

hand of Venus, and sent her and her mischievous train of Loves and Graces to reside in the dark caves of Mount Ætna.

Amused by all the strange sights and sounds, the goddess at first seemed quite contented; but after a time Vulcan's gloomy abode lost all its attractions: so she forsook her ill-favored husband, and went in search of another, more congenial mate.

Some time after, Vulcan married one of the Graces, who, however, seems to have also soon wearied of his society, for she deserted him.

Vulcan's children were mostly monsters, such as Cacus, Periphetes, Cercyon, etc., all of whom play an important part in heroic mythology. He is also the reputed father of Servius Tullius, sixth king of Rome, by a slave Ocrisia, whom he was wont to visit in the guise of a bright flame, which played harmlessly about her.

Vulcan was worshiped by all blacksmiths and artisans, who recognized him as their special patron, and venerated him accordingly.

"Those who labor
The sweaty forge, who edge the crooked scythe,
Bend stubborn steel, and harden gleaming armor,
Acknowledge Vulcan's aid."

PRIOR.

Great festivals, the Vulcanalia and the Hephæstia, were celebrated in honor of this god, who is generally represented as a short, muscular man, with one leg shorter than the other, a workman's cap on his curly locks, a short upper garment, and a smith's tools in his hand.

CHAPTER XI.

NEPTUNE.

WHEN Jupiter assigned to each of his brothers a separate portion of the universe, he decreed that Neptune, or Poseidon, should govern all the waters upon the face of the earth, and be sole monarch of the ocean.

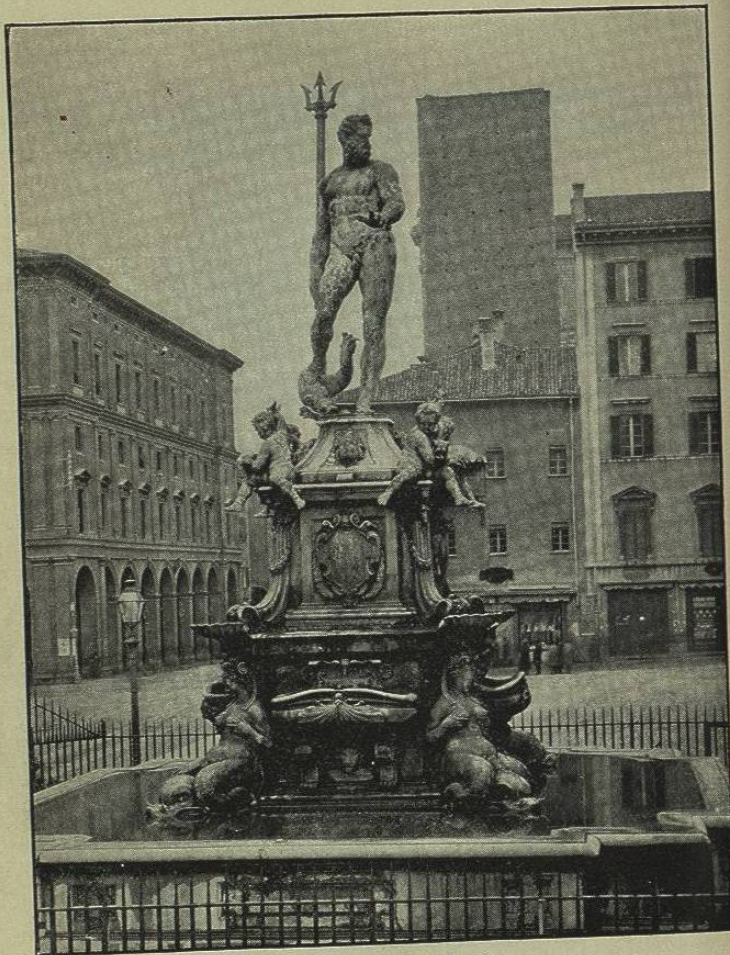
"Neptune, the mighty marine god, I sing;
Earth's mover, and the fruitless ocean's king.
That Helicon and th' Ægean deeps dost hold.
O thou earth-shaker; thy command, twofold
The gods have sorted; making thee of horses
The awful tamer, and of naval forces
The sure preserver. Hail, O Saturn's birth!
Whose graceful green hair circles all the earth.
Bear a benign mind; and thy helpful hand
Lend all, submitted to thy dread command."

