

# **OUR YOUNG FOLKS' PLUTARCH**



**OUR YOUNG FOLKS'  
PLUTARCH**

**BY**

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*with illustrations*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS  
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA**

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ISBN-10: 1-59915-208-8

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-208-0

Yesterday's Classics  
PO Box 3418  
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

## PREFACE

The lives which we here present in a condensed, simple form are prepared from those of Plutarch, of whom it will perhaps be interesting to young readers to have a short account. Plutarch was born in Chæronea, a town of Bœotia, about the middle of the first century. He belonged to a good family, and was brought up with every encouragement to study, literary pursuits, and virtuous actions. When very young he visited Rome, as did all the intelligent Greeks of his day, and it is supposed that while there he gave public lectures in philosophy and eloquence. He was a great admirer of Plato, and, like that philosopher, believed in the immortality of the soul. This doctrine he preached to his hearers, and taught them many valuable truths about justice and morality, of which they had previously been ignorant.

After his return to his native land, Plutarch held several important public offices, and devoted his time to forming plans for the benefit of his countrymen. Living to an advanced age, he wrote many important books; but the one which gave him most celebrity is the "Lives" from which we have derived this work. He consulted all the historians of his day, but did not follow them blindly; for after carefully comparing and weighing their statements, he selected those which seemed most probable. There can be no doubt that he shared the belief of the age in which he lived, for his works give evidence of devotion to the pagan gods. The legends of the Heroic age must not be accepted as historical facts, nor must

any importance be attached to the prophecies of priests, omens, oracles, and the divinations of soothsayers, except in so far as they afford a picture of ancient superstitions, and show how even the most powerful minds had their weaknesses. They may be traced to natural causes, and it seems probable that the Roman and Greek armies were victorious or the reverse, because they went into battle impressed by the favorable or unfavorable prophecies, as the case might be, of their soothsayers. Plutarch says, "It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives." This is why anecdotes, short sayings or a word or two of repartee are frequently recorded. For they furnish a better insight into the thoughts and character of a man than his most glorious exploit, famous siege, or blood battle. So it is lives, and not a history, that we offer; this must be borne in mind when some of the most important events the world has ever known receive insufficient mention.

R.K.

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## THESEUS

THESEUS was one of the most celebrated heroes of ancient times, but he lived so many centuries ago that no one knows the date of his birth. He was a Greek of noble descent, Æthra, his mother, being the granddaughter of one of the most powerful of all the Peloponnesian kings. Ægeus, his father, was not of royal blood, but he was descended from the oldest inhabitants of Attica, and became a sovereign before Theseus was born. A short time after he was chosen to rule over Athens he had occasion to travel, and one of the cities he visited was Træzene, where he was invited to court. There he met the Princess Æthra, with whom he fell in love. She returned his affection, and the two were married; but Ægeus did not mention this important event when he returned to Athens, because of the displeasure that he knew it would cause his relations, and still less did he dare to do so when the birth of his son was announced to him.

This was on account of his nephews, the Pallantidæ, a band of fifty brothers who expected to mount the throne in turn, and would not have hesitated to destroy anybody who might stand in their way. So Ægeus carefully preserved his secret, although it was his intention to recognize his son as soon as he felt that it would be safe to do it.

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Before his departure from Trœzene, Ægeus had hidden a sword and a pair of sandals beneath a huge stone, and had told Æthra that when their boy should reach manhood and should become sufficiently strong to raise the stone without aid, he was to carry the articles concealed under it to Athens. In that way, after the lapse of many years, Ægeus hoped to recognize his son. He had no fear that Æthra would betray the secret, for he had taken great pains to make her understand the danger to himself and Theseus if the existence of the latter should become known to the Pallantidæ.

Pittheus, Æthra's father, took charge of his grandson, and engaged a tutor named Connidas to educate him. In later years the Athenians sacrificed a ram to this tutor on the day before the celebration of the Thesean feasts, simply because he had been honored with the care of the person whom they loved, and for whom they entertained the most profound reverence.

Æthra was true to her trust, and told nobody who was the father of her son; but Pittheus declared that it was Neptune, the god of the sea. This pleased the Trœzenians, because they considered Neptune their special deity, offered sacrifices to him, and stamped their money with a three-pronged sceptre called a trident, which was the symbol of his power.

In course of time Theseus became a robust, healthy youth, and his mother was so pleased on account of his strength of mind and body, as well as the excellent judgment he displayed on various occasions, that when he was only sixteen years of age she resolved to inform him of the secret of his birth; so taking him by the hand one day, she led him to the stone under which his father had placed the sword and

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sandals, bade him remove it, and with what he would find concealed beneath hasten to Athens and present himself before Ægeus.

The youth obeyed in so far as lifting the stone was concerned, for, as we have said, he was strong, and the task was by no means a difficult one; but he astonished his mother by refusing to sail to Athens at her request. To Athens, he replied, he would certainly go, but not by sea. This announcement troubled the fond Æthra, for traveling by land was at that time made extremely dangerous by the bandits and cut-throats who overran Greece, and whose cruelty, strength, and desperate deeds were world-renowned. But Theseus was inspired with the spirit of the Heroic age in which he lived, and before following him in his travels we will say a few words about this period.

What is known as the Heroic age in history is supposed to have extended over about two hundred years. The Greeks believed that during that time their country was governed by a noble race of beings who, though not divine, possessed more than human strength, and were in many ways superior to ordinary men. These are the heroes, mentioned in Grecian mythology, whose exploits and noble deeds furnished themes for the early writers. The Heroic age closed with the Trojan war, 1184 B.C. Homer has given the best picture of the government, customs, and society of that age, and his poems furnish the earliest knowledge we have of the Greeks. This renders them valuable, even though they may not always be based on facts.

Among the most prominent heroes of Grecian mythology are Hercules, Theseus, and Minos.

