

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.
Assistant Editor: T. J. McCORMACK.

Associates: { E. C. HEGELER.
MARY CARUS.

VOL. XIV. (NO. 3)

MARCH, 1900.

NO. 526

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LONDON: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

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THE MONIST.

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Philosophy of Science.

PUBLISHED BY

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING COMPANY, CHICAGO, ILL.

MONON BUILDING, 324 DEARBORN STREET. POST-OFFICE DRAWER F.

Annually \$2.00 (9s. 6d.). Single Copies, 50 cents (2s. 6d.).

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	SINGLE COPIES	YEARLY
LONDON: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Paternoster House, Charing Cross Road	2s. 6d.	9s. 6d.
LEIPSIK: Otto Harrassowitz	M. 2.50	M. 9.50
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BOSTON: Damrell & Upham, 283 Washington Street	50 cents	—
NEW YORK: Lemcke & Buechner, 812 Broadway	50 cents	—

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THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO., CHICAGO
324 Dearborn St.,



THE CROSSING OF THE STYX.

After the painting by A. Zick.

The Open Court, March, 1900.

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EROS AND PSYCHE.

RETOLD AFTER APULEIUS.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE PUNISHMENT OF GUILT.

POOR Psyche wrung her hands in despair. Her first thought was to make a speedy end of her misery and so she ran to the river and threw herself into its waters. The water nymphs, however, took pity on her. Bearing up her body, they carried the gentle wife of Eros to the opposite shore. There on a rock sat Pan, the shepherds' god, playing his flute. Seeing the despair of the fair damsel, he came to the river bank and asked what he could do for her; and when she refused all help he said: "Poor girl! You look as if you had been thwarted in love. Be not despondent, but implore the help of Eros; he will listen to your prayer and grant your secret wishes, for he is a friend of all lovers."

Psyche thanked Pan for his good advice, and whispering a prayer to Eros rushed forth,—up the mountain and down the mountain, over stony ledges, past crags and rocks, through narrow passes everywhere surrounded by a wilderness full of brambles and thistles and thorns. The animals of the forest, the deer, the squirrels and the birds of the air served her as guides. At last, she reached the waving wheat fields on the far side of the mountain, where the country is dotted with the homes of men. She sought the palace of her aged father; but both her parents had died and she was now a lonely helpless orphan. After a long and wearisome journey she arrived broken-hearted and footsore at the residence of her eldest sister, Megalometis.

Having asked for admission, Psyche was at once ushered into the presence of the Queen and related to her the story of her mis-

fortune, saying: "I acted on the advice you gave me and was determined to slay the monster with a sharp knife, when behold, I saw by the light of my lamp that my husband was not a voracious beast, but Eros, the God of Love himself. I might still have avoided the evils of my perversity had I at once extinguished the lamp and



thrown away the dagger; but I was so enraptured with the sight that I could not help gazing at the beautiful features of the youthful god; and as I gave myself up to my ecstasy I carelessly allowed some hot oil to drip on his shoulder. He has now discarded me as unworthy of his love, and taken flight never to see me again."

Megalometis pretended to be greatly agitated, but inwardly rejoiced and thought to herself: "Eros being disgusted with Psyche will look for another consort and will gladly select a sister of Psyche who is as beautiful as his first partner, but will be more prudent than this silly child."

Suppressing her secret satisfaction, she plied the unfortunate woman with cunning questions as to the interest which her lover had evinced in his sisters-in-law and became confirmed in her belief through the answers she received, that Eros had known of their plans and might have prevented the catastrophe if he had



cared much for Psyche. Apparently he was ready for a new bride, and so she determined to approach him with vows of love. She dismissed Psyche, advising her to seek assistance at the home of her second sister, and began at once to erect a temple to be devoted to the god of lovers. But the old King, the husband of Megalometis, was extremely jealous, and surprising her once at the altar praying for the requital of her passion, he grew angry and without waiting for any explanation of her imprudent prayer, slew her on the spot.

Psyche was received with similar hypocritical kindness by Baskania, who secretly cherished the same hopes as her eldest sister.

She too felt assured that having rejected Psyche, Eros would gladly enter into a new alliance. And having not the slightest doubt that she with that extraordinary fascination which made her charms irresistible whenever she wished to captivate the fancy of a man, would be acceptable to the young god, Baskania journeyed to the place where the monument had been erected in commemoration of Psyche's sacrifice, and having ascended the rock, she lay down and exclaimed: "Receive me, Eros, as a wife worthy of thee; in me thou canst trust; I shall never betray thee!"

