

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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

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CHICAGO

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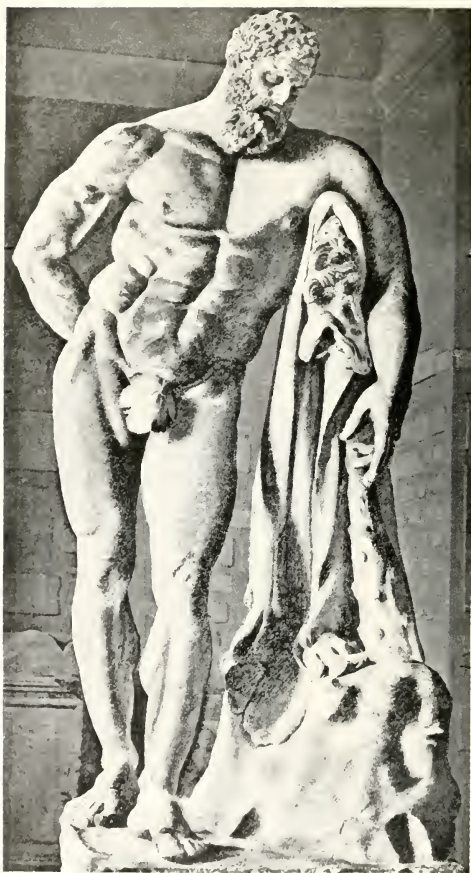
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THE FARNESE HERAKLES.

(Naples.)

Frontispiece to *The Open Court*.

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ON GREEK RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE DEMETER MYTH.

DEMETER (i. e., Mother Earth) is an indigenous Greek deity. There is nothing Asiatic about her, as is the case with the Ephesian Artemis. She is a more truly religious and less abstract personification of earth than Gæa and thus must be counted among the most significant figures of Greek mythology.



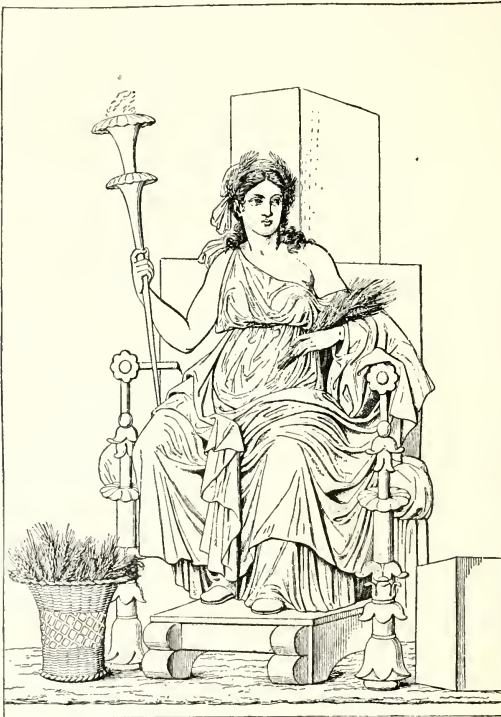
DEMETER.

Terra cotta relief. (After Overbeck, *Kunstmythologischer Atlas*, pl. 16, 8.)

As the sunshine in combination with the fertile soil produces vegetation, so Zeus begets with Demeter the goddess of flowers and fruits, Persephone, also called Kora, that is, the maiden.

The Demeter myth is of great significance. The story goes that Hades, the ruler of the dead, espied Persephone, the goddess of vegetation, and abducted her to his dreary abode in the Under World. The bereaved mother, Demeter, was disconsolate; she

wandered all over the earth in search of her daughter, bestowing the blessings of agriculture and civilisation wherever she went, and was determined not to return to Olympus until Zeus should send Hermes down to Hades with the command to allow Persephone to return to her mother. The god of the dead obeyed, but gave her the seeds of the pomegranate to eat, which made her a denizen



DEMETER, THE QUEEN OF THE HARVEST FESTIVALS.
Fresco of Pompeii. (*Mus. Borb.*, VI., 54.)

of the infernal regions forever. Thus the agreement arose that for two thirds of the year the maiden should return to the surface of the earth and for one third of the year, in winter, stay with her grim husband, Hades. Demeter rejoiced at the restoration of her daughter and had the Eleusinian Mysteries instituted to commem-

orate the loss and return of Persephone and to celebrate these events as a symbol of the constant reappearance of the life of nature and as a promise of the immortality of the human soul.

