

by a sun and moon of their own, decked with the most fragrant and beautiful of flowers, and provided with every charm that nature or art could supply. No storms or wintry winds ever came to rob these fields of their spring-like beauty; and here the blessed spent eternity, in pleasant communion with the friends they had loved on earth.

Elysian Fields.

“Patriots who perished for their country’s rights,
Or nobly triumphed in the fields of fight:
There holy priests and sacred poets stood,
Who sang with all the raptures of a god:
Worthies whose lives by useful arts refined;
With those who leave a deathless name behind,
Friends of the world, and fathers of mankind.”

CHAPTER XIII.

BACCHUS.

AMONG all the mortal maidens honored by the love of Jupiter, king of the gods, none was more attractive than Semele, daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia.

“For Semele was molded in the form
Of elegance; the beauty of her race
Shone in her forehead.”

NONNUS (Elton’s tr.).

Although conscious of these superior attractions, Semele was excessively coy, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Jupiter, disguised as a mortal, could urge his love suit. When he had at last obtained a hearing, he told her who he was, calculating upon the effect which such a revelation must necessarily produce.

*Story of
Semele.*

He was not mistaken in his previsions, for Semele, proud of having attracted the greatest among the gods, no longer offered any resistance, and consented to their union. Their love grew and prospered, and Jupiter came down from Olympus as often as possible to enjoy the society of his beloved. His frequent absences finally aroused Juno’s suspicions, and, as usual, she spared no pains to discover what powerful charm could draw him from her side. After a few days she knew all, and straightway determined to have her revenge, and punish her fickle spouse. To accomplish this successfully, she assumed the face and form of Beroe, Semele’s old nurse, and thus entered the young princess’s apartment quite unsuspected.

“Old Beroe’s decrepit shape she wears,
Her wrinkled visage, and her hoary hairs;
Whilst in her trembling gait she totters on,
And learns to tattle in the nurse’s tone.”

OVID (Addison’s tr.).

There she immediately entered into conversation with her supposed nursling, artfully extracted a complete confession, heard with suppressed rage how long Jupiter had wooed ere he had finally won the maiden’s consent, and received a rapturous and minute catalogue of all his personal charms and a synopsis of all they had both said.

The false nurse listened with apparent sympathy; but in reality she was furious, and, to put an end to it all, asked Semele if she were quite sure he was king of the gods, as he asserted, and whether he visited her in all the pomp of his regal apparel. The maiden shamefacedly replied that he was wont to visit her in the guise of a mortal only; whereupon Beroe, with feigned indignation, told her nursling he must either be a vile impostor, or else that he did not love her as dearly as he loved Juno, in whose presence he seldom appeared except in godlike array.

With artful words she so worked upon the guileless nature of her rival, that, when Jupiter next came, the maiden used all her blandishments to extort from him a solemn oath to grant any request she chose to make. A lover is not very likely to weigh his words under such circumstances, and Jupiter took the most solemn of all the oaths to gratify her whim.

“Bear me witness, Earth, and ye, broad Heavens
Above us, and ye, waters of the Styx,
That flow beneath us, mightiest oath of all,
And most revered by the blessed gods!”

HOMER (Bryant’s tr.).

The promise won, the delighted Semele bade her lover speedily return to Olympus, don his own majestic form and apparel, and hasten back to her side, surrounded by all his heavenly

pomp, and armed with his dreaded thunderbolts. Jupiter, horrified at this imprudent request, implored her to ask something else, and release him from a promise fraught with such danger to her; but all in vain. Semele, like many another fair lady, enjoyed having her own way, and fairly forced him to obey.

Jupiter returned to Olympus, modified his costume as much as possible, dimmed his glory wherever he could, and chose the feeblest of all his bolts, for well he knew no mere mortal could endure the shock of his full glory. Then, mounted on a pale flash of lightning, he darted back to Semele.

“To keep his promise he ascends, and shrouds
His awful brow in whirlwinds and in clouds;
Whilst all around, in terrible array,
His thunders rattle, and his lightnings play.
And yet, the dazzling luster to abate,
He set not out in all his pomp and state,
Clad in the mildest lightning of the skies,
And arm’d with thunder of the smallest size:
Not those huge bolts, by which the giants slain,
Lay overthrown on the Phlegrean plain.
'Twas of a lesser mold, and lighter weight;
They call it thunder of a second-rate.
For the rough Cyclops, who by Jove’s command
Temper’d the bolt and turn’d it to his hand,
Work’d up less flame and fury in its make,
And quench’d it sooner in the standing lake.
Thus dreadfully adorn’d, with horror bright,
Th’ illustrious god, descending from his height,
Came rushing on her in a storm of light.”

