greece the golden fleece that hangs in the treasure house of King Æetes in the distant land of Colchis."

When Pelias had ended this story, he looked straight into the eyes of Jason to read if possible the thoughts that were stirring in his mind. But Jason seemed unmoved, and carelessly asked whether it was known to a certainty that the fleece was still in Colchis among the treasures of the king.

"There is no doubt about it," answered Pelias. "For not three months ago a man came to Iolcus who said that he was the son of Phrixus. I questioned him with much care and found that he spoke the truth. His name is Argus, and he was then on his way to Orchomenus to claim the kingdom of his grandfather, Athamas. He it was who told me all about the life of Phrixus in Æea. It seems that old King Æetes took a great fancy to him and gave him his eldest daughter, Chalciopé, to be his wife. As the king's son-in-law he won great renown, and bore the standard of the Colchian folk in many a hard-fought battle with the savage people of the neighboring hills. At last, as he lay on his bed of death, he bade this same Argus, his son, to come to Greece

and claim his heritage from the Minyan folk of old Orchomenus.

“Now I doubt if Argus can make good his claim, for the curse of Athamas rests on him also. But he is a truthful man, and he told me all about the wondrous fleece, a treasure more precious than all the riches of Greece. He told me how it still hangs where old Æetes placed it, in the inner chamber of his treasure house. There it is guarded day and night by a fierce dragon that never sleeps.”

And now when Pelias looked into the eyes of the young hero, he saw that strange thoughts were moving him and that a heroic purpose was being formed within his mind.

“If I were a young man, strong and ambitious as I once was,” Pelias went on, “I would gather the young heroes of Greece together and lead them to distant Æa, and I would bring home the golden fleece. Thus I would remove the curse from the house of Athamas, and at the same time win great wealth and never-dying fame. But I am old, and they say that the race of heroes is dying out, and that young men no longer aspire to make themselves a name.”

Then Jason arose, his face all aglow and his heart beating fast because of the resolve which had suddenly taken hold of him. Silent, he strode up

and down through the length of the spacious hall, while the torches flared brightly and the maidens danced merrily and the music swelled into a mighty chorus. Thrice he strode to and fro as though forgetful of everything save the mighty thought that had come into his mind. Then he seated himself again by the false king's side, and said : —

“You are right, Pelias. To go in quest of the golden fleece and to bring it in triumph back to Greece is a deed the worthiest of any that I know. I, Jason, the son of Æson, will undertake that quest, and mayhap if only ten brave men will aid me, we shall win glory thereby, and everlasting fame.”

The false king leaped to his feet and seized his nephew's hand. “Jason,” he said, “may Father Jupiter bless your undertaking and bring you safe again to your kingdom and your friends! Surely great honor shall be yours, and power such as no king before you has ever known. To-morrow your father Æson shall take my place on the throne to rule over Iolcus in his own right till your return.”

“Nay, uncle,” said Jason, warmly, “my father has no joy in ruling men. It is you who must still govern Iolcus and hold my kingdom in trust for me while I make this perilous quest. Perhaps I shall die in a foreign land, perhaps the waves of some unknown sea shall roll above my head; but

never until I return with the precious fleece will I require my heritage at your hand."

Pelias had gained all that he desired. His face beamed with pleasure and his words were honeyed and kind as he hung a rich, golden chain about Jason's neck, and cried, "Behold, here is the hero who will bring to us the golden fleece."

Then all the people shouted their delight, and the strains of music waxed louder and louder, while the praise of Jason and of his comeliness and valor was upon every tongue.

ADVENTURE XVI

THE BUILDING OF THE ARGO

FORTHWITH Pelias sent messengers into every town of Greece to invite the heroes to come and join Jason in his perilous quest. The first to hear the call was Argus, the son of Phrixus. For his kinsmen in old Orchomenus would not receive him, but said that he must atone on the altar of Jupiter for the evil deeds of his grandsire, Athamas. He had escaped from them barely with his life, and now he made haste to offer his help to Jason.

“Welcome, cousin Argus, welcome,” said Jason. “Surely the gods have sent you; for among all the Minyan heroes there is none other that knows so much about the golden fleece and the city wherein it is kept.”

“Let me build the ship that is to carry you and your heroes to distant *Æa*,” said Argus.

“Gladly will I have you do so,” answered the prince. “See that you make it large and strong and swift-sailing. For no other ship has ever ventured upon those wild and unknown seas.”

So Argus went out with ax and saw and square and measuring line, and cut down trees with which to build the ship. He drew them to the beach and with patient labor hewed and framed them, marking out the keel and shaping the hull as he had often seen them on the small boats that sailed the narrow bays of Greece.

One day as he was toiling painfully at his task, and but little pleased with what he had done, he was surprised to see a lady walking toward him and looking at the timbers that lay scattered on the beach. She was tall and stately. She wore a long, gray cloak, and her hood, which was drawn loosely over her head, concealed her face and features. She came slowly toward the spot where Argus was at work, and now and then she stopped to scan some rough-hewn beam or look at the half-finished hull that lay close by the water's edge.

"What sort of thing is this which you are trying to build?" she asked.

"I am building a ship," said Argus, doubtfully. "I am building a ship to carry Prince Jason and the heroes of the Minyan race when they sail in quest of the golden fleece."

"Indeed!" said the lady, and her voice seemed full of scorn, "and how long do you think so rude a hulk will hold together when buffeted by the waves

of the open sea? How many heroes do you think can sit on its benches, plying the long oars?"

"Gentle lady," answered Argus, humbly, "this hulk, as you call it, may be rude and frail, and the benches for the rowers may be few, yet I do the best I can and trust the rest to the Mighty Ones above us. I know not how many heroes will embark for *ÆEa*, neither do I know what storms they will encounter; but I build with true intent, hoping —"

He ended his speech abruptly, for as he looked at the lady she seemed to vanish suddenly, and in her stead there stood a maiden, clad in flowing robes, with a spear in her hand and a wondrous shield upon her left arm. Upon her head was a helmet of brass, and she wore a breastplate on which was painted the face of the dread-inspiring Gorgon surrounded by twining serpents. The face of the maiden was full of beauty and sweet dignity, and her gray eyes beamed with the light that glows only in the hearts of those who plan and do noble things. Argus knew at once that she was none other than Athena, in whom all wisdom dwells, and he stood with uncovered head, wrapt in wonder.

"Argus," said the glorious maiden, "I know the wishes of your heart, and I will help you. Throw now all these puny, awkward things away, and begin your ship anew, and upon a larger and better pattern. For many are the heroes who will undertake

the quest with Jason, and the way to *Æa*, as you know, lies over perilous seas where no sail has ever yet been spread. Come with me and I will show you where to find the materials for your vessel and how to put them together so as to secure strength, beauty, and speed."

So Argus went with her, and she taught him all the lore of the builders of ships. For the hull and the beams of his vessel he chose the goodliest oaks from the slopes of old Mount Pelion; for the oars, he found no lack of cedars, straight-grained and without knots or flaws; and for the mast, he cut a noble pine, slender and tall, and supple as a sword of steel. All these things, with whatsoever else was needed, he caused to be carried down to the shore of the sea, where it approaches nearest to Iolcus, and soon there appeared upon the sands the framework of a ship the like of which, for size and strength, no man had ever seen.

When at length the hull was finished and the long benches for the rowers were arranged and the tholes for the oars were set in their places, Argus fashioned a rudder and hung it, as Athena directed, from the stern. Then from an oaken branch which she gave him he carved the image of a face — the face of Athena herself — and fastened it upon the prow of the vessel.



Argus and Athena.

“The branch from which you have formed this image,” said the wise maiden, “is from the sacred talking oak that grows by the temple of Jupiter in far-away Dodona. In times of danger or of doubt it will speak to the heroes, answering their questions and pointing out the way that they must go.”

At last the wonderful ship was finished, and its builder stood proudly beside it and surveyed his handiwork. From stem to stern there was no flaw nor imperfection, nor was anything lacking that could make it more beautiful or strong or swift.

“What shall we name this greatest of all ships?” asked Jason, when he came down to the shore one day to view the finished work.

Then to his great surprise the oaken image on the prow spoke out and answered, “Call it *Argo*, in honor of its worthy builder.”

“That we will do,” cried Jason, “and so long as ships sail the sea, the name of the son of Phrixus shall not be forgotten.”

Now while the *Argo* was being built and equipped, the heroes began to arrive in Iolcus. The most of them were of the Minyan race, and they came singly and by twos and by threes. Many made their journey on foot, traveling by devious ways over the mountains and through lands seldom visited and little known to men. A few came on horseback, riding fear-

lessly through forests and fens and frightful solitudes. But the greater number came in small ships, keeping always within sight of the shore and loitering awhile at every little seaport on their way.

No pains were spared in Iolcus to entertain these strangers in a manner befitting their noble rank. In the palace of the king, false Pelias welcomed them with every show of friendship, and left nothing undone that could add to their comfort or enjoyment. Even in Æson's country home, where Jason spent his leisure hours, lodgings were provided for not a few, and good cheer and happy fellowship gave pleasure to the fleeting hours. The streets of Iolcus were gay with banners; and the people were again happy and contented, for every one profited in some way by the presence of the heroes.

ADVENTURE XVII

THE DEPARTURE OF THE HEROES

At length the day arrived when all things were ready for the sailing. Scarcely had the dim dawn appeared when every one in Iolcus was astir. The long street through which the heroes were to pass, as well as the road that led to the beach where *Argo* lay, was lined with throngs of people anxious to see Prince Jason and his noble comrades. They had not long to wait; for, just as the sun's first rays gilded the top of Mount Pelion, the sound of a trumpet was heard far up the street, mingled with the shouting of many voices. It was the signal of the coming of the heroes.

Between the surging crowds they marched, in orderly array, nor has the world ever seen a company more glorious. Their helmets and shields were wreathed with twining vines and flowers, and from their spears floated bright ribbons or other rich tokens, the farewell gifts of loving friends. Their armor was polished till it shone like the

sun, and their steel-bright swords glittered in the gray light of the morning. The young men shouted with joy as they passed, and the girls cast red roses at their feet and sang rare songs of battle and of victory.

First and foremost in that grand company was Jason. Taller by a hand's breadth than any other of the heroes save one alone, he walked with head erect and eyes flashing with joy and pride of that promising hour. He was clad in princely garb. A helmet of reddest bronze was upon his head, and the bow which Cheiron had given him was in his hands. Like a young lion he walked between the throngs of admiring people, while they with one accord shouted their good wishes and prayed that he might have a happy voyage and a quick return.

Next in the place of honor came Hercules, whose deeds even then were the talk of all the world. He was taller by far than Jason, and in courage and strength he excelled all other men. He wore upon his shoulders a lion's skin which he had taken from the beast itself in far Nemea. In his hand he carried a huge club, knotted and gnarled and showing signs of much use. He wore no helmet, but his head was covered with long, black curls held in place by a band of brass curiously inwrought with figures of beasts and fearful monsters.

On each side of this matchless hero walked a young man, carrying his arms and ready to perform any service he should require. The one on the right was Hylas, the favorite of Hercules. His face was as fair as that of any maiden, and his form was as perfect as that of Apollo. His yellow hair, curled thick about his head, seemed like a golden crown; and he was richly clad in garments of blue, embroidered with silver thread. Besides his master's short sword, he carried his own bow and a quiver of sharp-pointed arrows. On the other side of the hero walked Ephebus, a slender warrior but well skilled with the sword and brave beyond his fellows. As these two marched beside their master the tips of the long plumes in their helmets scarcely reached the level of his shoulders, so tall was he compared with other men.

Next in the grand array came those world-famous twins, Castor and Pollux, whose love for each other was such that never for a day could they be separated. They walked erect and proud, their polished helmets glittering in the sun, and their horse-hair plumes floating in the morning wind above their shoulders. Behind them walked another pair of twins, less famous, who were destined at a future time to be their bane. The one was Idas, a great boaster, who next to Hercules was said to be the

strongest of men. The other was Lynceus, whose sharp eyes could see through a wall of stone, or find treasures buried deep beneath the soil.

Behind these walked Neleus, the fair-faced brother of Pelias, whom Jason's call had lured from his seaside home in distant Pylos. His long hair was white with age, but his eyes were bright with heroic fire, and his step was as firm and quick as on that day when he ran to the succor of his livid-faced brother in the market place of Iolcus. By his side was his son Nestor, a young man, lithe and strong, who in after years would be the counselor of other heroes scarcely less renowned than these with whom he was now adventuring.

Then followed, in the order of their rank, many other heroes whose deeds are related in ancient story: Laertes, the king of Ithaca, whose thoughts were all at home with his baby son, Ulysses, and his vines and blossoming orchards; Meleager, the fair-haired prince of the Calydonian woods; Æsculapius, who first taught men the art of healing sickness; Arcas, the famous hunter, with his bow of wood and brass and his quiver of leopard's skin well filled with death-dealing arrows; Peleus and Telamon, two brothers of renown, the grandsons of Cheiron the Centaur; Polyphemus, the friend of Hercules; Mopsus, the soothsayer, who understood

the language of birds; Tiphys and Ancæus, seamen of wide repute; Admetus, the husband of Alcestis, fairest of the daughters of false King Pelias; and Theseus, the black-haired prince of Athens, already famous for deeds of valor surpassing those of others of his age.

There were also men of lesser note — young heroes fearless and discreet — whose names I need not now recount. But toward the rear, where King Pelias rode in his gilded car, there walked a few heroes whose fame was scarcely surpassed by that of Hercules himself. Among them was Atalanta, the swift-running maiden from the Arcadian hills. Golden-haired, gray-eyed, and tall she was, and in her hands she carried the well-shaped bow with which she was wont to follow Diana in many a wild chase of timid deer or savage beast.

By her side walked Orpheus, the sweetest singer that the world has ever known. Neither arms nor armor did he bear, but in his hands he carried a wondrous lyre the like of which no man has ever seen. And it is said that when he sang, playing upon this lyre, the birds and beasts would come to listen, the trees and rocks would follow him, and the hearts of savage men would melt with tenderness and awe.

Last of all came two brothers, less famed than

some, and yet of more than mortal mold. They were Zetes and Calais, the sons of the North Wind. Upon the ankles of each were strong wings radiant with scales of gold; their eyes glowed like living coals beneath their shaggy brows; and their long, black hair grew in glossy masses from their heads and necks, and even halfway down their backs. They followed, floating in the air, as a sort of rear guard to the procession of heroes, their wings keeping time with the music of flute and lyre, and their hair streaming far behind them in the morning breeze.

Thus onward the heroes marched, with steady steps and clanging armor and hearts filled with thoughts of the daring quest that was now begun. They passed out of the city through the south gateway and down the dusty road that led to the shore of the sea. There, high on the beach, sat the mighty *Argo*, new-painted and bright with bands of blue and gold, shining in the light of the morning sun. When the heroes saw her, they shouted till the woods and hills rang with the echoes, and the gray sea answered with many enticing calls.

"Let nothing delay us," cried Jason. "Let nothing hinder our sailing. Behold, here is the ship ready for the launching, and the smooth waters

invite her to float upon their bosom. Let all lay hold, and with might and main push her into the sea.”

They obeyed and ran quickly to the vessel. With their shoulders against her mighty hull, they strained their utmost to move her. But not all the strength of Hercules or of Theseus or of boasting Idas, or of the heroes combined, could stir the giant ship from her resting place on the sands. At length they tried another plan. They dug a trench from the bows of the *Argo* to the water's edge so as to undermine the vessel. Then they placed rollers beneath her keel and tilted her forward until her weight rested upon them. But still, although the strength of fifty mighty heroes was again exerted, she sat stubbornly in her place and refused to slide into the sea.

Then Orpheus went and stood by the water's edge, where it was desired to launch the ship. While the other heroes waited near, he tuned his lyre and began to sing; and his song was full of sweetness and joy, breathing of all things noble and true and worthy of love. He sang of the Mighty Ones on Mount Olympus and of their wondrous power. He sang of the heroes of old, who did valiant deeds for the good of their fellows and despised all selfishness and greed. He sang of

the nourishing earth, of the sheltering sky, and of the all-embracing sea. And he sang of the good that is in men's hearts, teaching them to be kind and true and forgiving, and above all to aspire to heavenly things.

No sooner had he touched his lyre than the *Argo* began to tremble from stem to stern, and every timber in her hull responded to the bewitching music. Then, as he proceeded, she began to move slowly toward the spot where he was standing. He changed his theme and sang of the thunderous waves that beat forever against the rocky shore, of the laughing ripples that chase each other in the calm sunlight, and of the blue depths of the quiet sea lying unruffled beneath the summer sky. With a bound the *Argo* leaped forward and slid without a sound into the water before him, and there she floated like a living thing waiting to perform a pleasant duty.

Forthwith, through the watchful care of her builder, strong ropes were thrown, one from the vessel's prow and one from her stern, so as to moor her fast to the shore. The long oars were placed in the tholes across the gunwales; but the mast, with the well-made sails, was left lying across the benches in the middle of the ship.

And now the heroes, still standing on the shore,

cast lots for the oars. The right-hand oar midway between the stem and the stern was given to Hercules, for that was the place of honor. The helm was assigned to Tiphys, the skillfulest of sailors, who could foretell the coming of a storm, and could guide the vessel's course by observing the sun and stars. The single seat at the prow was reserved for Orpheus, the sweet singer, for the hands of such as he were little fitted to toil with the oar.

"To your places! To your places!" cried Jason; and one by one the heroes leaped joyfully aboard and each sat down upon his allotted bench. The ropes were drawn in, and a cup of mead was poured into the sea to appease the weird creatures of the deep and speed the voyage to a happy end.

Each man laid his hands upon his oar and sat in silence awaiting Jason's command. As thus they waited, all turned their faces landward, and tears were in the eyes of some as they thought of the dear friends left behind, and of their loved homes which they might never behold again. But Jason, standing beside the helmsman, delayed to give the word; for his thoughts were all upon the shore with his kinsmen and his people, who were lamenting his departure.

There, beside a new-built altar, stood his father and mother and false Pelias, offering sacrifices to

Neptune, the lord of the sea. White bulls and coal-black horses without spot or blemish were offered, one after another, by the white-robed priests, while Pelias poured wine into the flames and Æson scattered white barley upon the glowing coals. Farther away the people stood in great companies, lifting their hands skyward and whispering prayers for the heroes' safe return.

So, for a little while, the rowers sat listening to the varied sounds that came to them on the morning air. They heard the lowing of the beasts that were being led to the sacrifice. They heard the plaintive songs of the priests around the altar. They heard the sorrowful cries of their friends, beseeching the gods to bless their voyage. They heard the distant sound of flute and lyre and maidens' voices making merry in the city streets. Then, as they listened, they lifted up their hearts in prayer, and each man vowed to do his whole duty and shrink from no toil or hardship.

