

# 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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## CONTENTS:

<i>Frontispiece.</i> FRIEDRICH MAX MUELLER.	
<i>On Greek Religion and Mythology.</i> —Monsters.—Minor Deities.—Asklepios and His Apostle Apollonius of Tyana.—Tartaros. Profusely Illustrated from the Monuments and Statuary of Classical Antiquity. EDITOR . . . . .	705
<i>Cornelius Petrus Tiele.</i> In Commemoration of His Seventieth Birthday. With Portrait of Professor Tiele, Hitherto Unpublished. By MORRIS JASTROW, JR., Professor in the University of Pennsylvania . . . . .	728
<i>Friedrich Max Müller.</i> (1823-1900.) Biographical and Philosophical. THOMAS J. McCORMACK . . . . .	734
<i>The Rev. W. W. Seymour on the Prehistoric Cross.</i> With Illustrations. EDITOR . . . . .	745
<i>The Chinese Altar of Burnt Offering.</i> With Illustration of the Temple of Heaven. Communicated . . . . .	752
<i>The Paris Peace Congress and the Transvaal War.</i> YVES GUYOT . . . . .	756
<i>The Child.</i> A Poem. ALEX. F. CHAMBERLAIN, PH. D. . . . .	757
<i>Dr. Carus's History of the Devil</i> . . . . .	759
<i>Eros and Psyche.</i> With Illustrations from Thorwaldsen and a Reproduction of the Eros of Praxiteles . . . . .	760
<i>Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.</i> With Reproduction of Portrait of Hume by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS . . . . .	762
<i>Reincarnate.</i> A Poem. LILLIAN C. BARNES . . . . .	763
<i>Book Reviews</i> . . . . .	764

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मोक्षभूलरभट्टः  
F. Max Müller.

(1823-1900.)

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## ON GREEK RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY.

BY THE EDITOR.

### MONSTERS.

**M**OST of the monsters with which the Greek heroes contend are the same as in the folklore of all nations,—dragons. In ad-



GORGONEION.

Ancient face of the Gorgon Medusa.

dition, we have many-headed snakes, wild boars, the Minotaur or man-bull, the Chimera or goat-fiend (reminding us of the Assyrian

goat-demons), and above all the Gorgon Medusa, whose head is used as an amulet to drive away evil spirits according to the logic that devils must be driven out by Beelzebub, the chief of devils. The Assyrians placed statues of the disease-spreading South Wind at their south entrances, because they believed that if the South Wind devil saw his own picture he would be frightened away at the sight of its ugliness.

Homer speaks of Medusa's head as a frightful monster in the Under World ( $\lambda$  634 and  $\Lambda$  36). Other authors<sup>1</sup> mention its evil eye



MEDUSA RONDANINI.

A later and more beautiful representation. (Glyptothek, Munich.)

and gnashing of teeth. It is stated that no one could look at its face without being horror-stricken. Its mere aspect was blood-curdling and petrified the beholder with fear.

Gorgo,<sup>2</sup> the daughter of the two sea-monsters, Phorkys and Keto, lived on the island Sarpedon in the Western ocean, near the realm of the dead and not far from the beautiful garden of the immortals. She expected to become a mother by Poseidon, when she

<sup>1</sup> Hes. Scut., 235; see also Apollodorus II., 4, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Γοργώ or Γοργιών, also Γοργά and Γοργόνη.

was killed, according to the Athenian version, by Athena (hence called the Gorgon-slayer, γοργοφόνος), and, according to the Argivian



PEGASOS LED TO WATER.<sup>1</sup>

Relief in the Palace Spada. (E. Braun, *Antike Basreliefs*, pl. I. B. D., p. 300.)

version, by Perseus, the conqueror.<sup>2</sup> From the wound Pegasus, the winged horse, and Chrysaor, the golden man, were born. On

<sup>1</sup> Pegasus originated from the blood of the Medusa (Gorgo) and served several heroes of the solar type as a steed. He opened with a stroke of his hoof a spring on Mount Helicon called Hippocrena or Horse-spring (Paus., 9, 31, 3), which was afterwards regarded as the well of poetic inspiration. Pegasus, as the symbol of poetry, is a modern idea, not found in the classics.

<sup>2</sup> Περσεύς, literally the "the destroyer." viz., of the monster, from πέρθειν.

some monuments the soul is represented escaping in the shape of a diminutive human figure.

It will be noticed that the oldest representations of the Medusa are both frightful and ugly, but with the advance of Greek art the



THE DELIVERANCE OF ANDROMEDA BY PERSEUS.

Archaic representation. Pegasus springs from the blood of the Medusa.

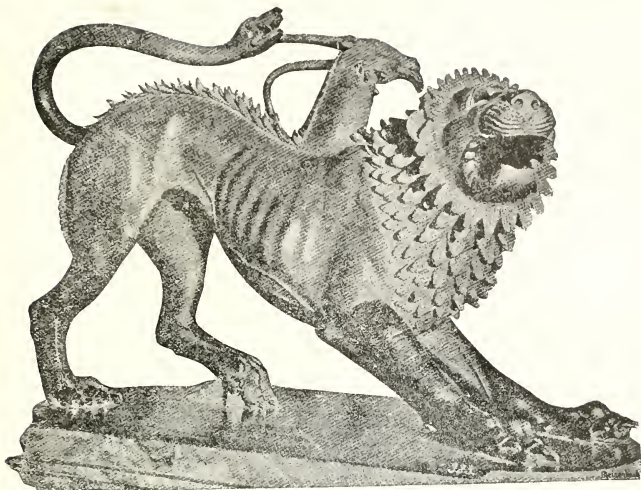
(After Benndorf, *Metopen von Selinunt*, pl. I.)

terrible is transfigured by beauty and changed into a fascinating form of awe-inspiring grandeur.