HOMER (Chapman's tr.).

Before this new ruler made his appearance, the Titan Oceanus had wielded the scepter of the sea; and regretfully he now resigned it to his youthful supplanter, whom he nevertheless admired sincerely, and described in glowing colors to his brothers.

"Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
By noble winged creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire."

KEATS.



(150)

FOUNTAIN OF NEPTUNE.—Bologna.
(Bologna.)

Neptune, the personification as well as the god of the sea, was of an exceedingly encroaching disposition. Dissatisfied with the portion allotted him, he once conspired to dethrone Jupiter; but, unfortunately for the success of his undertaking, his plot was discovered before he could put it into execution, and Jupiter, in punishment for his temerity, exiled him to earth. There he was condemned to build the walls of Troy for Laomedon, king of that city, who, in return, promised a handsome compensation.

Neptune's
exile.

Apollo, also banished from heaven at that time, volunteered to aid Neptune by playing on his lyre, and moving the stones by the power of sweet sounds (p. 65). The task satisfactorily ended, Laomedon, an avaricious and dishonest king, refused the promised guerdon, whereupon Neptune created a terrible monster, which came upon the shore, devoured the inhabitants, devastated everything within his reach, and inspired all with great terror.

“A great serpent from the deep,
Lifting his horrible head above their homes,
Devoured the children.”

LEWIS MORRIS.

To save themselves from the awful death which threatened them all, the Trojans consulted an oracle, who advised the sacrifice of a beautiful virgin, and promised the monster would disappear as soon as he had devoured the appointed victim.

A young girl was therefore chosen by lot, led down to the seashore, and chained by the priest's own hands to a slimy rock. As soon as her mourning friends had forsaken her, the hideous serpent came out of his lair in the waves, and devoured her; then he vanished, and nothing more was heard of him for a whole year, at the end of which time he reappeared, and resumed his former depredations, which were only checked by the sacrifice of a second virgin.

Story of
Hesione.

Year after year, however, he returned, and year after year a fair girl was doomed to perish, until finally the lot fell upon

Hesione, the king's only daughter. He could not bear the thought of the terrible fate awaiting her, and tried every means in his power to save her. As a last resort he sent heralds to publish far and wide that the king would give a great reward to any man who would dare attack and succeed in slaying the monster.

Hercules, on his return from the scene of one of his stupendous labors, heard the proclamation, and, with no other weapon than the oaken club he generally carried, slew the monster just as he was about to drag poor Hesione down into his slimy cave. Laomedon was, of course, overjoyed at the monster's death, but, true to his nature, again refused the promised reward, and by his dishonesty incurred the hatred and contempt of this hero also. Some time after, having finished his time of servitude with Eurystheus, Hercules, aided by a chosen band of adventurers, came to Troy to punish him for his perfidy. The city was stormed and taken, the king slain, and his wife and children carried to Greece as captives. There Hesione became the bride of Telamon; while her brother Podarces, later known as Priam, was redeemed by his people and made King of Troy.

Laomedon's failure to pay his just debts was the primary cause of the enmity which Apollo and Neptune displayed towards the Trojans during their famous war with the Greeks (p. 305).

Their term of exile ended, the gods were reinstated in their exalted positions, and hastened to resume their former occupations; but, in spite of the severe lesson just received, Neptune was not yet cured of his grasping tendencies. Not long after his return from Troy, he quarreled with Minerva for the possession of the then recently founded city of Athens, then nameless, and entered into the memorable contest in which he was signally defeated (p. 57). He also disputed the sovereignty of Trœzene with Minerva, and that of Corinth with Apollo. In the latter instance, the disputants having chosen Briareus as umpire, the prize was awarded to him as the most powerful of all the gods except Jupiter.