When the breeze of the evening wind made her hair flutter, Baskania rose and, standing close to the brink of the precipice, shouted: "Zephyr, be thou my messenger and carry me to thy master." She bounded into the air, as she had done before when about to visit Psyche, but this time, the gentle Zephyr was not



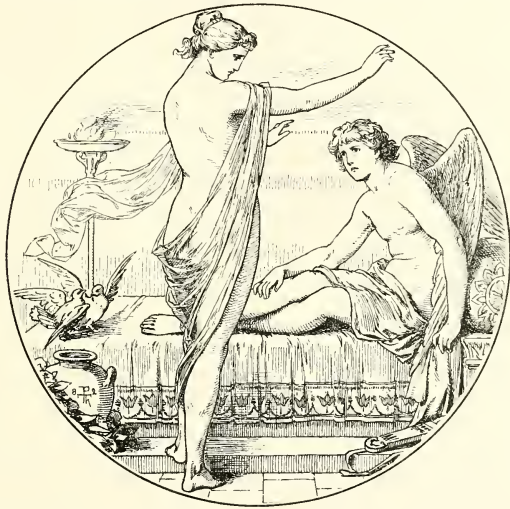
present to receive her, and she fell headlong from the mountain and perished miserably at the bottom of the abyss.

Such was the punishment which Psyche's bad sisters incurred, led to perdition by their own envy and evil intentions.

THE CENSURE.

Eros, in the meantime, suffered unspeakable pain from the burn caused by the hot oil that had fallen upon his shoulder. He returned home and, sick with fever, took to his couch lamenting and moaning. A sea-gull who had watched him in his flight, followed him stealthily and peeping into the window of his chamber saw him stretched on the bed apparently ill and suffering great agony. The fleet bird returned to the sea and sent word through one of the daughters of Nereus, to the mother of Eros, who was disporting herself in the depths of the ocean, that her son must have met with an accident for he lay sick in bed. His recovery seemed doubtful.

Aphrodite at once inquired of all creatures what they knew about her boy and how he might have been hurt, but her commiseration changed into wrath when she heard of his secret love affair with Psyche. "Is it possible?" exclaimed the goddess. "This mischievous fellow has neither obedience nor filial piety. Did I not command him to take awful revenge on my rival and to ruin her by some unworthy passion? and now he selects her as his own par-amour! He is not worthy to be my son and should no longer partake of the divinity which he has inherited from me, the great mother of life and the queen of animate existence!



Aphrodite hurried home and began to berate her son with bitter words: "What a wayward and ungrateful child you are;" said she, "and what a scandal there will be in Olympus!" The rumor of your escapades is being bruited about and will soon be known to all the gods. You have made your mother ashamed of her son. And I suppose you were foolish enough to marry that stupid girl—a mere mortal without dignity or discretion. What an ill-matched couple you would make! And are you not aware how I must feel at your making an enemy of mine my daughter-in-law? Think of it! An earth-born woman to dare to come forth as my rival and aspire to be your wife! It will be a disgrace, for you, for me, for the whole

family of the gods. Do you believe that I could ever give my consent to your union with Psyche?—No! I shall have you punished and will see to it that Psyche shall find a place of eternal torment in the infernal regions.”

Flushed with anger she slammed the door and called Vulcan Hephæstos, her husband. “Please, look out for the boy, lest he escape,” she said imperiously, as a woman wont to enforce obedience of a humble and devoted husband. “Build at once for this wanton bird a strong, big cage, with iron bars, for I will show to the world and to all gods that my authority can not so easily be set aside. I am the deity of love, not *he*. I shall yield neither to that upstart girl nor to this arrant knave, even though he be my own son!”

The god of the fiery forge grumblingly muttered between his teeth some words which might be taken for an indication of submission as well as protest. His reply caused her to stop and turn on him rather sharply with the question: “What did you say?”

“Oh nothing at all,” said Hephæstos, “I was only thinking that I had never expected anything better of the boy. He is a villain and will ever remain one; and he added in an undertone careful not to let his wife hear it who was beautiful withal in her anger: “Nor can he help it. He is born so, he is his mother’s son.”

At that moment Demeter and Hera entered and became unwilling witnesses of this little domestic squabble. But Aphrodite did not seem to mind their appearance, for she at once explained the situation. “You come in season,” she added, “help me to find and punish Psyche, for I must have my revenge!”