The Demeter myth is the subject of a most beautiful classical hymn, commonly ascribed to Homer, which, like many other pieces of Greek poetry, is untranslatable in its full grandeur and beauty. The lamentations of the goddess for her lost daughter are most pathetic. Demeter says :

“ O Sun, compassionate me on behalf of my divine daughter, if ever either by word or deed I have gratified thy heart and mind. My daughter whom I bore, a sweet blossom, beautiful in form, whose frequent cries I have heard through the sterile air, as though she were being forced away, but I have not beheld it with mine eyes,—but do thou (for thou from the divine æther dost look down with thy rays



ALTAR OF DEMETER.¹

(Frontispiece to Taylor's *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*.)

upon all the earth and sea) tell me truly, dear son, if thou hast anywhere seen him, of the gods or mortal men, who, without my consent, has seized her perforce and carried her off."

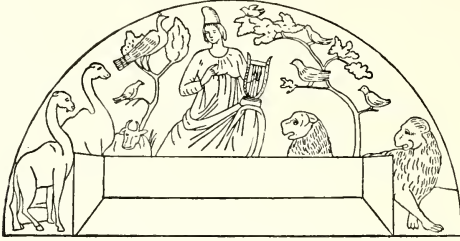
Then Demeter wanders about spreading bliss wherever she goes, and at last her daughter is restored to her for two thirds of the year, which time the goddess spends in "increasing the life-giving fruit for men." At last Triptolemos, a local hero of Attica, is sent out into the world as Demeter's messenger for the instruction of all the nations in the art of agriculture.

Schiller has cast similar ideas into German words and has succeeded in producing a most thoughtful poem under the title of *Die Klage der Ceres*, in which he describes the search of the discon-

¹The sacrifice to Demeter consists in a burning sheaf. She is worshipped by the people whom she changes from barbarians into civilised men. Zeus approves of her mission and her serpent guards the altar, decorated by her symbols, flowers, wheat, and fruit.

solate mother, the institution of agriculture together with the establishment of cities and states, the restoration of her lost child, and the celebration of the Eleusinian harvest festival.

Grote, in his *History of Greece* Vol. I., p. 55, after an admirable analysis of Homer's *Hymn to Demeter*, recommends it no less as a



1



2.



3.

CHRIST AS ORPHEUS.¹

1 and 3, from paintings in the cemetery of St. Calixtus in the Catacombs of Rome. 2, from a coin of Antoninus Pius (third century).

picture of the Mater Dolorosa than as an illustration of the nature and growth of Grecian legend generally, saying :

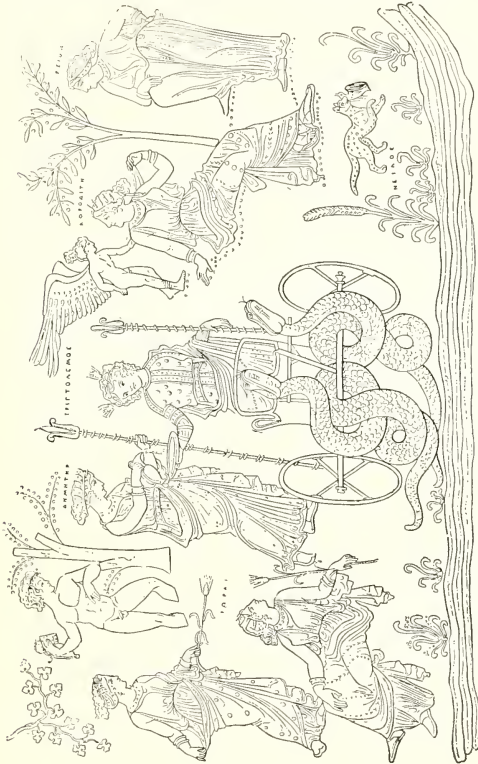
"In the mouth of an Athenian, Dêmêtêr and Persephonê were always the Mother and Daughter, by excellence. She is first an agonised sufferer, and then

