

GUERBER

HÉLÈNE

ADELINÉ

THE STORY OF THE
GREEKS

Hélène Guerber
The Story of the Greeks

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H. A. Guerber

The Story of the Greeks

PREFACE

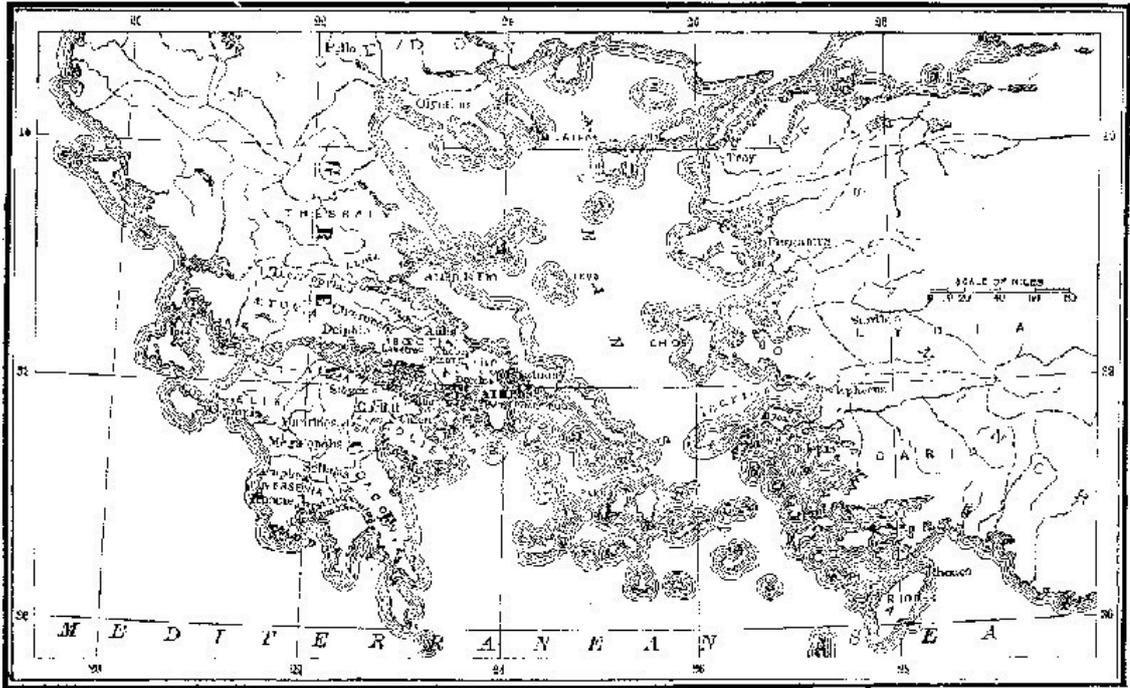
This elementary history of Greece is intended for supplementary reading or as a first history text-book for young pupils. It is therefore made up principally of stories about persons; for, while history proper is largely beyond the comprehension of children, they are able at an early age to understand and enjoy anecdotes of people, especially of those in the childhood of civilization. At the same time, these stories will give a clear idea of the most important events that have taken place in the ancient world, and, it is hoped, will arouse a desire to read further. They also aim to enforce the lessons of perseverance, courage, patriotism, and virtue that are taught by the noble lives described.

A knowledge of ancient history, however superficial, is of very great value; and the classic legends are almost equally worth knowing, because of the prominent part they play in the world's literature. These tales make a deep impression on the minds of children, and the history thus learned almost in play will cling to the memory far more tenaciously than any lessons subsequently conned.

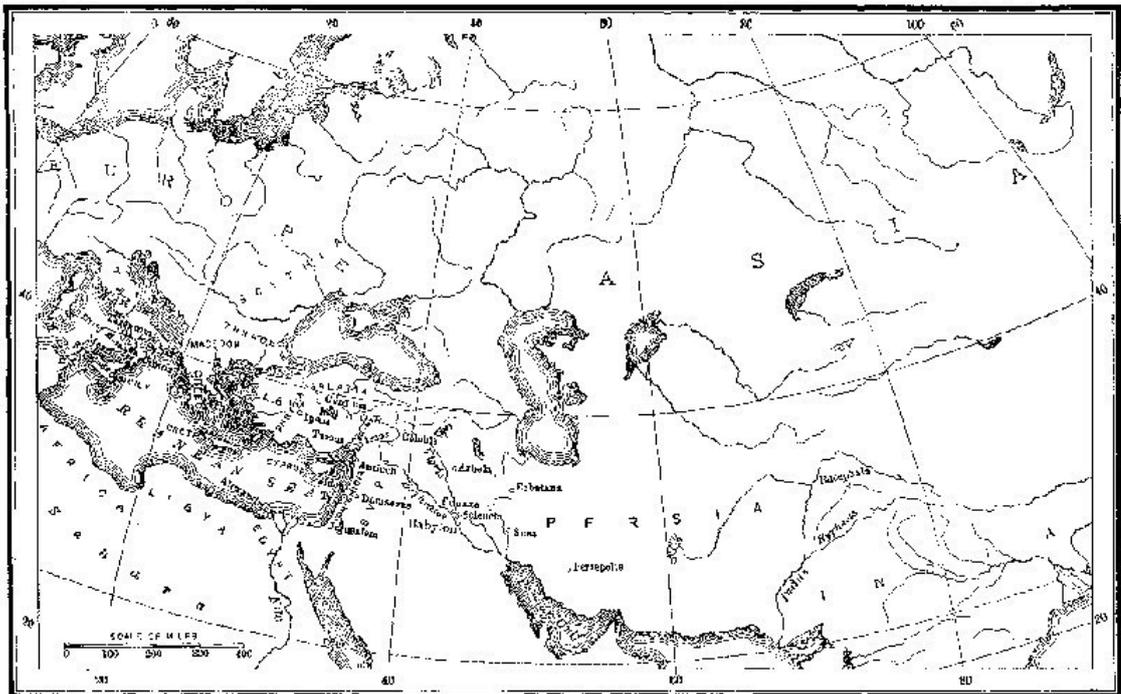
Many children leave school unacquainted with any history except that of the United States; which, dealing with less simple and primitive times than that of Greece, is apt to be so unattractive that the child never afterwards reads any historical works. It has been my intention to write a book which will give children pleasure to read, and will thus counteract the impression that history is uninteresting.

A few suggestions to teachers may not be considered superfluous. In the first place, I have found historical anecdotes an excellent aid in teaching English. Pupils find it far from irksome to relate the stories in their own words, and to reproduce them in compositions. Secondly, whenever a city or country is mentioned, every pupil should point out its location on the map. By such means only can any one properly understand an historical narrative; and in the present case there is the added reason that the practice will go far towards increasing the child's interest in geography. Lastly, the teacher should take great care that the proper names are correctly pronounced. The most common errors are provided against in the text; for, on the first occurrence of such a word, it is divided into syllables, with the accent marked. It remains for the teacher to enforce the ordinary rules as to the proper sounds of vowels and consonants.

H. A. G.



Map of Ancient Greece.



Map showing Greek Colonies and Conquests.

I. EARLY INHABITANTS OF GREECE

Although Greece (or Hel'las) is only half as large as the State of New York, it holds a very important place in the history of the world. It is situated in the southern part of Europe, cut off from the rest of the continent by a chain of high mountains which form a great wall on the north. It is surrounded on nearly all sides by the blue waters of the Med-it-er-ra'ne-an Sea, which stretch so far inland that it is said no part of the country is forty miles from the sea, or ten miles from the hills. Thus shut in by sea and mountains, it forms a little territory by itself, and it was the home of a noted people.

The history of Greece goes back to the time when people did not know how to write, and kept no record of what was happening around them. For a long while the stories told by parents to their children were the only information which could be had about the country and its former inhabitants; and these stories, slightly changed by every new teller, grew more and more extraordinary as time passed. At last they were so changed that no one could tell where the truth ended and fancy began.

The beginning of Greek history is therefore like a fairy tale; and while much of it cannot, of course, be true, it is the only information we have about the early Greeks. It is these strange fireside stories, which used to amuse Greek children so many years ago, that you are first going to hear.

About two thousand years before the birth of Christ, in the days when Isaac wanted to go down into Egypt, Greece was inhabited by a savage race of men called the Pe-las'gi-ans. They lived in the forests, or in caves hollowed out of the mountain side, and hunted wild beasts with great clubs and stone-tipped arrows and spears. They were so rude and wild that they ate nothing but raw meat, berries, and the roots which they dug up with sharp stones or even with their hands.

For clothing, the Pelasgians used the skins of the beasts they had killed; and to protect themselves against other savages, they gathered together in families or tribes, each having a chief who led in war and in the chase.

There were other far more civilized nations in those days. Among these were the E-gyp'tians, who lived in Africa. They had long known the use of fire, had good tools, and were much further advanced than the Pelasgians. They had learned not only to build houses, but to erect the most wonderful monuments in the world,—the Pyr'a-mids, of which you have no doubt heard.

In Egypt there were at that time a number of learned men. They were acquainted with many of the arts and sciences, and recorded all they knew in a peculiar writing of their own invention. Their neighbors, the Phœ-ni'-cians, whose land also bordered on the Mediterranean Sea, were quite civilized too; and as both of these nations had ships, they soon began to sail all around that great inland sea.

