

Greek Mythology

The Creation Myth

“First Chaos came into being, next wide bosomed Gaea(Earth), Tartarus and Eros (Love). From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night. Of Night were born Aether and Day (whom she brought forth after intercourse with Erebus), and Doom, Fate, Death, sleep, Dreams; also, though she lay with none, the Hesperides and Blame and Woe and the Fates, and Nemesis to afflict mortal men, and Deceit, Friendship, Age and Strife, which also had gloomy offspring.”[11]

“And Earth first bore starry Heaven (Uranus), equal to herself to cover her on every side and to be an ever-sure abiding place for the blessed gods. And earth brought forth, without intercourse of love, the Hills, haunts of the Nymphs and the fruitless sea with his raging swell.”[11] Heaven “gazing down fondly at her (Earth) from the mountains he showered fertile rain upon her secret clefts, and she bore grass flowers, and trees, with the beasts and birds proper to each. This same rain made the rivers flow and filled the hollow places with the water, so that lakes and seas came into being.”[12]

The Titans and the Giants

“Her (Earth) first children (with heaven) of Semi-human form were the hundred-handed giants Briareus, Gyges, and Cottus. Next appeared the three wild, one-eyed Cyclopes, builders of gigantic walls and master-smiths.....Their names were Brontes, Steropes, and Arges.”[12] Next came the “Titans: Oceanus, Hypenon, Iapetus, Themis, Memory (Mnemosyne), Phoebe also Tethys, and Cronus the wily—youngest and most terrible of her children.”[11]

“Cronus hated his lusty sire Heaven (Uranus). And Heaven hated others whom Earth had borne him”[11]. Because of Heaven's hatred, he forced the giants and Cyclopes underground and “would not let them up into the light.” But Cronus answered his mother's plea and, as his father heaven lay upon Earth, he castrated his father with a jagged sickle. Cronus cast the severed members behind him and from the bloody drops Earth conceived the Furies, Giants and Nymphs of the Ash-Trees. And as the members were swept away in the sea, the foam that sported around them gave birth to Aphrodite.”[11]

Cronus after overthrowing Heaven, “married his sister Rhea”[12] and then ruled over the Heaven and Earth. During his rule Cronus was mean and horrible. Heaven warned him that “your children will treat you just as you have treated us”[4], that “they will bind you in a terrible prison, and one of them will rule instead of you”[4] .

Because of Heaven's warning, "Every year, therefore, he swallow the children whom Rhea bore him: first Hestia, then Demeter and Hera, then Hades and Poseidon"[12]. "This was too much for his wife, Rhea...and as soon as her youngest son, Zeus, was born, she hid him away in a cave on the island of Crete."[4] So when Cronus demanded him, she "had wrapped a stone in swaddling clothes , which she gave to Cronus...; he swallowed it, believing that he was swallowing the infant Zeus"[12] .

With Zeus in Crete, he was "guarded by the mountain nymphs"[4] and safe from Cronus.

The Olympians

"Zeus grew to manhood...then sought out Metis the Titaness...On her advice he visited his mother Rhea, and asked to be made Cronus's cup-bearer. Rhea readily assisted him in his task of vengeance; she provided... (an) emetic potion, which Metis had told him to mix with Cronus's honeyed drink. Cronus, having drunk deep, vomited up first the stone, and then Zeus's elder brothers and sisters. They sprang out unhurt and in gratitude, asked him to lead them in a war against the Titans, who chose the gigantic Atlas as their leader: for Cronus was now past his prime."[12]

"The war lasted ten years but, as last, Mother Earth prophesized victory to her grandson Zeus, if he took as allies those whom Cronus had confined in Tartatus"[12]. So Zeus went and released the cyclopes and the giants, "strengthened them with divine food and drink. The Cyclopes thereupon gave Zeus the thunderbolt as a weapon of offense; and Hades, a helmet of darkness: and Poseidon, a trident. After the three brothers had held a counsel of war, Hades entered unseen into Cronus's presence, to steal his weapons and, while Poseidon threatened him with the trident...Zeus struck him (Cronus) down with a thunderbolt. The three-Hundred-handed Ones (giants) now took up rocks and pelted the remaining Titans"[12] until they took flight. "The Gods rushed in pursuit. Cronus and all the defeated Titans, except Atlas were banished ... and guarded there by the Hundred-handed Ones (Giants).... Atlas, as their war-leader, was awarded an exemplary punishment, being ordered to carry the sky on his shoulders; but the Titanesses were spared, for the sake of Metis and Rhea."[12]

After Cronus defeat, "Zeus and his brothers then cast lots to see which should rule the air, the sea and which under the earth: and so Zeus became King of Heaven, Poseidon ruled the waves (seas) and Hades the realm of the dead. Then there was peace and Zeus caused the palaces of the Gods to be built."[4]

“One of the Titans who was imprisoned...was Iapetus. He had three sons...Atlas who was made to hold up the sky on his shoulders... and two helpful sons...Prometheus and Epimetheus; and the first of these was one of the most important figures in all Greek myth.”[4].

Mortal Man

“Before the great war with the Titans there had been men on the earth, and that time was the Golden Age when corn grew without ploughing or sowing, and all the animals lived on fruit or grass. The Golden Age came and passed, for no children were born, and the men and women did nothing but eat and drink, and wander about the lovely garden of the world.” [4]

“Then came the men of the Silver Age, and with them came wickedness and evil, because of Cronus and the Titans....But when Zeus sat throned in Olympus.... he called to him the good Titan, Prometheus, "Go" he said, "and make man out of clay. Make him in shape and form like the Immortals, and I will breathe life into him. Then you shall teach him such things as he needs to know, so that he may honor the Immortals and build temples to us. And after a little time he shall die and go down to the realm of my brother Hades and be subject to him." [4]

“Prometheus did as he was told.... (and) Zeus gave life to the clay men and left Prometheus to teach them all things needful”[4].... But, before Zeus left, he warned Prometheus. “ ‘You may give such gifts as are suitable...but you must not give them fire—for that belongs to the Immortals. If you disobey in this matter, your fate shall be more terrible than that of all the other Titans put together’ “[4]

“For man as first was little better than beasts, a poor creature, who did not know how to think or how to use the things which he saw and felt round about him. He lived in caves, ate herbs and raw meat: and when he was wounded or hurt, he died because he knew nothing of medicine or surgery....But Prometheus, the good and kind, taught men all the arts and crafts of life. He taught them how to build houses and make tools; how to plough the earth and sow the corn, how to reap it when it had grown, to thresh out the bright grains and grind them between flat stones. He showed them how to catch and tame some of the wild creatures: the dog to guard their houses and go hunting with them; the horse to draw their chariots, and the ox to pull the plough; the sheep to yield wool, and the goats milk which might be made into cheese. It is said that Prometheus also gave men the power of speech, taught them the names of all things and even how to write and read. But it was slow work, since fire, the greatest aid, was missing. Without it meat must still be eaten raw, and tools could be made only of stone and wood; bread could not be baked, and houses could not be warmed in winter.” [4]

“...he (Prometheus) could read the future”[4] and knew he “must give fire to mankind, the last and greatest gifts”[4]. But he knew that he would “incur the terrible wrath of Zeus.”[4] “Then Prometheus...set out for Olympus carrying with him the stalk of a fennel plant, as long as a staff and hard as wood, but hollow and filled with a white pith which would burn slowly and steadily like the wick of a candle. At the foot of Olympus, he was met by Athena”[4] Athena was supportive of Prometheus interest in man, so she “led him by the secret paths to the summit of Olympus”[4]. “As day drew to an end, Helios drove up in his shining chariot, and Prometheus, hiding by the gateway, needed but to stretch out his fennel-stalk and touch the golden wheel. Then, the precious spark concealed under his cloak, he hastened down the mountain side, and away into a deep valley of Arcadia where he heaped up a pile of wood and kindled it.”[4] “When the day dawned he began to teach men the uses of fire. He showed them how to cook meat and bake bread; how to make bronze and smelt iron; how to hammer the hot metals into swords and ploughshares and all the other cunning crafts of the smith and the metal-worker”[4]