Suddenly, from the cloudless sky, a peal of thunder rolled, awaking the echoes in the woods and glens of Pelion. A brisk breeze sprang up from the west. Jason felt that Neptune was making known his pleasure, and he quickly gave the word of command. As if moved by a single hand, the fifty oars dipped quickly into the waves, and the

Argo glided proudly away from the shore. Then the mast was set up and the sails were spread to the wind. Swiftly did the sharp prow cut the rolling waves, and madly did the white foam boil in the wake of the mighty ship.

Forthwith Orpheus began again to make sweet music on his lyre, and the rowers bending to their task kept time with the gleeful melody. As the *Argo* rounded the headland of the bay and ventured into the wide, open sea, even the gods looked down in admiration. From the topmost peaks of Pelion the mountain nymphs gazed wondering, and with cries of joy cheered the heroes on their way. At the foot of the mountain, where the waves beat forever against the towering cliffs, wise Cheiron stood to watch the ship sail by. The ripples of the sea licked his bare feet and the birds of the shore circled around his head as the *Argo* with her heroic crew went speeding past him. With his hands raised aloft and his white beard streaming in the wind, he called aloud to Jason and bade him godspeed on his perilous voyage.

Then the heroes shouted joyfully and plied their oars with renewed vigor, and the *Argo* flew onward swifter than the white-winged sea gulls that nest among the reeds by the shore. All day they rowed, and all day a fresh, fair wind filled the sails while

the waves fled before them in despair, and the fishes great and small followed through the watery ways. They feared, as yet, to lose sight of the land, and so they kept ever within easy call of the shore with the tall cliffs of Pelion hard upon their left. When, at length, the sun sank low, Tiphys steered the vessel into a quiet haven overshadowed with spreading green trees, and there they rested through the night.

ADVENTURE XVIII

THE CRY OF THE KINGFISHER

THUS, day after day, the *Argo* sailed onward, passing many a towering headland, and many a bleak and stony strand. One by one, the landmarks known to the sailors of Greece were left behind. The woody slopes of Pelion, the gray peaks of Ossa, and then the cloud-capped heights of Olympus faded from view, and the heroes found themselves sailing in strange and unknown seas. But Tiphys stood by the helm and guided the *Argo* skillfully through ways hitherto untried, and all hearts were glad, for no one doubted the issue of the voyage.

They tarried awhile at the island of Samothrace, where there was a sheltered harbor; and there they built an altar and offered a sacrifice to Neptune, the lord of the sea. For this reason no seaman who visits Samothrace ever fails to pay there his dues to the Mighty Ones who have the winds and the waves in their keeping.

And now, having rested themselves, the heroes rowed onward many days, steering the ship straight toward the rising sun. On their left was the land of Thrace, seeming a mere shadow in the dim distance; while on their right a low-lying savage shore arose nearer and nearer each day. At length, to the joy of all, they entered the narrow sea where beautiful Helle, falling from the back of the golden ram, had met her sad, untimely fate.

Night closed around them while yet the *Argo* was in the midst of the Hellespont. But the rowers still labored manfully at the oars, while Orpheus played sweetly on his lyre, and Tiphys steered the vessel by the light of the stars. Thus they sailed onward into the sea, which they called Propontis, but which in our day is known as the sea of Marmora. There, at the dawn, they saw a pleasant, wooded shore inclosing a land-locked bay, and on the farther side of the bay was a white-walled town nestling at the foot of green hills. The only entrance to the bay was through a narrow channel, on one side of which arose a rocky headland, bare almost to the top and dotted with the mouths of many little caverns.

As the helmsman steered the *Argo* into the channel, strange, wild-looking creatures came out of the caverns and sat on the rocks to watch the vessel

pass. Whether they were men or beasts, the heroes could not tell; but as they sat gaping and grinning in the morning sun, they seemed to be the fearsome children of the old, old race of giants. They had somewhat the form of men; but each had six masterful hands, two on his shoulders and four upon his sides below, and over his dark face fell a mass of tangled hair reaching to his waist.

The heroes shouted, and pulling their oars right manfully, they drove the *Argo* swiftly forward into the safe and quiet bay. There, amidst blooming gardens and pleasant orchards, stood a little city of the Doliones, a peaceful people well known by hearsay to the Greeks.

“If I mistake not,” said Argus, “this is the city where a young king named Cyzicus bears sway.”

And so it was, for as they neared the shore the king himself came forth to see them, and to inquire who they were, and what errand had brought them to his shores. He was of about the same age as Jason. His beard was just beginning to sprout. His face beamed with kindness, and his eyes glowed with fearless courage.

When the heroes had made answer to his questions, he bade them row a little farther and moor their ship by the busy wharf in the middle of the town.

“Now come ashore,” he said, “and rest yourselves awhile. Your voyage has been long and tiresome, and no doubt you have escaped many dire perils. It will seem to you good to stand again upon the solid land and offer thanks to the Mighty Ones who have preserved and guided you.”

So they built an altar of loose stones by the shore and offered gifts to Apollo, the bright being who guards the lives of those who sail upon the sea. And King Cyzicus gave them sweet mead for the sacrifice and many white-wooled sheep; for he had had a dream of heroes such as these, and a voice had bidden him to treat them graciously and help them on their way.

When the sacrifice was ended, the king took Jason by the hand and led him through shady streets to his own white-walled palace; and there he entertained the heroes with feast and song and every form of wholesome merriment. And all rested from their long rowing and were glad. But when Jason asked which way they should sail to reach Colchis and the fair city of *Æa*, the king could not tell him; for the Doliones knew but little of the world outside of their own small city.

Gladly would the heroes have tarried long in the palace of Cyzicus, and gladly would the young king

have persuaded them to do so; but duty urged them onward. So, early on the morrow, they returned to their ship, and each of the rowers laid his hands upon his oar. Then, at a word from Tiphys, the *Argo* glided swiftly from the land, while Cyzicus stood upon the wharf and with uplifted hands besought the gods to bless them on their voyage.

Now, as they were about to sail again through the narrow channel that led into the open sea, they saw that the six-handed creatures of the headland had blocked the passage with huge stones, and were waiting by the shore like wild beasts crouching for their prey. The heroes ceased their rowing. They quickly landed, and with arrows and swords soon drove the savages back into their hiding places. There the fearsome creatures crouched in dread, shivering with fright, and in their brutish way begging for their lives.

Then Hercules waded out into the channel and with his great strength rolled the rocks aside and cleared the way. With shouts the heroes sat down again upon the rowers' benches, and the *Argo* floated safely out into the open sea. And from that day unto this the rock-strewn channel has been known as Jason's Way, and the headland has been called the Hill of Bears. But no man knows the fate of the six-handed creatures that dwelt there, nor whether

they ever again ventured out of their rock-built caverns.

The sails of the *Argo* were spread, and the wind carried her merrily forward all day long. But when the sun went down she was still far from land, and not even Lynceus, the sharp-sighted, could see the low-lying shore. Soon darkness fell, and then the wind ceased. The ship lay becalmed in the midst of the quiet sea.

“Let us all betake ourselves to rest,” said Jason, “and at dawn we will renew our rowing.”

At midnight, however, when all but Argus were asleep, a black cloud arose in the east and soon overspread the sky. The wind blew furiously and drove the *Argo* before it like a helpless leaf in the bosom of the storm. The heroes awoke; but not even Hercules could do anything to check the headlong course of the vessel as it was driven onward through the inky darkness. Anxiously and helplessly they sat upon the benches, not knowing what fate might be in store for them. At length, to their dismay, they heard the breakers dashing upon a rocky shore. Then, while they listened in terror, the *Argo* drifted into a sheltered bay; and as the wind died down, the moon peeped fitfully out from among the flying clouds.

“Where are we now, Tiphys?” asked Jason.

But the pilot could not tell him. He steered the vessel close upon the sandy shore and commanded the anchor to be cast overboard. The heroes landed. They built a fire upon the beach and began to dry their water-soaked clothing and to rest their tired limbs.

Suddenly a beacon light flashed up before them, and then another and another all along the shore. Soon torches were seen flitting this way and that in the darkness. The cries of men were heard in the distance, but rapidly drawing nearer. The sound of many footsteps in the sand, and then low voices speaking words of command, all came to the ears of the waiting heroes. They grasped their weapons and stood grimly still around their camp fire. Dark forms rushed forward into the dim light. Fierce cries resounded. The clash of spears, the twanging of bows, the whistling of arrows, and the shouts of fighting men were now heard on every hand.

The heroes could not guess what manner of men their foes could be, but they stood their ground and fought furiously. Just as the gray, cold dawn was beginning to drive away the darkness the strangers made a fierce dash toward the heroes. Then Jason with might and main hurled his spear at the leader of the attacking band. The deadly weapon passed through shield and breastplate, it pierced the

heart of the unknown warrior. He fell dead on the sand, and his followers with wails of grief and fear turned and fled and were soon lost to sight in the rising mists of the morning.

"Let us see what manner of man he is," said Jason.

He stooped and raised the helmet that half concealed the dead man's face. He staggered back as from a blow; for, lo! it was the face of his friend, King Cyzicus. Not until then did the heroes perceive that the bay into which the storm had driven them was the selfsame harbor from which they had sailed the day before and that they were close beside the city of the Doliones. Not until then did the Doliones perceive that the strangers on their shores were not a band of savages as they had supposed, but the Minyan heroes whom their king had entertained so royally.

Great was the grief of both because of their cureless error. Both together built, midway between the seashore and the wooded hills, a pyre of spicy woods and sweet-smelling herbs, and upon this they laid the body of the helpless king. Over all they placed rich wreaths of wild flowers and leafy vines, and each of the heroes hung beside it some precious gift to show the sorrow that he felt. Then they set fire to the pyre, and while it burned they stood afar

off weeping. The flames at length died away. The mourning friends of the king gathered up his ashes and put them in a golden vessel, richly carved, which had been brought from the treasure house of some Grecian king.

For three whole days the heroes mourned for Cyzicus ; and on the fourth day a storm arose that kept them back from venturing on the sea. A week passed, and still they lay idle upon the shore, while the winds raged aloft and the waves rolled mountain high over the deep.

One night, while all the men were sleeping save only Jason and the two who stood on guard, the cry of a kingfisher was heard. The winds howled, and the waves tossed the *Argo* even as she lay fast to her moorings, and soon the cry of the bird was heard a second time from among the drifting clouds.

“What means that cry of the kingfisher?” asked Jason. “What message does the bird bring to us?”

Then Mopsus, the soothsayer, who was one of the watchers, answered, “That cry foretells good fortune to the *Argo* and her crew, and the bird’s message is a command. It bids us to go forthwith to the top of yonder mountain and there do reverence to the Great Mother whose voice is heard in the air, the sea, and even the halls of mighty Jupiter. When

we shall have done this, the storm that has delayed us so long will cease and we may go forward on our voyage.”

Jason listened to these words with right willing heart, and at the dawn of day he awoke the heroes and told them of the message of the kingfisher. At once they began to climb the steep mountain, leaving only a few of their number behind to guard the ship.

Soon, from the summit of the topmost peak, they looked down upon the far-reaching sea and the boundless earth. Almost beneath them they saw the dim entrance to the Bosphorus, where in after ages the master city of the Turks would stand. Beyond it lay the mighty Pontus, known in our day as the Black Sea — a vast wilderness of waters over which no ship had ever sailed. On their left, beyond the smaller Propontis, stretched the forests and the savage mountain lands of Thrace. On their right, far in the distance, they beheld the green fields and blossoming orchards of many an Asiatic kingdom.

On the very crest of the mountain they heaped up an altar of stones, which they wreathed with oak leaves and crowns of laurel. Upon this they offered two white oxen without spot or blemish, at the same time calling upon the name of the Great

Mother, even upon her whom some call Earth and others know as Nature.

“O thou Mighty One,” prayed Jason, “look now upon us and bless us. Turn away this direful storm and bid the winds to cease and the waves to slumber, that so we may renew our voyage, and, in right good time, come to the end of our toilsome quest.”

Then he poured wine upon the blazing sacrifice, while Orpheus sang wonderful songs and the younger heroes danced in full armor, striking their swords and shields in tune with the music of the lyre.

The Great Mother heard, and signs of her pleasure were seen on every side. Flowers and tender plants sprang with a bound from the brown earth. Ripe fruits of every kind dropped from the branches of the trees. The wild beasts left their lairs in the mountain caves and came forth, wagging their tails and purring with joy, to meet the astonished heroes. Then a spring of sweet, running water gushed out from the rocky side of the peak — a spring to be known forever thereafter as Jason’s fountain.

At the same time the wind ceased blowing and the sea became calm. The heroes, hastening back to the shore, took their accustomed seats in the

Argo. The moorings were cast loose. The helmsman gave the word of command. The oars dipped briskly, keeping time to the tune of the lyre. The sails were spread to the western breeze. The mighty ship again flew forward on her adventurous way.

ADVENTURE XIX

THE LOSING OF HYLAS

ALL day the rowers bent to their oars. For the breeze soon ceased to blow, and the sails hung useless upon the slender mast. The waves were lulled to rest, and not a ripple roughened the surface of the sea. So, with a will, the heroes drove the ship along; and so swiftly did she fly that not even Neptune's famous horses could have overtaken her.

"Who of us will be the first to weary of the rowing?" asked one of the younger men.

"Not I," spoke up Hylas, the young squire of Hercules.

"Not I!" cried this one and that until the words had gone round the circuit of the ship.

"No man shall outdo me with the oar, or sit longer at the rowing," said Idas, the boaster.

But Hercules sat grim and silent on the midmost bench, saying not a word. He swung his oar with steady sweep, and the fire in his eyes told plainly that never would he yield or give up his place as first among the rowers.

Thus through the morning hours and through the noon and till the sun had almost dipped into the western sea did the fifty heroes sit stubbornly on their benches, each loath to be the first to stop his rowing. At length white-haired Neleus, with a sigh, drew in his oar. Then another gave up the task, and then another; for nearly all were overdone with toil.

But Hercules still sat, grim and silent, and swung his oar with the same steady sweep as at the beginning. And even after all the rest had given over, he alone drove the ship forward with all her former swiftness, nor seemed to feel fatigue.

The sun was setting when they neared the pleasant land where the river Cios pours its clear waters into the sea. No better spot in which to rest could the heroes hope to find; and Tiphys, straining upon the helm, steered the *Argo* sharply towards the shore. At the same moment Hercules, pulling mightily at his oar, broke it squarely in the middle. He fell backward among the benches, still grasping the upper fragment and glaring upward at the sky. The heroes would fain have laughed at this sudden ending of his long day's labor, yet none dared even give place to a smile, so great was the awe they had of him.

The proud *Argo* glided slowly onward and stopped

not until her sides gently brushed the shore. Then quickly the great ropes were thrown out, and she was fast moored close by the land. Some people of that country were already there, ready to welcome the voyaging strangers. A few ran for sticks with which to build a fire; others brought soft grass with which to make beds for the heroes; still others hastened to bring sheep and wine and to make ready a feast upon the shore.

While the rest were sitting about the fire and waiting for the supper, Hercules went alone into the woods, in search of something with which to make an oar to replace the one he had broken. Near the edge of a grove, a mile or so from the shore, he came upon a slender pine, well stripped of its branches. "This," said he to himself, "will make the oar that I wish."

He drew off his lion-skin cloak and threw it upon the ground. By its side he laid his great club and his quiver of sharp arrows. Then he gripped the tree firmly with both hands, he planted his broad shoulder against it, he wrenched it this way and that, and lifted with all his might. And behold, as he tugged and pulled, the tree came right out of the ground, the clods still clinging to its roots. He hummed a merry tune to himself as he donned his lion skin again and picked up his quiver and his

club. Then he threw the pine tree lightly across his shoulder and strode back toward the place where his companions were still waiting for the feast.

Now, not far from the shore, there was a sacred spring where the water bubbled up and then fell into a clear, deep pool. Around this pool were bowers of matted vines and flowering shrubs; and all about its edges were tall rushes and green parsley and dainty maiden-hair ferns. To this spring Hylas, the young squire of Hercules, went alone with a brazen pitcher to draw water for himself and his master. The place was beautiful, and he loitered long on the way, picking wild flowers and listening to the song of some night-singing bird.

"This is a rare, pleasant spot," he said to himself. "The nymphs who guard the woods and watch the mountain streams dwell near here, I think;" and then he fancied that he heard sweet voices far up the slope of the hill, singing an evening hymn to Diana, the huntress queen.

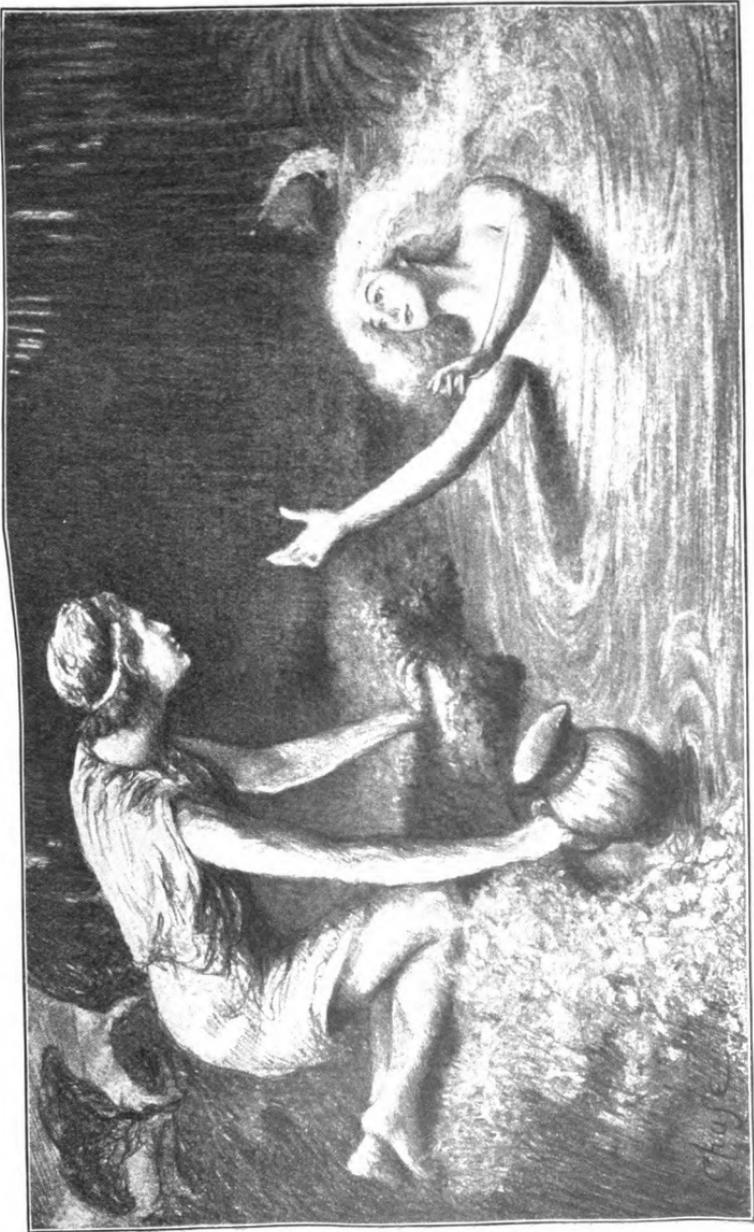
He found the spring. Above it the moon looked down, casting her round, bright image into the depths of the pool. He leaned over and dipped the wide-mouthed pitcher into the water. But, lo! as he did so, he saw the lovely nymph herself who guarded that sacred fountain. She seemed to him more beautiful than any dream. Her blushing face was

turned upward to the soft moonlight, and her long tresses fell like a shower of gold about her shoulders.