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Now Hercules and Theseus were of the same family, and the latter had heard so much about the wonderful feats of strength and the glorious valor of his ancestor that he burned to imitate him and have his name enrolled among the heroes. He had longed for the day when he might set forth to perform great deeds, and when at last it dawned he eagerly began his plans, and before long he started on his journey, determined to destroy all those who should offer violence to himself or who had been cruel to other travellers. Thus he hoped to benefit his country and all mankind.

The first creature who tried to stop him was Periphetes, the Club-bearer. Theseus killed him and took the enormous club with which he had put an end to his victims for so many years. As Hercules carried a huge lion's skin to show what a ferocious beast he had slain, so now did Theseus appear with the club of Periphetes, which, in his hands, became a most formidable weapon.

Theseus next slew Sinnis, the Pine-bender, whose very name had long been a terror to the world. His way of destroying people was to fasten their limbs to branches of pine-trees which were bent together for that purpose; then suddenly the trees would be unfastened, when they would return to their upright position and tear the victim to pieces. Sinnis suffered the very fate he had imposed on others.

At Commyon there was an immense sow, so fierce and wild as to keep the whole neighborhood in a state of constant dread. Theseus went out of his way to meet the horrible creature, because he did not wish it to appear that he would avoid peril of any sort; besides, he thought that a truly brave man ought to rid the world of dangerous beasts as well as of

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wicked human beings. So he put an end to the sow, and then travelled on to Megara.

At Megara there lived a notorious robber named Sciron, who made any person that came his way wash his feet. That would not have been a fatal operation performed in the ordinary way, but Sciron would seat himself at the edge of a lofty precipice for the washing, and while it was going on he would give his victim a violent kick and send him headlong down the rock into the sea. Theseus did not go through the ceremony of foot-washing with Sciron, but seized him and dashed him over the precipice. In putting these creatures out of the world in the same way they disposed of others, Theseus imitated Hercules, as students of mythology will perceive. Thus, in boxing-matches he killed Cycnus and Cercyon, celebrated wrestlers; he broke to pieces the skull of Termerus, who had killed people by butting his head against theirs; and Procrustes, a famous robber of Attica, he punished in the following way: Procrustes had a bed on which he made all his victims lie to see how nearly they would fit, but it was of a size that was sure to be too short for some people and too long for others. So the tall ones were lopped off and the short ones stretched out. The powerful giant's whole head had to come off before he could lie on the bed, and so Theseus punished him, much to the delight of the neighbors.

On his arrival at Athens, Theseus found public affairs all in confusion, for the inhabitants were divided into parties that were constantly disputing with one another. He did not at once present himself before his father, but Medea, to whom Ægeus was then married, found out who he was, and made up her mind that he should not stay to inherit the throne if she could help it, particularly as she had a son of her own for whom she desired it. So she told Ægeus that the

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appearance of the young stranger at court just then, when the government was so disturbed, meant mischief, and he must be put out of the way. She advised him to give a banquet and invite Theseus, for whom she would prepare a cup of poison. Ægeus, who was always in dread of plots against his throne, readily consented. When all the guests were assembled he took the cup of poison in his hand and was on the point of offering it, when Theseus drew out his sword and prepared to cut the meat with it. The father recognized the token and dashed the cup to the ground. A few questions convinced him that the stranger was his son, and he forthwith tenderly embraced him and publicly proclaimed him his heir. The Athenians, who had heard of the daring deeds of Theseus, shouted with joy, for they were delighted at the prospect of one day having so brave a king.

Not so the Pallantidæ; seeing their hopes thus destroyed, they became desperate, and, dividing themselves into two companies, they broke out into open warfare. Their plan was for one party to attack the city while the other lay in ambush ready to set upon the enemy from the opposite side. They might have met with success had it not been for a herald named Leos. He pretended to work with them, but treacherously repeated all he heard to Theseus. That young hero speedily destroyed one party, whereupon the other thought best to disperse.

Having no special business to attend to after that, Theseus amused himself by going to Marathon to destroy a furious bull that was doing great damage to the fields and frightening the people. This bull Hercules had brought from Crete, and when Theseus led it in chains through Athens, the people were filled with wonder at his having captured so ferocious a creature alive.

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Theseus was now ranked next to Hercules among the heroes; but the adventure which won for him the greatest glory was this:

The island of Crete was governed by Minos, a wise, good king, much beloved by his subjects on account of his justice and honesty. It so happened that his son, Androgeus, when on a visit to Attica, had been treacherously murdered, and in order to avenge the dreadful deed the disconsolate father made perpetual war against the Athenians. The gods sided with Minos, and not only sent famine and pestilence to punish his enemy, but dried up all their rivers.

At last their sufferings became so intense that the Athenians could no longer bear them, so they sent to the oracle for advice. The oracle told them that if they could devise some means of satisfying Minos the anger of the gods would be appeased, and their distress would come to an end. Messengers were forthwith despatched to Crete to see what could be done. The king proposed a treaty, which required that every nine years seven young Athenian men and as many girls, of noble families, should be sent to Crete as victims to the Minotaur.

The Minotaur was a huge monster that had the body and limbs of a man and the head of a bull. His abode was at the central point of several winding paths, that crossed and recrossed one another in such a puzzling manner that nobody who got into the labyrinth, as it was called, could ever find his way out again.

Well, Ægeus had agreed to King Minos's treaty, and two sets of Athenian maids and youths had been devoured by the Minotaur. The period for sending the third lot came around just after Theseus had captured the Marathon bull.

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The sorrow in Athens was so great that Theseus was much affected by it. Parents lamented loudly, and in the bitterness of their grief accused the king of signing the cruel treaty only because he had no child to sacrifice. No sooner did Theseus hear this than he unhesitatingly offered himself. Ægeus was shocked, and tried to dissuade his son from taking such a rash step, but Theseus remained firm, and the other thirteen victims were chosen as usual, by lot.

