

a passing gust of wind. Like a stone Leander sank, once, twice, thrice, and the billows closed forever over his head.

Hero in the mean while had relighted her torch, and, quite unconscious of the tragedy which had taken place, stood on the tower, straining her eyes to pierce the darkness. All night long she waited and watched for the lover who did not come; and, when the first sunbeams shone over the tossing sea, she cast an anxious glance over the waters to Abydos. No one was in sight as far as she could see. She was about to descend to pursue her daily tasks, when, glancing at the foot of the tower, she saw her lover's corpse heaving up and down on the waves.

“As shaken on his restless pillow,
His head heaves with the heaving billow;
That hand, whose motion is not life,
Yet feebly seems to menace strife,
Flung by the tossing tide on high,
Then level'd with the wave.”

BYRON.

Hero's heart broke at this sad sight, and she longed to die, too, that she might not be parted from Leander. To hasten their meeting, she threw herself into the sea, and perished in the waves, close by his side. Thus lived and died the faithful lovers, whose attachment has passed into a proverb.

Byron, the celebrated English bard, attempted Leander's feat of swimming across the Hellespont, and, on his return from that dangerous venture, wrote the following lines, which are so familiar to all English-speaking people:—

“The winds are high on Helle's wave,
As on that night of stormy water
When Love, who sent, forgot to save
The young, the beautiful, the brave,
The lonely hope of Sestos' daughter.
Oh! when alone along the sky
Her turret torch was blazing high,
Though rising gale, and breaking foam,
And shrieking sea-birds warn'd him home;

And clouds aloft and tides below,
With signs and sounds, forbade to go,
He could not see, he would not hear,
Or sound or sign foreboding fear;
His eye but saw that light of love,
The only star it hail'd above;
His ear but rang with Hero's song,
'Ye waves, divide not lovers long!
That tale is old, but love anew
May nerve young hearts to prove as true.”

An equally loving and unfortunate pair were Pyramus and Thisbe. Although no waves divided them, and they had the good fortune to occupy adjoining houses in Babylon, their parents having quarreled, they were forbidden to see or speak to each other. This decree wrung their tender hearts; and their continuous sighs finally touched Venus, who prepared to give them her aid. Thanks to this goddess's kind offices, a crack was discovered in the party wall, through which the lovers could peep at each other, converse, and even, it is said, exchange a kiss or two.

Sundry stolen interviews through this crack made them long for uninterrupted and unrestrained meetings: so they made an appointment to meet on a certain day and hour, under a white mulberry tree, just without the city gates.

Thisbe, anxious to see her lover, was the first to reach the trysting place, and, as she slowly paced back and forth to while away the time of waiting, she wondered what had happened to delay Pyramus. Her meditation was suddenly broken by a rustling sound in some neighboring bushes; and, thinking Pyramus was concealed there, she was about to call to him that he was discovered, when, instead of her lover, she saw a lion emerge from the thicket and come towards her, slowly lashing his sides with his tail, and licking his bloody jaws. With one terrified shriek the girl ran away, dropping her veil, which the lion caught in his bloody mouth and tore to shreds, before beating a retreat into the forest.

Shortly after, Pyramus came rushing up, out of breath, and full of loving excuses for Thisbe, who was not there, however, to receive them. Wondering at her absence, Pyramus looked around, and after a short investigation discerned the lion's foot-prints and the mangled veil. These signs sufficed to convince him that Thisbe had perished, and in a fit of despair he drew his dagger from its sheath and thrust it into his heart.

A few minutes later, Thisbe cautiously drew near, peering anxiously about to discover whether the lion were still lurking near. Her first glance showed her Pyramus stretched dead beneath the mulberry tree, with her bloody veil pressed convulsively to his lips. With a cry of terror she flew to his side, and tried to revive him; but, when assured that all her efforts were in vain, she drew the dagger from his breast, and, plunging it into her own bosom, fell beside him quite lifeless.

"In her bosom plunged the sword,
All warm and reeking from its slaughtered lord."

Ovid (Eusden's tr.).

Since that ominous day the fruit of the mulberry tree, which had been white, assumed a blood-like hue, dyed by the blood which flowed from the death wounds of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The lovely and talkative nymph Echo lived free from care and whole of heart until she met Narcissus, hunting in the forest. This frivolous young lady no sooner beheld the youth, than she fell deeply in love with him, and was proportionately grieved when she saw that he did not return her affections.

