

THE CHILDREN'S PLUTARCH
TALES OF THE GREEKS



ALEXANDER TAMING BUCEPHALUS 38

**THE CHILDREN'S
PLUTARCH
TALES OF THE GREEKS**

BY

F. J. GOULD

Illustrated by Walter Crane

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INTRODUCTION

IT is more a pleasure than I can well say to write of this little book which Mr. Gould has made for the children out of Plutarch's great book. The work is very well done, indeed, with a feeling for the original and a faith in it which no criticism or research can ever quite dissipate; for in spite of all the knowledge of Greece and Rome which the study of scholars has since brought us, the Greece and Rome of Plutarch, which, for the English race, became the Greece and Rome of Shakespeare and of Goldsmith, will remain to the end of time the universal countries, with the "cities of the soul" for their capitals. As I read these wonder-stories which Mr. Gould has so simply, so clearly, so wisely retold, I shared again that stir and thrill of the heart which the Italian poet Alfieri records, with his fine frenzy: "The book of books for me, and the one which caused me to pass hours of bliss and rapture, was Plutarch, his lives of the truly great; and some of these, as Timoleon, Caesar, Brutus, Pelopidas, Cato, and others, I read and read again with such a transport of cries, tears, and fury that if any one had heard me in the next room he would surely have thought me mad."

I should not wish the readers of these moving tales to be quite so violently affected as all this, even when, in later life, they go from them to the same stories as Plutarch himself tells them, which I hope they will be impatient to do. There they will learn much more about the general life of Greece and Rome than

they can learn from this book and its mate, Plutarch's Romans, and will see the difference between the two peoples, as Plutarch brings it out by giving first the life of a famous Grecian, and next the life of a famous Roman, and then comparing the two. I think Mr. Gould has done well to put all the Grecians together and all the Romans together, for otherwise it would be confusing to children who did not know their history, and did not realize how long after the Grecians the Romans came. I also like the gentle and right feeling in which he treats the facts, and will not allow any dazzle of glory to blind his readers as to the right and the wrong of the things that happen in the men that do or suffer the things. From time to time he speaks of that awful and cruel crime against human nature, that slavery on which the grandeur and the splendor of the whole ancient world was founded. But he does not, that I remember, make it plain how men and women and children, taken prisoners in war, or even peaceful strangers visiting a Greek city without the protection of some friendly citizen, could be robbed of their freedom and fortune and sold into lifelong slavery, with no more rights than the beasts of the field. I would have had him dwell on this fact, not so as to spoil the children's pleasure in the beautiful and noble things that the Greeks unselfishly did for their country and for one another, but so as to make them understand how in our strangely mixed humanity men could die heroes and martyrs to their country's cause while they lived masters of those whom they denied liberty and country and the ownership of their lives and limbs.

I would have the children who read this glowing book, so full of examples of sublime self-sacrifice, see that the Spartans were heroic champions of freedom in spite of holding the Helots in bitter bondage, and that the Athenians who fell in battle for their mother city could be her devoted children though they forbade their hapless stepbrothers her love and blessing. In such things the Greeks were savage, as the Hebrews were who also bought and sold their fellow-men.

The thing which seems to have made the Spartans so mighty in war and the Athenians so glorious in peace is another thing that Mr. Gould does not dwell on. It was their being, with all the other Greeks, republicans. This made them patriots as no other form of government could; it made each of them feel that he had the same stake in his country that he had in his own home—that his country was his home. Under monarchical governments, where the freeman is still the subject of the prince and not the citizen of the state, the patriot's creed is King and Country, with the King first; but in a republic it is Country first, last, and always, and never Country and President or Governor, no matter how good and great such men may be. Even with our Mother England, where people are as free to think, to speak, to write as we are, and may say what they please of the sovereign, still the cry is King and Country, and men live in the superstition that a king is somehow sacred and somehow superhuman. Their words deny this, while their lives declare it; but in Greece, as long as the Greeks were free, they had no such superstition. They were great because they were democratic republicans and were once as the Ameri-

cans and the French and the Swiss are now; and I would not have the children forget this. After the Macedonians conquered the true Grecians, and the Romans fell a prey to the tyrants whom their own luxury and ambition and riches had created, all was indeed changed, but it is not such Grecians or such Romans that Plutarch glorifies.