As they had no compass, the Egyptian and Phœnician sailors did not venture out of sight of land. They first sailed along the shore, and then to the islands which they could see far out on the blue waters.

When they had come to one island, they could see another still farther on; for, as you will see on any map, the Mediterranean Sea, between Greece and Asia, is dotted with islands, which look like stepping-stones going from one coast to the other.

Advancing thus carefully, the Egyptians and Phœnicians finally came to Greece, where they made settlements, and began to teach the Pelasgians many useful and important things.

II. THE DELUGE OF OGYGES

The first Egyptian who thus settled in Greece was a prince called In'á-chus. Landing in that country, which has a most delightful climate, he taught the Pelasgians how to make fire and how to cook their meat. He also showed them how to build comfortable homes by piling up stones one on top of another, much in the same way as the farmer makes the stone walls around his fields.

The Pelasgians were intelligent, although so uncivilized; and they soon learned to build these walls higher, in order to keep the wild beasts away from their homes. Then, when they had learned the use of bronze and iron tools, they cut the stones into huge blocks of regular shape.

These stone blocks were piled one upon another so cleverly that some of the walls are still standing, although no mortar was used to hold the stones together. Such was the strength of the Pelasgians, that they raised huge blocks to great heights, and made walls which their descendants declared must have been built by giants.

As the Greeks called their giants Cy'clops, which means "round-eyed," they soon called these walls Cy-clo-pe'an; and, in pointing them out to their children, they told strange tales of the great giants who had built them, and always added that these huge builders had but one eye, which was in the middle of the forehead.

Some time after Inachus the Egyptian had thus taught the Pelasgians the art of building, and had founded a city called Ar'gos, there came a terrible earthquake. The ground under the people's feet heaved and cracked, the mountains shook, the waters flooded the dry land, and the people fled in terror to the hills.

In spite of the speed with which they ran, the waters soon overtook them. Many of the Pelasgians were thus drowned, while their terrified companions ran faster and faster up the mountain, nor stopped to rest until they were quite safe.

Looking down upon the plains where they had once lived, they saw them all covered with water. They were now forced to build new homes; but when the waters little by little sank into the ground, or flowed back into the sea, they were very glad to find that some of their thickest walls had resisted the earthquake and flood, and were still standing firm.

The memory of the earthquake and flood was very clear, however. The poor Pelasgians could not forget their terror and the sudden death of so many friends, and they often talked about that horrible time. As this flood occurred in the days when Og'y-ges was king, it has generally been linked to his name, and called the Deluge (or flood) of Ogyges.

III. THE FOUNDING OF MANY IMPORTANT CITIES

Some time after Inachus had built Argos, another Egyptian prince came to settle in Greece. His name was Cecrops, and, as he came to Greece after the Deluge of Ogyges, he found very few inhabitants left. He landed, and decided to build a city on a promontory northeast of Argos. Then he invited all the Pelasgians who had not been drowned in the flood to join him.

The Pelasgians, glad to find such a wise leader, gathered around him, and they soon learned to plow the fields and to sow wheat. Under Cecrops' orders they also planted olive trees and vines, and learned how to press the oil from the olives and the wine from the grapes. Cecrops taught them how to harness their oxen; and before long the women began to spin the wool of their sheep, and to weave it into rough woolen garments, which were used for clothing, instead of the skins of wild beasts.

After building several small towns in Attica, Cecrops founded a larger one, which was at first called Cecropia in honor of himself. This name, however, was soon changed to Athens to please Athena (or Minerva), a goddess whom the people worshiped, and who was said to watch over the welfare of this her favorite city.

When Cecrops died, he was followed by other princes, who continued teaching the people many useful things, such as the training and harnessing of horses, the building of carts, and the proper way of harvesting grain. One prince even showed them how to make beehives, and how to use the honey as an article of food.

As the mountain sides in Greece are covered with a carpet of wild, sweet-smelling herbs and flowers, the Greek honey is very good; and people say that the best honey in the world is made by the bees on Mount Hymetus, near Athens, where they gather their golden store all summer long.

Shortly after the building of Athens, a Phœnician colony, led by Cadmus, settled a neighboring part of the country, called Bœotia, where they founded the city which was later known as Thebes. Cadmus also taught the people many useful things, among others the art of trade (or commerce) and that of navigation (the building and using of ships); but, best of all, he brought the alphabet to Greece, and showed the people how to express their thoughts in writing.

Almost at the same time that Cadmus founded Thebes, an Egyptian called Danaus came to Greece, and settled a colony on the same spot where that of Inachus had once been. The new Argos rose on the same place as the old; and the country around it, called Argolis, was separated from Bœotia and Attica only by a long narrow strip of land, which was known as the Isthmus of Corinth.

Danaus not only showed the Pelasgians all the useful arts which Cadmus and Cecrops had taught, but also helped them to build ships like that in which he had come to Greece. He also founded religious festivals or games in honor of the harvest goddess, Demeter. The women were invited to these games, and they only were allowed to bear torches in the public processions, where they sang hymns in honor of the goddess.

The descendants of Danaus long ruled over the land; and one member of his family, Perseus, built the town of Mycenæ on a spot where many of the Pelasgian stone walls can still be seen.

The Pelasgians who joined this young hero helped him to build great walls all around his town. These were provided with massive gateways and tall towers, from which the soldiers could overlook the whole country, and see the approach of an enemy from afar.

This same people built tombs for some of the ancient kings, and many treasure and store houses. These buildings, buried under earth and rubbish, were uncovered a few years ago. In the tombs were found swords, spears, and remains of ancient armor, gold ornaments, ancient pieces of pottery, human bones, and, strangest of all, thin masks of pure gold, which covered the faces of some of the dead.

Thus you see, the Pelasgians little by little joined the new colonies which came to take possession of the land, and founded little states or countries of their own, each governed by its own king, and obeying its own laws.

IV. STORY OF DEUCALION

The Greeks used to tell their children that Deu-ca'li-on, the leader of the Thes-sa'li-ans, was a descendant of the gods, for each part of the country claimed that its first great man was the son of a god. It was under the reign of Deucalion that another flood took place. This was even more terrible than that of Ogyges; and all the people of the neighborhood fled in haste to the high mountains north of Thes'sa-ly, where they were kindly received by Deucalion.

When all danger was over, and the waters began to recede, they followed their leader down into the plains again. This soon gave rise to a wonderful story, which you will often hear. It was said that Deucalion and his wife Pyr'ra were the only people left alive after the flood. When the waters had all gone, they went down the mountain, and found that the temple at Del'phi, where they worshiped their gods, was still standing unharmed. They entered, and, kneeling before the altar, prayed for help.

A mysterious voice then bade them go down the mountain, throwing their mother's bones behind them. They were very much troubled when they heard this, until Deucalion said that a voice from heaven could not have meant them to do any harm. In thinking over the real meaning of the words he had heard, he told his wife, that, as the Earth is the mother of all creatures, her bones must mean the stones.

Deucalion and Pyrrha, therefore, went slowly down the mountain, throwing the stones behind them. The Greeks used to tell that a sturdy race of men sprang up from the stones cast by Deucalion, while beautiful women came from those cast by Pyrrha.

The country was soon peopled by the children of these men, who always proudly declared that the story was true, and that they sprang from the race which owed its birth to this great miracle. Deucalion reigned over this people as long as he lived; and when he died, his two sons, Am-phic'ty-on and Hel'len, became kings in his stead. The former staid in Thessaly; and, hearing that some barbarians called Thra'cians were about to come over the mountains and drive his people away, he called the chiefs of all the different states to a council, to ask their advice about the best means of defense. All the chiefs obeyed the summons, and met at a place in Thessaly where the mountains approach the sea so closely as to leave but a narrow pass between. In the pass are hot springs, and so it was called Ther-mop'y-læ, or the Hot Gateway.

The chiefs thus gathered together called this assembly the Am-phic-ty-on'ic Council, in honor of Amphictyon. After making plans to drive back the Thracians, they decided to meet once a year, either at Thermopylæ or at the temple at Delphi, to talk over all important matters.

V. STORY OF DÆDALUS AND ICARUS

Hellen, Deucalion's second son, finding Thessaly too small to give homes to all the people, went southward with a band of hardy followers, and settled in another part of the country which we call Greece, but which was then, in honor of him, called Hellas, while his people were called Hellenes, or subjects of Hellen.

When Hellen died, he left his kingdom to his three sons, Dorus, Æolus, and Xuthus. Instead of dividing their father's lands fairly, the eldest two sons quarreled with the youngest, and finally drove him away. Homeless and poor, Xuthus now went to Athens, where he was warmly welcomed by the king, who not only treated him very kindly, but also gave him his daughter in marriage, and promised that he should inherit the throne.

This promise was duly kept, and Xuthus the exile ruled over Athens. When he died, he left the crown to his sons, Ion and Achæus.

As the Athenians had gradually increased in number until their territory was too small to afford a living to all the inhabitants, Ion and Achæus, even in their father's lifetime, led some of their followers along the Isthmus of Corinth, and down into the peninsula, where they founded two flourishing states, called, after them, Achaia and Ionia. Thus, while northern Greece was pretty equally divided between the Dorians and Æolians, descendants and subjects of Dorus and Æolus, the peninsula was almost entirely in the hands of the Ionians and Achæans, who built towns, cultivated the soil, and became bold navigators. They ventured farther and farther out at sea, until they were familiar with all the neighboring bays and islands.

