

GODS AND HEROES

GODS AND HEROES

BY

ROBERT FRANCILLON

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TO

Francis Felix

FOR WHOM

THIS BOOK WAS BEGUN

CONTENTS

SATURN	1
JUPITER AND JUNO	
THE GODS AND THE GIANTS	5
THE FIRST MAN; OR, THE STORY OF PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA	9
THE GREAT FLOOD; OR, THE STORY OF DEUCALION	16
APOLLO	
THE STORIES OF LATONA AND NIOBE.....	22
THE FLAYED PIPER; OR, THE STORY OF MARSYAS	26
TOO MUCH GOLD; OR, THE FIRST STORY OF MIDAS	31
THE CRITIC; OR, THE SECOND STORY OF MIDAS	37
SOME FLOWER STORIES	
THE LAUREL	40
THE HYACINTH	43
THE SUN-FLOWER	46
THE NARCISSUS	49
PRESUMPTION; OR, THE STORY OF PHAËTHON..	53

DIANA; AND THE STORY OF ORION	58
MINERVA; OR, WISDOM	65
VENUS	
THE GOD OF FIRE.....	68
LOVE AND THE SOUL; OR, THE STORY	
OF CUPID AND PSYCHE.....	76
MERCURY AND IRIS.....	98
NEPTUNE	102
HADES	
THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE DEAD	107
THE KINGDOM	113
ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE	119
THE MAN WHO NEVER DIED.....	124
THE ADVENTURES OF PERSEUS	127
THE GOLDEN FLEECE	149
A LOST SECRET	170
THE CHAMPION OF ATHENS	178
THE HERO OF HEROES	
THE ORACLE.....	193
HIS FIRST LABOR: THE LION	199
HIS SECOND LABOR: THE HYDRA	202
HIS THIRD LABOR: THE STAG.....	205

HIS FOURTH LABOR: THE BOAR	208
HIS FIFTH LABOR: THE AUGEAN STABLE	214
MORE LABORS; AND THE CATTLE OF GERYON .	218
HIS ELEVENTH LABOR: THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES	225
HIS TWELFTH LABOR: THE DESCENT INTO HADES.....	232
THE CHOICE OF HERCULES	239
THE TUNIC OF NESSUS.....	245
THE APPLE OF DISCORD	254

SATURN

ONCE upon a time, the Sky married the Earth. The Sky's name was Cœlus, and, the Earth's was Terra. They had a great many children: one of these, the eldest, was called Titan, and another was called Saturn.

Terra, their mother Earth, was very good and kind; but their father, Cœlus, was very unkind and cruel. He hated his own children, and shut them all up under ground, so that he might get rid of them—all of them, that is to say, except Saturn, whom he allowed to have his freedom. Saturn grew up; and he thought of nothing but how to set his brothers free. At last one day he went to his mother, and asked her what he could do. Terra had come to hate her husband for his cruelty: so she gave Saturn all the iron she had in her veins—you know that iron comes from what are called the Veins of the Earth—and he made a great scythe with it. With this scythe he wounded and punished his father so terribly that old Cœlus was never good for anything again—in fact, we never hear of him any more, except when we turn his name into Cœlum, which is the Latin for “the sky,” as you know.

GODS AND HEROES

Saturn instantly let all his brothers out from their underground prison. They were very grateful to him: and Titan, the eldest, said, "You shall be king of us all, and of all the world, if you will only promise me one thing." Saturn promised. "It is this," said Titan. "You know how our father treated us; and how you treated him. Children are plagues, and I don't want you to have anything to do with them. Therefore promise me to eat up all your children, if you ever have any, as soon as they are born. They'll be too young to mind and you'll be safe from them. I think so much of this, that if you don't eat them up, every one, I'll take the kingdom away from you. For I'm the eldest, and I might keep it if I pleased instead of giving it up to you."