The two visitors tried to mollify the anger of their cousin and could not understand what grievous sin Eros had committed. They granted that it was a mortal offence for a human being to be a rival of one of the Olympian gods, and that Psyche deserved a severe humiliation. But that could be atoned for and had nothing to do with the love affair of Eros. “Is not on the one hand the girl of royal blood,” replied Demeter, “and is she not a good match for Eros? On the other hand, such a little gallant adventure is exactly the thing one would have expected of your son who in every respect follows in the footsteps of his mother. When the apples are ripe, they do not fall far away from the tree, and there is no reason to grow excited about it.”

Aphrodite had difficulty to suppress her indignation and turned for support to Hera, the dignified wife of Zeus and Queen of Heaven. The latter did not quite share the views of Demeter, but

neither did she countenance the opinion of Aphrodite. Though she had no excuse for the conduct of Eros, she pleaded Psyche's cause, saying: "Have not several mortals been received among the Olympians? "Even I, the Queen of Heaven, had to allow Heracles to become one of us, and he was the son of a mortal woman, one of my rivals; but when I became convinced that he was worthy of the honor, I was glad to welcome him as one of the immortals and offered him with my own hands the nectar cup that endowed his person with everlasting life. My daughter Hebe, the goddess of eternal youth, has become his spouse and he will remain to mortal men for ever the paragon of human excellence."

THE QUEST.

Psyche continued her desolate journey, wandering hither and thither and resting neither night nor day in her search for Eros. If she could not regain the affections of her husband by proving to him her devotion, she was at least determined to propitiate him with the humble services of a handmaid.

While walking along the high road she saw a noble temple on the top of a mountain, and called out: "O that it might be the abode of my lover and lord!" And, attracted by the beauty of the building and its high columns, she wended her way toward its entrance.

The sanctum of the temple was decorated with wreaths of ears of wheat, and sheaves were placed here and there around the altar. There were sickles and other implements of harvesting, but everything lay about in disorder, thrown down at random by the hands of the fatigued harvesters. Psyche at once began to arrange the emblems of rural industry in good order, and said within herself: "I must not neglect the shrines of the gods nor their holy service, for I might thereby gain mercy for myself and forgiveness of my failings."

It was a temple of Demeter, and when the goddess saw Psyche diligently attending to the task of a servant in the hall of the temple she cried out: "Alas! Psyche, what do you do? Venus Aphrodite is tracking your footsteps and means to wreak vengeance upon you for the offence which you have given her; and you, not thinking of your own safety, are working here in the temple and taking care of my belongings!"

Psyche fell upon her knees and conjured the goddess to assist her in finding her beloved husband. "By the joyful harvest rituals; by the mysteries of Eleusis, with its lighted lamps and

solemn processions; by the sacred chests that conceal the symbolic utensils; by the fiery chariot drawn by winged dragons; by the countenance of the awful Hades who snatched away thy daughter Persephone; by her marriage and descent into the infernal regions; by the hallowed earth that closed upon her and her abductor; by the joyous return of the goddess with torch-illumined processions; and by thy sacred sanctuary in Attica; by all the venerable traditions and the solemn silence that surrounds thy rites—I implore thee to succor the wretched Psyche and to look with compassion upon this humble supplicant. Suffer me for a few days only to hide myself among the wheat sheaves, until the anger of the goddess who pursues me without cause has passed away, or at least is



mitigated by the lapse of time. I am worn out by long travel, my feet are sore, my soul is weary, and I long to recover my strength for continuing my search.”

But the goddess of the golden harvest remained unmoved by the maiden's entreaties and bade her humble supplicant rise to her feet. “I should be glad to assist you,” she said, “but I am powerless, for I should only incur the hostility of a sister goddess, without rendering you any help. In fact, I am bound by the rules of the Celestials to take you prisoner and hand you over to her wrath; and I make myself guilty of a breach of the established etiquette in simply bidding you leave my temple and begone.”

With these words, Demeter turned her back, and Psyche left the temple. Her afflictions were now doubled. She not only longed

for a reunion with her husband but also feared the anger of Aphrodite, one of the most powerful goddesses, and there was none to whom she might apply for help or protection.

She walked down hill to the valley, and espied among the tall trees of a sacred grove another temple of magnificent structure. It was a temple of Hera, Queen of Heaven and wife of Zeus, the great father of all the gods and men. Hoping to receive consideration at the hands of her who claimed to be protectress of the dignity of wives and mothers, Psyche entered and beheld the noble offerings and embroidered garments hung around with votive inscriptions. She fell upon her knees and embracing the altar she addressed the great goddess in prayer: "O, consort of the mighty Father, whose power extends over all the world, O holy Lady, who art adored as the Virgin Mother of the gods, Queen of Olympus, passing through the heavens in a chariot drawn by lions, thou mistress of the Island of Samos and the fortified city of Argos on the banks of the Inachus, protectress of holy matrimony, listen to my prayer and consider my overwhelming misfortunes!"