The nymph looked into his eyes and smiled, for she had never seen a human form so graceful and so full of manly courage as that which was now bending above her sacred spring. For a while they gazed at each other and smiled in silence. Then the nymph beckoned with her lily hands, and said: "Noble stranger, sail no more upon the stormy sea, but come with me to my home in fairyland. For there the winds blow softly and the air is sweet with the breath of flowers. There no snow nor chilling frost e'er falls to blight the beauty which fair summer brings; but gladness brightens every hour, and sorrow and care are never known. Come, come with me."

Hylas could not answer. His eyes were fixed upon the radiant creature, and he could not tear himself away. He could not so much as lift the pitcher which he had filled.

Then the nymph reached up from the water and seized his hands. She drew him down into the bottomless pool. The young man cried aloud as he felt himself sinking, but he had no strength nor will to struggle. Soon the water closed above him, and not a ripple told of the strange fate that had overtaken him.



Hylas and the Nymph.

It chanced, meanwhile, that Polyphemus, the gray-bearded hero of many a hard-fought battle, was walking out that way, hoping to meet his friend Hercules returning from the woods. He heard the cry of Hylas, and, like a wild beast rushing through tangled thickets, he hurried hither and thither, calling the name of the luckless youth. Soon, as chance would have it, he met Hercules coming down from the hills with the pine tree on his shoulder.

“Ah, friend,” cried Polyphemus, “I have a tale of grief to tell you. For Hylas is lost. I saw him come this way with a pitcher in his hand to draw water at the spring. Soon I heard him cry out as though in terror. I hastened to help him, but nowhere could I find him. I fear that he has been slain by some ravenous beast, or that savage men have waylaid him and carried him far into the wild woods.”

Then Hercules with a groan cast the pine tree upon the ground. With his great club in his hand he hurried toward the sacred spring. There, indeed, were the footprints of Hylas in the soft earth; but the pool lay silent in the night, and the reeds stood motionless upon its brink and kept well the secret which they knew. Then, through brush and brier and among the tall trees of the forest, the two

heroes wandered all the night, calling aloud the name of Hylas. And often, in some tangled thicket or secluded glen, they fancied that they heard him answer; but it was only the voice of some mountain nymph seeking to draw them farther and farther away from the shore where their comrades were sweetly sleeping, unmindful of their absence.

At length the morning star shone bright above the hilltops, and the welcome dawn began to spread its light upon the sea.

“Up, men!” cried Tiphys, “the day has begun and the wind is fair for sailing. Let us make an early start, that so we may take our ease when the sun grows hot.”

Many of the rowers, however, still lay sleeping beneath the benches, or in the hold of the *Argo*, closely wrapped in their long cloaks, and but few arose to lay their hands upon the oars; for all were overdone with the hard rowing of the day before, and would fain rest a little longer. The wind blew fresh and strong from the west, and the sails being spread, there was little need of rowing. Swiftly the *Argo* glided away from the Cian strand, and soon many a rocky headland and many a mile of low green shore were left behind.

It was not until the sun was high in the sky that all the heroes roused themselves from sleep and

took their accustomed places. Then, for the first time, they saw that three of their number had been left behind.

“Where is Hercules? Where is Polyphemus? Where is brave young Hylas?” These were the anxious questions which all asked, but none could answer.

The sails were furled. The oars backed water. The *Argo* was brought to a stop.

“Let us row back,” said some.

“It would be a wearisome task in the face of this strong wind,” said others.

Then they fell to quarreling among themselves, each blaming the other, and all grieving because the best of the crew had been left behind. But Jason sat in his seat beside the helmsman and said not a word, so dazed was he by what had happened.

At length Telamon arose and with harsh words upbraided him.

“Shame upon you!” he cried. “It is for you to say what shall be done, and yet you keep silence. You would willingly leave great Hercules behind. You fear that if he should go on to Colchis, he may do braver deeds than you, and thus take somewhat away from the fame which you hope to win by this quest. But Hercules shall not be left behind.”

With that, he pushed Tiphys aside and seized the

helm. His breath came hard and quick and his eyes glowed with anger. Yet Jason sat dumb in his place, unable to move his lips.

“To your oars, heroes!” cried Telamon. “To your oars, and in spite of the wind and waves and this fellow Jason, we will row back to the Cian shore.”

The heroes obeyed, some willingly and some with downcast looks and sullen murmurings. But Zetes and Calais, the sons of the North Wind, openly rebelled, and seizing Telamon by the shoulders, they forced him from the helmsman's seat. Then suddenly a stormy gust, which had been gathering among the headlands, overtook the *Argo* and drove her helplessly before it through blinding mists of rain and salt sea spray. As the rowers sat powerless on the benches with their idle oars beside them, all voices were hushed, for no one knew whither the vessel was being drifted. And as they sat and wondered, a marvelous thing occurred that soothed the minds of all and sent them hopeful on their way.

For in the midst of the dashing spray a light shone out from the oaken figure on the prow, and the carved image of Athena's face, which Argus had fastened there, glowed like the morning star. Then from the lips of the image a voice spoke loudly to the wondering heroes.

“Think no more of the heroes left behind,” it said; “for great Jupiter wills it not that Hercules shall go farther with you. There are tasks for him to do in Greece, and the voice of duty calls him back to his native land. As for Polyphemus, the Fates decree that he shall build a city and found a kingdom not far from the Cian shore whereon you left him. See that you hinder him not. And Hylas needs no more your loving friendship, for he dwells in joyous peace among the nymphs and naiads and those other beauteous forms that haunt the watery world.”

The heroes heard these words with glad hearts; and those who had so lately spoken harshly and with anger to each other shook hands and pledged anew their friendship. The mist lifted, and the sun shone brightly upon the waters; but the wind still blew and drove them swiftly eastward. All that day the rowers lounged at their ease in the vessel's hold, while their oars lay idle across the benches; and at evening the *Argo* was anchored in a safe harbor on the farther shore of the Propontis.

ADVENTURE XX

BLIND PHINEUS AND THE HARPIES

EARLY on the following day, the *Argo* sailed into the narrow strait known then and now as the Bosphorus. There the waves rose high and heaped themselves up in the path of the gallant ship. They beat against her and tossed her this way and that, as though to overwhelm her with their might. It was little that the rowers could do in such a sea. They sat, silent and dismayed, upon the benches, fearing lest every moment would be their last. But Tiphys stood bravely by the helm and, to the wonder and joy of all, deftly steered the vessel into a quiet harbor.

“If signs are true,” said Argus, “this is the place where old King Phineus dwells, the wisest soothsayer in all the world.”

The heroes leaped ashore and looked around them. Along the beach were clusters of small houses with gardens around them, and in their midst was one much larger which seemed to be the palace of the

king. Hearing the noise and seeing the *Argo* at anchor, the men of the place left their gardens and, with their rakes and hoes in their hands, came running to the beach. They crowded curiously around the heroes, eager to see what sort of folk they were, and seeming in no wise unfriendly.

“What place is this where men live so peacefully?” asked Jason.

“We call it Salmydessa,” was the answer.

“Then tell me,” said the hero, “is not this the home of Phineus, the soothsayer king, to whom all things both present and to come are known?”

With saddened faces and downcast eyes, the gardeners answered, “Truly, Phineus lives among us, but he is as one accursed and hopeless; for mighty Jupiter has bereft him of every joy.”

Then the heroes were aware of an old, old man coming slowly along the pathway between the blossoming gardens. It was easy to know that he was blind; for, leaning upon his long staff, he reached out with his trembling right hand and felt each step of the way. Over his shoulders he wore a long, dark cloak that fell in loose folds about his shriveled body and trailed in the dust behind him. His face was gaunt and pale, and his sightless eyes were fixed and motionless. His wrinkled feet were bare, and his limbs trembled with weakness and pal-



“It was easy to know that he was blind.”

sied old age. So feeble and thin was he that he seemed like a slender shadow creeping along between the garden walls.

Very slowly he felt his way toward the beach, where the astonished heroes stood awaiting him. He paused, and one of the gardeners ran to help him. Then, leaning upon the gardener's arm, he approached, gasping for breath and holding up one trembling hand as though in sign of greeting. At length he found strength to speak.

"Welcome to you, ye heroes of the Minyan race," he said; "for I know you. This is Jason, the prince of Iolcus, and these are his comrades who are sailing with him on the good ship *Argo* in quest of the golden fleece. Hail to you all! Welcome to the unhappy home of one from whom all joy of life is fled!"

The heroes, each in his turn, grasped the feeble hand of old Phineus and thanked him for his welcome, while wonder and pity filled their hearts.

"I knew that you were coming," he said. "Indeed, I have known it long, for Apollo has given me wisdom exceeding that of other men. Old and blind and miserable though I am, yet I have the gift of foretelling the things that are to be, and I know that you will free me from the cursed creatures that fill my days with wretchedness and woe."

“ Only tell us what to do,” answered Jason, “ and every one of us will lend a hand to help you ;” for he was deeply touched by the old man’s plaintive words.

“ I cannot tell you what to do,” said Phineus. “ I have no plan for anything. The Harpies, the hounds of Jupiter — they are the cause of all my woe. Never am I able to touch a morsel of food but they swoop down and snatch it from my hand, and my people dare not drive them away for fear of the wrath of mighty Jupiter. Thus I live in the midst of plenty, and yet am daily dying with starvation. My house, which was once the home of delight, is become the den of unclean monsters. My days are full of weariness and loathing, and my nights are given to darksome fears.”

“ But surely,” said Jason, “ there is a reason for all this. No man suffers or is wretched, unless the gods so will it. What have you done that has caused them to punish you so severely ?”

“ It is because of my boasting that they afflict me,” answered the old man. “ For when Apollo gave me the rare gift of foretelling unknown things, my heart was full of pride, and I declared that not even the secrets of Father Jupiter could be hidden from me. And then these loathsome creatures were sent to torment me.”

The heroes listened in awe, and none knew what answer to make; but Zetes, the son of the North Wind, spoke up and said, "Most gladly would I and my brother drive these monsters away and rid you of their presence, but we also fear the wrath of Jupiter."

"I know your fear, I know your fear!" cried old Phineus, and he raised his hands and turned his sightless eyes toward heaven. "Yet I have inquired into the matter, and I know that no punishment will ever come to you for what you may do to aid me."

"Will you swear that we shall not be harmed?" asked Calais, the brother of Zetes.

"I swear it," answered the king. "But come now into my house and see for yourselves the things that I am forced to endure."

With that, he caused the heroes to be led into the house, where he bade them wait a little while until a feast fit for a king should be prepared. The servants hastened to do their duty, and with downcast eyes and doubtful shakings of the head placed upon the table rich food and drink enough for all. When everything was ready, old Phineus was led to his place, and his two-edged sword was laid on the table close by his hand. Then the heroes gathered round, each sitting down in the order of his rank, with Jason next to the king.

“Now see what happens every time I try to satisfy my hunger,” said old Phineus.

He reached out his trembling hand toward the dish of savory food that had been set before him. At once there was a flapping, as of mighty wings, above the table, and the hall was darkened with black shadows that chilled the hearts of all upon whom they fell. Then the heroes saw the Harpies swooping down from the rafters and windows.

Never were any creatures more hideous and loathsome. Their faces were like the faces of women, but their bodies were those of vultures. Their eyes were red and watery; their thin and ghastly lips were spread apart by horrid, shapeless tusks. About their necks fell matted locks of coarse, red hair. Their breasts and wings were but half covered with gray feathers, ragged and soiled and stained with blood.

The heroes, when they saw these fearful creatures, sat spellbound, wondering what would happen next. Down upon the table the Harpies flew. They seized the food that had been set before the king, and with horrid snapping and snarling devoured it. They overturned the wine cups. They swept the dishes from the table. So loathsome were they to look upon, so fearful was the uproar which they made, that the king and all who were

with him arose, and shading their faces with their hands, fled from the hall of terror.

Forthwith, Zetes and Calaïs, the sons of the North Wind, drew their swords, and with loud shouts leaped into air. The Harpies heard them and saw their shining blades. They flew quickly forth from the hall and fled screaming across the sea; and Zetes and Calaïs, borne aloft by the golden wings upon their ankles, as quickly pursued them. Swifter than the wind, yes, swifter than the stars that shoot across the sky, they sped through the moonlit air. The swords of the sons of the North Wind gleamed like lightning as they struck, time and again, at the fleeing monsters. But the hateful creatures, although seeming often within their grasp, sprang suddenly forward and with new speed escaped them.

Thus they winged their way over many a dark and silent sea and over strange, unpeopled lands; and so rapid was their flight that there was no reckoning of the time. Soon they came to the floating islands in the far Sicilian Sea, and there the Harpies paused, overspent with weariness. And there they would most surely have met their doom had not a voice called from the clouds to stay the hands of their pursuers.

“Ye sons of the North Wind,” said the voice, “it

is not for you to slay the hounds of Jupiter with the sword. Turn back now, and seek your comrades; for it is ordained that the Harpies shall never more come nigh to King Phineus to annoy him or do him harm."

So Zetes and Calais withheld their hands and turned back; and for that reason the floating islands are unto this day called Strophades, or the Isles of Turning.

Meanwhile, in the halls of Phineus, the heroes sat awaiting the return of the swift-winged brothers. And with them sat the aged king, clothed now in his royal robes, with the flush of hope upon his cheeks and the joy of returning strength in his wasted form. They sat again at the long supper table, and no loathsome monsters disturbed their feast. They sat, rejoicing, through the silent hours of the night, while the torches flared and sputtered, and black wreaths of smoke encircled the rafters overhead; and blind Phineus told them of everything that would happen to them ere they should behold the high walls of *Æa* and gaze upon the long-sought fleece of gold.

Suddenly, as the morning star was rising from the sea, a shout was heard in the clear air above them. It was the shout of Zetes and Calais, returned from

their long and tireless chase. Soon they were in the midst of the hall, receiving the greetings of their friends. But no one gave them heartier thanks, or blessed them more sincerely, than blind King Phineus, whom they had freed from the dreadful curse of the Harpies.

“If I could wish you still greater joy,” said Jason to the king, “it would be that your eyes might regain their sight.”

“Oh, think not of that,” answered Phineus. “It is the mind that gives joy; and even in darkness the contented soul may find delight.”

ADVENTURE XXI

THE PERIL OF THE CLASHING ROCKS

ON the third day, as the sun was rising, the heroes made ready to sail away from Salmydessa. It was with sad hearts, however, that they bade King Phineus good-by; for he had made their stay so pleasant, with feasting and song and dance, that they would gladly have tarried longer with him. But Tiphys, the faithful pilot, would permit no further delaying.

“The sky is clear, the wind is fair,” he cried. “The good ship *Argo* waits impatiently by the shore. Let every man hasten to his own place.”

So they went on board; and there was not one among them who did not bear in his hands some rich present from blind King Phineus. They carried brazen pitchers and great bowls most beautifully carved with twining vines and figures of the gods. Some had costly tripods of bronze, and others had belts of rare leather and curious workmanship. Still others had breastplates and quaint ornaments of polished brass inlaid with precious

stones. All these things had Phineus given them in token of his love and gratitude; and to Jason he gave a golden chain and a two-edged sword with a snow-white ivory hilt.

As the heroes sat on the rowers' benches, waiting for the moorings to be loosed, the old king stood on the shore, telling them of the dangers they must shun, and giving them many a word of counsel.

"Above all," said he, "beware of the Clashing Rocks, which forever beat against each other at the entrance to the great sea, Pontus. Beware how you venture between them, for between them you must go. And that reminds me that I have still another present for you."

Then he called to one of his servants and said, "Go quickly and bring the bird."

Thereupon the man ran swiftly to the king's house, and soon returned with a green cage in which sat a cooing dove.

"Now who among you is the keenest eyed?" asked the king.

All answered with one voice, "Lynceus; for he can see farther than the mountain eagle, and not even the rockbuilt walls of prisons can hide anything from his sight."

Then the king took the cage and gave it into the hands of Lynceus.

“Soon,” said he, “you will come to the Clashing Rocks of which I spoke. The *Argo* must pass between them before you can enter the sea called Pontus; and yet no vessel has ever dared to try that perilous gateway. Keep your eyes upon the rocks, Lynceus, and when they slide apart then let loose the dove. Straight she will fly into that dreadful opening, and if the Fates so will it, she will pass safely through to the open sea. Then do you all bend to your oars most manfully, for so you also will escape the clasher. But if the bird shall be caught between the rocks, then know that it is not for you to sail on the great sea beyond. Turn back, while yet you can, and return with speed to Salmydesa. Here you shall find a home and peaceful rest, and here you may remain, safe from the perils of the deep.”

“Wise king,” said Jason, “we thank you heartily for your gifts and most of all for your many words of kind advice. But as for turning back, that we will never do. No perils on sea or land, nay, naught but death itself, shall cause us ever to give up this quest of the golden fleece.”

Then, as the heroes shouted, the moorings were cast off. The *Argo*, like a living thing, glided out of the harbor and was soon buffeting her way over the swirling waters of Bosphorus. And until she

was lost to sight in the distance, blind Phineus stood upon the shore and with uplifted hands prayed the Mighty Ones to prosper the voyage of the heroes and bring it to a happy end.

Soon, driven by sail and oar, the ship drew near the mouth of the narrow strait and the gateway into Pontus. Then the heroes began to hear the pounding of the great rocks. Louder and louder grew the noise until it sounded like sudden bursts of thunder repeated regularly as the beating of the waves upon the shore. Before them, at some distance, a mist-like cloud hung low upon the water and seemed to bar their way; and as often as the giant rocks clashed together, streams of white spray shot upward in gushing masses, spouting to the sky.

“What see you, Lynceus?” asked Jason.

And Lynceus, sitting in the prow and gazing forward, answered: “I see the huge blue rocks, taller by far than *Argo's* mast. I see them strike each other, like two fierce rams battling for the mastery. And now I see them rebound through the surging waves, and, quick as the lightning's flash, rush together again.”

The heroes could hear, but they could not see. Boom! boom! boom! Fearful was the sound of the rocks, forever clashing together in the midst of the seething, gushing waters.

