

**STORIES FROM PLATO AND
OTHER CLASSIC WRITERS**

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**HESIOD, HOMER, ARISTOPHANES,
OVID, CATULLUS, AND PLINY**

BY

MARY E. BURT

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
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Dedication

LOUIS AND STOCKTON
FRED AND HARRY
D. P. AND McA,
DON AND D. D. 3RD

PREFACE

“THERE is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand.”

When a thought of Plato becomes a thought to me,—when a truth that fired the soul of Pindar fires mine, time is no more.

EMERSON.

While it is good to walk among the living, it is good also to live with the wise, great, good dead. It keeps out of life the dreadful feeling of extemporaneousness with its conceit and its despair. It makes us always know that God made other men before He made us. It furnishes a constant background for our living. It provides us with perpetual humility and inspiration.

Shakespeare has no biography; and, much as we would like to know what happened to him in his life, I think we all feel doubtful whether we should get much of increased and deepened richness in our thought of him if what he did and said had been recorded. The poet's life is in his poems. The more profoundly and spiritually he is a poet, the more thoroughly this is true, the more impossible a biography of him becomes.

Let men like these talk to you and tell you of themselves. Being dead, they yet can speak. How good it is sometimes to leave the crowded world, which is so hot about its trifles, and go into the company of these great souls which are so calm about the most momentous things!

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

INTRODUCTION

Two years ago I was asked by the Kindergarten Association of Chicago to read several papers at their Institutes on the adaptation of stories from classic sources to kindergartens. Leaders among kindergarteners had long before agreed that literature manufactured merely for commercial speculation had not vitality enough to meet the needs of the child. They had themselves resorted to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, as a relief from the wearisomeness of the reading-matter of reading-books. I took the ground that teachers would derive more pleasure in their work if they were allowed a sweeping use of literature in their schools, each teacher detaching from classic or standard writings such hints and suggestions as she could use to the best advantage. I read about fifty stories which I had gleaned from Plato, Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Pliny, Ovid, and other classic sources as illustrations of the material which teachers might select from the original writings.

These stories I had found useful in previous schoolwork, because they contained fine moral points, or else because they were poetic statements of natural phenomena which might enhance the study of natural science.

I was urged by many of my audience to publish the stories for kindergarten use. Since then it has come in my way to use the stories with children of ages varying from six to twelve years, and I am satisfied that the collection is suitable as a primary reader; and I linger with grateful thought over the remembrance of the teachers and children, who, amid the allurements of life, could “leave the crowded world which is so hot about its trifles, and go into the company of those great souls which are so calm about the most momentous things.”

Many thanks are due to the intelligent assistance of the Librarian and Attendants of the Chicago Public Library, and to the Editors of the Inter-Ocean for the “I Will” etching—symbol of the life which renews itself as well from ancient as from modern fire.

M. E. B.

NEW YORK, Dec., 1893.

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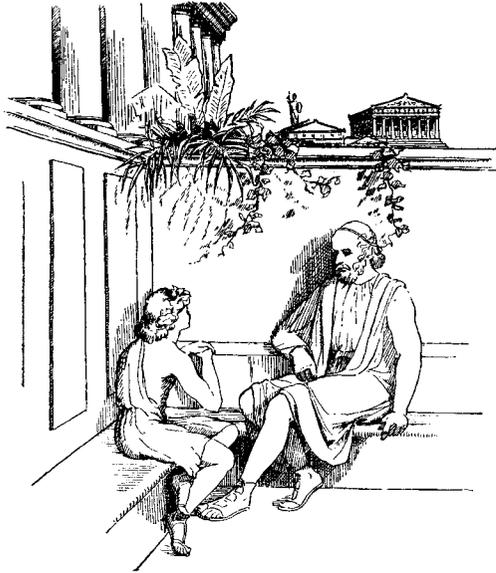
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CHAPTER I

A DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

THERE was once a boy who loved to go to school, and it was no great wonder, for he lived in a golden age, and in a golden clime.



The streets of the city in which he dwelt were full of gleaming statues, all open to the air, and teachers and pupils walked and talked together a great deal out of

STORIES FROM PLATO

doors, where they could see the violet tinted mountains and the shining sea.



This boy had one teacher, a remarkably wise one, who loved to gather a little circle about him on almost any corner. He did not tell his pupils anything. He merely asked them questions to set them thinking. One of his pupils said that he had to put his fingers in his ears and run away or he should grow old listening, so delightful were the lessons.

This wise teacher had a dream which was so good

A DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

that perhaps we ought to know it. He dreamed that he had a beautiful white swan in his bosom.

The bird was so young that it had no feathers, but he watched it and fed it with great care. As soon as the feathers came upon it, the bird stretched its wings and flew with the intrepid courage into the highest regions of air singing with inexpressible sweetness.