OVID (Addison’s tr.).

But, although so much milder than usual, this apparition was more than poor Semele’s human nerves could bear, and she dropped to the floor in a swoon at the first glimpse of her lover. Oblivious of all but her alarming condition, Jupiter sprang to her side; but the lightning which played about his head set fire to the whole palace, which was reduced to ashes.

Semele herself perished, burned to death; and the only person in all the building who escaped uninjured was Bacchus (Liber, Dionysius), the infant son of Jupiter and Semele, who was saved by his father's powerful hand. Jupiter was at first inconsolable at the death of Semele; and, to testify to all mortals how fondly he had loved her, he brought her spirit up to heaven, where he raised her to the rank of a deity.

Birth of
Bacchus.

Dionysius), the infant son of Jupiter and Semele, who was saved by his father's powerful hand.

"Semele of the flowing hair,
Who died in Thunder's crashing flame,
To deified existence came."

PRIOR.

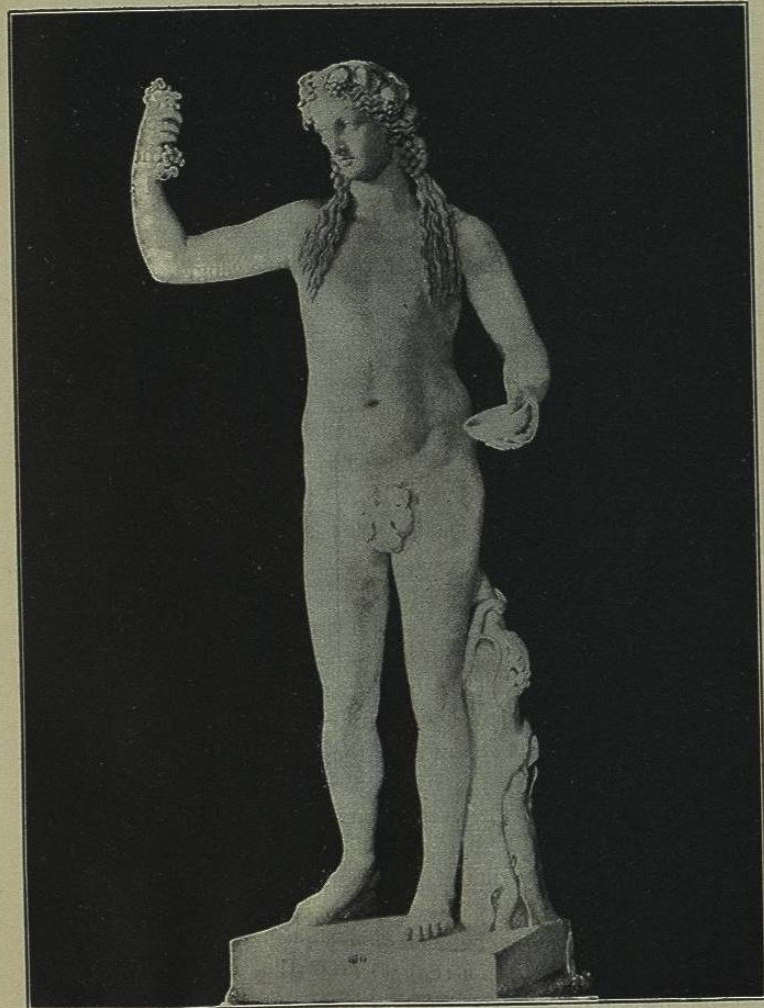
The infant Bacchus was first intrusted to the care of his aunt Ino, the second wife of Athamas, King of Thebes, who nursed him as tenderly as if he had been her own child. But all her love could not avail to screen him from the effects of Juno's persistent hatred: so Jupiter, fearing lest some harm might befall his precious son, bade Mercury convey him to the distant home of the Nysiades, — nymphs who guarded him most faithfully.

Juno, not daring to continue her persecutions, wreaked all her anger upon poor Ino and her unhappy household by sending the Fury Tisiphone to goad Athamas to madness. In a fit of deluded frenzy, he pursued his wife and children as if they were wild beasts. One of his sons, Learchus, fell beneath his arrows; and, to escape his murderous fury, Ino plunged headlong into the sea with her second child in her arms. The gods, in pity for her sufferings, changed her into the goddess Leucothea, and her son into a sea deity by the name of Palæmon.

