OLYMPIAN BRIDES.

BY THE EDITOR.

For us who have been educated in Christian countries and are strongly under the influence of Protestantism with its antipathy to symbolism, legend, ritual, and other allegorical methods of representing religious ideas, it is very difficult indeed to understand the spirit of pagan devotion. As a rule our opinions concerning paganism are full of unwarranted prejudices. We not only impute to heathens the superstitions that they actually had, but in our imagination we picture their religion as of the grossest kind. We regard them as idolaters who worship images of brass and stone, and think of them as possessing a faith in demons. The reason is not only that the ancient paganism is mostly poetical and mystical, while our own religion is anti-poetical, discarding imagination of any kind, but also that our judgment of the classical gods is influenced by the comments which the Church fathers made upon them, and we are further disturbed in our appreciation of the good features of paganism, not so much by our insufficient knowledge of the facts, as by taking into consideration later conceptions which ought to be ruled out. If we knew less of the later period of Greek civilization we would be more just in our appreciation of the religious spirit of its prime.

The Church fathers have picked out the worst features of pagan worship, have exaggerated them, and have put a malignant interpretation upon many things which if properly understood do not deserve any blame. Moreover, even if the opinion of the Church fathers did not influence us, we know paganism only from sources of comparatively late date when a decay of religious life had set in through a fusion of the various religions and had produced a state of religious anarchy and decadence which finally proved ruinous to the ancient conception, thus necessitating the formation of a new religion which appeared in Christianity.
historians and students of the Greek and Roman cults are familiar with Lucian, and kindred writers, who are the Ingersolls of antiquity, ridiculing the ancient gods and legends, and having themselves lost the spirit of devotion which animated their ancestors at the time when paganism was suited to the needs of the people. Other authors, who like Plutarch show much reverence for religion, are too philosophical to represent the naive belief of ancient paganism.

We must consider that most of the Greek and other legends received their final shape in special localities. As a rule they are closely affiliated to the public worship, to mystery plays which were

*Formerly this picture was interpreted to represent Kronos and Rhea, but Helbig (Wandgemälde No. 114) succeeded in convincing students of classical art that it can only refer to the marriage of Zeus. The bride is attended by Iris. Zeus sits in his grove lightly covered by his veil of clouds. Archaeologists find difficulty in explaining the three youths with wreaths on their heads. The easiest explanation seems to be that they represent mankind rejoicing on this festive occasion.
performed at the temple, and to ceremonies and customs which formed part of the public life of the commonwealth. In one part of Asia Minor where Semitic influences prevail, the god-man is worshiped under the name of Adonis, which means Lord.* In the spring Adonis celebrates his marriage with the goddess Astarte, or Istar, or Aphrodite, or as we now commonly say, Venus, but when the year draws to a close and vegetation withers, he is wounded in a chase for the wild boar (an animal sacred to him), and the beautiful god dies to indicate the deadened condition of nature during the winter. In the spring he re-awakes to new life and again runs the course of his divine career.

In some places and at certain seasons of the year the goddess of nature was a virgin, and virginity formed her typical character. Then again in other legends or on other occasions she was celebrated as the bride or the wife of some god. The same divinity could be the protectress at the same time of the arts and sciences, of warfare, of life and death and resurrection. These differentiations led to personal distinctions, and we have in Greek mythology the virgin Diana, and the virgin Pallas Athene by the side of

* The Hebrew אֲדֹנִי.
Aphrodite, the goddess of love, etc., the goddess Hera, Queen of Heaven, and wife of Zeus, and many others. All these figures were once united in one divinity, and we find that in some myths the ancient Babylonian Istar still shows features of all of them, but the more the legends of the gods assumed a literary shape, the more definite became the figures of the gods and goddesses, and when the inhabitants of one country became acquainted with the legends of another where there were different versions of the same god or goddess, a state of confusion began which was the cause of no little irritation.