The teacher never doubted that the swan was his good pupil who loved to go to school, and that he should enjoy boundless fame.



PLATO

CHAPTER II

THE GOODNESS THAT IS WITHIN

I WONDER if the children who are going to read this story or listen to it, like to get up early in the morning. I wonder if they want to be good and are so anxious about it that they cannot sleep.

I wonder if they think they can *learn* to be good, or if they believe goodness is inside to start with and that it must grow and grow itself. Perhaps some little boy may think that he is not old enough to know these things, but we can tell better when we hear what the children say after the story is done.

It happened a long time ago that a young man wanted to be good. Yes, it was a long, long time ago, but who knows but what it may happen again some time?

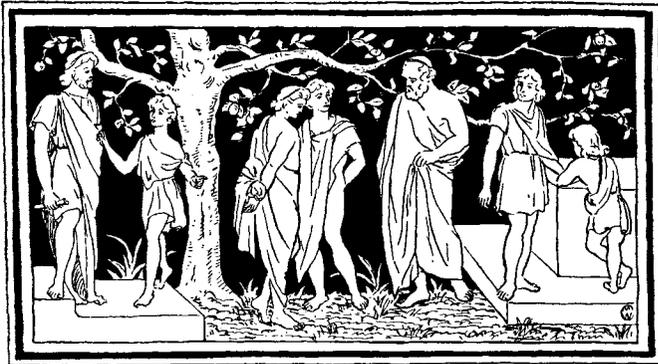
He wanted to be good so badly that he could not sleep and so he got up in the night and went to the house of a friend to tell him about it.

I think the friend must have been very good-natured, for he called out, "What's the news, Hippocrates?" when he heard the young man knocking with a stick on his

THE GOODNESS THAT IS WITHIN

door. "I want to be good," said Hippocrates, "and it makes me nervous and I cannot sleep. There is a teacher come to town who can teach it to me and I want you to get right up and take me to his house."

"It's too early, it isn't light yet," said the friend of the young man, "but I will get up and walk with you." So he rose and dressed for a walk and he went out into the garden and strolled around with Hippocrates until the sun was up, and then they set out to find the teacher who could teach people how to be good.



As they went along, the older man, whose name was Socrates, said to the younger, "Do you really think, Hippocrates, that any one can *learn* to be good? Now it almost seems to me that there is good *in* every one and that it must grow from the inside until a man is all full of goodness; and that goodness is not outside of any one and so cannot be taken in from the outside." In a little while they came to the house of the teacher and they sat down to listen to what he had to say, and he told them a story, and I will tell it to you.

HOW JUSTICE CAME

There was once a time when there were no men or women on all the earth, but the gods lived on Mount Olympus. The time came, however, when men and animals were to be made and put on the earth; so the gods fashioned them inside of the earth out of clay and fire.

And when the gods wanted to bring these new creatures out of the earth into the light of day, they commanded two of the gods to clothe them and give to each just such kind of a mind as properly belonged to it. One of these gods was careful and always thought a long time beforehand, so that he should make no mistake, and they called him Prometheus, which means fore-thought.

The other god always did things carelessly. He never did any thinking until the mischief was done and it was too late to avoid trouble. So they called him Epimetheus, which means after-thought. And it was this mischief-maker who had the most to do with making mortals.

Epimetheus said to his brother, Prometheus, "Let me distribute clothing to men and animals, and give to each the sort of mind proper for it to have. When I have it all finished you can examine my work and see if I have done it right."

Having coaxed Prometheus and gained his permission, Epimetheus set about clothing the animals and

THE GOODNESS THAT IS WITHIN

giving them gifts of mind. He covered the dog with hair and gave him swiftness, but he did not give him the power to talk.

He covered the cat with nice soft fur and gave her strong eyes that she might see in the dark, but he did not give her the cunning, which he gave to the rat. He covered the tortoise with a shell and made it slow and patient, but he did not give it the power to climb a tree.

He covered the wolf with long hair, gave him sharp teeth and a terrible howl, but he did not give him the fidelity of the dog. He gave littleness to worms and prepared them to live in the mud or crawl on plants. He gave hoofs to horses, and to the elephant a thick skin, and covered the sheep with wool.

He kept giving and giving, until he had given everything away and yet he had not come to men. He had given everything to irrational animals. So the human race remained unadorned and Epimetheus was at his wits' end, for he did not know what to do about it.

Then Prometheus came to examine his brother's work and was much ashamed to find that every animal, except man, was clothed and provided with everything suitable, while man was naked, unshod, without any bed and without any weapons to defend himself, or any tools with which to take care of himself; and the day had arrived when all the living things must come out to the light and live on the outside of the earth.

Prometheus wondered what he could do to aid men.