“But Zeus, as soon as he became aware that his command had been disobeyed and the gift which he withheld had been stolen and given to men, summoned Prometheus before him. Titan, he cried fiercely, ‘You have disobeyed me! What is there to prevent me from casting you down into Tartarus with your brethren, and destroying these vile insects, these men, to whom you have given gifts reserved for the Immortals alone’. ‘Lord Zeus,’ answered Prometheus quietly, ‘I know what is to come, and how cruelly you will punish me for all I have done. But there are two things you cannot do: no Immortal may take away the gift an Immortal has once given – so you will not deprive men of fire now that I have made it theirs. And I am certain that you will not destroy mankind, when I tell you that a man – your son, born of a mortal woman - will save you and all of you who dwell in Olympus in that future day when Earth will bring forth the Giants, ...(for) revenged for the overthrow of the Titans. This I tell you, and you know that my words are true: no Immortal will be able to slay a Giant, but a man will slay them, if he be strong and brave enough, And I will tell you this also: at a certain time in the future you may fall as you father fell’ “[4]

Zeus then had Prometheus chained to Mount Caucasus, where he would remain “ for ever and ever as punishment...and...be a warning to all who would disobey”[4]. As further punishment, Zeus “sent a fierce eagle who... (would) visit him every day and devour...(his) liver; and every night...(his) liver...(would) grow again so that next day...(his) agony may be repeated.”[4]

Zeus decided that he would “plague mankind so that the gift of fire might not make them too happy....he was making the first woman. Her name was Pandora, which means "all-gifted", for

all of the Immortals helped to endow her....Hephaestus shaped her out of clay, and lovely Aphrodite gave her beauty, while Hermes taught her cunning and boldness, and Athena dressed her in lovely clothes. Zeus breathed life into her, and then Hermes led her down to earth and brought her to Epimetheus, the thoughtless brother of Prometheus, who lived now more or less as a man among men.”[4]

“When Epimetheus saw the beauty of Pandora he forgot his brother's warning against accepting any gift from Zeus and fell in love with her at once. Very soon they were married...In the house of Epimetheus stood a golden box which Prometheus had left there with strict orders that no one was to open it. Epimetheus told his wife this, but she was so curious and inquisitive that life did not seem worth living until she knew what treasure it was that her husband was hiding from her. So one day when he was out, Pandora crept quietly to the golden casket and lifted the lid. Then with a rush and a cry out came all the ills which beset mankind - diseases, and sorrows, hate, jealousy, lies, theft, cheating and a hundred others. Terrified at what she had done Pandora slammed down the lid. But she raised it again quickly when a little voice cried: “Let me out too! I am Hope!” For Prometheus had placed Hope there when he shut up the evil things, so that mankind might not suffer quite so much if Zeus had his way. “[4]

“Time went by and men settled down all over the earth as if it had always been theirs. And Zeus was pleased with what he saw as he looked down from Olympus, and busied himself setting the rest of the world to rights after the desolation made by the Titans.... When he was tired with his labours, Zeus would go southwards to the land of the blessed Ethiopians, men of the Silver Age who had not learnt the wickedness of the Titans, and who often entertained the Immortals at their banquets.”[4]

“But the evils which Pandora had let loose from the golden casket found their way into surely enough into the hearts of men and some even in Greece became almost as wicked as those of the Silver Age whom Zeus had destroyed before Prometheus made man as we know him out of clay. Rumours of wickedness beyond belief came to Zeus and he began to wonder whether he could destroy the people of the Bronze Age and make yet another race of men: but without Prometheus to help him, he hesitated. At last he decided to see for himself.”[4]

Taking Hermes with him, Zeus disguised as an old man and Hermes as his grandson, they went to visit three households to test mankind. The first household was wicked. The second was good as well as the third. So Zeus spared mankind but he wanted to rid the evil men from the earth by unleashing a great flood. Zeus decried, “All those who are not fit to live shall drown in the flood, and I will see to it that any who save themselves by climbing to the tops of mountains

are worthy of life.”[4] He then told Deucalion and Pyrrha from the second household to build a great ship to survive the flood.

So Zeus returned to Olympus to let loose a great flood over the earth. “For nine days and nine nights the rain poured down upon the earth; and Poseidon stirred up the waves with his trident so that the sea flowed out over the land as well....At last the waters began to fall, and the ship came to rest on a slope of Mount Parnassus, near Apollo's shrine at Delphi.”[4] Apollo told “Deucalion and Pyrrha”[4] that “Zeus does not mean to stamp out utterly the race of men. Therefore go down into the valley before you, cover your heads you’re your cloaks, and cast behind you the bones of your mother.”[4]

“For a long time they were puzzled by this command for each of them had a different mother, and both were dead. But at last Deucalion, hit upon the right answer.”[4] That their “mother is the Earth, for out of earth were men formed by our maker Prometheus. And the bones of Earth must be stones.”[4]

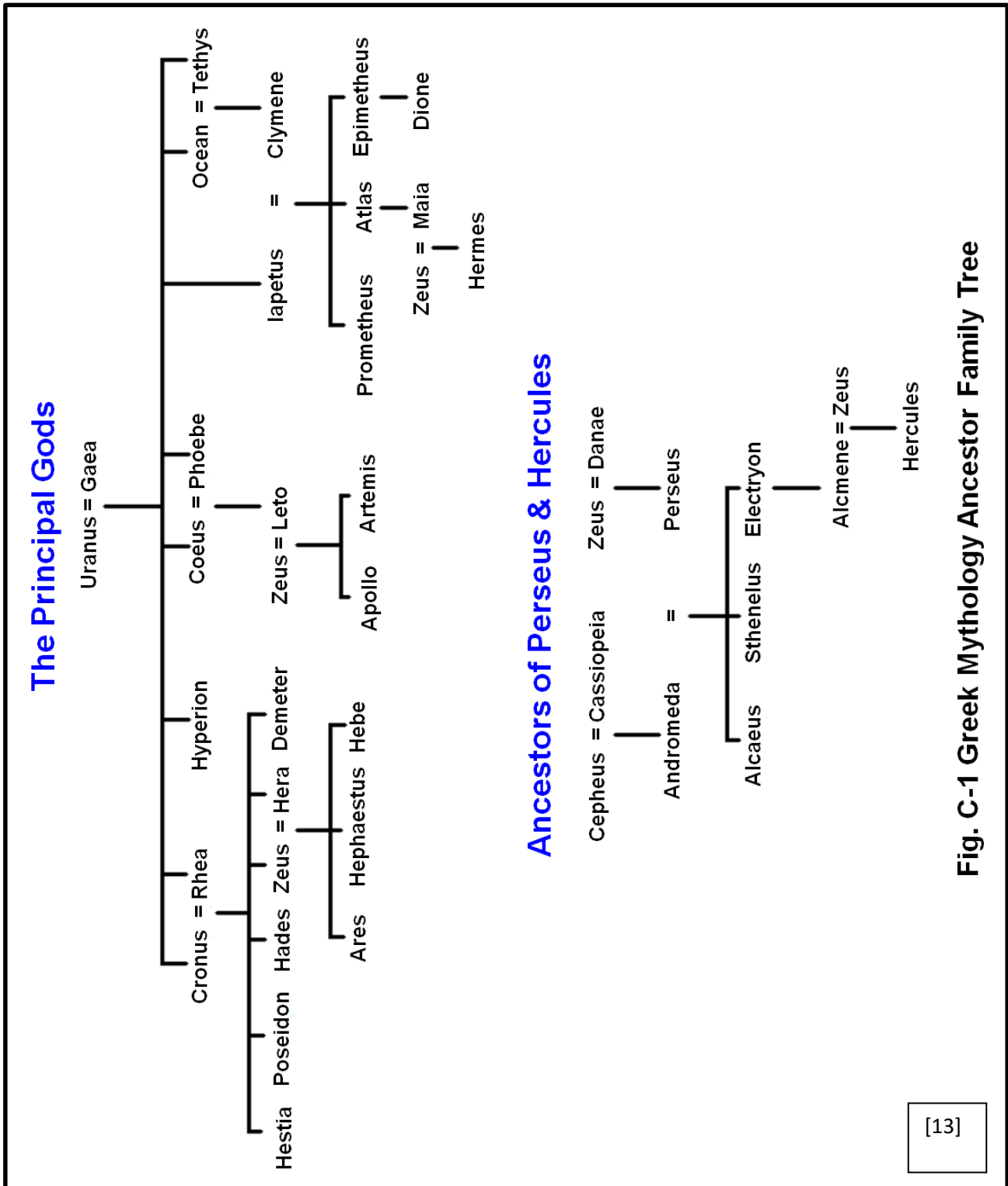
“So they went down into the river valley, cover their heads and began to throw stones backwards over their shoulders.”[4] As the stones hit the ground they turned into men and women. “In this way the land of Greece was re-populated”[4].