When still but a youth, Bacchus was appointed god of wine and revelry, and intrusted to the guidance of Silenus, a satyr, half man and half goat, who educated him, and accompanied him on all his travels; for he delighted in roaming all over the world, borne by his followers, or riding in his chariot drawn by wild beasts, while his tutor followed him, mounted on an ass, supported on either side by an attendant.

Bacchus'
attendants.

half man and half goat, who educated him, and accompanied him on all his travels; for he de-



BACCHUS.—(Vatican, Rome.)

(175)

"And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass."

KEATS.

Bacchus' train was very large indeed, and composed of men and women, nymphs, fauns, and satyrs, all crowned with ivy leaves, who drank wine,—a drink compounded for their express use out of water and sunshine,—ate grapes, danced and sang, and loudly proclaimed him their chosen leader.

"We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
A conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide."

KEATS.

The most unruly among his female followers were the Bacchantes, who delighted in revelry, and were in a perpetual state of intoxication as they went with him from land to land, where he taught the people the cultivation of the vine and the art of making wine. He traveled thus, it is said, throughout Greece and Asia Minor, and even ventured as far as India and Ethiopia.

During these long journeys, Bacchus, as was inevitable, met with many adventures, which have been fertile themes for poetry and art. On one occasion, having strayed away from his followers and lost his way, Bacchus laid himself down upon the sand on the seashore to rest. Some pirates, sailing by, saw the handsome young sleeper, and noiselessly bore him off to their vessel, intending to sell him as a slave in Egypt.

They were already quite far out at sea when the god awoke, and gazed around him in mute wonder at his surroundings. When fully roused, he bade the seamen take him back to land, but they merely replied by laughter and mockery. Their amusement was cut short, however, for the ship came to a sudden standstill; and, when they leaned over the sides to ascertain why their oars could no longer propel it onward, they saw a vine

grow out of the sea, and twine its branches and tendrils with lightning-like velocity around oars, mast, and rigging, thus transforming the vessel into a floating arbor. Then a sound of music and revelry greeted their astonished ears, and Bacchus' followers came thronging over the ship's sides, riding on wild beasts, and chanting the praises of their god and of his favorite beverage.

"In chorus we sing of wine, sweet wine,
Its power benign, and its flavor divine."

MARTINEZ DE LA ROSA.

These extraordinary sights and sounds so bewildered the poor sailors, that they lost all presence of mind, and jumped overboard into the sea, where they were drowned and changed into dolphins.

On another occasion, Silenus, after a great carousal, lost his way in the forest, and helplessly wandered from place to place in search of his companions, until he finally came to the court of Midas, King of Lydia, of ass's ears fame (p. 75).

Midas no sooner beheld the red nose and bloated appearance of the wanderer, than he recognized him as Bacchus' tutor, and volunteered to lead him back to his divine pupil. Delighted to see Silenus again, Bacchus promised Midas any reward he wished; whereupon Midas, who was an avaricious old king, fell upon his knees, and humbly besought the god to grant that all he touched might be changed into gold.

The curse of gold.

"Give me,' says he (nor thought he ask'd too much),
'That with my body whatsoe'er I touch,
Changed from the nature which it held of old,
May be converted into yellow gold.'"

OVID (Croxall's tr.).

Bacchus immediately signified that his prayer was granted; and Midas, overjoyed at the success of his bold venture, wandered back to his palace, testing his new-won power, which changed all to gold at a mere touch of one of his fingers.

"Down from a lowly branch a twig he drew,
The twig straight glitter'd with a golden hue.

He takes a stone, the stone was turn'd to gold:
 A clod he touches, and the crumbling mold
 Acknowledged soon the great transforming power,
 In weight and substance like a mass of ore.
 He pluck'd the corn, and straight his grasp appears
 Fill'd with a bending tuft of golden ears.
 An apple next he takes, and seems to hold
 The bright Hesperian vegetable gold:
 His hand he careless on a pillar lays,
 With shining gold the fluted pillars blaze."

OVID (Croxall's tr.).

The sight of these and many other wonders, wrought by a mere touch, filled his heart with joy; and in his elation he bade his servants prepare a sumptuous feast, and invite all his courtiers to share his merriment. His commands were obeyed with the utmost celerity, and Midas beamed with satisfaction as he took his place at the head of the board, and viewed the choice dishes and wines prepared for his delectation.

Here, too, however, a new revelation awaited him; for cloth, plate, and cup turned to gold, as did the food and drink as soon as they met his eager lips.

"Whose powerful hands the bread no sooner hold,
 But all its substance is transform'd to gold:
 Up to his mouth he lifts the savory meat,
 Which turns to gold as he attempts to eat:
 His patron's noble juice of purple hue,
 Touch'd by his lips, a gilded cordial grew,
 Unfit for drink; and, wondrous to behold,
 It trickles from his jaws a fluid gold.
 The rich poor fool, confounded with surprise,
 Starving in all his various plenty lies."

OVID (Croxall's tr.).

In the midst of plenty, the gnawing pangs of hunger now made themselves felt; and the precious gift, which prevented his allaying them, soon lost all its attractions. With weary feet,

Midas now retraced the road he had traveled in his pride a few hours before, again cast himself at Bacchus' feet, and this time implored him to take back the inconvenient gift, which prevented him from satisfying his natural appetites.

His distress seemed so real, that Bacchus bade him go and wash in the Pactolus River, if he would be rid of the power which had so soon turned into a curse. Midas hastened off to the river and plunged in its tide, noting that even its sands all turned to gold beneath his tread; since when,

"Pactolus singeth over golden sands."

GRAY.

Bacchus' favorite place of resort was the Island of Naxos, which he visited after every journey. During one of his sojourns there, he discovered a fair maiden lying alone on the sandy shore. Ariadne, for such was the girl's name, had been forsaken there by her lover, Theseus, who had sailed away while she slept (p. 257). As soon as she awoke, she called her faithless lover; but no answering sound fell upon her ear except the mocking tones of Echo. Her tears flowed freely as she beat her breast in despair; but suddenly her lamentations ceased, as she caught the faint sound of music floating toward her on the summer breeze. Eagerly turning toward the pleasant music, she caught sight of a merry procession, headed by the God of Wine.

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills
 There came a noise of revelers: the rills
 Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
 The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
 From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
 'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
 Like to a moving vintage down they came,
 Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
 All madly dancing through the pleasant valley."

KEATS.

Bacchus, the first to perceive the fair mourner, hastened to her side, and brought all his powers of persuasion into play to console her. His devotion at last induced her to forget her recreant lover, and, after a short courtship, Bacchus won her as a bride.

Their wedding was the gayest ever seen, and the feasting lasted for several days. The bridegroom presented the bride with a crown adorned with seven glittering stars, — an ornament which fitly enhanced her peerless beauty. Shortly after her marriage, however, poor Ariadne sickened and died, leaving a disconsolate widower, who took the crown she had so often worn and flung it up into the air. It rose higher and higher, until the gods fixed it in the sky, where it still forms a brilliant constellation, known as Ariadne's Crown, or Corona.

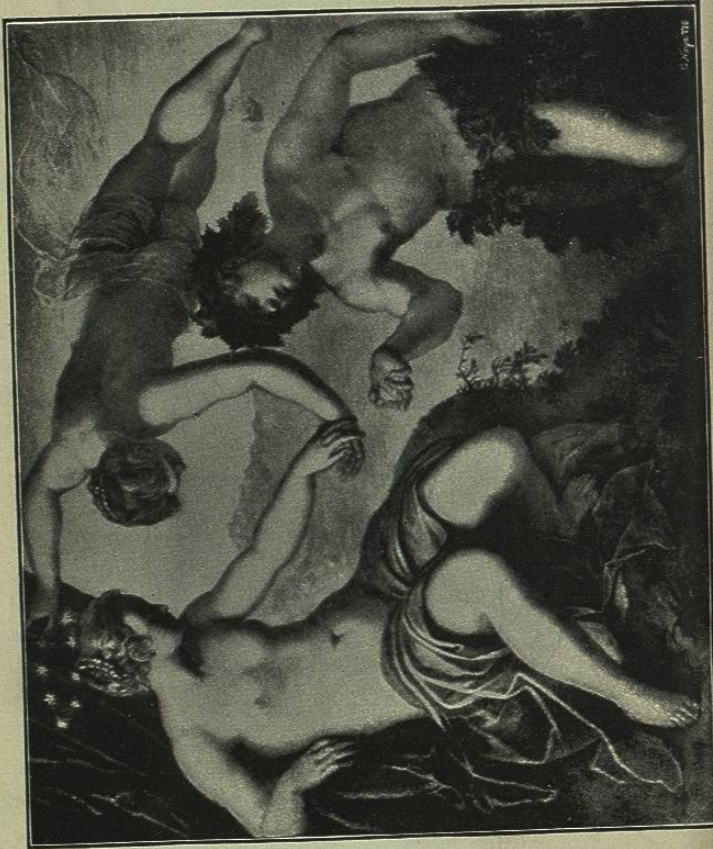
“And still her sign is seen in heaven,
And, 'midst the glittering symbols of the sky,
The starry crown of Ariadne glides.”

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS.

Bacchus' lightheartedness had all vanished, and he no longer took any pleasure in music, dance, or revelry, until Jupiter, in pity for his bereavement, restored Ariadne to his longing arms, and, to prevent her being again claimed by Death, gave her immortal life.

When but a short distance from Thebes, Bacchus once sent a herald to Pentheus, the king, to announce his approach, and bespeak a suitable reception and sumptuous entertainment. Rumors of the noise and disorder, which seemed to have been the invariable accompaniment of the god's presence, had already reached Pentheus, who therefore dismissed the herald with an insolent message, purporting that Bacchus had better remain outside of the city gates.

To avenge this insult, Bacchus inspired the Theban women with a species of dementia, which made them rush simultaneously out of the city and join his followers. Then they all clam-



MARRIAGE OF BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.—THIRSKING.

ored for permission to witness the religious rites in his honor, generally called Mysteries, which permission was graciously granted.

The king's spies reported all that had occurred, and their accounts made Pentheus long to view the ceremonies in secret. He therefore disguised himself, and hid in a bush near the consecrated place, hoping to see all without being seen; but an inadvertent movement attracted the attention of the already excited Bacchantes, who, led by Agave, the king's own mother, dragged him from his hiding place and tore him limb from limb.

Bacchus, god of wine, was worshiped throughout the ancient world, and festivals without number were held in his honor.

The most noted were the Greater and Lesser Dionysia, the Liberalia, and the Bacchanalia, where the wildest merrymaking and license were freely indulged in by all participants.

Worship of
Bacchus.

“Bacchus, on thee they call, in hymns divine,
And hang thy statues on the lofty pine:
Hence plenty every laughing vineyard fills,
Thro' the deep valleys and the sloping hills;
Where'er the god inclines his lovely face,
More luscious fruits the rich plantations grace.
Then let us Bacchus' praises duly sing,
And consecrated cakes, and chargers bring,
Dragg'd by their horns let victim goats expire,
And roast on hazel spits before the sacred fire.”

“Come, sacred sire, with luscious clusters crown'd,
Here all the riches of thy reign abound;
Each field replete with blushing autumn glows,
And in deep tides for thee the foaming vintage flows.”

VIRGIL (Warton's tr.).

Bacchus is generally represented as a handsome youth, crowned with ivy or grape leaves and clusters, bearing the thyrsus, an ivy-circled wand, as scepter, and riding in a chariot drawn by panthers or leopards.

CHAPTER XIV.

CERES AND PROSERPINA.

CERES (Demeter), daughter of Cronus and Rhea, and one of Jupiter's numerous consorts, was goddess of agriculture and civilization. Her manifold cares were shared by her daughter, Proserpina (Cora, Pherephatta, Persephone), the goddess of vegetation. Whenever her duties permitted, this fair young goddess hastened off to the Island of Sicily, her favorite place of resort, where she wandered about all day long, attended by a merry girlish train, gathering flowers, on the green slopes of Mount Ætna, and danced with the nymphs in the beautiful plain of Enna.

One day, weary of labor, Proserpina called these fair playmates to join her and spend a merry day gathering flowers.

“And one fair morn—
Not all the ages blot it—on the side
Of Ætna we were straying. There was then
Summer nor winter, springtide nor the time
Of harvest, but the soft unfailing sun
Shone always, and the sowing time was one
With reaping.”

LEWIS MORRIS.

The maidens sang merry lays as they wound their long garlands; and their joyous voices and ripples of silvery laughter attracted the attention of Pluto, just then driving past in his dark chariot drawn by four fiery black steeds. To ascertain whence these sounds proceeded, the

Pluto kidnaps
Proserpina.