¹ *Symbols and Emblems of Early and Mediaeval Christian Art.* By Louisa Twining. Pl. 16. London, 1885.

finally glorified,—the weal and woe of men being dependent upon her kindly feeling."

Grote adds :

"Though we now read this hymn as pleasing poetry, to the Eleusinians, for whom it was composed, it was genuine and sacred history. They believed in the visit of Dêmêtêr to Eleusis, and in the mysteries as a revelation from her, as implicitly as they believed in her existence and power as a goddess."



TRIPTOLEMOB, SENT OUT BY DEMETER ON HER CHARIOT DRAWN BY DRAGONS.
Vase-picture of Kertch. (After *Comic-Rendu*, 1862, pl. IV.—*B. D.*, 1858.)

ORPHEUS.

The Orphic Mysteries were similar to the Eleusinian, in ritual as well as in significance, and though we possess but meagre information concerning the legend and cult, which were kept secret, we know that it inculcated in some way a belief in immortality.

Orpheus, the singer who tamed the wild beasts of the woods by his music, lost his wife, Eurydice, by death; but going down to the Under World he moved Hades by his music to suffer her to follow him back again to the Upper World on condition that he should not look round upon her. He violated this condition, however, and she vanished from his sight.

The legend runs that Orpheus was slain, or, like Dionysos Zagreus, torn to pieces by the frenzied women of Thrace. Our information is too scanty and also contradictory to allow us to form any clear conception of the meaning of the Orphic rituals and myths; but one thing is certain: there were many among the early



HERMES PSYCHOPOMPOS AND
THE ANGEL OF DEATH.¹

(Relief on a hollow marble
column of Ephesus.)



GORGO AS AMULET.²

Christians who revered Christ as a redeemer from death in the same sense as the Orphic priests believed in the efficacy of the Orphic Mysteries; for pictures of Christ as Orpheus are quite common in the catacombs.

HERMES.

From Maia (that is, the nourishing one, the mother goddess) Zeus begot Hermes, the herald of the gods, the protector of commerce and trade, and the deity that conducted souls to Hades.

¹ Between Hermes and Death stands the figure of a woman, perhaps Persephone. See Wood, *Discov. at Ephesus*, London, 1877, and for illustrations of the "columna caelata," *Arch. Ztg.*, 1865, pl. 65. *B. D.*, p. 281, and Springer, *Hdb.*, I., p. 181.

² Gem from Kertch. After *Comte-Rendu*, 1860, pl. 4, fig. 6. (*Roscher, Lex.*, p. 1711.) See the illustrations on page 658 of the present *Open Court*.

Hermes is a god who gained in significance the more the belief in the Beyond grew in importance, for Hermes (even as early as Homeric times) was the leader of souls to the Under World (ὁ ψυχοπόμπος), and he, too, as we learned in the Demeter legend, assists the subjects of Hades to return to the world of light and life. He was worshipped as the resurrector, and artistic representations of this office became the prototypes of pictures of Christ raising the dead.

The reverence for Hermes grew when he became identified with the Egyptian Thoth, the scribe of the gods and the god of wisdom, of learning, of science; the deity of the word, of the written revelation, of science, who was called Poimander, the shepherd of men.