Saturn had no children then, and he gave the promise. But sometime afterwards he married a goddess named Rhea, who was very good and very beautiful. They, too, had a great many children. But, alas! there was that terrible promise that poor Saturn had made to Titan. Saturn could not break his word, so he ate every child as soon as it was born. Of course Rhea was very unhappy and miserable: it was worse, thought she, than if he had only shut them underground. But there was the promise—and she did not know what to do.

But she thought and thought, and at last she hit on a plan. When her next child was born, she hid it away, and when Saturn asked for it to eat it, she gave him a big stone instead of the baby. Saturn must have had good teeth, for he ate it up, and only thought that the new baby's bones were uncommonly hard. The

SATURN

trick answered so well that when the next child was born she did it again,—and again she did it a third time. She named the three children that she saved in this way, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto.

Jupiter, the eldest, was a very fine, strong child. He made such a noise with his crying that his mother Rhea was afraid Saturn would hear him. So she sent him away to the island of Crete where he was brought up on goat's milk; and she ordered his nurses to make all the noise they could with drums, trumpets, and cymbals all day and all night long, so that nobody could hear him cry and so find out that he was alive.

But unluckily her secret was found out by Titan. Titan thought Saturn had been breaking his word; so he made war on him, and very nearly conquered him and took his kingdom from him.

Jupiter, however, heard the noise of the battle through all the cymbals, trumpets, and drums. He was only a year old, but so big and strong that he rushed out of Crete, and fought a most desperate battle against his uncles, the Titans, to save his father, Saturn. The Titans were wonderful people. All were giants; and one of them had a hundred arms. They threw mountains instead of stones. But Jupiter conquered them at last, and set his father free.

But somehow Saturn was very much afraid of his son. I think I should have been afraid of you if you had been such a wonderful baby. In some way or other—I don't know how—he tried to get rid of Jupiter, and made himself so unpleasant that Jupiter had to take his kingdom away from him, and make himself

GODS AND HEROES

king. That is how Jupiter became king of all the gods and goddesses.

Saturn, when he lost his kingdom, went to Italy, where a king named Janus received him very kindly. Saturn and Janus became such friends that Janus made him king with him; and Saturn ruled so well that he made his people the happiest in all the world. Everybody was perfectly good and perfectly happy. Saturn's reign on earth is called the Golden Age. His wife, Rhea, was with him, and was as good as he;—so he had peace at last after all his troubles, which had no doubt taught him to be wise.

The Greek name for Saturn means "Time"; and Saturn is called the god of Time, who swallows up all things and creatures. All creatures may be called "the Children of Time." And the kingdom of Time, we may say, must always come to an end. The whole story means a great deal more than this; but this is enough to show you that it is not nonsense, and means something. One of the planets is called Saturn.

In pictures Saturn is always made an old man, because Time is old; and he carries his scythe, because Time mows everything away, just as a mower does the grass; or like "The Reaper whose name is Death." Only Death, in the poem, is kinder than Saturn or Time.

THE GODS AND THE GIANTS

WHEN Jupiter became god and king of the whole world, he made his two brothers, Neptune and Pluto, kings under him. He made Neptune god and king of the sea: Pluto he made god and king of Hades. Hades was a world underground, in the middle of the earth, where men and women go and live when they die.

The next thing that Jupiter did was to marry Juno. Their wedding was the grandest and most wonderful that ever was seen. Invitations were sent out to all the gods and nymphs. The nymphs were a sort of fairies—some of them waited upon the goddesses; some of them lived in rivers, brooks, and trees. All of them came to the wedding, except one nymph named Chělōnē.

She refused to come: and, besides that, she laughed at the whole thing. When they told her that Jupiter was going to marry Juno, she laughed so loud that Jupiter himself could hear her. I don't know why she thought it so ridiculous, but I can guess pretty well. I expect she knew Juno's bad temper better than Jupiter did, and how Jupiter was just the sort of husband to spoil any wife's temper. But Jupiter was very fond

GODS AND HEROES

of Juno just then, and he did not like to be laughed at on his wedding-day. So he had Chelone turned into a tortoise, so that she might never be able to laugh again. Nobody ever heard a tortoise laugh, nor ever will.