Sailing thus from place to place, the Hellenes came at last to Crete, a large island south of Greece. This island was then governed by a very wise king called Minos. The laws of this monarch were so just that all the Greeks admired them very much. When he died, they even declared that the gods had called him away to judge the dead in Hades, and to decide what punishments and rewards the spirits deserved.

Although Minos was very wise, he had a subject named Dædalus who was even wiser than he. This man not only invented the saw and the potter's wheel, but also taught the people how to rig sails for their vessels.

As nothing but oars and paddles had hitherto been used to propel ships, this last invention seemed very wonderful; and, to compliment Dædalus, the people declared that he had given their vessels wings, and had thus enabled them to fly over the seas.

Many years after, when sails were so common that they ceased to excite any wonder, the people, forgetting that these were the wings which Dædalus had made, invented a wonderful story, which runs as follows.

Minos, King of Crete, once sent for Dædalus, and bade him build a maze, or labyrinth, with so many rooms and winding halls, that no one, once in it, could ever find his way out again.

Dædalus set to work and built a maze so intricate that neither he nor his son Icarus, who was with him, could get out. Not willing to remain there a prisoner, Dædalus soon contrived a means of escape.

He and Icarus first gathered together a large quantity of feathers, out of which Dædalus cleverly made two pairs of wings. When these were fastened to their shoulders by means of wax, father and son rose up like birds and flew away. In spite of his father's cautions, Icarus rose higher and higher, until the heat of the sun melted the wax, so that his wings dropped off, and he fell into the sea and was drowned. His father, more prudent than he, flew low, and reached Greece in safety. There he went on inventing useful things, often gazing out sadly over the waters in which Icarus had perished, and which, in honor of the drowned youth, were long known as the Icarian Sea.

VI. THE ADVENTURES OF JASON

The Hellenes had not long been masters of all Greece, when a Phryg'ian called Pe'lops became master of the peninsula, which from him received the name of Pel-o-pon-ne'sus. He first taught the people to coin money; and his descendants, the Pe-lop'i-dæ, took possession of all the land around them, with the exception of Argolis, where the Da-na'i-des continued to reign.

Some of the Ionians and Achæans, driven away from their homes by the Pelopidæ, went on board their many vessels, and sailed away. They formed Hel-len'ic colonies in the neighboring islands along the coast of Asia Minor, and even in the southern part of Italy.

As some parts of Greece were very thinly settled, and as the people clustered around the towns where their rulers dwelt, there were wide, desolate tracts of land between them. Here were many wild beasts and robbers, who lay in wait for travelers on their way from one settlement to another. The robbers, who hid in the forests or mountains, were generally feared and disliked, until at last some brave young warriors made up their minds to fight against them and to kill them all. These young men were so brave that they well deserved the name of heroes, which has always been given them; and they met with many adventures about which the people loved to hear. Long after they had gone, the inhabitants, remembering their relief when the robbers were killed, taught their children to honor these brave young men almost as much as the gods, and they called the time when they lived the Heroic Age.

Not satisfied with freeing their own country from wild men and beasts, the heroes wandered far away from home in search of further adventures. These have also been told over and over again to children of all countries and ages, until every one is expected to know something about them. Fifty of these heroes, for instance, went on board of a small vessel called the "Argo," sailed across the well-known waters, and ventured boldly into unknown seas. They were in search of a Golden Fleece, which they were told they would find in Col'chis, where it was said to be guarded by a great dragon.

The leader of these fifty adventurers was Ja'son, an Æolian prince, who brought them safely to Colchis, whence, as the old stories relate, they brought back the Golden Fleece. They also brought home the king's daughter, who married Jason, and ruled his kingdom with him. Of course, as there was no such thing as a Golden Fleece, the Greeks merely used this expression to tell about the wealth which they got in the East, and carried home with them; for the voyage of the "Argo" was in reality the first distant commercial journey undertaken by the Greeks.

VII. THESEUS VISITS THE LABYRINTH

On coming back from the quest for the Golden Fleece, the heroes returned to their own homes, where they continued their efforts to make their people happy.

Theseus, one of the heroes, returned to Athens, and founded a yearly festival in honor of the goddess Athene. This festival was called Pan-ath-e-næ'a, which means "all the worshipers of Athene." It proved a great success, and was a bond of union among the people, who thus learned each other's customs and manners, and grew more friendly than if they had always staid at home. Theseus is one of the best-known among all the Greek heroes. Besides going with Jason in the "Argo," he rid his country of many robbers, and sailed to Crete. There he visited Minos, the king, who, having some time before conquered the Athenians, forced them to send him every year a shipload of youths and maidens, to feed to a monster which he kept in the Labyrinth.

To free his country from this tribute, Theseus, of his own free will, went on board the ship. When he reached Crete, he went first into the Labyrinth, and killed the monster with his sword. Then he found his way out of the maze by means of a long thread which the king's daughter had given him. One end of it he carried with him as he entered, while the other end was fastened to the door.

His old father, Ægeus, who had allowed him to go only after much persuasion, had told him to change the black sails of his vessel for white if he were lucky enough to escape. Theseus promised to do so, but he entirely forgot it in the joy of his return.

Ægeus, watching for the vessel day after day, saw it coming back at last; and when the sunlight fell upon the black sails, he felt sure that his son was dead.

His grief was so great at this loss, that he fell from the rock where he was standing down into the sea, and was drowned. In memory of him, the body of water near the rock is still known as the Æ-ge'an Sea.

When Theseus reached Athens, and heard of his father's grief and sudden death, his heart was filled with sorrow and remorse, and he loudly bewailed the carelessness which had cost his father's life.

Theseus now became King of Athens, and ruled his people very wisely for many years. He took part in many adventures and battles, lost two wives and a beloved son, and in his grief and old age became so cross and harsh that his people ceased to love him.

They finally grew so tired of his cruelty, that they all rose up against him, drove him out of the city, and forced him to take up his abode on the Island of Scyros. Then, fearing that he might return unexpectedly, they told the king of the island to watch him night and day, and to seize the first good opportunity to get rid of him. In obedience to these orders, the king escorted Theseus wherever he went; and one day, when they were both walking along the edge of a tall cliff, he suddenly pushed Theseus over it. Unable to defend or save himself, Theseus fell on some sharp rocks far below, and was instantly killed.

The Athenians rejoiced greatly when they heard of his death; but they soon forgot his harshness, remembered only his bravery and all the good he had done them in his youth, and regretted their ingratitude. Long after, as you will see, his body was carried to Athens, and buried not far from the A-crop'o-lis, which was a fortified hill or citadel in the midst of the city. Here the Athenians built a temple over his remains, and worshiped him as a god.

While Theseus was thus first fighting for his subjects, and then quarreling with them, one of his companions, the hero Her'cu-les (or Her'a-cles) went back to the Peloponnesus, where he had been born. There his descendants, the Her-a-clidæ, soon began fighting with the Pelopidæ for the possession of the land.

After much warfare, the Heraclidæ were driven away, and banished to Thessaly, where they were allowed to remain only upon condition that they would not attempt to renew their quarrel with the Pelopidæ for a hundred years.

VIII. THE TERRIBLE PROPHECY

While Theseus was reigning over the Athenians, the neighboring throne of Thebes, in Bœotia, was occupied by King La'ius and Queen Jo-cas'ta. In those days the people thought they could learn about the future by consulting the oracles, or priests who dwelt in the temples, and pretended to give mortals messages from the gods.

Hoping to learn what would become of himself and of his family, Laius sent rich gifts to the temple at Delphi, asking what would befall him in the coming years. The messenger soon returned, but, instead of bringing cheerful news, he tremblingly repeated the oracle's words: "King Laius, you will have a son who will murder his father, marry his mother, and bring destruction upon his native city!"

This news filled the king's heart with horror; and when, a few months later, a son was born to him, he made up his mind to kill him rather than let him live to commit such fearful crimes. But Laius was too gentle to harm a babe, and so ordered a servant to carry the child out of the town and put him to death.

The man obeyed the first part of the king's orders; but when he had come to a lonely spot on the mountain, he could not make up his mind to kill the poor little babe. Thinking that the child would soon die if left on this lonely spot, the servant tied him to a tree, and, going back to the city, reported that he had gotten rid of him.

No further questions were asked, and all thought that the child was dead. It was not so, however. His cries had attracted the attention of a passing shepherd, who carried him home, and, being too poor to keep him, took him to the King of Corinth. As the king had no children, he gladly adopted the little boy.

When the queen saw that the child's ankles were swollen by the cord by which he had been hung to the tree, she tenderly cared for him, and called him Œd'i-pus, which means "the swollen-footed." This nickname clung to the boy, who grew up thinking that the King and Queen of Corinth were his real parents.

IX. THE SPHINX'S RIDDLE

When Œdipus was grown up, he once went to a festival, where his proud manners so provoked one of his companions, that he taunted him with being only a foundling. Œdipus, seeing the frightened faces around him, now for the first time began to think that perhaps he had not been told the truth about his parentage. So he consulted an oracle.