The treaty provided that the Athenians should furnish their own ships, and that no weapons of war should be carried to Crete. But it set forth distinctly that if, by any fair means, the Minotaur should be destroyed, the tribute should cease forever. On the two previous occasions the ships had carried black sails only, but Theseus had so encouraged his father by declaring that he felt certain of being able to kill the monster, that Ægeus gave the pilot a white sail, commanding him to hoist it on his return if he brought Theseus safely back, but should such not be the case, the black one was to appear as a sign of misfortune.

On his arrival in Crete, Theseus took part in the public games that Minos yearly celebrated in memory of his lost son, and showed such superiority as a wrestler that Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, fell in love with him. This proved a blessing, for she secretly informed Theseus how to reach the centre of the labyrinth, and gave him a thread which he was to unwind as he passed along, and thus be able to find his way back.

With such a clue the killing of the Minotaur became an easy task to so powerful a man as Theseus, and having accomplished it, he set out with his companions in triumph for Athens. But when the ship neared the coast, so great was the

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excitement on board that neither Theseus nor the pilot remembered the signal of success they had been ordered to hoist. So when Ægeus beheld the vessel with its black sail, he naturally concluded that his son was dead. In despair he threw himself headlong from a rock and perished in the sea.

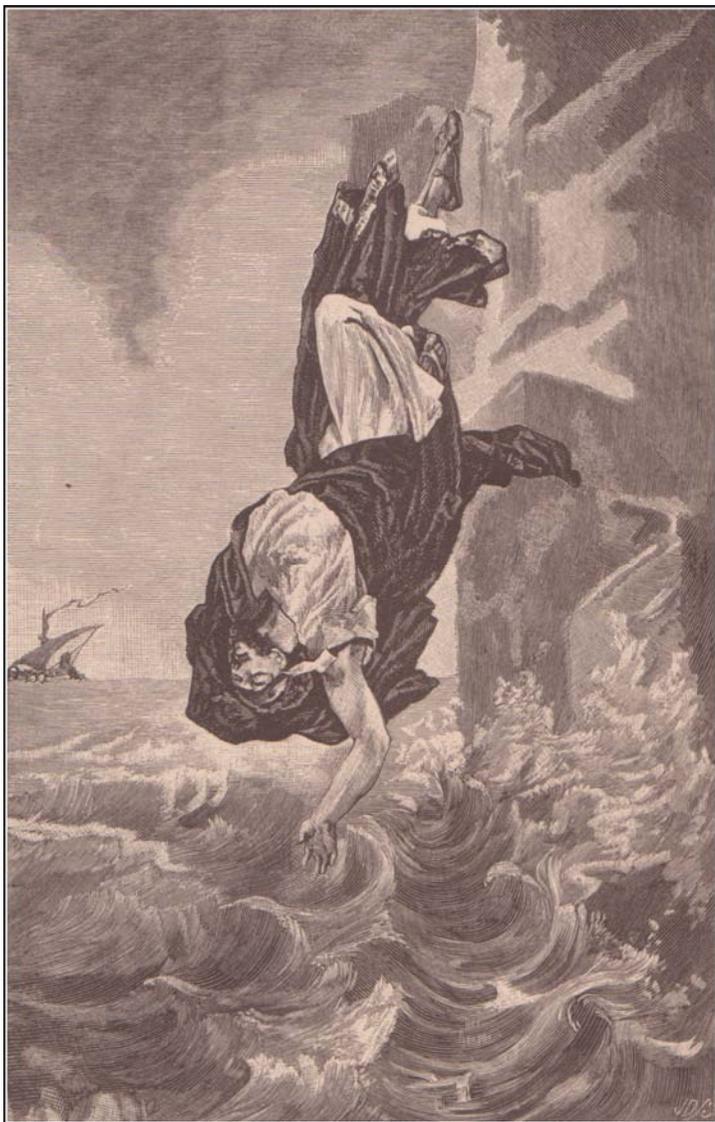
The first thing Theseus did on stepping ashore was to offer sacrifices to the gods, but while thus engaged he sent a messenger to Athens to announce his victory and safe return. The city was filled with mourning on account of the king's death, but the lamentations were changed to rejoicing when the good news was made known. The messenger was crowned with garlands, which he hung upon his staff, and hastened back to the sea-shore.

Theseus was still sacrificing when the death of his father was reported to him. He was much grieved, and so were his companions, all of whom took part in the funeral ceremonies, and helped Theseus to do honor to the memory of the late king. They then marched through the city in triumph, the people flocking out to welcome them, and to gaze at the hero who had relieved them from the cruel tribute imposed on them by King Minos.

Theseus was now king of Attica, and he set about improving the condition of his subjects at once. Instead of living near together, they were scattered over such a large space that they could not be easily governed, so disputes, and even battles, were constantly taking place. Theseus thought of a remedy, and, after consulting the Oracle of Delphi and getting a favorable answer, proceeded to apply it.

He went from town to town, from tribe to tribe, and explained his plan for establishing a commonwealth, which

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DEATH OF ÆGEUS

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he promised to protect. It required a vast deal of persuasion before he could convince people that he was working for their good, and not for the purpose of increasing his own power; but at last he was rewarded for his trouble by seeing the various little state houses closed and one grand council hall established for the use of the whole kingdom. A public feast was given to celebrate this union of the people, and the state was henceforth called Athens.

Strangers from other countries were now invited to settle in Athens, and they flocked there in crowds. Much confusion might have resulted; but Theseus was wise enough to provide against this at the outset. He divided the people into three classes,—the noblemen, the husbandmen, and the mechanics,—each class having its duties and position clearly defined. The nobles had charge of religious affairs, appointed the magistrates, and saw that the laws were not violated. The husbandmen tilled the ground and raised cattle, and the mechanics attended to buildings and improvements in machinery, etc.

