

of which are still extant, and serve to show the ancients' exalted conception of the Queen of Heaven.

Juno's festivals, the Matronalia, in Rome, were always celebrated with great pomp. Less important feasts were held in each city where a temple was dedicated to her.

Story of Cleobis and Biton. On one of these occasions an old priestess was very anxious to go to the temple at Argos, where she had ministered to the goddess for many years, and which she had left only to be married. The way was long and dusty: so the aged woman, who could no longer walk such a distance, bade her sons, Cleobis and Biton, harness her white heifers to her car. The youths hastened to do her bidding; but, although they searched diligently, the heifers could not be found. Rather than disappoint their aged mother, who had set her heart upon attending the services, these kind-hearted sons harnessed themselves to the cart, and drew her through the city to the temple gates, amid the acclamations of all the people, who admired this trait of filial devotion.

The mother was so touched by her sons' affection, that, as she knelt before the altar, she fervently prayed Juno to bestow upon them the greatest boon in her power. At the conclusion of the services the ex-priestess went into the portico, where her sons had thrown themselves to rest after their unwonted exertions; but instead of finding them merely asleep, as she expected, she found them dead. The Queen of Heaven had transported them while asleep to the Elysian Fields, the place of endless bliss, where such as they enjoyed eternal life.

CHAPTER IV.

MINERVA.

ALTHOUGH immortal, the gods were not exempt from physical pain. One day Jupiter suffered intensely from a sudden headache, and, in hopes that some mode of alleviation would be devised, he summoned all the gods to Olympus. Their united efforts were vain, however; and even the remedies suggested by Apollo, god of medicine, proved inefficacious. Unwilling, or perchance unable, to endure the racking pain any longer, Jupiter bade one of his sons, Vulcan, cleave his head open with an ax. With cheerful alacrity the dutiful god obeyed; and no sooner was the operation performed, than Minerva (Pallas, Athene) sprang out of her father's head, full-grown, clad in glittering armor, with poised spear, and chanting a triumphant song of victory.

Birth of
Minerva.

"From his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armor drest,
Golden, all radiant."

SHELLEY.

The assembled gods recoiled in fear before this unexpected apparition, while at the same time a mighty commotion over land and sea proclaimed the advent of a great divinity.

The goddess, who had thus joined the inhabitants of Olympus, was destined to preside over peace, defensive war, and needlework, to be the incarnation of wisdom, and to put to flight the obscure deity called Dullness, who until then had ruled the world.

"Ere Pallas issu'd from the Thund'rer's head,
Dullness o'er all possess'd her ancient right,
Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night."

POPE.

Minerva, having forced her unattractive predecessor to beat an ignominious retreat, quickly seized the scepter, and immediately began to rule in her stead.

Not long after her birth, Cecrops, a Phœnician, came to Greece, where he founded a beautiful city in the province since called Attica. All the gods watched his undertaking with great interest; and finally, seeing the town promised to become a thriving place, each wished the privilege of naming it. A general council was held, and after some deliberation most of the gods withdrew their claims. Soon none but Minerva and Neptune were left to contend for the coveted honor.

Naming
of Athens.

To settle the quarrel without evincing any partiality, Jupiter announced that the city would be intrusted to the protection of the deity who would create the most useful object for the use of man. Raising his trident, Neptune struck the ground, from which a noble horse sprang forth, amid the exclamations of wonder and admiration of all the spectators. His qualities were duly explained by his proud creator, and all thought it quite impossible for Minerva to surpass him. Loudly they laughed, and scornfully too, when she, in her turn, produced an olive tree; but when she had told them the manifold uses to which wood, fruit, foliage, twigs, etc., could be applied, and explained that the olive was a sign of peace and prosperity, and therefore far more desirable than the horse, the emblem of war and wretchedness, they could but acknowledge her gift the most serviceable, and award her the prize.

To commemorate this victory over her rival, Minerva gave her own name of Athene to the city, whose inhabitants, from that time forth, were taught to honor her as their tutelary goddess.



MINERVA.
(National Museum, Naples.)

Ever at Jupiter's side, Minerva often aided him by her wise counsels, and in times of war borrowed his terrible shield, the Ægis, which she flung over her shoulder when she sallied forth to give her support to those whose cause was just.

“ Her shoulder bore

The dreadful Ægis with its shaggy brim
Bordered with Terror. There was Strife, and there
Was Fortitude, and there was fierce Pursuit,
And there the Gorgon's head, a ghastly sight,
Deformed and dreadful, and a sign of woe.”

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

The din of battle had no terrors for this doughty goddess, and on every occasion she was wont to plunge into the thickest of the fray with the utmost valor.

These virile tastes were, however, fully counterbalanced by some exclusively feminine, for Minerva was as deft with her needle as with her sword. In Greece there lived in those olden times a maiden by the name of Arachne. Pretty, young, and winsome, she would have been loved by all had it not been for her inordinate pride, not in her personal advantages, but in her skill as a needlewoman.