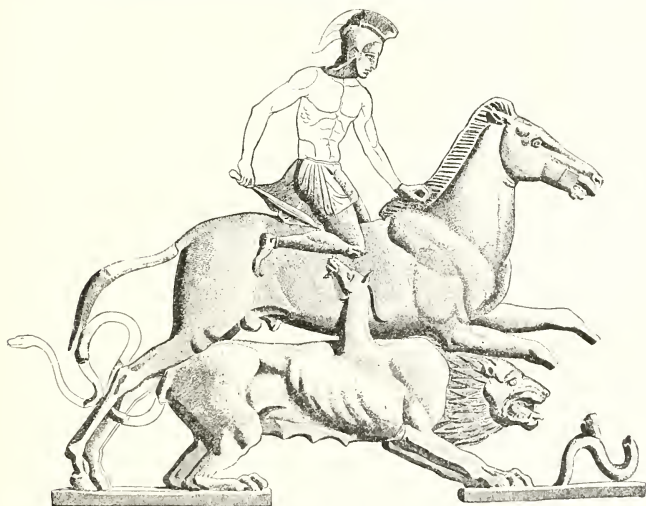
#### MINOR DEITIES.

There are innumerable minor deities that deserve mention: Pan, the god of the shepherds; Seilenos and Satyrs, the servants of Dionysos; river gods, Nymphs and Naiads, or water spirits; Dryads or oak-tree spirits; Oreads or mountain spirits; Iris, the rainbow,





CHIMÆRA OF AREZZO.  
The monster slain by Bellerophon. (Now at Florence.)



BELLEROPHON SLAYING THE CHIMÆRA.  
(A terra-cotta statue of Melos, now in the British Museum.)

who serves as a messenger of the gods; Ganymede, the Phrygian youth whom Zeus selected for his cup-bearer; Hymen, the god of marriage; Eos, the goddess of the dawn; the winds of the four quarters; Eris, the goddess of quarrel; the Harpies or death angels who snatch away children from their mothers; the Sirens<sup>1</sup> or Greek Loreleis who tempt the seafarer to approach the cliff on which they are seated; Momos, the god of comedies; Komos, the god of jollity; Asklepios, the god of medicine and healing; Hygeia, the goddess of health; Tyche or Fortune, the goddess of good luck; Nike, the goddess of victory; Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, retribution, and punishment; Kairos, a personification of oppor-



IRIS, THE MESSENGER OF THE GODS.



HYMEN.

tunity; Thanatos and Hypnos, death and sleep; Morpheus and Oneiros, slumber and dreams; the Centaurs, who were half-horse and half-man; and Castor and Pollux, the twins, called the Dioscuri.<sup>2</sup>

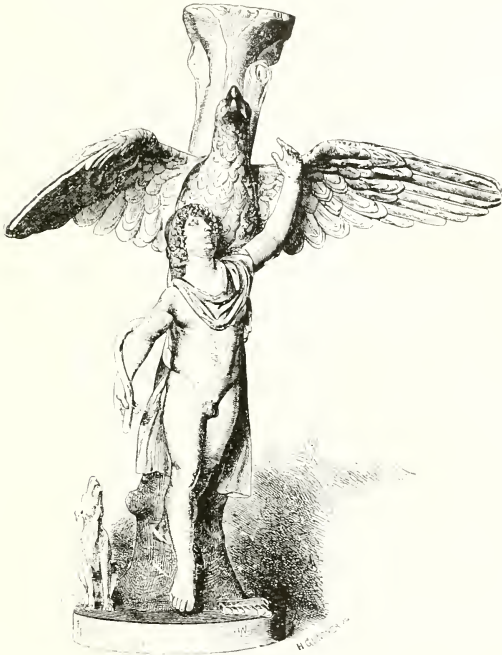
The figure of Nike has become the artistic prototype of the Christian angels. The idea of a divine messenger or *ἄγγελος* was

<sup>1</sup> The Sirens were originally the souls of the dead, as will appear further on.

<sup>2</sup> The Dioscuri were the sons of Leda and Zeus. The story goes that Zeus approached Leda as a swan and that she bore the twin gods in an egg. One of them, Castor, was mortal; the other, Pollux, immortal. When the former died, the latter did not want to live without his twin-brother. So he requested their father to allow him to die for his brother and to let them share alternately in the boon of immortality. They represent morning and evening stars, being the same planet and making their appearance alternately.

common to all the ancient nations and the appellation *bonus angelus* occurs in pagan inscriptions. The best protecting angel of emperors and kings was Nike, the goddess of Victory, and we find her frequently represented by their sides and on the hands.