In Greece the marriage of Aphrodite was celebrated in some districts with Hephaestos, the Indian Agni and the Roman Vulcan,
the god of fire, industry and civilization, while in other districts Ares, the Roman Mars, is looked upon as her spouse, and it can scarcely be doubted that their union was celebrated with public festivals. The underlying ideas were everywhere the same, but the forms which the myth assumed were different, and everything went well so long as the different cities and provinces remained isolated

and the various cults and myths were not mixed up. But when this happened the union of Ares with Aphrodite was considered an adultery, and Hephaestos (Vulcan) was represented as the irate husband. Such is the shape of the legend as we find it in Homer, and similar collisions of different myths have become ap-
parent elsewhere. This confusion of different versions of the myths finally produced what may be called infidelity, which spread rapidly in Greece at the period with which we are most familiar. We can not doubt that even at the time of Socrates there was a strong orthodox party at Athens who may have been guided to some extent by genuine piety, but we shall not go far astray if we consider that political as well as financial interests were also at stake. The festivals must have been the source of a rich income, and the hereditary priestly families were very zealous to preserve both their wealth and their influence. No wonder that even a conservative progress such as was inaugurated by Socrates was hateful to these men, and that they did not hesitate to have him condemned as an infidel and atheist because his philosophy tended to undermine the authority of the established gods.

Considering these changes which have come over the religion of ancient Greece, we must be careful to look upon every myth as a tradition by itself, and we shall in this way appreciate its real religious spirit much better than if we see it in its connection with other myths. We shall find that the main feature of the ancient pagan religion consists in the glorification of the god-man. He wins a triumph or gains a victory of some kind, then celebrates his marriage, but succumbs to death to reappear in a rejuvenated form. The different legends differ in details, sometimes the hero is a god-man, sometimes the main figure is a god, and his son is the divine hero, a man in whom the deity has become incarnated.

As soon as the people of one district became acquainted with the mythology of their neighbors, the process of a religious disintegration began slowly to set in and continued with the spread of an acquaintance with other countries. From time to time priests and poets attempted to reconcile contradictions, to combine different versions and to reconstruct their old traditions in adaptation to a widened horizon, but the final doom of this mythological phase of religion was inevitable. Paganism broke down and made room for a monotheism which, however, preserved the most important feature common to all myths—the idea of the God-man, as a mediator between God and man and as a saviour. Apollo, Dionysus, Asclepius, Theseus, Heracles, etc., are sons of Zeus, all of them divine personalities, who have come to help, to liberate, to heal, to rescue, to ransom mankind from all evil, from death, disease and oppression. When the polytheism of the gods had become worn out, the underlying idea was purged of its primitive naturalism in the
alembic of a dualistic philosophy, finally resulting in an ascetic religion.

Almost all god-men who appear as saviours in India, Asia, and in Greece are supposed to have been the object of persecution at the time of their birth. One of the oldest myths representing this typical feature is the story of the birth of Zeus. His father Kronos, a prehistoric deity, later on identified with Chronos, which means "time," was supposed to have been in the habit of swallowing his own children. He was married to the goddess Rhea,* also called Cybele, an ancient goddess who must have been a form of the

Asiatic Istara, for even in her later forms she is still endowed with many Oriental features, and is a goddess not less of life and resurrection than of death and the darker powers of the nether world. This Rhea was chosen by Kronos as his wife, and when she took

* The ancient goddess Rhea or Cybele must not be confounded with Rea Silvia. The very words are different as appears from the fact that in the former the c is short, and in the latter, long. By an unjustified license the name Rea Silvia is frequently also spelled in the Greek fashion with an h after the K. Even Harper's Latin Dictionary and Dictionary of Classical Antiquity are guilty of this mistake which has crept in at an early date. Baumeister in Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums follows Preller in spelling the Roman goddess in the Roman way, Rea.
pity on her offspring she gave her divine husband a stone instead of the infant that she had born him. In the meantime the little child-god, who was Zeus, himself destined to become the head of the new dynasty of the Greek gods, was brought up in a hiding place. He was suckled by the goat Amalthea on the Island of Crete, and his cries were drowned by the noise of the Corybantes, a feature which continued to be repeated in mystery plays performed on the island of Crete and representing the birth of Zeus.