Jupiter and Juno set up their palace in the sky, just over the top of Mount Olympus, a high mountain in the north of Greece. And very soon, I am sorry to say, his quarrels with Juno began—so that, after all, poor Chelone had been right in not thinking much of the grand wedding. He always kept her for his Queen; but he cared for a great many Titanesses and nymphs much more than he did for her, and married more of them than anybody can reckon, one after another. This made Juno very angry, and they used to quarrel terribly. But something was going to happen which was almost as bad as quarreling, and which must have made Jupiter envy the peace and comfort of old Saturn, who had become only an earthly king.

The Titans made another war. And this time they got the help of the Giants, who were more terrible even than the Titans. They were immense monsters, some almost as tall as the tallest mountain, fearfully strong, and horribly ugly, with hair miles long, and rough beards down to their middle. One of them had fifty heads and a hundred hands. Another had serpents instead of legs. Others, called Cyclopes, had only one eye, which was in the middle of their foreheads. But the most terrible of all was a giant named Typhon. He had a hundred heads, each like a dragon's, and darted flames from his mouth and eyes. A great battle was fought between the gods and the giants. The giants tried to get into the sky by piling up the moun-

THE GODS AND THE GIANTS

tains one upon another. They used oak-trees for clubs, and threw hills for stones. They set whole forests on fire, and tossed them up like torches to set fire to the sky. And at last Typhon's hundred fiery mouths set up a hundred different yells and roars all at once, so loud and horrible that Jupiter and all the gods ran away into Egypt and hid themselves there in the shapes of animals. Jupiter turned himself into a ram, and Juno became a cow.

But, when their fright was over, the gods came back into their own shapes, and fought another battle, greater and more terrible than before. And this time the gods won. Some of the giants were crushed under mountains or drowned in the sea. Some were taken prisoners: and of these some were beaten to death and others were skinned alive. Atlas, who was the tallest, was ordered to spend all his days in holding up the sky on his shoulders,—how it was held up before, I do not know. Some of the Cyclopes were set to work in making thunderbolts for Jupiter. They became the blacksmiths of the gods, and Mount Ætna, which is a volcano, was one of their forges.

After this, the gods lived in peace: though Jupiter and Juno never left off quarreling a good deal. Jupiter made most of his children gods and goddesses, and they all lived together over Mount Olympus, ruling the earth and the sky, and the air, the sun, and the stars. You will read the stories of all of them. They used to eat a delicious food called Ambrosia, and their wine was a wonderful drink called Nectar. Hebe, the goddess of Youth, mixed and poured out the Nectar, and Ganymede was Jupiter's own page and cup-bearer.

GODS AND HEROES

These gods and goddesses of the sky were a sort of large family, with Jupiter and Juno for father and mother. Of course Neptune with his gods of the sea, and Pluto with his gods of Hades, were like different families, and lived in their own places.

Whenever it thunders, that is the voice of Jupiter. One of the planets is named after him—it is a beautiful large white star. In pictures, he is a large, strong man, with a thick brown beard, looking like a king. He sits on a throne, with lightning in his hand, and an eagle by his side. Juno is a large, beautiful woman, tall and grand, looking like a queen, with a proud face and splendid eyes. The peacock is her favorite bird, just as Jupiter's is the eagle.

THE FIRST MAN; OR, THE STORY OF PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA

ONE of the Titans left two sons, Prometheus and Epimetheus. Prometheus means Forethought, and Epimetheus means Afterthought. Now Prometheus was not big and strong like the other Titans, but he was more clever and cunning than all of them put together. And he said to himself, "Well, the gods have shown themselves stronger than we. We can't conquer them by fighting, that's clear. But there are cleverer ways of winning than by fighting, as they shall see."

So Prometheus dug up a good-sized lump of clay, more than six feet long, and nearly four feet round. And now, said he to himself, "I only want just one little spark of Heavenly Fire."