Instead of giving him a plain answer,—a thing which the oracles were seldom known to do,—the voice said, "Œdipus, beware! You are doomed to kill your father, marry your mother, and bring destruction upon your native city!"

Horrified at this prophecy, and feeling sure that the King and Queen of Corinth were his parents, and that the oracle's predictions threatened misfortunes to them, Œdipus made up his mind to leave home forever. He did not even dare to return to bid his family good-by, and he started out alone and on foot to seek his fortunes elsewhere.

As he walked, he thought of his misfortunes, and grew very bitter against the cruel goddess of fate, whom he had been taught to fear. He fancied that this goddess could rule things as she pleased, and that it was she who had said he would commit the dreadful crimes which he was trying to avoid.

After several days' aimless wandering, Œdipus came at last to some crossroads. There he met an old man riding in a chariot, and preceded by a herald, who haughtily bade Œdipus make way for his master.

As Œdipus had been brought up as a prince, he was in the habit of seeing everybody make way for him. He therefore proudly refused to stir; and when the herald raised his staff to strike, Œdipus drew his sword and killed him.

The old man, indignant at this deed of violence, stepped out of his chariot and attacked Œdipus. Now, the young man did not know that it was his father Laius whom he thus met for the first time, so he fell upon and killed him also. The servants too were all slain when they in turn attacked him; and then Œdipus calmly continued his journey, little suspecting that the first part of the oracle's prediction had been fulfilled.

Soon after this fight, Œdipus came to the city of Thebes. The streets were filled with excited people, all talking at once; and the young prince, in listening to what they said, soon learned the cause of their excitement.

It seems that a terrible monster called the Sphinx had taken up its station on one of the principal roads leading to the town, and would allow no one to pass who could not answer a riddle which it asked. This creature had the head of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle; and, as it ate up all those who could not guess its riddle, the people were very much frightened.

Many persons had already been slain; for, although the bravest men had gone out to kill it, they had lost their lives in the attempt, as no one could harm it unless he guessed the mysterious riddle.

Laius, the king, hoping to learn from the oracle at Delphi the answer to the riddle, had ridden off in his chariot; but the people grew more excited still, when a messenger came running into the town, and said that the king and all his servants had been killed by robbers, and that their dead bodies had been found in the middle of the road.

Œdipus paid no attention to this news; for he little suspected that the old man whom he had killed was the king, whom everybody loved, and for whom they now mourned with noisy grief.

He was, however, deeply interested in the story of the Sphinx; and he was so sure that he could guess the riddle, that he immediately set out to find the monster. He walked boldly along the road until stopped by the Sphinx, which told him to answer this riddle if he wished to live: "What creature walks upon four feet in the morning, upon two at noon, and upon three at night?"

After a few moments' deep thought, Œdipus answered that the creature was *man*. "For," said he, "in the morning of life, or in babyhood, man creeps on hands and knees; at noon, or in manhood, he walks erect; and at evening, or in old age, he supports his tottering steps with a staff."

The Sphinx's riddle was guessed; and the monster, knowing that its power was now at an end, tried to get away. But Œdipus would not allow it to do so; and, drawing his sword, he forced it back until it fell over a precipice, on the sharp stones below, and was dashed to pieces.

X. BLINDNESS AND DEATH OF ŒDIPUS

Bœotia was now rid of the Sphinx; and when the Thebans heard the joyful news of its death, they welcomed [Oe]dipus with much joy. In reward for his bravery, they gave him not only the throne, but also the hand of Jocasta, the widowed queen. It was thus that Œdipus, although he did not know it, fulfilled the second part of the prophecy, and married his own mother.

Several years now passed by, during which Œdipus ruled the Thebans so wisely, that they all loved him dearly, and went to him for advice in all their troubles. Finally the good times came to an end; and the people were again terrified, because a plague, or great sickness, broke out in the city, and many of the inhabitants died.

All kinds of medicines were tried, but without effect; and all the gods were asked to lend their aid. In despair, Œdipus sent a messenger to Delphi to ask the oracle how the disease could be stopped. The oracle for once gave a plain answer, and said that the plague would cease only when the murderer of Laius had been found and punished.

Investigations were now made for the first time, and it was found that Œdipus was the one who had slain the king. At the same time, the servant confessed that he had not killed the royal child; and the shepherd told how he had found the babe and carried him to Corinth, where he had been adopted by the king.

When Œdipus heard all this, he was driven almost mad with despair; for now he knew not only that he had murdered his father and married his mother, but that it was on his account that the plague had caused the death of so many people in Thebes.

In her horror and grief at this discovery, Queen Jocasta killed herself. When Œdipus learned that she was dead, he ran into the room where she lay, and took one of the buckles which fastened her dress and put out his eyes with it, saying, that, since they had beheld such a sorrowful sight, they should never again see the light of day.

To rid the city of his accursed presence, and thus, if possible, save it from the threatened destruction, Œdipus banished himself, and wandered away, old, blind, and poor, for he would take none of his riches with him.

He departed sorrowfully, leaving his kingdom to his two sons, E-te´o-cles and Pol-y-ni´ces, and telling them to care for their sisters, An-tig´o-ne and Is-me´ne.

Ismene wept bitterly when she said good-by to her father; but Antigone placed her father's hand upon her shoulder, said that she would never forsake him, and left the city, tenderly supporting and guiding him.

Father and daughter wandered thus from place to place, finding no rest; for all the people shrank from even looking upon Œdipus, who, they said, was evidently accursed by the gods, since he had committed such frightful crimes.

After many days' wandering and much fatigue, the exiles arrived at last on the border of a dark forest held sacred to the Furies,—the goddesses whose duty it was to punish all criminals by tormenting them as long as they lived, and even after they had died.

When Antigone described to her poor blind father the place they had reached, he bade her remain by the roadside, and, groping his way, soon vanished into the forest. He had scarcely gone, when a terrible thunderstorm arose. The air grew dark, the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, the trees bent and twisted in the wind; and, although Antigone called her father again and again, she heard no answering cry.

When morning came, she went to look for him, but found no trace of him. The people in the neighborhood then told her that the Furies had dragged her father away to punish him for his crimes, and Antigone sadly went back to Thebes.

As soon as she arrived in the city, Antigone hastened to the palace to tell her brothers and sister about their father's sad death; but when she entered her former happy home, she learned that there are sadder things than death, for her brothers were no longer friends, and had begun a terrible quarrel.

XI. THE BROTHERS' QUARREL

The misfortunes of Thebes had not come to an end with the banishment of Ædipus, and fate was still against the unhappy city. The plague, it is true, had stopped; but the two young princes were quarreling about the possession of the throne.

Both wanted to reign, and neither wished to share the throne with his brother. After much dispute, they agreed at last that each should reign a year in turn.

Eteocles, the elder, was of course allowed to rule during the first year; while Polynices went to pay a visit to A-dras'tus, King of Argos. Here he was warmly welcomed and hospitably entertained; but when the year was ended, he hurried back to Thebes to reign in his turn.

When he came to the city, however, Eteocles refused to give up the scepter, and, calling out his guards, made use of his power to drive Polynices out of the town. This was very wrong, for a promise should always be kept; and it made Polynices so angry, that he said he would return with an army, and force his brother to act fairly.

Polynices therefore hurried back to Argos, and soon persuaded Adrastus, with five other kings and noted warriors, to go with him to Thebes, and help him take the throne by force.

When Eteocles heard that seven kings were coming with a large army to make him give up the throne of Thebes, he made up his mind to fight hard to keep it. After strengthening the city walls, laying in a great stock of provisions, and securing the help of seven brave allies, Eteocles closed the gates of Thebes, and calmly awaited the arrival of the enemy.

Meanwhile the seven chiefs were marching from Argos to Thebes. They came at last to the forest of Ne'me-a, where Hercules, the chief hero of Argos, had once slain a terrible lion. This monster had long lived in the forest, filling the hearts of all the people with dread; and when Hercules came out of the forest, wearing the skin of the lion, they had greatly rejoiced.

In honor of Hercules' victory over the Ne'me-an lion, the seven chiefs stopped in this spot to celebrate games, which they said should be held in that neighborhood every three years. This festival was ever after celebrated thus; and when the people gathered together there to see the racing and boxing, they loved to recall the memory of the brave lion slayer, and of the seven kings who had first celebrated the Nemean games.

When Polynices and his allies came at last to Thebes, they found all the gates closed; and although they fought bravely, and tried hard to enter the city, they were kept at bay for seven long years. At the end of that time the people inside the city, and those without, were equally tired of this long siege: so it was finally agreed that the two armies should meet on a neighboring plain and fight it out.

The armies were led by the two brothers, who now hated each other so bitterly, that, instead of waiting for the signal for battle, they rushed upon each other, and both fell before any one could interfere.

This terrible end of their quarrel filled the hearts of both armies with fear, and they agreed to make a truce in order to bury their chiefs. As it was customary at that time to burn the bodies of the dead, both corpses were laid upon the funeral pyre side by side. When the wood was all burned, the ashes were put into separate urns, for the Greeks used to tell their children that these brothers hated each other so much that even their ashes would not mingle.