Neptune's
contests.

As god of the sea, Neptune did not generally remain in Olympus, but dwelt way down in the coral caves of his kingdom, over which he ruled with resistless sway. By one word he could stir up or calm the wildest storm, and cause the billows to roar with fury or subside into peaceful ripples.

Neptune's
power.

“He spake, and round about him called the clouds
And roused the ocean, — wielding in his hand
The trident, — summoned all the hurricanes
Of all the winds, and covered earth and sky
At once with mists, while from above the night
Fell suddenly.”

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

The rivers, fountains, lakes, and seas were not only subject to his rule, but he could also cause terrible earthquakes at will, and, when he pleased, raise islands from the deep, as he did when Latona entreated him to shelter her from Juno's persecutions (p. 62).

Neptune is said to have loved the goddess Ceres, and to have followed her during her prolonged search for her daughter, Proserpina. Annoyed by his persistent wooing, the goddess, to escape him, assumed the form of a mare; but the God of the Sea, not at all deceived by this stratagem, straightway assumed the form of a horse, in which guise he contentedly trotted after her and renewed his attentions.

The offspring of this equine pair was Arion, a wonderful winged steed, gifted with the power of speech, whose early education was intrusted to the Nereides. They trained him to draw his father's chariot over the waves with incredible rapidity, and parted with him regretfully when he was given to Copreus, Pelops' son. This marvelous horse passed successively into Hercules' and Adrastus' hands; and the latter won all the chariot races, thanks to his fleetness.

Neptune's
wives.

On another occasion, Neptune, having fallen deeply in love with a maiden named Theophane, and fearful lest some one of her numerous suitors should find favor in her eyes before he had

time to urge his wooing, suddenly changed her into a sheep, and conveyed her to the Island of Crumissa, where he assumed the guise of a ram, and, in this metamorphosed condition, carried on his courtship, which eventually proved successful. The offspring of this union was the golden-fleeced ram which bore Phryxus in safety to the Colchian shores, and whose pelt was the goal of the Argonautic expedition (p. 265).

Neptune also loved and married Medusa in the days of her youth and beauty, and when some drops of blood fell from her severed head into the salt sea foam, he produced from them the graceful winged steed Pegasus (p. 244).

Neptune is also said to be the father of the giants Otus and Ephialtes, of Neleus, Pelias, and Polyphemus.

The Queen of the Ocean, Neptune's own true and lawful wife, was a Nereid, one of the fifty daughters of Doris and Nereus, — the personification of the calm and sunlit aspect of the sea. Her name was Amphitrite, or Salacia. At first she was in great awe of her distinguished suitor, and in her fear fled at his approach, leaving him no chance to admire any of her charms, except the grace and celerity with which she managed to flit, or rather glide, out of his sight.

“Along the deep

With beauteous ankles, Amphitrite glides.”

HESIOD (Elton's tr.).

This conduct grieved Neptune so sorely, that he sent a dolphin to plead his cause, and persuade the fair nymph to share his throne. The messenger, carefully instructed beforehand, carried out the directions with such skill, that Amphitrite formally consented to become Neptune's wife.

The King of the Deep was so overjoyed at these good tidings, that he transferred the dolphin to the sky, where he forms a well-known constellation. Neptune and Amphitrite in due time became the happy parents of several children, among whom the most celebrated is Triton, whose body was half man and half fish, and who gave his name to all his male descendants.

Like all other gods, Neptune took a lively interest in men's affairs, and sometimes interfered in their behalf. On one occasion, for instance, he even lent his beautiful chariot to a youth by the name of Idas, who, loving a maiden Story of Idas and Marpessa. dearly, and unable to win her father's consent to their union, had resolved to kidnap her. Marpessa, for such was the lady's name, allowed herself to be carried off without protest; and the lovers were blissfully speeding along in Neptune's chariot, when her father, Evenus, perceiving their escape, started in pursuit of them. In spite of the most strenuous efforts, he could not overtake the fleeing pair, and in his anger plunged into a river, where he was drowned, and which from him received the name of Evenus.