“Zeus was pleased with mankind now that the more evil of them had been destroyed, and he (Zeus) and the other Immortals wandered often through the lovely land of Hellas, and some married mortal brides whose children became Kings and Princes.....For Zeus remembered the prophecy of the Titan, Prometheus, that when the Giants came to attack him and the other Immortals, they could only win the war if there was a mortal man strong and brave enough to fight at their side and kill the Giants when the Gods had overthrown them.”[4]

After the great flood, Zeus was “eager to make Greece a pleasant dwelling-place”[4] so he commanded Earth to bring forth animals. “Earth did as she was bidden, and animals of every kind came leaping and tumbling out of the ground....For besides the animals, she made the Giants - though they did not come out of their caves for a long time.... But in addition to the Giants, Earth produced the most fearful monster ever seen, who was called Typhon”[4], the last of the Titans.

In Greek Mythology, there are literally hundreds of stories to be told - stories about the twelve Olympians that lived with Zeus on Mount Olympus (like Apollo, Helios, Athena, Hermes, Ares),

stories of lesser divinities such as the Nymphs, the Fates and the Muses, or stories about the demi-gods such as Hercules and Orpheus.



Of all the mythology stories that could be told, three stories have been chosen to tell because we can find these characters in the night sky; Perseus, Hercules and Orion.

The Story of Perseus

“In Tiryns lived King Acrisius, who only had one child, a lovely girl called Danae. Being very anxious to have a son to succeed him, Acrisius sent to ask the oracle of Apollo what he had done that this was denied him. His question was not answered; instead the oracle warned him that his daughter would have a son who would kill him.”[4] (see page Fig. C-1 for Ancestry Tree)

“ ‘We’ll see about that!’ cried Acrisius, and, vowing that Danae should never marry, he shut her up in a tower at Tiryns which was plated all over with brass so that it shone in the sun like gold....But Zeus visited Danae in a shower shower of golden rain, and spoke with her out of the shining mist, and they had a son called Perseus who was born there in the prison-tower at Tiryns.”[4]

“When Acrisius heard about the child...he was filled with anger and fear... He would not believe that Zeus was the child’s father but said that it was Proteus, his brother, whom he hated....He had a great wooden chest made, and he set Danae in it with the baby in her arms and pushed it out on to the rippling waters in the Bay of Nauplia”[4].

However, Danae and Perseus did not die because on the next day “the chest washed up on the shores of the island of Seriphos, where Polydectes was king....Dictys, the king's brother, who was a fisherman, found Danae and her child, and took them to his home and looked after them.”[4]

“Perseus grew up, a strong and noble youth skilled in all manner of things from the craft of the fisherman to the use of a sword. In time King Polydectes heard of them, and fell in love with Danae; but Danae would not marry him, for he was a cruel and wicked tyrant. At length he decided to take her by force; but this he dared not do because Perseus was always there to guard her. So he devised a scheme to remove Perseus without incurring any blame for killing him. He held a great feast to which he invited the young men of Seriphos, including Perseus, and they all came bringing rich gifts to the King. But Perseus had nothing to give, and he alone came empty-handed, so that all the young men mocked him, until his cheeks burnt with shame.”[4] In shame he shouted that he would bring a finer gift than any other. “‘That cannot be,’ said cunning Polydectes, ‘unless you bring me the head of Medusa, the Gorgon!’ ”[4]. Without hesitation, Perseus agreed to kill the Gorgon.

“And he rush out of the palace amid the loud laughter and jeers of Polydectes and his friends, and went down beside the quiet sea to think what he should do. While he sat there,

deep in thought, two Immortals came to him: Athena, tall and stately in her shining helmet, with her polished shield upon her arm; and Hermes with kindly laughter in his eyes, slim and quick of limb, with the winged sandals on his feet. 'Do not grieve, Perseus,' said Hermes, 'for, by the will of Zeus, we are come to help you. See, here I lend you the sharpest weapon in the world, that very sickle of adamant with which Cronos wounded the Sky, and which Zeus used in his battle with Typhon. No lesser blade will smite the head from Medusa the Gorgon.' 'And I,' said Athena in her calm, sweet voice, 'will lend you by shield with which I dazzle the eyes of erring mortals who do battle against my wisdom. Any mortal who looks upon the face of Medusa is turned to stone immediately by the terror of it: but if you look only on her reflection in the shield, all will be well.' 'Rise now,' said Hermes. 'Your mother will be safe until your return, for the good fisherman, Dictys, will protect her – and you have far to travel. First you must visit the Grey Sisters and learn from them how to find the nymphs who dwell at the back of the North Wind: they will lend you all else that you may need, and will tell you how to find the Gorgons, and how to escape from the two who are immortal, when you have slain Medusa.'"[4]

"He came...to the lonely cave in the dark north where the three daughters of the Titan Phorcus lived, the Grey Sisters who had been born old women with grey hair, and who had only one eye and one tooth between them. Perseus stepped quietly up behind them as they sat near the mouth of their cave; and as they passed the single eye from one to another, he took it from an outstretched hand, and then cried aloud: 'Daughters of Phorcus, I have your eye! And I will keep it...if you do not tell me what I wish to know. The Grey Sisters cried aloud in alarm, 'Give us back our eye, and we will swear by Styx to tell you truthfully all you ask. But do not leave us forever in this terrible darkness!' So Perseus learnt the way to the magic land at the back of the North Wind and returning the eye, hastened on his journey. When he reached the lovely garden of the northern nymphs, he was welcomed kindly by them...he said: 'Fair nymphs, I must hasten away to kill the Gorgon Medusa and carry her head to wicked King Polydectes. Tell me...where the Gorgons live, and how I may kill Medusa.' "[4]

The Nymphs lent him the "Shoes of Swiftmess"[4] to escape, a "magic wallet in which to carry the head"[4] after he cut it off, and "the Cap of Hades"[4] to make him invisible while he sneaked up on Medusa.