Quickly, at Jason's command, the rowers backed hard upon their oars and stopped the *Argo* in mid-stream. Then Lynceus, taking the dove in his hands, peered through the cloud of mist and vapor, and waited for the rocks to strike once more and then rebound.

"Now, go!" he cried; and the bird, springing forward, darted into the midst of the dashing spray, straight toward the open gateway. The heroes leaned forward and with straining eyes watched her flight. Swiftly she sped, but not more swiftly than the returning rocks. They clashed together with thunderous sound, and all supposed that the bird was crushed between them. But as they rebounded Lynceus shouted: "Lo! there she goes unharmed. She has lost only a single feather from her tail."

No eyes but his were sharp enough to see her skimming joyously through the air, high above the quiet waters of the great sea, Pontus.

Suddenly and sharply Tiphys gave the word. Every man bent to his oar, and with might and main drove the *Argo* forward. All around the oaken image on the prow a golden light shone out, and a voice cried, "Onward with speed, and have no fear!"

And now the heroes see the rocks rising straight

before them and rushing for another onset. They hear the fearful crash. They are drenched with the flying, gushing spray. They are choked with the salt water. Their breath comes hard, and their arms grow feeble with fear.

But Orpheus, the godlike musician, touches his lyre, and strains of entrancing music mingle with the fearful din of rocks and waves. And, looking upward, the heroes see, towering above their heads, — yes, towering high above the great rocks themselves, — a glorious lady, fair-haired and blue-eyed, and with face more beautiful than any mortal being. She reaches forth her round, white arms; she places a hand on the summit of each of the clashing rocks; she pushes them far apart. As she does this, a rainbow rises from the mist and arches the open gateway; and with a mighty shout, the heroes drive the *Argo* through and the next moment find themselves floating on the green waters of mighty Pontus.

“Hail, hail to Juno, our queen and our helper!” cries Jason; for he knows that it is she who smiles upon them from above the rainbow. And, looking back, he sees the great rocks standing firm in their places, while the water at their feet lies smooth and quiet, and the once fearful passage between them is unruffled by any wave.

“They are set so firmly that they cannot move,” cries Mopsus, the soothsayer, “and never again shall they clash together in midstream.”

The heroes shout again. They raise the weather-beaten sails. They bend with a will to their oars. The *Argo*, like a bird let loose, sails swiftly over the summer sea.

ADVENTURE XXII

THE VOYAGE ACROSS THE PONTUS

FOR many days the voyaging heroes held on their course across the great sea, Pontus. Eastward they sailed, passing headland after headland, and keeping always within sight of the shore. Each night they anchored in some quiet cove, or moored the *Argo* hard by some sandy beach; and at dawn they spread their sails again to the western breeze and, without the use of oars, went speeding toward the Colchian land and their journey's end.

Thus they skirted many a wild and savage coast. They visited the green island where men say Apollo, the mighty archer, once rested when on his journey to far northern lands. They saw the lovely haunts of the sea nymphs, and sometimes, on moonlit nights, heard them calling to one another in the distance. They passed the grim cliffs where Pluto has a cavern roofed in with trees and rocks—a cavern from which even in midsummer a chilling blast rushes forth night and day, turning the water around it into ice.

They came at length to the land of the Bebryces, a rude and half-savage people, and there they tarried many days. While some rested themselves by the green shore, others went into the woods in search of game, and many were the deer which the swift-footed archers brought to the ground.

Now, on a certain day, Castor and Pollux, the noble twins, wandered far up the mountain side, gathering wild flowers and admiring the many beautiful trees. Near the foot of a steep cliff they found a spring of clear water, which flowed into a deep pool lined with the whitest of pebbles. All around the pool were fragrant blossoms of every sort, while overhead swayed the leafy branches of many an ancient tree.

As the twins drew near to this delightful spot, they saw a grim giant sitting by the pool and bathing his feet in the limpid water. Huge and hard-fisted was he, and the muscles on his arms stood out like ropes of iron. Upon his shoulders and breast he wore a lion's skin, with its great claws dangling about his waist. Fiercely he stared at the young heroes, but not a word did he speak as they approached him.

"Good luck to you, stranger," said Pollux. "Are you one of the men of this island?"

"Good luck it is when such men as you come in my way," growled the giant.

“Indeed, we wish you no harm,” said Pollux. “You have nothing to fear from us.”

“Fear! fear!” cried the giant, roaring with laughter. “What sort of men do you claim to be that Amycus should be afraid of you?”

“We are strangers who would fain be on friendly terms with all in this place,” answered Castor. “If you are Amycus, the king of the Bebryces, we would even give you rich gifts, that so you may go to your home rejoicing.”

“Give me no gifts,” said surly Amycus; “for surely you shall have none from me.”

“Grant at least,” said Pollux, “that we may taste of the water from this spring, for we are very thirsty.”

Amycus shook his fist and answered hoarsely, “Not a drop shall you have, nor any other favor from me save one blow with this strong arm.”

“Ha!” cried Pollux, “is it a boxing match that you wish to try? Surely, I am ready for that, and with right good will. But what prize shall be given to the winner?”

“There is little need of a prize,” said Amycus, “but if you win, I promise to be your man; and if I win—why, there is the end of it. I shall do as I please.”

“It is well,” answered Pollux. “Let us call our friends to witness the match.”

The giant made no answer, but took a hollow shell that hung by a cord about his neck, and blew a loud blast upon it. At once a thousand long-haired Bebryces came hastening out of the shadows of the woods. Then Castor, with a shout that echoed from the trees and rocks, aroused the heroes, who were taking their ease on the beach. With loud cries they came running up the mountain side, eager to know the cause of the uproar. Soon they beheld grim Amycus and skillful Pollux arrayed against each other in their quickly-made boxing ring. They hastened to the spot and stood around to watch the issue of the combat.

With ox-skin gloves upon their fists and long leathern thongs about their arms, the two champions stood in the ring. They glared at each other, and Amycus loudly boasted of his strength and skill.

“There is no man in the world who can withstand me in a bout at boxing,” he cried. “Woe to him who feels the weight of my fist.” And with that he struck savagely at his foe.

But Pollux nimbly warded the blow, and the giant stumbled forward, maddened and confused. Then the contest began in fair earnest, and long and fiercely did it rage. With loud shouts the Bebryces cheered their king; but the heroes stood silent in their places, well knowing what the outcome

would be. For of what avail is brute strength when matched against well-trained skill and manly valor? At length the giant fell headlong among the weeds and flowers, fainting and holding out both his hands in token of defeat.

“Spare me!” he cried, while his breath came thick and fast, “spare me, and I swear that I will never again be rude to strangers who visit my shores.”

Thus Pollux triumphed over the savage king of this most savage island; and the heroes with much rejoicing returned to their ship.

The next day they set sail, and again the *Argo* sped swiftly over the sea. Far, very far did she sail, for the wind blew steadily and no storm arose to turn her from her course.

At length the wooded shores of a large island appeared on their right, and the heroes rejoiced, for they knew that it was the land in which Lycus, a prophet king, held sway. They cast anchor in a pleasant cove and leaped ashore; for blind Phineus had told them that here they would find a kindly welcome and rest from their long sea voyage. And it was so; for when Lycus heard of their coming, he sent messengers to invite them to his kingly halls. There they tarried many days and were entertained in most royal fashion. King Lycus

told them much concerning *Æa*, the Colchian city, and its mighty king *Æetes*, and to each of the heroes he gave a costly gift.

But in the midst of their joyance a great sorrow overtook them, for, on the tenth day, Tiphys the good helmsman died, having been bitten by a poisonous snake. Great indeed was the grief of the heroes. "We shall never see his like again," they said; and they threw themselves prone upon the sand and wept until the sun went down.

"Now indeed we are undone," said Jason; "for there is no man among us who can steer the *Argo* over this untraveled sea. All that we have done is in vain, for we shall never behold the shores of Colchis or the high towers of *Æa*. Never shall we feast our eyes with the ruddy beauty of the golden fleece. Neither shall we be able to return to our dear homes and waiting friends in Greece. But we are doomed to tarry here, idle and without fame, till old age ends our useless lives."

He laid himself down in the hold of the ship and moaned with despair; but in the middle of the night a great light shone around, and he was aware that Juno, the blue-eyed queen, was near him.

"Jason," she said, and her face, though beautiful as a summer morning, was stern and reproachful, "Jason, are you a hero? Brave men do not behave

in this way. None but the cowardly give up to despair. Have you not Ancæus with you — the skillfullest sailor that ever pulled an oar? In all the world there is no one who can excel him, and for that reason men call him the son of Neptune. Let him be your pilot.”

So, when the morning dawned, all arose with cheerful hearts. They sat upon the benches and with sturdy arms wielded the long oars. They drove the *Argo* swiftly away from the shore; and Ancæus, the gray-bearded son of the sea, stood by the helm. Soon a brisk wind arose, the sails were spread, and the ship flew lightly over the waves — lightly, and yet with such speed that even the eagle which flies with the storm could not have overtaken her.

Long and far did the heroes sail. They counted not the days, they measured not the leagues, they reckoned neither distance nor time.

They passed the outlet of the Parthenius, the gentlest of rivers, the favorite stream of Diana, the huntress queen.

They passed the land of the Amazons, where only women dwelt — women whose thoughts were all on war.

They passed the mountainous shores of the Chalybes, where men dig iron from the earth and

spend all their days in dark caves amid smoke and flame.

They skirted the reedy inlets of the island of Mars. There the fierce birds of the god of war had their nesting places, secure from men or beasts that might do them harm. These birds fiercely attacked the heroes, shooting down sharp feathers into the ship until it seemed as though the clouds were raining arrows. Forthwith the heroes donned their brazen helmets with blood-red plumes waving above them; and they beat upon their shields and shouted with all their might, till the birds in wild alarm arose by thousands high in the air and flew screaming away.

Onward sailed the *Argo*. The summer sun shone brightly over sea and land, and at length the heroes beheld with wonder the snow-clad peaks of Caucasus towering high before them. As they gazed spellbound at the gray cliffs and mighty rocks that seemed to rise even above the sky, they saw a great bird flying toward the mountains — a bird so mighty that when it flapped its wings the sails of the ship and even the ship itself trembled.

“It is the vulture that torments forever the great hero, Prometheus,” said Mopsus, the soothsayer.

And then some fancied that they saw Prometheus himself, chained and helpless on one of the highest

peaks, patiently waiting for the day when godlike Hercules would come and set him free.

Soon the wind changed. The *Argo* veered to the southward, and the snowy mountain heights at length faded in the distance. On the left lay a low, green shore with meadows level as the sea itself, but farther back were fair rolling hills and fields and pastures and pleasant homesteads nestling among orchard trees. The heroes furled the sails and laid the mast in its place between the benches. Then taking their oars they rowed slowly along the shore, peering into every inlet and carefully feeling their way from point to point. For they knew that this was the land of Colchis, and that the city of *Æa* could not be far away.

Ere long they beheld a quiet cove with sandy beaches on both sides and groves of willow trees beyond. Into this cove a slow-flowing river emptied its yellow water through a deep and narrow channel.

"This stream is the Phasis," said Argus, for now he saw the well-remembered landmarks among which, as a boy, he had wandered on many an idle day. "The city of *Æa* is on its banks not more than three leagues away."

Then Ancæus the helmsman deftly steered the ship into the stream, while the oarsmen with gentle

strokes drove her forward against the sluggish current. Quietly and without sound the *Argo* floated onward between the low shores and then through a reed-bordered channel so narrow that the long oars reached almost from bank to bank. Soon she emerged into an open place, and the heroes, peering through the reeds, saw that they had come into a pleasant land. On the right and the left were wooded pastures and fields of ripening grain, and on the hill slopes quite near were snug farmhouses such as they had already seen from a distance. Then suddenly as the ship rounded a bend in the stream, the white walls and high towers of famous *Æa* burst upon their sight, scarcely half a league away.

Jason forthwith bade the rowers draw in their oars, and the *Argo* was made fast to the low-lying bank, where drooping willow branches and tall reeds hid her from sight.

“Here we will rest for the night,” said the prince of heroes. “In the morning we will see what sort of welcome we shall receive in the city of old *Æetes*.”

ADVENTURE XXIII

IN THE HALLS OF KING ÆETES

VERY impatiently did Jason and his companions await the passing of the night. At length, however, as the sun arose and gilded the high towers of ÆEa, the heroes sat down on the benches of the *Argo* to plan how they might best approach the city and win the long-desired fleece of gold.

“I will tell you what seems good to me,” said Jason; “but if any other has a better plan, let him make it known. For we all share alike in this quest.”

“Yes, tell us your plan,” said the rest.

“It is this,” answered Jason. “I will take with me Argus, the son of Phrixus, and two others, and we alone will go to the halls of the king while all of you remain here in hiding. I will tell Æetes truthfully who I am and why I have come. I will offer him a goodly price for the fleece, for it will not be right to take it by force if he can be persuaded to part with it willingly. But if I cannot

prevail upon him, or if he treats me rudely, then it will be for you to show your skill in strategy and your strength in battle."

"You have spoken wisely and well," cried all the heroes. "Your plan is a good one, and we have no other."

So Jason, clad in princely garments and with the wand of Mercury in his hand, went out toward the city; and behind him walked Argus and two other heroes of renown. As they crossed the fields and came to the road by the great gates, a heavy fog fell all around and wrapped them in darkness; and neither the watchmen on the walls nor the people in the streets saw the four strangers who walked so near them. But Argus led the way by paths well known to him, and soon they stood at the door of the mighty palace of Æetes.

They went in quietly, filled with wonder at what they saw. For no man in Greece had ever dreamed of such a hall. The pillars that upheld the lofty roof were of gold and silver inlaid with precious stones. The ceiling was of some rare spicy wood, carved beautifully and stained red and purple and golden like the sunset clouds of an autumn day.

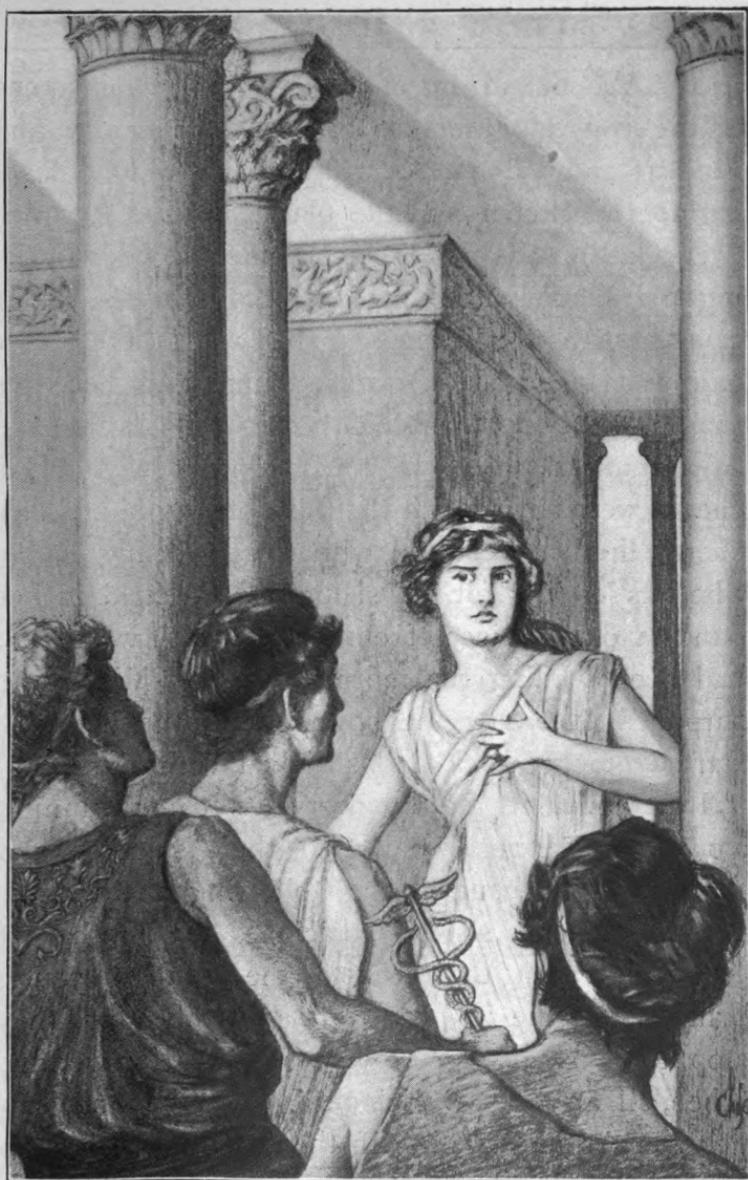
Just beyond the threshold a mass of flowering vines twined upward, filling the hall with sweet perfumes and entrancing every eye with their beauty.

About the roots of these vines flowed the wondrous springs which Vulcan, the smith of smiths, digged in the golden days of old. From the first of these springs milk gushed forth; from the second, wine; from the third, a fragrant oil; and from the fourth, water which to-day was hot and to-morrow was cold as ice.

In the midst of the hall stood two bulls of polished brass, and beside them was a plow of hardest rock. These bulls were the wonder of all men, for twelve times each day they breathed forth fearful flames and their eyes gleamed with light too dazzling to behold. They, too, had been shaped by the deft hands of Vulcan.

The inner hall was both beautiful and grand. The walls were hung with finest tapestry on which was pictured many a story of the old, old times. Above, and all around the painted ceiling, was a cornice of gold on which were carved the figures of gods and goddesses, of nymphs and satyrs, and of every other strange being that lives beneath the sun. The floor was inlaid with precious stones so placed as to make it look like a green meadow spangled thick with gorgeous flowers.

On the farther side of this hall was the open inner court around which were the private chambers of the king and queen and of Prince Absyrtus, their



"The princess Medea came hastily in."

son. Above and beyond these were the rooms of the two daughters of the king, Chalciopé and Médée; and still farther away were the doors leading to the kitchen and the places for the servants.

As Jason and his three comrades stood wondering and silent in the inner hall, the princess Médée came hastily in, not knowing they were there. Her hair was black as a raven's wing, and her eyes snapped and glowed beneath her dark brows like twin stars gleaming in the midnight sky. Her cheeks were ruddy with the flush of youth, and her cherry lips were parted with a bewitching smile. She was looking for her sister, and she held in her hands a dainty piece of embroidery with which she had been whiling the morning hours. When her surprised eyes saw the strangers in the hall, she started quickly back and shrieked with alarm.

In a moment the maidservants came running from the weaving room with their spindles and yarn in their hands; and following them came Médée's elderly sister, Chalciopé, the mother of Argus. When they beheld the strange young prince, so noble in form and so richly clad, they stopped suddenly and stood speechless for wonder. Then, all at once, Chalciopé, looking beyond, saw her son Argus standing in the hall, and with a cry of glad surprise she ran to meet him.