The Hebrew word for angel מַלְאָכִים (*malâch*) also means "messenger" and is used in its original sense in the old Testament



GANYMEDE, THE PHRYGIAN BOY.

Carried up to Olympus by the eagle of Zeus.  
(Marble statue by Leochares, Vatican.)

to denote men sent out on errands and ambassadors of kings. *Malach Jahveh* (מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה), i. e., messenger of JHVH means angel, as the word is now used.

All these divinities found more or less representation in art according to the needs of practical life.

## ASKLEPIOS AND HIS APOSTLE APOLLONIUS OF TYANA.

Asklepios<sup>1</sup> was not a god in the days of Homer but only a skilful physician, the disciple of Chiron the wise Centaur. Being a



THE NIKE OF PAIONIOS. (After Treu's Restoration.)<sup>2</sup>

healer, however, he grew in importance and a number of contradictory legends sprang up concerning him, one told by the author

<sup>1</sup> Better known in English under his Latinised name *Æsculapius*.

<sup>2</sup> See Treu, *Olympia*, p. 182 ff., cf. Roscher, 39, p. 341.



NIKE.

Vase-picture in red. (After *Élite céram.*, I., 91.)

ANGELS AT THE BED OF A DYING MAN.<sup>1</sup>

Relief on an Etruscan Cinerary of Volterra. (*Arch. Ztg.*, 1846, pl. 47.)

<sup>1</sup>The angel of death stands at the head of the bed, sword in hand, the *bonus angelus* grasps the hand of one of the survivors, either comforting him or pledging him to remain faithful to the memory of the deceased. It was customary in Rome for the oldest son and principal heir to inhale the last breath of the dying person and so to inspire, as it were, his soul, as Virgil says (*Aen.* IV., 684) *extremum halitum ore legere*.

of the Homeric hymn XIV, another by Pindar, and a third one by Pausanias.<sup>1</sup> One thing is clear, however, that many Asklepiian priests were skilled physicians, and it would seem even that several of their temples were used as hospitals and sanitariums.

The Asklepiian priests, however, though there is reason to credit them with considerable knowledge of medical skill, were at the same time healers of the soul. They demanded continence, propriety, and faith in the saving grace of their tutelary god; and



KAIROS.

Personifying the moment of luck and success.<sup>2</sup>

(*Arch. Ztg.*, 1875, pl. 1. *B. D.*, II., 772.)

an inscription over the entrance of the temple of Asklepios in Epidaurus reads: "None but the pure shall enter here."

An inscription discovered on the southern slope of the Acrop-

<sup>1</sup> Pausanias tells us the Epidaurian version, stating that Koronis, the daughter of King Phlegias, visiting Epidaurus on the northeastern coast of Argolis, bore a child to Apollo, and fearing her father's wrath, exposed it on the mountain slope where it was found by the goatherd Aresthanas and educated by Chiron. Aresthanas at once knew the divinity of the baby, whom he called Asklepios, because when he lifted it up a light streamed from it as bright as a flash of lightning.

<sup>2</sup> Kairos walks on winged wheels and holds a pair of balances in one hand and a razor in the other, for, says the Greek proverb, the decision lies on "the edge of a razor" (*ἐπὶ ξυροῦ ἀκμῆς*, cf. Homer, *K.*, 173). The relief shows a young man "taking fortune by the forelock." An old man standing behind Kairos extends his left arm, but too late: he has missed his chance; and repentance (*μετάνοια*) turns her head away weeping.

ASKLEPIOS, OR ÆSCULAPIUS.<sup>1</sup>

(Now in Florence.)

<sup>1</sup>Judging from a coin of Pergamon (published in Baumeister's *Denkmäler*, p. 135), archaeologists believe that this statue represents the type of the statue made by Phrymachos for the Æsculapius temple of Pergamon. Cf. *B. D.*, 139.

olis at Athens records a prayer of Diophantos addressed to Asklepios, which reads as follows :<sup>1</sup>

"Save me, and heal my grievous gout, O blessed and most mighty presence, I adjure thee by thy father, to whom I loudly pray. No one of mortals can give a surcease from such pangs. Thou alone, divinely blessed one, hast the power, for the supreme gods bestowed on thee, all-pitying one, a rich gift for mortals. Thou art their appointed deliverer from pain."

Asklepios is not addressed as a god, though he is invoked as a divine presence, and his common designation is Son of God (*filius dei*) and saviour (*σωτήρ*). A legend reports that once when Asklepios had resuscitated a man and prevented his descent into the realm of death, Zeus slew him with his thunderbolt at the request of Hades, the grim god of the Under World.

The greatest representative of Asklepios, however, Apollonius of Tyana, was a man who for some time in the history of our religious evolution appeared as a powerful rival of Jesus of Nazareth, aspiring to the honor of being worshipped as the Saviour of mankind.