"He bade farewell to the kind nymphs, and set out on the way...and he came at last to the stony land of the Gorgons. Then he saw the three terrible sisters lying asleep in the sun with the snakes which grew instead of hair writhing about the head of Medusa, and the dragon-

scales which covered her sisters' head. They had white tusks like pigs and hands of brass; and great golden wings grew from their shoulders.”[4]

“Wearing the Cap of Darkness, and stepping cautiously, Perseus drew near, looking only at the reflection in Athena’s polished shield. Then he trembled indeed as he saw the terrible face of Medusa pictured on the bright surface; but he did not draw back. Still looking only at the reflection, he drew the adamantine sickle and cut off the terrible head at a single blow. Then, quick as could be, he picked it up and dropped it into the wallet which the nymphs had given him. But the hissing of the snakes on Medusa’s head woke the other two Gorgons, who could not be killed, and they sprang up, eager to avenge their sister.”[4]

“Perseus leapt into the air and sped away on the Shoes of Swiftmess as fast as he could go. After him came the Gorgons, screaming with rage, but Perseus fled away and away out over the dark ocean...until his terrible pursers were lost in the distance behind him.”[4]

“On the way, some of the blood from the Medusa's severed head dripped out of the sack and fell into the sea. Poseidon felt the drops, recognized them as Medusa's blood, and was deeply moved. For Poseidon had been in love with Medusa when she was a beautiful maiden, before she had been bewitched. Remembering how she once had been, he raised her drops of blood from the sea. He then mixed the drops of blood with white foam of the waves and with white sands of the beach creating the Winged Horse, Pegasus.”[14]

“Cepheus as an African, the King of Ethiopia, and the beautiful Cassiopeia was his Queen. Soon after their marriage, Cassiopeia bore her husband a daughter, Andromeda. Even when a young girl, Andromeda possessed a beauty as great as that of her mother. Cassiopeia was vain and boastful. So great was her beauty and that of Andromeda, she said, that it surpassed even that of the sea-nymphs. When the sea-nymphs overheard Cassiopeia they were very jealous. They complained to Poseidon, God of the Sea, and demanded that Cassiopeia be punished. Poseidon agreed and summoned a terrible sea-monster, Cetus.....To the horror of Cepheus and Cassiopeia, Cetus, in the form of a monstrous whale, set upon his mission of destruction and began the slaughter, working his way up and down the coast. The frightened people gathered and pleaded to their king to save them. Cepheus consulted an oracle-one with magical powers that could communicate with the gods when men sought their advice. The oracle told Cepheus that there was only one way to stop the slaughter: ‘You must offer your daughter Andromeda as a sacrifice.’ She was to be chained to the rocks on the coast and left there for Cetus to devour. Cepheus was torn with grief, for his people and their property, and for his daughter. He made the bitter choice of sacrificing Andromeda, whereupon she was chained to the rocks and abandoned to await Cetus. When Cetus discovered the prize awaiting him, he left off his wholesale destruction of the land and began swimming toward the ledge where Andromeda was chained.”[14]

As Perseus was returning from slaying the Medusa, he noticed a maiden chained to a rock. “Down he swept to the girl’s side.”[14] Asking her why she was bound, she replied with “the story of her boastful mother and the advice the oracle had given her father. “As he listened, Perseus could hear distant thrashing in the water. It was Cetus, his head above the waves, parting the waters with his massive scaled body as he approached the shore. Meanwhile, people had gathered along the shore.... They were terrified by his awful appearance as he churned through the water toward them. Among those present were Cepheus and Cassiopeia....Perseus quickly turned to Cepheus and”[14] made a deal to save his daughter for a promise to marry her. Cepheus agreed and “promised Perseus that he would have what he asked for, whereupon Perseus unsheathed his sword and leapt into the air to the attack. One thrust of his sword found a soft spot between the armored scales of the monster. Wounded, it twisted over on its side. Perseus then inflicted another deep cut, and another. Blood now colored the water red and soaked Perseus’s winged shoes. Fearful of losing his ability to fly, he alighted on a rock near the shore and waited for the sea-monster to attack again. As it did, Perseus’s sword plunged deeply into the monster’s chest and found its mark

directly through Cetus's evil heart. Slowly the monster slipped beneath the waves, leaving only a pool of slime and blood mixed with sea foam from his thrashing.”[14]

“Joyful beyond words, Cepheus and Cassiopeia led Perseus and Andromeda to their house, where a great feast and celebration were prepared. Among those who gathered were many new friends of Perseus's, those who had witnessed his slaying of the sea-monster. Now, unknown to our hero, Andromeda had been promised in marriage by her father to Phineus, her father's brother. But Cepheus had been too fearful to admit this to Perseus. During the height of the celebration, Phineus appeared to claim Andromeda as his own. Accompanying him were many of his followers, all of them armed.”[14]

“...Perseus “told Phineus that the gods had altered the course of Andromeda's life and that Phineus had no claim on her....Perseus and his comrades were greatly out-numbered by Phineus's small army, but they bravely withstood the onslaught.”[14] Phineus and his band then attacked Perseus and some of his new followers. “Perseus realized that it was only a matter of time before his loyal friends tired and all would be killed.”[14]

“So shouting in order that all would hear his warning, and reaching into the sack containing the head of Medusa.”[14] He “withdrew the Medusa's head and held it high.... Within moments the great hall had become adorned with stone statues of warriors in every possible attitude of battle.”[14] Phineus heard “Perseus warning to his friends”[14] and had turned his head just in time to kept from turning into stone. “In doing so he quickly saw the great power Perseus held as he watched his men turned to stone. With his head still turned Phineus made his way toward Perseus and knelt before him”[14] asking for mercy. Perseus, angry because of the unnecessary killing caused by Phineus, “thrust the Medusa's head to one side so that Phineus got a glimpse of it. Instantly he was turned to stone, his head turned away, his hands outstretched, and hunched forward on his knees begging for mercy.”[14]

“Not long after this, they set sail for Greece”[4] to take Medusa's head back to Polydectes. Upon arriving at the “island of Seriphos...he found that his mother Danae had been made a slave by Polydectes, while Dictys, his kind friend, languished in prison. Leaving Andromeda on the ship, Perseus went alone up to the palace and found Polydectes...sitting...with the same band of followers who had jeered at him once before.”[4] When he arrived, Polydectes would not believe Perseus story and demanded proof. . So Perseus “pulled the Gorgon's head out of the wallet and held it up for all to see. And afterwards the stone lumps which had once been men were dragged out and left on the hillside.”[4]

“That evening Hermes came to Perseus and received back from him the sickle and the shield and with them the cap, the shoes, and the wallet. He also took the head of Medusa, which Athena set in the centre of her shield to strike terror into the hearts of the Giants when the long expected invasion should take place.”[4]

“After this Dictys became King of Seriphos, and married Danae, while Perseus and Andromeda set sail for Argolis. But on the way he stopped at Larissa and took part in the great games....Perseus distinguished himself greatly...but when it came to throwing the round disc, he hurled it so hard that it struck an old man who sat watching, and killed him instantly. This it turned out, was Acrisius who had left Tiryns in fear that Perseus on his return, would kill him and so fulfil the oracle”[4].

“Perseus and Andromeda were married”[14] and had many children, which included “Electryon and Alcaeus”[4]. Both of these men were to play a very important role in the story of Hercules.

The Story of Hercules

“...the Giants were stirring under the dark Northern hills and still the hero was not born who was to save both men and Immortals. Zeus looked about ...anxiously...For the hero, he believed, was to be born in Thebes – and was also to be a member of the royal family of Argolis, descended from Danae whom he had visited in the shower of gold.”[4] (see Fig. C-1 Ancestry Tree)

“Alcmena, the grand-daughter of Perseus, dwelt at Thebes, waiting but for the return of Amphitryon to be her husband.”[4] Zeus was now sure that she would be the mother of the hero.

“Alcmena was the loveliest woman alive at that time....she was good and virtuous, one who would always be true to Amphitryon”[4] Zeus devised a scheme and carried it out by coming down “swiftly from Olympus, and by his powers put on the very shape and voice and likeness of Amphitryon. He arrived at Thebes, dusty from travel, and Alcmena welcomed him without any shadow of suspicion, and the wedding was celebrated that very evening.”[4] Zeus made “mankind so drowsy and sending them such sweet dreams that no one suspected that this one night was the length of three.”[4] During this long night a child was conceived. “The months passed, and the time drew near when the child was to be born, and Zeus, certain

that he would be the hero destined to save the Immortals, could not contain his satisfaction.”[4] He told the other Immortals, “ ‘there will be born a boy, a descendent of Perseus who will be Lord over all the people of Argolis’ “[4]. Hera upon hearing this became furious. She had planned that King Sthenelus, soon to be born, son would become King of Argolis. Hera then tricked Zeus into swearing that the next child born would become King.