The new money was stamped with the image of an ox; probably in memory of the brute Theseus had slain at Marathon; so the Athenians valued an article at so many oxen, instead of dollars, as we do.

Theseus took possession of the country about Megara and added it to Athens, but wisely set up a pillar to mark the boundary-line, so as to avoid dispute on that point. Indeed, he seemed to be ever on the alert for anything that might disturb the peace and order he had established at home; but he was not so considerate of other nations, as his expedition against the Amazons proves. The Amazons were a race of warlike women represented in the ancient pictures and writ-

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ings as fighting the Greek heroes. Theseus seized Antiope, their queen, fled with her to his ship, and set sail forthwith.

The rash act led to a disastrous war, which lasted four months; for the Amazons followed their queen to Athens and fought desperately. Antiope was slain, and so were many of her race, before peace was declared.

Theseus performed several exploits which we need not relate, because they were not of great importance, but when he reached the age of fifty he was guilty of a deed that by no means adds to his glory. That was the carrying off of Helen, who was supposed to be the daughter of the god Jupiter. She was considered the greatest beauty in the world, although she was then only nine years old.

Helen was dancing in the temple of Diana when Theseus went there, accompanied by his friend Pirithoüs, and stole her away. Armed men pursued the robbers, but could not overtake them, for they hastened on through Peloponnesus, and were soon beyond danger of arrest. Then they drew lots to see which of them should marry Helen when she should grow up, agreeing beforehand that the successful one should assist the other in getting a wife. Theseus proved the lucky man, and he bore the beauty to the house of a friend of his named Aphidnus, bidding him take the very best care of her and keep her hiding-place a profound secret. Æthra was conducted to the same house by Theseus, who begged her to assist in the care of the precious charge.

Now Pirithoüs had to be provided with a wife, and Cora, daughter of Pluto, god of the lower regions, was fixed upon. Accordingly, the two friends set out to secure Cora; but this was by no means so easy a task as they had supposed, for Pluto kept a fierce dog, named Cerberus, and all the suitors

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for Cora's hand had to fight the brute before they could be received. Cerberus must have been wonderfully intelligent, for he knew that Pirithoüs had come to steal the young lady, not to sue for her, so he rushed at him and tore him to pieces. Theseus escaped a similar fate; but he was captured by Pluto and locked up.

Theseus was still in prison when Helen's brothers, Castor and Pollux, went to Athens to seek their sister. The inhabitants assured them that she was not with them, and that they did not know where she was to be found. But an Athenian, named Academus, had discovered her hiding-place, and informed Castor and Pollux of it. They gathered together an army, marched to the town where Aphidnus lived, assaulted and got possession of it. Helen was rescued and sent to Troy, where it is supposed Æthra went to live with her.

Castor and Pollux returned to Athens and became citizens; for the people felt so grateful to them for not punishing them on account of Theseus's crime that they received them with every mark of friendship.

In course of time Hercules, while travelling, went to visit Pluto, who related to him how Theseus and Pirithoüs had tried to steal his daughter, and the punishment each had received. Hercules was grieved at what he heard of Theseus, whom he had long admired, so he entreated Pluto to release his prisoner, telling him that so great a hero deserved a better fate.

So Pluto opened the prison door, and Theseus returned home, where, as a mark of gratitude, he dedicated all the sacred places to Hercules.

Now Theseus expected to resume his place on the throne and govern the Athenians as before, but he soon

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found he was mistaken. All the good he had done was overshadowed by the silly actions that had made the people despise and distrust him. At first he thought of fighting for his rights; but deciding that no benefit could result from that, he gave up hope and set sail for Scyros, where he owned land that had belonged to his father.

He thought that Lycomedes, King of Scyros, was his friend, and that he should have no trouble in laying claim to his own possessions; but such was not the case. Lycomedes received him courteously, and invited him to walk with him to a cliff, under pretence of pointing out the estate he owned. When they reached the highest point Lycomedes threw his visitor headlong into the sea, killing him instantly.

In course of time the Athenians began to worship Theseus as a demi-god; and when they were at war with the Medes and Persians part of their army declared that he appeared at their head, completely armed, and led them against the enemy. After that sacrifices were offered to him, and the Oracle of Apollo ordered that his bones should be placed in a sacred spot at Athens. But for a long time it was impossible to find them, for the people of Scyros were not friendly, and would not tell where Theseus was buried.

At last Cimon, who had conquered the island, saw an eagle one day pecking at a certain mound and trying to scrape up the earth. It suddenly struck him that the gods were thus pointing out to him the burial-place of Theseus; so he dug until he came to a coffin, which he opened. It contained the bones of a very large man, by whose side lay a sword and a brass spear-head. Cimon was now convinced, and lost no time in carrying the coffin to Athens. Had Theseus returned alive his countrymen could scarcely have rejoiced more than

## *THESEUS*

they did when his remains were brought to them. They made a grand public funeral, and erected a tomb in his memory just in the heart of the city.

Ever after, sacrifices in honor of the benefactor of Athens were offered on the anniversary of his return from Crete.

## LYCURGUS

THERE is so much uncertainty about the life of Lycurgus, the law-giver of Sparta, that circumstances related by one historian are often contradicted or differently represented by all the others. No two agree as to the date of his birth, his voyages, or the manner of his death. One reason for this disagreement is that there were two men in Sparta at different periods named Lycurgus. The earlier one, of whom we write, lived not long after Homer, and some of the exploits of the later Lycurgus are often confused with his. However, we shall be careful to present only such facts as are given by the most reliable authors. It must be borne in mind that the capital of Laconia was sometimes called Sparta and sometimes Lacedæmon. The names are used indiscriminately, both meaning the same city.