Arachne, in her conceit, fancied that no one could equal the work done by her deft fingers, so she boasted far and wide that she would have no fear to match her skill with Minerva's. She made this remark so loudly and so frequently, that the goddess was finally annoyed, and left her seat in high Olympus to come down upon earth and punish the maiden. In the guise of an old crone, she entered Arachne's house, seated herself, and began a conversation. In a few minutes the maiden had resumed her usual strain, and renewed her rash boast. Minerva gently advised her to be more modest, lest she should incur the wrath of the gods by her presumptuous words; but Arachne was so blinded by her conceit, that she scorned the well-meant warning, saucily tossed her head, and declared she wished the goddess would hear her, and propose a contest, in which she would

surely be able to prove the truth of her assertions. This insolent speech so incensed Minerva, that she cast aside her disguise and accepted the challenge.

Both set up their looms, and began to weave exquisite designs in tapestry: Minerva choosing as her subject her contest with Neptune; and Arachne, the kidnapping of Europa. In silence the fair weavers worked, and their webs grew apace under their practiced fingers. The assembled gods, the horse, the olive tree, seemed to live and move under Minerva's flashing shuttle.

“ Amongst these leaves she made a Butterflie,
With excellent device and wondrous slight,
Fluttring among the Olives wantonly,
That seem'd to live, so like it was in sight:
The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,
The silken downe with which his backe is dight,
His broad outstretched hornes, his hayrie thies,
His glorious colours, and his glistering eies.”

SPENSER.

Arachne, in the mean while, was intent upon her swimming bull, against whose broad breast the waves splashed, and upon a half-laughing, half-frightened girl, who clung to the bull's horns, while the wind played with her flowing tresses and garments.

“ Sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.”

TENNYSON.

The finishing touches all given, each turned to view her rival's work, and at the very first glance Arachne was forced to acknowledge her failure. To be thus outstripped, after all her proud boasts, was humiliating indeed. Bitterly did Arachne now repent of her folly; and in her despair she bound a rope about her neck, and hung herself. Minerva saw her discomfited rival was about to escape: so she quickly changed her dangling body

into a spider, and condemned her to weave and spin without ceasing,—a warning to all conceited mortals.

Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, was widely worshiped. Temples and altars without number were dedicated to her service, the most celebrated of all being the Parthenon at Athens. Naught but the ruins of this mighty pile now exist; but they suffice to testify to the beauty of the edifice, which served, in turn, as temple, church, mosque, and finally as powder magazine.

Worship of
Minerva.

“Fair Parthenon! yet still must Fancy weep
For thee, thou work of nobler spirits flown.
Bright, as of old, the sunbeams o'er thee sleep
In all their beauty still—and thine is gone!
Empires have sunk since thou wert first revered,
And varying rites have sanctified thy shrine.
The dust is round thee of the race that rear'd
Thy walls; and thou—their fate must soon be thine!”

HEMANS.

Statues of Minerva—a beautiful, majestic woman, fully clothed and armed—were very numerous. The most celebrated of all, by the renowned Greek sculptor Phidias, measured full forty feet in height. Festivals were celebrated in honor of Minerva wherever her worship was held,—some, the Greek Panathenæa, for instance, only every four years; others, such as the Minervalia and Quinquatria, every year. At these festivals the Palladium, a statue of the goddess, said to have fallen from heaven, was carried in procession through the city, where the people hailed its appearance with joyful cries and songs of praise.

CHAPTER V.

APOLLO.

THE most glorious and beautiful among all the gods was Apollo (Phœbus, Sol, Helios, Cynthius, Pytheus), god of the sun, of medicine, music, poetry, and all fine arts.

“Bright-hair'd Apollo!—thou who ever art
A blessing to the world—whose mighty heart
Forever pours out love, and light, and life;
Thou, at whose glance, all things of earth are rife
With happiness; to whom, in early spring,
Bright flowers raise up their heads, where'er they cling
On the steep mountain side, or in the vale
Are nestled calmly. Thou at whom the pale
And weary earth looks up, when winter flees,
With patient gaze: thou for whom wind-stripped trees
Put on fresh leaves, and drink deep of the light
That glitters in thine eye: thou in whose bright
And hottest rays the eagle fills his eye
With quenchless fire, and far, far up on high
Screams out his joy to thee, by all the names
That thou dost bear—whether thy godhead claims
Phœbus or Sol, or golden-hair'd Apollo,
Cynthian or Pythian, if thou dost follow
The fleeing night, oh, hear
Our hymn to thee, and willingly draw near!”

PIKE.

Apollo was the son of Jupiter and Latona, or Leto, the goddess of dark nights. Juno's jealousy had been aroused by Jupiter's preference for her rival. To avenge herself, she banished