“Hera hastened in triumph to Argos, accompanied by her daughter Eilithyia, who presides over the birth of children. By witchcraft she made sure that Alcmena’s son, Heracles, was not born until next day, but that his cousin Eurystheus, the son of King Sthenelus, was born instead, much earlier than was expected.”[4]

Hercules “was born a day late in Thebes, and with him a twin brother, the son of Amphitryon, who was named Iphicles”[4]. “One evening, when Heracles had reached the age of eight or ten months, as others say, one year...Hera sent two prodigious azure-scaled serpents to Amphitryon’s house, with strict orders to destroy Heracles....The twins awoke, to see the serpents writhed above them, with darting, forked tongues; for Zeus again divinely illumined the chamber.”[12] Iphicles screams roused Alcmena and Amphitryon and they rushed in. “Heracles, who had not uttered so much as a whimper, proudly displayed the serpents, which he was in the act of strangling, one in either hand. As they died, he laughed, bounced joyfully up and down, and threw them at Amphitryon’s feet.”[12]

“Hercules grew quickly and in safety, well tended by Alcmena and her husband....Heracles was taught all the gentle arts: how to sing, how to play sweetly on the lyre and how to read and write. Then Amphitryon taught him how to drive a chariot skillfully; and he learnt also the use sword and spear, and the whole art of boxing and wrestling.”[4]

“It was plain to see...that Heracles was the son of an Immortal. For he was a head taller than any other man, and broad in proportion, while his eyes flashed fire. But his temper was very violent, and when he was still only a boy he killed Linus who was teaching him to play the lyre. For Linus struck him angrily one day when he played a false note, and Heracles struck back so violently with the instrument which he held in his hand that Linus fell dead immediately. Heracles was pardoned for this deed; but Amphitryon, fearing lest such a mischance might happen again, sent him away from Thebes, to tend the cattle on Mount Cithaeron.”[4]

One day Hercules was guarding the cattle of Amphitryon and a lion jumped one of the cows and killed it. “Heracles returned to Thebes for his brother Iphicles who took charge of the cattle, and

he himself set out to trail the lion to its den"[4] and killed it. "On the way back to Thebes, Heracles met with a messenger from a certain King Eriginus, who was on his way to collect tribute from the Thebans whom he had conquered in war some years before this and robbed of all their weapons and armour. Hercules was furious when he heard what the messenger wanted, and insulted him so grossly in his rage that King Eriginus sent a band of armed men to Thebes demanding that Hercules should be given up to him for punishment."[4] King Creon of Thebes agreed for he had no army. "Hercules... gather together young men... and led them against the company of men sent by King Eriginus, whom they defeated and drove out of Thebes."[4]

"Full of rage, Eriginus gathered an army and set out to destroy the city, but Hercules ambushed them in a narrow mountain pass and defeating them almost single-handed, killing the King and most of his captains.[4]

"King Creon was so grateful for what Hercules had done – and so afraid lest he might think of seeking revenge for his willingness to give him up to Eriginus, that he made haste to offer him his daughter Megara in marriage."[4] Hercules married and had three sons over several years.

During this time in Thebes, "Heracles did no deeds of valour, nor did he free Greece from any plagues; and Zeus was troubled, seeing that the hero was not fitting himself for his great task."[4] One day, Hera reminded Zeus of his oath that Eurystheus would become King saying, "Yet Hercules, the greatest of them, dwells safely in Thebes, and will soon become King of the city... and I would have him as slave to Eurystheus."[4] Zeus agreed because of this oath and but also because he saw a way to get Hercules back in shape. So Zeus decreed that Hercules would perform "ten labors for him(Eurystheus), the hardest that can be devised and if he survives them,...grant him his freedom....But at a word from Zeus, Athena followed quietly to help Heracles as far as possible"[4]

Because of the difficulty of forcing Hercules to become a servant to Eurystheus, Zeus decided to "send madness upon Hercules so that... he may commit murder and be driven as an exile from Thebes."[4]. The next day, "the sons of Hercules and their cousins...were engaged in martial exercises...Hercules sat on a hillside watching them, his bow on his back and a quiver full of arrows by his side."[4] Hera using Zeus's idea, made him think that enemies were upon him. Hercules shot arrows at the enemies killing all of them. Only afterwards did Hercules learn that he had killed "three of his sons...with two of Iphicles' as well"[4].

“...Hercules in his misery and despair shut himself up in a dark room and refused to see or speak to anyone....at length King Thestius visited him by command of Zeus and told him that he must go to Delphi and ask Apollo how he was to atone for the terrible things he had done.”[4]

Apollo's oracle told Hercules to go “to Eurystheus, who rules over Argolis...and serve him faithfully in the tasks which he shall set you, doing him no harm nor striving to wrest the kingdom from him.”[4]. So Hercules set out to see Eurystheus with “his nephew Iolaus, a son of Iphicles”[4]

“The first Labour which Eurystheus imposed on Heracles....was to kill and flay the Nemaen, or Cleonaeon lion”[12] “Although some call this lion the offspring of Typhon, or of the Chimera and the Dog Orthrus, others say that Selene bore it with a fearful shudder and dropped it to earth on Mount Tretus near Nemea beside a two-mouthed cave.”[12]

“Now this lion...was ravaging the lands all round Nemea. Nobody could kill it, for it was invulnerable, its hide so hard that neither iron nor bronze nor stone could pierce it.”[4]

“Heracles reached Nemea at midday, but since the lion had depopulated the neighbourhood, he found no one to direct him; nor were any tracks to be seen.”[12] “For a long while he searched in vain, but at last one evening he discovered the den of the fearsome Lion, which had two entrances and was strewn with the bones of men and cattle. Heracles waited nearby, and presently the great tawny beast came prowling up the hillside, its mane streaked with the blood of its latest kill and its tongue licking its great bearded chin. Setting an arrow to the string, Heracles drew it to his ear and loosed. The swift shaft hummed to its mark, but the sharp point rebounded from the Lion's flank and fell harmlessly to the ground. With a cry of rage, Heracles drew his sword and charged, lunging with all this strength at the Lion's chest as the huge creature reared up on its hind legs to strike at him with its mighty claws. But the tempered iron bent as if it had been lead, and the Lion, though it fell backwards, then crouched for a spring, roaring horribly.”[4] Heracles “taking his club in both hands he dealt this one a smashing blow on the head. The Lion stood dazed for a moment, then fled to its lair, where it turned, snarling.”[4] “Realizing that no weapon could kill it, Heracles rushed into the cave with his cloak wrapped round one arm, and seized the Lion round the neck with the other. Then they rolled and wrestled on the ground, over and over, the Lion's struggles growing ever weaker and weaker, until at last it lay dead....Before it died it made one final effort and bit off one of Heracles's fingers.

With the lion's own claws Hercules skinned it and took the hide back to Eurystheus. From this point on Hercules wore the "invulnerable pelt as armor, and the head as a helmet." [12].

The next labor was to kill the Lernean Hydra. This labor "was much more dangerous and difficult than the first, for the Hydra was a great serpent...which lived in the marshes of Lerna not far from Argos. It was so venomous that its very breath was deadly and it was the terror of the whole district." [4] The Hydra was "born to Typhon and Eurystheus," [12] which "had a prodigious dog-like body and eight or nine snaky heads, one of them immortal" [12].