“O Argus, my child!” she cried, “hast thou indeed come home again? Hast thou had enough of savage Orchomenus, and hast thou come back to stay with thy mother in her old age?”

While she was clinging to his neck and sobbing aloud for joy, the king himself came into the hall.

Æetes was very old, yet he walked erect and proud, and his eyes blazed like balefires beneath his gray forehead. Men said that he was the child of the Sun, and none could remember the time when he began to rule over the people of ÆEa. Like a lion roused in his lair, he strode forward, eager to learn what was the cause of the commotion. But when he saw the strangers and among them his grandson Argus, he curbed his anger, and in pleasant tones bade each of them welcome. Then, without further words, he went back the way he had come, calling aloud to his servants.

Forthwith there was running to and fro throughout the palace. Some hastened to carry wood into the kitchen; some quickly rekindled the smouldering fires; others hurried to slay the fatted beeves and to prepare a feast for the unexpected guests. One of Chalciopé's maidens led them to pleasant chambers set apart for strangers; another brought them clean linen and warm water for the bath; another dusted their clothes and stood ready to do

any service they might wish. But no one asked them questions or sought to know the reason of their coming.

At length, when they had rested and refreshed themselves, they were led into the long dining hall, where meat and drink for the mightiest were placed before them. There, with the old king as their host, they feasted merrily, while soft music, played by unseen hands, filled their hearts with joy and drove all fear of danger from their minds. From a curtained gallery above, dark eyes looked down upon them—the eyes of Chalciopé and of her young maiden sister. And as Medea gazed upon the faultless form of Jason, she thought that nowhere in the world could there be another prince so full of grace and noble courage and all that goes to the making of a perfect man.

When the meal was finished, and it was right and courteous to ask the questions that were uppermost in his mind, Æetes said to Argus, “Now tell me, my grandson, why have you returned to Æea, and who are these noble strangers whom you have brought hither to be my guests?”

Then Argus answered humbly, as becomes a young man speaking to his grandsire: “Æetes, I went, as you did bid me, to Orchomenus to claim the kingdom which should be mine. But the Minyæ

in that city would not receive me, and I barely escaped from them with my life. The race of Athamas is accursed, and it is decreed that no one of his descendants shall sit upon his throne until the golden fleece is carried back to Greece."

"Ah, indeed," said Æetes, scornfully. "Then I suppose that your errand here is to rob your grand-sire of his richest treasure; and you have brought these strangers to help you. Is it not so?"

"Judge me not so harshly, grandfather," answered Argus. "I will tell you the truth. The young prince who sits beside us is Jason, whose grandfather was Cretheus, the brother of Athamas. He is therefore my own cousin. He is heir to the rich kingdom of Iolcus, which lies at the foot of old Mount Pelion by the sea. But a certain lawless man robbed him of his birthright while he was still a lad, and bade him win it back by bringing the golden fleece from Æa. So we together built a ship, greater than any other that has ever sailed the sea. And Jason gathered around him all the chosen heroes of the Minyan race for a quest the like of which no other man has ever undertaken. He has come hither to Colchis and the city of Æa, bringing great treasures with which to buy the golden fleece."

"Indeed, indeed!" muttered Æetes, and his face

began to grow purple with rage. Then Jason arose and spoke soothingly to him.

“Great king,” he said, “the words that Argus has spoken are true. And now, that we may remove the curse which rests so heavily upon the house of Athamas, we come to you as merchants with a fair store of goodly things to offer you in exchange for the fleece. We have in the hold of our ship rich golden cups and well-wrought arms, and brazen tripods, and rare dyestuffs from distant Tyre, and much else to please the eyes of kings and deck their lordly halls. Take these and let us have the fleece that hangs useless in your treasure house. Then the curse will be removed from the family of Athamas, and your son Argus will be awarded his just rights.”

The old face of Æetes changed from purple to an ashen hue as he listened to these words. But he checked his anger and answered cunningly; for he planned not only to keep the fleece, but also to possess himself of all the riches of which Jason had spoken.

“I am no merchant that I should trade with you,” he said. “The fleece is not for sale; and even though it were, there is not merchandise enough in the world to pay for it. As for the curse that rests on the house of Athamas, what do I care? Let it

abide there, I say. Nor is it worth your while to try to get the fleece by force; for all the heroes of Greece cannot stand against my power. Nevertheless, I hold the gods in reverence and will do as they may direct. So I will set a task for you, and if you perform it I shall know that father Jupiter wills you to possess the fleece. If you fail, let the consequences fall upon your head."

"Tell me what the task is," said Jason, "and I will not shrink from it, even though I should die."

"Then hear it," answered Æetes. "In the Field of Mars, close by the city gate, two bulls are grazing, the like of which no man has ever seen. They are as wild as the winds of winter; they breathe hot flames from their nostrils. Your task shall be to yoke these oxen to my plow and with it to turn up an acre of the rough sod in the Field of Mars. Then you shall sow the field not with grain, but with the teeth of a dragon. These teeth will at once spring up as armed men, and you must slay them or be slain by them."

When Jason heard these words he was dumb with wonder and knew not what to say; and the more he thought about the task, the harder did it seem. Yet there was but one answer for him to make, and at length he spoke it bravely as became a leader of heroes.

“The task is an over hard one,” he said, “and no man may undertake it and hope to live. Yet I will not shrink from it. To-morrow at the hour of noon I will try it, and if I die no man shall say that Jason was a coward.”

“It is well,” said the king. “To-morrow the trial shall be made.”

Then Jason and his comrades arose and went forth from the hall. And from her place in the curtained gallery, Medea, with wondering eyes, looked down at the young hero. She watched him until his form was lost to view in the narrow street; then she hastened to her chamber and closed the door behind her.

“Ah, me!” she said, while hot tears gushed from her eyes. “Ah, me! that he should perish thus! For never was there a man like him, so young, so strong, so noble in form and feature.”

Then as she mourned for him she thought of his beautiful raiment, she thought of his witching voice, she thought of the way that he sat at the table and how he went out of the door. His face seemed even then before her eyes, and his words seemed to be ringing in her ears.

“O Hecate,” she prayed between her sobs, “have pity on the fair young prince. Help him to escape, for he can never do the task that is set for him. Or,

if he must die, let him know that I, at least, do grieve for his sad fate."

Meanwhile Jason and his comrades went swiftly back to the spot where the *Argo* lay hidden by the shore. There they found the other heroes waiting anxiously to learn the outcome of their visit to the king.

"Æetes has set me a hard task," said Jason, "and the certain end of it is death. His heart is bitter toward us, and so great is his power that we shall not win the golden fleece from him. Yet I will not shrink from the trial, nor shall men ever say that the prize was lost through any neglect of mine. As for you, my fellows, be wary and strong, and swift to avenge my untimely fate."

"We will stand by you to the end," shouted all the heroes; and they declared that, come what might, they would never despair of the golden fleece so long as one of them was left alive.

ADVENTURE XXIV

THE BREWING OF THE MAGIC LOTION

IN her chamber all night long the maiden Medea lay thinking of the noble stranger who on the morrow would go out to yoke the fire-breathing bulls. At first only pity was in her heart — pity that one so young and handsome should perish in his prime. Then, little by little, she formed a plan by which to help him in his dreadful task. At length her mind was fully made up to save the hero, even at the risk of her own life.

As soon as the early dawn began to drive the shadows from her room she arose. She smoothed out her long, black tresses and bathed her tear-stained face in refreshing water. Next she donned a long black robe and fastened it about her neck with ebony brooches. Then, having thrown a thick veil over her face, she went softly out of her chamber.

At the threshold her maidens met her, — twelve fair girls of her own age, who were ever ready to do

her bidding. It was no new thing that they should rise thus early, for it was Medea's custom to go often at earliest dawn to do service at the shrine of Hecate, the goddess of enchantment and magic arts.

"Bring quickly the wagon and the mules," she said; "for even now it is broad daylight, and we shall be late at the temple."

Then, while some ran to yoke the beasts, she drew two of the trustiest maidens aside and whispered: "Hearken to me. In a sheltered nook of the river, not far below the city walls, there lies a ship, with many heroes from distant Greece on board. Do you make your way quickly thither and inquire for Jason, their leader. Then say to him that if he would win his quest he must not fail to meet the king's daughter at the shrine of Hecate sharply at the rising of the sun."

The maidens promised, and glided swiftly away through the shadowy streets.

And now as Medea came to the outer door she found the wagon waiting. She stepped into it and took the reins. Two of her maidens stood beside her, but the rest, with their black robes lifted to the knee, ran behind. Medea waved her whip, and the swift mules sped lightly through the town. The hour was so early that not many people had risen ;

but those who heard the rattling car knew well that it was carrying the king's daughter to the shrine of the witch goddess, and few dared look at her, lest she might work some magic spell upon them.

Soon she left the narrow streets. Soon she passed the great temple of Jupiter and the high towers by the market place. The eastern gate of the city swung open before her, and she drove out. Swiftly in her noisy car she sped across the plain, while her surefooted maidens followed closely behind. To a grove of blasted oaks, where two roads crossed, she drove her team. There, in the dim shadows where noxious shrubs grew rank, the low walls of Hecate's temple stood half concealed. The mules checked their speed, and Medea leaped lightly from the wagon.

“Now listen to me, my maidens,” she whispered, standing in the gloom. “Yesterday you saw the noble stranger who sat at my father's table, and you heard of the beautiful and costly things which he has brought over the sea to Ææa. Among them are rings of gold and brooches set with rarest gems, and many a fair ornament such as princesses wear in distant Greece. Now, if you are discreet and do as I say, you shall have some of these rich gifts for yourselves. For the young hero is even now on his way to meet me here, and he will bring many

ornaments with him, which he will give me if I help him in the fearful task he is to do to-day. All these beautiful things shall be yours if you will but keep my secret and betray me not."

"Trust us! We will be faithful," cried the maidens, with one accord.

"Then watch here, and move not away until I call you," said Medea, and with that she turned and went into the darksome temple.

The room was small and dimly lighted. The floor was only the bare earth made smooth and hard by the trampling of feet. The walls were hung with dark tapestry wherein was woven many a picture of direful things and creatures of the night. Upon a platform at the farther side stood the three-faced image of Hecate, holding in her hands a smoking torch, a key, and a two-edged knife. At her feet, a black lamb was tethered, waiting to be sacrificed. Above her head, bats were flitting in the gloom, while on the rafters an owl, solemn and gray, sat blinking at the feeble light.

Medea was alone. From the folds of her black robe she drew a basket filled with things used in the magic arts. With the tip of her finger she drew a circle on the ground, and in the center of this she kindled a fire of twigs and scented leaves and mystic herbs. It burned slowly, and the small

tongues of flame shone dimly red and blue and purple in the darkness, seeming to make the gloomy place still gloomier.

Next, from her basket, Medea drew a bowl, black on the outside, but within carved most wondrously with figures of toads and snakes and other hideous things. Into this bowl she poured a dark liquid from a larger bowl that sat beside the three-faced image of Hecate. To this she added many bits of leaves and roots of unknown names and curious forms, and when the mixture was complete, she set the bowl amidst the flames.

Soon strange fumes began to rise, and clouds of thick white smoke floated in the heavy air. And as Medea watched them eagerly, noting how they changed their forms, she muttered the magic words of enchantment which none but Hecate herself could understand. Then, lifting her hands to the image, she prayed, "Dread goddess, help me this day, and grant that the charm I am brewing may work most wondrously and bring about those things that I desire most."

This ended, she drew the vessel from the fire and let the mixture cool awhile. Then, still muttering enchantments, she poured the magic stuff into a vial shaped like an apple with golden figures wrought upon it.



The Brewing of the Magic Lotion.

"It is done," she said, and at that moment the first rays of the sun peeped over the eastern hills.

In the meanwhile, Jason, having received the message which Medea's maidens carried to him, hastened to go also to the temple of Hecate. Argus showed him the way, and Mopsus the soothsayer followed. Never had Jason seemed so graceful and godlike as on that eventful day, and all the heroes wondered as they watched his shining figure crossing the fields in the dull, gray light of the dawn.

The three hurried along the narrow path, that so they might reach the temple before the sun should rise above the mountain tops. Soon they approached the crossing of the roads, and there they saw the dark, low building huddled in the shadow of a blasted tree. Upon the tree a number of crows were perched, and they were cawing to each other as only crows can caw.

"What are those birds saying?" asked Jason.

"They are talking about you," answered Mopsus. "The first one says, 'Here comes the hero who seeks the fleece of gold.' The old one on the topmost branch says, 'Hard, indeed, is the task that King Æetes has set for him to perform.' Then the younger ones all answer, 'Yes, but if he will trust to Medea's charms, he shall succeed.'"

Suddenly, as the heroes drew nearer, the birds flapped their wings and made a great outcry.

“What did they say then?” asked Jason.

“They said,” answered Mopsus, “that if more than one of us shall enter Hecate’s temple, the charm that Medea has laid will be broken. So go you in alone, and Argus and I will stand and wait outside.”

But as Jason was about to pass in at the door, he met Medea on the threshold. Quickly she started back, trembling as one afraid. Her face grew pale, and she stood gasping for breath beneath the sputtering torch that faintly lighted up the gloomy place.

For a moment the hero stood also abashed, and then smiling as though speaking to an old friend, he said: “Wherefore should you be afraid of me, Medea? I have come hither by your request, hoping that you will help me in my hour of need. For without such help I shall never perform the task that your father has set for me.”

Then courage came into her heart, and she looked straight into his eyes. Yet her hand still shook as she drew forth from her girdle the precious, apple-shaped vial into which she had poured her magic mixture.

“The help that I give you is this,” she said. “It is a magic lotion—an ointment of Hecate’s

own brewing. Anoint yourself with it, and great strength and valor will be yours, and you will think yourself a match even for the gods. Sprinkle, also, your sword with it, and your shield and your spear. Then be bold and fear not, for neither the fire-breathing bulls nor the fierce onslaught of the earth-born men can do you harm."

"I will obey every word that you say," answered Jason.

"Then hearken," said Medea, "and do this. When you have plowed the Field of Mars, take the dragon's teeth that my father will give you, and as you walk along the furrow cast them by handfuls over your shoulder. At once they will spring up, a host of fierce men in armor. Watch them closely and then slyly throw a stone among them. You need do nothing more; for they will forthwith destroy each other like famished wolves fighting for food."

"I thank you heartily," said Jason, "and gladly would I make some return for all your kindness. Tell me if there is anything that I can do to prove my gratitude."

The maiden smiled sadly and laid her hand in his. "Only this," she answered: "remember the name of Medea when haply you shall return some day to your home beyond the sea. And I, too, will

remember the name of Jason when you are gone away."

"Truly," said Jason, "I will never forget you. And if perchance I live to return to my own sweet country, all the world shall hear of you, and the name of Medea shall be remembered as long as the sun endures."

Then they parted. Jason, with Mopsus and Argus, hastened joyfully back to the ship, and Medea went forth to call her maidens.

"The hour is growing late," she said, "and my father will be expecting me."

She stepped into the swift wagon. In one hand she took the reins, and with the other she wielded the long whip. The mules sprang forward, and with clattering speed carried her homeward.

ADVENTURE XXV

IN THE FIELD OF MARS

It was noon in Æa. The hour had come for the great contest in the Field of Mars. The whole city was astir. From above the doorway of the king's palace the trumpets were sounded. The people poured forth into the streets. They hastened eagerly out through the market gate and along the great country road, all eager to see the fate of the bold stranger who had dared so fearful a task.

The king, with Medea by his side, drove through the town in his bronze-wheeled chariot. Upon his head he wore a sun-bright helmet with four long plumes nodding in the wind. Over his shoulder hung a rawhide shield which no weapon could pierce, and in his belt he wore the wondrous sword that Mars himself had given him.

Forth he drove through the streets and out into the open meadows; and Medea, clad in the white robes of a princess, talked lightly of the rare sport

they were going to see in the Field of Mars. But, all the while, the maiden's heart was a-tremble, and her fingers grasped the precious black charm that she had taken from the shrine of Hecate.

The Field of Mars was soon reached. It was a level space fenced in by strong stone walls. On the south side was a high platform with long rows of benches overtopping the wall, and in the midst was a white pavilion for the king. Thither Æetes mounted, leading Medea by the hand, while his son, the noble young Absyrtus, walked behind. As the three sat down in the well-cushioned seats that overlooked the field, the drums beat loudly, the trumpets sounded, and all the people shouted for joy.

At the same moment Jason and his band of heroes came marching to the field. Now Jason had bathed himself with the magic lotion, as Medea had bidden him, and dauntless courage filled his heart. As the gate of bronze opened to let him pass into the fateful place where his task was to be performed, many a fair maiden sighed and thought she had never seen a hero whose form was so perfect or whose bearing was so grand. And even Æetes, seeing how fearless he was, grew faint at heart and wondered whether indeed this glorious youth were not some god come down to mock him. But soon he rallied and raised his

hand to give the signal that the contest should begin.

The trumpets sounded. The people were hushed and silent, as though a great fear had fallen upon them. With spear and shield Jason ran forward. Upon the ground before him he saw the brazen yoke and the mighty plow; but where were the beasts which he had come to conquer?

Under a mass of rocks near by there was a dark cavern, from the mouth of which dense smoke was pouring, and the hero rightly guessed that the bulls were within. He shouted aloud. He beat upon his shield. He threw stones into the cavern's mouth.

Out rushed the fearful beasts, bellowing as they came. Streams of fire spouted from their nostrils, and clouds of stifling vapor filled the air around them. Fearful was their onset, but Jason leaped swiftly forward to meet them halfway. For a moment he seemed wrapped in flames. Then, to the great wonder of the beholders, he came striding across the field, wreathed in smoke and dragging the bulls by the horns.

With might and main he forced them to the spot where he would have them go. Little good did it do them to struggle; they soon learned they had met their master. When Jason raised the massive yoke to set it on their necks, they meekly



Jason and the Fire-breathing Bulls.

bowed their heads and let him do his will. Then quickly the heavy plow with its long pole was harnessed to the yoke, and the hero with commanding shouts drove his team across the field. The mighty plowshare cleaved the tough sward, it cleaved the very rocks, and the rattling clods and crumbling stones were scattered right and left. Back and forth, from this end of the field to that, and from that end to this, the bellowing beasts toiled unwillingly; and at each turning a broad, deep furrow was left behind.

The Colchians from their high seats on the wall looked on with dumb amazement, and the heroes of the *Argo* stood up boldly and shouted for gladness. But the face of the old king grew ashy pale, and he knew not what to think. "No man could do that wondrous thing," he muttered, "unless he were helped by some trick of magic," and he glared so fiercely at his daughter Medea that her face grew pale and her heart trembled with fear.

At length the plowing was finished. With a shout of triumph, Jason loosed the oxen from the yoke and waved his arms to drive them back to their cavern. Then, lo! the fire ceased to spout from their mouths, the smoke no longer rose from their nostrils. The creatures uttered no sound, they made no movement. They stood rooted to the

ground, and seemed only another pair of lifeless statues like those that stood in the king's great hall.