The Egyptian influence which, as we have seen, was very strong in the early days of Greece, made itself felt also in the period



PROMETHEUS CHAINED TO THE ROCK AND LIBERATED BY HERAKLES.
Ancient sarcophagus now in the museum of the Capitol, Rome.

of decline, and many ideas, such as of Abraxas, the Adorable One, of Thoth, the incarnate Word, of Serapis (presumably a corruption of Osiris Apis), the slain and resurrected God, of Isis the Holy One, the Mother of God, of Harpokrates, God the Child, as well as the institution of monkhood practised by the followers of Serapis, penetrated the Greek world at the beginning of the Christian era and left their impression on the beliefs of the people, partly preparing for the advent of the new religion and partly entering into it in a modified form.

PROMETHEUS.

One Titanic figure deserves especial mention, from possessing a peculiar significance as the shaper of mankind and as the sufferer. It is Prometheus, the bold, struggling genius of progress, the *esprit fort*, the man who dares and does. He bestows on mankind the

heavenly gift of fire in spite of the prohibition of Zeus, and is willing to suffer for it on the cross (as Æschylus expresses it), being fastened at the command of Zeus to Mount Caucasus by Hephæstos. There daily an eagle appears to lacerate the liver of this martyr for the cause of human welfare; and the liver grows again over night so as to perpetuate the torture, when finally Herakles comes to his rescue. This hero shoots the eagle and reconciles Zeus and Prometheus, the proud sovereign and the noble-



PELEUS STRUGGLING WITH THETIS.¹

Vase-picture in Munich. (After Gerhard, *Auserl. Vasenb.*, III., 227.—B.D., 1799.)



THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS.²

Bas-relief in the Villa Ludovisi (*Mon. Inst.*, III., 29).

minded rebel. Prometheus then communicates to Zeus the secret that Thetis, the goddess of the deep sea, whom Zeus intended to

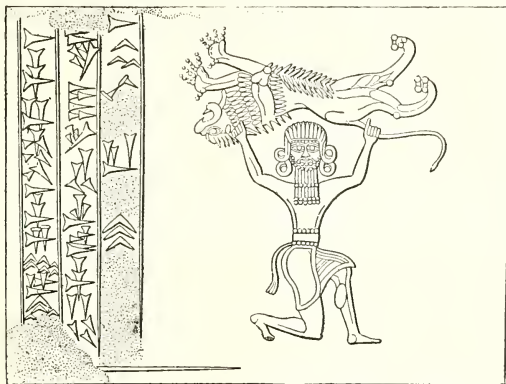
¹ When Zeus decided to have Thetis married to a mortal man, Peleus was chosen; but the latter had to conquer his bride, and in this task he succeeded (according to the painter of the vase) with the assistance of the wise centaur Cheiron, the educator of Achilles. A nymph Ponto-medusa gives the cause of her mistress up as lost and flees.

² Hermes conducts Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite into the presence of Paris, who is tending his flocks in company with his wife Oinone. Hera and Athene are at the right of Paris; Aphrodite is at his left. Eros leans on his left shoulder. Herakles, Artemis, Helios, a river god, and a nymph witness the scene.

marry, was (like Themis) destined to bear a child that would be greater than his father.

In Hesiod's *Theogony* Prometheus appears as a mere mischief-maker, but in the later development of religious thought he becomes the ideal of human progressiveness and courage of thought, being a Greek anticipation of, and a parallel to, the Faust character in the legends of the times of the Renaissance.

Prometheus, the Forethinker, is contrasted with his brother Epimetheus, the man of after-thought. Prometheus had warned Epimetheus not to accept any gift from Zeus, but the latter found a woman whom he called Pandora, the "all-gift," so beautiful that Epimetheus could not resist the temptation and received her with



ISDUBAR, THE BABYLONIAN HERAKLES, CONQUERING THE LION.
(Lenormant. *Histoire ancienne de l'Orient*, Vol. V., p. 178.)

a box of gifts into his house. When the box was opened all the ills that flesh is heir to flew out, filling the world with woe.

The Promethean spirit is powerfully described by Goethe in his poem *Prometheus*, where the bold Forethinker is characterised as taking his stand against Zeus and building up an independent liberty-loving humanity in spite of the tyrant in heaven.

