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DIANA OF VERSAILLES.
(Louvre, Paris.)

CHAPTER VI.

DIANA.

DIANA (Cynthia, Phœbe, Selene, Artemis), the fair twin sister of Apollo, was not only goddess of the moon, but also of the chase.

“Goddess serene, transcending every star!
Queen of the sky, whose beams are seen afar!
By night heaven owns thy sway, by day the grove,
When, as chaste Dian, here thou deign'st to rove.”

BYRON.

In works of art this goddess is generally represented as a beautiful maiden, clad in a short hunting dress, armed with a bow, a quiver full of arrows at her side, and a crescent on her well-poised head.

Proud of her two children, Apollo and Diana, Latona boasted far and wide that such as hers had never been, for they excelled all others in beauty, intelligence, and power.

The daughter of Tantalus, Niobe, heard this boast, and laughed in scorn; for she was the mother of fourteen children,—seven manly sons and seven beautiful daughters. In her pride she called aloud to Latona, and taunted her because her offspring numbered but two.

Story of
Niobe.

Shortly after, Niobe even went so far as to forbid her people to worship Apollo and Diana, and gave orders that all the statues representing them in her kingdom should be torn down from their pedestals, and destroyed. Enraged at this insult, Latona called her children to her side, and bade them go forth and slay all her luckless rival's offspring.

Provided with well-stocked quivers, the twins set out to do her bidding; and Apollo, meeting the seven lads out hunting, cut their existence short with his unfailing arrows.

“Phœbus slew the sons
With arrows from his silver bow, incensed
At Niobe.”

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

With all proverbial speed the tidings reached Niobe, whose heart failed when she heard that her seven sons, her pride and delight, had fallen under Apollo's shafts, and that they now lay cold and stiff in the forest, where they had eagerly hastened a few hours before, to follow the deer to its cover.

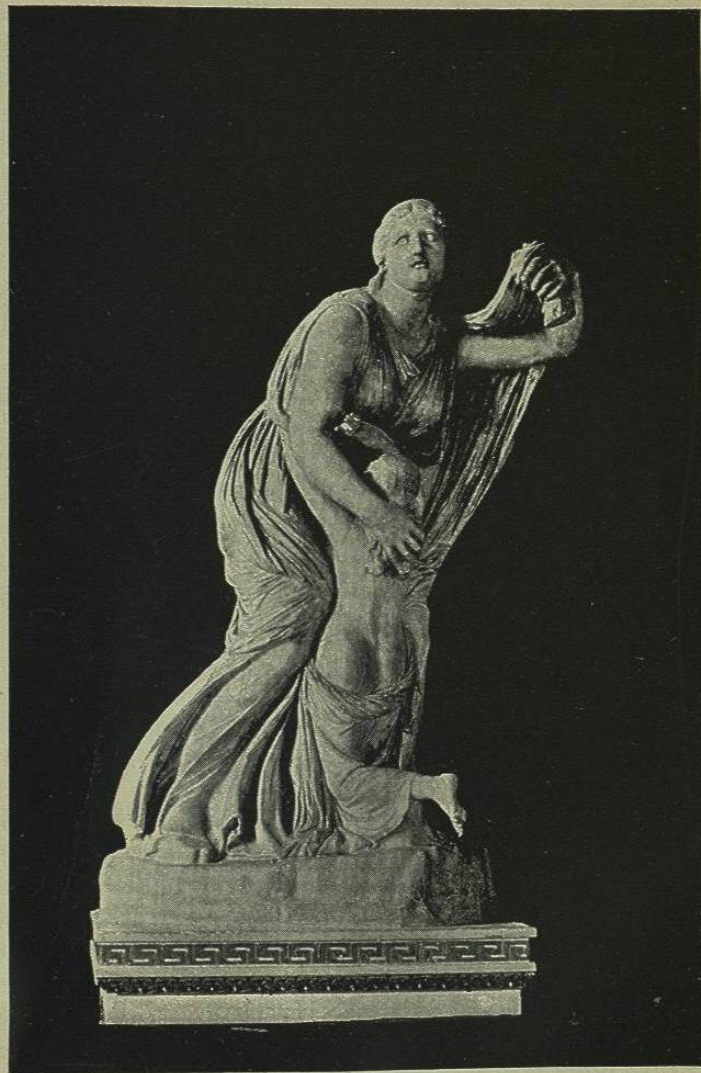
As she mourned their untimely death, she thought her cup of sorrow was full; but long ere her first passion of grief was over, Diana began to slay her daughters.

“But what is this? What means this oozing flood?
Her daughters, too, are weltering in their blood:
One clasps her mother's knees, one clings around
Her neck, and one lies prostrate on the ground;
One seeks her breast; one eyes the coming woe
And shudders; one in terror crouches low.”

MELEAGER.