Now the Heavenly Fire is only to be found in the sky; and Jupiter had ordered that no Titan was ever to enter the sky again. But Prometheus was much too clever to find any difficulty about that. The great goddess Minerva, who is the goddess of Wisdom, happened to be on a visit to the earth just then, so Prometheus called upon her and said:—

GODS AND HEROES

“Great goddess, I am only a poor, beaten Titan, and I have never seen the sky. But my father and my father’s father used to live there in the good old times, and I should like, just once, to see the inside of the beautiful blue place above the clouds which was once their home. Please, great goddess, let me go in just once, and I’ll promise to do no harm.”

Now Minerva did not like to break the rule. But she was very trusting and very good-natured, because she was very wise; and besides, Prometheus looked such a poor little creature, so different from all the other Titans and Giants, that she said:—

“You certainly don’t look as if you could do us any harm, even if you tried. Very well—you shall have a look at the sky, and I’ll show you round.”

So she told Prometheus to follow her up Mount Olympus; but she did not notice a little twig that he carried in his hand: and if she had noticed it, she would not have thought it mattered. Wise people don’t notice all the little things that cunning people do. Then she opened the golden gate of the sky, and let him in. She was very kind, and showed him everything. He went over the palace of the gods, and saw Jupiter’s great ivory throne, and his eagle, and the brew-house where the nectar is made. He looked at the places behind the clouds, where they keep the rain and snow. Then they looked at all the stars; and at last they came to the Stables of the Sun. For you must know that the sun is a great fiery car, drawn by four white horses from the east to the west, and is put away in a stable during the

THE FIRST MAN

night-time, where the four horses eat wheat made of gold.

“Now you have seen everything,” said Minerva; “and you must go.”

“Thank you,” said Prometheus. And he went back to earth again. But just as he was leaving, he touched one of the wheels of the sun with his little twig, so that a spark came off upon the end.

The spark was still there when he got home. He touched his lump of clay with the spark of Heavenly Fire—and, lo and behold, the lump of clay became a living man!

“There!” said Prometheus. “There’s Something that will give the gods more trouble than anything that ever was made!”

It was the First Man.

Jupiter very soon found out what Prometheus had done, and was very vexed and annoyed. He forgave Minerva, who was his favorite daughter, but he said to the god of Fire: “Make something that will trouble the man even more than the man will trouble me.”

So the god of Fire took another lump of clay, and a great deal of Heavenly Flame, and made the First Woman.

All the gods admired her very much, for she had been made very nicely—better than the man. Jupiter said to her, “My child, go to Prometheus and give him my compliments, and tell him to marry you.” The gods

GODS AND HEROES

and goddesses thought it a good idea, and all of them made her presents for her wedding. One gave her beauty, another wit, another fine clothes, and so on; but Jupiter only gave her a little box, which was not to be opened till her wedding-day.

Prometheus was sitting one day at his door, thinking how clever he was, when he saw, coming down Olympus, the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. As soon as she came close—

“Who are you?” he asked. “From where do you come?”

“My name is Pandora,” said she. “And I am come from the skies to marry you.”

“With all my heart,” said Prometheus. “You will be a very nice wife, I am sure. But—let me see—Pandora means ‘All Gifts,’ doesn’t it? What have you got to give me, to keep house upon?”

“The gods have given me everything!” said Pandora. “I bring you Beauty, Wit, Love, Wisdom, Health, Wealth, Virtue, Fine Clothes—in a word, everything that you can wish for.”

“And that little box—what have you in that?” asked he.

“Oh, that’s only a little box that Jupiter gave me—I don’t know what’s in that, for it is not to be opened till after we’re married. Perhaps it is diamonds.”

“Who gave it you?” asked he.

THE FIRST MAN

“Jupiter,” said Pandora.

“Oho!” thought the cunning Prometheus. “Secret boxes from Jupiter are not to my fancy. My dear,” he said to Pandora, “on second thoughts, I don’t think I will marry you. But as you’ve had so much trouble in coming, I’ll send you to my brother Epimetheus, and you shall marry him. He’ll do just as well.”