Idas and Marpessa were just congratulating themselves upon their narrow escape, when suddenly Apollo appeared before them, and, checking their steeds, declared he loved the maiden too, and would not tamely yield her up to a rival.

This was quite equivalent to a challenge; and Idas, stepping down from the chariot, was about to engage in the fight, when suddenly out of a clear sky a thunderbolt came crashing down to earth, and an imperious voice was heard to declare that the quarrel could be settled by Marpessa only, and that she should freely choose the suitor she preferred as husband.

The maiden glanced at both her lovers, and quickly reviewed their respective attractions. Remembering that Apollo, being immortal, would retain all his youthful bloom when her more ephemeral beauty had vanished, and that he would then probably cease to love her, she held out her hand to Idas, declaring she preferred to link her fate to that of a mortal, who would grow old when she did, and love her as long as they both lived. This choice was approved by Jupiter; and the lovers, after reaching a place of safety, returned the wondrous chariot to Neptune, with many grateful thanks for his timely aid.

Neptune's attendants.

All the Nereides, Tritons, and lesser sea divinities formed a part of Neptune and Amphitrite's train, and followed closely when they rode forth to survey their kingdom.

Neptune had, besides this, many subordinates, whose duty it was to look after various seas, lakes, rivers, fountains, etc., confided to their special care. In harmony with their occupations, these divinities were either hoary river gods (such as Father Nile), slender youths, beautiful maidens, or little babbling children. They seldom left the cool waves of their appointed dwellings, and strove to win Neptune's approbation mostly by the zeal they showed in the discharge of their various duties.

Proteus, too, another inferior deity, had the care of the flocks of the deep, and he always attended Neptune when it was safe to leave his great herds of sea calves to bask on the sunny shores.

"In ages past old Proteus, with his droves
Of sea calves, sought the mountains and the groves."

COWPER.

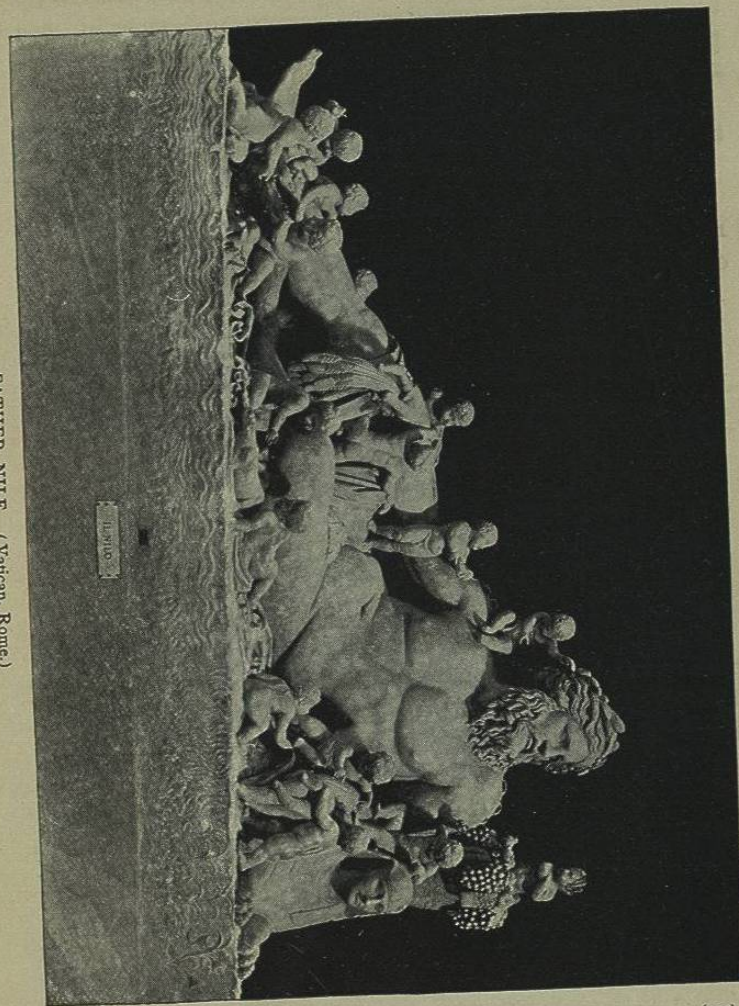
In common with all the other gods, Proteus enjoyed the gift of prophecy, and had the power to assume any shape he pleased.