All her blandishments were unavailing, and, in her despair at his hard-heartedness, she implored Venus to punish him by making him suffer the pangs of unrequited love; then, melancholy and longing to die, she wandered off into the mountains, far from the haunts of her former companions, and there, brooding continually over her sorrow, pined away until there remained naught of her but her melodious voice.

The gods, displeased at her lack of proper pride, condemned her to haunt rocks and solitary places, and, as a warning to other impulsive maidens, to repeat the last sounds which fell upon her ear.

"But her voice is still living immortal, —
The same you have frequently heard
In your rambles in valleys and forests,
Repeating your ultimate word."

SAXE.

Venus alone had not forgotten poor Echo's last passionate prayer, and was biding her time to punish the disdainful Narcissus. One day, after a prolonged chase, he hurried to a lonely pool to slake his thirst.

"In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping."

KEATS.

Quickly he knelt upon the grass, and bent over the pellucid waters to take a draught; but he suddenly paused, surprised. Down near the pebbly bottom he saw a face so passing fair, that he immediately lost his heart, for he thought it belonged to some water nymph gazing up at him through the transparent flood.

With sudden passion he caught at the beautiful apparition; but, the moment his arms touched the water, the nymph vanished. Astonished and dismayed, he slowly withdrew to a short distance, and breathlessly awaited the nymph's return.

The agitated waters soon resumed their mirror-like smoothness; and Narcissus, approaching noiselessly on tiptoe, and cautiously peeping into the pool, became aware first of curly, tumbled locks, and then of a pair of beautiful, watchful, anxious eyes. Evidently the nymph had just concluded to emerge from her hiding place to reconnoiter.

More prudent this time, the youth gradually bent further over the pool; and, reassured by his kindly glances, the nymph's whole head appeared. In gentle tones the youth now addressed her; and her ruby lips parted and moved as if she were answering, though not a sound came to his ear. In his excitement he began to gesticulate, whereupon two snowy arms repeated his every gesture; but when, encouraged by her loving glances and actions, he tried once more to clasp her in his arms, she vanished as rapidly as the first time.

Time and again the same pantomime was enacted, and time and again the nymph eluded his touch; but the enamored youth could not tear himself away from the spot haunted by this sweet image, whose sensitive face reflected his every emotion, and who grew as pale and wan as he,—evidently, like him, a victim to love and despair.

Even the shades of night could not drive Narcissus away from his post, and, when the pale moonbeams illumined his retreat, he bent over the pool to ascertain whether she too were anxious and sleepless, and saw her gazing longingly up at him.

There Narcissus lingered day and night, without eating or drinking, until he died, little suspecting that the fancied nymph was but his own image reflected in the clear waters. Echo was avenged; but the gods of Olympus gazed compassionately down upon the beautiful corpse, and changed it into a flower bearing the youth's name, which has ever since flourished beside quiet pools, wherein its pale image is clearly reflected.

“A lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness:
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.”

KEATS.

Pygmalion, King of Cyprus, was a very celebrated sculptor. All his leisure moments were spent in the faithful portrayal of the

gods and goddesses. One day his practiced hand fashioned an image of Galatea. It was so beautiful that even before it was entirely finished its author loved it. When completed, Pygmalion admired it still more, deemed it too beautiful to remain inanimate, and besought Venus to give it life, stating that he wished a wife just like it.

Pygmalion
and
Galatea.

As Pygmalion had always been an obdurate bachelor, and had frequently declared he would never marry, Venus was delighted to see him at last a victim of the tender passion, and resolved to grant his request. Pygmalion clasped the exquisite image to his breast to infuse some of his own warmth into the icy bosom, and pressed kiss after kiss upon the chiseled lips, until at last they grew soft and warm at his touch, and a faint color flushed the pale cheeks, as a breath dilated her lungs, and sent her blood coursing along her veins,—

“As once with prayers in passion flowing,
Pygmalion embraced the stone,
Till, from the frozen marble glowing,
The light of feeling o'er him shone.”

SCHILLER.

Pygmalion's delight at seeing his fair image a living and breathing maiden was unbounded, and after a short but passionate wooing the object of his affections became his happy wife.

In those same remote ages of “sweet mythology” there lived a king whose three daughters were world-renowned on account of their matchless beauty. Psyche, the youngest of the sisters, was so lovely, that her father's subjects declared her worthy to be called the Goddess of Beauty, and offered to pay homage to her instead of to Venus. Offended by this proposal, which Psyche had good sense enough to refuse, Venus resolved to demonstrate forcibly to that benighted race that the maiden was mortal. She therefore bade her son Cupid slay her.