It is perhaps not an accident that Tyana is a town of Cappadocia, not far from Tarsus, the birth-place of the Apostle St. Paul. Asia Minor was the region in which the religious fermentation that permeated the classical world from the days of Alexander the Great was strongest ; and we have reason to believe that Apollonius was as pure-minded and earnest as his countryman Paul. Philostratos, a courtier of the literary circle of the Empress Julia Domna, compiled the life of this pagan saint, his main sources being the account of Maximus of *Ægæ*, for several years a fellow-philosopher of the Tyanian while both were pursuing the ascetic life of the Pythagorean brotherhood, and the wondrous tales of Daneis of Nineveh concerning the travels and adventures of Apollonius. The similarity of many of these stories to the miracles of Jesus excited in the early days of Christianity the jealousy of the Christian monks, as a result of which all the works of this pagan saint were destroyed, and we know his personality only from the distorted reflexion of it in the book of Philostratos, from the caricatures of Lucian and Apuleius, and finally from the incidental remarks of ancient authors, and the strictures of the Church Fathers.

Men of sober judgment, among them Dio Cassius the historian, believed in some at least of the miracles of Apollonius, and the Christians, among them Origen,<sup>2</sup> do not as a rule deny them.

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Augustus C. Merriam's interesting article "Æsculapia as Revealed by Inscriptions" in the May number of Gaillard's *Medical Journal* (Vol. XI., No. 5).

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Celsum*, VI., 41.



Eusebius of Cæsarea takes Hierocles to task for giving preference to Apollonius over Jesus, in respect of the former's having lived a more exemplary life as well as having performed more numerous and better attested miracles. The same author quotes approvingly a sentence from Apollonius embodying his confession of faith. Eusebius says :

" Even the well-known Apollonius of Tyana, whose name is upon all men's lips for praise, is said to write much in the same strain in his work on sacrifice about the first and great God.

" There is one Highest God above and apart from the lower gods. Beyond the reach of the contaminating world of sense as he is, nothing apprehensible by any organ of sense, neither burnt offerings nor bloodless sacrifices, can reach him, not even unuttered prayers. He is the substance of things seen, and in him, plants, animals, men, and the elements of which the world is made, have life and exist. He is the noblest of existences, and men must duly worship him with the only faculty in them to which no material organ is attached, their speculative reason."

#### TARTAROS.

The realm of the dead was supposed to be underground. It was called Hades (the invisible) or Tartaros; but both names, especially the former one, are also used to denote the God of the Under World himself. The dead live there as mere shades or bloodless specters, watched by the terrible Kerberos, a dog with three heads.

The idea that the living could commune with the dead was quite prevalent in Greece and led to necromancy and psychomancy, a branch of sorcery which had for its object the conjuring of the ghosts of the deceased for the purpose of making them proclaim oracles or prophecies.

The souls of the dead were conceived sometimes as winged heads, sometimes as fleeting shadows or images of the personalities of the deceased, both conceptions being of Egyptian origin.<sup>1</sup> The former can be traced to the notion of the *Ba*, the soul as consciousness pictured as a hawk with a human head, the latter to the *Ka*, i. e., the spirit of a man in a dream-like form of body at the time of his death. The so called tomb-sirens, found in great numbers in Greek cemeteries, were originally intended as representatives of the souls of deceased persons.

The god Hades is also called Pluto, and being the owner of all the uncounted underground treasures, is at the same time the god of wealth. The queen of the dead is Persephone, whose ab-

<sup>1</sup> Birds with human heads also figure in Assyrian mythology.

duction by Pluto is a favorite subject of decoration on Greek sarcophagi.

Access to the Land of the Shades was deemed possible in the



FUNERAL SIREN.<sup>1</sup>

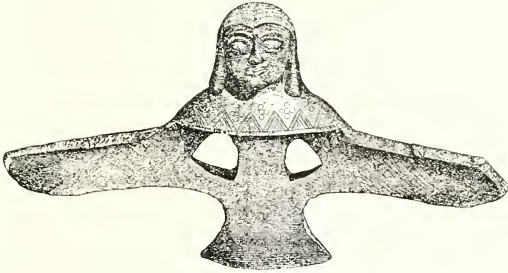
Found in Athens. (After a photograph, *B. D.*, p. 1644.)

west of Europe near the pillars of Heracles, the present Gibraltar. Odysseus visited the place and after him Æneas. Psyche descended

<sup>1</sup> This form of the sirens preserves most closely the Egyptian type of the *ba*, the hawk with a human head representing the soul of a deceased person. Their original significance, it appears, was soon lost and the sirens were believed to be supernatural beings of transcendent beauty lamenting the dead. Diodorus Siculus informs us that at Hephaestion's incineration wooden sirens contained the singers who sang the dirges (xvii, 115). Later on the sirens were represented standing as winged virgins with birds' feet. According to Homer's *Odyssey*, they are antique Loreleis whose enchanting voices signify peril and lead to death.

through a cavity in the wild mountain recesses of the Taygetos in Lacedæmon, called the breathing-hole of Tartaros.

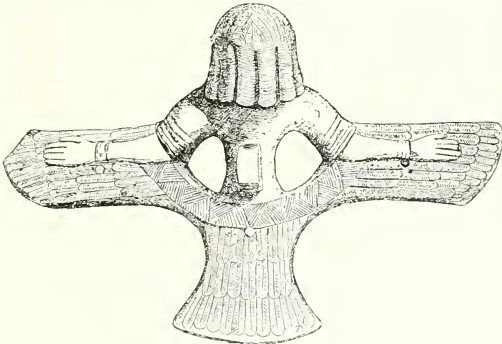
The rivers of the Under World are the Styx (the heinous stream), the Acheron (the river of woe), the Kokytos (the waters of wailing), and the Pyriphlegethon (the floods of fire). Charon ferries the shades across the Styx, provided they have been properly buried



FRONT VIEW OF THE DIVINE DOVE.<sup>1</sup>

Ancient bronze figure found at Van, commonly called Semiramis, but apparently a form of the goddess Istar who was worshipped under the form of a dove.