Accompanied by Iolaus, Heracles drove down to the edge of the marsh in his chariot, and there Athena appeared to him." [4] "On her advice, he forced the Hydra to emerge by pelting it with burning arrows, and then held his breath while he caught hold of it. But the monster twined around his feet, in an endeavour to trip him up. In vain did he batter at its heads with his club: no sooner was one crushed, than two or three more grew in its place." [12] "To make matters worse, a gigantic crab came scuttling out of the marsh and seized Heracles by the foot....He crushed the crab with a single blow of his club, and shouted to Iolaus to light a torch and come to his assistance. Iolaus obeyed bravely, and as Heracles crushed each head of the Hydra with his club, he burnt and seared the shattered neck so that no new heads could grow from the bleeding stumps....Heracles cut off the immortal head with his sword and buried it under a gigantic rock....Then, having dipped his arrows in the Hydra's blood, which was deadly poison, he returned to" [4] Eurystheus. Upon Hercules returned, Eurystheus told Hercules that because Iolaus had helped him this labor would not count as one of the ten.

"HERACLES'S Third Labour was to capture the Ceryneian Hind, and bring her alive from Oenoe to Mycenae. The swift, dappled creature had brazen hooves and golden horns like a stag...She was sacred to Artemis." [12] "Heracles did not wish to harm this beautiful creature and, though it was the swiftest of all deer, he chased it on foot for a whole year....At length he overtook it in Arcadia" [4]. Heracles return with the Hind to Eurystheus unharmed.

"The fourth labour imposed on Heracles was to capture alive the Erymanthian Boar: a fierce, enormous beast which haunted the...slopes of Mount Erymanthus...and ravaged the country around Psophis." [12]

As Hercules sought after the boar, he met a centaur named Pholus. "The centaurs were men only to the waist, below that they had the body and legs of a horse." [4]. "Pholus entertained Heracles hospitable in his cave, setting roast meat before him. But he foolishly opened a jar of wine which...had (been) left in the cave, and the wild centaurs who lived nearby, attracted by

the smell, came crowding round, drank the strong wine, and were so maddened by it that they attacked Heracles.”[4] Hercules was forced to kill several. “One of them, Nessus, never forgave Heracles, but swore vengeance upon him”[4]. Later, Hercules caught the boar and “tying its legs firmly together”[4] took it back to Eurystheus.

The fifth labor “was to cleanse King Augeias’s filthy cattle yard in one day”[12]. King Augeus had “the biggest herd of cattle of any man in Greece, thousands of them”[4] and, “the dung in Augeias’s cattle yard and sheepfolds had not been cleared away for many years, and though its noisome stench did not affect the beasts themselves, it spread a pestilence across the whole Peloponnese. Moreover, the valley pastures were so deep in dung that they could no longer be ploughed for grain.”[12] Before beginning the task, Heracles “went to King Augeas and, without saying anything about Eurystheus”[4] or the labours made a bargain to clean his stables “in a single day , while your cows are out on the pasture”[4] for “a tenth of your herd in payment.”[4] Augeas agreed to the bargain, believing it would be impossible.

“Hercules first breached the wall of the yard in two places, and next diverted the neighboring rivers Alpheus and Peneius...so that their streams rushed through the yard, swept it clean and then went on to cleanse the sheepfolds and the valley pastures.[12]

Meanwhile, Augeus found out about the labors and when Hercules came for payment he refused to pay. Augeus told Hercules that since he had already been hired by Eurystheus and therefore did not owe him anything. Upon returning to Eurystheus, Hercules was told that because he had made a bet with Augeus to clean the yards that this labor did not count.

The sixth labor “was to remove the countless brazen-beaked, brazen-clawed, brazen-winged, man-eating birds, sacred to Ares which...had flocked to the Stymphalian Marsh.”[12] While in flight, the birds could “discharge a shower of brazen feathers”[12], which sped down like sharp arrows.

“On arrival at the marsh, which lay surrounded by dense woods, Heracles found himself unable to drive away the birds with his arrows”[12]. As Hercules thought how he might do this labor, Athena came out of the sky and “gave him a pair of brazen castanets”[12]. He then “went up onto a mountain surrounded by dense woods... and clashed the castanets”[4]. The noise “helped by the echo was so terrible that the birds flew up in fear and fled shrieking and clapping their wings to the distant island of Aretias....As they fled, Hercules “was able to bring down several of the Stymphalian birds with his deadly arrows and these he took back in triumph to Eurystheus”[4] as proof that the deed was completed.

The seventh labor of ordered by Eurystheus was “to capture the Cretan Bull”[12] Hercules went down “to the harbor at Nauplia, and took ship to the beautiful island of Crete”[4]. “King Minos welcomed his warmly and entertained him in his great place at Knossus”[4] “Minos gladly gave Heracles permission to take the bull.”[4] The bull was given to Minos by Poseidon for sacrifice, but the King substituted one other, after which the bull went mad. “At this time it was ravaging Crete, especially the region watered by the river Tethris, rooting up crops and leveling orchard walls.”[12] Hercules was eventually able to track down the animal and “captured him without any difficulty and carried it away to Greece” [4] and back to Eurystheus.

The eighth labor was “to capture the four savage mares of Thracian King Diomedes”[12]. “Diomedes kept the mares tethered with iron chains to bronze mangers, and fed them on the flesh of his unsuspecting guests.”[12] Heracles set sail for Thrace, and “Diomedes welcomed him kindly: but Heracles knew that it was only a pretence, since it was this savage king’s custom to throw his guest to the four terrible horses, who would immediately devour them.”[4] The “next day, with the help of a groom belonging to Diomedes, Heracles managed to steal the four horses, and even to harness them to a chariot...But the groom then betrayed him to Diomedes, who followed him with a band of men.”[4] Heracles leaving the horses with the groom then “broke down a stretch of the sea wall. It was the high tide, and great waves came pouring through, and washed away most of the Thracians. King Diomedes, however he captured and carried back to the chariot. There finding that the horses had already eaten the treacherous groom, he threw the wicked king to them as well, and they devoured him also. After this Hercules drove off at full speed, and whether it was through eating their master, or whether he managed to tame them on the way”[4], the horses were tame when they got back to Eurystheus.

The “ninth labour was to fetch for Eurystheus’s daughter Admete the golden girdle of Ares worn by the Amazonian queen Hippolyte.”[12] “Hercules sailed from...Argolis with nine companions....After several adventures on the way, they came into the Black Sea and arrived in the land of the Amazons”[4] Upon his arrival Hippolyte herself came to welcome them. Hippolyte had already heard about Hercules labors and after Hercules had told her about this labor, she was delighted to give Hercules her belt.

Hera, from her vantage point in Mount Olympus, “felt that this was far too easy a victory for him. So she disguised herself as an Amazon warrior and went hastening to the fortified citadel”[4] She started “spreading a rumour that these strangers planned to abduct Hipolyte;

whereupon the incensed warrior-women mounted their horses and charged down on the ship. Heracles, suspecting treachery, killed Hippolyte offhand, removed her girdle, seized her axe and to her weapons, and prepared to defend himself. He killed each of the Amazon leaders in turn, putting their army to flight after great slaughter.”[12] Upon this return to Mycenae, “Heracles handed the girdle to Eurysheus, who gave it to Admete.”[12]

The tenth labor “was to fetch the famous cattle of Geryon from Erytheia, an island near the Ocean stream, without either demand or payment. Geryon, a son of Chrysaor and Callirrhoe, a daughter of the Titan Oceanus, was the King of Tartessus in Spain, and reputedly the strongest man alive. He had been born with three heads, six hands, and three bodies joined together at the waist. Geryon’s shambling red cattle, beasts of marvelous beauty, were guarded by the herdsman Eurytion”[12].