W. D. HOWELLS.

PREFACE

IT appeared to me that, by way of preliminary to lessons on justice, government, political progress, etc., it would be well to create in the child-nature a sympathy for some definite historic movement. With this sympathy as a basis, one could better build up conceptions of social justice, civic evolution, and international relations. I could think of no finer material for this purpose than the admirable biographies of Plutarch; though the national history, or the history of Western Europe generally, would doubtless serve the same end. Western history, however, derives its traditions from Greece and Rome, and it seemed to me an advantage to use a work which not only furnished simple instruction in the meaning of politics, but also held rank as a literary classic. My version is intended for children aged about ten to fourteen, after which period they should be encouraged to go direct to the wise, manly, and entertaining pages of Plutarch himself. The spirit of my selection from Plutarch's ample store is aptly represented in the beautiful drawings by Mr. Walter Crane.

F. J. GOULD.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE famous author, philosopher, and educator who is known to us as Plutarch—in Greek, Πλουτάρχος—was born at Chæronea, in Bœotia, about A.D. 46. The wealth of his parents enabled him to enjoy a thorough education at Athens, particularly in philosophy. After making various journeys, he lived for a long time in Rome, where he lectured upon philosophy and associated with people of distinction, and took an important part in the education of the future Emperor Hadrian. The Emperor Trajan gave him consular rank, and Hadrian appointed him Procurator of Greece. It was about A.D. 120 that he died in his native town of Chæronea, where he was archon and priest of the Pythian Apollo.

In addition to his most famous work, the *Parallel Lives*, known familiarly as *Plutarch's Lives*, he was the author of some eighty-three writings of various kinds. The *Lives*, which were probably prepared in Rome, but finished and published late in life at Chæronea, were intended to afford studies of character, and the vividness of the mental and moral portraiture has made them continue to be a living force. Historically they have supplied many deficiencies in knowledge of the times and persons treated in his great work.

THE HARDY MEN OF SPARTA

THE men in the fortress on the hill were so surrounded by their foes that Sous, their leader, advised them to yield, and they agreed. He spoke to the enemy from the wall:

“We will own you masters if you will agree to one condition. For days we have been without water, and we are dying of thirst. Let every man of my army drink of the spring which runs by your camp, and then all our land shall be yours.”

This was allowed. But Sous first called his fighting-men together, and asked if any one of them would forbear from drinking. None would go without the water he longed for. They marched out of the castle and eagerly drank—all except Sous. His throat was dry like desert sand, but he would not drink. He simply sprinkled water over his hot face. Then he summoned his men and marched off, saying to the enemy:

“This land is still mine and not yours, for we have not all drunk. Not a drop of water has touched my lips.”

Of course, this was cunning and dishonest, according to our ideas to-day; but the ancient Greeks and other people thought such tricks quite right, espe-

cially if the deceit was done for the sake of one's country; and you see Sous wished to save his country from the hands of strangers.

This chieftain Sous was a Spartan, and Sparta was a rocky and mountainous land in the south of Greece, the cliffs along its shore standing over the blue depths of the Mediterranean Sea. Round its main city, Sparta, no walls were built, the bravery of the citizens being its true defence. Sous was the first man who thought of seizing the men of a certain seaside town of Sparta, and making slaves of them. They were called Helots (*Hel-ots*), and any other captives taken in sieges or in battles on the sea were also called Helots. You could know these slaves in the street by their dress. They wore caps of dogskin and coats of sheepskin, but no other clothes, and each day (so it is said) they bared their backs and were beaten by their masters, in order to keep their spirit humble. Sometimes the Spartans would give the slaves strong drink till they were drunken, and then lead them out before the young men so as to show how wretched and unmanly a drunkard appeared. Yet the Spartans would have fared ill without the help of their slaves, for the Helots were cooks, ploughmen, carriers, and general servants. I am glad to say, however, that no Helot could be sold, and, after paying so much barley, oil, or wine to his lord, he might keep the rest of the fruits of the field on which he worked.

Among the children's children's children (or descendants) of Sous was the famous man Lycurgus (*Lyc-
kur-gus*), about 825 B.C., who was teacher and lawgiver to the Spartans as Moses was to the Jews. Now, Ly-

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curgus had made up his mind to give the best laws he could plan to the people of Sparta; but, as he knew it was harder to rule men than to rule sheep, or even wolves or lions, he first went about the world to learn all he could concerning people and their manners. Thus he travelled to Spain, Egypt, and (some say) as far as India.