This story of Ædipus and his family is only a myth, but it is a very celebrated one. The Greeks wrote stories, poems, and plays about it, and it is on that account that it should be known by every one who wishes to study the history of Greece.

XII. THE TAKING OF THEBES

The terrible death of the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices did not, as you might suppose, end the siege of Thebes. No sooner were their funerals over, than both armies began to fight again; and they continued the contest until all the chiefs had been killed except Adrastus only.

Most of the soldiers had also been slain: so Adrastus made up his mind to go home, and wait until the sons of these fallen heroes were old enough to fight, before he went on with the war. As they thought it their duty to avenge all injuries, and especially the death of a relative, Adrastus had no trouble in getting these youths to march against Thebes. So they began a second siege, which was known as the War of the E-pig'o-ni, or descendants, because the young warriors took up their fathers' quarrel.

Such was the bravery of these young men, that they succeeded where their fathers had failed, and after a long struggle took the city of Thebes. As Polynices was dead, and could not claim the scepter he had so longed to possess, they put his son Ther-san'der upon the throne.

This young man ruled for a while in peace; but because his sons were insane, the Thebans thought that the gods still hated the race of Ædipus: so they drove these princes away, and chose another and less unlucky family to rule over them instead.

Even the daughters of Ædipus were very unhappy; for Antigone, having taken the part of her brother Polynices, was put to death, while her sister Ismene died of grief.

Such was the end of the race of Ædipus,—a king who has been considered the most unhappy man that ever lived, because, although he meant to be good, he was forced by fate to commit the most horrible crimes.

XIII. THE CHILDHOOD OF PARIS

In those days, Pri'am and Hec'u-ba were King and Queen of Troy (or Il'i-um),—a beautiful city near the coast of Asia Minor, almost opposite Athens. They were the parents of a large family of sons and daughters; and among the sons were Hec'tor and Par'is, young men of remarkable strength and beauty.

Paris had had a very adventurous life. When he was but a little babe, his mother dreamed that she saw a flaming brand in the cradle, in the place where the child lay. This brand seemed to set fire to the cradle and all the palace; and the queen, awaking with a start, was overjoyed to find that it was nothing but a dream.

Men in those days believed that dreams were sent by the gods to warn them of coming events, and so Hecuba was very anxious to know what the burning brand meant. She told her husband all about it, and they finally decided to ask an oracle to explain the dream.

A few days later the messenger they had sent to the oracle came home, and Hecuba shed many tears when he brought word that the child Paris was destined to bring destruction upon his native city.

To escape this calamity, Priam ordered that Paris should be carried out of the city, and that he should be left in a forest, where the wild beasts would eat him up, or where he would be sure to die from hunger and cold.

Poor little Paris was therefore lifted out of his comfortable cradle, and left alone in the woods, where he cried so hard that a passing hunter heard him. This man was so sorry for the poor child, that he carried him home to his wife, who brought the little stranger up with her own children.

As he lived with hunters, Paris soon learned their ways; and he became so active that when he was quite grown up he went to Troy to take part in the athletic games, which were often held there in honor of the gods. He was so strong that he easily won all the prizes, although Hector and the other young princes were also striving for them.

When Paris went up to receive the crown of wild olive leaves which was the victor's prize, every one noticed his likeness to the royal family; and his sister Cas-san'dra, who was able to foretell future events, said that he was the son of Priam and Hecuba, and that he would bring great misfortunes upon Troy.

The king and queen paid no heed to these words, but gladly welcomed Paris home, and lavished all kinds of gifts upon him to make up for their cruelty and long neglect.

Paris was so fond of change and adventure, that he soon grew tired of court life, and asked Priam for a ship, so that he might sail off to Greece.

This request was readily granted, and Paris went away. The young prince sailed from island to island, and came at last to the southern part of the Peloponnesus, where the descendants of Hercules had founded the city of Sparta. Here he was warmly welcomed by King Men-e-la'us; but this king was obliged to leave home shortly after the arrival of Paris, and he bade Helen, his wife, the most beautiful woman in the world, do all she could to entertain the noble stranger.

Helen was so kind to Paris that he soon fell in love with her. His greatest wish was to have her as his wife: so he began to tell her that Ve'nus, the goddess of love, had promised him that he should marry the most beautiful woman in the world.

Talking thus day after day, the handsome young Paris finally persuaded Helen to leave her husband and home. She got on board of his vessel, and went with him to Troy as his wife. Of course, this wrongdoing could not bring happiness; and not only were they duly punished, but, as you will soon see, the crime of Paris brought suffering and death to his friends as well.

When Menelaus came home and found that his guest had run away with his wife, he was very angry, and vowed that he would not rest until he had punished Paris and won back the beautiful Helen.

He therefore made ready for war, and sent word to his friends and relatives to come and help him, telling them to meet him at Au'lis, a seaport, where they would find swift-sailing vessels to carry them across the sea to Troy.

XIV. THE MUSTER OF THE TROOPS

When the neighboring kings and chiefs received Menelaus' message, they were delighted; for fighting was their only occupation, and they enjoyed the din of battle more than anything else. They began to collect their soldiers, polish their arms, and man their vessels. Then, inviting all who wished to join them, they started out for Aulis, where they formed a huge army.

Each of the parties was led by its own king or chief. Some of these chiefs were very brave, and their names are still well known. The leading ones among them were Nes'tor, the wisest man of his day, to whom every one came for good advice; and U-lys'ses, the crafty or sly king, who was so clever that he could easily outwit all men.

There were also A'jax, the strongest man of his time; Thersander, the new king of Thebes, who came with the Epigoni; and Ag-a-mem'non, King of Mycenæ, Menelaus' brother, who was chosen chief of the whole army.

The Greeks never began any undertaking without consulting the oracles to find out how it would end. Agamemnon, therefore, consulted one of these soothsayers, who said that Troy would never be taken unless A-chil'les fought with the Greeks.

When they heard this answer, the chiefs immediately asked who Achilles was, and they soon learned all about him. He was a young prince of whom it had been foretold at the time of his birth that he would be the greatest warrior of his age, and that he would die young. His mother, who loved him dearly, shed many tears when she heard these words, and made up her mind to do all she could to prevent this prophecy from coming true.

She first carried Achilles, when but a baby, to the river Styx, for it was said that those who bathed in its waters could never be wounded.

Afraid to let go of her child for fear he might drown, but anxious to make sure that the waters should touch every part of him, the mother plunged him into the rushing tide, holding him fast by one heel.

This she held so tight that the waters never even wet it; and it was only long after, when too late to remedy it, that an oracle told her that Achilles could be wounded in his heel, which the waters of the Styx had not touched. As soon as this good mother heard the first news of the coming war, her heart was troubled; for she knew that Achilles, who was now a young man, would want to join the army, and she was afraid of losing him.

To prevent his hearing anything about the war, she persuaded him to visit the King of Scyros. There, under pretext of a joke, he was induced to put on girl's clothes, and to pretend that he was a woman.

The Greeks, after hearing the oracle's words, sent messengers for Achilles; but they could not find him, as he had left home, and no one would tell them where he had gone. As it was of no use to set out without him, according to the oracle's answer, which they thoroughly believed, the army lingered at Aulis in despair.

Ulysses, seeing that they would never start unless Achilles were found, now offered to go and get him. Disguised as a peddler, with a pack upon his back, he went first to Achilles' home, where the chattering maids told him all he wished to know, and thence he went to the Island of Scyros.

Achilles was so well disguised that Ulysses could not tell him from the king's daughters and their maids: so he made use of a trick to find him out. Among the trinkets in his pack, he put a sword of fine workmanship, and, entering the palace, spread out his wares before the admiring maidens. They all gathered about him; but, while the real girls went into raptures over his ornaments, Achilles grasped the sword, drew it from the scabbard, carefully tested the blade, and swung it with a strong arm.

Of course, Ulysses then easily saw that he was not a girl, and, slipping up to him, managed to whisper news of the coming war, and won his promise to join the army at Aulis in a few days.

XV. THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENIA

True to his promise, Achilles soon came to Aulis with his well-trained soldiers, the Myr'midons, and with him came his friend Pa-tro'clus. All were now eager to start, and ready to embark; but unfortunately there was no favorable wind to fill their sails and waft them over to Asia Minor.

Day after day they waited, and offered sacrifices to the gods, but all in vain. At last they again consulted the oracle, who said that the wind would not blow until Iph-i-ge-ni'a, Agamemnon's daughter, were offered up in sacrifice to Di-an'a, goddess of the moon and the chase, whom this king had once offended.

Agamemnon at first said that he would not sacrifice his daughter, but finally his companions persuaded him to do so. Just as the priest was about to kill the maiden on the altar, however, the goddess Diana came, and carried her off unharmed, leaving a deer to be sacrificed in her stead.

The deer was killed, the wind rose, the sails filled, and the Greek fleet soon came within sight of the high walls and towers of Troy. There, contrary to their expectations, the Greeks found the people ready to fight them; but, after many days' struggle, they saw that they had made no great advance.

On the wide plain which stretched out between the city and the sea, the Greek and Tro'jan armies fought many a battle; and sometimes one party, and sometimes the other, had the victory. The men on both sides had been trained to handle their weapons with great skill, and there were many fights in which the Greek heroes met the bravest Trojans.