So Pandora went on to Epimetheus, and he married her. But Prometheus had sent him a private message not to open the box that had been given by Jupiter. So it was put away, and everything went on very well for a long time.

But, at last, Pandora happened to be alone in the house; and she could not resist the temptation to just take one little peep into the box to see what was inside. Such a little box could not hold any harm: and it might be the most beautiful present of all. Anyhow, she could do no harm by lifting the lid; she could easily shut it up again. She felt she was doing what would displease Epimetheus, and was rather ashamed of her curiosity, but—well, she *did* open the box. And then—out there flew thousands and thousands of creatures, like a swarm of wasps and flies, buzzing and darting about with joy to be free. Out at the window, and over the world they flew. Alas! they were all the evil things that are in the world to torment and hurt mankind. Those flies from Pandora’s box were War, Pain, Grief, Anger, Sickness, Sorrow, Poverty, Death, Sin. What could she do? She could not get them back

GODS AND HEROES

into the box again; she could only scream and wring her hands. Epimetheus heard her cries, and did all he could: he shut down the lid, just in time to keep the very last of the swarm from flying away. By good luck, it was the only one worth keeping—a little creature called Hope, who still lives in the box to comfort us when the others are stinging us, and to make us say, “There is good in everything—even in the box of Pandora.”

But Jupiter, when he heard how Prometheus had refused to marry Pandora, and had tried to outwit him again, was very angry indeed. He sent down one of the gods, who took Prometheus and carried him to Mount Caucasus, and bound him to the highest and coldest peak with chains. And a vulture was sent to gnaw his heart forever.

So cunning could not conquer the strength of the gods after all.

I have something to say about this story, which you may not quite understand now, but which you will, some day, when you read it again. Think how Man is made of dead common clay, but with one spark of Heavenly Fire straight from the sky. Think how Woman is made, with less clay, but with more of the Heavenly Fire. Think of that “Afterthought,” which saved Hope when there was nothing else to be saved, and think of the Pain sent to gnaw the heart of Prometheus, who used all his cleverness to make himself great in wrong-doing.

THE FIRST MAN

You will be glad to hear that, a long time afterwards, the greatest and best man in all Mythology came and killed the vulture, and set Prometheus free. You will read all about it in time. But I want you to know and remember the man's name. It was Hercules.

THE GREAT FLOOD; OR, THE STORY OF DEUCALION

PROMETHEUS turned out to be quite right in saying that men would give more trouble to Jupiter than the Titans or the Giants, or anything that had ever been made. As time went on, men became more and more wicked every day.

Now there lived in Thessaly, on the banks of a river, a man and his wife, named Deucalion and Pyrrha. I think they must have been good people, and not like all the other men and women in the world. One day, Deucalion noticed that the water in the river was rising very high. He did not think much of it at the time, but the next day it was higher, and the next higher still. At last the river burst its banks, and spread over the country, sweeping away houses and drowning many people.

Deucalion and Pyrrha escaped out of their own house just in time, and went to the top of a mountain. But, to their terror, the waters still kept on spreading and rising, until all the plain of Thessaly looked like a sea, and the tops of the hills like islands.

THE GREAT FLOOD

“The water will cover the hills soon,” said Deucalion, “and then the mountains. What shall we do?”

Pyrrha thought for a moment, and then said:—

“I have heard that there is a very wise man on the top of Mount Caucasus who knows everything. Let us go to him, and perhaps he will tell us what to do and what all this water means.”

So they went down the other side, and went on and on till they reached the great Caucasian mountains, which are the highest in all Europe, and are always covered with snow. They climbed up to the highest peak, and there they saw a man, chained to the ice, with a vulture tearing and gnawing him. It was Prometheus, who had made the first man.

Deucalion tried to drive the horrible bird away. But Prometheus said:—

“It is no use. You can do nothing for me. Not even the Great Flood will drive this bird away, or put me out of my pain.”