The former gift he was wont to exercise very reluctantly; and when mortals wished to consult him, he would change his form with bewildering rapidity, and, unless they clung to him through all his changes, they could obtain no answer to their questions.

"Shouting [we] seize the god: our force t' evade,
His various arts he soon resumes in aid:
A lion now, he curls a surgy mane;
Sudden, our hands a spotted pard restrain;
Then, arm'd with tusks, and lightning in his eyes,
A boar's obscener shape the god belies:
On spiry volumes, there, a dragon rides;
Here, from our strict embrace a stream he glides;
And last, sublime, his stately growth he rears,
A tree, and well-dissembled foliage wears."

HOMER (Pope's tr.).

But if these manifestations proved unavailing to drive his would-be hearers away, the god answered every question circumstantially.



FATHER NILE. (Vatican, Rome.)

Amphitrite, Neptune's wife, — generally represented as a beautiful nude nymph, crowned with seaweed, and reclining in a pearl-shell chariot drawn by dolphins, or sea-horses, — was worshiped with her husband.

Neptune, majestic and middle-aged, with long, flowing hair and beard, wearing a seaweed crown, and brandishing a trident, or three-pronged fork, was widely worshiped throughout Greece and Italy, and had countless shrines. His principal votaries were the seamen and horse trainers, who often bespoke his aid.

Worship of
Neptune.

“Hail, Neptune, greatest of the gods!
Thou ruler of the salt sea floods;
Thou with the deep and dark-green hair,
That dost the golden trident bear;
Thou that, with either arm outspread,
Embosomest the earth we tread:
Thine are the beasts with fin and scales,
That round thy chariot, as it sails,
Plunging and tumbling, fast and free,
All reckless follow o'er the sea.”

ARION.

Many large temples were dedicated exclusively to the worship of Neptune, and games were frequently celebrated in his honor. The most noted of all were undoubtedly the Isthmian Games, — a national festival, held every four years at Corinth, on the isthmus of the same name. Hither people came from all points of the compass, and all parts of the then known world, either to witness or to take part in the noted wrestling, boxing, and racing matches, or in the musical and poetical contests.

CHAPTER XII.

PLUTO.

PLUTO (Dis, Hades, Plutus, Aïdoneus), son of Cronus and Rhea, received as his share of the world the supervision of the Infernal Regions, situated beneath the earth, and was also appointed god of the dead and of riches, for all precious metals are buried deep in the bosom of the earth.

“Blinded Plutus, didst thou dwell
Nor in land nor fathomed sea,
But only in the depths of hell, —
God of riches! safe from thee
Man himself might happy be.”

TIMOCREON OF RHODES.

This god inspired all men with a great fear. They never spoke of him without trembling, and fervently prayed that they might never see his face; for, when he appeared on the surface of the earth, it was only in search of some victim to drag down into his dismal abode, or to make sure there was no crevice through which a sunbeam might glide to brighten its gloom and dispel its shadows. Whenever the stern god set out on one of these expeditions, he rode in a chariot drawn by four coal-black steeds; and, if any obstacle presented itself to impede his progress, he struck it with his two-pronged fork, the emblem of his power, and the obstacle was immediately removed. It was on one of these occasions that Pluto kidnapped Proserpina, the fair goddess of vegetation, daughter of Ceres, whom he set on his throne in Hades, and crowned his queen (p. 183).