Cupid and
Psyche.

Armed with his bow and arrows, and provided with a deadly poison, Cupid set out to do her bidding, and at nightfall reached

the palace, crept noiselessly past the sleeping guards, along the deserted halls, and came to Psyche's apartment, into which he glided unseen. Stealthily he approached the couch upon which the fair maiden was sleeping, and bent over her to administer the poisoned dose.

A moonbeam falling athwart her face revealed her unequalled loveliness, and made Cupid start back in surprise; but, as he did so, one of his own love arrows came into contact with his rosy flesh, and inflicted a wound, from which he was to suffer for many a weary day.

All unconscious of the gravity of his hurt, he hung enraptured over the sleeping maiden, and let her fair image sink into his heart; then, noiselessly as he had entered, he stole out again, vowing he would never harm such innocence and beauty.

Morning dawned. Venus, who had expected to see the sun illumine her rival's corpse, saw her sporting as usual in the palace gardens, and bitterly realized that her first plan had completely failed. She therefore began to devise various torments of a petty kind, and persecuted the poor girl so remorselessly, that she fled from home with the firm intention of putting an end to the life she could no longer enjoy in peace.

To achieve this purpose, Psyche painfully toiled up a rugged mountain, and, creeping to the very edge of a great precipice, cast herself down, expecting to be dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks below; but Cupid, who had indignantly though helplessly seen all his mother's persecutions, had followed Psyche unseen, and, when he perceived her intention to commit suicide, he called to Zephyrus (the South Wind), and entreated him to catch the maiden in his strong yet gentle arms, and bear her off to a distant isle.

Consequently, instead of a swift, sharp fall and painful death, Psyche felt herself gently wafted over hill and dale, across sparkling waters; and, long before she wearied of this new mode of travel, she was gently laid on a flowery bank, in the midst of an exquisite garden.

Bewildered, she slowly rose to her feet, rubbed her pretty eyes to make sure she was not dreaming, and wonderingly strolled about the beautiful grounds. Ere long she came to an enchanted palace, whose portals opened wide to receive her, while gentle voices bade her enter, and invisible hands drew her over the threshold and waited upon her.

When night came, and darkness again covered the earth, Cupid appeared in search of his beloved Psyche. In the perfumed dusk he confessed his love, and tenderly begged for some return.

Now, although the fading light would not permit her to discern the form or features of her unknown lover, Psyche listened to his soft tones with unconcealed pleasure, and soon consented to their union. Cupid then entreated her to make no attempt to discover his name, or to catch a glimpse of his face, warning her that if she did so he would be forced to leave her, never to return.

“Dear, I am with thee only while I keep
My visage hidden; and if thou once shouldst see
My face, I must forsake thee: the high gods
Link Love with Faith, and he withdraws himself
From the full gaze of Knowledge.”

LEWIS MORRIS.

Psyche solemnly promised to respect her mysterious lover's wishes, and gave herself up entirely to the enjoyment of his company. All night long they talked; and when the first faint streak of light appeared above the horizon, Cupid bade Psyche farewell, promising to return with the welcome shades of night. All day long Psyche thought of him, longed for him, and, as soon as the sun had set, sped to the bower where the birds were sleepily trilling forth their evening song, and breathlessly waited until he came to join her.

“Now on broad pinions from the realms above
Descending Cupid seeks the Cyprian grove;

To his wide arms enamor'd Psyche springs,
 And clasps her lover with aurelian wings.
 A purple sash across His shoulder bends,
 And fringed with gold the quiver'd shafts suspends."