Zeus was slow in granting man his liberty, but apparently he did not mean to become an enemy to human progress. Thus Zeus and Prometheus were reconciled and now the God is warned by the prophetic Titan of the danger that threatened him. Zeus thereupon has Thetis married to Peleus, a mortal, whose son Achilles

becomes the famous hero of Homer's *Iliad*. The wedding of Peleus is the beginning of the Trojan war, for Eris, the goddess of quarrel, the only deity that was not invited, rolls into the assembly a golden apple with the inscription, "To the fairest." Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite contend for the prize, and Paris, the shepherd of Mount Ida and son of King Priam, is appointed by Zeus as judge. Hera offers him fame, Athene wisdom, and Aphrodite the most beautiful woman on earth. Paris decides in favor of Aphrodite who helps him to abduct Helen, Queen of King Menelaus of Lacedæmon, which becomes the cause of the Trojan war.

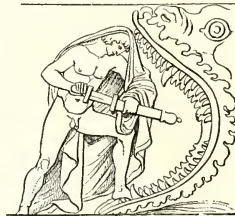
HERAKLES.

The hero-myths of Greece are specialised forms of the worship of Zeus in his sons as saviours of mankind. All heroes are children



HERAKLES STRANGLES THE TWO
SNAKES SENT BY HERA
TO KILL HIM.¹

(Fresco of Herculaneum.)



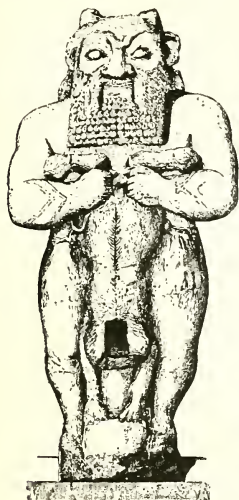
HERAKLES DESCENDING INTO
THE BELLY OF THE LEVIATHAN.²
Vase-picture. (*B. D.*, I., p. 663.)

of the common father of all gods and men, and foremost among them is Herakles, the liberator of Prometheus, a son of Zeus and Alkmene, Queen of Argos.

¹ Behind Herakles stands his mother, Alkmene; Amphitryon, his step father, King of Argos, draws his sword to help the child; the tutor of the children holds the frightened Iphides, the stepbrother of Herakles, in his arms.

² This vase-picture (which should be compared with the vase-picture of "Jason rescued by Athena from the jaws of the dragon" *v. infra*) was formerly believed to represent Jason's struggle with the dragon, but is now interpreted as depicting a parallel to the Perseus legend preserved by Hellanikos (*Ap. Schol. Iliad.*, Y. 146), who relates that Herakles in delivering Hesione, the daughter of King Laomedon of Troy, descended into a dragon and slew him by severing his intestines, a task that cost him three days' labor, during which time the hero's hair was burned by the internal heat of the dragon.

Historians have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that Herakles is none other than the Phœnician Melkarth, the Baal of Sor (i. e., Tyre), and the Phœnician Melkarth again is none other than Bel Merodach, the Christ of the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Israelites knew him under the name of Samson and told legends of him that betray his solar origin. As the nations of Western Asia have inherited much of their civilisation as well as of their religion from the ancient Sumero-Accadians, the assumption

MELKARTH.¹

Colossal statue found at Amathus. (*Gazette archéologique*, 1879, pl. XXXI.)

THE FARNESIAN ATLAS.²

(After a photograph. *B. D.*, I., 225.)