The most renowned of all the ancestors of Lycurgus was Soüs, who, while king of the Lacedæmonians, gained a tract of land called Helos. He reduced the inhabitants to slavery, and from that time all the slaves that the Lacedæmonians captured in their wars were called by the general name of Helots.

A remarkable story is told of Soüs, which is worth repeating, because it gives an example of wonderful self-control. He was once besieged by the Clitorians in a barren

## LYCURGUS

spot where it was impossible to get fresh water. This occasioned the soldiers so much suffering that Soüs was forced to appeal to the besiegers, and he agreed to restore to them all he had conquered providing that he and his men should drink of a neighboring spring. The Clitorians, thinking that they had nothing to lose and much to gain, readily acceded to the terms. Then Soüs assembled his forces and offered his entire kingdom to any man among them who would forbear to drink; but they were so thirsty that they scarcely paid any heed to the offer, and eagerly partook of the cool, refreshing water. When all were satisfied, Soüs approached the spring, and, in the presence of his own soldiers and those of the enemy, merely sprinkled his face; then, without allowing a drop of water to enter his mouth, looked around with an air of triumph, and loudly declared that, since all his army had not drunk, the articles of the agreement were unfulfilled. Thus the country remained in his possession.

When the father of Lycurgus died, his eldest son, Polydectes, succeeded to the throne of Sparta, but he lived only a few months, and at his death it was unanimously agreed that Lycurgus should be king. But it so happened that a short time after her husband died the widow of Polydectes gave birth to a son, when Lycurgus, being too just to deprive the child of his right, presented him to the magistrates, and said, "Spartans, behold your new-born king!" He then placed the infant in the chair of state and named him Charilaus.

Lycurgus acted as guardian of the little king, and was for many months the real ruler of Sparta; but in course of time the friends and relations of the queen-mother became jealous of his power, and complained because they thought they did not receive proper consideration. They went further, and accused Lycurgus of desiring the death of Charilaus in

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order that he might ascend the throne. This, and various other accusations which they brought against him, so aroused the suspicions of the people that Lycurgus determined to go away, and not return until his nephew had reached manhood. So, in indignation that any one should believe him capable of such baseness, he set sail with the intention of visiting different countries and studying their various forms of government.

The first place he landed at was Crete, where he became acquainted with one Thales, a poet and musician, renowned for his learning and for his political abilities. Thales wrote poems which he set to music, exhorting people to obedience and virtue, and so effective were they that private quarrels were often ended, and peace and order restored by their influence, and Thales had in consequence become a most important and useful person. He and Lycurgus were soon warm friends, and the latter persuaded him to go to Sparta, where, by means of his melodies, he did much towards civilizing the inhabitants.

Lycurgus travelled on, only stopping long enough in each country to find out what was better or worse in its institutions than in those of his native land. While on this journey he first saw some of Homer's poetry, which he admired so much that he introduced it wherever it was not known.

Although Lycurgus remained away from Sparta several years, he was very much missed, and his countrymen frequently sent ambassadors to entreat him to return. They compared their condition with what it had been under his rule, and were convinced that he had a genius for governing, whereas Charilaus was only a king in name. In course of time

## LYCURGUS

public affairs went from bad to worse, and then the king himself expressed a wish to have Lycurgus back. When this was made known to the traveller he no longer hesitated.

Lycurgus saw at once, on his arrival in Sparta, that no sort of patching up would restore the government to its proper state, and the only way to remedy the evil condition of public affairs was to begin at the very foundation and frame an entirely new set of laws. The first step he took was to visit the oracle at Delphi, where he offered a sacrifice and asked advice. The priestess called him the "beloved of the gods," and, in answer to his request that he might be inspired to enact good laws, assured him that Apollo had heard him, and promised that the constitution he should establish would be the wisest and best in the whole world. This was so encouraging that Lycurgus went to his friends and to all the prominent men of Sparta and begged them to assist him in his undertaking. They consented, and when his plans were completed Lycurgus requested thirty of the best-known Spartans to meet him at break of day in the market-place, well armed and prepared to attack any one who should oppose him. Such a tumult arose when the new form of government was announced that King Charilaus became alarmed, and thought there was a conspiracy against his person. So he rushed to the Temple of Minerva of the Brazen Horse for safety. There Lycurgus and his party followed, and explained their intentions so satisfactorily that the king was easily won over to their side.

The most important feature of the new government was the establishment of a senate, whose duty it should be to prevent the king on one hand, and the people on the other, from assuming too much control. After this was accomplished a difficult task presented itself in the new division of

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the land, which was all owned by a few wealthy men of Sparta. Lycurgus considered this a bad state of affairs, but it required a great deal of discussion and persuasion before he could convince these land-owners to part with their estates. He succeeded, however, and nine thousand lots were distributed among as many citizens of Sparta. Then the country of Laconia was divided into thirty thousand equal shares for her citizens. After that, all being rich and poor alike, the only distinction a man could hope for was in acts of virtue. Once when Lycurgus was travelling through the country at harvest-time he smiled to see how equal were the stacks of grain on each division of land, and said, "Laconia looks like a large family estate distributed among a number of brothers."

To divide movables was such an impossible matter that the law-giver had to resort to stratagem to accomplish this. He made gold and silver coin worthless, and substituted iron instead; but it was so heavy and bulky that a whole roomful was not very valuable, and a yoke of oxen was required to remove a small sum. This put an end to robbery, for it was difficult to steal enough of such money to make the crime an object, and impossible to conceal a large sum. Another peculiarity of the iron coin was that it prevented the Spartans from making purchases of their neighbors, who laughed at it, and would not receive it in exchange for their wares. Hence the Spartans were forced to manufacture whatever they needed, so they turned their attention to the production of such useful articles as tables, chairs, and beds, and were willing to dispense with luxuries. Finding that very little money was required for necessities, the Spartans were easily satisfied, and had no reason to covet wealth. This was a state of affairs that Lycurgus particularly desired. Wandering fortune-tellers and venders of trashy trinkets ceased their visits to a country that

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had undesirable money, and as such people do more harm than good, their absence was an advantage.