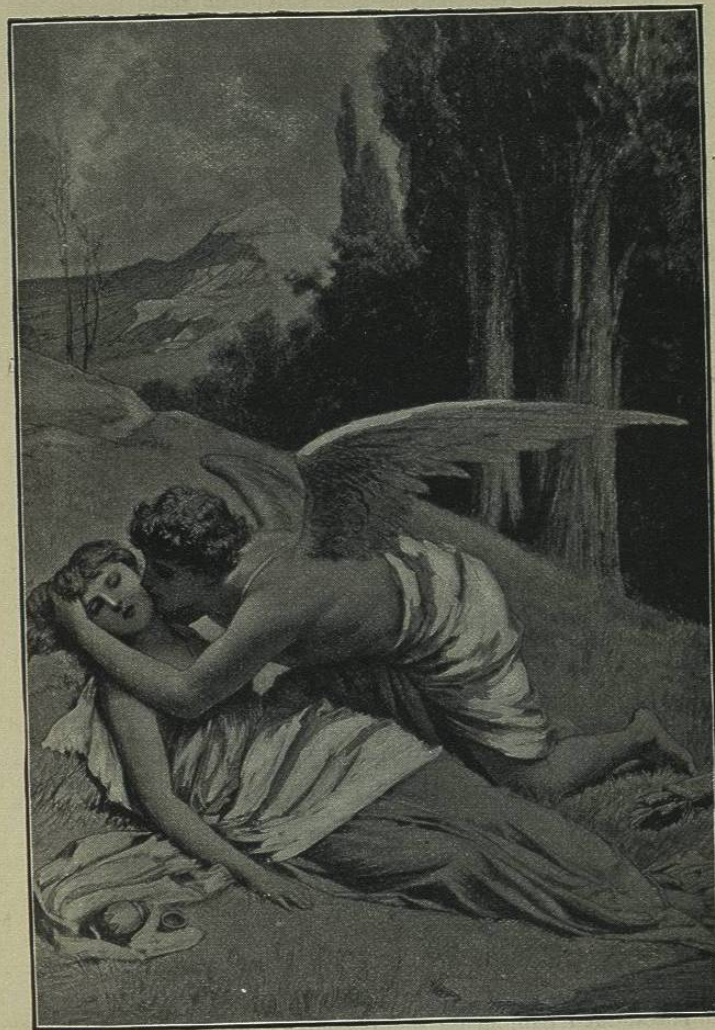
DARWIN.

Although the hours of day seemed interminable, spent as they were in complete solitude, Psyche found the hours of night all too short in the sweet society of Love. Her every wish was gratified almost as soon as expressed; and at last, encouraged by her lover's evident anxiety to please her, she gave utterance to her longing to see and converse with her sisters once more. The ardent lover could not refuse to grant this request, yet Psyche noticed that his consent seemed somewhat hesitating and reluctant.

The next morning, while enjoying a solitary stroll, Psyche suddenly encountered her two sisters. After rapturous embraces and an incoherent volley of questions and answers, they settled down to enjoy a long talk. Psyche related her desperate attempt at suicide, her miraculous preservation from certain death, her aerial journey, her entrance into the enchanted palace, her love for her mysterious nightly visitor, — all, in short, that had happened since she had left her father's home.

Now, the elder sisters had always been jealous of Psyche's superior beauty; and when they saw her luxurious surroundings, and heard her raptures about her lover, they were envious, and resolved to mar the happiness which they could not enjoy. They therefore did all in their power to convince poor Psyche that her lover must be some monster, so hideous that he dare not brave the broad light of day, lest he should make her loathe him, and further added, that, if she were not very careful, he would probably end by devouring her.

They thereupon advised poor troubled Psyche to conceal a lamp and dagger in her lover's apartment, and to gaze upon him in secret, when his eyes were closed in sleep. If the light of the lamp revealed, as they felt sure it would, the hideous coun-



CUPID AWAKENING PSYCHE.—Thumann.

tenance and distorted form of a monster, they bade her use the dagger to kill him. Then, satisfied with their work, the sisters departed, leaving Psyche alone to carry out their evil suggestions.

When safe at home once more, the sisters constantly brooded over the tale Psyche had poured into their ears, and, hoping to secure as luxurious a home and as fascinating a lover, they each hurried off in secret to the mountain gorge, cast themselves over the precipice, and — perished.

Night having come, bringing the usually so welcome Cupid, Psyche, tortured with doubt, could with difficulty conceal her agitation. After repeated efforts to charm her from her silent mood, Cupid fell asleep; and, as soon as his regular breathing proclaimed him lost in slumber, Psyche noiselessly lighted her lamp, seized her dagger, and, approaching the couch with great caution, bent over her sleeping lover. The lamp, which she held high above her head, cast its light full upon the face and form of a handsome youth.

“Now trembling, now distracted; bold,
And now irresolute she seems;
The blue lamp glimmers in her hold,
And in her hand the dagger gleams.
Prepared to strike, she verges near,
Then, the blue light glimmering from above,
The hideous sight expects with fear —
And gazes on the god of Love.”

APOLLONIUS.