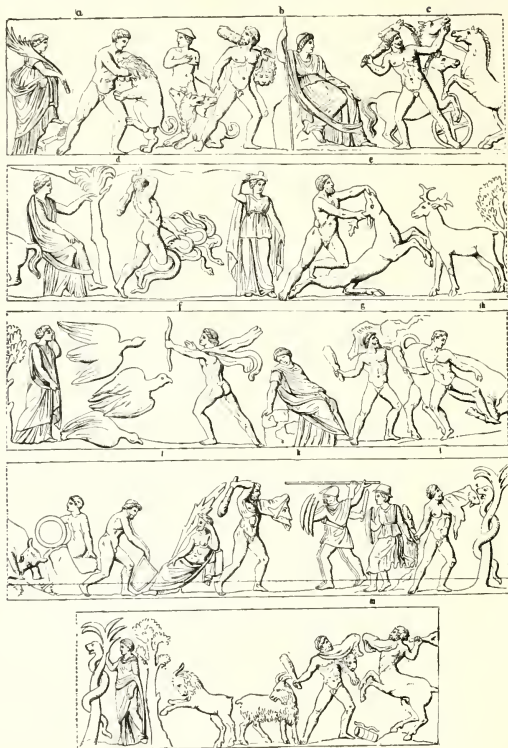
is justified that the legend of Herakles, the Greek Melkarth, is the Hellenised form of a very old myth,—a venerable heirloom handed down from prehistoric ages.

Herakles is the god-man, the sun-god incarnate, who in his

¹The god holds a lion in his hands as if on the point of tearing it in twain. His beard is trimmed in Assyrian fashion, indicating the home of the artist's prototype. Cf. Lenormant, *Histoire ancienne de l'Orient*, Vol. VI., p. 566.

²Atlas (i. e., the bearer), according to Homer, carries the dome of heaven, which seems to rest on the ocean. Artists represent him bearing the segment of a star-covered globe (see, for instance, the illustration of the garden of the Hesperides, *v. infra*). Later statues show him with a zodiacal globe on his shoulders.

wanderings bestows blessings upon the children of the earth and by bold deeds rescues mankind from evil. The twelve labors of



THE TWELVE LABORS OF HERAKLES.
Relief in the Villa Albani at Rome.

a, Herakles kills the Nemean lion; *b*, he rescues Theseus from the Underworld; *c*, he tames the horses of Diomedes, a nymph witnesses the scene; *d*, he conquers the Lernæan hydra in the presence of the nymph Lerna; *e*, he catches the Kerenitic hind; *f*, he shoots the Stymphalian birds, a deed which moves the pity of the local nymph; *g*, he carries home the Erymanthian boar; *h*, he tames the Kretan steer; *i*, he cleanses the stable of Augeas, the river god Alpheios seated before him, furnishes the water; *k*, he conquers the three-bodied Geryones, behind them stands the nymph of Spain; *l*, he kills the dragon who guards the apples of the Hesperides, one of them being present in the scene, the goats being the animals of Libya; *m*, he conquers the centaurs (according to the common version, the Amazons).

Herakles are the accomplishments of the sun during the twelve months. How much Herakles, as the rescuer from evil, was like

Christ to the Greek mind, appears from the reverence with which philosophers speak of him as the beloved son of Zeus.

The last deed of Herakles is his death and resurrection (*ἔγερσις*). He dies in the flames of the funeral pyre, but rises to renewed life on the height of Olympus, where he is given in marriage to Hebe, the blooming daughter of Hera.

Epictetus says of Herakles:

"He knew that no man is an orphan, but that there is a father always and constantly for all of us. He had not only heard the words that Zeus was the father of men, for he regarded him as *his* father and called him such; and looking up to him, he did what Zeus did. Therefore he could live happily everywhere."

The philosopher Seneca echoes the same sentiment when he contrasts the unselfishness of Herakles with the ambition of other



HERAKLES TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN BY ATHENA IN A CHARIOT.¹

Picture on a Lucanian vase in Munich. (After *Mon. Inst.*, IV., 41.)

heroes, who may be brave and courageous, like Alexander the Great, for instance, but are not saviours. He says:

"Herakles never gained victories for himself. He wandered through the circle of the earth, not as a conqueror, but as a protector. What, indeed, should the enemy of the wicked, the defender of the good, the peace-bringer, conquer for himself either on land or sea!"