On his return to Sparta, he was made lawgiver; and one of the first things he did was to divide the land into forty thousand small portions, or lots, each being just large enough to keep a family supplied with barley, wine, or olive-oil. And when he passed at harvest-time among the fields, divided into lots, and saw the shocks of yellow corn standing, he smiled to think that the land of Sparta was fairly shared among the citizens, and that each man had neither too little nor too much. No gold or silver money was used; all the money was simply pieces of iron, and thirty pounds' worth of iron would fill a room and need two strong oxen to carry it in a cart; and so it was not easy to hoard up much money, or for a man to become very rich.

Their couches, tables, and beds were all carved in wood in a very plain way, without costly cushions or gilding; and the doors and ceilings of the houses were made of wood roughly sawn, but never polished. Lycurgus would not let the people sit at home to eat dainty meals; all were obliged to come to public tables, and take their dinners and suppers in company. At each table about fifteen persons would sit, and each would bring to the public store every month a certain load of barley-meal, wine, cheese, and figs, and a little

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iron money to buy flesh or fish. Their favorite food was a kind of black broth. At the tables the children sat with their elders, and folk might talk as much as they would and make jokes, so long as the jokes were not nasty and silly. And if the joke went against any particular man, he was expected to take it in good part, for the Spartans considered that a brave fellow should not only be stout in fight, but should cheerfully stand being laughed at.

The boys had their hair cut short, and went barefoot, and wore very little clothing. They slept together in companies, or brigades, their beds being made of reeds, which their own hands had pulled up on the banks of the river. In winter, they were permitted to spread warm thistle-down on the top of the reeds. When the boys ran races, or boxed, or wrestled, the old men would stand by and watch the sports. At supper they might sing and talk, but that lad was thought most of who could say the best things in the fewest words. The Spartan style of talking was called "laconic," and it was short and shrewd.

Thus a Spartan was asked by a foolish man the question, "Who is the best man in Sparta?" The answer was, "He that is least like you."

Another was asked how many men there were in the Spartan country, and he replied: "Enough to keep bad men at a distance."

So hardy were the Spartan lads that they were proud to bear pain without uttering a cry. On one occasion a boy had caught a young fox and placed it inside his coat. While he sat at the supper table, the

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young fox began biting him very severely, but he would not make a single sound; and not until his companions saw the blood drawn by the creature's claws did they know how much the brave lad suffered. The girls also would join together in sports, running, wrestling, and throwing quoits and darts; for they took delight in rendering their bodies healthy and strong, so that they might be happier mothers. When their sons went forth to war, the Spartan mothers would give each young man his shield, and say: "Return with this shield, or upon it," meaning, "You must either carry back your shield as a warrior who has fought well, or be carried on it as a dead warrior, who would not allow himself to be taken prisoner by the enemy."

So anxious were the Spartans that all the citizens should be strong and well-made that they carried weak and sickly babies to a deep cave in a mountain, and there let them die. When quite little, the children were often taken into dark places, so that they might be used to the gloom and walk through it without fear. Thus it came to pass that the Spartans were heroic in the day of battle; and, when the question arose whether a wall should be built about the city, the people were pleased with the man who said: "That city is well fortified which has a wall of men instead of bricks." Yet, powerful and warlike as the young men were, they always treated the aged with respect, and, if a weak old man came into a place of meeting, they would instantly rise and offer him a convenient seat.

Some of the richer sort of people disliked the stern way in which Lycurgus made them live, and one day an angry crowd attacked him, and he fled for ref-

uge to a temple. A young man named Alcander joined in the riot, and thought it a fine thing to help in putting down the tyrant. He struck the lawgiver on the eye with a stick. Then Lycurgus stopped and showed his bleeding face to the people, and they were ashamed, and, seizing Alcander, brought him to Lycurgus, and bade him punish the young man as he willed.

The lawgiver took Alcander to his house, and the young man expected a very rough chastisement for his wrong-doing. But Lycurgus merely ordered him to act as his servant, and fetch things for him and wait upon him at his work or his meals; and for several days this went on, the master of Sparta saying no unkind word to Alcander, and in no way showing that he owed a grudge. When Alcander at length went home, he told his friends how generously he had been served, and how noble a man he thought Lycurgus was; and thus Lycurgus turned an enemy into a friend.

When Lycurgus felt himself advancing in years, he made up his mind not to dwell any longer in Sparta. He called the people together and said to them:

“My friends, I am going to the temple of the great god Apollo, to speak with him and hear what he has to say to me. Before I leave, I wish you all to promise me—princes and citizens alike—that you will faithfully keep all the laws I have made, and alter none of them until I return.”