Public tables were introduced, and did more than any other institutions of the law-giver in placing the citizens on a more equal footing, by forcing every man to partake of the same description and quality of food as his neighbor. In no circumstance would it do for any one to take a private meal beforehand, even though he made his appearance afterwards at the public table, for a person with a poor appetite was suspected and accused of being dainty and effeminate, and that no Spartan could stand. But the men who had been wealthy objected to eating what Lycurgus prescribed, and one day they collected in the market-place and attacked him with abusive language, which they followed up by throwing stones. Finding that he was in danger, Lycurgus ran for a sanctuary, but he was pursued by a young man named Alcander, who overtook him and struck him such a violent blow in the face with a stout stick as to put out one of his eyes. Lycurgus did not attempt to resent his injury, but turned towards the rest of his tormentors, who, at the sight of his horrible condition, with his face streaming with blood, were so repentant and ashamed that they placed Alcander in his hands for punishment, and conducted Lycurgus to his home with great care and tenderness.

The law-giver thanked them for assisting him, and then dismissed all excepting Alcander, whom he took into his house. No word of reproach or ill treatment of any sort awaited the offender. The usual servants and attendants were sent away, and Alcander was ordered to wait upon Lycurgus instead. This he did without a murmur, because he was sorry for the dreadful injury he had done, and knew that he deserved punishment. Day by day his admiration of Lycurgus

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increased, and he constantly spoke to his friends of the goodness, the temperance, the industry, and the gentleness of the man he had once deemed proud and severe. Alcander knew that he could not do better than to imitate his master, and by so doing he became a wise, prudent citizen. In memory of his accident Lycurgus built a temple to Minerva, and to prevent the recurrence of such violence, the Lacedæmonians made it a rule never to carry sticks to their public assemblies.

Now we must give a description of the public dining-tables. Fifteen persons sat at a table, each being obliged to furnish monthly a bushel of meal, eight gallons of wine, five pounds of cheese, two pounds and a half of figs, and a little money to buy meat and fish. Any man who offered a sacrifice of first fruits, or killed a deer, had the privilege of eating at home for one day, providing he sent part of the venison to the public table. Besides repressing luxury, these assemblages for dining had another object: they were a kind of school for the young, where they were instructed in state affairs by learned statesmen, who discoursed while eating. Conversation was encouraged among the diners, who chatted freely and made jests, though they were always exceedingly careful not to hurt one another's feelings, that being considered ill bred.

The first time a youth entered the eating-place, the oldest citizen present would say, pointing to the door, "Not a word spoken in this company goes out there." This gave freedom to the conversation, and taught the young not to repeat what they heard. The manner of admitting a candidate to a particular table was as follows: each man who occupied a seat at it took a bit of soft bread and rolled it into a little ball, which he silently dropped into a vessel carried around for that purpose by a waiter. This vessel was called Caddos. If the candidate was desired, the shape of the ball was preserved by

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the person who made it, but if, for any reason, he preferred somebody else, the ball was flattened before being deposited in the Caddos. One flattened ball was sufficient to exclude an applicant, and such being the case, the fifteen men who occupied each table were always acceptable to one another. A rejected person was said to have ill luck with the Caddos.

The Lacedæmonians drank wine in moderation, and only at the public table; at the conclusion of the meal they went home in the dark. Their reason for not carrying lanterns was that they might accustom themselves to march boldly without light, and thus be prepared for midnight forays against an enemy.

It is remarkable that none of the laws made by Lycurgus were put into writing; indeed, he particularly enjoined that they should not be. He preferred rather to educate people to proper habits than to enforce them by writing. He said that matters of importance would have more weight if they were woven into the actions of everyday life, and imprinted on the hearts of the young by wise discipline and good example. Even for business contracts no writing was deemed necessary; the idea being so to educate men that their judgment would become sufficiently correct to enable them to adhere to an agreement or alter it as time and circumstances might require.

One of the laws of Lycurgus required the ceilings of the houses be wrought with no tool but an axe, and the doors and gates be only so smooth as a saw could make them. This was to prevent extravagance and luxury, for in a house so roughly constructed a man would not be likely to place bedsteads with silver feet, showy drapery, or gold and silver cups and salvers. Such costly articles would seem out of place;

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plain, substantial ones were selected in preference. So accustomed did the Spartans become to simplicity that when Leotychidas, one of their kings, was entertained in a room at Corinth where the ceilings and door-posts were richly carved, he asked whether the trees of that country grew like that. It is not probable that the question arose from ignorance, but the king had learned to sneer at such sumptuous and expensive buildings as he saw at Corinth.

Lycurgus thought the good education of the Spartan youth the noblest part of his work, and required girls as well as boys to take plenty of exercise in the open air, such as running, wrestling, and throwing quoits, that they might become strong and healthy. Every child was regarded as the property of the state, so it was carried, soon after birth, to a place called Lesche to be examined by certain elders, who decided its fate. If it were found to be well-formed and healthy, an order was given for its rearing, and a portion of land set apart for its maintenance. But a puny or deformed baby was thrown into a chasm, for the Spartans would have no weaklings. Their object was to build up a martial race, and they did not see, as we do, that people whose bodies are not strong often become the most valuable members of the human family.

Those children that were permitted to live were nursed with the greatest care, not tenderly, but with a view to making them robust. Their clothing was loose, their food coarse and plain; they were not afraid to be left alone or in the dark, nor were they permitted to indulge ill humor or to cry at trifles. The Lacedæmonian nurses were so famous that people of other countries often purchased them for their children.