The story of the infancy of Zeus is typical. A similar fate is recorded of the Indian Krishna and the Krishna myth is transferred both upon Buddha and Christ. A slaughter of innocent

babes is incorporated into the history of all three. We meet with kindered traditions everywhere, especially of those who appear on earth in human form, are born in lowly circumstances, among the peasants in a rustic district, sometimes in a stable and usually in a cave. Dionysus was cradled in a trunus, a food measure from which the cattle are fed, and the Christ-child lay in a manger.

The underlying idea of all the ancient religions seems to be that the gods are human and that noble men are divine. Nothing that is human is deemed unworthy of a god. So all the gods have their consorts, and the gods must pass through the ordeal of death
as well as men. We are not sufficiently informed about what might be called the dogmas of Greek paganism, but we know that there were many places famous for having a tomb of Zeus, which can only have been funerary shrines attached to Zeus temples, where the annual death of the god was bemoaned with a subsequent celebration of his victorious resurrection.

One of the favorite gods whose name is identified with the idea of joy and exuberance of life is Dionysus, the god of wine, and a representative of the resurrection. He is the son of Zeus and Semele, the latter being presumably a goddess of the moon. Like all saviour gods he was the object of perfidious persecution even
before he was born, for Hera in her jealousy suggested to Semele the wish of seeing her lover in his full divinity. Zeus being obliged by his oath to fulfil her wish, granted her request and so Semele died through her own fault, for no one could see Zeus and live, a feature which is also attributed to Yahveh, the national God of Israel. Since the infant was not quite ready for birth, Zeus took him to himself concealing him in his side, and when the babe was fully matured had him cut out from his thigh. It was on this account that Dionysus was called "the twice born." Like Zeus the Dionysus child had to be brought up in secrecy, and the satyrs and
mænads made so much noise that no one could hear the cries of the infant. We know that this incident of a boisterous noise-making crowd remained a characteristic feature of the Bacchus festivals and other kindred performances.

Among the art monuments which have come down to us, we have representations of the union between two divine personalities, a god and a goddess such as Ares and Aphrodite, or Zeus with Hera, Poseidon with Amphitrite, Dionysus with Ariadne, Persens and Andromeda, etc. both parties being purely divine and superhuman. There are other legends, however, which gradually acquire a greater interest because they are a mixture of human and divine. The human element of the story endears a hero to the people.

In most cases it will be difficult to make a rigid distinction
between gods and heroes, because most heroes are humanized gods; for instance in the original myth—now lost—Heracles must have been the sun-god himself whose wanderings and deeds of valor were related in the story of his twelve labors. But he was more and more humanized until he became a hero whose unusual virtue, strength, and courage had to be explained, and who therefore was deemed to be the offspring of a god. In Greece as elsewhere most of the royal families derived their origin from some god or another.

The story makes Heracles the son of Zeus and Alkmene, and the kings of Argos who derived their descent from him are called Heraclids. When Heracles after his death ascended to Olympus he was married to Hebe, the goddess of eternal youth.

A most beautiful legend is the story of Eros and Psyche, which is of special interest to all as it represents the god of love in his union with the human soul, an idea which occurs in the Christian Church where, too, the soul is represented as the bride of Christ.

We ought to bear in mind that the story of Eros and Psyche is a fairy tale, and it is the only fairy tale which has been saved from the universal deluge that swept away most of the literary traces of antiquity. There is no doubt but that Greece had fairy tales as much as Germany and other modern countries, but there happened to be no Grimm brothers to collect them and put them in book form. We must bear in mind that even in Germany the interest in popular stories or Märchen is of a very recent date, and it was actually by an accident that the attention of one of the Grimm brothers was called to an old Hessian woman who knew many old traditions by heart, and she was the last one left, who being illiterate, repeated the stories as she had heard them from her grandmother. If the scholar philologist had never heard of her, the German Märchen would have been lost forever. In Greece the legend of Eros and Psyche is preserved by Apuleius, who really did not reproduce the real spirit of it for his style is somewhat frivolous, and he does not do justice to the religious spirit that underlies this pretty and tender tale.