The auspicious goddess at once appeared visibly to the eyes of the supplicant, in august majesty, and said: "Readily would I grant your prayer if I were not bound to respect the wishes of Aphrodite, my daughter-in-law, whom I love and cherish as my own child. I hope that fate will not overburden you in your distress, and that your trials may draw to a happy conclusion; but I cannot interfere and must leave you to your own destiny. Be perseverant and faithful and you will work out your own salvation."

Utterly dismayed by this new rebuff, Psyche decided to give up the attempt of finding a place of refuge or of looking to her own safety, and said to herself: "I cannot escape the wrath of Aphrodite, and it will be best to submit patiently and humbly to the penance which the goddess may impose upon me. I shall certainly not find my lost husband by searching the world, but I am quite likely to meet him again in the home of his mother. I will be resolute and approach my enemy and pursuer boldly. It is true she hates me, but is she not at the same time the mother of him whom I love with a devotion that knows no bounds? It may be my own destruction, but there is no other chance left. If I am doomed I shall prefer to die willingly and courageously. Better bleed to death as a willing sacrifice on the altar of the gods than be hunted down as a wounded doe in the chase."

THE SUBMISSION.

After a vain pursuit of Psyche throughout the cities of Greece and other countries, Aphrodite returned to her home in Heaven. She rode in a chariot of pure gold which Hephæstos, her husband, had skilfully wrought for her in the shape of a shell as a wedding present, rendering the precious metal more precious by chiselling away a part of it and giving it a beautiful form. Four white doves of the flock that nestled under the eaves of her celestial mansions were hitched to the beam and moved it onward with wondrous ease.



Riotous sparrows fluttered round their mistress, noisily chattering and proclaiming the approach of the great goddess, whose train passed through the sky gracefully like a roseate cloudbelt.

Soon the ether opened before the eyes of the goddess and, having reached the summit of Mount Olympus, Aphrodite approached the throne of Zeus, the mighty thunderer and ruler of the world. She saluted him with noble dignity and asked for the services of Hermes, the herald of the Celestials, which the great father of the gods granted without further inquiry. Hermes, on being called, cordially greeted the fair goddess, and learning her desire

at once put on his winged shoes, thus making himself ready for a descent to the earth.

Journeying together in the golden chariot, Aphrodite, the goddess addressed him with winning words: "My dear brother," she said, you know that I never do anything without your advice and I now need your assistance in a special case that causes me much annoyance. A mortal girl who has dared to be a rival of my dignity and thus has forfeited to me her life and is now by right my slave, has absconded, and I am unable to find her. I must resort, therefore, to publishing a proclamation, and issue a warrant for her capture." Thereupon Aphrodite handed the herald-god a paper which contained the name of Psyche and a description of her person, naming at the same time the reward which was promised for the surrender of the fugitive.

The proceeding, however, had become superfluous, for scarcely had the goddess returned to her home when Psyche approached the gates of the palace and delivered herself into the hands of her enemy.

One of Aphrodite's servants, Fashion by name, met Psyche at the door and bawled out: "Thou wicked wench! Thou art the very person my mistress is seeking."

Fashion seized the frightened damsel by the hair and dragged her violently into the presence of Aphrodite, who addressed her with haughty irony: "At last you deign to pay your respects to your mother-in-law? I suppose you know, my fair young lady, that if you had not come of your own accord, I should soon have discovered your hiding-place; but now I will treat you according to your deserts."

THE THREE TASKS.

Psyche protested that she would willingly and gladly serve the mother of Eros and be in every respect obedient to her behests, saying: "I beg you try me and receive me as a handmaid in your house, only have mercy on me and desist from hating me."

Aphrodite replied, "We shall see what you can do," and led the humble petitioner out to the barn where she took barley, millet, poppy seed, and every other kind of grain, mixed them well together in an enormous heap and scornfully said: "I will test both your patience and skill. Sort these seeds grain by grain, and unless the task be done before the evening I will deliver you over to my servants, Anxiety and Sorrow, who shall torment and chastise you with due severity." Then, leaving the embarrassed girl alone with her formidable task, she shut her up in the big barn.