In vain the poor girls sought to escape the flying arrows. In vain Niobe sought to protect them, and called upon all the gods of Olympus. Her daughters fell one by one, never to rise again. The last clung convulsively to her mother's breast; but, even in that fond mother's passionate embrace, death found and claimed her. Then the gods, touched by the sight of woe so intense, changed Niobe into stone, just as she stood, with upturned face, streaming eyes, and quivering lips.

This statue was placed on Mount Sipylus, close to a stream of running water; and it was said that tears continually flowed down the marble cheeks, for, though changed, Niobe still felt, and wept for her great loss.



NIOBE.
(Uffizi Palace, Florence.)

This story is an allegory, in which Niobe, the mother, represents winter, hard, cold, and proud; until Apollo's deadly arrows, the sunbeams, slay her children, the winter months. Her tears are emblems of the natural thaw which comes in spring, when winter's pride has melted.

As soon as the young Goddess of the Moon had been introduced in Olympus, all the gods expressed a wish to marry her; but she refused to listen to their entreaties, begged Diana's avocations. her father's permission to remain single all her life, and pleaded her cause so ably, that Jupiter was forced to grant her request.

Every evening, as soon as the Sun had finished his course, Diana mounted her moon car, and drove her milk-white steeds across the heavens, watched over and loved by the countless stars, which shone their brightest to cheer her on her way; and as she drove she often bent down to view the sleeping earth, so shadowy and dreamlike, and to breathe the intoxicating perfume of the distant flowers. It always seemed to her then as if Nature, so beautiful during the day, borrowed additional charms from the witching hours of the night.

"'Twas now the time when Phœbus yields to night,
And rising Cynthia sheds her silver light,
Wide o'er the world in solemn pomp she drew
Her airy chariot hung with pearly dew."

One evening, as she was driving noiselessly along, she suddenly checked her steeds; for there on the hillside she saw a handsome young shepherd, fast asleep, his upturned face illumined by the moon's soft light. Diana wonderingly gazed upon his beauty, and before long felt her heart beat with more than admiration. Gliding gently from her chariot, she floated to his side, bent slowly, and dropped an airy kiss upon his slightly parted lips.

The youth Endymion, only partially awakened by this demonstration, half raised his fringed lids, and for a moment his sleep-

dimmed eyes rested wonderingly upon the beautiful vision. That one glance, although it drove Diana away in great haste, kindled in his heart an inextinguishable passion. He rose with a start, and rubbed his sleepy eyes; but when he saw the moon, which he fancied close beside him, sailing away across the deep-blue sky, he felt sure the whole occurrence had been but a dream, but so sweet a dream that he cast himself down upon the sward, hoping to woo it to visit him once more.

It did not come again that night, however; but the next night, as he lay on the selfsame spot, it recurred in all its sweetness; and night after night it was repeated when the pale moonbeams fell athwart his sleeping face.

"Then, as the full orb poised upon the peak,
There came a lovely vision of a maid,
Who seemed to step as from a golden car
Out of the low-hung moon."

LEWIS MORRIS.

Diana, fully as enamored as he, could not bear to pass him by without a caress, and invariably left her car for a moment, as it touched the mountain peak, to run to him and snatch a hasty kiss.

"Chaste Artemis, who guides the lunar car,
The pale nocturnal vigils ever keeping,
Sped through the silent space from star to star,
And, blushing, stooped to kiss Endymion sleeping."

BOYSEN.

But, even when asleep, Endymion watched for her coming, and enjoyed the bliss of her presence; yet a spell seemed to prevent his giving any sign of consciousness.

Time passed thus. Diana, who could not bear to think of the youth's beauty being marred by want, toil, and exposure, finally caused an eternal sleep to fall upon him, and bore him off to Mount Latmus, where she concealed him in a cave held sacred to her, and never profaned by human gaze. There each night

the goddess paused to gaze enraptured upon his beloved countenance, and to press a soft kiss upon his unconscious lips. Such is the tale of Diana and her lowly sweetheart, which has inspired poets of all ages.

•“Queen of the wide air; thou most lovely queen
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen!
As thou exceedest all things in thy shrine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.”

KEATS.

Endymion was not, however, the only mortal loved by Diana, for mythologists report that her affections were also bestowed upon a young hunter by the name of Orion. All day long this youth scoured the forest, his faithful dog Sirius at his heels.

One day, in the dense shade of the forest, he met a group of Diana's nymphs, the seven Pleiades, daughters of Atlas. These fair maidens needed but to be seen to be passionately loved, and Orion's heart burned as he sought to approach them; but they were very coy, and, as he drew near and addressed them, turned and fled.

Afraid lest he should never see them again were he now to lose sight of them, he pursued them hotly; but the nymphs sped on, until, their strength failing, they called upon their patroness's aid. Their prayer was no sooner heard than answered, and Orion, panting and weary, came up just in time to see seven snow-white pigeons wing their way up into the azure sky.