(After Lenormant, *L'histoire de l'Or.*, Vol. IV., p. 124 and 125.)



REAR VIEW OF THE DIVINE DOVE.

and on payment of a fee, the smallest coin being sufficient, which was placed in the mouth of the dead. The souls drink of the waters of Lethe or oblivion, and lead a most monotonous, dreary life, with the exception of the great criminals who are tortured according to

<sup>1</sup>The artistic conception of a bird with a human head was not wanting in Western Asia, but the significance of these figures is not as yet definitely determined.

their deserts. Tantalos suffers hunger and thirst with water and fruits in sight; Ixion is forged on a fiery wheel; Sisyphos rolls up hill a big boulder which always slips down again; Tityos, the giant who made an attempt to assault Leto, is lacerated by vultures; and the Danaïdes try to fill a leaking vessel.

The descent of the souls of the slain suitors is dramatically described in the last book of the *Odyssey*:

"But Cyllenian<sup>1</sup> Hermes called out the souls of the suitors; and he held in his hands a beautiful golden rod, with which he soothes the eyes of men when he wishes, and raises them up again from sleep. With this indeed he drove them, moving them on; and they whirring followed. As when bats in the recess of a divine cave flit about whirring, when one falls from its place off the rock, and they cling to one another: so they went together whirring, and gentle Hermes led them down the murky ways. And they came near the streams of the ocean and



GREEK SKELETON DANCE. SILVER CUP FOUND AT BOSCOREALE.

the Leucadian rock,<sup>2</sup> and they went near the gates of the Sun, and the people of dreams: and they quickly came to the meadow of Asphodel, where dwell the souls, the images of the dead."

Death is never represented by Greek artists as a skeleton, which is the customary conception of the Middle Ages. Skeletons appear on Greek monuments, for instance on the beautiful silver mug found in Boscoreale, where the skeletons of poets and sages admonish the toper to enjoy the fleeting moment, for soon his body will be laid in the grave. Death is commonly conceived as the twin brother of sleep, a calm youth who might be mistaken for Eros, the god of love, were it not for the absence of the bow and arrows as well as for the inverted position of the torch of life in his hands.

<sup>1</sup> So called after the mountain Cyllene in Arcadia which was sacred to Hermes.

<sup>2</sup> The cliff of whitening bones.

The idea of death is so closely connected with the deities of life that almost all of them are represented in some way by their relation to the world underground, in which capacity they are called chthonian.<sup>1</sup> Thus we have a chthonian Zeus, a chthonian Aphrodite, a chthonian Dionysos, a chthonian Hermes, and even a chthonian Eros.

The Etruscans regarded death as a terrible demon, an ugly monster, carrying a weapon of slaughter in his hands. But this belief was considerably modified under the influence of Greek civilisation, and later monuments change the Etruscan god of death into a Nike-like divinity with a sword, who is accompanied by the good angel, acting as a comforter of the bereaved family.



THE GODDESS ISTAR.  
Bas-relief in the British Museum.  
(Lenormant, V., p. 259.)



CHARON FERRYING LOVERS  
ACROSS THE STYX.  
Greek Scarabæus. (After Wieseler,  
*Denkm.*, II., 870.  
*B. D.*, 379.)

The eleventh book of the *Odyssey* is devoted to a description of Odysseus's visit to the realm of the dead. Circe, the bewitching nymph of the island in the sea, had advised Odysseus to consult the blind prophet Tiresias who had passed into the Land of the Shades, and to sacrifice a black ram and a black ewe to Pluto and Persephone. But before our hero sets sail, one of his companions, Elpenor, falls from a roof and dies.

Odysseus describes his adventures in these words :

“ The ship reached the extreme boundaries of the deep-flowing ocean ; where are the people and city of the Cimmerians, covered with shadow and vapour, nor does the shining sun behold them with his beams, neither when he goes towards the starry heaven, nor when he turns back again from heaven to earth ; but pernicious night is spread over hapless mortals. Having come there, we drew up our

<sup>1</sup> χθόνιος, belonging to χθών, the earth, or being related to the Nether World.

ship; and we took out the two sheep; and we ourselves went again to the stream of the ocean, until we came to the place which Circe mentioned. There Perimedes and Eurylochus made sacred offerings; but I, drawing my sharp sword from my thigh, dug a trench, the width of a cubit each way; and around it we poured libations to all the dead, first with mixed honey, then with sweet wine, again a third time with water; and I sprinkled white meal over it. And I much besought the unsubstantial heads of the dead, [promising, that] when I came to Ithaca, I would offer up in my palace a barren heifer, whichever is the best, and would fill a pyre with excellent things; and that I would sacrifice separately to Tiresias alone a sheep all black, which excels amongst our sheep.