“Ah! the Great Flood!” cried Deucalion and Pyrrha together. “We have left it behind us—are we safe up here?”

“You are safe nowhere,” said Prometheus. “Soon the waters will break over the mountains round Thessaly and spread over the whole world. They will rise and rise till not even this peak will be seen. Jupiter is sending this flood to sweep away from the face of the earth the wickedness of man. Not one is to be saved. Even now, there is nobody left alive but you two.”

GODS AND HEROES

Deucalion and Pyrrha looked: and, in the distance, they saw the waters coming on, and rising above the hills.

“But perhaps,” said Prometheus, “Jupiter may not wish to punish *you*. I cannot tell. But I will tell you what to do—it *may* save you. Go down the mountain till you come to a wood, and cut down a tree.” Then he told them how to make a boat—for nobody knew anything about boats in those days. Then he bade them good bye, and they went down the hill sorrowfully, wishing they could help Prometheus, and doubting if they could help themselves.

They came to the wood, and made the boat—just in time. The water rose; but their boat rose with the water. At last even the highest peak of Caucasus was covered, and they could see nothing but the sky above them and the waters round. Then the clouds gathered and burst, and the sky and the sea became one great storm.

For nine days and nights their little boat was tossed about by the winds and waves. But on the tenth day, as if by magic, the sky cleared, the water went down, and their boat was left high and dry on the top of a hill.

They knelt, and thanked Jupiter, and went down the hill hand in hand—the only man and the only woman in the whole world. They did not even know where they were.

But presently they met, coming up the hill, a form like a woman, only grander and more beautiful.

THE GREAT FLOOD

They were afraid. But at last they had courage to ask:—

“Who are you? And where are we?”

“This hill is Mount Parnassus; and I am Themis, the goddess of Justice,” said she. “I have finished my work upon the earth, and am on my way home to the sky. I know your story. Live, and be good, and be warned by what has happened to all other men.”

“But what is the use of our living?” they asked, “and what is the use of this great world to us two? For we have no children to come after us when we die.”

“What you say is just,” said the goddess of Justice. “Jupiter will be pleased enough to give this empty world to a wiser and better race of men. But he will be quite as content without them. In short, you may have companions, if you want them, and if you will teach them to be better and wiser than the old ones. Only you must make them for yourselves.”

“But how can we make men?” asked they.

“I will tell you. Throw your grandmother’s bones behind you without looking round.”

“Our grandmother’s bones? But how are we to find them after this flood, or to know which are hers?”

“The gods,” said Themis, “tell people what to do, but not how it is to be done.” And she vanished into the air.

I think Themis was right. All of us are taught what we ought to do; but we are usually left to ask

GODS AND HEROES

ourselves whether any particular thing is right or wrong.

Deucalion and Pyrrha asked one another; but neither knew what to say. The whole world, after the Great Flood, was full of bones everywhere. Which were their grandmother's, and where? They wandered about over half the world trying to find them, but all in vain, till they thought they would have to give it up in despair.

At last, however, Pyrrha said to Deucalion:—

“I have a thought. We are all called the children of Jupiter, you know, because he is called the father of gods and men. And Jupiter and all the gods are the children of Cœlus and Terra. Now, if we are the children of Jupiter, and Jupiter is the child of Terra, then Terra must be our grandmother. And Terra is the Earth; so our grandmother is the Earth, you see.”

“But,” asked Deucalion, “what about the bones?”

“What are the bones of the Earth but the stones?” said Pyrrha. “The stones must be our Grandmother's Bones.”

“I don't think you're right,” said Deucalion. “It's much too easy a thing—only to throw a few stones. But there's no harm in trying.”

So they gathered two heaps of stones, one for him and one for her, and threw the stones behind them, over their shoulders, without turning round—just as Themis had told them.

THE GREAT FLOOD

When they had thrown away all their stones, they looked to see if anything had happened. And lo! every stone thrown by Pyrrha had become a woman, and every stone thrown by Deucalion had become a man.