The people said: “We promise.”

Then Lycurgus bade farewell to his friends and to his son, and set out for the temple of Apollo at

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Delphi, and the god told him that the laws which he had established for Sparta were good and useful. The lawgiver thought that, if he never returned to his native land, the citizens would never alter the laws. Therefore, for the sake of the country which he loved, he died beyond its borders. Some say he died in one place, some in another. Some say he died in the island of Crete, and, as the old lawgiver lay sick, he bade those about him burn his body and throw the ashes into the sea. When they did this, his remains were borne by the waves this way and that, and so it was not possible he could ever return to Sparta.

THE WISE MAN OF ATHENS

A BUZZ of many voices was heard in the market-place of Athens. "Is he really mad?" asked one.

"Yes, you can see he is. Look at him now; he is leaping on to the herald's stone; and he wears a cap! Poor Solon; what a pity his brain should give way like this! Hark, he is beginning to speak."

The citizens of Athens crowded round the herald's stone, and listened to Solon. It was the custom for only sick people to wear caps, and Solon's strange appearance made the people readily believe the report that he was out of his mind. He recited a poem which he had composed beginning with the words:

Hear and attend!
From Salamis I came,
To show your error.

Solon was born about 638 B.C., and died about 558 B.C.

Salamis was an island whose mountains rose above the sea on the west of Athens. It was held by the Megarian people, who had taken it by force; and Solon so stirred up the spirit of Athens that the citi-

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zens made him commander of the men who should recapture the island. Solon played the following trick: He bade a number of young men dress in long, loose garments that made them appear like women; and he sent word to the Megarian warriors in Salamis that now they might have a good chance of seizing some of the principal ladies of Athens! The Megarians, not knowing the message was a trap laid by Solon, hurried into a ship, landed on the Athenian coast, and saw what seemed to be a crowd of women dancing at a festival. With a shout they rushed forward, but were much surprised when the supposed matrons drew swords and made a fierce defence. In the end all the Megarians were slain, and Solon afterward took possession of Salamis. You will meet many such tales of trickery in the history of war in ancient times; and I fear that in our own days also men do not hesitate to deceive their enemies, and they think it quite right to do so.

In another case of trickery the Athenian people were not so well pleased. The city had been troubled by quarrels between two parties who disagreed as to the best way of governing the State; and a number of men were beaten in the conflict and fled to the temple of the goddess Athene (*Ath-ee-nee*) for refuge. According to the custom of the time, no man might touch them while they remained under the care of the goddess. Some of the opposite party came to the gate, and said:

“Come out, like honest men, and go before the city magistrates, and let them judge if you are guilty or innocent.”

“We dare not come out. You would slay us.”

“No, not while you are under the protection of Athene; and we will give you a long thread, long enough to reach from here to the court of justice, and while you hold that we shall consider you as under the guardianship of the goddess.”

So the men who had taken refuge in the temple tied the thread to the altar of Athene, and, while holding it, walked forth toward the place of the magistrates. But presently—perhaps by accident, perhaps by the act of some treacherous hand—the thread snapped. Then their foes fell upon them and killed them. But the people of Athens regarded this deed as a most wicked murder, and later on, when Solon was made chief ruler and lawgiver of the city, all the persons who took part in this action were sent into exile.

Many of the citizens wished Solon to take the crown. They thought he was a wise and just man, and would act as a wise and just king. Solon, however, had no mind for kingship; he was pleased to do his best to govern Athens, but had no wish for the glory of a crown or the splendor of a palace. He found the people of the Athenian country divided. There were, first, the Peasants of the Mountains, poor and hard-working, and always in debt to money-lenders; second, the Dwellers on the Coast, who were neither very rich nor very poor; and third, the Nobles of the Plain, who owned fruitful fields and orchards, and had much power. The poorest folk expected great help from Solon. They hoped he would wipe away all their debts, and they hoped he would take away the greater part of

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the land of the nobles and share it out among the people generally, as was done in Sparta. Solon did indeed wipe out their debts. He declared that all debts should be forgiven, so that the peasants might make a fresh start in life. Nor, even after that, would he allow any debtor to be seized and put into prison. For such had been the custom till then, every debtor being treated as if he were a wicked person. Solon heard of Athenians who had fled away into strange lands for fear of being cast into prison on account of money they owed, and he sent and brought them back; and all debtors who were in jail he set at liberty. You may be sure the poor and needy folk were filled with joy, and they now waited for him to divide the lands. But this Solon would not do, for he thought it would only upset the whole country; and, for that reason, some who had once praised him began to speak ill of him. Yet most of the citizens held him in great esteem, for they saw that in all he did he sought to do good to the people. Many laws he swept away. Before his days a lawgiver named Draco had ruled Athens so severely that he put to death men who only stole a few herbs from a garden; so that it was said that his laws were written not in ink, but in blood. I will set down a little list of some of Solon's laws:

He divided the people (leaving out the slaves) into four classes: The first class were men who had a yearly income of five hundred measures of corn; they must serve as horse-soldiers in the army, and they could vote at elections.