Psyche was broken-hearted, and looked with silent despair upon the mountain of mixed grain. But before she could consider how she might perform this intricate work, a tiny ant came out and pitying the distress of the forlorn maiden, whom it knew to be the consort of the mightiest of the gods, summoned the help of its in-



numerable comrades. A whole tribe of thousands and thousands of these little creatures soon made their appearance, and began to sort the heap of seeds. Their work did not last long, and the task was soon completed.

When Aphrodite returned at night-fall, exhilarated by the joyous festivities of a nuptial banquet, decorated with roses, and re-

splendent with beauty, she saw the marvellous task performed, and cried out: "This is not the work of your own hands; for I am sure, you could not have finished it without assistance. But I will give you another task."

A piece of coarse bread and a jar of spring-water was the only meal she granted the beautiful bride of her son, and turning her back upon the frightened girl, the goddess left Psyche alone in the cold barn.

On the next morning Aphrodite reappeared and showed again her irreconcilable hatred. She pointed to the woods and said: "Do you see the forest beyond the stream? Go out into the wilderness and you will find there a flock of sheep grazing, with fleece that shines like gold. I want a tuft of that precious wool. Go then and



bring me one. But mind you, the sheep are wild, and when you approach them they will butt you ferociously and may kill you."

Psyche went out to the stream, not so much to obey the commands of her severe mistress, as to meet death either on the horns of the wether or in the depths of the river. But when she came to the banks of the stream the nymph of the reeds, the mother of music, began to speak with the voice of a flute: "O, Psyche, do not desecrate the waters of the river by making it your tomb; nor approach the wether or any of the sheep while they are browsing in the woods. They are fierce, and will certainly destroy you. If you will follow my advice lie down under the shadowy plane-tree; when the sun has descended from the meridian and approached the horizon, go out to the place where the sheep have passed

through brush-wood ; there you will, without encountering any danger, gather some golden tufts from the thorns of the bushes."

Psyche did according to the advice of the reed ; and when she came home, Venus looked on her with amazement, and said : "How didst thou escape death in the wilderness, and how didst thou procure the golden tuft from the fierce sheep ?"

When Psyche told her how easily she had completed her task the goddess replied : "I know very well that it was not your wisdom that made you succeed, but I will propose a third trial which will probe not only your discretion but also test the courage of your heart."

Psyche looked expectantly at her tormenter and Aphrodite continued : "Here is a water-urn of purest crystal ; take it and ascend



the mountain. In the most desolate region of the wilderness you will find the place where the waters of Cocytus roll, rushing down over the steep precipice to disappear in an unfathomable abyss. Fetch me some water from the fountain-head of the holy river, and I will test thereby whether thou art worthy of my son."

Psyche took the crystal urn and hurried out to the source of Cocytus, but found the rock over which its wild waters rushed inaccessible. The place was haunted by wild dragons who were lurking in the crevices of the cliffs, threatening her with hisses and opening their wide jaws as if to devour her. Breaking down under the terrors of the place, Psyche burst into tears, when suddenly a mighty bird came down to her from the heavens. It was the strong eagle of Zeus, who hovered by her side and inspired her with new

courage. Remembering the good services with which Eros assisted him when sent down to bring up to the throne of Zeus the Phrygian cup-bearer, Ganymede, he was determined to prove his gratitude by hastening to help the wife of the god of love in her distress.

The eagle addressed the despondent wayfarer, saying: "O, simple-minded maiden! Do you imagine you can catch one drop from the source of these enchanted waters without being hurled into the deep gorge? The mere attempt is sure death. But give me the urn, and I shall be glad to fill it for you."

The royal bird of the mighty Zeus took the vessel in his claws and, flying up to the rushing torrent, filled it in the dashing waves of the river, amid the furious attacks of dragons and venomous



reptiles. Psyche was glad to receive the water and quickly returned to Aphrodite whose anger was rather intensified than appeased by the success of her humble daughter-in-law. "You have again completed your task beyond my expectation," said she; "you seem to be a veritable witch who can work miracles; but do not hope to escape thus lightly. There is one more thing in which you must serve me. That, however, I expect will be the last."

THE REALM OF DEATH.

Aphrodite was mortified at the happy termination of the three tasks set to Psyche and said to herself: "I will now go about it in a more determined way and bring this unsatisfactory relation to a definite conclusion. I will so arrange it that the silly creature

must perish." So she took a little vase curiously wrought in gold and decorated with inlaid enamel, and said to Psyche: "Take this vessel down into the infernal regions and deliver it to Persephone, my niece, the noble Queen of King Hades, called Pluto, the ruler of the dead. Tell her that I am anxious to receive from her some spray from the fountain of youth; and let it be enough to restore the beauty of seven days; for that much I have lost in ministering unto my sick son. Begone, and make haste. I wish you luck on your journey, and when you have procured the rare gift let your ascent be speedy,"—adding in an undertone—"if ever you can find your way back from the country whence there is no return!"