So they kept on throwing stones till the world was full of men and women again. And Deucalion and Pyrrha became their king and queen.

THE STORIES OF LATONA AND NIOBE

JUPITER once fell in love with a beautiful Titaness named Latona. This made Juno terribly angry: so she sent a huge and horrible snake, called Python, to hunt Latona all over the world. And she went to Terra, and made her swear not to give Latona a resting-place or a hiding-place anywhere.

So poor Latona was hunted and driven about by Python night and day. She also went to our Grandmother Earth, and begged for a corner to rest in or a cave to hide in. But old Terra said, "No. I have sworn to Juno that you shall have no rest in me."

At last, in her despair, she went to Neptune, and prayed him to hide her in his waters, since Earth had refused her. Neptune said, "I wish I could, with all my heart; but what place is there, in the sea or on the land, where you can hide from the Queen of the Sky? But wait—there's one thing that nobody knows of but me. There is an island under the sea; and this island is always moving and wandering about, so that nobody can see it, or tell where it may chance to be, for it is never in the same place two minutes together. It isn't sea, because it's land; but it doesn't belong to Terra, be-

THE STORIES OF LATONA AND NIOBE

cause it's under the sea, and has no bottom. I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll fix it where nobody can find it, and you'll be safe there, because it's neither earth nor sea."

So Neptune anchored the floating island in a part of the Ægean Sea. The island is called Delos; and it is there still, just where it was fixed by Neptune for Latona.

Latona went and lived there, safe from Juno and Python. After a time she had two children, a son and a daughter. The son was named Apollo, and the daughter Diana.

Both were beautiful, but Apollo was the most beautiful boy ever born. He was a wonderful child in every way. The very instant he was born he made a bow and arrow, and went across the sea, and found Python, and killed him. When he was four years old, he built one of the wonders of the world—a great altar to the gods, made of the horns of the goats that his sister Diana used to hunt and shoot in the mountains. With two such children to help her, Latona no longer felt afraid of Juno. So she left Delos, and came, with her two children, into a country of Asia Minor, called Lydia.

Now there was a princess in Thebes named Niobe, who had fourteen beautiful children—seven daughters and seven sons. She was very fond and proud of them, and she did not like to hear people talking about Latona's wonderful children. "What signifies a miserable couple of children, when I have

GODS AND HEROES

fourteen?" she used to say. "I don't think much of Latona"; and, in her jealousy, she never lost a chance of insulting the mother of Apollo and Diana.

Of course these insults came to Latona's ears. Apollo and Diana heard of them too; and they resolved to punish the proud princess who insulted and scorned their mother. I scarcely like to tell you of how they punished Niobe, for I cannot think of anything more cruel.

Each of them took a bow and seven arrows. Apollo shot with his arrows all the seven sons of Niobe. Diana shot six of Niobe's seven daughters, leaving only one alive. "There!" said they; "what signifies a miserable one child, when our mother has two?"

When poor Niobe saw her children killed before her she wept bitterly, and she could not stop her tears. They flowed on and on, until she cried herself into stone.

As for Apollo, he kept on growing handsomer and stronger until he became a god—the most glorious of all the gods in the sky. Jupiter made him the god of the Sun, and made his sister, Diana, goddess of the Moon. He was also the god of all beautiful and useful things: of music, painting, poetry, medicine. Several names were given to him. One of his names is "Phœbus," which means bright and splendid like the sun. "Apollo" means "the Destroyer": people must guess for themselves why he was called "the Destroyer."

In pictures and statues he is always made graceful, beautiful, and young. He has no hair on his face,

THE STORIES OF LATONA AND NIOBE

but wears long waving hair. Sometimes he carries a lyre—a sort of small harp—and sometimes a bow. Very often he wears a wreath of laurel. You must take a great deal of notice of Apollo, or Phœbus, because he is the most famous of all the gods next to Jupiter. It will help you to know him if you think of him as always beautiful, wise, and bright, but rather cruel and hard.