We must bear in mind that fairy tales are the last echo of an ancient religion. There was a time when they were myths, and the events related were of the deepest meaning to the listener. Thus the story of Eros and Psyche was really a poetical explanation of the fate of the soul, and involves a promise of immortality of some kind, and we find similar notions pervading almost all other genuine folklore tales. The deities of the ancient myth have been reduced to good and bad fairies, and events which take place in the world
beyond are localized in this because primitive man did not discriminate between the two worlds; to him both were closely interwoven.

Sometimes it is easy to trace the original myth in a fairy tale. We learn for instance that the good girl who falls into the well and drowns is kindly treated by the fairy Dame Holle or Hulda, who is no one else than the Queen of Heaven and the ruler of the world, while the bad girl is punished by her own evil deeds. In other stories, such as "Little Red Riding Hood," we have greater difficulty in recognizing how the bad wolf swallows her and has to give her up again when she is rescued by the kind hunter. Fairy tales never stop to take into consideration such impossibilities as that the wolf devours little Red Riding Hood, and the hunter cuts her out of the wolf's stomach, whence she comes forth as young and

![Eros and Psyche Together with the Good Shepherd.](image)

(Ancient Sarcophagus.)

pretty as she was before. The reason is that here we do not deal with events of this life, but are confronted with facts that represent the wonderful stories of the fate of gods and men in the world to come.

The charming story of Eros and Psyche must have exercised some influence in the formation of early Christianity, for we find the typical group of this loving couple represented side by side with the good shepherd on an ancient sarcophagus.

The same idea that underlies the story of Eros and Psyche is the theme of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. But while it extends to man the hope of immortality it explains why Orpheus must leave his beloved wife in the realm of Hades. She still lives; he found her and would have brought her back had he not forgotten
in his eagerness to see her the divine behest not to turn back, and so they remain forever separated.

An interesting myth originated in Nauplia, where a public festival celebrated the marriage of Poseidon, the god of the sea, with Amymone, a nymph who is always represented as a lovely maiden. The local legend (as preserved by Apollonius, II, I, 8)
informs us that the founder of Nauplia was deemed to be the son of Poseidon and the nymph Amymone. Amymone went into the country with a pitcher to look for drinking water, and not being able to find a spring lost her way in the woods near the shore, where she came upon a satyr who attacked her. She called for help and Poseidon, the god of the sea, came to her rescue, and having driven away the satyr, fell in love with the beautiful girl and married her. The son of Amymone, Nauplius, was honored in that locality as the tutelary hero of the city, and it is not impossible that this legend is of purely physical origin. It has been found that the best spring in the neighborhood comes from a mountain in the immediate vicinity of the shore, and its fresh clear waters gush in great plenty directly into the sea. Even in the remote days of antiquity it had become necessary to dam the spring, partly in order to procure the water, and partly to protect the fertile shore in its vicinity against
sudden inundations. If this was indeed the origin of the myth it
would explain why Amymone, the nymph of a fresh water spring
is always represented as a lovely maiden in the flower of her youth.

Perhaps the favorite representation of a marriage feast be-
tween a goddess and a mortal is the story of Thetis, a daughter
of Nereus, who like Poseidon was a god of the sea. The ancient
myth became so extremely popular because Homer inserted it into
the national epic of Greece, and derived from it the cause of the
Greek expedition against Troy.

Thetis was the loveliest of the Nereids, and Zeus himself was
in love with her, but he was prevented from marrying her because
an oracle had foretold that her son would be greater than his
father. Accordingly Zeus was frightened because he feared that as
he had deposed his father Kronos, so the son of Thetis would in

PELEUS WRESTLES WITH THETIS.*

turn deprive him of the government of the world, and he decided
that Thetis should not marry any god, but be united with a mortal,
and for this honor he selected Peleus of Aegina, king of Thessaly
who was himself the son of Aiaces and the nymph Endeis, the
daughter of Chiron.