STORIES FROM PLATO

He knew that they must starve and freeze, if they were left in such a helpless condition.



MINERVA

So he went among the gods to see what he could find, that would help the poor mortals and keep them from being destroyed. In the workshop of Vulcan, the old lame blacksmith-god, he found Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, making spears and spindles, and other useful things.

He saw that a certain kind of wisdom came from using fire and making tools, so he stole some of the fire and some of the wisdom, too, and took them down to mortals for a present.

Then man came possessed of the wisdom, which would enable him to keep from starving and freezing, and of the power to defend himself against wild beasts.

But there was a higher wisdom, the wisdom of loving one another, which Prometheus did not bring down to man, for that wisdom was locked up and in the safe-keeping of Jupiter, the greatest of the gods.

Jupiter was so terrible, that Prometheus was afraid to go to his home, which was guarded very securely.

Prometheus had been forbidden by Jupiter to visit his home any more, because he had stolen the fire and taken it down to men; the fire belonged to the gods,

THE GOODNESS THAT IS WITHIN

and it made men godlike, to know how to use it. Old Jupiter did not want men to become godlike. He was very jealous for fear that earthly creatures might grow stronger and wiser than himself.

So all the mortals went up onto the face of the earth instead of staying inside of it, and they took some fire and the kind of wisdom which goes along with fire and teaches men how to keep themselves alive awhile. And they built altars to the gods, and made statues of the gods, and burnt incense to them, which pleased Jupiter very much, and he thought men were rather nice after all.

In the course of time men began to try to talk, and pretty soon they made words, and after a long time they could tell little stories. Then they built huts, and larger huts, and by and by they devised little houses, and larger houses, until at last they built grand palaces. They made shoes too, and beds, and cooked food, and learned to make clothes and dress themselves.

But they lived lonely lives notwithstanding, for they were scattered all over the country. They had no cities. They kept on using fire, and learned more and more wisdom all the time from using it, but this wisdom was only physical wisdom. It was outside of them and not inside, and so it did not do anything for them, except to keep them alive and flourishing.

It did not teach them how to live together. It did not exactly teach them how to live separately either, for sometimes the wild beasts would attack them in such

STORIES FROM PLATO

a way, and in such great numbers, that many of them were killed.

So they sought to collect themselves together, to preserve themselves from destruction, and they began to build cities. When they had built cities, and had come to live in them, and were all crowded together, they hurt one another, because they had no wisdom, except the physical wisdom that came by using fire. They were selfish, and each man took anything that he wanted, that belonged to his neighbor, and if his neighbor offended him, he kicked, and cuffed, and even killed him.

When men had lived together a little while, and had quarrelled and fought until they had almost destroyed each other, Jupiter looked down from Mount Olympus and said, "Are these the men who used to build temples for me, and burn incense, and sing songs, and praise the gods? Oh, what a shame, that they do not know how to live together without destroying one another!

I must unlock the wisdom, I have hidden away, the wisdom that teaches people how to be generous and loving. I will send this wisdom down to them, and I will call it *Justice*.

Every man shall have it inside of him, right in his heart, and he will be ashamed to hurt his brother. He will not think anything valuable comes to him through greed. He will not want any advantage at all that comes through the disadvantage or the grief of another."

Then Jupiter called Epimetheus and said to him, "There is the wisdom of Love. Take it down and give it to men, so that they can live together in cities, and not

THE GOODNESS THAT IS WITHIN

destroy one another.” “Shall I give it to every man?” said Epithemeus, “or to a few—just the best men?”



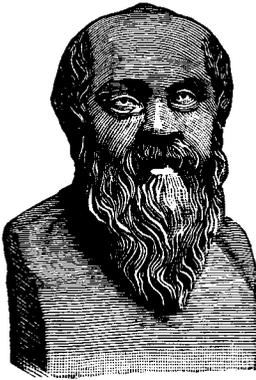
“Give it to every man,” said Jupiter. “Put it right into his heart. Make it a part of him. Let it flow in his blood. Let it look out from his eyes. Let it thrill from the ends of his fingers.

“Let it speak from his tongue and in the actions of his body. And you shall make a great and everlasting law in my name,” continued Jupiter, “that any man who cannot take the wisdom of love into his heart, and be

STORIES FROM PLATO

ashamed of injustice, shall be put to death as a pest in this city.”

So Epimetheus took the Wisdom of Love—the Justice—from Jupiter and brought it down, and made it a part of men, and now if a man has not that wisdom, he is not considered a man at all, but a sort of beast.



SOCRATES

And every good man wants every other man to be good. The mother wants the little child to be good; the nurse, the teacher, and the father, all try to make the children good, and when people are bad they are punished, in hopes that they will become good.