The second class were men who had a yearly income of three hundred measures of corn; they also

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must serve as horse-soldiers in the army, and they could vote at elections.

The third class were men who had a yearly income of one hundred and fifty measures of corn; they must serve as foot-soldiers in the army, and they could vote at elections.

The fourth class were men who worked for wages; they could serve as foot-soldiers, and, if so, they would be paid, whereas the first three classes had no pay; and they had no vote, but they could assemble at a big public meeting and shout "Yes" or "No" when the rulers proposed that anything special should be done.

Solon set up a Council of Four Hundred men who would govern the city of Athens. To-day we should call it a Parliament.

He made a law that after a person was dead no one should say anything evil against him.

He made a law to keep the people from spending too much money on funerals. For instance, they must not sacrifice an ox at a funeral, nor must they bury with the dead body more than three garments.

He made a law that no man was bound to support his aged father unless the father had taught him a useful trade. Solon thought this would lead fathers to be more careful in teaching useful trades to their sons.

He made a law that no one should plant a tree less than five feet from his neighbor's garden, lest the tree should spread its roots so far as to draw the goodness away from the soil in the neighbor's plot.

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He made a law that no man should keep bees nearer than three hundred feet from his neighbor's beehives.

He made a law that a dog which bit a man should be chained to a heavy log of wood.

For some years he travelled in many lands, learning all he could from the people whom he met. Among other things he heard tales of a wonderful land far away in the western seas. It was called Atlantis, and it had beautiful fields, and its palaces were entered by grand gates, and its people were very happy. Solon made a poem about this happy land in order to amuse his countrymen in Athens. He lived to a great age, and was mourned deeply by the people at his death. I will close this account by a story of Solon's visit to the court of the richest man in the world—Cræsus (*Kreesus*), King of Lydia.

Solon had always lived in a humble house, and dressed in a simple manner. When he arrived at the palace of Cræsus, he saw noblemen passing in and out, and so richly attired that he imagined each or any of them might be the king; and each nobleman was followed by a train of servants. When at length the Athenian came into the royal chamber, he beheld the king seated on a magnificent throne, and the place was glittering with jewels, and fine carpets lay on the floors, and valuable marble pillars held up the roof, and ornaments of gold and silver were observed on all sides. Solon showed no joy at these sights. To him they were gaudy and showy, and not at all deserving of praise. Then the king tried to dazzle Solon by opening to him

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his treasure-houses, where were gathered the most precious articles in the world.

“Have you ever seen a happier man than I am?” asked the king.

“Yes.”

“Who was that?”

“A plain man in Athens, named Tellus. He dwelt in a modest cottage with the wife and children who loved him. Though poor, he always had enough for his wants. He died fighting for his country, and his neighbors loved his memory.”

“Well, is there any one else happier than I am?”

“Yes!”

“Another? Who was that, I pray you?”

“Two brothers who died after showing kindness to their old mother. She had set her heart on attending a feast at the village temple, and was ready to start when it was found that the oxen who were to draw her in a cart were away in a distant field, ploughing, and could not be brought in time. Her sons, in order she should not be disappointed, harnessed themselves like oxen to the cart, and drew her, amid the cheers of the village folk, to the doors of the temple. They sat at the feast, merry and friendly, and that night they died; and all men loved their memory. You see, O king, that I cannot speak of a man as happy till I know all his life.”

Some time afterward the armies of Persia invaded the land. Cræsus was taken prisoner, and Cyrus,

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the King of Persia, ordered that he should be burned on a high pile of wood.

As the unhappy king was lying on the pile he shrieked, "O Solon, Solon, Solon!"

King Cyrus commanded his men to stay their hands from setting the pile alight, and he asked Cræsus to tell why he called on Solon; and Cræsus told the story. Cyrus thought for a while, and then bade that Cræsus should be set at liberty, not to be king again (for that would not make him happier), but so that he might live an honorable life.