Psyche's heart beat loudly with joy and pride as she beheld, instead of the monster, this graceful youth; and as she hung over him, enraptured, she forgot all caution. An inadvertent motion tipped her lamp, and one drop of burning oil, running over the narrow brim, fell upon Cupid's naked shoulder.

The sudden pain made him open his eyes with a start. The lighted lamp, the glittering dagger, the trembling Psyche, told the whole story. Cupid sprang from the couch, seized his bow

and arrows, and, with a last sorrowful, reproachful glance at Psyche, flew away through the open window, exclaiming, —

“Farewell! There is no Love except with Faith,
And thine is dead! Farewell! I come no more!”

LEWIS MORRIS.

When he had vanished into the dusky air without, the balmy night winds ceased to blow; and suddenly a tempest began to rage with such fury, that poor frightened Psyche dared not remain alone in the palace, but hastened out into the gardens, where she soon lost consciousness of her misery in a deep swoon. When she opened her eyes once more, the storm had ceased, the sun was high in the heavens, and palace and gardens had vanished.

Psyche
forsaken.

Poor Psyche lingered there the following and many succeeding nights, vainly hoping for Cupid's return, and shedding many bitter tears of repentance. Finally she resolved to commit suicide, and, with that purpose in view, plunged into a neighboring river; but the god of the stream caught and carried her ashore, where his daughters, the water nymphs, restored her to life. Thus forced to live, Psyche wandered about disconsolate, seeking Cupid, and questioning all she met, the nymphs, Pan, and Ceres, who compassionately listened to her confession of love for her husband.

“Not as the earthly loves which throb and flush
Round earthly shrines was mine, but a pure spirit,
Lovelier than all embodied love, more pure
And wonderful; but never on his eyes
I looked, which still were hidden, and I knew not
The fashion of his nature; for by night,
When visual eyes are blind, but the soul sees,
Came he, and bade me seek not to inquire
Or whence he came or wherefore. Nor knew I
His name. And always ere the coming day,
As if he were the Sun god, lingering
With some too well loved maiden, he would rise
And vanish until eve.”

LEWIS MORRIS.

Ceres had often seen Cupid, and had heard that very morning that he was having a wound in his shoulder dressed by Venus: so she advised Psyche to go to the Goddess of Beauty, to enter her service, and to perform every task with cheerful alacrity, knowing that such a course would ultimately bring about a meeting and reconciliation between the lovers.

Psyche gratefully accepted and followed Ceres' advice, and labored early and late to satisfy her exacting mistress, who appointed such difficult tasks, that the poor girl would never have been able to accomplish them had she not been aided by all the beasts and insects, who loved her dearly.

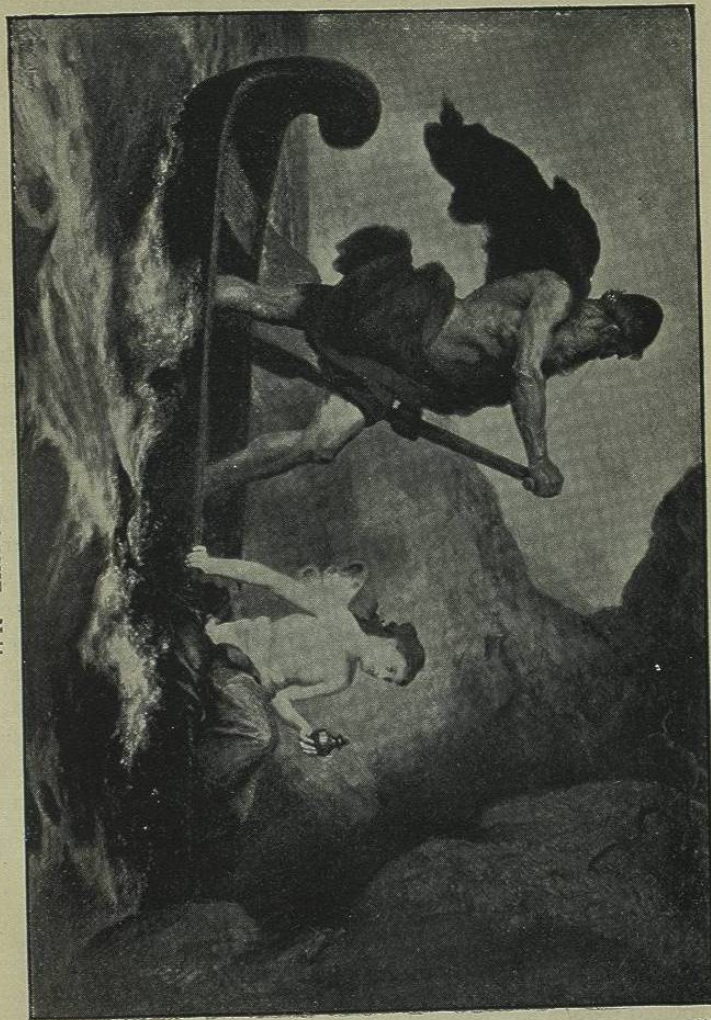
Venus repeatedly tested her fidelity and endurance, and finally resolved, as a crucial experiment, to send her to Hades to fetch a box of beauty ointment, for which Proserpina alone had the recipe. Directed by Zephyrus, her old friend, Psyche encountered the terrors of Hades in safety, delivered her message, and in return received a small box. The gates of Hades were closed behind her, and she had nearly finished her last task, when she suddenly fancied that it would be wise to appropriate a little of the magic preparation to efface the traces of sleepless nights and many tears.