Nine years passed thus in continual warfare, but even then the Greeks were as far from taking the town as on the first day; and the Trojans, in spite of all their courage, had not been able to drive their enemies away.

XVI. THE WRATH OF ACHILLES

In all their battles, the booty won by the Greeks from the enemy had been divided among the chiefs and soldiers, and on one occasion female slaves were given to Agamemnon and Achilles. These girls were not born slaves, but were captives of war reduced to slavery, as was then the custom; for, while the men and boys were always killed, the women and girls were forced to be the servants of the victors.

Now, it happened that the slave given to Agamemnon was the daughter of a priest of Apollo. He was very sorry when he heard she had fallen into the hands of the Greeks, and sent a message to Agamemnon, offering to give him a large sum of money if he would only set her free.

Agamemnon would not accept the money, and sent a rude message to the priest, who, in anger, asked Apollo to avenge this insult by sending a plague upon the Greeks. The god heard and granted this prayer, and soon all the soldiers in the Greek camp were suffering from a terrible disease, of which many of them died.

As no remedy could relieve the sufferers, the Greek leaders consulted an oracle, to find out how the plague might be stopped. Then they learned that Apollo was angry with Agamemnon because he had refused to give up his slave, and that the Greeks would continue to suffer until he made up his mind to give her back to her father.

Thus forced to give her up to save his men from further suffering and even from death, Agamemnon angrily said he would take Achilles' slave instead, and he had her brought to wait upon him in his tent.

Achilles, who wanted to save the Greeks from the plague, allowed the maiden to depart, warning Agamemnon, however, that he would no longer fight for a chief who could be so selfish and unjust. As soon as the girl had gone, therefore, he laid aside his fine armor; and although he heard the call for battle, and the din of fighting, he staid quietly within his tent.

While Achilles sat thus sulking day after day, his companions were bravely fighting. In spite of their bravery, however, the Trojans were gaining the advantage; for, now that Achilles was no longer there to fill their hearts with terror, they fought with new courage.

The Greeks, missing the bright young leader who always led them into the midst of the fray, were gradually driven back by the Trojans, who pressed eagerly forward, and even began to set fire to some of the Greek ships.

Achilles' friend, Patroclus, who was fighting at the head of the Greeks, now saw that the Trojans, unless they were checked, would soon destroy the whole army, and he rushed into Achilles' tent to beg him to come and help them once more.

His entreaties were vain. Achilles refused to move a step; but he consented at last to let Patroclus wear his armor, and, thus disguised, make a last attempt to rally the Greeks and drive back the Trojans.

Patroclus started out, and, when the Trojans saw the well-known armor, they shrank back in terror, for they greatly feared Achilles. They soon saw their mistake, however; and Hector, rushing forward, killed Patroclus, tore the armor off his body, and retired to put it on in honor of his victory.

Then a terrible struggle took place between the Trojans and the Greeks for the possession of Patroclus' body. The news of his friend's death had quickly been carried to Achilles, and had roused him from his indifferent state. Springing upon the wall that stretched before the camp, he gave a mighty shout, at the sound of which the Trojans fled, while Ajax and Ulysses brought back the body of Patroclus.

XVII. DEATH OF HECTOR AND ACHILLES

The next day, having secured armor and weapons, Achilles again went out to fight. His purpose was to meet Hector, and, by killing him, to avenge his dead friend, Patroclus. He therefore rushed up and down the battlefield; and when at last he came face to face with his foe, they closed in deadly fight. The two young men, each the champion warrior of his army, were now fighting with the courage of despair; for, while Achilles was thirsting to avenge his friend, Hector knew that the fate of Troy depended mostly upon his arm. The struggle was terrible. It was watched with breathless interest by the armies on both sides, and by aged Priam and the Trojan women from the walls of Troy. In spite of Hector's courage, in spite of all his skill, he was doomed to die, and soon he fell under the blows of Achilles.

Then, in sight of both armies and of Hector's weeping family, Achilles took off his enemy's armor, bound the dead body by the feet to his chariot, and dragged it three times around the city walls before he went back to camp to mourn over the remains of Patroclus.

That night, guided by one of the gods, old King Priam came secretly into the Greek camp, and, stealing into Achilles' tent, fell at his feet. He had come to beg Achilles to give back the body of Hector, that he might weep over it, and bury it with all the usual ceremonies and honors.

Touched by the old man's tears, and ready now to listen to his better feelings, Achilles kindly raised the old king, comforted him with gentle words, and not only gave back the body, but also promised that there should be a truce of a few days, so that both armies could bury their dead in peace.

The funerals were held, the bodies burned, the usual games celebrated; and when the truce was over, the long war was begun again. After several other great fights, Achilles died from a wound in his heel caused by a poisoned arrow that was treacherously shot by Paris.

The sorrowing Greeks then buried the young hero on the wide plain between Troy and the sea. This spot has been visited by many people who admired the brave young hero of the *Iliad* (see p. 60).

XVIII. THE BURNING OF TROY

As the valor of the Greeks had proved of no avail during the ten-years' war, and as they were still as far as ever from taking Troy, Ulysses the crafty now proposed to take the city by a stratagem, or trick.

The Greeks, obeying his directions, built a wooden horse of very large size. It was hollow, and the space inside it was large enough to hold a number of armed men. When this horse was finished, and the men were hidden in it, the Greeks all embarked as if to sail home.

The Trojans, who had watched them embark and sail out of sight, rushed down to the shore shouting for joy, and began to wander around the deserted camp. They soon found the huge wooden horse, and were staring wonderingly at it, when they were joined by a Greek who had purposely been left behind, and who now crept out of his hiding place.

In answer to their questions, this man said that his companions had deserted him, and that the wooden horse had been built and left there as an offering to Po-sei'don (or Nep'tune), god of the sea. The Trojans, believing all this, now decided to keep the wooden horse in memory of their long siege, and the useless attempt of the Greeks to take Troy.

They therefore joyfully dragged the huge animal into the city; and, as the gates were not large enough for it to pass through, they tore down part of their strong walls.

That very night, while all the Trojans were sleeping peacefully for the first time in many years, without any fear of a midnight attack, the Greek vessels noiselessly sailed back to their old moorings. The soldiers landed in silence, and, marching up softly, joined their companions, who had crept out of the wooden horse, and had opened all the gates to receive them.

Pouring into Troy on all sides at once, the Greeks now began their work of destruction, killing, burning, and stealing everywhere. The Trojan warriors, awakening from sleep, vainly tried to defend themselves; but all were killed except Prince Æ-ne'as, who escaped with his family and a few faithful friends, to form a new kingdom in Italy.

All the women, including even the queen and her daughters, were made prisoners and carried away by the Greek heroes. The men were now very anxious to return home with the booty they had won; for they had done what they had long wished to do, and Troy, the beautiful city, was burned to the ground.

All this, as you know, happened many years ago,—so many that no one knows just how long. The city thus destroyed was never rebuilt. Some years ago a German traveler began to dig on the spot where it once stood. Deep down under the ground he found the remains of beautiful buildings, some pottery, household utensils, weapons, and a great deal of gold, silver, brass, and bronze. All these things were blackened or partly melted by fire, showing that the Greeks had set fire to the city, as their famous old poems relate.

The Greeks said, however, that their gods were very angry with many of their warriors on account of the cruelty they showed on that dreadful night, and that many of them had to suffer great hardships before they reached home. Some were tossed about by the winds and waves for many long years, and suffered shipwrecks. Others reached home safely, only to be murdered by relatives who had taken possession of their thrones during their long absence.

Only a few among these heroes escaped with their lives, and wandered off to other countries to found new cities. Thus arose many Greek colonies in Sicily and southern Italy, which were called Great Greece, in honor of the country from which the first settlers had come.

As you have already seen, Prince Æneas was among these Trojans. After many exciting adventures, which you will be able to read in the "Story of Rome," he sailed up the Ti'ber River, and landed near the place where one of his descendants was to found the present capital of Italy, which is one of the most famous cities in the world.

XIX. HEROIC DEATH OF CODRUS

You remember, do you not, how the sons of Pelops had driven the Heraclidæ, or sons of Hercules, out of the peninsula which was called the Peloponnesus? This same peninsula is now called Mo-re'a, or the mulberry leaf, because it is shaped something like such a leaf, as you will see by looking at your map.

The Heraclidæ had not gone away willingly, but were staying in Thessaly, in the northern part of Greece, where they promised to remain one hundred years without making any attempt to come back.

Shortly after the end of the Trojan War, this truce of a hundred years came to an end; and the Heraclidæ called upon their neighbors the Dorians to join them, and help them win back their former lands.

Led by three brave chiefs, the allies passed through Greece proper, along the Isthmus of Corinth, and, spreading all over the Peloponnesus, soon took possession of the principal towns. The leading members of the family of Hercules took the title of kings, and ruled over the cities of Argos, Mycenæ, and Spar'ta.

The Dorians, who had helped the Heraclidæ win back their former possessions, now saw that the land here was better than their home in the mountains, so they drove all the rest of the Ionians out of the country, and settled there also.

Thus driven away by the Dorians and the Heraclidæ, these Ionians went to Athens, to the neighboring islands, and even to the coast of Asia Minor, south of the ruined city of Troy, where they settled in great numbers. They called the strip of land which they occupied Ionia, and founded many towns, some of which, such as Eph'e-sus and Mi-le'tus, were destined to become famous.