Psyche now gave up all hope. She knew that he who went down to the infernal regions would never again behold the light of the sun. But she was willing to obey, and proceeded toward a high tower, for, thought she, if I precipitate myself from its battlements I shall most quickly reach the land of the shades.

When she arrived, the tower suddenly addressed her and said: "Miserable maiden, why dost thou attempt to destroy thyself, and why dost thou give up so quickly in the face of great danger where endurance and courage are most needed? Truly, if thou hurlest thyself down thou wilt reach Hades but with no chance to return thence to the world of the sun."

Psyche sat down at the entrance of the tower and said: "What shall I do? There is nothing left for me but to die."

The tower replied: "Take courage and listen. Near Lacedæmon, in the mountains, is a gorge which contains a cave known to be the breathing-hole of the Nether World. In its yawning depth is an untrodden road that will lead thee to the palace of Hades. But thou must not pass by the shades with empty hands. Take along some barley-bread soaked in hydromel, that old fashioned drink made of honey and water, and put in thy mouth two coins. When thou hast accomplished a good part of thy journey thou wilt meet a lame ass laden with wood, and a lame driver, who will ask thee to hand him some cords to fasten the burden which has fallen from the ass. But beware of him, and pass him by in silence. It is a device of the rulers of the shades to detain visitors on the way and to prevent their return. Then thou wilt arrive at the river of the dead and must pay Charon his fee for ferrying thee over to the other shore; for avarice is practised even in the realm of death. Let Charon have one of the coins, which thou must allow him to take from thy mouth with his own hands, and keep the other coin

for thy return. While thou passest over the sluggish river the corpse of an old man will float on the surface and raise his hand in entreaty to help him into the boat. It is but another device to entangle thee in the affairs of the Nether World. Beware of yielding to any impulse of sympathy but keep silent and suffer the boat to pass by. Having reached the other shore, thou wilt find at a little distance three old women weaving, who will request thee to lend them a helping hand. But it is not lawful for thee to touch the web. Pass the weird spinsters by and heed them not. All these and many other apparitions are snares prepared for thee. If thou



liftest thy hand, anxious to assist others, thou wilt drop some of thy hydromel bread without which thou wilt be unable to return to the light. There is at the threshold of Persephone's castle a large fierce watch-dog with three heads, who by his barking terrorises the dead, lest any one of them escape. Appease him with a sop of thy hydromel bread, and thou wilt have no difficulty in passing him by. When thou enterest the portal thou wilt come directly into the presence of Persephone, who will receive thee graciously. She will ask thee to be seated and to partake of a sumptuous banquet; but refuse all her courteous offers, for if thou eatest a morsel of the food of the shades thou must stay with them forever. Therefore tell

Persephone that a piece of common rye bread will be sufficient for thee; this she will give thee, and do thou eat it. Then it is time to attend to thy errand, hand her the vase, and having received in it the gift for Aphrodite, thou mayest return to the world of light. Thou must again bribe the cruel dog with the rest of thy hydromel



bread, pay the ferryman with the coin reserved in thy mouth for the purpose; and having passed back over the river thou wilt, after journeying through the cavity, again reach its entrance, where the light of the celestial stars will greet thee. But I warn thee above all things to be very careful with the mysterious vase in thy charge;

do not open it, do not even look at it, nor try to explore the treasure that is concealed in it."

Psyche proceeded to Lacedæmon and found the cavity in the gorge. Having procured two coins and the barley bread soaked in hydromel she ventured into the avenue that leads to the infernal regions. She passed the lame ass with its lame driver, let the ferryman take his fee, turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of the floating corpse, neglected the request of the greyhaired spinsters, assuaged the furious dog with a sop of hydromel bread, and entered the palace of Hades. Persephone, seated by the side of her awful husband, listened in kindness to the maiden's message and granted the petition. Remembering her own sad fate, the goddess felt com-



passion and invited her fair guest to eat at the royal table ; but Psyche declined and was contented with a piece of rye bread for supper. Having received Persephone's gift in her golden vase, the anxious wanderer returned by the way which she had come. A second time filling the jaws of the watch-dog and paying the ferryman with the coin still left in her mouth, she fled from the infernal regions and reached the world of the living early in the morning, while the stars were still shining in the heavens.