The version of Homer appears to be of a comparatively recent
date, for we have instances according to which Peleus has to gain
his divine wife by conquest. Thetis resents being married to a

*Thetis as a goddess of the sea possesses the power in common with
Proteus of changing her shape. Flames come out from her shoulders and two
lions (in the illustration exceedingly small) try to bite Peleus, and Chiron
comes to his rescue. While other centaurs are represented as savage he was
supposed to be endowed with wisdom, and this attribute is indicated in pic-
tures by representing him with human feet. The branch of a tree and two
little satyrs have reference to his forest life. The defeat of Thetis is shown
by the flight of a Nereid here called Donmeda, and Thetis herself has her feet
turned backward.
mortal and yields only on the condition that he would conquer her. This combat is repeatedly represented in some ancient vase pic-


tures. Later illustrations, however, show that she accepts the engagement with Peleus willingly, and the artist even represents
THE FRANÇOIS VASE. representing the marriage of Thetis.
her love of Peleus in her attitude, showing how she courts his arrival as a welcome husband. The scene is represented in the so-called Portland vase, one of the most beautiful pieces of art which has come down to us and is now preserved in the British Museum. A little cupid flutters above Thetis, and Nereus, her father, watches the arrival of Peleus.

Another vase, commonly called the François vase, also represents the marriage of Thetis, and in two stately rows we see the several gods invited to take part at the festival approaching the temple where they are welcomed by Peleus while the bride waits in the interior of the building.

We need scarcely mention the well-known incidents which the legend connects with the story. In order to avoid trouble the gods do not invite Eris the goddess of strife, but she revenges herself for this slight by rolling a golden apple among the goddesses with the inscription "For the most beautiful." This starts a quarrel which Zeus decides through Paris who gives the apple to Aphrodite, and thus offends both Athene and Hera. As a reward Aphrodite

**APHRODITE PERSUADING HELEN.**

Pytho, i. e., Persuasion, is seated above Helen while Eros stands by Paris who is also called Alexandros.
promises Paris that for his bride he may have Helen, the wife of Agamemnon, known as the most beautiful woman on earth, and when Paris succeeds by the aid of Aphrodite in eloping with Helen, the Greeks unite in an expedition of revenge to bring her back to Greece.

Helen is a humanized deity as much as Heracles, for Homer speaks of Menelaos to whom she was married as the husband of a goddess, and her name is apparently an archaic form of the word "Selene" which means "the moon."

In the ancient history of Rome Mars is reported to have been the father of Romulus and Remus by a vestal virgin called Rea Silvia, also known as Ilia. According to the popular Roman tradition recorded in the first book of Livy, Rea Silvia (or Ilia) was the daughter of Numitor, the exiled or deposed king of Alba Longa. His younger brother had usurped the throne, and in order to assure himself against the rights of his elder brother caused the latter's
daughter to be made a vestal virgin, and transferred to the temple of Vesta. But here a divine destiny interfered. Mars selected her as his spouse, and the virgin Rea Silvia bore him the twins Romulus and Remus. The rest of the legend is sufficiently known: the irate uncle had the infants exposed in the woods, but a she-wolf nursed them, and this incident has become the emblem of Rome.

The legend of Aphrodite's marriage with Anchises would probably have been forgotten had not .Eneas, their son, been adopted as the ancestor of the Gens Julia, the imperial family of Rome.

The time when these several legends of the marriage of the gods were really part of the religious life of the people, lies in an almost prehistoric time and we have no real and direct information concerning their significance, but when we try to reconstruct the significance which these myths had we come to the conclusion that there was a period in which they were dear to the hearts of the people, and that the marriage festivals of these gods and goddesses were celebrated in their special localities with genuine devotion and with a natural unsophisticated piety.

When Christianity superseded paganism, it incorporated into
its own doctrinal structure several of the most fundamental pagan ideas, among them the doctrines of the god-man as a saviour, of the dying god who rises from death to new life, and also of the immortality of the soul. No trace of these theories can be found in the religion of ancient Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, while the Gentiles clung to them with great tenacity. In Christianity they appear completely transformed not only through the rigid

monothecism of its Jewish traditions but also by means of the ascetic tendencies so prominent in the second and third centuries of Church history; and yet the idea of the saviour's marriage, though absolutely obliterated in the dogmatic formation of the Christian belief, was also preserved at least in certain allusions to Christ as the bridegroom, in the report of the marriage of the Lamb in the Revelations of St. John, and in the legend of St. Catherine, the bride of Christ.