Then Jason came forward to get the dragon's teeth from the king's officer who had them in charge. There were so many of the white, pointed things that they filled a brazen helmet to the brim. "They are fair, good seed, and they shall be sown well," said the hero. With long and measured steps, like a practiced farmer, he walked back and forth over the rough-plowed land, at every step throwing a handful of the baleful teeth over his shoulder.

Scarcely was his task finished when a faint muttering sound was heard beneath the upturned earth. It grew louder, and soon the clods and turf and broken stones began to move about and form themselves into little mounds and hillocks. Then from each hillock was pushed forth, first a mailed fist, and after it an arm encased in iron, and at last the head and body of a giant warrior clad in glittering armor, and bearing a shield and spear. With strange shouts and dreadful clamor the warriors sprang to their feet and looked around them. Then, indeed, would Jason have been lost had he not remembered Medea's words. But while the armored giants were gazing wildly around them, he secretly threw a round, smooth stone among them.

At once each began to fight his neighbor, and with loud yells to thrust his spear about him. Fearful, indeed, was the uproar, and fierce was the battle. Blindly the warriors struck this way and that, not caring whom they slew. They fell like the ripened wheat before the sickle of the reaper. Soon not one of the great multitude was left alive.

As the sun went down in the hazy west, Jason stood alone in the Field of Mars. His fearful task was ended.

Then a great shout went up from all the lookers-on, and the king beckoned for the hero to draw near.

"Now, Jason," he said, "we know that you are favored of the gods; for no man without such favor could perform the deeds of valor that we have seen done here to-day. The fleece of gold shall in due time be yours, for I have promised it. But there is no need of haste. Come and feast with me in my house to-night, and to-morrow you shall sail for Greece, carrying back the object of your quest."

As he spoke, his eyes glowed with an evil light, and his face betrayed the falseness of his heart. Yet Jason answered him with thanks and words of praise.

"O King," he said, "you are both kind and wise, and it would be but ill of me to ask still further

favors or to refuse to be your guest to-night. First, I will send my comrades back to their ship, and then I will go with you as you bid."

So, while Æetes tarried in his place with fair Medea by his side, Jason hastened to speak to the heroes, who stood a little way apart, expecting his commands.

"My friends," said he, "Æetes still plots mischief in his heart, and it becomes us to be wary and alert. I am to be his guest to-night. But go you straight-way to the ship. Turn her prow toward the sea. Make everything ready for instant flight. Then wait and see what may happen."

With these words he turned away and sought the king. Then, sitting by his side in his chariot of polished brass, he rode like a conqueror back into the town. But Medea, with her brother Absyrtus, returned by another way.

ADVENTURE XXVI

THE WINNING OF THE FLEECE

THE feast in the long hall of old Æetes was ended. The guests had gone their several ways. The musicians and the dancing girls had disappeared. The torchbearers, too, had departed, and the palace was in darkness. The great doors were shut and bolted, and the guards stood in their places nodding and asleep.

In the best guest room above the court, Jason stood alone. He was clad in full armor, as when he subdued the fiery bulls, and his fingers toyed with his sword hilt as he waited impatiently for some hoped-for signal from Medea.

In his secret council chamber the king sat with all his men of might around him; and his heart was hot with fury as he talked of the deeds that Jason had performed. Then an old soothsayer in whom he placed great trust arose and begged leave to speak.

“It is plain,” said he, “that this Jason could

never have performed the task that you set for him had not some magic power aided him. Now here is something that may help us solve the mystery. It is a tassel of gold thread finely wrought, such as these Greeks wear upon their sword belts. No man in Æa ever wore its like. This noon as I paused at the crossing of the roads to breathe a prayer to Hecate, I saw this precious thing lying at the threshold of her temple; and as I stooped to pick it up, I saw close by it, but half hidden in the shadow of the door, this bowl, with Medea's name within it wrought curiously in white and black."

"Say no more! say no more!" cried the king. "It is as I suspected, and my ungrateful daughter is the cause of our defeat. No other magic than that which she herself wields through the aid of mighty Hecate could have done this thing. But her punishment shall be swift and terrible."

Then in hoarse, low whispers he made known a plan by which to make an end of all the business, to destroy Jason and his comrades, and to seize upon the *Argo* and her treasures. Little did he think that light-footed Medea was at that moment standing by the door and listening to every word.

She did not listen long. She knew that her own death was planned, and that vile treachery was devised against the heroes. So, wrapped in her long,

black cloak, she stole silently through the darkened halls to the place where the keys of the king's treasure house were kept. The secret cabinet wherein they lay was closed fast with threefold bolts of brass.

"Now help me, Hecate," she said; and from her bosom she drew a yellow herb which she laid upon the lock, muttering strange words and passing her hand to and fro before it.

Scarcely had she begun the spell when the bolts slid backward, the door flew open silently, and there before her lay the seven golden keys. She seized them quickly and hid them within the folds of her cloak. Then with a smile she hastened back to the deserted inner court.

She climbed the stairway to Jason's room. She tapped lightly at his door. It opened softly, and by the dim moonlight that struggled in she saw the hero standing armed before her.

"Follow me!" she whispered. And without delay or further words the two went noiselessly through the halls. The great bronze doors opened at Medea's touch, and soon they found themselves in the quiet street.

Silently Medea glided onward, shunning the moonlight. Silently Jason followed her, wondering but saying nothing. She led him to the grove of

ancient oaks that stood around the gray old temple of Jupiter. There, deep hidden among the shadows, was the massive outside wall of the king's treasure house. At the door Medea paused and for the first time lightly spoke.

"Within this place, encircled by seven walls, is the precious thing for which you have come so far and dared so much. Be brave and fear not, for you have to face the direst danger of all. Before you can lay hands on the fleece you must pass the sleepless dragon that guards it day and night. No witchery of mine can give you strength to conquer it as you conquered the brazen bulls to-day."

"Lead on," answered Jason. "I have no fears," and he laid his hand upon his sword.

"Put up your sword," said Medea. "I will lead, but do you keep silent until the prize is won."

Then with the golden keys she unlocked the doors one after the other, and silently the two passed on through the seven encircling walls. As the last door was opened they saw before them a great chamber lighted with a golden glow that seemed to issue from a glorious object hanging on the wall. But right in their path lay the dragon, motionless, with staring eyes wide open and yellow claws outstretched as though ready to seize some helpless victim.

A hideous thing he was. His scaly form was stretched out to a wondrous length. His red jaws were parted just enough to show the double row of pointed teeth within his cavernous mouth. What mortal could withstand a beast so huge and pitiless? He seemed to be preparing to spring upon them.

But Medea stood fearless before the monster, gazing steadfastly into his bloodshot eyes. Then from the folds of her cloak she took a tiny harp of wondrous workmanship, which men said Vulcan, in the ancient days, had wrought for one of the Muses. Deftly her fingers strayed hither and thither over the golden strings. The whole place was filled with music so sweet that even Orpheus could not have excelled it.

The dragon heard, and soon forgot all else but the bewitching strains. His eyes began to close as though he were being lulled to sleep. His yellow claws relaxed as little by little he glided nearer and nearer to the fair musician. Slowly and more slowly he came, while she stood unmoved and drew her fingers with swiftness through the strings. At last the horrid head rested on the floor beside her, and the half-closed eyes looked up into the maiden's face, robbed of their fierceness by the wondrous power of music. Then without pausing or looking

round, Medea whispered, "Go now, softly, quickly, and take the fleece of gold."

Silently and with a brave heart, Jason glided forward, right past the dragon into the glowing light of the treasure chamber. His eyes were dazzled with the glory of the object that hung before him. He reached out his arms, he plunged his hands deep into the wondrous folds of the golden fleece. Quickly he lifted it from its place. Silently he glided back to the door, brushing the dragon's scaly side as he passed.

"Be still! Make haste!" Medea whispered. "The terror is asleep. Look not back, but hasten."

And so the two went swiftly from the dreadful place, closing each door behind them, and pausing not till they had reached the street. Then Jason saw that the ruddy light which issued from the fleece shone bright as day around them, while they must needs keep hidden; and he tried in vain to thrust it beneath his armor.

"Conceal it with this," said Medea, and loosing her long cloak she slipped it from her shoulders and threw it lightly over the glowing treasure.

"Now hasten," she said. "Hasten to your ship and your friends; and then make all speed away, for my father will not let you easily escape. As for

me, my hours are numbered, and I go to meet my doom. Before the sun of to-morrow rises, my eyes shall be closed in death. But as you sail swiftly over the sea, will you not think sometimes of her who died that you might win your quest? Will you not now and then speak the name of Medea, who gave her life in order that your name might be remembered forever?"

Jason took her hand in his own and said: "Never will I sail again on the good ship *Argo* unless you sail with me. Never will I return to my sweet country and my home and friends unless you go with me and I can say, 'Here is Medea, who won the golden fleece for me.' Come, the *Argo* waits for us. Come, let us hasten to escape from the wrath of King Æetes."

What could Medea do but obey?

Together the two fled silently through the shadowy streets. Together they left the sleeping town behind them and hurried across the moonlit fields. And all this while the glorious fleece lay on Jason's arm concealed beneath Medea's cloak. Soon they came in sight of the *Argo*, lying in plain view close by the bank. Her bright gunwales and ready oars glistened in the moonlight, and the figure of Athena glowed redly at her prow.

ADVENTURE XXVII

THE FLIGHT AND THE PURSUIT

How the heroes shouted when Jason drew the folded cloak aside and gave them one glimpse of the hard-won fleece before laying it in the hold beside their other treasures! How they gazed in wonder as he lifted Medea into the *Argo* and led her to the seat of safety beneath the small deck at the prow! But they had little time for asking questions. A beacon fire flamed suddenly from the tower above the market place. It was answered by another, and then another and another, till the river banks from the city to the sea seemed ablaze with signals.

“They have discovered our flight,” said Jason. And Ancæus the good helmsman shouted: “To your oars, heroes! To your oars!”

The rumbling of chariot wheels and the clatter of galloping hoofs resounded on the streets. Lights glimmered among the boats along the wharfs, and soon the splashing of a hundred oars disturbed the quiet of the sleeping river. The heroes must be

prompt and swift if they would escape with their treasure.

As Ancæus gave the word, the rowers, as one man, bent to their task. In a moment the *Argo* was in midstream; in another moment she was speeding like an arrow toward the sea. But on both sides balefires gleamed, and the shouts of men and the galloping of horses along the shore seemed to keep even pace with the fleeing ship. The heroes shouted in triumph and defiance. For in the hold they saw the yellow gleam of the priceless fleece, and at the prow in queenly raiment sat the daughter of the king.

Then Orpheus tuned his lyre and sang a new song. He sang of love and hope and faith. He sang of beauty and of honor and renown. He sang of the curse of gold that withers and blights the human heart and checks the noblest impulses of the soul. Then he sang of the restless sea and of loved ones far away, and of the joys of home and the blessings of peace. And as he sang, the rowers kept time with his music, and their eyes swam in tears as they remembered the sweet homeland which they might never see again.

Swiftly the *Argo* sped onward between the green banks of the Phasis; but ever the sound of pursuit came nearer and nearer. At length the dawn

appeared, and soon the sun rose in the yellow east. At the same moment they saw the mouth of the river just before them, and the silvery waters of the sea dancing and rippling beyond. But both banks were lined with armed warriors, some of whom had waded far out into the stream, ready to hurl their spears at the fleeing heroes; while directly in front of them one of the king's warships guarded the narrow outlet to the sea.

"Forward!" cried Jason; and the heroes, leaning low, pulled hard upon their oars.

As they drew nearer their foes, whom should they see standing in the king's ship but young Absyrtus, the brother of Medea. His form was very noble. The brazen armor in which he was clad shone like gold in the beams of the sun, and the four red plumes on his helmet nodded gayly to the freshening breeze.

"Ye men of Greece," he cried, "I command you to come no farther. You have taken from my father the fleece of gold, the wonder of the world, and I bid you return it to him, and give yourselves up to be dealt with as he shall deem just and right."

With that he poised his long spear and made as though he would hurl it into the midst of the heroes. But Jason coolly answered him: "Who are you that we should obey you? Move aside and

let our ship pass through this narrow channel into the sea."

Forthwith bold Ancæus at the helm turned the *Argo* straight toward the Colchian vessel, and those of the heroes who were not rowing bent their bows and made ready to let fly their arrows. Seeing this, young Absyrtus with the strength of a giant threw his spear. It grazed the armor of Jason and stuck in the deck close by the head of Medea. Fierce shouts filled the air, and spears and darts flew thick as the flakes of snow on a wintry day. Then, indeed, did the heroes thank their well-built armor and their strong shields of oxhide; for although the *Argo's* hull was stuck full of deadly missiles, yet not one of those on board was injured.

With a mighty cry, Jason leaped forward and hurled his spear at Absyrtus, and at the same time Arcas, the wild archer, let fly his unerring arrow. Both struck the young prince, piercing his breastplate and his heavy armor. With a shriek of agony he threw up his arms and fell into the dark stream.

The next moment the mighty *Argo*, driven with the utmost speed, struck the king's vessel squarely amidships. There was a dreadful crash, a flying of broken timbers, a shrieking of desperate and drowning men, and then all that could be seen of

the hapless warship were a few splintered boards and bits of rigging floating in the midst of the swirling waves. The *Argo*, unharmed, glided onward through the narrow channel and was soon riding upon the green waters of the sea.

The rowers rested upon their oars, and all looked back. The shores were black with Colchian warriors, some weeping, some shouting and waving their arms, and all rushing to and fro like mad men. Down the river came a fleet of Colchian vessels, — a hundred small ships with a dozen warriors in each; and in the foremost of these stood Æetes himself, waving his sword in the air and crying for vengeance upon the Greeks. But when he reached the spot where young Absyrtus had been overthrown, he caused his fleet to halt in midstream, that all might search for the body of the ill-fated prince.

“To your oars, heroes!” cried Jason.

Swiftly then did the *Argo* speed away. A brisk wind sprang up, and the sails were spread. Never did vessel glide so rapidly over the sea. And the thought that was uppermost in the mind of every hero was his home. But Medea’s heart was heavy with the memory of loved ones left behind in Æea, and most of all with sadness for her brother’s untimely death.

ADVENTURE XXVIII

THE VOYAGE UP THE ISTER

THROUGH all that summer day, the *Argo* with her noble crew sailed onward. For many days did she sail, favored by fair winds behind and sunny skies above. But when the heroes at length supposed that they were very near the entrance to the straits where the clashing rocks stood guard, a thick fog fell suddenly around and hid all things from their sight. Slowly and timidly, like a blind man groping in strange places, they felt their way in the gray, bewildering gloom. But whether they were going northward or southward or eastward or westward, the wisest among them could not tell. Vainly, therefore, did they row hither and thither for many days; and when the fog lifted at last, they found themselves near a strange coast very far from the passage they had been seeking. Then suddenly Jason remembered that blind old Phineus had warned them to return to Greece by another way.

“Yet is there another way?” he asked.

“In truth there is,” answered Argus; “for I have often heard it spoken of in ÆEa by those whose fathers learned of it from the Egyptian priests. It is through a river called the Ister, a broad, deep stream that has its springs in the mountains of the far-distant West. The stream by its many branches finds its way into many seas. By following one, we may reach the waters that lave the shores of Thessaly and the isles of Greece. By following another, we may pass through Thrace and thence into the far western sea that bounds the savage coasts of Sicily.”

This speech pleased Jason mightily, and he gave commands to sail northward in search of one of the mouths of the Ister. At once a bright light flashed forth from the oaken image at the prow, and a voice was heard to say, “I will show you the way.”

So with glad hearts the heroes sailed onward, with the round, green hills of Paphlagonia on their left. And the radiant light shone out before them day and night, pointing the way, while the brisk south wind urged them ever onward. At length they reached the spot where a broad river emptied its yellow flood into the sea; and since it seemed to come out of the West, they deemed that it must be the Ister. When Jason asked the figure at the prow,

it made no answer. Nevertheless, the light still shone, and so the helmsman steered the ship into the smoothly flowing stream.

How many days they held on this course, or how far they sailed against the gentle current of that river, no man has told. At first they floated between low, grassy banks, where broad meadows lay on either side like seas of waving green stretching away and away to meet the bending sky. Then they rowed between higher banks, where trees grew large and tall, seeming to hedge them in with walls through which even the eyes of Lynceus could see but little way. Later on they came into an opener country, with pleasant groves, and many a sunny glade, and upland hillocks where herds of deer were pasturing. There for a time they tarried, while Arcas and swift Atalanta and a dozen other skillful archers went out to try their fortune in the chase. Right glad they were to roam once more in the wild greenwood. Many a savage beast was slain that day by their unerring arrows; and at evening they bore full many a carcass of deer or other timid creature back to the *Argo*.

After that they rowed onward many days, while the stream became narrower and narrower, and the forest grew more and more dense, until the gnarled branches of the trees almost met above their heads.

But still the light glowed from the oaken image of Athena, and still the heroes bravely toiled and felt no fear of failure. At last, however, the river dwindled to a mere brook, flowing sullenly through boggy ground, and the banks were scarcely more than an oar's length apart. Then Jason, and, indeed, all the rest, began to lose hope, for plainly they could row no farther.

“Alas!” said the heroes, half angrily, and each seeking to throw the blame upon another. “Is this to be the end of our quest? Shall we remain here and perish in this savage wood, or shall we float back to the sea from whence we came and try to find some other passage homeward?”

Then all went ashore, and while some built a campfire under the trees and sat around it, telling old stories of the golden age, others wandered far into the woods to see what new thing they might discover.

Among these last was Argus. With his bow in his hand, and watching eagerly for any sign of game, he pushed his way alone through the tangled underwoods. Suddenly he heard a rustling of leaves and branches near him, and he drew his arrow ready for a shot.

Then, to his great surprise, he saw a maiden walking beneath the trees. Her limbs were clad

in polished armor, and upon her feet she wore strong sandals bound about with straps of well-tanned leather. From her shoulders fell a cloak of cloth, full rich and soft, and embroidered beautifully with gold. On her head she wore a helmet, and in her hands she carried a mighty bow. Her face was very fair, and her eyes twinkled with laughter as she spoke to Argus.

“What luck have you had to-day, huntsman?” she asked, seeming not surprised to meet a stranger in that solitary place.

Then Argus, quaking in every limb, answered, “Neither bird nor beast have I met, fair lady, nor do I think that this wood affords much game for the huntsman.”

“Then why do you wander in a place so bare of that which tempts heroic men like you?” asked the maiden.

“It is not of my free choice,” answered Argus. “But some ill fate has brought me and my comrades to this spot, hoping that we might find a passage to the western sea. Lo, yonder, grounded in the shallow stream, is our ship *Argo*, which no strength of oar can drive farther. No western sea have we found, but only this desolate forest, forsaken even by the beasts.”

