

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.

god stepped out of his car, and cautiously peeped through the thick foliage.

He saw Proserpina sitting on a mossy bank, almost buried in many-hued blossoms, her laughing companions picturesquely grouped around her. One glance sufficed to convince Pluto of her loveliness and grace, and to make him feel that his happiness depended on the possession of this bright young creature.

Long ere this, he had tried to persuade one after another of the goddesses to share his gloomy throne; but one and all had refused the honor, and declined to accompany him to a land where the sun never shone, the birds never sang, and the flowers never bloomed. Hurt and disappointed by these rebuffs, Pluto had finally registered a solemn vow never to go wooing again; and so, instead of gently inviting Proserpina to become his queen, he resolved to kidnap her.

Straight through the bushes he strode, direct to the spot where she was seated. The noise of crackling branches and hasty footsteps made the assembled maidens swiftly turn. One glance sufficed to identify the intruder, for none but he could boast of such a dark, lowering countenance; and all exclaimed in mingled wonder and terror at his unwonted presence in those sunlit regions.

“’Tis he, ’tis he: he comes to us
From the depths of Tartarus.
For what of evil doth he roam
From his red and gloomy home,
In the center of the world,
Where the sinful dead are hurled?
Mark him as he moves along,
Drawn by horses black and strong,
Such as may belong to Night
Ere she takes her morning flight.
Now the chariot stops: the god
On our grassy world hath trod:
Like a Titan steppeth he,
Yet full of his divinity.



ABDUCTION OF PROSERPINA.—Schobelt.

On his mighty shoulders lie
Raven locks, and in his eye
A cruel beauty, such as none
Of us may wisely look upon."

BARRY CORNWALL.

Frightened by his impetuous approach, the trembling nymphs first crowded around Proserpina, who, in her astonishment and trepidation, dropped all her pretty flowers and stood motionless among them. Her uncertainty as to his purpose was only momentary, for, catching her in his brawny arms ere she could make an attempt to escape, he bore her off to his chariot, in spite of prayers and struggles, and drove away as fast as his fleet steeds could carry him.

He was soon out of hearing of the wild cries and lamentations of the nymphs, who vainly pursued him, and tried to overtake their beloved mistress. Afraid lest Ceres should come and force him to relinquish his new-won treasure, Pluto drove faster and faster, nor paused for an instant until he reached the banks of the Cyane River, whose waters, at his approach, began to seethe and roar in a menacing fashion, and spread themselves as much as possible, to check him in his flight.

Pluto quickly perceived that to attempt to cross the river in his chariot would be madness, while by retracing his footsteps he ran the risk of meeting Ceres, and being forced to relinquish his prize. He therefore decided to have recourse to other means, and, seizing his terrible two-pronged fork, struck the earth such a mighty blow, that a great crevice opened under his feet, through which horses and chariot plunged down into the darkness of the Lower World.

Proserpina turned her weeping eyes to catch a parting glimpse of the fair earth she was leaving, and then, with a fond thought of her anxious mother, who, when evening came, would vainly seek her child in all her favorite haunts, she quickly flung her girdle into the Cyane, and called to the water nymph to carry it to Ceres,

Elated by the complete success of his bold venture, and no longer fearful of immediate pursuit, the happy god strained his fair captive to his breast, pressed kisses on her fresh young cheeks, and tried to calm her terrors, as the black steeds rushed faster and faster along the dark passage, nor paused until they reached the foot of their master's throne.

"Pleased as he grasps her in his iron arms,
Frights with soft sighs, with tender words alarms."

DARWIN.

In the mean while the sun had sunk below the Sicilian horizon; and Ceres, returning from the fields of fast-ripening grain to her own dwelling, sought for the missing Proserpina, of whom no trace could be found except the scattered flowers. Hither and thither the mother wandered, calling her daughter, and wondering where she could be, and why she did not come bounding to meet her. As time passed, and still Proserpina did not appear, Ceres' heart beat fast with apprehension, and the tears coursed down her cheeks as she rushed about from place to place, calling her daughter.

"What ails her that she comes not home?
Demeter seeks her far and wide,
And gloomy-browed doth ceaseless roam
From many a morn till eventide.
'My life, immortal though it be,
Is naught!' she cries, 'for want of thee,
Persephone — Persephone!'"

INGELOW.

Night came, and Ceres, kindling a torch at the volcanic fires of Mount Ætna, continued her search. Day dawned, and still the mother called, awakening the morning echoes with her longing cries for her child. Her daily duties were all neglected. The rain no longer refreshed the drooping flowers, the grain was parched by the ardent rays of the sun, and the grass all perished, while Ceres roamed over hill and dale in search of Proserpina.

Weary at last of her hopeless quest, the goddess seated herself by the wayside, near the city of Eleusis, and gave way to her overwhelming grief.

“Long was thine anxious search
For lovely Proserpine, nor didst thou break
Thy mournful fast, till the far-fam'd Eleusis
Received thee wandering.”

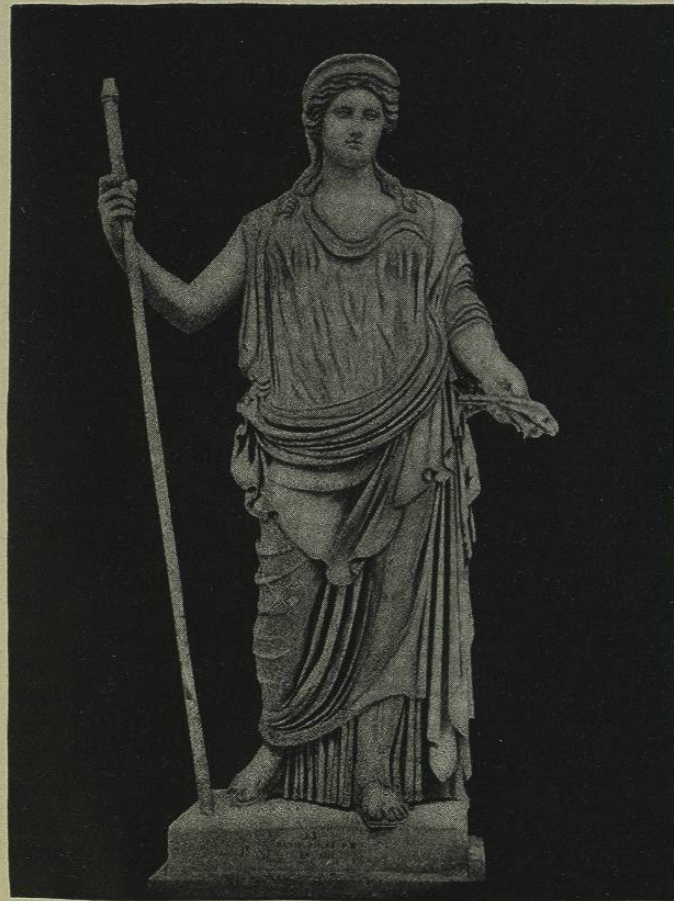
ORPHIC HYMN.

To avoid recognition, she had assumed the appearance of an aged crone; and as she sat there by the wayside, in tears, she attracted the compassionate inquiries of the daughters of Celeus, king of the country. Having heard her bewail the loss of her child, they entreated her to come to the palace, and, knowing nothing could so well soothe a breaking heart, offered her the charge of their infant brother Triptolemus.

Ceres, touched by their ready sympathy, accepted the offer; and when she arrived at the palace, the royal heir was intrusted to her care. Tenderly the goddess kissed the puny child's little pinched face; and at her touch the child became rosy and well, to the unbounded astonishment of the royal family and all the court.

In the night, while Ceres sat alone with her charge, it occurred to her that she might confer a still greater blessing upon him, that of immortality: so she anointed his limbs with nectar, murmured a powerful charm, and placed him upon the red-hot coals, to consume all the perishable elements left in his body.

The queen, Metaneira, who had thought it somewhat imprudent to leave the child thus alone with a stranger, now stole noiselessly into the apartment, and with a wild shriek rushed to the fire and snatched her child out of the flames, pressed him anxiously to her breast, and, after ascertaining that he was quite unharmed, turned to vent her indignation upon the careless nurse; but the aged beggar woman had vanished, and in her stead she confronted the radiant Goddess of Agriculture.



CERES.
(Vatican, Rome.)

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"From her fragrant robes
A lovely scent was scattered, and afar
Shone light emitted from her skin divine,
And yellow locks upon her shoulders waved;
White as from lightning, all the house was filled
With splendor."

HOMERIC HYMN.

With a gentle reproof to the queen for her untimely interference, Ceres explained what she fain would have done, and vanished, to continue her wanderings in other lands. She finally returned to Italy; and, while wandering along the river banks one day, the waters suddenly cast a glittering object at her feet. Stooping hastily to ascertain what it might be, she recognized the girdle her daughter had worn when she had parted from her in Sicily.

Joyfully she embraced the token, and, thinking she must now be upon Proserpina's track, hastened on until she came to a crystal fountain, by whose side she sat down to rest. Her eyes were heavy with the combined effect of tears, fatigue, and oppressive heat, and she was about to lose all consciousness of her trouble in sleep, when the murmur of the fountain increased, until she fancied it was talking; not as mortals do, but in its own silvery accents.

The goddess was not mistaken; for a few minutes later she could distinguish words, and heard the fountain entreat her to listen, if she would hear what had befallen her child. *Arethusa and Alpheus.* The fountain then went on to tell how she had not always been a mere stream, but was once a nymph, called *Arethusa*, in *Diana's* train, and how, overcome by the heat, she had once sought a cool stream wherein she might bathe her heated limbs.

She soon found one, the *Alpheus* River, and selected a spot where the trees hung over the limpid waters, where the sand on the bottom was fine and even, and where no mortal eyes could see her as she threw aside her sandals and outer garments. She was enjoying the refreshing sensation of the water rippling



A NYMPH.—Kray.

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around her hot limbs, and was reveling in the complete solitude, when suddenly the river, until now as smooth as a mirror, was ruffled by waves, which crept nearer and nearer to the startled nymph, until in affright she sprang out of the water.

Then a voice—the voice of the river god Alpheus—was heard, calling to her in pleading accents to stay her flight and lend an ear to his wooing; but when the impetuous god, instead of waiting for an answer to his suit, rose up out of the water and rushed to clasp her in his arms, she turned and fled in great terror. She fled, but he pursued. Over hill and dale, through forest and field, Arethusa ran, still closely followed by her too ardent lover, until, exhausted, she paused for breath, crying aloud to Diana to come to her rescue.

Her prayer was answered. A moment later she was enveloped in a thick mist and transformed into a fountain. Alpheus could no longer see her, but wandered about, bewailing her disappearance, and calling her in passionate accents.

“O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,
Why didst thou hear her prayer? Oh that I
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how
To entice her to a dive! then stealing in
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.”

KEATS.

The misty cloud in which Arethusa had been enveloped by Diana's protecting care was soon blown away by a mischievous breath from Zephyrus; and Alpheus, who was still hovering near there, suddenly beholding a fountain where none had ever existed before, surmised what had happened. Changing himself into an impetuous torrent, he rushed to join his beloved, who sprang out of her mossy bed, and hurried on over sticks and stones, until Diana, seeing her new plight, opened a crevice, through which she glided away from the bright sunlight she loved so well into the depths of Pluto's realm.

While gliding there in the gloom, Arethusa had caught a glimpse of Proserpina on her sable throne, beside the stern-browed Pluto. She could not, however, pause to inquire how she came there, but hurried on breathlessly, until another crevice offered her the means of returning to the upper world, and seeing once more the blue sky and sun on the Sicilian plains.

The monotonous murmur of the fountain now subsided again into its usual undertone; and Ceres, knowing where to seek her daughter, was about to depart, when she heard the sudden rush and roar of a large body of water. She immediately turned, and beheld the torrent Alpheus, who, after a disconsolate search underground for the lost Arethusa, had found a crevice, through which he passed to join his beloved on the Sicilian plains.

“Alpheus, Elis' stream, they say,
Beneath the seas here found his way,
And now his waters interfuse
With thine, O fountain Arethuse,
Beneath Sicilian skies.”

VIRGIL (Conington's tr.).

In spite of her previous efforts to escape him, Arethusa must still have been very glad to see him once more, for Ceres heard her murmur contentedly as she sank into his arms and listened to his louder tones of rapturous love.

Maidens in Greece were wont to throw fresh garlands into the Alpheus River; and it was said the selfsame flowers, carried away by his current, soon reappeared in the Sicilian fountain, carried there as love offerings by the enamored river.

“O my beloved, how divinely sweet
Is the pure joy when kindred spirits meet!
Like him, the river god, whose waters flow,
With love their only light, through caves below,
Wafting in triumph all the flowery braids
And festal rings, with which Olympic maids
Have decked his current, an offering meet
To lay at Arethusa's shining feet.”

Think when at last he meets his fountain bride
 What perfect love must thrill the blended tide!
 And lost in each, till mingling into one,
 Their lot the same for shadow or for sun,
 A type of true love, to the deep they run."

MOORE.

Now, although poor Ceres had ascertained where to find her missing daughter, her grief was not at all diminished, for she felt convinced that Pluto would never willingly relinquish her. She therefore withdrew into a dark cave to mourn unseen, and still further neglected her wonted duties.

Famine threatened to visit the people, and they prayed and clamored for her aid; but, absorbed in grief, she paid no heed to their distress, and vowed that nothing on earth should grow, with her permission, as long as her daughter was detained in Hades. In despair at this frightful state of affairs, the people then besought Jupiter to pity the sufferings they endured, and to allow Proserpina to revisit the upper world once more.

"Arise, and set the maiden free;
 Why should the world such sorrow dree
 By reason of Persephone?"

INGELOW.

As soon as she became aware of this petition, Ceres hastened to Olympus, to join her supplications to the cries which rose from all parts of the earth; until Jupiter, wearied by these importunities, consented to Proserpina's return, upon condition, however, that she had not touched any food during the whole time of her sojourn in the Infernal Regions.

"Last, Zeus himself,
 Pitying the evil that was done, sent forth
 His messenger beyond the western rim
 To fetch me back to earth."

LEWIS MORRIS.

Ceres in person hastened to her daughter's new abode, and was about to lead her away in spite of Pluto, when a spirit, Ascalaphus, suddenly declared that the queen had partaken of The pomegranate seeds. some pomegranate seeds that very day. Proserpina could not refute the charge, and Jupiter decreed that for every seed she had eaten she should spend one month of every year in her husband's gloomy kingdom.

Thus it came about that Proserpina was condemned to spend one half the year in Hades, and could linger on the bright earth only for six months at a time.

Mercury was chosen to lead her to and from Hades; and, whenever he brought her out of her gloomy prison, the skies became blue and sunny, the grass sprang fresh and green beneath her elastic tread, the flowers bloomed along her way, the birds trilled forth their merry lays, and all was joy and brightness.

"And when, in springtime, with sweet-smelling flowers
 Of various kinds the earth doth bloom, thou'lt come
 From gloomy darkness back—a mighty joy
 To gods and mortal men."

HOMERIC HYMN.

Ceres, happy once more in the possession of her beloved daughter, cheerfully and diligently attended to all her duties, and blessed the earth with plenty; but when the six Proserpina's return. months were over, and the skies wept and all nature mourned Proserpina's departure, she again returned to her cave, whence no entreaties could draw her.

As for the merry, happy-natured Proserpina, the moment Hades' portals closed behind her, she became pale and melancholy; and none would have dreamed the playful, flower-crowned Goddess of Vegetation was identical with the sad-faced, sable-vested Queen of Hades (now called Hecate), who held a pomegranate in one hand, and a torch in the other. Proserpina, like Adonis, was the personification of vegetation, visibly prosperous during the six favorable months of the year, and lurking hidden under the cold ground during the remainder of the time.

Many beautiful temples were dedicated to Ceres and Proserpina in Greece and Italy, where yearly festivals, the Thesmophoria and the Cerealia, were celebrated with great pomp.

Worship of
Ceres.

“To Ceres chief her annual rites be paid,
On the green turf, beneath a fragrant shade,
When winter ends, and spring serenely shines,
Then fat the lambs, then mellow are the wines,
Then sweet are slumbers on the flowery ground,
Then with thick shades are lofty mountains crown'd.
Let all the hinds bend low at Ceres' shrine;
Mix honey sweet, for her, with milk and mellow wine;
Thrice lead the victim the new fruits around,
And Ceres call, and choral hymns resound:
Presume not, swains, the ripen'd grain to reap,
Till crown'd with oak in antic dance ye leap,
Invoking Ceres, and in solemn lays,
Exalt your rural queen's immortal praise.”

VIRGIL (C. Pitt's tr.).

To commemorate her long search for her daughter, Ceres returned to Eleusis, taught her former nursling, Triptolemus, the various secrets of agriculture, and gave him her chariot, bidding him travel everywhere, and teach the people how to plow, sow, and reap; and then she instituted the Eleusinia, festivals held in honor of her daughter and herself at Eleusis.

Triptolemus did not fail to carry out the goddess's instructions, and journeyed far and wide, until he finally reached the court of Lyncus, King of Scythia, where the false monarch would have treacherously slain him had not Ceres by timely interference prevented the execution of his base purpose by changing the traitor into a lynx, the emblem of perfidy.

Ceres was generally represented as a fair, matronly woman, clad in flowing draperies, sometimes crowned with wheat ears, and bearing a sheaf of grain and a sickle, or with a plow and a horn of plenty disgorging its wealth of fruit and flowers at her feet. Groves were frequently dedicated to her; and any mortal

rash enough to lay the ax on one of these sacred trees was sure to incur the goddess's wrath, as is proved by the story of Erisichthon.

This man was evidently a freethinker, and, to show his contempt for the superstitious veneration paid to Ceres' trees, took his ax and cut down one of her sacred oaks. At his first blow, blood began to flow from the tree; but, undeterred by the phenomenon or the entreaties of the bystanders, Erisichthon continued. Finally, annoyed by the importunities of the spectators, he turned and slew one or two, and then completed his sacrilege.

Ceres, incensed by his insolence and cruelty, devised a terrible chastisement for the unfortunate man, and sent Famine to gnaw his vitals, and torment him night and day. The wretch, tortured by a hunger which no amount of food could allay, disposed of all his property to obtain the means of procuring nourishment; but his monstrous appetite continued, and, as he had but one daughter left, he sold her as a slave to obtain food.

The girl's master left her alone for a moment upon the seashore, and, in answer to her prayer, Neptune delivered her from servitude by changing her into a fisherman. When the master returned and found his slave gone, he questioned the fisherman, and, not obtaining any satisfactory information, departed. Neptune then restored the maiden to her own form, and let her return home; but, as her father sold her again, the god was obliged to interfere once more in her behalf, until at last Erisichthon, deprived of means to procure food, devoured himself.

Another anecdote illustrating Ceres' power is told about a lad, Stellio, who made fun of the goddess when she was journeying, on account of the haste with which she disposed of a bowl of gruel offered by some charitable person. To punish the boy for his rudeness, Ceres flung the remainder of her gruel into his face, and changed him into a lizard.

Ceres and
Stellio.