“Heracles set out on this expedition alone, and journeyed overland through Italy, France, and Spain, slaying many wild beasts and other monsters on the way, until he came to the straits separating Europe from Africa. Here he set up two great stone pillars, one at Gibraltar and the other at Ceuta: and the straits were called the Pillars of Hercules by the Romans in consequence.”[4]

Using a gigantic water-lily provided by Helios and “his lion-skin as a sail [4], Heracles traveled “to the island of Erythia”...On reaching the shore this first care was to moor his strange boat in a concealed inlet: then he climbed a hill in the centre of the island to spy out the land. He had scarcely reached the summit, when a great dog came rushing at him open-mouthed, only to meet his end from a single blow of the deadly club. As he descended in the direction of the pastures where he could see the beautiful red cattle grazing, Heracles was attacked by the herdsman, whom he killed also, but only after a fierce fight. Heracles then drove the cattle towards the shore, but before he reached it the ogre Geryon came rushing towards him, brandishing various weapons in his six huge hands, and shouting threats of terrible vengeance. Heracles knew that he was no match for so powerful a monster if they came to hand-grips; so, quick as thought, he discharged three arrows, one through each of the ogre’s three throats; and that was the end of him. Then he drove the cattle into the magic goblet, sailed back to Spain, and having returned his strange vessel to Helios with many thanks, began the weary task of driving the head overland all the way back to Greece.”[4]

“Heracles had performed these Ten Labours in the space of eight years and one month; but Eurysheus, discounting the Second and the Fifth, set him two more”[12]. The Eleventh Labour was to fetch fruit from the golden apple-tree, Mother Earth’s wedding gift to Hera, with

which she had been so delighted that she planted it in her own divine garden. This garden lay on the slopes of Mount Atlas, where the panting chariot-horses of the Sun complete their journey, and where Atlas's sheep and cattle, one thousand herds of each, wander over their undisputed pastures. When Hera found, one day, that Atlas's daughters, the Hesperides, to whom she had entrusted the tree, were pilfering the apples, she set the ever-watchful dragon Ladon to coil around the tree as its guardian. Some say that Ladon was the offspring of Typhon and Echidne; others, that he was the youngest-born of Ceto and Phorcys; others again, that he was a parthogenous son of Mother Earth. He had one hundred heads".[12]

"Heracles came to the land of Illyria and begged the nymphs who lived there to tell him how he might find the golden apples, they replied that, by the command of their father, Zeus, he must journey on, to Mount Caucasus, and ask Prometheus. The way was long and dangerous, but at length Heracles came to the great mountain above the world's end. Climbing by chasm and crevasse, by steep glissade and slippery glacier, he came to the great cliff-face on which the Titan was chained. And as he clambered up beside him, the great eagle swooped down to its horrible feast, and the mighty titan screamed aloud in his agony. But Heracles, with a shout of rage and pity, fitted an arrow to his bow, drew it to the head, and loosed it with all his might. The great eagle flew up, transfixed by the arrow, and plunged down into the waves of the Black Sea, thousands of feet below."[4] Prometheus asked who was this mortal and Heracles replied that "I am Heracles, the son of Zeus"[4]...". "And I come here by his command, to free you.' For Zeus forgives you for your great crimes against himself, and asks your pardon for the torture to which he has put you. Nevertheless, he bids me say that, since his great decrees cannot be broken altogether, you must wear a ring on your finger for ever as a token that you are still bound in fetters of metal."[4] While Heracles removed Prometheus binding, he told him about his labors "and asked him about the golden apples of Hesperides."[4]

Prometheus told him "that the tree is in a magic garden on the world's western verge, beyond the mountain on which my brother Atlas stands for ever supporting the starry sky on his shoulders. The dragon Ladon curls round that tree, and in the garden dwell the immortal daughters of Hesperus, the Warden of the Evening Star, which is also the Star of the Morning; and he is the son of Atlas. Ask Atlas to assist you: for no mortal may enter that garden without great danger; and he has built a high wall around it that cannot be climbed."[4] "Heracles met with many adventures as he traversed the earth....on his way to Mount Atlas."[4]

Heracles soon came "to the great mountain, the highest in the known world, on top of which stood Atlas the Titan, holding up the sky lest it should sink down again upon the earth as it had

done in the beginning of the world.”[4] When Heracles “had climbed to the peak on which Atlas stood”[4], he said, “ ‘I come to you for help, great Titan. Your brother Prometheus advised me to ask your assistance: I am Heracles, and I come for three of the golden apples to deliver to my taskmaster, Eurystheus of Tiryns, who loads me with labours by command of Immortal Hera’ ”[4] Atlas answered back, “I will do what you wish if you will perform two great deeds to assist me. While I am away you must take my place and hold the sky upon your shoulders; and before you do this, you must slay the dragon Ladon who guards the tree; for even I may not touch the fruit while he lives”[4]

“Heracles looked down beyond the mountain, towards the Western Ocean, and saw far below him the lovely Garden of the Herperides. There were the cool glades and the silver leaves of Paradise, and in the midst the great tree shining with the golden fruit, while three lovely nymphs, the daughters of Hesperus, danced and sang in the dappled sunlight. Then he saw the dragon curled about the tree, a monster longer than any he had slain, its scales shining with gold and blue. He drew an arrow from his quiver, fitted it to his bow, and shot with so unerring an aim that it pierced the dragon’s throat. The creature uncurled from the tree and glided away into the bushes there to die slowly”.[4]

“When Ladon the dragon had gone, Atlas shifted his mighty burden on to the broad shoulders of Heracles”[4] and “hurried off in the direction of the Garden.”[4] The next morning Atlas returned “carrying three golden apples in his hand.”[4] Taking the apples, Heracles “set off down the mountain...When he reached the sea coast, Heracles took ship for Greece and after a long voyage was landed at Lindos on the island of Rhodes....Heracles went on his way to Tiryns....and delivered the golden apples to Eurystheus.”[4]

The twelfth and the last labor were to be the “hardest and most dangerous of all”[4];. “to descend into the Realm of Hades and bring back Cerberus, the three-headed Hound of Hell.”[4] Zeus “sent Athena and Hermes to his help”[4] The “two Immortals led Heracles to the great cave at Taenarum, not far from Sparta, and down into the gloomy depths of the earth until they came to the underworld which was bounded by the black River Styx. Here Athena waited, while Hermes went on with Heracles, for it was one of his offices to lead souls down to Hades. At the River Styx the dark old ferryman, Charon, was waiting with his boat. He was only allowed to ferry dead souls across the stream,...but Heracles scowled at him so fiercely that he did not dare”[4] to challenge. “On the other side Heracles found himself in the grey, twilight land of the dead, where ghosts flitted about moaning and gibbering....Heracles saw many terrible sights in the Realm of Hades, for he crossed the fiery river of Phlegathon and entered Tartarus,

the prison where the Titans lay, and where the wicked are punished....At last Heracles came to where Hades and Persephone sat in state, and he told them why he was there and begged them to lend him their terrible hound.”[4] Hades answered that you may take him, “if you can overcome him without the use of weapons.”[4] “So Heracles returned to the bank of the Styx, and Cerberus rushed at him, since he was there to prevent the souls of the dead from leaving the Realm of Hades. Cerberus has three mighty heads with lion-like manes bristling with snakes; and in place of a tail a serpent writhed and hissed. Heracles wrapped his lion-skin about himself, seized hold of the brute and squeezed him hard. Cerberus struggled and tried to bite; but the lion-skin was too tough, and Heracles was too strong...At last Cerberus gave way, and Heracles carried him off in the triumph, crossing the dark river with the help of Hermes and Athena.”[4] Upon reaching the light of day, “Heracles set out at once for Tiryns.”[4] Upon arriving and “when the King appeared, Heracles cried: ‘My last labour is achieved! Here is Cerberus!’ “[4] After serving “Eurystheus for twelve years”[12] and in that time completing twelve labors, of which ten counted, Eurystheus was forced to set Hercules free.