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No tutors or nurses were obtained in that way for Spartan children, nor were their parents at liberty to educate them as they pleased. For at the age of seven they were enrolled in companies, and all subjected to the same discipline, performing their tasks and enjoying their recreations in common. The boy who showed most courage was made captain of the company, and the rest had to obey his orders implicitly and submit without a murmur to the punishments he inflicted. Old men were always present at the games, and often suggested some reason for a quarrel, in order that they might study the characters of the different boys and see which were brave and which cowardly. A slight knowledge of reading and writing was all that was required; but a Spartan youth was taught to endure pain, and to conquer in battle; as he advanced in years the severity of his discipline was increased, his head was shaved, he wore no shoes or stockings, and no clothing whatever when at play.

After reaching the age of twelve the boys discarded underclothing, which up to that time they were permitted to wear, and one coat a year was allotted to each. Bathing was not considered a necessity, and in order to render the skin hard and tough it was indulged in only on specified days at rare intervals. The Spartan boys slept together, forming themselves into bands and assisting each other in breaking and gathering the rushes of which their beds were composed. They were allowed to use no tools, their bare hands being considered sufficient for the work. In winter they added thistle-down to their rushes for warmth. They were constantly and carefully watched by the older men of the nation, and promptly punished for neglect of duty.

The bands were selected by the ablest and best citizen, who was appointed for that purpose. He governed them all,

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selected a captain for each, and exercised a general supervision over them. The captains were chosen from among the Irens, as those who had reached the age of twenty were called, bravery, good temper, and self-control being the necessary qualifications. The position, therefore, was considered one of high honor. It was the captain's duty to command in battle; but in time of peace he was waited on by the members of his band, who obeyed his orders implicitly. The older ones did the hard work, such as fetching logs of wood, while to the younger and weaker ones fell the duty of gathering salads, herbs, meats, or any other food, as best they could, even though it became necessary to steal it. For this purpose they would creep into the gardens or sneak into the eating-houses which chanced to be left unguarded, and help themselves. If caught in the act, these youths were whipped unmercifully for their awkwardness. Their supper was purposely made such a scant meal that they were encouraged to steal from actual hunger. This was done as an exercise of courage and address, for if a youth could not steal or beg food he had to suffer the pangs of hunger. Fortunately for the morals of the Spartan boys, they had no need of riches or luxury, consequently their thefts were limited to the requirements of their stomachs. This was bad enough, but the object was to render children who were destined for war expert in escaping the watchfulness of an enemy, and to accustom them to expose themselves to the severest punishment in case of detection. Another reason for feeding them so sparingly was to make them tall and pliant, rather than short and fat.

The Spartan boys performed their stealing so earnestly that one of them having hidden a young fox under his cloak suffered the animal to tear out his very bowels, choosing rather to die on the spot than be detected and accused of

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awkwardness. This story might appear incredible in any other nation, but Plutarch assures us that he himself saw several Lacedæmonian youths whipped to death at the foot of the altar of Diana, on which their blood was sprinkled as a sacrifice. All the institutions of Lycurgus tended towards excessive self-control, by which he desired to render Spartans superior to other human beings.

It was the custom of the Iren to spend some time with the boys every evening after supper, when he would test their wits and find out which were the bright and which the stupid ones. For example: one boy was ordered to sing a song, and was expected to comply instantly whether he chose or not. Another was asked who was the best man in the city, or what he thought of the various actions of such and such men. The object of these questions was not only to encourage the boys in forming opinions, but also to oblige them to inform themselves as to the defects and abilities of their countrymen. If a boy was not prepared with an answer he was considered dull and indifferent, and supposed to be wanting in a proper sense of virtue and honor. A good reason had to be given, in as few words as possible, for every statement made, and if it were not clear and sensible the boy had his thumb bitten by his captain. This was done in the presence of the old men and magistrates, who expressed no opinions in the presence of the boys, but as soon as they were gone reproved the Iren if he had been too severe or too indulgent.

The art of talking was so cultivated that the boys became sharp and quick at repartee. Indeed, it was the aim of every Lacedæmonian to condense a deal of sense into as few words as possible. Lycurgus set the example, as the anecdotes related about him prove.

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On being questioned as to why he allowed such mean and trivial sacrifices to the gods, he replied, "That we may always have something to offer them." When asked what sort of martial exercises he preferred, he said, "All, excepting those in which you stretch out your hands." That attitude meant a demand for quarter in battle. Lycurgus was once consulted by letter as to how his countrymen might best oppose an invasion of their enemies. His answer was, "By continuing poor, and not coveting each man to be greater than his fellow." When asked whether the city ought not to be enclosed by a wall, he wrote, "The city is well fortified which hath a wall of men instead of brick."

King Charilaus was once asked why Lycurgus had made so few laws: he replied, "Men of few words require few laws." It was said by a learned Spartan in defence of another, who had been admitted to one of the public repasts and had observed profound silence throughout, "He who knows how to speak knows also when to speak." A troublesome, impertinent fellow asked one of the wise men four or five times, "Who was the best man in Sparta?" and got for his answer, "He that is least like you." An orator of Athens declared that the Lacedæmonians had no learning. "True," answered one who was present, "for we are the only people of Greece that have learnt no ill of you." These are enough examples to show how chary the Spartans were of their words.

Music and poetry were cultivated to a great extent, and the songs were such as to excite enthusiasm and inspire men to fight. They were always simple in their expression, serious and moral in their tone; often they were praises of such men as had died in defence of their country, declaring them to be happy and glorified, or they were written to ridicule cowards,

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who chose rather to drag out a life which was regarded with contempt than seek glory on the field of battle.