There a second transformation overtook the Pleiades, who were changed into a constellation, composed of seven bright stars, and there they shone undimmed for ages; but when Troy fell into the enemy's hands, all grew pale with grief, and one, more timid and impressionable than the rest, withdrew from sight to hide her anguish from the curious eyes of men.

“And is there glory from the heavens departed?—
O void unmark'd!—thy sisters of the sky
Still hold their place on high,

Though from its rank thine orb so long hath started,
Thou, that no more art seen of mortal eye!”

HEMANS.

Orion, like a fickle youth, was soon consoled for their disappearance, and loved Merope, daughter of CEnopion, King of Chios, who consented to their union on condition that his future son-in-law should win his bride by some heroic deed. Now, as Orion was anything but a patient man, the delay was very unwelcome indeed, and he made up his mind to abduct his bride instead of marrying her openly; but the plan was frustrated by CEnopion's watchfulness, and Orion was punished by the loss not only of his bride, but also of his eyesight.

Blind, helpless, and alone, he now wandered from place to place, hoping to find some one capable of restoring his sight. At last he reached the Cyclopes' cave, and one of them took pity on him, and led him to the Sun, from whose radiance he borrowed a store of light,—

“When, blinded by CEnopion,
He sought the blacksmith at his forge,
And, climbing up the mountain gorge,
Fixed his blank eyes upon the sun.”

LONGFELLOW.

Happy once more, he resumed his favorite sport, and hunted from morn till eve. Diana met him in the forest, and, sharing his tastes, soon learned to love him; but this affection was viewed with great displeasure by Apollo, from whose piercing glance nothing that occurred by day could be hidden, and he resolved to put an end to his sister's infatuation. He therefore summoned her to his side. To divert her suspicions, he began to talk of archery, and, under the pretext of testing her skill as a markswoman, bade her shoot at a dark speck rising and falling far out at sea.

Diana seized her bow, feathered her arrow, and sent it with such force and accurate aim, that she touched the point, and saw it vanish beneath the waves, little suspecting that the dark

head of Orion, who was refreshing himself by a sea bath, was given her as a target. When she discovered her error, she mourned his loss with many tears, vowed never to forget him, and placed him, and his faithful dog Sirius as constellations in the sky.

When Diana had finished her nightly journey in her moon car, she seized her bow and arrows, and, attended by her nymphs, was wont to sally forth to hunt the wild beasts in the forest.

One summer afternoon, after an unusually long and exciting pursuit, Diana and her followers came to one of the still mountain pools where they had often resorted to enjoy a plunge. The cool waters rippled so invitingly, that the goddess and her attendants hastened to divest themselves of their short hunting garments, and lave their heated limbs.

But unfortunately the goddess and her attendant nymphs had not been the only ones out hunting that day. Actæon, the huntsman, had risen at dawn to stalk the deer; and now, weary and parched with thirst, he too sought the well-known mountain spring,

“Deep in the cool recesses of the wood,
Where the cold crystal of a mossy pool
Rose to the flowery marge, and gave again
The soft green lawn where oftentimes, overspent,
I lay upon the grass and eager bathed
My limbs in the clear lymph.”

LEWIS MORRIS.

As he drew near the accustomed spot, Actæon fancied he heard bursts of silvery laughter: so he crept on very cautiously, and soon, gently parting the thick branches of the underbrush, beheld the sporting group.

At the selfsame moment Diana turned to ascertain the cause of the rustle which had caught her practiced ear, and met the admiring gaze of the astonished young hunter. Speechless with indignation that a mortal had beheld her thus, she caught some

water in her hollow palm, flung it in his face, and bade him go and declare, if he could, that he had seen Diana disrobed.

The glittering drops had no sooner touched the young man's face, than he turned to obey her command, and found himself transformed into a stag, with slender, sinewy limbs, furry skin, and wide-branching antlers. Nothing remained of his former self except the woeful consciousness of his transformation; and as he stood there, motionless and dismayed, the distant baying of his hounds coming to join him fell upon his ear.

An electric thrill of fear shot through every vein, as, mindful of his new form, he bounded away through the forest. Alas! too late; for the pack had caught one glimpse of his sleek sides, and were after him in full cry.

In vain poor Actæon strained every muscle. His limbs refused their support, and, as he sank exhausted to the ground, the hounds sprang at his quivering throat.

“Nearer they came and nearer, baying loud,
With bloodshot eyes and red jaws dripping foam;
And when I strove to check their savagery,
Speaking with words, no voice articulate came,
Only a dumb, low bleat. Then all the throng
Leapt swift on me, and tore me as I lay!”

LEWIS MORRIS.

Diana was widely worshiped, and temples without number were dedicated to her service; among others, the world-renowned sanctuary of Ephesus. The ancients also celebrated many festivals in honor of this fair goddess of the moon, who was ever ready to extend her protection over all deserving mortals.