Having overcome all these dangers against her own expectation, she began to ponder on the terrible scenes which she had beheld. She thought of the vase and its contents, and said to herself: "How foolish I am ! Here I hold in my hand spray from the

fountain of youth, the very essence of divine beauty, and I am on my way to deliver it to the woman who hates me and designs my destruction. Should I not open the vessel and keep the precious gift for myself, which would make me fair to behold and would forever bind my husband to me by the most powerful of ties?"

She lifted the lid, and the essence with its deadly odor poured out in the shape of vapor. It contained no beauty, but proved to be Stygian sleep and forgetfulness, which immediately seized



her, and she sank down prostrate on the ground surrounded by a dense cloud of somnolence.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

Eros, in the meantime, had recovered from his illness. A butterfly that came fluttering through the window told him the latest news of the trials and misfortunes of Psyche. Having regained his old strength and recklessness, the youthful god easily outwitted the watchful Hephæstus escaping from the chamber through a window and hurrying on the wings of love to the earth, to the very entrance of the cave in the gorge that leads to the infernal regions. He saw Psyche stretched on the ground motionless, nothing but a sleeping corpse. "It is a kind providence," he said to himself, "that allows

me to arrive at the right moment to help the beloved maiden before her sleep changes into death."

With these words Eros took away the Stygian slumber from Psyche's eyelids, and closed the soporific vapor in the vessel from which it had escaped. Then touching Psyche with the point of one of his arrows, he called her back to life. "Unhappy girl!" he exclaimed, "have you again become a victim to curiosity? You should know that the fountain of youth is a spring that is fed by the waters of Stygian Lethe. Only the celestial gods can partake of it without suffering harm, but poor mortal mankind, when tast-



ing the drink of oblivion for the sake of its rejuvenescence, must constantly pass through death and birth."

Awakened by a kiss from Eros, Psyche opened her eyes and saw her lover bending over her, anxiously watching her return to life. "Now you see," he said to her, smiling at his own good tempered taunt, "how fatal your inquisitiveness might have been. Take the vase and deliver it to Aphrodite; and while you carry out the demand of my mother I shall see to the rest."

He bade farewell to his blooming bride and flew straight up to Olympus to present his cause directly at the throne of Father Zeus.

Big tears filled Psyche's eyes when she saw the beloved god

soar up to heaven. "Will he return? Does he still love me? Has not my beauty suffered through the severe trials to which I have been exposed so long?" She sat down on the bank of the stream that flowed past with an almost imperceptible motion and there she saw her face reflected as in a clear mirror; and her heart



leapt for joy, for indeed she was as beautiful as ever—nay more so, for her charms had ripened into full bloom; she had grown maturer and the expression of her face showed more depth and comprehension. A feeling of unspeakable happiness came over her; she grew so gay and light-hearted, that she felt as if she could rise up into

the air. Her whole system seemed transfigured and on her shoulders appeared two butterfly wings of marvellous iridescence.



The mighty father of the gods received Eros kindly and kissed the beloved youngster, saying: "Thou indeed among the gods payest least respect to the ruler of Olympus, and dost not



shrink from implicating me in the intrigues of earthly relations. But considering that thou art very dear to me, and that I have

nursed thee with my own hand, I will gladly comply with thy wishes."

With a smile of a grandfatherly indulgence, the great Zeus ordered Hermes, the herald of Olympus, at once to summon an assembly of all the celestials and, since a high penalty was imposed



upon any one that should be delinquent, the assembly hall was soon filled.

When Venus Aphrodite arrived in her shell chariot drawn by pigeons, she met her son Eros as he rushed down to the earth: "Mother," he said in a reproachful and almost bitter tone; and yet

there was at the same time a note of gentle pleading in his sweet voice. "Mother, if you persevere in your objection to my marrying Psyche, I am determined to leave the high Olympus, to renounce my divinity, and to retire to the place to which your will may banish her. Tartarus in her company is a more welcome abode than Heaven without her."

Aphrodite followed him with her eyes as he descended. She shook her head and said to herself: "The boy is no longer himself; I fear me, I must yield, or there will be some great calamity."

Eros descended to the earth where he found Psyche anxiously



waiting for him. He greeted her with a kiss and she informed her lover that she had delivered the vase and its contents to Aphrodite, but the goddess had received her disdainfully and dismissed her in disgrace, claiming that this time the task had not been completed rightfully and truly, for the vessel had been opened and the strength of its contents was gone.

"Do not mind my mother's severity," said Eros, "I have gained a most powerful ally in my grandfather, the mighty Zeus. Accompany me to Olympus and at the throne of the omnipotent sovereign of all the gods our destiny will be decided."