The box, however, contained naught but the spirit of Sleep, who, pouncing upon Psyche, laid her low by the roadside. Cupid, passing by, saw her there, marked the ravages of grief, remembered his love and her suffering, and, wrestling with the spirit, forced him to reënter the narrow bounds of his prison, and woke Psyche with a loving kiss.

"Dear, unclose thine eyes.
Thou mayst look on me now. I go no more,
But am thine own forever."

LEWIS MORRIS.

Then, hand in hand, they winged their flight to Olympus, entered the council hall; and there Cupid presented Psyche, his chosen bride, to the assembled deities, who all promised to be present at the nuptial ceremony. Venus even, forgetting all her



CHARON AND PSYCHE.—Nolle.

former envy, welcomed the blushing bride, who was happy ever after.

The ancients, for whom Cupid was an emblem of the heart, considered Psyche the personification of the soul, and represented her with butterfly wings; that little insect being another symbol of the soul, which cannot die.

One of the latest myths concerning Venus is that of Berenice, who, fearing for her beloved husband's life, implored the goddess

Berenice's to protect him in battle, vowing to sacrifice her **Hair.** luxuriant hair if he returned home in safety. The prayer was granted, and Berenice's beautiful locks laid upon Venus' shrine, whence they, however, very mysteriously disappeared. An astrologer, consulted concerning the supposed theft, solemnly pointed to a comet rapidly coming into view, and declared that the gods had placed Berenice's hair among the stars, there to shine forever in memory of her wifely sacrifice.

Venus, goddess of beauty, is represented either entirely naked, or with some scanty drapery called a "cestus." Seated in her chariot, formed of a single pearl shell, and drawn **Worship of** by snow-white doves, her favorite birds, she jour- **Venus.** neyed from shrine to shrine, complacently admiring the lavish decorations of jewels and flowers her worshipers provided. The offerings of young lovers were ever those which found most favor in her sight.

"Venus loves the whispers
Of plighted youth and maid,
In April's ivory moonlight
Beneath the chestnut shade."

MACAULAY.

Numerous ancient and some modern statues of this goddess grace the various art galleries, but among them all the most perfect is the world-renowned Venus de Milo.

Venus' festivals were always scenes of graceful amusements; and her votaries wore wreaths of fresh, fragrant flowers, the emblem of all natural beauty.

CHAPTER VIII.

MERCURY.

As already repeatedly stated in the course of this work, Jupiter was never a strictly faithful spouse, and, in spite of his wife's remonstrances, could not refrain from indulging **Birth of** his caprice for every pretty face he met along **Mercury.** his way. It is thus, therefore, that he yielded to the charms of Maia, goddess of the plains, and spent some blissful hours in her society. This divine couple's happiness culminated when they first beheld their little son, Mercury (Hermes, Psychopompus, Oneicopompus), who was born in a grotto on Mount Cyllene, in Arcadia,—

"Mercury, whom Maia bore,
Sweet Maia, on Cyllene's hoary top."
VIRGIL (Cowper's tr.).

This infant god was quite unlike mortal children, as will readily be perceived by the numerous pranks he played immediately after his birth. First he sprang from his mother's knee, grasped a tortoise shell lying on the ground, bored holes in its sides, stretched strings across its concavity, and, sweeping his hands over them, produced strains of sweetest music, thus inventing the first lyre.

"So there it lay, through wet and dry,
As empty as the last new sonnet,
Till by and by came Mercury,
And, having mused upon it,