Of course, the Ionians were very angry at thus being driven away from home; and those who had gone to live in Athens soon asked Co'drus, the Athenian king, to make war against the Heraclidæ of Sparta.

The two armies soon met, and prepared for battle. Codrus, having consulted an oracle, had learned that the victory would be given to the army whose king should be killed, so he nobly made up his mind to die for the good of his people.

Instead of going into battle in royal dress, with his guards all around him, as was his habit, he dressed himself like an ordinary soldier, and went forward until he stood in the very first rank of the army. Then he rushed boldly into the midst of the foe.

Of course, he was soon cut down; but the Athenians, seeing his courage, and learning why he had thus risked his life, fought with such valor that they defeated the Spar'tan forces, and forced them to retreat.

The victory had been won; but the Athenians were so sorry to lose their beloved king, that they could not rejoice, and sadly returned home, carrying the body of Codrus. Such was the admiration of all the people for this act of royal courage, that they vowed they would never again call any one by the name of king.

When Codrus had been buried, therefore, the Athenians gave his son and heir the government of the city, calling him archon, or chief for life,—a title which was borne by many rulers after him.

The Spartans, who had come into Attica to fight the Athenians, retreated hastily after their defeat, and returned to their city, where they settled, forcing all the people who dwelt in the neighborhood either to leave the country or to serve them as their slaves.

The return of the Heraclidæ into the Peloponnesus is the last event of the Heroic Age, and now real history begins. After this, it is no longer necessary to try to find out the truth hidden in the old tales which were handed down from father to son, and which were the only fairy stories the Greek children knew; for henceforth records were kept of all the principal events.

XX. THE BLIND POET

Three or four centuries after the siege of Troy, there lived a poor old blind poet who wandered about from place to place, playing upon his lyre, and reciting wonderful verses which told about the adventures of the Greek heroes, and their great deeds during the Trojan War.

We are told that this old man, whose name was Ho'mer, had not always been poor and blind, but that, having embarked by mistake upon a vessel manned by pirates, he not only had been robbed of all his wealth, and blinded, but had been left upon a lonely shore.

By some happy chance, poor blind Homer found his way to the inhabited parts of the country, where he soon won many friends. Instead of spending all his time in weeping over his troubles, Homer tried to think of some way in which he could earn his living, and at the same time give pleasure to others. He soon found such a way in telling the stories of the past to all who cared to listen to them.

As the people in those days had no books, no schools, and no theaters, these stories seemed very wonderful. Little by little Homer turned them into verses so grand and beautiful that we admire them still; and these he recited, accompanying himself on a lyre, which he handled with much skill. As he wandered thus from place to place, old and young crowded around him to listen to his tales; and some young men were so struck by them that they followed him everywhere, until they too could repeat them. This was quite easy to do, because Homer had put them into the most beautiful and harmonious language the world has ever known. As soon as these young men had learned a few of the tales, they too began to travel from place to place, telling them to all they met; and thus Homer's verses became well known throughout all Greece.

The Greeks who could recite Homer's poems went next to the islands and Asia Minor, stopping at every place where Greek was spoken, to tell about the wrath of Achilles, the death of Patroclus, Hector, or old Priam, the burning of Troy, the wanderings of Ulysses, and the return of the Greeks. Other youths learned the poems; and so, although they were not written down for many a year, they were constantly recited and sung, and thus kept alive in the memory of the people.

As for Homer, their author, we know but little about him. We are told that he lived to be very old, and that although he was poor as long as he lived, and forced to earn his living by reciting his songs, he was greatly honored after his death.

His two great heroic poems—the Iliad, telling all about the Trojan War, and the Od'ys-sey, relating how Ulysses sailed about for ten years on his way home from Troy—were finally written down, and kept so carefully that they can still be read to-day. Such was the admiration felt for these poems, that some years after Homer's death an attempt was made to find out more about him, and about the place where he was born.

Fifty cities claimed the honor of giving him birth; but, although it was never positively found out where he was born, most people thought the Island of Chi'os was his birthplace. The Greek towns, wishing to show how much they admired the works of Homer, used to send yearly gifts to this place, the native land of the grandest poet the world has ever known.

XXI. THE RISE OF SPARTA

The city of Sparta, founded in the days of the Pelasgians, and once ruled over by Menelaus and Helen, had fallen, as we have seen, into the hands of the Heraclidæ when they came back to the Peloponnesus after their exile of a hundred years. It was first governed by A-ris-to-dæ'mus, one of their three leaders; and, as records soon began to be kept, we know a great deal about the early history of this famous place.

As the town had formerly belonged to the Heraclidæ, and had been ruled by one of their ancestors, called Lac-e-dæ'mon, they called it by his name, and the country around it they named La-co'ni-a. Having won back the town by fighting, the Heraclidæ said that they would attend to war and politics, and make the conquered people till the ground.

The old inhabitants of Laconia, therefore, went on living in the country, where they sowed and harvested for the benefit of the Spartans. All the prisoners of war, however, became real slaves. They were obliged to serve the Spartans in every way, and were called He'lots.

When Aristodemus died, his twin sons were both made kings; and, as each of them left his throne to his descendants, Sparta had two kings, instead of one, from this time on. One member of the royal family, although he never bore the name of king, is the most noted man in Spartan history. This is Ly-cur'gus, the son of one ruler, the brother of another, and the guardian of an infant king named Char-i-la'us.

Lycurgus was a thoroughly good and upright man. We are told that the mother of the baby king once offered to put her child to death that Lycurgus might reign. Fearing for the babe's safety, Lycurgus made believe that he agreed to this plan, and asked that the child should be given to him to kill as he saw fit.

Lycurgus, having thus obtained possession of the babe, carried him to the council hall. There the child was named king; and Lycurgus promised that he would watch carefully over him, educate him well, and rule for him until he should be old and wise enough to reign alone.

While he was thus acting as ruler, Lycurgus made use of his power to bring many new customs into Sparta, and to change the laws. As he was one of the wisest men who ever lived, he knew very well that men must be good if they would be happy. He also knew that health is far better than riches; and, hoping to make the Spartans both good and healthy, he won them over little by little to obey a new set of laws, which he had made after visiting many of the neighboring countries, and learning all he could.

XXII. THE SPARTAN TRAINING

The laws which Lycurgus drew up for the Spartans were very strict. For instance, as soon as a babe came into the world, the law ordered that the father should wrap it up in a cloak, and carry it before a council made up of some of the oldest and wisest men.

They looked at the child carefully, and if it seemed strong and healthy, and was neither crippled nor in any way deformed, they said that it might live. Then they gave it back to the father, and bade him bring up the child for the honor of his country.

If the babe was sickly or deformed, it was carried off to a mountain near by, and left alone; so that it soon died of hunger or thirst, or was eaten up by the wild beasts.

The Spartan children staid under their father's roof and in their mother's care until they were seven years old. While in the nursery, they were taught all the beautiful old Greek legends, and listened with delight to the stories of the ancient heroes, and especially to the poems of Homer telling about the war of Troy and the adventures of Ulysses.

As soon as the children had reached seven years of age, they were given over to the care of the state, and allowed to visit their parents but seldom. The boys were put in charge of chosen men, who trained them to become strong and brave; while the girls were placed under some good and wise woman, who not only taught them all they needed to know to keep house well, but also trained them to be as strong and fearless as their brothers. All Spartan boys were allowed but one rough woolen garment, which served as their sole covering by night and by day, and was of the same material in summer as in winter.

They were taught very little reading, writing, and arithmetic, but were carefully trained to recite the poems of Homer, the patriotic songs, and to accompany themselves skillfully on the lyre. They were also obliged to sing in the public chorus, and to dance gracefully at all the religious feasts.

As the Spartans were very anxious that their boys should be strong and fearless, they were taught to stand pain and fatigue without a murmur; and, to make sure that they could do so, their teachers made them go through a very severe training.

Led by one of the older boys, the little lads were often sent out for long tramps over rough and stony roads, under the hot sun; and the best boy was the one who kept up longest, in spite of bleeding feet, burning thirst, and great fatigue.

Spartan boys were allowed no beds to sleep in, lest they should become lazy and hard to please. Their only couch was a heap of rushes, which they picked on the banks of the Eu-ro'tas, a river near Sparta; and in winter they were allowed to cover these with a layer of cat-tail down to make them softer and warmer.

XXIII. THE BRAVE SPARTAN BOY

As greedy and disobedient children were viewed at Sparta with the contempt they deserved, all the boys were trained to obey at a word, whatever the order given, and were allowed only the plainest and scantiest food.

Strange to relate, the Spartans also trained their boys to steal. They praised them when they succeeded in doing so without being found out, and punished them only when caught in the act. The reason for this queer custom was this: the people were often engaged in war, and as they had no baggage wagons following their army, and no special officer to furnish food, they had to depend entirely upon the provisions they could get on their way.

Whenever an army came in sight, the people hid not only their wealth, but also their food; and, had not the Spartan soldiers been trained to steal, they would often have suffered much from hunger when they were at war.

To test the courage of the Spartan boys, their teachers never allowed them to have a light, and often sent them out alone in the middle of the night, on errands which they had to do as best they could.