‘But when I had besought them, the nations of the dead, with vows and prayers, then taking the two sheep, I cut off their heads into the trench, and the black blood flowed: and the souls of the perished dead were assembled forth from Erebus, [betrothed girls and youths, and much-enduring old men, and tender virgins, having a newly grieved mind, and many war-renowned men wounded with brass-tipped spears, possessing gore-smearred arms, who, in great numbers, were wandering about the trench on different sides with a divine clamour; and pale fear seized upon me.] Then at length exhorting my companions, I commanded them, having skinned the sheep which lay there, slain with the cruel brass, to burn them, and to invoke the gods, Pluto and dread Persephone. But I, having drawn my sharp sword from my thigh, sat down, nor did I suffer the powerless heads of the dead to draw nigh the blood, before I inquired of Tiresias. And first the soul of my companion Elpenor came; for he was not yet buried beneath the wide-wayed earth; for we left his body in the palace of Circe unwept for and unburied,<sup>1</sup> since another toil [then] urged us. Beholding him, I wept, and pitied him in my mind, and addressing him, spoke winged words: ‘O Elpenor, how didst thou come under the dark west? Thou hast come sooner, being on foot, than I with a black ship.’

‘Thus I spoke; but he groaning answered me in discourse, ‘O Zeus-born son of Laertes, much contriving Odysseus, the evil destiny of the deity and the abundant wine hurt me. Lying down on the roof of the palace of Circe, I did not think of descending backwards. Having come to the long ladder, I fell down from the top; and my neck was broken from the vertebræ and my soul descended to Hades. Now, I entreat thee by those who are [left] behind, and not present, by thy wife and father, who nurtured thee when little, and Telemachus, whom thou didst leave alone in thy palace; for I know, that going hence from the house of Pluto, thou wilt moor thy well-wrought ship at the island of *Ææa*: there then, O king, I exhort thee to be mindful of me, nor, when thou departest, leave me behind, unwept for, unburied, going at a distance, lest I should become some cause to thee of the wrath of the gods: but burn me with whatever arms are mine, and build on the shore of the hoary sea a monument for me, a wretched man, to be heard of even by posterity; perform these things for me, and fix upon the tomb the oar with which I rowed whilst alive, being with my companions.’

‘Thus he spoke; but I answering addressed him: ‘O wretched one, I will perform and do these things for thee.’

‘Thus we sat answering one another with sad words; I indeed holding my sword off over the blood, but the image of my companion on the other side spoke many things. And afterwards there came on the soul of my deceased mother,

<sup>1</sup> It is a well-known superstition, that the ghosts of the dead were supposed to wander as long as they remained unburied, and were not suffered to mingle with the other dead. Cf. Virg. *Æn.* vi. 325, sqq. Lucan. i. II. Eur. *Hec.* 30. Phocylid. *Γνώμ.* 96. Heliodor. *Æth.* ii. p. 67.

Anticlea, daughter of magnanimous Autolycus, whom I left alive, on going to sacred Ilium. I indeed wept beholding her, and pitied her in my mind ; but not even thus, although grieving very much, did I suffer her to go forward near to the blood, before I inquired of Tiresias. But at length the soul of Theban Tiresias came on holding a golden sceptre, but me he knew and addressed :

“ ‘ O Zeus-born son of Laertes, why, O wretched one, leaving the light of the sun, hast thou come, that thou mayest see the dead and this joyless region ? but go back from the trench, and hold off thy sharp sword, that I may drink the blood and tell thee what is unerring.’

“ Thus he spoke ; but I retiring back, fixed my silver-hilted sword in the



SIREN TAKEN FROM A TOMB.  
Later conception. Now in the  
Louvre. Bouillon Musée, III.,  
Bas-relief 6. *B. D.*, 1645.



HERAKLES PLUCKING THE APPLE OF  
THE HESPERIDES.

sheath ; but when he had drunk the black blood, then at length the blameless prophet addressed me with words :

“ ‘ Thou seekest a pleasant return, O illustrious Odysseus ; but the deity will render it difficult for thee ; for I do not think that thou wilt escape the notice of Poseidon, who has set wrath in his mind against thee, enraged because thou hast blinded his dear ‘son (Polyphæmon the Cyclops). But still, even so, . . . thou mayest return to Ithaca, although suffering ill . . . but thou wilt find troubles in thine house, overbearing men, who consume thy livelihood, wooing thy goddess-like wife, and offering themselves for her dowry gifts. But certainly when thou

comest thou wilt revenge their violence . . . but death will come upon thee away from the sea, gentle, very much such a one, as will let thee die, taken with gentle old age; and the people around thee will be happy: these things I tell thee true.'

'Thus he spoke; but I answering addressed him: 'O Tiresias, the gods themselves have surely decreed these things. But come, tell me this, and relate it truly. I behold this the soul of my deceased mother, she sits near the blood in silence, nor does she dare to look openly at her son, nor to speak to him. Tell me, O king, how she can know me, being such a one.'

'Thus I spake; but he immediately answering addressed me: 'I will tell thee an easy word, and will place it in thy mind; whomsoever of the deceased dead thou sufferest to come near the blood, he will tell thee the truth; but whomsoever thou grudgest it, he will go back again.'