And now you may tell me whether you think goodness is outside of you or inside. And you may tell me whether you think Hippocrates learned to be good by going to the teacher, or whether he carried goodness in his heart all the time.

CHAPTER III

FOR THE LITTLE BOY WHO WILL NOT SAY “PLEASE”

ONCE in a while there is a little boy who does not know how to say “please” and “thank you.” I have even seen one who did not seem to care for any one or respect anybody. So I will tell you a story which shows how necessary it is that people should be respectful.

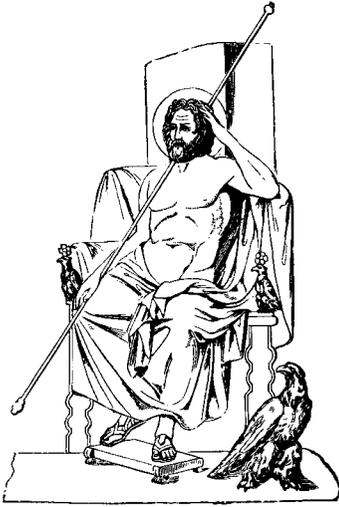
There was a time when all men living on the earth were disrespectful. They never said “please” nor “thank you,” and they grabbed everything away from others, and no one cared for any one else.

At that time men were double. They had two faces, two pairs of arms, two pairs of legs, four hands, and four feet. Their bodies were round like a ball, and when they walked they rolled over and over like a wheel, or more like a boy turning somersaults, heels over head, head over heels, hand over hand, they went bumping along in a most ridiculous fashion.

They were twice as strong as they are now, and they could run twice as fast, and climb any tree like a cat. They were very fierce, too, and so saucy to the gods that

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old Jupiter was almost afraid they would climb Mount Olympus and put the gods to flight. He trembled on his throne when he saw how strong and daring they were.



JUPITER

So Jupiter called Apollo and told him to take each mortal and cut him right down through the middle so that he should have only one pair of legs and arms; and to smooth him out and pull the skin around him and tie it up, and make his face straight and make him walk upright on two legs, so that he would be one man instead of a double man.

Jupiter told Apollo to teach him to be respectful also, and to instruct him that if he did not treat the gods respectfully and love his fellow men he would have him sliced right in two again so that he would have to go hopping around on one leg and have only one arm, and one eye, and half a nose.

Now, when men began to walk around on two legs and try to help themselves with two arms they began to feel very lonesome for that other half that had always been with them, and they kept thinking about the other half, and that is the way men learned to care for each

THE LITTLE BOY WHO WILL NOT SAY “PLEASE”

other and to think about other folks instead of thinking all the time about themselves.

I am afraid that the little boy who would not say “please” will lose half of himself sometime if he does not learn to be polite and kind.

CHAPTER IV

THE GIFT OF THE MUSES

It happened on a warm day in summer that a man and a boy lay down under a tree. There was a cold fountain close by. It ran over a grassy slope among images and statues which showed it to be a fountain sacred to the water-nymphs.

There was a choir of grass-hoppers in the tree and they added their music to the summer-like harmony of the hour.

The man was a famous wise man and he said to the boy, "The grass-hoppers are singing over our heads as is their custom in the heat of the day.

They are talking with each other and appear to be looking down on us. If they should see us falling asleep, as most men do at noontime, they would think us indolent of mind, and they would laugh us to scorn.

They would say, some slaves or other had come to listen to their music and that they had gone to sleep like sheep by the side of the fountain.

But if they see us talking together and sailing by them as if they were sirens who had lost their power of

THE GIFT OF THE MUSES

enchantment, the gift which they have from the Muses, to confer upon men, they may perchance bestow upon us.”

“What is this gift from the gods?” said the boy. “I have never heard of it.”

“It is not proper,” replied the man, “that a lover of wisdom should not have heard of these things. Know, then, that it is said that these grass-hoppers were men before the Muses were born.

But when the Muses came they invented song, and some of the men who lived at that time, were so overcome by the pleasure of listening to their singing, that they forgot to eat and drink.

Thus they died thoughtlessly from starvation. From their bones the race of grass-hoppers sprang up, and the Muses gave them this gift, that they could live without food from the time of their birth, and they could sing all the time without food or drink until they died.

And the Muses gave them another gift, that after death they should go to the Muses and live with them, and inform each Muse by whom she was honored on the earth. So now they tell the goddess of the dance who honors her and they make the dancers dear to that goddess. And they tell the goddess of love all about lovers. And so on with all the rest.

But the goddess of wisdom and the goddess of learning they tell of those that pass their lives in speaking wisely. And upon these people most of all, the Muses

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pour forth their heavenly gifts. Therefore, my boy, let us not sleep lest we lose the gift of the Muses.”

“No, indeed,” said the boy, “let us talk of wise things and not sleep.”