Then, too, once a year all the boys were brought to the Temple of Diana, where their courage was further tried by a severe flogging; and those who stood this whipping without a tear or moan were duly praised. The little Spartan boys were so eager to be thought brave, that it is said that some let themselves be flogged to death rather than complain.

The bravery of one of these boys was so wonderful that you will find it mentioned in nearly every Greek history you read. This little fellow had stolen a live fox, and hidden it in the bosom of his dress, on his way to school.

The imprisoned fox, hoping to escape, began to gnaw a hole in the boy's chest, and to tear his flesh with his sharp claws; but, in spite of the pain, the lad sat still, and let the fox bite him to death.

It was only when he fell lifeless to the floor that the teachers found the fox, and saw how cruelly he had torn the brave little boy to pieces. Ever since then, when boys stand pain bravely and without wincing, they have been called little Spartans, in memory of this lad.

In order that the boys should be taught to behave well under all circumstances, they were never allowed to speak except when spoken to, and then their answers were expected to be as short and exact as possible.

This style of speaking, where much was said in few words, was so usual in the whole country of Laconia, that it is still known as the laconic style.

To train them in this mode of speech, the elders daily made the boys pass an oral examination, asking them any questions they could think of. The boys had to answer promptly, briefly, and carefully; and if they failed to do so, it was considered a great disgrace.

These daily questionings were meant to sharpen their wits, strengthen their memories, and teach them how to think and decide quickly and correctly.

The Spartan youths were further taught to treat all their elders with the greatest respect; and it must have been a pretty sight to see all these manly fellows respectfully saluting all the old people they met, and even stopping their play to make way for them when they came on the street.

To strengthen their muscles, the boys were also carefully trained in gymnastics. They could handle weapons, throw heavy weights, wrestle, run with great speed, swim, jump, and ride, and were experts in all exercises which tended to make them strong, active, and well.

XXIV. PUBLIC TABLES IN SPARTA

The Spartan men prided themselves upon living almost as plainly as the boys, and, instead of eating their meals at home with the women and children, they had a common table. Each man gave a certain amount of flour, oil, wine, vegetables, and money, just enough to provide for his share of food.

Instead of having varied and delicate dishes, they always ate about the same things; and their favorite food was a thick dark stew or soup, which they called black broth. Rich and poor were treated alike, sat side by side, and ate the same food, which was intended to make them equally strong and able to serve their country.

The girls and women never came to these public tables; but the boys were given a seat there as soon as they had learned their first and most important lesson, obedience.

When the boys came into the public dining hall for the first time, the oldest man present called them to him, and, pointing to the door, solemnly warned them that nothing said inside the walls was ever to be repeated without.

Then, while the boys took their places and ate without speaking a word, the old men talked freely of all they pleased, sure that Spartan lads would never be mean enough to repeat anything they said, and trusting to their honor.

Although the Spartans had wine upon their table, they were a very temperate people, and drank only a very little with each meal. To show the boys what a horrible thing drunkenness is, and the sure result of too much drinking, the old men sometimes gave them an object lesson.

They sent for one of the meanest Helots or slaves, and purposely gave him plenty of wine. He was encouraged to go on drinking until he sank on the floor in a drunken sleep. Then the old men would point him out to the boys, and explain to them that a man who has drunk too much is unworthy of the love or esteem of his fellow-creatures, and is in many ways worse than a beast.

The Spartan boys, thus early warned of the evils of drinking, were careful to take but very little wine, and to keep their heads quite clear, so that they might always be considered men, and might never disgrace themselves as they had seen the Helots do.

When the boys had passed through the first course of training, they in turn became the teachers and leaders of the smaller lads, and thus served their country until they were old enough to go to war. When they left for their first campaign, all the people came out to see them off, and each mother gave her son his shield, saying,—

"Come back with it or on it."

By this she meant "Come home honorably, bearing your shield, thus showing that you have never thrown it away to save yourself by flight; or die so bravely that your companions will bring back your body resting on your shield, to give you a glorious burial."

XXV. LAWS OF LYCURGUS

The Spartan girls, who were brought up by the women, were, like the boys, taught to wrestle, run, and swim, and to take part in gymnastics of all kinds, until they too became very strong and supple, and could stand almost any fatigue.

They were also taught to read, write, count, sing, play, and dance; to spin, weave, and dye; and to do all kinds of woman's work. In short, they were expected to be strong, intelligent, and capable, so that when they married they might help their husbands, and bring up their children sensibly. At some public festivals the girls strove with one another in various games, which were witnessed only by their fathers and mothers and the other married people of the city. The winners in these contests were given beautiful prizes, which were much coveted.

Lycurgus hoped to make the Spartans a strong and good people. To hinder the kings from doing anything wrong, he had the people choose five men, called ephors, to watch over and to advise them.

Then, knowing that great wealth is not desirable, Lycurgus said that the Spartans should use only iron money. All the Spartan coins were therefore bars of iron, so heavy that a yoke of oxen and a strong cart were needed to carry a sum equal to one hundred dollars from one spot to another. Money was so bulky that it could neither be hidden nor stolen; and no one cared to make a fortune, since it required a large space to stow away even a small sum.

When Charilaus, the infant king, had grown up, Lycurgus prepared to go away. Before he left the town, he called all the citizens together, reminded them of all he had done to make them a great people, and ended by asking every man present to swear to obey the laws until he came back.

The Spartans were very grateful for all he had done for them, so they gladly took this oath, and Lycurgus left the place. Some time after, he came back to Greece; but, hearing that the Spartans were thriving under the rules he had laid down, he made up his mind never to visit Sparta again.

It was thus that the Spartans found themselves bound by solemn oath to obey Lycurgus' laws forever; and as long as they remembered this promise, they were a thriving and happy people.

XXVI. THE MESSENIAN WAR

Not very far from Sparta, and next to Laconia, was a country called Mes-se'ni-a, which was much more fertile, and had long been occupied by a kindred race descended from Le'lex, brother of Lacedæmon.

When the Spartans found out that the Mes-se'ni-an fields were more fruitful than their own, they longed to have them, and anxiously watched for some excuse to make war against the Messenians and win their land. It was not long before they found one.

There was a temple on the boundary of Messenia and Laconia, where the people of both countries used to assemble on certain days to offer up sacrifices to the gods. The Messenian lads, seeing the beauty of the Spartan girls, and longing to have such strong, handsome, and intelligent wives, once carried off a few of them into their own country, and refused to give them up again. The Spartans, indignant at this conduct, flew to arms, and one night, led by their king, attacked the Messenian town of Am-phe'a.

As no one expected them, they soon became masters of the place, and in their anger killed all the inhabitants. The other Messenians, hearing of this cruel deed, quickly made ready to fight, and bravely began the struggle which is known as the First Messenian War.

Although very brave, the Messenians had not been as well trained as the Spartans, and could not drive them back. On the contrary, they were themselves driven from place to place, until they were forced to take refuge in the fortified city of I-tho'me. Here they were shut in with their king, Aristodemus, who was a proud and brave man.

Ithome was built high up on a rock, so steep that the Spartan soldiers could not climb it, and so high that they could not even shoot their arrows into the town.

The Messenians, hoping to keep this place of refuge, kept a sharp lookout, and, whenever the Spartans made any attempt to climb the rocks, they rolled great blocks of stone down upon them.

All went well as long as the food lasted, but the time came when the Messenians in Ithome had nothing to eat. Some of their bravest men tried to go down into the valley in search of provisions; but, as they were attacked by the Spartans, they could not bring the hungry people much to eat.

When Aristodemus saw that the people would all die of hunger unless some way were found to get food, he consulted an oracle, in order to find out what it was best for him to do. The oracle answered that a battle should be fought, and promised the victory to the king who offered his daughter in sacrifice to the gods.

When Aristodemus heard this answer, he shuddered with fear; for, although he knew that his ancestors had offered up human victims on their altars, he loved his only daughter too well to give her up.

For some time longer, therefore, he resisted every attack, and tried to think of some other way to save his people. At last, however, seeing that they would all die unless something were done, he sacrificed the child he loved so well.

The Messenians were touched by his generosity, and by his readiness to do all in his power to save them. They felt sure that the gods would now give them the victory, and rushed out of the town and into the Spartan camp. Their attack was so sudden, and they fought with such fury, that they soon killed three hundred Spartans and one of their kings.

This battle did not, as they had hoped, end the war, which went on for several years. At last Aristodemus, despairing of victory, went to his beloved daughter's tomb, and there killed himself.

When he was dead, the city of Ithome fell into the hands of the Spartans. They treated the conquered Messenians with great cruelty, made them all slaves, and were as unkind to them as they had been to the Helots.

XXVII. THE MUSIC OF TYRTÆUS

After suffering great tortures under the Spartan yoke for forty long years, the Messenians began to plan a revolt.

One of their princes, Ar-is-tom'e-nes, a man of unusual bravery, made up his mind to free the unhappy people, and to ruin the proud city of Sparta, which had caused them so much suffering.

He therefore secretly assembled all the Messenians, and, when his plans were ready, began to war openly against the Spartans, whom he defeated in several battles.

With his small army, he even pressed forward toward the city of Sparta, and camped within sight of its dwellings. The Spartan women could thus see a very unusual sight,—the light of the enemies' fires.

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