“I might show you the way to that western sea,”

said the maiden, smiling; "but you still must voyage many leagues before you find it. Indeed, you must wander long and face many and dire perils before you see the shores of Greece again. For Jupiter is angry with you because of the death of young Absyrtus, and scarcely will he permit you to carry home the golden fleece. But come with me."

She turned, and Argus followed her through the tangled woods. Very soon she paused in an open space where the ground sloped downward and no trees were seen beyond, but only the clear blue sky.

"Come hither, Argus," she said, "and see what lies beyond; and then remember that it was Iris, the messenger of Queen Juno, that led you to this spot."

While she spoke, a great change came over her; and now she seemed no longer a warrior maiden cased in armor, but a dainty fairy floating in the summer air. Her arms were bare. Her yellow hair like sunbeams streamed behind. From her shoulders rose two gauzy wings that bore her swiftly upward toward the sky; and her long raiment, trailing in the air, glimmered with all the colors of the rainbow.

For only a moment did Argus see her thus, and then she vanished. He looked toward the spot

where she had last stood, and there, to his surprise, he saw not trees nor green grass, but a broad, deep river flowing silently to some distant, unknown sea.

“Oh, if only the *Argo* were launched upon that noble stream!” he cried; and he hastened back to tell his comrades of all that he had seen.

ADVENTURE XXIX

THE ISLAND OF CIRCE

FOR many days the heroes toiled with a will, clearing a roadway from the spot where the *Argo* lay to the banks of the new-found river. When this was done they built a broad platform of hewn timbers well framed together, and underneath it they placed huge wheels sawn from the trunk of an ancient oak. With infinite labor and by main strength alone, they lifted the mighty *Argo*, inch by inch, and slid her thereon.

“Now, forward!” cried Jason. “Yo! heave, ho!” and every hero strained his utmost to move the ponderous car.

“Now, yo! heave, ho!” The wheels began to creak, and very slowly the great platform with its water-soaked burden began to move. Then Orpheus, playing his lyre, walked on before, and the hearts of the heroes grew light as they put their shoulders to the work. Faster and faster the lumbering wheels went round, and *Argo*, like

a living thing, glided onward between the trees. Nevertheless, the road was rough, and many a mishap caused delays; therefore ten days elapsed before the ship-laden wagon stood upon the bank of the broad river which Jason hoped would bear them homeward.

Soon, once more, the *Argo* was floating like a bird upon the water, and all the heroes shouted for joy. They broke up the planks and beams and wheels of the now useless car, and with them built an altar to mighty Jupiter. Then they laid barley thereon, and cakes and spices and many costly things pleasing to the father of the gods. At length, when all things were in readiness, they poured wine upon the timbers and set fire to the huge pile. The flames shot upward; the heroes with a shout bent to their oars; and *Argo* joyfully glided away on her voyage down the unknown river.

Onward with the stream the heroes sailed, and their hearts were light within them; for they felt that surely they would soon behold the welcome shores of Greece. But when they came to the mouth of the river and to the open sea, the whole world was strange, and no man could tell which way to steer the vessel's course. So they sailed onward at haphazard, trusting to discover some well-known

headland or other landmark by which to find their bearings.

They passed the wooded shores of Corcyra and the pleasant isle of Melité, lands then unknown to the men of Greece. They sailed close by the steep cliffs of Cerossus, where Queen Calypso, a daughter of the gods, dwelt happily. There the heroes fancied they saw, far away, the shadowy Hills of Thunder, well known to all seafaring men; but when they would have sailed thither, a storm arose and drove them out of their course.

All night long they drifted before the wind, and in the morning they heard the breakers dashing against the rock-bound shores of the island of Electra. Then did the oaken image on *Argo's* prow find its voice again, and the face of Athena glowed with a dazzling light. The image cried out in the midst of the storm, and told of the wrath of Jupiter.

“Thus shall the waves drive you hither and thither,” it said, “and thus shall you be carried through unknown seas until you have appeased the anger of the mighty father of gods. For he is displeased with you on account of the death of young Absyrtus, whom Jason slew at the mouth of the river Phasis. Seek now the island home of Circe, the daughter of the Sun; for she alone

can help you, and she alone can purge away the guilt of Jason and the sinful folly of Medea."

So cried the image in the darkness of the storm, and a deadly fear came upon all the heroes. But Castor and Pollux, the godlike twins, lifted up their hands in prayer, and the *Argo* leaped forward through the angry sea.

Not long thereafter the storm abated, and the hearts of the voyagers were cheered by pleasant skies and favoring breezes. Fearfully they sailed through unremembered seas and along many a strange and savage coast. They saw the deep river Eridanus, where Phaethon fell on the day that he rashly tried to drive the sun car through the sky; and all night long they heard the voices of his sisters, among the poplars on the banks, loudly lamenting his untimely death.

At length their eyes were gladdened with the sight of bold, white cliffs and between them a pleasant shore, which seemed unlike any other they had ever beheld. As they gazed wonderingly through the sunlit mist which hung over the sea, they knew that this place could be none other than the secret island home of Circe, the sorceress queen. Therefore, with hopeful hearts, they steered the *Argo* into a quiet harbor and moored her fast to the low-lying shore.

Then Medea, with words befitting a princess, bade the heroes be cautious. "Have a care," said she, "that none of you leave the ship. For this Circe is the sister of my father Æetes, and she is the wisest of women. But she is as pitiless as she is wise; for those upon whom she casts her magic spells can never hope to see home or friends or the dear shores of Greece. Wait here in the ship, and Jason and I, who are the only guilty ones, will go to her house and beseech her to remove the stain that so darkens our lives."

So the heroes sat still on the rowers' benches and gazed with longing eyes at the green meadows and fruit-bearing orchards that lined the harbor's shore. The air seemed full of languid music, and the breezes were laden with sweet perfumes, and each man thought to himself that he had never seen so lovely a land.

But Jason, with Medea by his side, stepped ashore and walked silently down the path that led to a marble palace dimly visible in a distant grove. As they walked, strange creatures came leaping from the hedges and orchards to meet them. Tigers and leopards and mountain lions and many an unknown beast ramped and roared around them; and a drove of grunting swine followed in their tracks and made as if to devour them. Then

Jason, more afraid than he had been in the Field of Mars, half drew his sword; but Medea bade him let it be.

“These beasts are not of flesh and blood,” she whispered; “and no weapons can avail you in this land of magic charms. But see this wreath of withered leaves that I carry on my arm. No harm can befall us while that is near; for the leaves are of the herb moly, which is proof against all creatures born of witchery or of Circe’s spells.”

So to the grove and between the trees they passed, while the beasts leaped and snarled around them or fawned humbly at their feet. At length they stood at the door of a wondrous house, the walls of which were covered over with carvings and pictures of all marvelous things. There, in the hallway, they saw the sorceress herself, dread Circe, pouring a magic liquid from a vial, while two strange beasts whined and made their complaints before her. Her amber hair, worn loosely, seemed like a crown of gold when touched by the mellow sunlight, and she was clad in raiment of finest silk most delicately adorned.

She smiled as she saw the strangers standing at her door. Then, quickly dismissing the beasts, she hastened forward to greet them.

“Welcome, welcome, wanderers of the sea,” she



Painting by Sir E. Burne-Jones.

The Witchery of Circe.

Photograph by Berlin Photographic Company.

said. "I know you, maiden; for you, like me, have kinship with the Sun, and you are most dear to me."

Then with kindly gestures she bade them enter and seat themselves within her hall. But they, without answering, glided swiftly past her and knelt upon her hearth as was the wont of suppliants. There, as they remained kneeling, they covered their faces with their hands and lifted not their eyes nor spoke any word to the sorceress. Circe knew their errand. She knew that they sought to be cleansed from blood guiltiness, and forthwith she hastened to offer the sacrifices that were due.

First, she brought a wooden bowl around which were carven mystic figures whose meaning no one knew. Then with a silver knife she slew a suckling pig, holding it above the bowl so that the fresh blood would trickle therein. This being done, she dipped the hands of the suppliants into the blood, calling meanwhile upon the name of Jupiter.

Afterward she made other libations, standing by the hearth and praying to the Mighty Ones. And she poured honey and milk and oil, and scattered meal around the suppliants. All these she burned with fire, trusting to appease the spirits of the dead and soothe the wrath of the avenging gods.

When she had finished, she took Medea and Jason by the hands and raised them up. She led

them toward the door, showing no wish to detain them in her halls. To Medea she spoke in words of deep reproach, although it was plain that even she pitied the girl's unhappy fate.

"Your story is not unknown to me," she said; "neither is the dark future that lies before you. Your name through all the coming ages shall be a byword of reproach. Men shall forget how wise and fair you have been, and none shall praise you for this deed that you have done. Now, farewell! Hasten with all speed from this place. Take with you this fellow who has sold his kingdom for a name and brought sorrow into your father's house and woes unspeakable. Hasten and begone, lest I relent!"

Then Medea, shuddering, covered her face and wept. But Jason took her by the hand and led her with hurrying footsteps out of that enchanted place. Through the long avenue of trees they hastened, while the snarling beasts pursued, and from every shadowy nook persuasive voices cried out entreating them to stay. Yet they paused not nor looked around; and when, at length, they reached the shore, they leaped breathless aboard the *Argo*, like hunted hares fleeing before the hounds.

"Loose the moorings quickly," cried Jason, "and row with all speed from this dreadful shore."

Some would fain have tarried even then; but Medea warned them. "No man has power to escape from Circe's witchery," she said; "and all who yield to her are changed to brutish forms, to swine and howling beasts and shadowy forms bereft of reason. Hasten, or we shall all perish through her magic power."

ADVENTURE XXX

THE SIRENS AND THE PERILOUS STRAITS

FOR three days and nights the *Argo* sailed steadily upon an unknown sea, nor did the heroes behold any sign of land. On the fourth day, however, they approached the long north shore of Sicily and sighted a snug harbor half hidden by wooded shores. There they rested a little while and gave thanks to Jupiter and all the Mighty Ones who had preserved them from so many perils. Then they took ship again and rowed eastward, with the green Sicilian headlands always on their right.

At length they drew near an island of surpassing beauty, carpeted from shore to shore with flowers of every hue. The heroes were entranced with its loveliness, and some said, "Here we will abide in idleness until we have forgotten the toils of this most wearisome voyage."

But when Medea had scanned the enticing shore, she cried out: "Do not land there, but row quickly far out to sea. For this is the home of the Sirens,

of whom my father taught me, long time ago, in Ææa."

The heroes smiled at her earnestness, but still rowed toward the shore. "Who are those Sirens?" they asked. "Who are they that we should fear them?"

"They are the daughters of the Muse, Terpsichore," answered Medea. "They stand upon the shore and watch for passing vessels, and many are the seafarers whom they have lured to death. For they sing so sweetly that whoso listens to them forgets his home, his country, and his life, and he perishes while yet the melody is in his ears."

Even then the heroes could see the lovely creatures walking on the beach, their white garments fluttering in the wind and their golden hair gleaming in the soft sunlight.

"Take the helm, O Jason!" cried Medea. "Take the helm and steer *Argo* seaward. For if we come within the spell of their sweet singing, your perilous quest will be ended in shame and death."

While she was speaking, the Sirens began to sing; and as the oarsmen listened to the bewitching melody, they ceased rowing and wished only that the song would never end. But Jason, spurred by Medea's words, leaped to the stern and took the helm from the nerveless hands of old Anceus, who

with dreamy eyes was steering the *Argo* shoreward. In that very moment the wind filled the sail, and the mighty vessel veered sharply to the left and glided out into the deep sea.

The entranced heroes would have leaped into the sea had not Orpheus seized his lyre and quickly begun an answering song. Swiftly his fingers swept the twanging chords, and the sound of the Sirens' song was drowned in the glorious music of the lyre. Onward the *Argo* flew, driven by the strong west wind, and soon the heroes were beyond the reach of the Sirens' deadly melody. But the witchery of it still lingered in the hearts of some, and fain would they have returned to listen to it and die.

Then Butes, the handsomest of all the heroes, sprang up suddenly and threw himself into the waves. Swiftly he swam through the gray surf, shoreward, while his comrades watched him from the ship. They watched him as he breasted the foaming breakers. They watched him till his feet struck the firm sands and he began to wade through the shallowing water. Then suddenly a blue cloud in-wrapped him, and their eyes saw him no more. But the cloud rose up gently and floated away toward the tall headland of Lilybæum in the distant west.

Whether Butes were alive or dead, his comrades

never knew. But old stories tell us that Venus was in the cloud, and that she carried him in her arms to her pleasant home on Lilybæum. There he lived long and happily in the blessed company of the immortals.

Meanwhile the rising wind drove *Argo* swiftly from the land of the Sirens; but in her path were perils scarcely less fearful than those she had escaped. For on the morrow the shore bent to the southward, and the helmsman knew that the ship was in the strait that lies between Sicilia and the Italian land. There two seas meet, and the shores draw very close together.

On this side the dread whirlpool Charybdis rushes, hissing and roaring, forever sucking in the sea and forever casting it forth again. On that side looms a high cliff wherein is a cave, the home of Scylla, the monster of the shore. At the farther end of the strait are the Wandering Rocks, which buffet each other among the waves and hammer the shore with an unceasing din.

As the *Argo* drew near this perilous passage the nymphs of the deep sea came from their homes to meet her. The water was white with them as they swam this way and that to shield her from harm. And Thetis, their queen, took hold of the rudder underneath to steer her safely through.

So now the oarsmen rowed with all their might. Like a creature of the sea, the ship leaped through the seething waves. The heroes looked to their right and saw Charybdis yawning to swallow them up. She spit and spouted and roared most furiously as *Argo* glided onward past the very brink of her dreadful, whirling funnel.

A cry from Medea caused all eyes to look upward. There they saw the grisly monster Scylla straining to get at them. Her six long necks were stretched out to their fullest length, and the jaws of her six heads gaped horribly as she tried in vain to reach and snap up the venturesome vessel. But, guarded on both sides by the friendly nymphs and guided by the unerring hand of Thetis, the *Argo* kept the safe middle course. She swerved neither this way nor that, but like an arrow from Diana's bow shot straight forward through that perilous way.

Scarcely, however, did the heroes find themselves beyond the reach of Scylla's jaws when they heard the Wandering Rocks clashing furiously around them. On every side the wild surf foamed and roared, while clouds of steaming mist hid rocks and sea and sky from view. Long did the oarsmen toil, heaving the ship forward through the boiling waves. And Thetis still held the rudder, and her

maids, dashing hither and thither, kept the vessel clear of the pointed rocks.

At length, suddenly, the *Argo* glided like a swan out into the smooth, calm sea. The sun shone brightly down from the cloudless sky, and the air seemed filled with a holy restfulness. From the green meadow on the near-by shore the sound of tinkling bells and bleating lambs was borne to the gladdened ears of the heroes. Merrily, therefore, the sails were spread, and with bold Ancæus again at the helm the mighty ship sped onward while all her crew rejoiced.

ADVENTURE XXXI

THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES

ONE morning, as the sun was rising, the heroes beheld a long, low shore in the distance. It stretched far to the right and the left, and was so distant that it seemed like a blue cloud resting between the sea and the sky. With eager eyes each man gazed steadily forward, wondering what land it could be. Suddenly old Neleus, with a shout that frightened the circling sea gulls, leaped upon his bench and waved his arms like a man bereft of reason.

“Home, home at last!” he cried. “I see the sandy beach and the green pasture lands of Messenia! I see my own fair city of Pylos!”

Then sharp-eyed Lynceus also looked. Through the gray mists of the morning he saw the streets of the town, and the little ships lying at the wharfs, and even the cattle browsing in the far-distant pastures. The hearts of all the heroes were filled with gladness, and their eyes swam with tears;

for they felt that soon their long voyage would be ended.

At the next moment, however, the sky was darkened with clouds. The North Wind swooped suddenly down and, catching the *Argo* in his grasp, drove her far and swiftly from her course. The shore faded from sight. A furious blast swept over the sea. The heroes could do nothing but cower, helpless, beneath the benches and wonder to what dreadful fate they were being carried.

For nine long nights and as many days the *Argo* drifted before the storm. Then, in a twinkling, the wind ceased, and Jason and his comrades found themselves floating in a shallow bay, with sandy shoals and green patches of seaweed all around. Before them was a shelving shore and a low-lying land, stretching to the right and the left until it was lost in the hazy distance.

It was but the work of a moment to drive the *Argo* forward till her keel grated upon the shell-strewn beach. Then all on board leaped out and looked around them.

“What place is this that looks so like a dream?” asked Jason.

But not even Ancæus, the helmsman, nor Mopsus, with his soothsaying, could answer. All stood amazed, and none dared so much as guess the name

of the land. No sound was heard along the shore. Even the lapping of the waves against the rocks was noiseless, and the voices of the heroes were like softest whispers.

Soon courage revived in the hearts of the weary voyagers, and like children let out from school they ran eagerly forward. For they had been pent up long in the pitching *Argo*, and the freedom of the shore seemed very sweet to them. Scarcely, however, were they well beyond the sloping beach when all stopped short in dumb amazement. For before them lay the loveliest scene their eyes had ever looked upon, and as they gazed they forgot their weariness and their hunger and thirst, and thought only of its wondrous beauty.

Here were fields glorious with every flower that blooms. Here were orchard trees laden with all kinds of ripe and ripening fruits. Here were pleasant groves and plashing waterfalls, and little brooks winding like silver ribbons through flower-bespangled meadows.

The air was dense with the perfume of roses and the drowsy odors of thousands of blossoming herbs. Countless birds flitted and sang among the green boughs. Savage beasts and the timid creatures of the woods romped and played together beneath the trees. The lamb walked fearlessly by the lion's

side, and the spotted deer gambled with the leopard's cubs.

Strangest of all strange things was a green terrace which seemed no work of nature and yet not made with hands. Surrounding it was a low, marble wall inlaid with ivory and pearls and carved with many a picture of the ancient days when innocence and mirth prevailed. In the center of this terrace stood a tree the like of which there was never another on earth. For from every bough hung apples more beautiful than you or I have ever dreamed of seeing, and every apple was of pure red gold.

"They are the apples that were given to Juno on her wedding day," whispered Jason to Medea, "and this place is the garden of the Hesperides."

Then beneath the tree Medea saw the scaly folds of a dragon glistening green and yellow in the sunlight, and she knew that it was Ladon, the sleepless beast that watched those precious apples day and night. His hundred heads looked forth in a fiery circle, while his hundred flaming tongues leaped within his jaws like whips of blood.

But this fearsome creature was not the only guardian of the golden fruit. For now three maidens came tripping across the lawn. Their faces were as fair as a June morning, and they were clad in silken raiment white as falling snow. The

heroes stood spellbound ; for they knew that these were the Hesperides, the deathless nymphs whose task it was to keep this garden of the gods.