At no time was the discipline of the Spartans less severe than when they were engaged in a war. Then they were permitted to have fine clothes and costly armor, and to curl their hair, of which they had a great quantity. They were particular about the arrangement of this ornament, because the law-giver had said that a large head of hair added beauty to a good face and terror to an ugly one. During their campaigns they were better fed and forced to exercise less severely than in time of peace, and their whole treatment was so much more indulgent that they were never better satisfied than when under military rule. They went to battle dancing and keeping step to the music without disturbing their ranks. They were gay, cheerful, and so eager that they resembled race-horses full of fire and neighing for the start. When the king advanced against the enemy, he was always surrounded by those who had been crowned at the public games. Spartans considered it such a favor to be so placed in battle, that one of them, who had gained a difficult victory in an Olympic game, upon being asked what reward he expected, since he would not accept money as other combatants did, replied, "I shall have the honor to fight foremost in the ranks before my prince."

When they had routed an enemy they continued in pursuit until they were assured of the victory, but no longer, for they deemed it unworthy of a Grecian to destroy those who did not resist. This manner of dealing with their enemies was not only magnanimous, but was wise, for their opponents often gave up the fight and fled, knowing that their lives would be spared as soon as they did so. Lycurgus made great

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improvements in the art of war, and proved himself a brave, competent commander.

He made Lacedæmon resemble one great camp, where each person had his share of provisions and his occupation marked out. Even a man advanced in years could not live according to his own fancy, for he had always to consider the interest of his country before his own. If nothing else was required of him, he watched the boys in the performance of their exercises, and taught them something useful. Lycurgus forbade his people to engage in any mechanical trade, consequently they had plenty of leisure. They required no money, and thought that time devoted to the accumulation of wealth was sinfully wasted. The Helots tilled the ground and did all the menial work which a Lacedæmonian freeman considered beneath his dignity.

Lawsuits ceased, because there was no silver or gold to dispute about, and everybody's wants were supplied without any anxiety on his part. When not engaged in war, the Spartans spent their time in dancing, feasting, hunting, exercises, and conversation, and they were taught to believe that there was nothing more unworthy than to live by themselves or for themselves. They gathered about their commander, and devoted themselves entirely to the welfare of their country, esteeming no honor so great as that of being selected as a member of the senate. This is not remarkable when we remember that it was only the wisest and best of the citizens who were chosen, and only those who could count sixty years of honorable life.

With regard to burials Lycurgus made some wise rules. He tried to lessen superstition by ordering the dead to be buried within the city, and even near the temples, so that the

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young might become accustomed to seeing dead bodies without fearing them, and that they might touch them or tread upon a grave without fancying themselves defiled thereby. Nothing was allowed to be put into the ground with a corpse except a few olive-leaves and the scarlet cloth in which it was wrapped. Only the names of such men as fell in war, and of such women as died in sacred offices, were inscribed on the graves. Eleven days were devoted to mourning, which terminated on the twelfth day by a sacrifice to Ceres, the goddess of agriculture.

Travelling abroad was forbidden, because Lycurgus did not wish his people to adopt the bad habits and manners of the ill-educated, and, for the same reason, all strangers who could not give a good account of themselves, and a sensible reason for coming to Sparta, were banished.

It seems strange that a man who thought so much of honesty and valor as Lycurgus did should have allowed the Helots to be used with injustice, but such was the fact. The Lacedæmonians treated these poor slaves, who performed for them all the menial offices that they were too proud to stoop to themselves, with positive cruelty. Everything about the downtrodden Helots indicated that they were in bondage. Their dress, their manners, their gestures, all their surroundings, differed from those of their masters. They wore dog-skin bonnets and sheep-skin vests; they were forbidden to study art or to perform any act that was not menial; once a day they received a certain number of stripes, whether they deserved punishment or not, merely to remind them that they were slaves. If they dared, even in the most trivial matter, to imitate their masters, they were made to suffer for the offence, and sometimes they were actually murdered in cold blood by the Lacedæmonian young men. Other shameful

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cruelties were practised upon them, which it is not necessary to recount.

After Lycurgus had got his ordinances into working order, and was satisfied that the government was firmly established on the principles he had introduced, he felt so pleased that he wanted to do something to make it last forever. Having thought out a plan, he called an assembly of the people, and when they had gathered in large numbers he told them that, although the happiness and well-being of the state seemed assured, there was one very important matter that needed attention, but he did not wish to mention it until he had consulted the oracle. He then begged them to continue to observe the laws strictly, without the slightest alteration, until his return, promising that he would act precisely as the gods should direct. Everybody consented, and urged him to set out at once on his journey. This did not satisfy Lycurgus, however; he needed more binding assurance; and for that purpose the senate, as well as all those in authority, were required to take a solemn oath that they would abide by the laws and maintain them until his return. That done, he departed for Delphi.

On his arrival he offered a sacrifice to the god, and asked whether the laws he had established were acceptable. The reply was that they were excellent, and that so long as they were observed Sparta would be the most glorious city of the world. Having sent this flattering announcement of the Delphic Apollo to Sparta in writing, the law-giver resolved to put an end to his existence, hoping thereby to compel his countrymen to be faithful to their oath for an indefinite period. He therefore starved himself to death, for he considered it a statesman's duty to set an example of heroism, even in his exit from the world.

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The oath that Lycurgus had exacted before his departure for Delphi was religiously observed, and Sparta retained her position as the chief city of Greece for five hundred years in consequence. During that period fourteen kings succeeded one another to the throne, but no change was made in the laws until the reign of Agis, who restored gold and silver money, which encouraged avarice and its attending evils. This is not the Agis whose life forms part of this volume, but one of his early ancestors.

The body of Lycurgus was burned at Crete, and the ashes were scattered into the sea. He had requested this, because he feared that if any part of himself went back to Sparta the people would consider themselves released from their oath. A temple was erected in honor of the law-giver, and sacrifices were yearly offered to him by his grateful and loving countrymen.