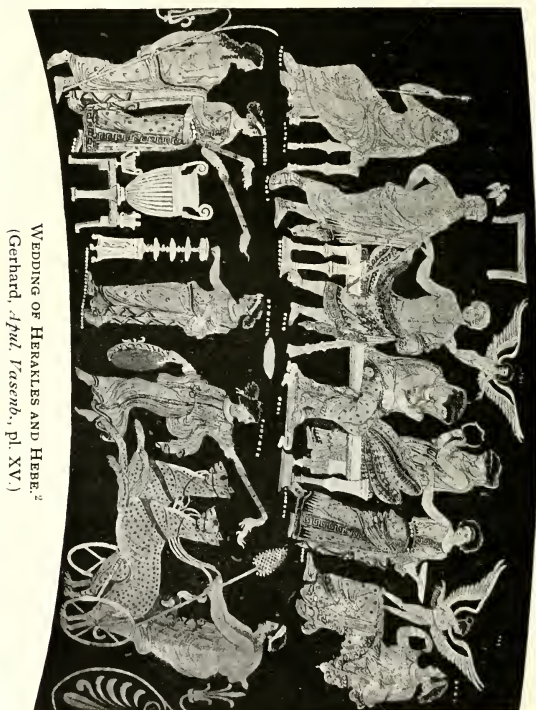
HEROES.

Odysseus, like Herakles, is originally the sun-god and his wanderings through the earth are the course of the sun over the world. Like the sun, Odysseus descends in the far West into Tartaros and comes up again.

¹Satyrs gaze with astonishment at the pyre, the flames of which are extinguished by two nymphs, called Arethusa and Premnusia.

The *Odyssey* is the Greek version of the *Râmâyana*, a Brahman story of similar significance, while the *Iliad* finds its counterpart in the *Mahâbhârata*, the legend of the great war.¹

Other heroes, such as Theseus (i. e., he who brings about settled conditions, the organiser, or legislator), Bellerophon, Perseus,



WEDDING OF HERAKLES AND HEBE.²
(Gerhard, *Arch. Taschenb.*, pl. XV.)

the Dioskuri, etc., are all slayers of monsters and are, if we make allowance for local coloring, variations of the same fundamental

¹These two Indian epics are unquestionably of great antiquity, but it is interesting to note that (as Weber endeavors to prove) Valmiki, a late redactor of the *Râmâyana*, must have been familiar with Homer. He lived somewhat after the beginning of the Christian era when Greek influence began to make itself felt in India.

²Between Hebe, the girlish bride, and Herakles who is here youthful and beardless, hovers Eros. Zeus and Hera are on the left, Aphrodite with Himeros and two of her maids, Charis and Peitho, on the right. Underneath Dionysos arrives in his chariot, drawn by panthers. From the opposite side Apollo and Artemis arrive, while Eunomia and Euthymia receive the guests.

idea that permeates the whole of Greek mythology, of the same theme of saviourship, which is most apparent in the Herakles myth.

The story of Demeter's daughter and her sad fate finds many parallels in the legends of dying gods and heroes, among which the most typical is the tale of the death of Adonis. Like the Herakles myth, it is of Phœnician origin, the name Adonis being nothing



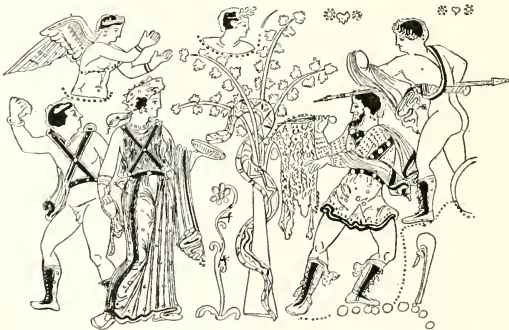
PERSEUS LIBERATING ANDROMEDA.

Ancient relief. Capitol. (From Springer, *Handb.*, p. 256.)

else than the Greek form of the Semitic title of God, Adon, i. e., Lord, a word which is used in the same significance in the Bible. Adon, the sun-god and husband of Astarte, the Phœnician Venus, dies and is resurrected. He is the same as Tammuz for whom, as the prophet Ezekiel, Jewish women wept in the temple.