“ Who are those puny men who dare to intrude where even the immortals fear to come ? ” asked Hespera, the eldest of the sisters.

“ Methinks they are those robber Greeks on their way home from Colchis, ” answered Erytheis, the second.

“ Better for them had they remained at home, ” said Ægle, the youngest.

“ Yes, better, indeed, ” responded Hespera ; “ for little happiness will that fleece of gold ever bring to its possessor. ”

Hand in hand the maidens stood beside the tree, their sun-bright hair floating in the breeze and their great, round eyes gazing calmly and fearlessly at the intruding heroes. Then they began to dance upon the lawn, and as they danced they sang a wonderful melody, sweeter by far than any that Orpheus ever knew. The voyagers listened, scarcely daring to breathe ; and each began to forget himself, his comrades, his home, yes, even life itself. For the song had in it a charm more powerful even than the song of the Sirens.

Then Jason, with a mighty effort, aroused himself. “ Back to the ship, comrades, ” he hoarsely

whispered. "Back to the *Argo* ere it is too late! This is no place for living men."

By sheer force he turned their faces seaward and drove them like a flock of dumb sheep into the *Argo*. And they, as senseless as the oars which he placed in their hands, sat silent on the benches, having no will nor power of their own.

Very softly now the music was carried to their ears, and soon it ceased. A nameless silence filled the air, and not even the splashing of the waves or the rushing of the breeze through the rigging made the slightest sound. Jason, unaided, trimmed the sails, and then he took the helm in his own hands. A brisk wind came up from over the Hesperian fields, and the *Argo* glided silently away from that haven of dreams.

One by one the heroes, after a time, awoke from the spell that had so strangely dulled their senses. At length fifty oars were dipping with a will into the salty waves, and the good ship was flying northward swifter than the wind.

Not far did she sail, however; for the misty shore seemed to approach on either side and hem her in; and now it rose sheer before her, like a gray green wall through which there was no way of passing.

"How now?" cried Ancæus, scanning the land, the water, and the sky. "This is not the open sea,

as we supposed. It is the great lake Tritonis, from which there is but one passage whereby to escape; and that passage is a well-hidden strait which no man may find without the aid of the gods."

The hearts of the voyagers were heavy with despair. "Alas!" they cried, "it were better to have perished long ago; for now there is no hope."

But Jason, seeing a fair harbor before them, steered the *Argo* thither, and again all leaped ashore. There, on the surface of a huge gray rock, they saw the footprints of a man, and from one of them a spring of clear cold water was gushing. The sight of the bubbling spring cheered their spirits, and soon every man was sprawling on hands and knees, eagerly supping the life-giving fluid. For there had been neither water nor meat in the ship's hold for two days, and all were well-nigh famished.

After this, some hastened to fill the water bottles and stow them under the rowers' benches; but the braver ones ran into the woods, hoping to find a deer or perhaps some smaller game to satisfy their hunger.

One by one they returned, each bringing the prize that he had captured. Atalanta brought a shambling bear; Lynceus, the sharp-sighted, brought two panther's cubs; and the North Wind's sons

drove before them a flock of sheep which they had bought of friendly shepherds among the hills. But Canthus, one of the younger heroes, was less fortunate; for he brought back no prize, but his comrades found him on the hills lying pale and dead, with face upturned to the sky. A shepherd whose sheep he was trying to drive away by stealth had slain him with a swift stone.

Sorrowful, indeed, were the heroes when they carried the bleeding body of Canthus down to the shore and buried it in the sand. But this was not the end of their grief; for on that same day Mopsus was bitten by a snake and died. Not all his skill at soothsaying could save him from his doom.

"Surely," said Jason to his lamenting comrades, "this is but the beginning. For to the same sad end shall we all come unless we can win the favor of the gods who rule these shores."

Then Orpheus brought out from the hold a fair tripod of polished brass and set it upon the shore for Triton, the god of the lake. And others brought forth the whitest of the sheep for Jason to offer up in sacrifice. They built a little altar of stones by the stern of the ship, and when the smoke of the fire began to hide the sacrifice, all joined in singing a hymn of praise to the rulers of the sea. Then

Jason lifted up his hands and prayed, "O thou Triton, who hast dominion of this shore, have pity on us and lead us out of this lake of thine into the open sea."

Forthwith, even as he prayed, the *Argo* began to move, and the heroes leaped quickly aboard. They looked over into the water and saw the mighty Triton, with his hands upon the keel, guiding the ship whither he would have her go. He was a wondrous creature; for his head and arms and breast were like those of a strong man, but below the waist he was formed like a fish, with scales and fins and a mighty tail with which he pushed his way through the water. He guided the ship right onward through the secret strait and out into the open sea. Then suddenly he plunged deep downward, and the heroes saw him no more.

ADVENTURE XXXII

THE MAN OF BRASS

THE weather-worn sails were again spread to the wind. The long oars were placed in the tholes, and the oarsmen again bent to their task. And so the *Argo*, with her prow turned northward, sailed again over unknown seas; but for how many days or with what varying hopes, I know not.

At length, on a summer evening, the good ship entered a pleasant sea dotted with green islands and bounded on the north by a rocky coast. Then the helmsman, Ancæus, shouted for joy; for he had often sailed on these waters, and he knew the name of every shore and of every towering headland.

Onward sped the *Argo* until she approached a great island which stood high above the waves and seemed to be the queen of the sea.

“What land is that?” asked Jason.

“It is the island of Crete, the kingdom of mighty Minos,” answered Ancæus.

Then the helmsman steered the ship shoreward, hoping to anchor in some safe harbor for the night. But as they drew nearer to the land, the heroes saw a mighty giant standing on the cliffs and hurling huge stones toward them. The name of the giant was Talus, and he was the last of that old, old race whom men say sprang from ash trees when the world was young.

His arms and legs and body were of the strongest brass. His eyes glowed like burning coals, and his breath was like the breath of a furnace. All the blood in his body flowed through a single vein, and this vein was everywhere covered with brass save at one spot beneath the tendon of his ankle.

He taunted the heroes with mocking words. He hurled rock after rock at the *Argo*, at one time grazing the prow, and at another breaking off the tip of mast.

“Begone, you robber Greeks!” he cried. “Begone, and think not to find another golden fleece in this island which I guard. Three times every day I walk around the coast, watching it well for my master, King Minos. Nowhere will you find a landing place without being seen by me. So, begone! Begone!”

Unwillingly the helmsman turned the ship about,

for the voyagers were overdone with toil and all had hoped to rest themselves on shore awhile.

Then Medea stood up on the prow of the *Argo* and bade the oarsmen stop rowing. About her shoulders was wrapped the black cloak which she had been wont to wear in Hecate's temple, and in her hands she held the magic herbs which had served her so wonderfully in her father's halls. Raising her white arms aloft, she muttered many a witching spell, crying aloud and calling upon the fearful creatures that flit in darkness.

Three times she muttered these charms. Three times she sprinkled the air and the sea with the dust of dead bones and the dried blood of uncanny things. And all the while she prayed to dread Hecate, the queen of witchery and of magic arts.

"Help us this once, O queen of darkness," she cried. "Help us this once, and rid us of the senseless monster that now drives us back into the sea."

Even as she ended the third recital of her spell, the mighty giant met his doom. For, as he was madly seeking heavy stones to hurl at the *Argo*, he struck his foot against the jagged corner of a rock, making a deep wound in his ankle. The one vein in his body was cut asunder, and the blood poured out in torrents. Helpless he stood for a moment, while his life fled from him. Then, like a great pine

tree which the woodcutters have hewn through at the base, he staggered and fell, and with a fearsome crash tumbled into the sea.

The heroes, without more ado, rowed forward, rejoicing, into the harbor; and there they rested two nights and a day. Then with impatient hearts they again took their places upon the benches and dipped their long oars in the briny waves. The helmsman turned the ship's prow once more toward Greece, the storm-beaten sails were raised to the wind, and *Argo* sped over the sea.

ADVENTURE XXXIII

THE HOME-COMING

THE way was clear, the sailing was easy, and the heroes' hearts were cheered with thoughts of home. Soon the well-known coast of Greece appeared on their left, and every man shouted a glad welcome to the fair land from which he had so long been a wanderer. And now the perils that had been endured and the labors that had been performed seemed like the shadows of dreams soon past and soon forgotten.

So the heroes sailed onward, past Thera's island and to the long Laconian shore. There the noble twins, Castor and Pollux, and the swift huntress, Atalanta, would fain leave them, seeing that their homes were near at hand. Therefore they parted with them, and, weighing anchor again, they rowed steadily along the coast and across the mouth of the bay, where Theseus knew that his own fair city of Athens stood. But Jason would not turn aside, and so Theseus and others of the heroes were set ashore

on the nearest point of the mainland. Then the rowers, with renewed will, bent to their oars and drove the ship right onward into the narrow channel of Euripus.

Without tarrying or slacking speed they passed Aulis and Chalcis and came into the broader Eubœan Sea. On their left were the green woods of Bœotia, and a day's journey inland was the old Minyan city of Orchomenus.

“Let us go thither and put Argus on the throne which by right belongs to him,” said some.

But the rest were impatient to reach their homes, and Jason would not permit any delaying. He bade them press onward, and soon, to their joy, the peaks of Pelion were seen in the dim distance.

Early one morning in autumn an old weather-stained ship silently entered the little bay before Iolcus. Her hull was scarred and worm-eaten, and slimy with seaweed and clinging shells. Her rotten sails hung in tatters from her storm-strained mast. Her helm was split, and held together by old ropes and bits of rigging. Her few oars were bent and worn, and half the tholes along the gunwales were broken. The oaken image on her prow was splintered and jammed, battered out of shape, and stained by the waters of many seas.

“What old hulk is that?” asked a sailor who was lounging on the beach.

“She looks like some trading ship from Tyre,” answered his companion; “but she is bigger than any other I have ever seen.”

“She has had a rough time of it,” said the first speaker. “Methinks she has come in for repairs, and yet, I dare say, her masters will let no chance for trading slip by.”

By this time quite a crowd of fishermen and sailors and idlers from the town had gathered on the beach, and many were the guesses concerning the strange vessel.

“She is almost as large as the *Argo* was,” said an old Minyan fisherman, “and she has much the same shape. But the *Argo* was a beautiful vessel, and it would be a sin to compare this ugly old hulk with her.”

“Ah, yes,” said an Athenian sailor. “I think I have heard of the *Argo*. Does any one know what became of her?”

“Why, she sailed from this very spot with Prince Jason and fifty other heroes on board. They were going in quest of a ram’s fleece that was said to be in some country near the rising of the sun. But that was a long time ago, and no word of her has ever come back to Iolcus.”

Meanwhile the old ship was anchored by the beach and the crew leaped ashore. They were rough-looking fellows. Their faces were browned and tanned by the winds and the sun of many climes. Their hair was long, and their grisly beards were untrimmed. Their once rich clothing was in shreds and tatters. Their armor was battered with much use and rusted by the salt sea spray. Yet they bore themselves right nobly and seemed not at all like traders from Tyre. Their eyes sparkled with the joy of a sweet home-coming, and they shouted like victors returning with spoils.

Soon it was noised in Iolcus that Jason and his comrades had come back with the ship *Argo* and were landed at the farther end of the beach. Great, indeed, was the surprise, and great the joy. All other thoughts were forgotten, and men, women, and children hurried down to the shore to see the *Argo* and her famous crew.

Among those who went out on foot was a white-haired old gardener whose span of life seemed nearly at an end. As he hobbled along with the aid of a staff, the rude crowd jostled against him and threw him from his feet. Some of the gentler ones kindly raised him up and helped him on his way; yet he was feeble and lame, and the eager multitude soon left him far behind. But while he

was still a great way off, Jason saw him and ran to meet him.

“Father,” he cried, “rejoice with me, for I have come back to you and have brought the golden fleece.”

Old Æson sprang forward and threw his arms about the neck of his hero son. He spoke not a word, he uttered not a sound, but lay silent and motionless on Jason’s breast. And when Jason at length loosened his arms and looked into his face, lo, the poor old man was dead! His joy had been greater than he could bear.

Then down the road a chariot came rumbling, and in it sat Pelias, the false king. Very old and feeble he was. His scarred face was pale as ashes, and his wrinkled skin seemed to cling to his very bones. His body was bundled up in many folds of blankets and furry robes. His hairless head nodded to this side and to that, made helpless with palsy. His long, gaunt arms hung trembling and useless from his shoulders. He was the very image of a man to whom life has become a burden.

“Is this our dear nephew Jason?” he asked in quavering tones; “and has he brought to us the famous fleece of gold?”

“Yes, Pelias,” answered Jason. “I am your nephew Jason, and I have brought from Colchis

the famous fleece of gold. Now give up the crown to me, for I am the rightful king of Iolcus."

"I have kept the crown for you a long time, Jason," said Pelias; "and I would fain let you have it. But wait a little while. I pray you wait a little while, and let my eyes look upon that wondrous fleece."

They brought the fleece from the ship's hold, still wrapped in Medea's cloak. They laid it down before the old false king, and the heroes stood silent around it. Then they removed its covering, but, lo! it no longer shone with the ruddy, golden light that had made it the wonder of the world. The glory had departed from it.

"You have played me false. You have cheated me and have brought no golden fleece from Colchis," said Pelias, wrathfully. "I will keep the crown yet a little longer." And he commanded his charioteer to drive back into the city.

When he reached his palace and was lifted out of his chariot, who do you think met him at the door of his great hall? It was none other than Medea, the heroic maiden of *Æa*. The eyes of Pelias were dim and he fancied that she was a beautiful witch lately come to Iolcus and already well known in the palace. She was robed in a loose-fitting gown black as darkest midnight; her

hair fell in wavy masses over her shoulders; her eyes sparkled like diamonds beneath her arching brows; in her hands she held the magic herbs of Hecate.

“Great king,” she said, “the gods have given me the power to grant you the dearest wish of your heart. Tell me what it is that you most desire, and to-morrow you shall be gratified.”

“Let me see,” said Pelias, trying to raise his palsied hand. “Let me see. The thing that I most desire is to be young again and strong as I once was, so that I may hold this kingdom against the upstart Jason. Grant me this wish, and you shall sit beside me on my ivory throne.”

“You shall have your desire,” answered Medea; and she vanished, smiling.

But on the morrow the old false king was dead, and Jason sat upon the throne that was rightfully his own.

And Medea sat by his side.

AFTER WORD

So ends the story of the Golden Fleece. It is a story which singers of songs and tellers of strange tales have repeated in thousands of forms to delighted listeners of every age and almost every clime. Of stories of heroism and adventure, it is not only the oldest, but it is the one most widely known. Parts of it were familiar to Homer when he composed that noblest of all poems, the "Iliad." For more than thirty centuries it has been retold and re-retold in kings' palaces and peasants' huts, and wherever men have loved to hear of things wonderful and heroic. Not only is it popular in enlightened Europe and America, but it is current in crude and varying versions among the natives of half-civilized lands in Asia and Africa and even among the islanders of the South Sea. It is a tale that never tires; and as long as the world endures, men and children will find pleasure in reading it and in listening to its recital.

In repeating this story to you, I have borrowed from many sources, coloring the narrative to suit my own fancy, and adding or omitting as seemed

best and most proper. For thus has it been repeated from the beginning, each teller relating it as his own imaginings have prompted, while the essential thread of the tale is left unaltered and unalterable. Just so have many singers often sung the same song with widely varying tones and diverse effects: yet the substance of the song remains unchanged. It is the singing that restores life and beauty to the time-worn melody; it is the telling that gives newness to the old, old story.

Should you be curious to know of the later deeds of Jason and Medea, and how they lived in their hard-won kingdom of Iolcus, I can only remind you that there is nothing further to be told about the Golden Fleece. It would be pleasant to end our story, as many a fairy tale is ended, by saying that our hero and heroine lived happily together forever afterward. But the old poets and dramatists say quite differently; and so we shall leave them, sitting side by side on the ivory throne.

PERSONS AND PLACES MENTIONED IN THE
STORY

Ab sȳr'tus	Cās'tor	Hēl'lē	Mīn'y an
Ad mē'tus	Cau'cā sus	Hēl'les pont	Nē'leūs
Æ'a (ē'ā)	Çēn'taur	Hēr'cu lēş	Nē'mē ā
Æ ē'tēş	Çe rōs'sus	Hēs'pe rā	Nēph'e lē
Æg'le (ēg'lē)	Çhal çī'o pe	Hes pēr'i dēş	Nēp'tune
Æ'ō lus	Çhāl'çis	Hȳ'las	Nēs'tor
Æs cu la'pi us	Çhāl'y bēş	I'das	O lȳm'pus
Æ'son	Çha rȳb'dis	I'no	Or-ehōm'e nus
Al çim'e dē	Çheī'ron	Ī ōl'cus	Or'pheūs
Am'a zonş	Çī'os	I'ris	Os'sā
Am'y cus	Çīr'çē	Is'ter	Paph'la gō'ni ā
Am y thā'on	Cōl'ehis	Ith'ā cā	Par thē'ni a
A nau'rus	Cor çȳ'rā	Jā'son	Pē'leūs
A pōl'lo	Crē'theūs	Ju'no	Pē'li as
Ar'cas	Çȳz'i cus	Ju'pi ter	Pē'li on
Ar'gō	Dēl'phī	La cō'ni an	Pe nei'ūs
Ar'gus	Di ā'nā	Lā'don	Phā'ē thon
At a lān'tā	Do dō'nā	La er'tēş	Phā'sis
Ath'ā mās	Do lī'o nēş	Lāp'ith	Phē'ræ
Ā thē'nā	E lēc'trā	Līl'y bœ'um	Phē'rēş
Au'lis	E'līs	Lȳ'cus	Phīn'e us
Bēb'rȳ çēs	E nī'peūs	Lȳn'ceūs	Phrix'us
Bœ ō'tia	E rīd'a nus	Mār'mo rā	Plū'to
Bōs'pho rus	Ēr'y thē'is	Me dē'ā	Pōl'lux
Bū'tēş	Eu bœ'an	Me'le ā'ger	Pol'y phē'mus
Cāl'ā is	Eu rī'pus	Mēl'i tē	Pōn'tus
Cal y dō'ni an	Hēc'ā tē	Mes sē'ni ā	Pro mē'theūs
Cān'thūs	Hē'lī os	Mīn'y æ	Pro pōn'tis

Pý'los	Ströph'a dēs̄	Thē'rá	Ti'phys
Sal mō'neūs	Tā'lus	Thē'seūs	Tri'ton
Sal'my dēs'sà	Těl'a mon	Thes sāl'i an	Tri tō'nis
Sam'o thrā'çē	Tēm'pē	Thes'sa ly	Tý'ro
Sat'urn	Terp sīch'o rē	Thē'tis	U lý'sēs
Sçýl'là	Thēbeș	Thrāçe	Zē'tēs̄

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