In the coming years Hercules activities were numerous, but eventually Prometheus prophecy came to be true that required Hercules to save the Immortals in Mt. Olympus.

The Giant’s “invasion so long dreaded and expected came suddenly. For Earth had made the Giants and hidden them away in great caves far to the north of Greece until the moment came when they were strong and fierce enough to assail heaven.”[4] “They had been born...at Thracian Phlegra, twenty-four in number.”[12]

“Then, as soon as Zeus seemed very much engaged in quarrelling with Hera and tossing Hephaestus out of heaven, the Giants came down into Greece and got ready to attack the Immortals. They camped on the volcanic plain of Plegra, and the first thing they did was to capture the golden-horned cattle of the Sun-Titan, Helios, and carry them off for food. The leader of the Giants was called Alcyoneus, and he was immortal so long as he stayed in the land of Phlegra. And at first they did so, attacking Olympus by hurling huge rocks and burning oak-trees.”[4]

Zeus knew that a mortal would be needed to defeat the Giants as Prometheus had prophesized. So “he sent Athena to fetch Heracles.”[4] Upon his arrival and with, “Athena’s direction, Heracles shot Alcyoneus with a poisoned arrow. But as soon as he fell to the ground he began to recover. ‘Quick!’ cried Athena, ‘He cannot die so long as he remains in Phlegra! Drag him away into another country!’ So Heracles hoisted theGiant on to his back and staggered

with him over the border. There he flung him down and killed him with repeated blows of his club.

“Returning to the battle, Heracles found that the Giant Porphyron had assumed the lead and tried to carry off Hera....Zeus felled him with a thunderbolt; and Heraclessettled him with an arrow.”[4]

“The battle grew fast and furious now, and Heracles stood to send in the shaft of death whenever an Immortal had laid a Giant low. When, for example, Apollo had smitten one in the eye with his bright shaft, or Hecate had burnt another with her torches; when Hephaestus had laid low a Giant with missiles of re-hot metal, or Dionysus brought down an enemy with his magic thyrsus, or Ares The War Lord smote home with his terrible spear.”[4] “Finally the remnants of the Giants fled in terror towards the south of Greece, all except the two greatest ones, Ephialtes and Otus. These made a last desperate assault”[4].

“...they piled Mount Ossa on top of Mount Pelion, and started climbing up towards Heaven”.[4] “ In this emergency even Heracles was powerless to help, for these two Giants could only be killed by their own kind”[4]. They were easily tricked, however, being stupid as Giants usually were; and when Zeus sent a message that he would give up Artemis to the most deserving of the two, they began to quarrel violently. While they were arguing Artemis turned herself into a white doe and ran suddenly between them, Each, eager to prove that he was least the better marksman, hurled a spear at it. Both missed their mark, but each spear pierced the other Giant to the heart. Thus each was struck by his own kind, and so they died, and were chained to a pillar in Tartarus with fetters made of living vipers.”[4]

“Meanwhile the other giants fled, pursued closely by the Immortals and Heracles. One was caught by Poseidon, who broke off a piece of the island of Cos and buried him under it, making the Rock of Nisyros which still sticks up out of the sea nearby. The rest came to Arcadia, and at a place called Bathos the Immortals surrounded them and the final battle took place. There Hermes, wearing the Helmet of Invisibility which he had borrowed from Hades, struck down a Giant; and Ares....wielded his spear to good effect, while Artemis sped home here arrows and Zeus whirled down his thunderbolts upon the doomed race of Giants, And Heracles, with his fatal shafts and his mighty club, made certain that there could be no recovery from the blows of the Immortals.”[4]

“The last Giant left alive was Enceladus. Heracles had wounded him and when he saw all his companions, whom he had thought immortal, lying dead around him, he fled before the

sword of the drunken satyr, Silenus, who had accompanied Dionysus into the battle. He rushed across Greece, waded the Adriatic Sea, and was at last overtaken by Athena at Cumae in Italy – where he still lies, breathing fire, under the volcano of Vesuvius.”[4]

“The battle ended, the Giants destroyed and the Immortals were saved. Heracles, the great hero, had done his work on earth, and Zeus was preparing to raise him to Olympus and make him an Immortal.”[4]

At the end of his life, Hercules won immortality. He was traveling with Deianira, his wife, and he allowed a centaur named Nessus to carry her across a flooded stream. Nessus attacked her, and Hercules shot him with a poisoned arrow. As Nessus died, he told Deianira to save his blood to use as a love potion. When Hercules later fell in love with Iole, a woman he had captured, Deianira dipped a robe in the blood and sent it to him. When he put it on, the poison ate away his flesh. In agony, he begged his friends to place him on a funeral pyre and light it. After his body had been burned up, he was taken up to Mount Olympus and welcomed as one of the gods.

The Story of Orion

Orion was “the son of Poseidon and the mortal Euryale, who was the daughter of King Minos. Orion's first wife was Side, a vain women who boasted that she was more beautiful even than Hera, the Queen of Heaven. Hera, being a very jealous woman, punished Side by sending her down to Hades.”[14]

“After losing his wife, Orion voyaged to the island of Chios where he fell in love with Merope, daughter of King Oenopion. Although the King promised Orion his daughter's hand in marriage, he kept delaying the wedding, each time giving Orion a new and difficult task to perform in order for Orion again and again to prove his worthiness. Eventually Orion came to realize that the King's promises meant nothing and that Oenopion really never intended to let his daughter marry him.”[14]

“In despair, Orion planned to carry Merope away, by force if necessary. Unfortunately the plan was discovered and the King's guards seized Orion and locked him up. Oenopion was furious with himself for having managed things so poorly and took out his rage on Orion by blinding him and casting him and casting him onto the beach to fend for himself.”[14]

“Now because Orion was the son of Poseidon, he had the powers of walking on the surface of the seas. And this he began to do on hearing the ringing of a distant blacksmith's hammer. Following the sound he went to the island of Lemnos and to the artisan-smith Hephaestus who fashioned beautiful ornaments of silver and gold, and armor for the gods. Hephaestus pitied the blind giant and gave Orion one of his servants, Cedalion, as a guide.”[14]

“Placing Cedalion on his great shoulders, Orion told him to guide them to the east. Orion knew that it was there, in the east, where he could have his sights restored. Eventually they came to the land of the rising sun, the domain of the Sun-god Apollo. At sunrise the next day Orion faced the Sun and was warmed by its rays. Looking in the direction of the sun, Orion felt his eyes come alive.”[14]

“With his eyesight regained, the giant made his way to the island of Crete to live. There he hunted game and led a happy life. One day he met Artemis, Goddess of Wild Animals and of the Moon, who also liked to hunt. They fell in love and spent many days together.”[14]

On one of these days, “Orion boasted that so great was his might and skill as a hunter that he could kill all the animals on the face of Earth.”[14]

“Apollo went to Mother Earth and, mischievously repeating Orion's boast, arranged for a monstrous scorpion to pursue him. Orion attacked the scorpion, first with arrows, then with his sword , but finding that its armour was proof against any mortal weapon, dived into the sea and swam away.”[12]

“Now each night Artemis was supposed to drive her silver Moon-chariot across the sky. On noticing that there had been no Moon for several nights, Apollo became angry with his sister and told her that she must not neglect her duties any longer. But so great was her love for the handsome giant that she ignored her brother's words.”[14] This left Apollo no other choice.

“...one day near sunset Apollo tricked his sister. He had seen Orion bathing by himself by the shore. With his blinding rays, Apollo caused a bright patch of light to surround Orion on the water. Only a dim gray patch in the middle could be seen. Apollo next teased Artemis by saying that she had been spending so much time with her lover that she had lost her eye as a marksman and he challenged her to hit the dark spot in the center of the shimmering patch of light. Artemis was angry with her brother for teasing her and quickly sent an arrow across the sea to its mark, killing her lover.”[14]

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