'Thus having spoke, the soul of king Tiresias went within the house of Pluto, when he had spoken the oracles: but I remained there firmly, until my mother came and drank of the blood; but she immediately knew me, and lamenting addressed to me winged words:

'My son, how didst thou come under the shadowy darkness, being alive? but it is difficult for the living to behold these things; [for in the midst there are mighty rivers and terrible streams, first indeed the ocean, which it is not possible to pass, being on foot, except any one have a well-built ship.] Dost thou now come here wandering from Troy, with thy ship and companions, after a long time? nor hast thou seen thy wife in thy palace?'

'Thus she spoke; but I answering addressed her, 'O my mother, necessity led me to Hades, to consult the soul of Theban Tiresias. For I have not yet come near Achaia, nor have I ever stepped upon my own land, but I still wander about . . . tell me the counsel and mind of my wooed wife, whether does she remain with her son, and guard all things safe? or now has one of the Grecians, whoever is the best, wedded her?'

'Thus I spoke; but my venerable mother immediately answered me: 'She by all means remains with an enduring mind in thy palace: and her miserable nights and days are continually spent in tears . . . I perished and drew on my fate. Nor did the well-aiming, shaft-delighting [goddess], coming upon me with her mild weapons, slay me in the palace.<sup>1</sup> Nor did any disease come upon me, which especially takes away the mind from the limbs with hateful consumption. But regret for thee, and cares for thee, O illustrious Odysseus, and kindness for thee, deprived me of my sweet life.'

'Thus she spoke; but I, meditating in my mind, wished to lay hold of the soul of my departed mother. Thrice indeed I essayed it, and my mind urged me to lay hold of it, but thrice it flew from my hands, like unto a shadow, or even to a dream: but sharp grief arose in my heart still more; and addressing her, I spoke winged words:

'Mother mine, why dost thou not remain for me, desirous to take hold of thee, that even in Hades, throwing around our dear hands, we may both be satiated with sad grief? Has illustrious Persephone sent forth this an image for me, that I may lament still more, mourning?'

'Thus I spoke; my venerable mother immediately answered me: 'Alas! my son, unhappy above all mortals, Persephone, the daughter of Zeus, by no means deceives thee, but this is the condition of mortals, when they are dead. For their nerves no longer have flesh and bones, but the strong force of burning fire subdues

<sup>1</sup> Artemis.



them, when first the mind leaves the white bones, and the soul, like as a dream, flitting, flies away. But hasten as quick as possible to the light; and know all these things, that even hereafter thou mayest tell them to thy wife.'

"There then I beheld Minos, the illustrious son of Zeus, having a golden sceptre, giving laws to the dead, sitting down; but the others around him, the king, pleaded their causes, sitting and standing through the wide-gated house of Pluto.

"After him I beheld vast Orion, hunting beasts at the same time, in the meadow of asphodel, which he had himself killed in the desert mountains, having an all-brazen club in his hands, forever unbroken.

"And I beheld Tityus, the son of the very renowned earth, lying on the ground; and he lay stretched over nine acres; and two vultures sitting on each side of him were tearing his liver, diving into the caul: but he did not ward them off with his hands; for he had dragged Leto, the celebrated wife of Zeus, as she was going to Pythos, through the delightful Panopeus.

"And I beheld Tantalus suffering severe griefs, standing in a lake: and it approached his chin. But he stood thirsting, and he could not get any thing to drink; for as often as the old man stooped, desiring to drink, so often the water being sucked up, was lost to him; and the black earth appeared around his feet, and the deity dried it up. And lofty trees shed down fruit from the top, pear trees, and apples, and pomegranates producing glorious fruit, and sweet figs, and flourishing olives: of which, when the old man raised himself up to pluck some with his hands, the wind kept casting them away to the dark clouds.

"And I beheld Sisyphus, having violent griefs, bearing an enormous stone with both [his hands]: he indeed leaning with his hands and feet kept thrusting the stone up to the top: but when it was about to pass over the summit, then strong force began to drive it back again, then the impudent stone rolled to the plain; but he, striving, kept thrusting it back, and the sweat flowed down from his limbs, and a dirt arose from his head.

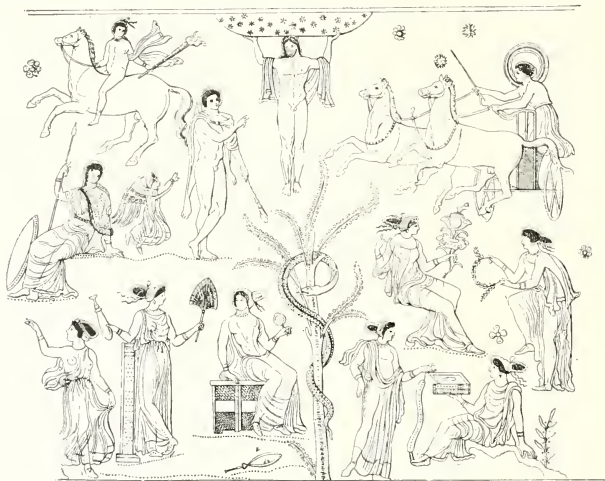
"After him I perceived the might of Hercules, an image; for he himself amongst the immortal gods is delighted with banquets, and has the fair-footed Hebe [daughter of mighty Zeus and golden-sandaled Juno]. And around him there was a clang of the dead, as of birds, frightened on all sides; but he, like unto dark night, having a naked bow, and an arrow at the string, looking about terribly, was always like unto one about to let fly a shaft. And there was a fearful belt around his breast, the thong was golden: on which wondrous forms were wrought, bears, and wild boars, and terrible lions, and contests, and battles, and slaughters, and slayings of men; he who devised that thong with his art, never having wrought such a one before, could he work any other such. But he immediately knew me, when he saw me with his eyes, and pitying me, addressed winged words:

"O Zeus-born son of Laertes, much-contriving Odysseus, ah! wretched one, thou too art certainly pursuing some evil fate, which I also endured under the beams of the sun. I was indeed the son of Zeus, the son of Saturn, but I had infinite labor; for I was subjected to a much inferior man, who enjoined upon me difficult contests: and once he sent me hither to bring the dog, for he did not think that there was any contest more difficult than this. I indeed brought it up and led it from Pluto's, but Hermes and blue-eyed Athene escorted me.'

"Thus having spoken, he went again within the house of Hades. But I remained there firmly, if by chance any one of the heroes, who perished in former times, would still come; and I should now still have seen former men, whom I wished, Theseus, and Pirithous, glorious children of the gods; but first myriads

of nations of the dead were assembled around me with a divine clamor; and pale fear seized me, lest to me illustrious Persephone should send a Gorgon head of a terrific monster from Orcus. Going then immediately to my ship, I ordered my companions to go on board themselves, and to loose the halsers. But they quickly embarked, and sat down on the benches. And the wave of the stream carried it through the ocean river, first the rowing and afterwards a fair wind."<sup>1</sup>

The Greeks clung to life and thus the shade of Achilles says to Odysseus (in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*): "I would prefer to be the serf of the poorest and most destitute man on earth than to rule in the Under World over the departed dead." But even in the days when the Homeric songs were collected and reduced to



THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES.<sup>2</sup>

Vase-picture. (Gerhard, *Ges. Abh.*, pl. II.)

the shape in which they are now, a more optimistic view of death began to take hold of the minds of the people.

The belief in the happy condition of the good and the deserving was introduced at an early date from Egypt. The Egyptian "Sechnit Aahlu," the abode of bliss, was changed into "Elysium" or the Islands of the Blessed, which were supposed to be situated

<sup>1</sup> Trans. by Buckley, *Bohn's Library*.

<sup>2</sup> Atlas carries the stellar dome; Phosphoros, the morning star, and Helios (perhaps Selene) sweep across the heavens. The Hesperides in various postures (here seven in number) surround the tree with the golden apples, which are watched by the dragon. Herakles descends with club in hand.

in the West, in the regions of the Old World where the sun sets. Minos, Rhadamanthys<sup>1</sup> and Æakos are the judges who admit the worthy and condemn sinners to be confined in Tartaros.<sup>2</sup>

In the West, too, is situated the garden of the Hesperides, i. e., the Maids of Evening, who guard the tree of life with its immortality-giving apples.

It is noteworthy that only the shade of Heracles is in Hades; he himself lives in Olympus. Some elect men do not go down to Hades, but are transferred to the Elysian fields where they abide in a transfigured state without ever tasting death. Proteus prophesies this enviable fate to Menelaos, the husband of Helen:

"But for thee, O noble Menelaos, it is not decreed by the gods to die, and meet with thy fate in horse-pasturing Argos; but the immortals will send you to the Elysian plain, and the boundaries of the earth, where is auburn-haired Rhadamanthys; there of a truth is the most easy life for men. There is nor snow, nor long winter, nor ever a shower, but ever thus the ocean sends forth the gently blowing breezes of the west wind, to refresh men; [such will be thy fate] because thou possessest Helen, and art the son-in-law of Zeus!"—*Odyssey* IV, 561 ff.

All these myths have lost their significance for us, but to the Greek mind they were aglow with life and inspiration, and replete with noble thoughts.

The idea of the death of the soul and the notions of its fate in the Land of the Shades exercised a powerful influence over the moral conceptions of the people. Says Plato:

"When a man is confronted with the thought that he must die, fear and care overcome him concerning things which before he did not mind; for the myths, so called, about Hades, how the wrong-doer will be punished there, so long ridiculed, then cause his soul to turn back."

Ἐπειδὴν τις ἐγγὺς ἢ τοῦ αἰεσθαι τελευθήσειν, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ δέος καὶ φροντίς περὶ ὧν ἐμπροσθεν οὐκ εἰσήει· οἱ τε γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν ᾧδον, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ δίδόναι δίκην, καταγελάμνοι τέως, τότε δὴ στρέφουσιν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν.

—Plato, *De rep.*, I, 330d.

Greek religion had its serious aspects and was taken seriously by the Greeks. The moral teachings of the Greek sages show us the depth of their religious sentiments.

<sup>1</sup> The word Rhadamanthys also betrays Egyptian origin. As A-ahlu changed to Elysium, so the words Ra of Amenti, i. e., the god ruling in the Nether World, were Hellenised into Rhadamanthys.

<sup>2</sup> Homer speaks of Elysium and Rhadamanthys, while Hesiod following the Cretan version of the legend makes Kronos the ruler in the Islands of the Blessed.