Psyche leaned on the shoulder of Eros who placed his arm

lovingly round her waist and both were lifted up to heaven on the wings of divine happiness.

In the meantime the great Zeus, the lofty sovereign of Heaven, took his seat on the throne and addressed the gods assembled in council: "Ye Olympian deities, who are here gathered together in complete number, ye are well acquainted with the flighty character of the youth, Eros, the youngest of the gods and yet presiding over the most important functions of the life of the world. I deem it necessary to bridle his impetuosity and to restrain his impulsive nature. It will be best for him, for the gods, and for the welfare



of the whole world, if he will forthwith assume the responsibility of marriage. If he has a wife and the cares and worries of a household, he will become sober and sedate;" and turning to Aphrodite, Zeus said: "Since he has made his choice and pledged his troth to a maiden that pleases his fancy, we ordain that his marriage shall be recognised as legal and his bride accepted in the circle of the Olympians as one of us. The mother of the groom had some cause to be dissatisfied with the choice of Eros, but I advise her to be lenient with her daughter-in-law Psyche, who, though a mortal maiden, has proved herself worthy of her son's love and of relationship with the gods."

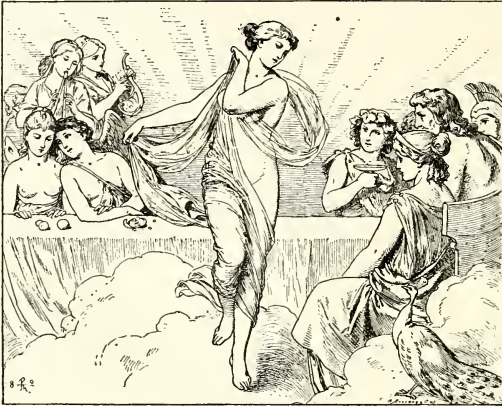
Aphrodite at first pouted her lips and ventured to raise objections, but when she saw that the mighty brow of the great father of the Olympians became clouded with ire, she relented and granted that Psyche was worthy of her son's hand. Then the face of Zeus



brightened again, and all the gods were pleased with his proposition. Apollo moved to celebrate at once the marriage of the young couple in the banquet hall of high Olympus. He was seconded by Bacchus; and the motion was carried when Eros in company with Psyche entered the assemblage. The young bride received the con-

gratulations of the Olympians, and Zeus himself presented to her a bowl of nectar from which Psyche drank the bliss of immortality.

The gods sat down to the banquet in the order of their dignity. Eros and Psyche, however, sat nearest to Zeus, the great father of the gods, and were now legally and solemnly for ever and aye joined in holy wedlock. Ganymede acted as cup-bearer to the



mighty sovereign of Olympus, and Bacchus supplied the rest of the company with drink.

After the banquet the merry-making was continued far into the night. The Seasons suffused the scene with roseate hue, Apollo sang and played the lyre. The Muses played a grand symphony, Aphrodite danced before the gods and unexpectedly showed herself very gracious to the bride. Satyrs played the flute.



Thus ended the sorrows of Psyche, and her happiness was complete when at the appointed time she bore her husband a child, a little daughter, sweet, and cunning, and bright. When she smiled her eyes were beaming like sunshine, and her parents called her "Joy."

No one of the gods, and least of all Venus Aphrodite, ever found cause to regret that Psyche had been admitted to the circle of the celestials. Very soon things had the appearance as if she had been living in Olympus since time immemorial, and whenever she happened to be absent, her happy face was sure to be missed. Since her arrival heaven seemed more radiant than before.

The inhabitants of the earth rejoiced at the honors of the earth-born maiden. In Psyche the divinity of the human soul had found official recognition among the Olympians. Since thus the human had been deified, and since thereby the divine had revealed itself as the truly human, mankind seemed more human and the gods more divine than ever.

The human soul will go astray, but if it remains faithful to its ideals, firm amid the temptations and vicissitudes of fate, and courageous even in the terrors of hell and under the shadows of death, it will at last find the path that leadeth unto life, and it will find it in Love.

Love moves the universe. As attraction, Love sways the molar masses of gravitating bodies; as affinity, Love joins atoms into higher combinations; but Love reaches perfection only when it is mated with the human soul; for then Love becomes conscious and learns to know its own nature. In the human soul, however, Love is confronted with longing, with suffering, and with parting. It passes through trials and tribulations, but now at last Love finds bliss in otherness, satisfaction in self-surrender, a restitution to life in the oblation of its own being, and immortality in death.

Death is the problem of life, but Love is its solution.