THESEUS, THE SLAYER OF THE MINOTAUR,
Receiving the thanks of the rescued victims.¹ (Fresco in the Campagna,
from *Mus. Borb.*, X., 50.)



JASON SECURING THE GOLDEN FLEECE.²
Vase of Naples. (Reproduced from Heydemann, *Hall*.
Winckelmannsprogramm, 1886, pl. 3.)

¹ This picture, frequently copied in frescoes, has become famous through Goethe's admirable description which appears in Vol. XXX., 425 f. of his collected works (edition Cotta).

² The hero is accompanied by Medea and two warriors. A satyr's head is visible in the tree and the bust of Nike appears in the sky.

The festival of mourning with subsequent rejoicing that was celebrated in Cyprus for Adon-Tammuz, was changed in Christian times into a kind of Christian mystery-play of the death and resurrection of Lazarus. Thus the underlying ideas remain the same with the change of time.



JASON RESCUED BY ATHENA FROM THE JAWS OF THE DRAGON.¹

Attic vase from Cære. Roscher, *Lex.*, II., p. 85.



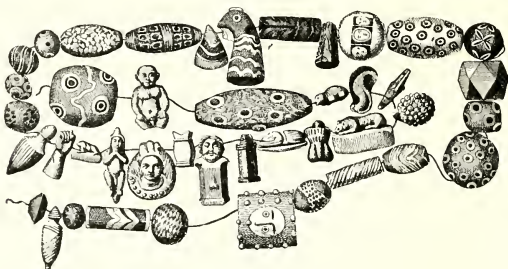
SAMPLES OF MONSTERS ON ÆGÆAN STONES.²

(*Arch. Ztg.*, 1883, pl. 16, Nos. 7, 3, 16.)

¹ Happily the interpretation of this picture is definitely determined by both the name ΙΑΣΩΝ and the golden fleece hanging on the tree. The picture does not represent the common version of the legend, but is interesting as showing that Greek mythology also possessed its Jonas who had been in the belly of a monster. A similar legend is told of Herakles, an illustration of which is given on page 650.

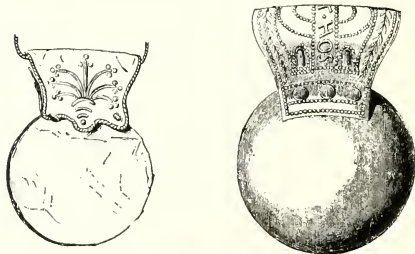
² The Ægæan stones, the *Inselsteine* of German archæologists, so called because found on the islands of the Ægæan sea, exhibit the beginning of glyptic art, imported into Greece from the Orient.

A favorite legend which is frequently chiseled on sarcophagi, on account of its promise of the soul's return from Tartaros, is the story of Admetos and Alkestis. The hero Admetos (i. e., the invincible, one of the many representatives of the god of death) woos Alkestis (i. e., the Strong One, a form of Persephone) the daughter of Pelias. He shows his prowess by appearing in a chariot drawn by a wild boar and a lion. The bridal chamber, however, is filled with snakes (a symbol of the goddess of the earth) and Admetos

AMULETS.¹

Necklace of various votive symbols, found in the Crimea.

(Jahn, pl. V., 2.—*B. D.*, I., 76.)



GOLD CAPSULES, OR BULLAE.

Worn round the neck as receptacles for amulets. (After *Arch. Journ.*, VI., 113, and VIII., 166.)

is doomed to die. Apollo then pleads with the Fates to spare his life, and the three goddesses allow him to send a substitute to the Under World, whereupon Alkestis declares her readiness to sacrifice herself for her husband, and becomes thus the ideal wife, faithful unto death. Persephone in recognition of her heroism, however, allows Alkestis to return to life.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

¹ Votive figures appear to have been used in ancient Greece and Italy as much as they are now by the devotees of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches.