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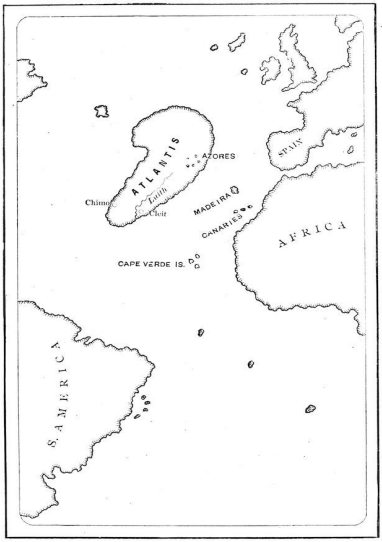

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POSEIDON'S PARADISE
The Romance of Atlantis

BY

ELIZABETH G. BIRKMAIER

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"Time dissipates to shining ether the solid angularity of facts. No anchor, no cable, no fences avail to keep a fact a fact. Babylon, and Troy, and Tyre, and even early Rome are passing into fiction. The Garden of Eden, the sun standing still in Gibeon, is poetry thenceforward to all nations."—Emerson.

POSEIDON'S PARADISE.

CHAPTER I.
A DECLARATION OF WAR.

It was thousands of years before the Christian era—how many thousands no chronicler has stated. And the island lay, as through the ages past, fair and imperial in the Atlantic. Though now was it becoming wanton, even to its undoing. Else would not this be written.

Midsummer was upon this Atlantis, upon the islands attendant that served as stepping-stones to the continents beyond. Under the soft sensuousness, the morn was taking richer glow, the streams brightening to gold, the gardens and vineyards glorifying in green; whilst hill and mountain grew alluring in shadow and color, the palaces lustrous in their tri-tinted stones, and the temples' syenite a gleaming red that rivaled the flashing orichalcum studding domes and pinnacles. The great island was a gorgeous mosaic: and its setting, sapphire, that royal stone emblematic of calm and truth; for the laving waters were as serene as blue, in such being all suggestive of that repose which comes of perception of the true. The whole was a glory.

About Cleit, that royal city gracing the stream Luith, in the southeastern part of the island, there was an unusual stir. This day was to be observed one of the most ancient, and therefore simplest, of the customs of Atlantis. The king and royal rulers were to give audience to the principal captains of the nation, and receive the certificates of their prowess for the year. And now, from Cleit's harbor, which was a few miles southward of the city, at the mouth of Luith, were speeding the galleys of Cleit's captains; whilst from points north, east, south, and west, the many other captains were hastening, that all might meet in the grounds of the royal palace before noon of this auspicious day.

Upon the great marble landing place, these captains came together, about them thronging the people in gayest holiday attire. Most evident was it that the latter still took pleasure in this old-fashioned observance, that they wished not to fall behind in its celebration, notwithstanding the times were changing so wofully. Many had been the prognostications of the few conservatives remaining that erelong this simple, this most ancient custom, would come to naught. Indeed, most of these had averred privately that the meeting of the year before would prove the last.

Yet here were again convening these mighty captains—size being a consideration of their office. Here, again, were they towering above the average Atlantean, tall as he was. Fine was it to note their flashing eyes, their grand bearing, as they imparted such information as they were free to give to the curious, fast-questioning ones; but finer to witness the expanding eyes of the latter as their ears took in the wonder, the verity of it all!

But the great silver gong was sounding. It was noon. Then men, women, and children burst into acclamations. Already were the captains forming into line, with the captain general at the head. Again sounded the gong. Therewith, the line filed along the marble pathway to the palace, followed by the cheering throng.

But gradually the throng quieted. Ever was the palace neared reverently. There was a hush, when, from out the thick foliage, it arose upon them lustrous in its stones of red, white, and black, its facings of alabaster, its columns of marble and orichalcum, its red pinnacles;—a palace well befitting this land of glamour.

Like all the other palaces of the island, this was simple of construction. The main plan consisted of rectangles set about a great court, these rectangles being two-storied. In the lower story, light was admitted through large apertures protected by curtains and shutters of hard wood set in at will. Additional light was also admitted from the upper story, which was supported by columns and open at the sides, curtains excluding the sunshine at pleasure. Some of these columns extended from the lower floor to the roof; others rested on the walls of the lower story, where the thickness would permit; and each was many volumes in its inscriptions and sculptures.

The captains mounted the grand portico with its columns of marble and orichalcum, each innumerable volumes; passed through the narrowing portal, guarded by its colossal winged bulls, to the great hall; and thence to the state chamber—on the right, still followed by the throng.

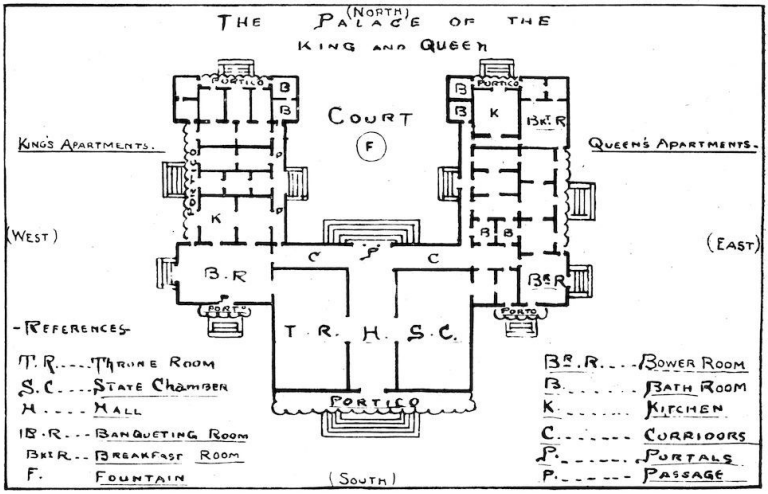
Great and glittering was this oblong state chamber. Its high, arched ceiling of ivory and bronze was rich in gilding. The walls were paneled in ivory overlaid with silver, many of the panels being inscribed with the laws of Poseidon and Atlas. The pavement was of blue and white marbles. To this fell from the apertures hangings of finest yellow linen. The seats were of carved ebony; and at the farther end were the golden throne, and the ivory chairs of the rulers, priests, and nobles.

With arms folded on their breasts and heads bent low, the captains advanced until they stood a goodly row before their king. He, of name Atlano, sat high on a dais raised above another dais; and about him were ranged the royal rulers. On the lower dais sat the priests and nobles, the priests being to the right.

When the apartment could hold no more, the gong sounded. Thereupon the chamberlain, who stood out upon the lower dais, made the sign; and low bent these that had just entered before their king, until the chamberlain said, “Ye will arise.”

The king then waved his scepter. As one, the priests and nobles stood to intone a welcome to the captains. Afterward, arose the royal rulers to smile and bow in greeting.

The white raiment and silver circlets of the priests were in strong contrast to the gorgeous robing and jeweled headgear of the rulers and nobles. But the king was dazzling in his royal purple robe, his scintillating crown, and the wondrous mantle sacred to himself. This last was ingeniously fashioned of finest, rarest feathers, varying in color from cream to orange, and was of such length as to sweep the floor behind. Though well he bore this aggregation of rich hues. For Atlano was handsome in the best Atlantean type, though his expression was harsh, cruel. But he was softening somewhat at sight of these brave captains standing in such humility before him. And, smiling, he addressed them.



"Captains, thy king giveth greeting."

They responded, "O most gracious of kings, Atlano, long may thy great self thus beam upon thy captains!"

Atlano inclined his head. The rulers, priests, and nobles intoned:

"Long, O most gracious king, Atlano, may thy captains thus come before thee!"

"Long live the king!" returned the captains.

Then followed an invocation to the gods by the aged high priest Olto, his son, the chief priest Oltis, assisting. Thereafter, the rulers, priests, and nobles sat down, and the king addressed the chamberlain.

"Shafo, if it seemeth good, the captains may now tell us of their work."

The chamberlain pointed with his wand: "Captain General, thou wilt begin."

The captain general stepped out from his fellows, and, in measured tones, replied as if to the king:

"O most gracious of kings, Atlano, this I state to thy great self: I, captain of the war vessel *Atlas*, since leaving the harbor of Cleit, eleven moons since, have sailed around the country of the Afrites, and up its eastern coast. At many places, we fell upon the black people, and took of their gold and ivory; and then sent them into the inner parts to get incense trees, nutwoods, ebony, apes with dog heads,[1] monkeys with long tails, and greyhounds. It is two weeks since we came into harbor, and yielded our cargo. This showeth its worth, and stateth the sums we of the vessel merit."

Bowing low, the captain general handed a roll of papyrus to an attendant, who laid it upon a table below the dais.

The chamberlain then pointed his wand toward the captain first in line. He stepped forward, and spoke in uncertain tones that slowly strengthened:

"O most gracious of kings, Atlano, this I state to thy great self: I, captain of the trading vessel *Mestor*, came into Chimo thirty days since from our people of Chimu,[2] whither I sailed twelve moons ago, bearing a cargo of dried fruits, grains, and rare woods. There I found our people building a temple to the great Amen, that in shape is like unto a pyramid, and in size is half a mile around. Already are the temples, palaces, and tombs of Chimu looking as ours. And great is the decking in gold and silver, for the mines are not far. Of

gold, silver, and gems I bring to Chimo large stores. This showeth the worth of the cargo, and the sums which we of the vessel merit."

The captain handed his roll to the captain general, who, in turn, handed it to the attendant. When this captain had resumed his place, the next captain, at beck of the chamberlain, stepped out to continue:

"O most gracious of kings, Atlano, this I state to thy great self: I, captain of the war vessel *Azaes*, left Autochthin seven moons since to bear to the fair green island[3] in the north a band of our people, and with them left the means of living for the time of twelve moons. On my way from there I ran in the passage to the Middle Sea[4] to look about a little, but at once sped back upon seeing some large vessels, strange and threatening. It is twenty days since I came into Autochthin. I bring to thee, O most gracious King, this written word of the planting of our people in the island, of their further needs, and of the sums that we of the vessel merit."

And the captain handed in his roll.

At mention of these unknown vessels, the king's scarcely-concealed indifference vanished. He looked surprised, then alarmed. With increasing emotion, he glanced from rulers to nobles to find their wearied expressions had, at least, become interested.

But on went the harangues. One captain had sailed beyond the western seas, and northward up a mighty river to the colony Missos.[5] Another had sailed around the country of the Afrites, and eastward to that sultry land that supplied them with gems. Another had been to the land of the Eskaldi.[6] Thus ran the reports until it was the turn of the last captain but one. He stepped out with an air important; and, in more important tone, began:

"O most gracious of kings, Atlano, to thy great self I would state that I am captain of the vessel *Paero*. It is eleven moons since I left for Khemi,[7] with a cargo of rare woods, grains, and wool. I bring from Khemi green stone, red granite of Syene, and the byssus of the Middle Sea. Yesterday came I back to Cleit; and therefore have I not my roll. But within a day will it be ready."

But this captain, instead of returning to his place, stood waiting.

"What wilt thou, Sir Captain?" asked the chamberlain.

"O most gracious of kings, Atlano, to thy great self I would state more."

Most eager became the expressions of king and nobles. The captain paused until the chamberlain signed for him to continue.

"Most gracious king, a people across the Middle Sea, to the north of Khemi, causeth fear in the lands about it because of its quick rise to power. It is not long since this people passed over from the far east, and now it ruleth the sea. It is magic."

The king's red skin deepened to purple. In a voice grown hoarse, he exclaimed:

"The name of this people!"

And the chamberlain iterated, "The name of this people!"

"O most gracious king, Atlano, their land is Pelasgia. They are called Pelasgians. Their king is Pelasgus."

"They have a king, then?"

This the chamberlain also iterated, as he did the ensuing questions.

"O most gracious king, Atlano, they have a king."

"Know they how to war?"

"O most gracious King, they are fond of peace; and think but of trade and tilling the ground."

“More! More!”

“O most gracious King, I know no more.”

“Let him to his place. Cause some other captain to tell me more!”

The captain who had put back from the Middle Sea stepped out, getting the start of the only captain yet to be heard from. But the latter was willing to bide his time. At beck of the chamberlain, the former declared:

“O most gracious of kings, Atlano, then was it the vessels of this people that so troubled us. Nothing like them have I seen for size and strength.”

The king turned to left, to right, demanding fiercely, “Hear ye this? Hear ye this?”

Senil, the most venerable of the rulers, arose.

“Senil, what wilt thou?”

“King Atlano, we hear; and it seemeth evil.”

“What is the thing we shall do?”

“O most gracious King, that will we do which seemeth good to thee.”

The king’s face testified to his emotions. His anger had given way to wild triumph. He ejaculated:

“Senil, Rulers, Nobles, we will bring them to naught! It shall not be said that any power holdeth the sea with Atlantis!”

He turned to regard the captain, who had not as yet resumed his place; and muttered:

“If this be true—if this be true.”

There was then heard a meaning cough from the last captain, who had been so forgotten. The king noted this, and said:

“Shafo, there is one captain who hath not been heard.”

At the sign, this captain stepped forth with an air even more important than had been that of the captain of the *Paero*, and the captain who had withdrawn from the Middle Sea bowed back to his place. Of due weight were this captain’s tones.

“O most gracious of kings, Atlano, to thy great self I would state that I, the captain of the trading vessel *Osir*, came back but yesterday to Elasippa from our land of Shaphana,[8] after bringing there grain, cotton, and linen, and taking in corn, wine, and oil. There I heard much of this new power, for, of late, its vessels come within the harbor of Shaphana. Thus far this Pelasgia thinketh not of war, but of trade. Her vessels are marvels of strength and speed.”

“Hear ye this?” interrupted Atlano, turning to rulers and nobles, “Her vessels are marvels of strength and speed!” Then, of the captain, he demanded:

“Thou sayest not that thou didst see aught of these?”

The chamberlain iterated this.

“O most gracious of kings, I have to say that I saw them. Two were speeding into harbor as we left it. Nowhere have I seen vessels that come nigh them!”

The king arose and stared at this captain, until he perforce stammered:

“O most gracious king, I have not my roll; but in two days will it be ready.”

But not of him, nor of his certificate, was the king thinking. His thought was for this new, menacing power. After some minutes’ absorption, his tones rang fierce:

“Is there more?”

The chamberlain iterated, “Is there more?”

“O most gracious of kings, there is no more.”

The captain was waved back to his place. The king, standing most erect, addressed all.

“Rulers, Priests, Nobles, Captains, Leaders, People, let us look to this. Let it be the one mind to fall upon and crush this Pelasgia! What will ye?”

Senil arose.

“Senil, what wilt thou?”

“King Atlano, we will as thou.”

The other rulers arose.

“Rulers, what will ye?”

“King Atlano, we will as thou.”

Phiro, a noble young and ardent, here arose.

“Phiro, what sayest thou?”

“Gracious King, if it pleaseth thee, let those who are for war bend the knee.”

“It is well. Rulers, Priests, Nobles, Captains, Leaders, People,—ye that are for war bend the knee, and let us beseech the gods.”

Great was the stir in the vast assemblage. Then every soul bent the knee, even to the king, while the feeble tones of the high priest began to be heard, asking for blessing on this so suddenly conceived undertaking. When he had finished, the king arose, the others still remaining on their knees, until he said:

“Ye may arise.”

When all were standing, and the hush was deepening, the king exulted:

“It is one voice. Here let us make the vow to sweep from the earth this new power—these marvels of vessels. Swear!”

Every right arm was pointed heavenward, every voice said solemnly, “We swear!”

“So be it. Now will we to work. The Leaders!”

There was a mighty stir. This indeed meant war.

The chamberlain beckoned; and the leaders, who were next in rank to the captains, stepped from their places against the walls on right and left. Tall and stalwart were they, and attired much like the captains. They wore not the ordinary loose-flowing robes, but close-fitting tunics, short, loose lower garments similar to the trousers of to-day, and high boots of soft skins. On their heads were helmet-shaped caps of red linen; and about their waists were broad bronze belts, inscribed with their office and number.

These leaders formed a considerable body in the kingdom, each province having its quota. Their office was this: When war was declared, each was to furnish one-sixth of the portion of a war chariot with its two horses and riders; also, a light chariot with a fighting man on foot and charioteer; also, two heavy-armed men, two archers, two slingers, three stone shooters, three javelin men, and four sailors.[9]

Of course these leaders present belonged to Cleit; but it was understood that whatever the king commanded them, the nine rulers would command their own.

To these leaders the king spoke impressively.

“Leaders, ye know your duty. This day begin measures for most bitter war.”

On their knees sank the leaders, and there remained until ordered by the chamberlain to arise. Then their spokesman answered:

“O most gracious of kings, Atlano, thy leaders, as thou hast said, know well their duty. They will to it this day.”

Then, with faces to the king, they moved to their places.

The king addressed the rulers.

“Ye, kin rulers, will speed on the morrow to your cities, and then give orders to your leaders. Ere the coming moon is old, gather your vessels within this harbor. Then on to lay Pelasgia low!”

The assemblage, as one, echoed:

“Yea—on—to lay Pelasgia low!”

The exultant king continued:

“This further will I say: Daily, at the noon hour, let every noble come to this state chamber, that plans may be made, and given out. Let every captain make well ready his vessel for the men, food, and weapons of war. Let the people be of one mind through it all.”

A murmur of acclamation arose and swelled, the smiling king permitting it, until it became a mighty shout. This the people without heard, and answered—forgetting reverence—until the hangings of the palace moved. And still the king stood smiling.

When there was quiet, he said, with warmth: “Thus endeth this gathering of the captains. Brave captains, well have ye done. Thy king knoweth pride beyond measure. The gods be with you.”

The captains, after bowing to the floor, stood proudly erect. The high priest gave the blessing. Afterward, when the king, with his rulers, nobles, and priests, had sat down, the chamberlain waved his wand. Slowly the assemblage went out, with faces ever to the king. Deeply they saluted him at the threshold, before disappearing. Of these the captains were the last to withdraw, as they had been the first to enter. Exultant, with the king, all passed out to the perfect day, to spread wide this unlooked-for result of the convention.

Yet still continued the day in its soft, serene loveliness.

The king, rulers, and nobles remained to confer. But this conference was interrupted somewhat when the waiting islanders without received word of this declaration of war. Again, forgetting reverence, they became jubilant. So much did these Atlanteans love conquest. Those within the state chamber were but stimulated, doing quick, vigorous work.

One most important measure of this conference was the unanimous agreement that the queen should reign during the king’s absence. The nine rulers (descendants of the nine younger brothers of Atlas, eldest son of Poseidon) were to remain at home in order to sustain her, and be subject in a body to her call. Further, though this was spoken only inwardly, they could the better watch each other. As each made solemn vow to be loyal to country and queen, Atlano, of his mocking spirit, laughed within.

For, how could they do otherwise? Would not he bear with him, his ablest nobles, his chiefs, his captains, his warmen, his sailors? And would they not return laden with spoils, strengthened, rioting of victory? What could stand against them? Well might these rulers vow to be loyal!

CHAPTER II.
QUEEN ATLANA.

From the state chamber the king sped buoyantly through the great hall, with its lines of bowing officers and attendants, each as smiling as himself over this war prospect; and thence, to the right, along the corridor, to the queen's bower room.

Most eloquently did this large apartment testify to the industry of the queen and her ladies, as theirs were the embroidery upon the hangings of byssus and the coverings of the couches, the plaiting of the great mats upon the inlaid floor, the festooning of the flowers from the satinwood walls. The room was a veritable bower in its brightness, fragrance, and floral adornments; and, as the climax to its charms, three of its sides opened upon the fairy-like, private garden, which spread to the eastward.

The queen's ladies were throwing over a couch the covering they had just finished as the king entered. After low salutations, they withdrew. The queen, meanwhile, had arisen for greeting; and, sad as it may seem, was wondering at her husband's cheerfulness of mien.

Queen Atlana was tall, gracious, lovely. She was Atlano's cousin, being the daughter of his father's brother by a princess of Khemi. Owing to her Semitic blood, hers was not the complexion of the true Atlanteans. In her, the mixture of the red and yellow had produced a richness of skin whose tints were of the olive and the peach. Her eyes were brown, large, soft, and lustrous; her hair, black and waving, and worn in high braids about her head. Her features were straight, the forehead receding but little, and the mouth beautiful and tender.

Her robe was of fine white linen, embroidered in buff; and hung from her shoulders in folds to the floor, being confined at the waist by a golden girdle. Her perfect arms were bare and without ornament. With a grace bewitching, she moved toward the king, her face flushing sweetly, and said low in love:

"With joy I greet thee, Atlano."

He took her extended hand and led her to her couch, responding, as he sat down beside her, "With the like feeling do I greet thee, Atlana."

Her eyes lighted gladly. Such crumbs had begun to fall rarely from the king's table, and, therefore, had now the fullness of the banqueting board. Smiling, she said:

"Thou art happy, Atlano. Comest thou from the meeting of the captains?"

"The captains left an hour hence. Since then we have had thought for matters of weight."

There was a strange exultation about him. She looked at him in inquiry.

"Thou askest not of the meeting."

"It was in my thought. Tell me of it."

"There were the like olden speeches of cargoes taken out and cargoes brought back, of the planting of our people in new lands, and their doings; of spoils taken. Pfui! how sick am I of it! How great is my wish to put some other in my place to hearken to it all!"

"But the people would not have it. It hath ever been the custom of the kings."

“A custom of the fools! How weary I grow of it! This day I was almost in sleep. But one thing I heard that roused me!”

“What heardst thou?”

He was rubbing his hands gloatingly, his long, thin, cruel hands.

“What thinkest thou, Atlana?”

“I think not. Tell me.”

He waited, delighting to prolong her impatience; and then drawled:

“We have heard—that—will force—us—to—”

“To what?”

“To war.”

She looked so incredulous that he laughed. “I say the truth, Atlana. We are to war.”

“To war!”

Her face had blanched, yet she could not believe.

“Yea, Atlana, to war. A new power showeth itself to the north of Khemi. It aimeth to hold the Middle Sea. We go to crush it!”

She grew faint at his relentless tone. However, she managed to plead:

“It cannot harm us. Spare it.”

“Spare it! Much would it spare us should it grow stronger. Even now is it mighty enough to thrust us to one side. Do us harm! That is my fear.”

“Atlano, I beseech that thou wilt seek no quarrel with this people.”

“There is no need to seek. I will make one. I will show them that Atlantis still hath being—that she is not dead of her power, her wealth, her spoils, her glory. Spoils! Here will be another—a grand one! Here will another land mourn its being—those marvels of vessels sink beneath the waters, or, better, swell the numbers of our own. Here will Atlantis show another line to that dreaming Khemi that doth not rouse even when the smallest haven goeth beyond her in treading the sea. What are her piles of stone to one strong, free breath of the sea? And what a glory to hold every breath as we have until now! Base Khemi—to be thus given over to her sands, her works of stone!”

“Atlano, call to mind that I am fond of Khemi. It is the land of my mother.”

“One would know it when thou wouldst bid me spare this Pelasgia.”

“Thou art wrong to trouble this people.”

“Such is what I might look for from thee. Ever art thou against me!”

“When have I ever been against thee?”

He tried hard to recall an instance, but could not. Less angry, he insisted:

“As a wife, thou hast the right to think with me—hast the right to bid me good speed when I go to crush this people.”

“Thou! Thou wilt not go?”

“I go to crush them. The gods have my vow. Here have I rusted too long. I am as king of Khemi!”

“Thou wilt be killed! Atlano, thou wilt be killed!”

“Then wilt thou be queen,” he returned derisively. “Thou art next in line with all thy Khemian blood, and these Atlanteans love thee. Ill would they take it should Oltis come after me—for his father counteth not. That smooth Oltis—well doth he wish it! But I shall not be killed, if but to bring to naught the hopes of that cunning priest. He thinketh I see not through him.” Loud rang his mocking laugh.

The queen arose, and, standing before him, besought:

"Atlano, for the sake of our land and people, war not. Think of our Atlanteans who will not come back—of their darkened homes. Call to mind how, in the time of thy father, we lost our people in warring against Fun-hi. And what evil came of it, for it brought on the death of thy father!"

"Yea, but it made the way for me."

"Atlano!"

"Say on, 'Atlano!' Well should I sicken of my name!" (He had arisen to face her vindictively.) "I say to thee, Atlana, we are to war, war. And now I have done with it—and thee." (He turned to go.)

"So be it—war! But I warn thee, it is one thing to war, another to win."

"Put not upon it an evil eye, Atlana. If thou dost croak, I fear." (He was again facing her.)

"I croak not, but I warn thee. The cause is not just."

"Thou art in evil temper this day. It is best that I go to the temple and talk with Oltis. Ah, thou dost shake!"

"Why art thou ever with Oltis if thou trustest him not?"

"I like to draw him on, to make him believe I think with him, to make him take my way in the end. I like to see him, the proud one, bend—bend—because I am the king. He is a toad."

"But thou goest to this toad from me."

"Yea, but wert thou more as he I would stay with thee."

"Think. Thou didst call him a toad."

"I mean, wert thou not so bent of mind. Oltis never sayeth nay to me. It would be better, Atlana, couldst thou ever think with me."

"It is but this time, Atlano. Come, sit with me again. I will be more calm."

"Nay, I go."

"Go not to Oltis."

"I like the mirth of it."

"I fear him. He will do thee evil."

There was another mocking laugh. "If thou didst but know, I think evil toward him. I like him not. And now my good wishes I leave thee."

"Go not."

Seeing there were tears in her eyes, he stooped to kiss her carelessly; then, drew from her restraining hand and went out.

Atlana was left to weep inconsolably. Well she loved her husband; and hard to bear was his growing indifference. Now had come this new terror, this suddenly sprung up cloud of war, and the injustice of such a contest could presage only defeat. For the remainder of the day she continued alone, given over to despondency, and dreading lest any eye should witness her plight.

Before night, many were the aching hearts on the island beside the queen's. The wives of high and low degree had alike fallen to sorrowing. Mourning was rife among the females of the land, and grew in intensity from the hard-heartedness of the males, who had no patience with such puerile manifestations, and, therefore, laughed at them, derided. When some wives took courage to hint of the possibility of defeat, they were so withered by scorn as to run for hiding places; and it was days before quite a goodly number rallied sufficiently to show themselves. The women of Atlantis could imagine and suffer thereby as ably as their sisters of to-day.

As the preparations grew brisker, more despairing became these Atlantean women. As for the queen, she only brightened when in presence of the king. Then she was strong. Thus he knew not of the agony she was enduring—could not have appreciated it had she disclosed it. Once he even complimented her upon her sensible way of accepting the matter, she smiling back in a weary manner that was lost upon him, so centered was he in self. But, day by day, she grew more fond, if possible, so that his eyes opened somewhat; and, at last, he exclaimed:

"Atlana, where didst thou get such heart? Well would it be if thou hadst children."

"Children! Torment me not!"

The cry was tragic. The king, though amazed, scoffed:

"Thou sayest well. They are but a torment."

"I meant not that they are a torment. It is torment that I have them not!"

Wildly she spoke, unsealing her lips upon this subject, and to the astounding of the king, as she continued:

"Why speakest thou of children, and at this time? It is hard to bear. To have no child to look upon, to nurse, to clasp! Here is the heart of a mother, but where is the child to cling to it, to bless it? I am alone—alone!"

She bowed her head to hide the bursting tears. The king, touched, attempted consolation.

"Grieve not, Atlana. I care for children but to vex Oltis. As life is, they are ever a trouble."

"I care not about Oltis. For trouble, fathers have no trouble. It is the mothers alone—who have to bear—that have the right to murmur. But I should never murmur."

"Nay, for a queen need have no care."

"I should have care, and hail it, were I many times a queen."

Such strong yearning was in her face that the king exclaimed:

"Atlana, what is it? What is upon thee? Is it this matter of war?"

"Day and night I think of naught else. Hard have I tried to be brave. Atlano, go not from me. The pain I cannot bear."

"There is no need for pain. We go to lay Pelasgia low. And I shall come again. Think, thou art the wife of a king. Trouble me no longer with bodings of evil. Would we had a child. It would take my place."

Atlana sighed, and raised her head, determined to say no more. Relieved that her tears had ceased, Atlano said more gently:

"Let us sail down to the harbor. There have the vessels of all the ports gathered. It will cheer thee but to look upon them."

Fine cheer, indeed, was this for such an aching heart! The queen looked at him, thinking he meant to jest. But no, his earnestness was too apparent. Already had his face brightened at the prospect. So she forced a smile, and, calling her ladies, gave the necessary orders.

Shortly, herself, the king, and a few of the nobles, with their wives, went gliding down Luith to the harbor. But great heaviness of spirit was beneath the smiles of these women; and this heaviness increased when, upon arriving at the harbor, they beheld the many war vessels in brave array, with pennants flying, and men crowding their decks. Bitter was it to listen to the exulting speeches of Atlano and his nobles; bitterer, to listen to the acclamations of those on deck and shore. The nobles' wives looked from their queen to each other, but could derive no comfort, no hope. There was not one to lighten the gloom of the others among these suffering women.

CHAPTER III.

ATLANTIS VERSUS PELASGIA.

A few days later the Atlantean fleet sailed to the eastward to invade this upstart Pelasgia —these Pelasgians that had come from Western Asia by way of the Cyclades to make an abiding place in the Greece of to-day, as well as the islands of the Ægean Sea.

A mysterious people were the Pelasgians. Their appearance among the past known races of the earth was sudden; their extinction has been complete. Yet we know they were peaceful, and fond of agriculture; that, under the favoring skies of their adopted land, they became the greatest merchants and sailors of most ancient times, antedating the renowned Phœnicians; that from Greece they passed over to Southern Italy, there, perhaps, to inaugurate that "golden age of Saturn," when peaceful agricultural pursuits superseded the piratical habits of the Carians and Leleges. But this is little.

However, their monuments endure. These are the vast Cyclopean remains of Greece and Asia that puzzle while they amaze. Evidently intended for fortification, they were built of huge polygonal stones, fitted together without cement and mortar, so perfectly as to survive the structures of succeeding ages and races. These are all that are left to point to a people who, though forced everywhere to yield to the conqueror, must yet have been possessed of indomitable energy and perseverance. Though ineffaceable are their invisible imprints for good.

Under Pelasgus, their leader and king, this colony won renown so quickly that it is no wonder Atlano should doubt its existence. But this knowledge proved the impetus he had been desiring. Now there was new life in the mere thought of the stifling of this menacing people.

Thus the fleet went gaily sailing along the Middle Sea, so high were the hopes, so positive the convictions of success.

The skies were favorable: and the time dragged not, because of the ravages made upon the coasts to the left. At length the islands off the southern shore of Greece were sighted; and there came into view what could only be some Pelasgian vessels. As the great fleet bore down upon them, these took to flight, and made such good speed, the while warning other vessels they met, that all were out of sight before reaching the southern point of Attica.[10]

Up the western coast they speeded to their port,[11] whilst the Atlanteans, mistaking their route, rounded Attica to sail up its eastern coast. Nothing here invited them except some outlying hamlets, which they pillaged and destroyed. When well along between Attica and Euboea, the fleet lay to, and many warriors disembarked.

These advanced through Bœotia, the surprised Pelasgians fleeing before them into Thessaly. But quickly did Thessaly prepare for defense, calling as leader Deucalion, who, with his family, dwelt at Larissa, on its southern shore.

This Deucalion was revered and beloved; and it was whispered that he possessed mysterious powers that could come only of the gods. So none but himself must lead these ready Thessalonians.

He, most willing, hastily gathered his neighbors. And then these Pelasgians of Thessaly met the invaders, gave them fierce battle, and forced them back, even through Bœotia, and into Attica. Meanwhile, a few of the Atlantean vessels had proceeded along the coast of Attica and Bœotia, seeking pillage; and, all too soon, came upon Larissa, whose simple homes and cultivated lands were on either side of its gentle stream and by the coast. Here, at this inviting spot, they paused to descend upon its women and children, every man having gone with Deucalion. When home after home had been pillaged and destroyed, these defenseless ones fell before the red warriors to plead, agonized, for mercy. But when unanswered, spurned, their importunities changed to despairing cries for Deucalion, which the marauders were only too quick to distinguish.

Thus the leader inquired of one of the shrieking women, in a tone she could not fail to understand, "Deucalion?"

She, foolish one, by her gestures and pointing, made them comprehend that this Deucalion had led his fellows southward to meet the invading foe.

Grim was then the laughter of the Atlanteans. To this succeeded desire to know which was Deucalion's home. They were about to inquire, when the same woman, of her frenzy, cried:

"See—Pyrrha, Pyrrha! The wife of Deucalion!"

The Atlanteans, following her glance, again comprehended. Under some trees, at a little distance, were kneeling, entwined, a woman and two children. The leader eagerly asked:

"Is that the wife of Deucalion?"

The woman, understanding, bowed in affirmation.

"And the children of Deucalion?"

Again the woman bowed her "Yes."

There was a swift movement of the chief and his men toward the group. Perceiving this, Pyrrha, with her children, arose, and the three stood in passive dignity. But less swift grew the approach of the marauders, as they the better beheld this Pyrrha, this fair, noble, most lovely woman, who, with the mother fear in her eyes, was holding tightly a youth well grown and a little maiden. For the moment a feeling akin to reverence came upon the fierce men, so that they halted. But the leader, overcoming this, went still nearer, and demanded:

"Give me the children!"

Of her intuition, Pyrrha understood. Tighter grew her grasp, as she besought mercy with her eyes. But the chief hardened only the more, for he was calculating upon the ransom that these children must bring. So he laid his hand upon the youth, strong in his purpose.

Then fine it was to behold the youth's flashing eyes, his proud crest, and the brave air with which he turned to repel this mighty-looking warrior. Though Pyrrha, by tone and grasp, endeavored to restrain him, as she, in her Pelasgian, pleaded for mercy. Vain, however, were her sweet tones. The chief's hands went about young Hellen; the cruel men pressed sore; and Pyrrha and her daughter, bereft, sank upon their knees, heart pressed to heart, to cry to heaven for help.

But again went the hands at their work. The mother was drawn back ruthlessly, and the maiden wrenched from her arms. Brave, unyielding, Pyrrha struggled to her feet, prepared to follow, to drag her children back. But the evil spirits held high their captives, and gathered about them in mass as they moved onward to the ships. Dark became everything to Pyrrha; her lovely body tottered, and she fell unconscious. Heaven at last was kind.

The other women, with their children, collected about her. But to all efforts for her revival, she responded not. So they forbore, to fall on their knees, and gaze dumbly at the

vessels, which, with booty and captives, were already beginning the journey southward. When these were out of sight, they arose, their thought only for the miserable creature who had revealed Deucalion's family to the despoilers. As one, they fell upon her with their tongues; and of her it need hardly be told that, for the balance of her life, it would have been better had she never been born.

The despoilers hastened southward to hear evil. The brave Atlanteans who had disembarked to destroy these Pelasgians, had met with defeat. Yes, Atlano had been pressed back into Attica by Deucalion, and there had been routed by a small army under Pelasgus. In consequence the ranks of the Atlanteans could only tear their way to the coast, many dying as they went of exhaustion or wounds, so that Atlano with the other survivors appeared but as a handful to those awaiting them on the ships.

When Atlano was again on his own vessel, his rage and humiliation were so intense that none dared to venture near him to tell of the presence of the two young captives. Even Maron, his chief attendant, kept aloof and eyed him in fear—the great, grim, swarthy Maron, who had never known awe until now.

But the king had not been long on board when, as he stood gazing upon the shore of this uncrushed Pelasgia, he heard a sound as of sobbing, and that not far from him. Surprised, he listened for some seconds, and then signed to Maron. The latter came forward eagerly, while the others of the vessel scarcely breathed in their interest.

"What is that noise, Maron?"

"Most gracious king, it cometh from the two children made captive on the coast above, at a place where some of our vessels landed for booty."

"Who took them?"

"Most gracious king, it was the chief captain, Zekil."

"Let them be brought before me."

Maron signed to an officer, who hastened to the middle of the vessel, where there was a small apartment used for storage, to return with the two miserable ones. When these beheld the fierce, dark red face of the king, they cried out in alarm.

"Bring the rod," ordered the king, "and let Zekil come before me."

The two children had fallen on their knees to supplicate for deliverance. This Atlano well understood from their signs, their tones, their agony. With contempt he looked down upon them until the bronze rod was brought. At his word a blow upon the back of each brought the hapless pair to their feet. But their tears had ceased, and, with eyes shining of indignation, they held to each other. Their shoulders were smarting, but the pain was as nothing beside the indignity, for these children had known only tenderness and reverence hitherto.

Then, as the youth Hellen turned from his sister to flash at him a look as haughty, as fierce, Atlano smiled in derision, and asked:

"Maron, is this the son of a king?"

"Most gracious King, he is the son of a great chief. Zekil knoweth; and yonder he cometh."

Soon Zekil was on board, and kneeling to the king. When bidden to arise, he stood up as if well satisfied with himself.

"Zekil, whence came these children?"

"Most gracious King, we brought them from the coast above."

"Whose children are they?"

"Most gracious King, the people whom we fell upon were ever calling upon their father, as if he had all power. It was 'Deucalion!' 'Deucalion!' on every side."

“Deucalion!” Atlano gasped the word. Then, of his astonishment and exultation, cried:

“Ha—Deucalion! Art thou sure?”

“Most gracious King, their father is Deucalion.”

“Knowest thou who is Deucalion? Knowest thou who he is, Zekil?”

Even Zekil was shrinking back at the fury of his tone.

“He is the one who headed the horde—that drove us back—into the way of loss, ruin. But for Deucalion, we would have swept from earth this Pelasgia!

“Yea, and as they thronged about him, and pressed against us, it was to the cry of ‘Deucalion—Deucalion!’ And we fled before this ‘Deucalion!’” He hissed the word at the terrified children.

“Now to pay him—now to pay him! And it shall be fine ransom! Ah, what ransom will I have for you, ye thrice-cursed children of Deucalion!”

He raised his hand as if to smite. Æole, comprehending, looked full in his face, calmly but beseechingly. And, as he, for the first time, obtained a clear view of the sweet, innocent, fair, lovely countenance of this child of thirteen, and received the appealing look of eyes beautiful like violets, eyes of a color unknown in Atlantis, the hand, losing force, fell to his side.

Further, as he continued to stare into these eyes, and note the gestures of the small, perfect hands, he understood that she was imploring their return to Pelasgia. But, at his frowning shake of the head, she desisted, to speak in quick, firm tone, to his comprehension:

“Then free my brother, and I will stay.”

At perceiving the king’s threatening hand, Hellen had raised his own to ward off the blow. Great was his astonishment when the king’s hand fell to his side, as he was not aware of Æole’s look or gestures. But, at her words, he started, shocked, and faced her.

“Æole, thou knowest not what thou askest. Thinkest thou I will go, and leave thee here, to the mercy of these?” And he looked with scorn at King Atlano, who was quick to interpret his words.

In spite of himself, Atlano could not but admire Hellen’s courage. He glanced from one to the other, the uncowed demeanor of both so impressing him that he said to those in attendance:

“They are a noble pair, this brother and sister. If we take naught of the spoil of Pelasgia with us to Atlantis, we are rich in them, for their value must bring us fine ransom, and before the sun of the morrow. Meanwhile, let them be held in honor. Maron, lead them whence they came.”

Then he turned to speak apart with Zekil. And Maron conducted the youth and maiden to the outside room.

Later, there was a conference of the king and his few surviving nobles and chief captains when it was decided that the Atlantean fleet would remain where it was, and, on the morrow, dictate terms for the ransom of the captives.

After Atlano had sent away his nobles and captains, he went to look upon the sufferers, and found them reclining upon some cushions, in the very stupor of grief. They heeded him not as he stood and watched them. And many forms did his thoughts take as he noted their beauty and grace. The one that would recur most often was, “I would almost keep them in spite of many ransoms.”

But, as it proved, there was no ransom on the morrow. For, that night, the vessels of the Pelasgians, hurriedly brought together from every available point, so harassed and

destroyed a portion of the Atlantean fleet that the remainder was forced to speed off in the early morning, leaving to an uncertain future the wished-for ransom.

Thus the invading fleet passed away. And the bitterly weeping children stood straining their eyes at the beloved, the fast disappearing shores. At about the time that their dear Pelasgia was beyond their view, Deucalion rejoined his still unconscious wife, and learned from those about her of this terrible bereavement.

CHAPTER IV.
THE PELASGIAN CAPTIVES.

Sacred mountain, uplands, shore, and harbor became black with people, as the returning fleet drew inward. The enthusiastic welcomings were all that the proudest conqueror could wish. Yet these islanders, fearing they were but lukewarm in their manifestations to these so victorious, grew but the more enthusiastic—until it came upon them that the fleet was moving with ominous slowness, that few were the pennants, that there were no responses, and that the decks were looking wofully scant of men.

Almost as one they became mute; and each began to eye his fellows in doubt. Could it be that victory had not been with Atlantis? Fast fell their hopes, until wild became the speculations as to who were returning, who were left dead in a far-off clime.

Gradually, the cry of terror overspread harbor, shore, uplands, and mountain; and its sounds were the first to fall upon the king's ears as the fleet drew into Luith's outlet.

Quick were the king and his nobles in boarding the galleys awaiting them. No looks were there for the masses, looking gloomily on from shore and docks, though a few of the latter tried hard to shout welcomes that would stick in their throats. As the galleys began to move off, the gloom deepened, until amazement lightened it a little; for what meant these two fair children that Maron and an officer were bearing from the king's vessel to a galley? Also, why was this galley keeping so near that of the king? The tongues were loosened, and conjecture ran high until the warmen and sailors began to disembark. These were at once surrounded by the impatient beholders on land; and, as Atlano and his nobles moved away, they knew the listeners were hearing of the dead, so eloquent of anguish grew the air.

Useless was it to stop their ears. What was the outer hearing to the powerful inward faculty that naught could render deaf?

Onward, up the beautiful Luith, glided the king and his nobles, their eyes ever turned from the galleys that had come to meet certain nobles nevermore to be seen in Atlantis. Of these Phiro was one—Phiro, the young, the ardent. Then they thought of the wives awaiting these, the non-returning, and grew abject in their humiliation and fear. Mute, they glided by the palaces whose marble landing places were covered with anxious observers.

When they reached the upper part of the stream and beheld banks and heights swarming with people, and many galleys coming toward them, the king drew more closely under his awnings, that he might not respond to the cheers of these loyal subjects who were content in that he was of those returning.

And there, at the royal landing place, were priests also awaiting him. In spite of the anxiety, shout after shout went up from all sides as his galley touched the granite steps. But terrible was the hush when the king came forth, unsmiling, unanswering. After the steps were ascended, his chariot entered, and he was driven off, they knew their every fear was verified.

Shivering with dismay, they looked on in silence as the downcast nobles, now that the king no longer needed their attendance, thought of their homes, and, entering their

chariots, drove off. But there came diversion for the time when the half-fainting captives were borne to a chariot, and driven after the king.

The priests, who were of inferior rank, were about to drive to the temple when these children appeared. They waited until they were gone, when one spoke out to the captain of the galley that had borne them:

"Sir Captain, whence are those children?"

"Priest Kluto, Maron telleth that they are of Pelasgia, and the children of a great chief."

"Well, I knew it!" exclaimed a swarthy man, a Kabyle of the Amazirgi.[12] "Before I lost this arm, and when I was in Shaphana, I saw these Pelasgians. Fair were some even as these children, and of foreheads as straight. Marked ye their foreheads?"

"I marked them!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

Then, for the first time in the history of the island, these Atlanteans began to regard the receding foreheads everywhere about them with less than the usual favor.

Thereupon, another priest, of his shrewdness, warned:

"Such foreheads come not of the gods. Call to mind that ye spring from Poseidon. Was not the forehead of Poseidon even as our foreheads? Are not our foreheads as his? Then have a care. Else will ye mock!"

"But how fair, how white are they!" demurred a yellow man of the Eskaldi.[13] "Of a truth, the gods love such a color!"

"Get thee beyond the mountains of Shaphana,[14] whither we found thy tribe famishing," scoffed the priest. "I speak but to Atlanteans. Atlanteans, we are of the gods—we are red. But other things are for our thoughts than skins and foreheads. We are the children of Poseidon. Let us look to it that we anger him not. For, what a day is this!"

Then, shaking his head in a manner that drew forth the cries and groans of the bystanders, he made the sign, and was driven off. The other priests followed.

During this conversation more galleys had approached; and from one got out a few warmen and sailors. These were at once questioned by men, women, and children. But short was the listening, when the air was rent with anguish. Then those unbereaved led the mourners to their homes, themselves sick of shame and despair.

What had come upon Atlantis? Never had a king been so humiliated. Never before had the ships returned without brilliant booty. Fun-hi was as a grain of sand to this. And, ah, the non-returning! Woe to the stricken ones—the desolated homes!

The thinking ones, in their places of retirement, trembled at what this might mean.

The king, with his attendants, drove on to the palace court. He alighted; and, waving off the clustering ones, passed on to the queen's apartments. He would tell Atlana that this had come of her croakings.

But Atlana was standing alone in her bower room, her arms outstretched, the glad tears pouring. She hastened to embrace him, crying:

"Atlano, I see thee again, and not harmed! The gods be thanked forever!"

"Yea, thou seest me again. Though better were it had I been left to feed the birds in Pelasgia!"

"Could I but cheer thee."

She kissed his hand and yearned for the embrace that would not come.

"It is because of thy croaking, Atlana. From the first thou didst look with cold eye upon it. And the other women of the land have helped thee. Thy bodings of evil, and theirs, have

helped towards our loss, our ruin! Knowest thou not the power of thought?"

"Say not so, Atlano. Say not our thoughts could have such power. Small cheer would it bring to mourning wives and daughters. Ah, wretched Atlanteans—wretched women! And to think I could greet thee with smiles, with these sorrowing ones about us! It is cruel—cruel! But my heart will leap that thou hast come back, though with no kiss—no fond clasp within thine arms."

She bent her head as a tall lily might when overborne by a bitter blast, and then raised her eyes appealingly.

"Yea, I have come back, and in what manner? Hard is it to raise my head, harder to look about me. I am craven! Small heart have I for kiss or clasp. But here they are, since thou dost ask for them." And he proceeded to do both so coldly that she drew away from him in haste, her eyes flashing, her cheeks crimsoning, that she had thus besought him. But her indignation was short. It was plain that he was suffering sore in his humiliation; and her wifely pity triumphed when he began to pace moodily. Only love and tenderest sympathy shone in her eyes when at last he ejaculated:

"Could I but hide myself. Would I were a priest!"—the last being uttered in derision.

Hoping to divert him, she whispered:—

"Atlano, knowest thou the high priest is dying?"

"Nay." He stopped, interested.

"They have looked for him to pass away through the night."

"And Oltis—is he dying likewise?" Grim was his laugh.

"Oltis is well. He hath been cruel to his father. Yet, to the people, he mourneth as a tender son."

"The sly, smooth face! So he is to be high priest as I come back. It bodeth evil."

"What meanest thou?"

"It bodeth evil for Atlantis that I come back with my spirit sore to find Oltis stepping into the place of high priest. Would this matter had naught to do with line. It would be well if the chief priests came not of the blood of the kings. It could be changed."

This last idea seemed to please him, as he grew absorbed over it, and even smiled. But the queen shuddered. Well she dreaded any further departure from the ancient customs. Already had there been enough such to cause her faithful, devout spirit untold suffering and fear. She waited a little, and then said cheerfully:

"Let us hope that Oltis wilt do better as high priest."

"Thou knowest as well as I there is no good in him."

The queen sighed, and said almost under her breath: "Well was it for his wife that she died early. But his poor children!"

"And his poor, poor niece, poor of a truth before he hath done with her!"

"Atlano, since thou didst leave, he hath kept Electra from me. He hath pleaded the sore state of Olto, that he hath ever need of her."

"Hath Olto been sick so long?"

"From the time thou didst leave, he failed. Soon he was too weak to serve in the great temple even. The other temples thou knowest he had not visited in a year."

"And now Oltis will have charge over them all. Would the law were not as this. Would it could be changed."

"Call to mind that Oltis hath no son. His nephew Urgis cometh after him."

"Yea, that followeth that Urgis will leave the temple at Chimo, to be the chief priest in our temple when Oltis is high priest. I could take cheer in the thought that one is of like

cunning with the other. So Oltis will be high priest, and Urgis chief priest of our great temple. The two will need a firm hand, Atlana." Again his laugh rang grim.

The queen had become very pale. Noting this, Atlano continued, "But, to change, I have brought thee a gift."

"A gift!" She smiled rosily.

"I have brought thee thy wish, children. Ah, thou dost not see! We have taken two captives, the son and daughter of a great Pelasgian chief. If ransom cometh not, they are thine. Thou wilt care for them, wilt cause them to be taught our tongue and habits. Here, in this palace, will they stay to be treated as are the children of the king."

Much did he enjoy her astonishment, and the yearning look that came into her eyes.

"But how old are they, Atlano?"

"The boy is sixteen years; the girl, thirteen."

"And their parents are dead?"

"Nay, nay, they live!"

"They live, and without their children?"

"Yea, yea, and without their children!"

"It is a horror."

"It is a delight." Most mocking was his laugh.

"Thou meanest it not."

"But I do. These are the children of Deucalion. To him we owe our loss, ruin. If ransom cometh not, I can well pay him. Atlana, the girl is most fair."

The queen shivered, and her eyes fell.

"The boy is noble of look and brave. He will be a warrior, and, in the coming time, can help to fall upon Pelasgia. What delight if, in battle, he should slay his father!"

The queen turned from him, and a cry of torment escaped her.

"Atlana, there was enough of such noise ere I went from thee. I mean this I tell thee."

She was ghastly in her paleness.

"Atlana, thou lookest far from well. It may be thou art not able to look upon these captives now. I will show them to thee on the morrow."

"I would see them now, now!"

The king pulled a cord hanging from the wall, and the queen's pygmy entered.

This pygmy, who was but four feet in height, had been captured in Afrita[15] near the middle part, together with many of his tribe of Akka; and it was ten years since the forlorn creatures had entered upon servitude in Atlantis. But Azu was fortunate in that he had been given to the queen. Her heart had gone out to him, as it ever did toward the wretched; and, of her kindness, she often questioned as to his former life, receiving crude descriptions of his tribe's home in the great forest, and boastful accounts of its ability and prowess—for quickly had he learned Atlantean, being but a child when captured, and now scarcely twenty.

Very bright was Azu, and affectionate, though most peculiar of look because of his large round head, snout-like projection of the jaws, receding chin, flat chest, huge paunch, and angular, projecting lower limbs. Further, his grotesqueness of body was enhanced by his garb. This, in color, was flaming red, and consisted of a tunic, close-fitting, short lower garments, pointed cap, and pointed shoes. He looked a goblin. His one beauty was his hands, which were small and well formed. Moreover, his teeth were strong and pearly, and served somewhat to lighten the darkness of his visage, as he grinned without ceasing.

With feet turning inward and a waddling or lurching of the body, he approached, to fall most suddenly flat on his face before the king. Smiling, Atlano ordered:

"Azu, arise. Speed to Maron, who is in the first small room. Bid him bring hither the captives."

Azu then arose, and backed to the door with head bent low. When he went out, the queen sank on a couch, and shaded her eyes with her hands. In a few moments, he reëntered to lurch, bow, and say:

"Gracious King, Maron and the children are without."

"Bid them come in."

Azu went out. Then entered Maron, half bearing Æole, whilst Hellen walked feebly beside him. Maron laid Æole on a couch, and then made his obeisance to the queen, who had arisen. After receiving this, she bade him place a chair for the youth near his sister. Into this Hellen sank in weariness. Then Atlana moved beside them to gaze upon Æole, who lay back with eyes closed, breathing faintly. And, as she gazed, the queen thought the maiden's loveliness more of heaven than earth. Shortly, with tears starting, she turned to look upon the noble, handsome youth, who was regarding her so despairingly, and she the more marveled. Where got these children their exceeding fairness, their straightness of feature, their grace of form and face? What a color was the maiden's hair, so rich in its brownish red, so golden where the sun was kissing it! What must her eyes be, for the youth's were blue as the deepest skies!

Of her admiration and compassion, the queen leaned over and kissed the sweet, straight forehead with such fervor that Æole opened her eyes. One look from their beautiful blue depths so stirred Atlana that she kissed her again and again. Then, as she perceived Hellen gazing in woe upon her, she felt a sudden love for both.

"Altano, they are mine. My heart leapeth. They will be my children. At last the gods pity me!"

"As thou wilt, Atlana. They are thine unless ransom cometh. Though, I have the mind not to yield them."

"Ransom! Ah, I forgot! They have a mother, a father. What is there more than woe to lose such children! I beseech thee, send them this day to their home."

"Thou art a driveler!" With fierce look he turned to leave; and, as he strode away, added, "Fit wife art thou for Olto!"

But she went after him. "Again I ask that thou wilt send them to their home, and this day. Choose between them and me."

He half turned, and cast at her a peculiar look, in which showed wavering. Then, in smooth, persuasive tone, said:

"Atlana, it is for thee to wait. I have to please my nobles in this. They look for ransom. It is best to seem to hearken to them for the time. After the sting of this loss is less keen, they will the better yield. Further, have a care for thyself. Where is thy trust as a wife?"

"Thou wouldst do better had I less trust, as thou callest it. There are some who have no eye for such—some who can be stirred only by lack of thought, lack of feeling, lack of faith, [16] until they become as full of life as were the dying under that draught of our cousin, Viril!"

"Thou meanest that draught that gave youth, never-ending youth?" asked he, eagerly, unmindful of her reproach.

"Yea."

"Would we knew that draught, if it was found, for Viril died."

“We know that he lived long, so long that he came to wish for death. Without doubt, he ceased to take it.”

“Would he had left the word to us. Would it could again be found! Would we, in our seeking, could”—He paused in fear. He had been incautious. But Atlana, unheeding his words, for her thought had returned to the captives, implored:

“Think well upon it, Atlano. In a few days come to me with the word that these children will go back to Pelasgia.”

Relieved, he answered mildly, “Trouble me not with it now.” And again would have gone.

“Yield to me.”

“Take away thy hand. I must to Oltis, whom thou likest so well. Later will we think upon this.” And, pushing aside her detaining hand, he passed from the apartment.

The queen again leaned over Æole; but shortly beckoned to Hellen. Taking his hand, she sat beside them, looking from one to the other with such affection that they revived somewhat. This was the first sympathy they had received, and no mother’s could have been tenderer.

After a little Æole sat up, and the relieving tears fell fast. When the queen had wiped these well away, she spoke reassuringly to Hellen; and then the two, by their signs, made her to understand how grateful were her sympathy and quick affection.

Soon Azu brought them some refreshment, the while refreshing their spirits to the extent that they even laughed. Here was a novelty of novelties. Whereupon, and out of his goodness of heart, he became overjoyed, and to express this, executed some extraordinary leaps that made them laugh the more. Finally, at the queen’s behest, he struck off into a wild, weird dance that he had learned in the inmost recesses of the Afrite forest. At this their tears were paralyzed, and the laughing, strengthened.

They were now in good condition for the services of the lady Elna. She showed them to rooms near the queen, ordered for them fresh clothing, and bade Azu conduct them to the bath. Afterward they reposed.

As the days passed, they became more cheerful, owing to the thoughtfulness of the queen. Every morning, they drove with her about the environs of the sacred mountain, even going long distances on the great plain to the left. This plain much amazed them, so boundless was it, so intersected with canals and streams, so cultivated in every tree and plant that could please the eye and gratify the palate. Moreover, marvelous was the great ditch about it, that, they were told, was hundreds of miles in circumference; whose depth of a hundred feet was almost incredible; whose width was as that of a river.

Further, there were the great quarries to the north end of the sacred mountain, from which were taken out the stones red, white, and black, that were used in building the palaces. Here many men worked; and even the pygmies, who showed a strength and endurance wonderful for their size.

Also, there were fountains leaping everywhere, great cisterns roofed over, many bath houses, and race courses with their attendant horses.

Stupendous were the pyramids, several of which arose on the great plain. With astonishment was it heard that these contained the dead. That of the royal family arose towards the summit of the sacred mountain, to the westward of a purling stream. In front of it was the temple of Poseidon and Cleito, that now was never opened, its sanctity being preserved by an inclosure of gold. They were not long in comprehending that here had been the home of Poseidon and Cleito, here the birthplace of their ten sons.

But their chief entertainment was found in the great hall of the palace and its corridors. This hall ran through the center of the rectangle forming the front of the palace, and to the court; whilst its corridors ran to the right and left, and overlooked the court. Everywhere

were the walls covered with sculptured slabs of alabaster, twelve feet in height, representing events in the history of the island. There were recorded battles, sieges, triumphs, and exploits of the race course and chase. Even the ceremonies of religion were portrayed. Beneath these slabs were pictures engraved on copper, also historic. Above the slabs were paintings of the different kings and queens inclosed in borders of fine designs and brilliant coloring. The pavement was of sculptured slabs of marble, representing flowers and trees. At every doorway were colossal winged lions or bulls, some human faced; and all either of alabaster or greenstone. And numerous were the columns of orichalcum, engraved, and the statues of greenstone.

Yes, here was entertainment, and almost forgetfulness that there were such strange faces, such unknown tongues about them.

Before the month had passed, they were able to take up certain duties, as well as to enter upon the study of the alphabet and language of Atlantis. Every morning they received instruction in the bower room; and, rather strangely, when they had mastered the rudiments of the language, the queen took it into her head to study Pelasgian. It was not long before the bower room was a tower of Babel on a small scale, as it rang with young voices, and even laughter in which the queen had full part. Well was it for Atlana that some lightness had entered into her days.

Thus it happened that the queen accused herself when her heart leaped at hearing from Atlano that the nobles would not permit the captives' return. It had even been determined that they must enter upon their initiation into the industries of the island at once. In consequence, Hellen began to go about the adjacent parts with an attendant, in order that he might obtain knowledge of agriculture, sheep raising, and metal working. And Æole quickly became proficient in embroidery, in the spinning and weaving of cotton and wool, in flower culture, and in poultry raising. Soon, like Queen Atlana, she had her own particular flower garden, and her pets among all our fowls of to-day with the exception of the turkey. Soon, even, she was wearing robes similar in fashion to the queen's, of her own weaving and embroidering. The queen never tired of exclaiming to the king at the progress of this youth and maiden.

But, though busy and outwardly cheerful, Hellen and Æole ever longed for Pelasgia. They could not reconcile themselves to this new life, in spite of its charm of novelty, its many wonders. When they looked upon the magnificent temples and luxurious palaces, they thought of the plain homes of Larissa to sigh, to grow faint. Ever were the enchanting gardens fading away before their dimming eyes, giving place to the simply cultivated fields of Pelasgia, instead. The canals, aqueducts, and pyramids were wonders they never could have dreamed of, but, oh, for the river, the springs, the modest tombs of their home! Pelasgia knew not this perfection of cereals and fruits, these great race courses, the mighty elephants, the lavish adornments of gold, silver, orichalcum, and precious stones. Also, it knew not the lack of truth and honor, the profligacy, the sensuality of these degenerate islanders. Thus, the two, when alone together, could talk but of their parents and home, as well as their dread of the glitter and falsehood about them. Their only balm was the love of the queen.

The king they feared and disliked. Keen were they to perceive the shadow he ever left upon the queen. She, it was plain to see, was daily growing sadder. And, about the palace it was whispered that the king's profligacies were causing this, as he had steadily progressed in wickedness since his return from Pelasgia.

Thus these two Pelasgian captives grew to be Atlana's comfort, her alleviation. Indeed, she became bound up in them as the weary months went by.

The first year passed, and no offer of ransom arrived; but Hellen and Æole ceased not to hope. The second and third years dragged, and no word had been received. Then each

confessed a dread that their parents were no more.

When the third year had passed, the nobles often hinted of the desirability of another invasion of Pelasgia; but always Atlano advised delay, for his martial spirit had weakened under the sloth and indulgence of these later years. He lived but for ease and sensuality.

So, as the time was ripe, he put in operation long-devised plans. Hellen and Æole were now to realize in the fullest their most forlorn, helpless situation. The tears that were but beginning to dry were about to fall faster than ever.

CHAPTER V.
THE ABDUCTION.

The queen, Æole, and Hellen had returned from the seashore, where they had been watching a swimming bout of the young nobles and the crowning of the victor. After the glare of the hot sands, they were impatient to be in their favorite cool nook of the garden. This was a large green plat quite inclosed in sycamores and acacias that bordered the side stream to the east. Here, when her ladies had served some refreshment and been dismissed, the queen spoke anxiously:

"Æole, Hellen, I read the looks ye cast far over the sea. Would ye could forget."

"Dear Queen Atlana," returned Æole, "it is our wish not to forget. The lotus is not for us. Most dear art thou, as thou knowest. But ever, at sight of the sea, cometh this wish to breast it, that we may learn of our home. Ah, the drawing! Ah, the pain!"

"Yea," added Hellen, "when we look upon the sea, we can but dash against our bars. This causeth us to go so little to the shore. At sight of the luring, mocking water that leadeth to Pelasgia, we grow sick of our longing."

"Had I my will, ye should go this day. If the king would but heed my prayers."

"Dear Queen, we know how often thou dost beseech him for us, and we tremble."

"Fear not that he would harm me. Too well doth he need me."

She smiled pathetically. Then into her face came such a weary expression and succeeding far-away look that the two fell to talking in subdued tones of lighter matters; and, as they talked, Æole took up her embroidery, which Hellen at once began to examine and admire.

While thus engaged with each other, the queen aroused from her reverie, and regarded them intently.

Æole was looking as the lilies in her white linen robe embroidered in blue, which she herself had wrought from spinning to completion. Wonderfully fair and perfect was the face, and aglow with intelligence, character, sweetness, purity. Of a strange beauty was the gold red hair that curled from the low, straight forehead to fall long from the pearly fillet; whilst her eyes were dark blue stars, and touching the grace of every pose and movement of her lovely form.

As she gazed, the queen agonized, for perils were threatening this innocent one; and she wondered if Hellen had any inkling of these, any suspicions. He was so handsome, fiery, generous, brave. It was not in him to brook scorn or insult. Besides, how well did the two love each other! What one would suffer in the other!

The queen again closed her eyes to lose herself in sorrowing over them, but not for long. Soon footsteps were heard beyond the trees. She aroused to speak the dread words:

"The king."

Æole also half arose, with the wild intent to run away. Then, regaining self-possession, sat again; though, when the king appeared she was trembling and paling so as to alarm

Hellen. “Strange,” he thought, “this dread of Æole for the king. She knoweth liking for all save him.”

To the homesick Æole, this presence of the king was doubly unbearable. She wished Hellen had not been there, that she might have slipped away. The queen, who comprehended her feeling, could only motion to Atlano to sit beside herself, the while murmuring:

“We have been to the sands.”

“I saw you as ye drove back. Thou goest there but little, Æole.”

She bowed in affirmation.

“Thou likest not the water?”

“King Atlano, I like the water, but it causeth me the more to think of my home.”

“It is time thou didst forget thy home, Æole. Hellen, thou hast no such longing?”

“King Atlano, my sister and myself feel the same. At sight of the sea we sicken for our home.”

The king frowned.

“How old art thou, Hellen?”

“King Atlano, I am nineteen.”

“Thou art of age to be a warrior. Wouldst thou be a captain?”

“I would be a warrior like my father. I care not to war for the sake of it, but I would joy to war if it was to save my land, my home.”

The queen glanced at him in reproof. His honesty and fearlessness she was ever dreading. The king glared for a moment, then, smiling, inquired:

“Æole, how old art thou?”

“King Atlano, I am sixteen.”

“Thou art of age to be a handmaid. Æole, wouldst thou be a handmaid in the great temple?”

The queen checked a cry of dismay, and became so white that Hellen, in his fear, moved nearer her.

Æole, also, was alarmed, though, after taking the queen’s hand, she spoke out with a fine bravery:

“King Atlano, I would not be a handmaid. I would stay with Queen Atlana while I am here.”

“While thou art here? Hast thy stay a limit?”

“I fear it hath not a limit. But I am happy if I stay with Queen Atlana. She holdeth the next place to my parents and Hellen.”

And she looked at the queen with most loving eyes.

Upon the king’s face came an expression that only Atlana beheld. Her head whirled, and she fell back upon her chair as if about to swoon. Hellen was quick to raise her, while Æole flew for some water that chanced to be upon the rustic table. The two then bathed her brow and chafed her hands as they begged her to revive.

Atlano watched, unimpressed. When Atlana had sat up with an arm of each faithful one about her, he said sarcastically:

“Well didst thou manage, Atlana.”

The three stared at him, confounded.

He continued: “Thinkest thou any good can come of this acting? Of a truth, if I cause thee such trouble, it would be well to stay from thee ever.”

“Atlano, talk not thus!”

“I go now.” And he arose. “But I have to tell thee that Æole and Hellen will leave thee.”

She also arose. “Hellen and Æole will leave me? Thou wouldst jest!”

“Another handmaid is needed in the temple. Æole hath been called. A messenger is wanted between the temple and this place. Hellen is chosen.”

A dread faintness came upon the queen. But she urged:

“Æole will die if she leaveth me. Spare her to me. Thou knowest my fond feeling.”

“Æole will go, on the morrow, to the temple.”

“Atlano, call to mind that thou gavest me these children.”

He laughed derisively. “I gave but to take away.”

“Atlano, have mercy. The temple is no place for Æole—for any maiden—any woman.”

“Beware,” he vociferated, in warning tone. “Thou ravest. Have a care. Thou wouldst mock.”

“Mock!” Such meaning was in her look that his lips paled. “Mock! Thou dost use that word, and to me.”

“Atlana, cease, or thou wilt have sorrow.”

“Sorrow! What sorrow is like to this, to take Æole from me. Say thou wilt not.”

“Oltis is firm. Æole will serve in the temple. Hellen will be the messenger.” And he turned as if to avoid further insistence.

She seized his hand, and implored, “What shall I say—do—that thou wilt hear?”

“Thou canst say naught. I leave thee to think upon it.”

With this, he roughly withdrew his hand, and turning, strode away.

Most direful was this shadow. As nothing were the longings, the homesickness. Æole became so wrought with terror, that Atlana set aside her own woe in order to comfort. As for Hellen, he paced as if beside himself for a little. Then paused before the queen, declaring:

“Æole shall not go to that temple. May her life cease ere then. Thinkest thou, dear Queen, that I have no eyes, no ears?”

“Hellen, what knowest thou?”

“I know—that—for all its fair outward look—evil worketh within. The gods are thought of only in form. Those priests would be gods, would rise in their flesh to heaven. Have I not heard the whisperings of the people as to the noise and mirth of the inner parts? Is not Oltis without truth, full of guile? Is not the worship mocked? Are not the animals yielded on the altar, yea, the serving of handmaids, mockeries of the olden holy laws? Handmaids, in truth!”

Of his agony, he paused.

“Hellen, what more knowest thou?”

“What more? Is not this enough? What more knowest thou?”

There was no reply. But Æole spoke feebly:

“Hellen, may I die rather than go there. To be near the king and those priests!” Her shuddering was so excessive that Hellen was obliged to support her, while he implored:

“Æole, be brave. There will be a way out of this.”

“She hath not gone. I have a voice.” The queen drew Æole to her, and whilst caressing her, and looking upon her in her grace and innocence, thought:

“Ah, Æole, I could hate thee, but that thou art so dear! If I could die in my shame. If we could both die. And once I was happy, in the young days of my fond trust. How ages far they seem. It is that I have lived before. Is this Atlano?”

She fell to weeping in a quiet, hopeless way, so that Hellen and Æole, in their turn, essayed what comfort they could. Thus passed the weary day.

The next morning, Maron was announced with a message from the king. Æole was bidden to leave the palace at noon. As the queen had been expecting this, she was ready.

“Maron, bear to the king my word that Æole shall not leave me. I ask that he will no more of it.”

Maron withdrew.

In an hour, appeared two officials of the temple, bearing a written order from the high priest. The queen dismissed them with a message that the king would come to her. But answer was immediately returned that the king was engaged, and that Oltis’ order must be obeyed, as it was given of the gods.

To the officials, Queen Atlana merely said:

“Bear the word to the high priest—that I will not yield in this.”

The officials departed.

Shortly they returned with two others, and presented an order for Æole’s immediate presence signed by Atlano and Oltis. The queen’s answer was:

“Ye will bear to the king and high priest my word that Æole shall not go.”

“But, gracious Queen,” demurred Ludor, the spokesman, “this is to please Amen.”

“Who sayeth it is to please Amen?”

“The high priest told me thus—after his most gracious self, the king.”

“I believe it not.”

The four drew back in dismay. How dared she to dispute king and high priest. It was sacrilege. Never had such been known.

Courteously waving them off, she added:

“Go to them with my words.”

Notwithstanding their orders to use force, if necessary, they withdrew in reverence, for the queen’s majesty and fearlessness were most impressive as well as provocative of sympathy.

Upon the appearance of the unsuccessful four, the furious king hastened to the palace; and burst into the bower room to meet only the lady Rica, who informed him that the queen was in the room adjoining. He entered this to find Atlana leaning over Æole, whom she was vainly trying to comfort. Drawing back, he beckoned to her to follow him to an unoccupied apartment to one side.

When she had obeyed, and they could not be heard, he vociferated:

“Thou darest to set me at naught?”

“It is not Amen, nor Poseidon, then.” Atlana was grand in her brave dignity.

He looked at her sidelong, and said more smoothly:

“I am but their worker.”

“I have said that I believe it not.”

He seized her hands, and even shook her as he hissed:

“Thou wouldst set thyself against me, then. Dost thou forget I am the king? That I can do with thee as I will?”

“Shake me to death, if thou wilt. Yield me upon thine altar, even. But thy sorrow and pain will follow.”

He laughed mockingly.

“Thou dost forget the prophecy of thy father on his bed of death, ‘*With Atlana at the palace no evil befalleth Atlano*’?”

He drew his breath hard, and averted his eyes before her steady look. With assumed indifference, he replied:

“It was but the babble of age.”

“Then am I free to visit Khemi—to visit the kindred of my mother.”

“Never, Atlana! Thou hast sworn to me ever to stay at this palace unless I grant thee leave.”

“Thou believest that prophecy. Thou canst never harm me.”

“Atlana, I wish thee no evil, but thou hast to obey me. Thou hast to yield in this going of Æole.”

“Æole shall not go.”

He leaned toward her, and whispered:

“Wouldst thou see her yielded on the altar? The priests will have her either as gift or handmaid. We have to please Amen that he may favor us.”

The queen cried out in horror. It was too true that human blood had defiled the altar. Shortly before the invasion of Pelasgia, Oltis, then chief priest of the temple, had offered as sacrifice, within the inner sanctuary, an African captive—a king—at behest of Atlano, who desired vengeance because of the latter’s refusal to reveal where certain treasure of his massacred tribe was hidden. Worse, the excuse for this great profanation had been that Amen and Poseidon needed propitiation. All this Atlano had confided to his wife.

The queen, of her horror, spoke not for a little. Then she towered almost to his height, as she cried:

“Tell me not that Amen and Poseidon are as men! Ye would make them as such—as frail, as wicked—in that they give favor for favor! Mock them no further. Make them no longer gods to suit your weak minds, your base thoughts! They are gods—gods—above such feeble doings of the flesh. Have done with this shield that they must be vilely served to give favor, and all the other shields!”

Atlano was confounded.

“Yea, and the curse is already upon thee for that dread mockery. The blood of that poor king is a blight upon this island, a mildew; and thou wouldst add another, further mock the gods. If thou hast heed for their favor, hast thou no thought for their anger? Hast thou no faint, deep feeling that evil broodeth over this island? Hadst thou my dreams! Night after night they come.”

“Atlana, thou art getting an old woman.”

His tone was contemptuous, but his eyes had lost their boldness.

“More than that. I am ages old. Each night of brooding care hath been as years.”

“What care canst thou have known?”

Was he in earnest, or did he speak thus to hide even from himself knowledge that she had suffered, and through him? Atlana could not tell, but she would not upbraid. Such had never been her fashion. Though better might it have been if Atlano could have seen himself, as in a glass, through her wifely chidings—at times.

He continued in a tone strangely conciliatory:

“Thou art not well. New air will help thee. Too long hast thou staid here in this palace. What thinkest thou of a short stay on the western coast where the breezes most have power —say Chimo? There the new pyramid riseth high. Wilt thou go?”

“With thee, yea.”

“But I have not time to go. In a few days is the festival of our Father Poseidon.”

“I may take Æole?”

“Æole will leave for the temple now. It is time her bearers were here.”

“Thou meanest she will go by force?”

“If it needeth.”

“It is only over my dead body she will go!” And Atlana, spurred by her terror, fairly ran back to the retiring room.

But close upon her was Atlano, as she leaned over the shrinking girl. Then, as they faced each other defiantly, the king gave a low call to which came the answering of many soft footsteps.

The dazed queen next heard Rica shriek, and fall as in a swoon. Then the hangings were thrust aside, and there hastened in several of the guards of the great court of the temple. At this outrage, the brave spirit might well have succumbed; but instead, she threw herself upon Æole and held her tight.

Severe was the struggle between husband and wife; but Atlana held on with that strength that comes of desperation, until the king produced a taper, which one of the guards lighted, and held to her nostrils. Then the dauntless lady fell back into the arms that should have been her stay, her shield, senseless; and was placed on a couch, there to lie as if in deep slumber.

Æole, who had fainted, was borne on a chair to the courtyard, where a closed chariot was awaiting her; whilst the mystified attendants looked on, and listened to the plausible explanations of her bearers.

Atlano remained with his wife until the day waned. And none knew the secret of the queen’s yielding.

CHAPTER VI.
THE VOICE.

Drear was the night to Hellen, given over as it was to agony. He was torn with futile promptings; but, toward morning, came slight alleviation, as soon he would be with Æole. Scarce, though, had he arisen from his almost untouched meal, than Maron appeared with an order from the king. He was to go at once to the harbor with a message for the chief priest of the temple of Ouranos, and await answer.

"Maron, it meaneth that the king would be rid of me. I will not go."

No pity stirred within the huge swarthy Maron because of this youth's drawn face, his passionate, desperate outcry. With grim smile, he replied:

"Thou wilt speed. The king is in haste. Come."

"I would first bid Æole good-morning."

"Linger not, for the galley waiteth. Come—come."

The despairing youth complied; and, as he went, Maron further enforced the king's order. Though deaf was Hellen. Wild, murderous thoughts were chasing through his brain. He felt he could have strangled this pitiless man beside him with delight, and thus whetted have rushed upon the king. Hard—hard was it to forbear.

Upon arriving at the galley, Maron was obliged almost to drag him on board; when at once it shot off—Maron remaining to watch until it was out of sight.

As Hellen sailed, torture the more possessed him. Three times was he on the point of bidding the rowers return. When over half way, his anguish conquered; and he gave the order, the men obeying, dissatisfied, as they were hoping to join some cronies at the port.

Tardily the glum rowers retraced the way. Meanwhile, Hellen's fears so lightened that they almost ceased to exist as the palace came into view; and, as he ascended the steps of the landing place, he laughed at himself, so much did the vicinage of Æole encourage him.

He hastened to the courtyard, and was about to enter when obliged to give way to a closed chariot that was being driven therefrom.

But, following this chariot, rode some guards of the temple. As they dashed past, Hellen became rigid for the moment. Now were his fears confirmed. That chariot contained Æole. She was being borne to the temple—was lost unless he could tear her from her captors.

His inanity vanished. Madly he flew through the palace grounds; and eschewing the grand roadway, made a short cut up to the gateway of the outer court of the great temple.

Here he paused to gather breath and strength, until he heard the chariot approaching. Then he stepped just within the gateway, and waited, indifferent to the curious looks of the few loitering guards.

The chariot came through the gateway slowly. When abreast of him, he sprang on its step, thrust aside the curtains, and beheld his sister unconscious. In a second he was beside her, and drawing her into his arms. Then in defiance, he eyed the clustering guards, who were seizing him as they bade him come out. And, with a madman's strength, shook them off, to hold his sister the firmer.

The guards, exclaiming in fierce tones, began to pull him as if to pieces. Still he held on, the while looking for some weapon with which to end their sufferings. Death must come to them. It was their only saviour.

Suddenly, a priest appeared beside the contestants. It was Partlan, a creature of Oltis. As he looked within the chariot, and perceived Hellen struggling, this priest grinned much as a hyena does when assured of its prey; and then felt for something within his vestment.

With a sign to the guards to relinquish their hold, he drew forth a tube much like a siphon. As the luckless Hellen was wondering that he should thus have been let alone, Partlan began to play upon him a spray that caused him to sink back benumbed, though still maintaining hold of his sister.

Then Partlan gave the word, and the chariot went on through the court to a side portico of the temple extension. Here Æole was taken from Hellen's arms, and given over to several handmaids. And Hellen, who had partially retained consciousness, swooned.

When Hellen revived, he found himself lying upon a couch in a room through whose one aperture the sunset light was streaming. He raised to look about him; and, at once, his eyes fastened upon a high grating at the farthest end. Upon hearing a clicking behind him, he turned, but saw nothing. Again he looked toward the grating, to become horrified at perceiving behind it a tall, imposing, red-garbed, masked figure. Stonily, Hellen returned the gaze of this worse than specter, his dread augmenting because of the dizziness overcoming him. It was something of relief when the figure, in lowest tone, spoke.

"Youth, thou art to bend, to obey. Wouldst thou bring evil upon thy sister and thyself? Is it thy will to see thy sister upon the altar? The high priest hath said she will be gift, or handmaid."

"Better the gift upon the altar," spoke Hellen as he strove to overcome his weakness, and arise.

"Shouldst thou no longer chafe, thy sister will but be a handmaid. This I promise thee."

"Who art thou that art so able to promise?"

"Thou hast heard of the 'Silent Priest'?"

"I have, and I have seen him."

"I speak for him."

"Then he hath brought this upon us. And thou art his base helper, his tool!"

With regained strength, Hellen leaped from the couch, and darted toward the grating, his hands outstretched, menacing.

But, as he reached it, he was overborne by a sweet, subtle force. A tenderness exquisite pervaded him, so that his threatening hands fell limp, and he stood motionless, eagerly gazing.

"My son," pathetic, persuasive were the tones, "if thou wilt but wait, a way will open for thee and thy sister out of this bondage. This is but the step toward thy home. Dost thou not feel that I speak truth?"

"I do, I do." Hellen was mastered.

"Then chafe no longer, but wait for the light."

"I will."

The figure then looked over, and beyond Hellen, and said with authority:

"Lead this youth to the chief priest."

Hellen turned sharply to behold close behind him a weird, unnatural shape, closely habited in dust color. How had it come almost within touch without noise or rustle? And

how of a serpent did it remind him as it stood tall, slender, vibrating, and observing him with brilliant, piercing eyes.

The red-garbed figure waved his hand in farewell to Hellen, saying:

"Follow him."

Hellen, as if charmed, went after the noiseless, gliding, quivering shape, through an opening door, and down a wide passage to a great apartment to the north of the temple proper. This was the gathering room of the priests, and several of these stood about the door.

When fairly within this apartment, Hellen's listlessness fled. He had caught sight of Æole at the farther end. She was standing before the chief priest Urgis, who was seated at a table; and by her side, and half supporting her, was a maiden apparently as young as herself.

In his eagerness, Hellen hurried past his dust-colored guide, and paused almost beside Æole. With strange intensity, he took in her grace, and the subtle charm of expression pervading face, hands, and limbs,—each as potent as her magnetic glance. Æole's soul fascinated in repose, in activity—in turn of the head, curves of the limbs, shaping of foot, movement of hands,—in voice, smile, buoyancy of tread. It was as though the material body gladly served as glass the most transparent to disclose the spiritual body within, in all its purity, beauty, and perfectness of organization.

But, as Hellen gazed and wondered, he became aware of the power of a pair of eyes of rare beauty and intelligence. These were set in the head of the maiden supporting Æole, and so magnetic were they that his careless look became fixed, whereat she blushed, and turned the eyes away. He was quick to observe that hers was a type of feature not purely Atlantean, a type similar to Queen Atlana's in its large brown eyes, rich olive complexion, and fine, dark, waving hair. Who was this bright, beautiful, imperial young creature? To his surprise, conjectures about her began to rival his anxiety for Æole; though not for long. For Priest Urgis, with due solemnity, was addressing the newcomers.

"Maidens, we of the temple greet thee. And hearken ye well, Electra of Khemi, Æole of Pelasgia, and to this: It is the will of the gods that, from this day, the great temple holdeth you. For this honor, cease not to give thanks. For this high place, call forth thy powers."

"But, Cousin Urgis!" remonstrated Electra, proudly, and to the amaze of the gathering priests. Never before had incipient handmaid lifted her voice thus.

"Hush, daughter," interrupted Urgis, his unctuous, hypocritical tone vanishing. "Not here canst thou speak unless bidden. Thou art to hearken, and to this."

Electra turned from him with such royal indifference as to amaze the beholders the more. But Urgis, unheeding, continued:

"Thou, Electra of Khemi, daughter of the princes of Atlantis and Khemi, and owner of many arts gained in the palace of the high priest, art deemed most worthy this honor. Much have we heard of thy fond care of the mother passed away, and of the high, bright powers of thy mind. Thus hath it been thought fitting to call thee to the service of our Father Poseidon. Then greeting to thee, Princess Electra, and worthy Cousin."

At this mention of her mother, the tears came into Electra's eyes, and, in spite of herself, dashed down upon her robe. But her spirit being brave, she was endeavoring to compose herself to answer, when Urgis continued:

"And thou, Æole of Pelasgia, hast been so long with our gracious queen that we know thou wilt do well in all that will be asked of thee. Much have we heard of thy gentle ways, thy warm heart, thy quick mind, thy zeal—gifts of value in a handmaid. Then greeting to thee, Æole of Pelasgia."

Profound was the quiet when Urgis ceased. Indeed, all were waiting for speech of Electra, whose tears were drying. After pausing in impressive manner for a few seconds, Urgis concluded:

"Sensel, it is for thee to lead these handmaids to their rooms. There let them be served with food. In the morning will their duties begin."

Then spoke Electra in low, sweet tones that thrilled.

"Priest, Cousin Urgis, to thy words of greeting I hearken not. Happy was I in the palace of my Uncle Oltis. Why force me hither? Why tear me from my duties, the dear presence of my cousins? And—I am a princess of Khemi and Atlantis." Haughtily she regarded him. "It is not a high place. No princess hath ever served in a temple. Cousin Urgis, be just—have mercy."

"Electra of Khemi, it cometh of more light. In the coming time, princesses, like those of less place, may look to be called as handmaids."

"By what right, Cousin Urgis?"

"To the High Priest it hath been given of the gods."

"Oltis—given of the gods!"

The contempt of her tone astounded even Urgis.

"Tell Oltis that I believe it not. Tell him I will not yield. Tell him I will lift my voice until I arouse this sluggish Atlantis!"

Hellen's heart beat wildly. What strength was hers thus to speak. Besides, how rich and soft was her voice with all its agitation. How exalted her look!

She resumed more calmly, and in most loving tone:

"Now, Cousin Urgis, I will withdraw to the palace, and take with me this maiden." And she looked at Æole reassuringly.

"Never! Here wilt thou stay. And speak not again, else worse will come upon thee."

She took Æole's hand, and whispered: "Speak for thyself."

Æole glanced upward at the frowning Urgis. The look was of such effect that he said gently:

"Is it thy will to speak, Æole of Pelasgia?"

To Hellen's astonishment, she implored, in tones almost as firm as Electra's:

"Priest Urgis—with Electra—I ask, Why force me hither? For I, too, was happy—quite happy with Queen Atlana. Further, I have a brother; from him part me not. For we are strangers, captives—and sorrow much for Pelasgia. Yet are we ever able to cheer each other. I need him; he needeth me. Priest Urgis, I beseech thee, let me go to my brother!"

So heartrending was her tone that Hellen could endure no further. Thus he cried:

"But—here is thy brother, Æole—thy brother who hath not power to save thee!"

He extended his arms as she turned, bewildered. Upon perceiving his suffering expression, she uttered a cry that brought more tears to Electra's eyes, and sprang to embrace him.

Priest Urgis, enraged, arose, and ordered the pair to separate. At the same moment King Atlano entered. There was a falling back, a dread hush, as the king's eyes fastened upon the pathetic tableau. Scowling, until his face grew black, he advanced menacingly toward the unhappy brother and sister.

But he was impeded. Someone had caught at his robe. He turned to perceive it was Electra.

"King Atlano, in the name of our Father Poseidon, I ask that Æole and myself may go from this place."

“Electra, ask naught in the name of Poseidon that is not his will. By his wish thou art here. Thou hast but to obey.”

“Never hath a princess been pressed into the temple. I shall call to the queen, to the rulers.”

“Thinkest thou any call of thine will reach them? Thou wilt be too well watched. It is the will of thine uncle thou art here; therefore, yield to it.”

“Thou saidst it was by wish of Poseidon a moment since.”

It might be truly said that the listeners held their breaths. Even Atlano’s was suspended for some seconds.

“Electra, the wish of Poseidon is the will of thine uncle.”

“Thou answerest with cunning; but tell me, is Oltis ever thus ready to obey the higher powers? Is not this a strange humility? Is there naught behind?” Here a thought presented itself. “I believe not that the higher powers are in this. It is further false speech—another shield for the working of evil by Oltis. And I know his will, his wish. He hath an eye for my riches.”

Atlano was confounded, but only for the moment. He made the movement as if to withdraw from her detaining hand. But she held on firmly, and continued:

“Yea, his will, his wish, is my riches. Bear to him the word to take all, if he will but leave me free. I speak for Æole, likewise.”

The king at this was more than confounded. His face paled, then flushed, and the words would not come. After a terrifying pause, he said in a tone subdued, conciliatory:

“Electra, another word, and thou wilt know sorrow. Mock not the will of Poseidon.”

She relinquished her hold on his robe, and fell on her knees to implore:

“O Poseidon, our father, our god, I ask this of thee: Is it thy will that I am here—that these wishes of king and priests shall have weight? Grant some sign, either of yea or nay. Is it thy will, or is it not thy will?”

Stricken with awe, king and priests listened to this first, bold appeal to Poseidon that had ever been made within the temple by aught save the initiated. And a fearful quiet succeeded. Unconsciously, each was expecting an answer. And it came. Far up, near the top of the high vaulted ceiling, a low, soft voice dropped the words:

“It is—not.”

They stared dumbly upward, awaiting more. In a few seconds, was added:

“But—out of this—will good work.”

The three unhappy ones took in a little hope. The priests appeared less terrified. Atlano, recovering, looked about in triumph, before deriding:

“That was a weak voice for a god. I thought the gods thundered when they spoke to men. Electra wilt thou try again?”

Electra shuddered. She felt it was blasphemy.

Atlano subjoined, “It is time to end this. Where is Sensel?”

From the door glided in the dust-colored shape.

“Sensel, lead these handmaids to their rooms.”

“King Atlano!” ejaculated Hellen.

“Ha—Hellen!—What wouldst thou? Pardon for thy wrongdoing of this morning?”

“Nay. Do with me for that as thou wilt, but tear not Æole from me.”

“It is ordered that ye shall part, not to meet.”

“Mercy!” besought poor Hellen, looking upward.

Upon them was again falling the voice, and firmer, louder:

"It is not ordered that the brother and sister shall thus part. With every sun, will they meet."

Appalling was the hush. In spite of himself, the king showed a mighty fear. He looked stealthily about him to see every face blanched. Indeed, their hearts felt blanched. Upward they gazed in voiceless horror, each as if intent upon finding some crevice, or flaw in the ceiling, that might explain the mysterious tones. But this was a stone ceiling, well cemented. Vain could be the most searching glances. Besides, the twilight was creeping on.

Protracted was the silence, until the king said, as if against his will:

"Hellen, it may be that thyself and Æole can meet each day. I shall speak with the high priest."

"King Atlano, wilt thou grant us Electra?"

A glad light came into Electra's eyes. This Atlano perceived.

"Hellen, thou askest too much. Electra cannot join you."

"Electra will join the brother and sister."

The voice was now faint, and far away. It seemed as if it came rather from above than beneath the ceiling. Some of the priests were so overcome as to fall on their knees abjectly. With uncertain voice, Atlano called to Sensel, who had again retired to the doorway:

"Sensel, lead these new handmaids to their building, and let them be served with food. In the morning, will their duties begin."

With one dread look at Hellen, Æole turned to comply. But Hellen seized and embraced her, and held tight Electra's proffered hand. Thus they stood, until Sensel said, softly:

"Come."

Then Æole drew away from her brother's arms, walking as if faint. Electra, with a proud air, went after her, and took her hand.

When they had passed out, the king said to the dazed Hellen:

"For thee, thou wilt go to the palace. In the morning, come hither for thy duty. But think not, I shall forget thy wrongdoing. Go!"

Hellen, following an attendant, tottered out.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEMPLE.

Æole and Electra followed the quivering Sensel into the passage, thence to its end, and through a door leading into a court about which was ranged the building allotted to the handmaids.

In this building, they ate and slept. As to recreation, there was time for none, rest being their one desire when relieved from duty; and thus there was no comradeship among them. They were virtually as cut off from each other as from their friends without.

Sensel conducted the newcomers to rooms that adjoined, and received their most grateful looks, though he shook his head as if to disclaim thanks. As he was about to leave them, he said:

"In a little while, will I send you food and drink."

They thanked him, this time in words; and looked after him until he had disappeared, when Electra whispered:

"Didst thou note his kind voice, the gentle look of those shining eyes? I believe him to be good—for all."

"Electra, I like him; I am sure he is good."

"Ah, thou art growing as the rose over it!"

"Let us look at our rooms, Electra."

These, they found, were good sized and well lighted. Rugs covered the smooth floors, and soft were the couches, easy the chairs. Besides, there was a table for each. The apertures had hangings of white linen, full and long, and an air of neatness prevailed.

Æole sighed, but said:

"We shall have some cheer, Electra."

"It is fair for a prison, Æole."

Æole stepped to her aperture to look out. Then she went into Electra's room, and inspected her view. When this was done, she said, with effort:

"Electra, wilt thou change rooms with me?"

"Yea. But why?"

"From my room I can see the water; the sight causeth pain. Thou knowest it leadeth to my home."

Her voice failed.

"Thou dear, sorrowing Æole!"

Electra took her in her arms and held her tight, and kissed her again and again.

"I am glad that my room will do—that those great trees hide that mocking water. Thou poor dear!"

"Electra, thou givest cheer. I should not grieve with thee to brighten."

Fondly she returned the embrace and kisses. Tears were springing in both pairs of eyes when a low tap was heard at the door.

Electra answered to admit Sensel. He, himself, was bearing the food and drink—thin cakes made of corn and honey, pomegranates, melons, and a sherbet of almonds and honey.

As he set these upon the table, he apologized:

"It was not my will to let another bear them."

"It pleaseth us; doth it not, Electra?"

"Of a truth it pleaseth. Sensel, I own I am hungry in spite of this prison." It was good to see her smile.

Æole smiled back, as she said:

"One cannot stay in the depths where thou art, Electra. It giveth a fine hunger to look at thee."

Sensel laughed charmingly, then bowing low, retired. At once they sat down, and with all their woe, did justice to the dainty fare.

When Sensel returned, they were sitting side by side, deep in conversation. He said:

"Ye see I come again. Have ye ended?"

Each smiled her *yes*—and such smiles! A dotard's head would have been turned. No wonder was it that his own smile answered, that his olive skin grew rosy, that his beautiful eyes became even more brilliant, that his tall body undulated with a grace surprising, that he almost forgot what he had come for. However, Electra's words somewhat restored him. She said, with feeling:

"Sensel, well hast thou treated us. Thou hast brought us what we like. Our thanks are thine."

He laughed so that they laughed to hear him; afterward, he looked at Æole, his color rising. Thus she said with fine graciousness:

"Sensel, our rest this night will be calmer that thou hast served us." And with this began to blush as Psyche might because of his gallant bow.

After the like attention to Electra, he thought of his dishes, and withdrew with the air of a prince.

"He is a wonder," ejaculated Electra.

"Yea; and one it will be hard to get over. Was there ever such grace as his in the bowing?"

"Never! His serpent self knoweth how to do things."

Then, fearing he might have heard this, Electra arose, and looked out with due caution. She returned, whispering:

"He standeth in deep thought at the end of the passage, and without the dishes or food. He hath passed his burden to some other. I have it! He would know more of us."

"Well is it, for we would know more of him." And Æole arose to peer out. "He hath gone," next came regretfully. "We shall not look upon him further this day."

They resumed their seats, again to confide their fears, or to remain quiet and muse. Upon parting for the night, they wept in each other's arms.

But they were young. Thus sleep wooed them from their sorrow, and they aroused only when the gong had sounded long in the morning. When Sensel came to conduct them to breakfast, they looked refreshed; and, if it must be told, sped rather buoyantly to the eating room.

Here they found about twenty of the handmaids. These were walking up and down, awaiting the serving of the meal. All were pretty and graceful. Indeed, a few were beautiful.

Their complexions varied from olive to red, their eyes were either gray, brown, or black; and the hair ranged from light brown to jet black. Thus, all looked curiously at Æole because of her auburn hair, blue eyes, and fair skin.

Without exception, their expressions were sweet and intelligent; and they responded with warmth when introduced to the newcomers. After a short talk, all sat down to the simple meal of pease, milk, bread, and fruit—Sensel, meanwhile, leaving them, until the meal should be ended.

When he returned, it was to bid the new handmaids follow him. This they did, passing from the eating room into the court, and thence to the passage they had been in the night before. Through its length they went, and paused at a great arched door at the end. Then Electra whispered:

"Æole, look within."

This door opened into the temple proper. Thus Æole, who had never attended the services because the queen did not, exclaimed of her exceeding wonder and admiration. For this is what she saw:

A great circular space, marble paved, and inclosed by walls and ceiling resplendent in settings of gold, silver, and orichalcum; at the eastern end, a richly engraved golden altar on which the sacred fire blazed high, and above which the morning light streamed in through a wide aperture; a row of handmaids and one priest standing by who had been in attendance the night through; flowers, flowers everywhere, on altar, statues, in niches, and the apertures; numbers of lamps of silver and gold pendent from the ceiling by silver chains or supported by alabaster stands—each lamp simulating a bird or flower, and all having a handle at one end and a beak at the other for pouring in oil, while through their upper surfaces projected wicks from the reservoirs below; great stands of alabaster bearing golden vessels in which smoked the incense;—and, wonder of wonders, the many golden statues!

After entering, Sensel led them among these golden statues—these representatives of Poseidon, Cleito, and the Nereids. Poseidon in his chariot, and with head reaching to the roof, was a piece of work so stupendous that Æole gazed bewildered, awed, until Sensel mercifully set her to counting the Nereids disporting about him on their dolphins.

But this was like making way through a labyrinth to the dazed Æole; and she found no rest until her eyes lighted on the beauteous Cleito, who was standing in her sweet serenity beside Poseidon. With a happy cry, she darted toward the entrancing figure, put her arms about it, and looked up with love into the tender face.

"Electra, thus looked my mother. It is herself in gold. My mother—my mother!"

"She was the wife of Poseidon. It is Cleito. Hast thou not heard the story? How, in the ages past, Poseidon came unto this island to find it a wilderness with her for its one fair flower? How he wedded her, and made of this a heaven almost? How ten sons were born to them in the palace which is now the temple above? How, when she died, he could no longer be king for grief? How he placed the crown upon his eldest, Atlas? How, after fond last words, he speeded away nevermore to be seen of the islanders, whose heavy hearts at last found cheer in the thought that their father was a god, and had gone back to his heaven from there to watch over and guide them?"

"I have heard it all from Queen Atlana. How dear is the story. Ah, Electra, if she were like this, what have we to fear?"

The tears were in Electra's eyes. And Sensel's, could it be that his were moist? Eager were his low tones.

"Fear not, Æole. The spirit of Cleito may not be able to aid thee, but the gods have other workers."

Then, perceiving that the priest was nearing them, he added in his ordinary tone:

"We may linger among these no longer. Thy duties, and those of Electra, are now for thy thought. This priest will show you all."

To this priest they were then introduced, and he at once began to initiate them in their duties. These were to dust, to arrange the flowers, to fill and light the lamps, to watch the sacred fire, and to assist in the chanting of the services. Thus entered they upon their servitude.

Through the day, the two looked forward to the night. Would Hellen be permitted to join them, in deference to the voice, or would the king be overruled? Their anxiety grew as the day waned; and, when dismissed late in the evening, they repaired to their rooms without hope. When ready for supper, and about to emerge from their doors, Sensel was perceived standing near. At their greeting, he came towards them smiling his brightest, and said:

"Hellen doth wait for you on the hill above, near the temple of Poseidon and Cleito. There ye may talk with him for an hour, when ye have ended your meal."

"It is good," returned Æole, overjoyed. "Sensel, we thank thee. To think the king doth grant it. We feared to hope."

"Yea, the king granteth it. But—let there be care," and turning quickly, he glided off.

After a hurried meal, they came out into the court to find him awaiting them. He led them to a low door towards the west, and opening this disclosed the hillside.

"Thou wilt find him above," he whispered, "and have a care. Well is it the moon riseth."

They hastened out, and upward to meet Hellen just below the gold inclosed temple. Much time did he take in embracing Æole, the while holding Electra's hand. When his ardor could no longer be prolonged, he said in lowest tone:

"I have found the spot for us. It is the watch tower on the northern slope. There can no ear hearken."

He then took the lead. When passing the sacred temple, Electra forgot not to fall on her knees in devotion to Poseidon and Cleito, and afterward besought their intercession. Her face was the brighter when she arose.

This watch tower stood below the temple of Poseidon and Cleito, and above the inclosures holding the sacred bulls that were roaming in their grounds with much of bellowing. This bellowing was indeed a safeguard, as it could but drown all sounds contiguous.

The round tower must have been fifty feet in height, stone steps leading up to its doorway which was fifteen feet from the ground. At the base, the interior was about seventy-five feet in diameter, the wall here being fifteen feet in thickness, this thickness decreasing gradually upward, until at the top it was but eight feet.

When inside, Hellen assisted each up the stone staircase. At the top, they seated themselves on the broad ledge; and when the bulls grew rampant of noise, Hellen explained:

"Ere night fell, the king sent me word that we could meet here on this part of the mountain for an hour of each evening, until it is his will to change. But I think he recked not of the bulls."

They laughed. Then Æole asked: "Who brought thee the word?"

"Sensel!"

"Say not his name in such tone," urged Electra. "He hath been very good to us."

"His serpent self, then. I believe he is half serpent."

“It is because of his dress, and his manner of moving and speeding,” interposed Æole. “But his voice is fine and rich in kind tones, and his eyes speak good. Though let us not talk of him now. Tell us of the queen.”

“She hath been sick through the day. None have seen her save the ladies Rica and Elna. They are in sore trouble. Ah, how my blood doth heat!”

“Of a truth thou lookest in a fever,” said Electra. “But calm thyself, for the air surgeth much about us.”

He smiled. Electra continued:

“Ah, the poor queen! How fond is her heart; yet she hath but a stone in the king!”

It was Hellen’s turn. “Electra, thou speakest to be heard—in thy warmth. We must have a care. The air surgeth, and in it there are ears. Thus it is wise to keep cool, and speak low.”

Good was it to hear Electra laugh.

“Ah, Hellen, but thou hast the last. Though for this time—alone.”

Here Æole, who had been far off in her abstraction, asked:

“Hellen, thinkest thou the queen will see thee on the morrow?”

“It is my hope.”

“Bid her take cheer. Tell her my duties are light, that my room is next to that of my sister Electra. Tell her my fond thoughts are hers, that I live on my hope to get to her.”

“I will.”

“And give her my fond greeting,” spoke Electra. “She was the friend of my mother, and I saw her much until these last years.”

“Electra, why did we never meet thee before?”

“Queen Atlana and mine Uncle Oltis have not been friends since my grandfather Olto died. The queen doth think my grandfather was hastened to his death through the lack of care of Oltis.” Her voice had sunk to a whisper, and she looked cautiously about her. “That is why the queen never cometh to the temple. That is why I have been kept from her.”

“Oltis is a blight on all that is good,” responded Hellen.

“Yea, and he doth master the king. It is no wonder that the queen doth shun him.”

Then followed quiet, the quiet of despair, almost. The three looked sadly down from their eyry upon the scene beneath—upon the zones of water[17] with their boats and galleys; upon the zones of land[17] with their guardhouses and race courses; upon the plain to the west with its many streams, its pyramids, its denseness of verdure, its brightly lighted habitations; upon the restless bulls in their inclosures; upon the dwellings of the artificers, miners and husbandmen that spread northward beyond the third zone of water; upon the mountains towering to the northeast; upon the ocean to the east. At length Æole spoke.

“This is a most smiling spot. Why are not the people better?”

“They lack thought for gods and man,” answered Electra.

“Yet—they show faith in worship.”

“It is the letter not the spirit. Theirs is a weak faith; their only feeling a warm one for self.”

“Yea, they are sunk in thought of self, and thus in the placing high of self,” added Hellen.

“It is too true. Atlano and Oltis would be gods. They would scale heaven—there to be waited upon by even Amen and Poseidon. Ah, what a spirit of evil hath mine uncle—he brother of my mother!” Poor Electra turned away that they might not see her emotion.

“Æole, Electra, I call to mind that, in Pelasgia, we were taught to put away self, to seek the truth. Æole, I often heard our father say: ‘It is much to win a battle, more to do a kind

act.'"

"Ah, Hellen, Hellen! Of late, I dream much of our father. But last night, he came to me in sleep, and whispered, 'Æole, all will be well. Have hope.' Thinkest thou it was his spirit talking to mine? Is it that in sleep our spirits so throw off the bonds of flesh as to have full being? Is it that they can see, can hold sweet speech with those beyond? Yea, it is, it is! I know that our father is not of earth—that he cometh to me in spirit. And our mother? If he hath gone, she hath not staid. They look on us from above."

"Æole, wouldst thou rave? Dost thou think the above, a place of torment?"

"Hellen!"

"Could they look upon us would they joy?"

"They could see beyond this."

"It is well thou canst hold such a thought—better if thou canst believe such—best of all, if thou wouldst have them dead. But I doubt them. Often I think what if they live to forget us. The horror of it!"

"The horror is in such a thought, Hellen. Wouldst thou sin?"

"Æole, it is they who sin, thus to forget their children."

"Hellen," cried Electra, "thou hast shocked Æole. Look how white she is."

Indeed Æole was not only white, but quivering of her wounded love and indignation, and she turned her head away when Hellen, of his contrition, begged for her forgiveness. A miserable quiet fell upon the three until Electra said below her breath:

"Someone cometh down the mountain side."

"It is that shaking Sensel!" exclaimed Hellen.

They remained still until the figure came beneath them, and proved to be Sensel. He called softly:

"Are ye above?"

Electra answered: "Yea."

He returned: "It is past the hour. Thyself and Æole should be in the temple."

"We will come at once, Sensel," spoke Æole, firmly.

This, her firmness, was the result of Hellen's rebellious expression. Thereupon, she made the movement to descend, but Hellen heeded it not. Then she called:

"Sensel, wilt thou come up?"

"Never!" cried Hellen. Starting to his feet, he held out his hand, and led her half way down, there to meet Sensel, who had been quick to respond.

"Hellen, thou wilt go back for Electra," said she. "I will go the rest of the way with Sensel." Then quickly drawing her hand from his, she gave it to Sensel, and down they went.

Hellen returned for Electra. When without, they beheld the other pair already far up the hill. The discomfited Hellen could only mutter, as he began to lead Electra:

"I merit this. But never have I seen Æole thus."

"Dost thou think thou canst ever know a woman, Hellen?" was the unsatisfactory return.

In unbroken silence, they continued their way. When the advancing pair were joined at the hillside door, Hellen put his arm about Æole, and kissed her good-night, afterward whispering, "I was wrong."

"But I have not been right."

With this, she kissed him again and again, so that he was comforted. When he had well pressed Electra's hand, off he sped.

The next two nights, Hellen bore no better tidings of the queen. She still continued too feeble to see any but her ladies, therefore the three young hearts grew in sadness.

But, on the fourth day, he received the message by Azu that the queen would speak with him; and, overjoyed, followed the smiling pygmy to the bower room, there to meet the Lady Rica who conducted him to an inner room. Here, on a couch, lay Atlana; and, as he approached, his joy became dread, so great was the change in her. Listlessly she held out her hand, which the affectionate youth fell on his knees to kiss, while the heavy sighs came fast. When Rica had withdrawn, Atlana murmured:

"Hellen, be not cast down. I am better, though weak, weak. Tell me, how is Æole?"

"Dear Queen, Æole is well in body, but sore in mind because of thee. She hath not smiled for days."

"My poor Æole."

"But for Electra she could not have borne it."

"Electra!" In spite of her weakness the queen half arose to stare at him in doubt and terror.

"Yea, Electra. She is a handmaid, and was called with Æole."

"Electra a handmaid! She is a princess—is of our blood. Hellen, thou art wrong."

"Dear Queen, Electra, the niece of Oltis, is she that I mean—a maiden most fair, most bright. There could be but one Electra with such eyes, such a smile, such a grand spirit. To look upon her is to fall at her feet."

The queen lay back and moaned: "Electra it is—it is." Then clasping her hands she implored: "O Poseidon, is this the next? And canst thou look on? O Amen, hast thou no shafts of fire?"

Hellen was awestricken at the intense despair of her tone, the reproach even.

"Dear, dear Queen, be not so wrought. Thou wilt die."

"Nay, Hellen." To his amazement, she again half arose. "Nay, I shall not die. I will live—live to bring to naught these fiends—these monsters of false dealing. Yet, ah, Atlano, Atlano!" She began to weep in a way that rent him.

After a little, with the hope to divert her, he said:

"Electra hath told us of thy fond feeling for her mother."

"Yea. We were most dear to each other. The horror of it, the crime, that Electra hath been called to the temple!"

"Queen Atlana, why is it a crime?"

"Hellen, I will tell thee." She looked about her in fear, before whispering:

"It is—that, at times, the handmaids have been called to the inner holy place, where only the highest priests and the king can serve. And—these handmaids never have been heard of more. Never hath one been seen after passing into the inner holy place."

Alas for poor Hellen! He could only break away and utter cry after cry of dismay until speech came.

"What can I do? What can I do? Ah, why have I not known this?"

"It is wise for these Atlanteans, in their lack of spirit, to be quiet, Hellen. But, hearken." Her tone was calm with all its anguish. Insensibly, he also calmed, and again knelt beside her.

"I must tell thee—these handmaids who have thus vanished were the fairest of their sisters. Thus do I fear for Æole and Electra."

Hellen, groaning, sank prostrate, unnerved.

“Thinkest thou, Hellen, they were yielded on the altar, the gifts of a wicked worship? Or what else thinkest thou? What thoughts have been mine since the first lovely young girl was taken from the others. And I have had from Atlano but laughter, mockery, when I have questioned.”

“Queen Atlana, thou hast rent me!”

Hellen had arisen to pace wildly: and then stopped, and fell to considering after the manner of one demented.

“Hellen, it will not do to give way as if mad. Rather, case thyself in rock. Thou shouldst be serpent and dove, wouldst thou help Æole and Electra.”

“Easy it is to talk thus!” He paused, choked for the moment. “But—what can I do? How can I help them? Oh, ye base Pelasgians, to leave us to this fate! I would wish to be born of stones, iron—not of such flesh and blood!”

“Hellen, thou art going mad, thus to charge thy parents, and such parents! Call to mind that thou hast told me of their truth, their care. Nay—thou art not going mad—thou art mad. Yea, demons hold thee. Leave me, Hellen!”

The queen’s indignation would have overwhelmed any save this fiery, reckless, despairing youth. He was too far gone to be reached by reproach of any kind. Thus, he turned away, saying:

“Thou hast said it, Queen Atlana. I will leave thee. My own bitter thoughts are more dear than the cheer thou givest. But with thee I leave my fond wishes, for thou hast been father, mother in one, the gods bless thee!”

With this he began to hasten away.

The queen watched him in anguish. He must not leave with such a sore spirit. When he was even at the door, she murmured:

“Hellen, one more word.”

“Queen Atlana, thou hast given me too many.”

Though he had paused and turned full around.

“I am sure all will go well, if thou wilt wait and be calm.”

“Have we not waited—years? And this is what they bring.”

“It may be the first step to your home.”

Hellen walked toward her with eager face. “That calleth to my mind this,” he said.

Then he related what had occurred between himself and the red-garbed figure, and dwelt upon the intervention of the mysterious voice. The queen acknowledged the force of Electra’s reason for being dragged to the temple by bending her head in shame; and raised it not until he spoke of the voice. At the end, she was so awed as to fall back overcome. Her lips then moved as if in prayer, and Hellen distinguished:

“O Amen—O Poseidon—ye have not forgotten, as I feared.”

She continued quiet for a little, her eyes closed. Then she raised with sudden strength and brightening look.

“Hellen, hope. The gods answer. I feel it.”

“Could I but feel it. Are there gods?”

“Hellen, no more. Call to mind thy last sin. There are limits.”

“Forgive me, dear Queen.”

“The king seeth the powers above are in this, or he would not have yielded. He hath granted Æole and thyself much.”

“Every night since have we met, and Electra hath been with us each time.”

“Dear Electra. Hellen, she is noble. Such care was hers of her mother. She is true and fond.”

“Do I not know it?”

Then he blushed because of the queen’s keen look.

“Think not too much of her, Hellen. It will but cause thee further sorrow.”

“Dear Queen Atlana, didst thou know her father?”

“Yea. Cairais was a most noble prince of Khemi. He came hither to visit, and learn of our land of Chimu. Then it was that he met Lustra, the sister of Oltis. At once were they drawn to each other; and soon were wedded, and went to Khemi. They staid in Khemi several years; and there was Electra born. But Lustra began to fail, and pined for Atlantis. Cairais brought her back, and she grew better. Then he sickened and passed away before we thought him in danger. Lustra so mourned that she again failed; and was not long in going to him. Through her time of pain, the child Electra showed a grand heart. She was a woman in thought and help.”

“Have not Æole and I felt it?”

“Her mother was good and most fair; her father, noble of heart and mind. Electra, in truth, is their daughter.”

“But—dear Queen—why should the Atlanteans bear as they do?”

“They have been changing fast since the rule of Oltis. They are blind, lost to feeling, sunk in pleasure. When some have risen in their anger they have been sore treated. The father of the first handmaid that was called became too questioning, too threatening. Therefore, he and his family were banished to Chimu. After a few such cases, the people yielded. Thou knowest even I was forced to yield.”

“How?”

“Whilst I clung to Æole, a drug was held at my nostrils that made me, for the while, lose all sense. Their arts are many.”

“I shall be crazed again!”

“Be calm, Hellen. Call to mind that the gods are hearkening. My dreams long have boded some dire evil to this island.”

“May such come. May this island sink into these waters, and soon—to rid the world of such wicked work!”

“Hellen, thou knowest not what thou sayest. Yet, thou dost but speak my dreams.”

She covered her eyes with her hands, and tremor after tremor passed over her.

“Dear Queen Atlana, we will cease this talk so full of horror. Let me kiss thy hand. Then will I go.”

“Yea, Hellen. It were better thou shouldst leave me for a little.”

She held out her hands. He rubbed them gently, magnetically, so that she became calmer, and soon lay quiet. Then he arranged the cushions, and placed the shawl over her most tenderly.

“Dear Queen Atlana, mayest thou now slumber. I go for a little.”

“My fond wishes to Æole and Electra. And bid them hope.”

“I will.”

After kissing her hands he went from her. The ladies Rica and Elna then came in and fanned her until sleep came.

Alas, poor Queen Atlana!

CHAPTER VIII.

POSEIDON'S FESTIVAL DAY.

It was an hour past noon when Hellen left the palace. Soon he was traversing the great roadway among throngs of people, some on foot, some on horseback, some in chariots; and all, like himself, bound for the great temple.

For this was the Festival day of Poseidon, and he must now be honored less from love than from habit. So much had this people fallen.

This great roadway was stupendous of construction. Of thirty feet in width, it coiled about the mountain, spiral-like, from the base to the summit fifteen hundred feet above, in terraces of a hundred feet in height—these terraces being interrupted only about the vast groundwork of the temple, and there being continued in tunnels. In many places the roadway was cut out of the solid rock; and, in others, built over solid masonry in which the arch was a conspicuous figure; whilst transverse paths led from it up and down in numerous available points, causing the mountain to be accessible in every part. In this manner did the ancient Atlanteans testify their homage for Poseidon and Cleito, whose temple surmounted all—whose temple now was so seldom approached even by those considering themselves the most devout.

Along the roadway, with the throng, speeded Hellen until he arrived at the wide transverse road that curved upward to the Grove of Poseidon and through the grove to the great court of the temple.

This Grove of Poseidon, dense in its shade, was planted in cypresses and palms that stood in groups of threes, and about it were stationed columns of orichalcum inscribed with the ancient laws, both civil and religious. The largest of these columns stood in front of the gateway of the great court, and of this more will be said anon. Sufficient for the present is it to add that, as every Atlantean passed it, he was supposed to bow in veneration. Though of late years even this simple observance was falling into almost utter neglect.

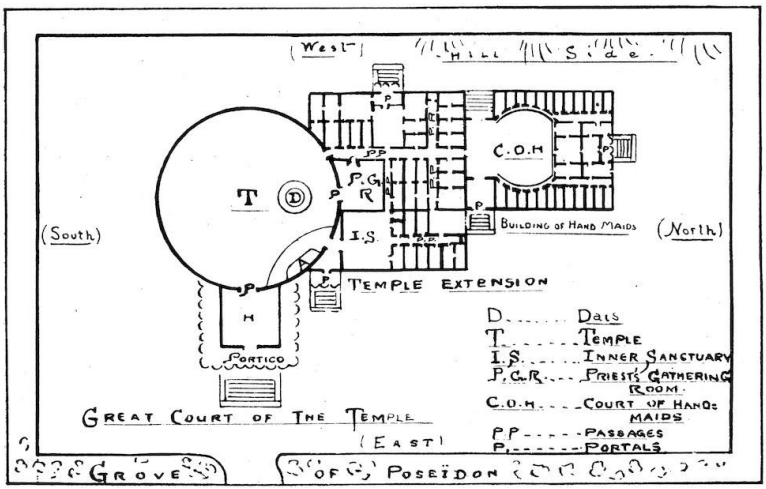
Hellen entered the gateway to find the great court quite filled with people. On he pressed to the main portico—that vast portico about which were ranged the golden statues of Poseidon's ten sons and their wives.[18] Here he paused, as did others, to admire the garlands flung about these, as well as gaze upon the scene below, of mountain with encircling zones of land and water, of the beautiful Luith winding to the sea, of that sea spreading blue and serene to the eastward. And Hellen thought that never had a day been so fair, never had the view been so enchanting.

He passed through the portal, and into a spacious hall whose stone ceiling was supported by columns of granite and syenite. From this hall opened the great circular temple proper, its wide portal facing the entering one; and both looking to the east.

Just within this sacred portal, Hellen took his stand so as to face the great altar to the right. As the people entered, they also turned to face both portal and altar, and consequently the east. Of the four cardinal points, the east was held in the most reverence, it being deemed the especial abiding place of the gods.

At the northern curve of the temple were three doors that led to the temple extension. The one toward the east opened into a passage leading to the inner holy place, or sanctuary, and through it only the king, high priest, chief priest, and the few priests highest in authority could pass. The middle door admitted the inferior priests from their gathering room. By the third door, toward the west, the handmaids entered from the long passage that extended northward to their own building. On the left of this passage were the rooms reserved for the priests and the few male attendants. On its right, the first door opened into the great gathering room, and farther along were other doors leading to rooms connecting with this that were sacred to the priests. As the rooms on the right of the passage, as well as the gathering room, were inside rooms, they would have been dark had not this part of the extension been run up higher, thus admitting of apertures in the walls just below the vaulted ceilings. To the right of this middle part, was the inner sanctuary with its rear connecting rooms. These were lighted by apertures; and those of the inner sanctuary and the principal rooms overlooked the eastern coast.

On the great stone dais, holding the golden altar and leading to the inner sanctuary, were gathered the priests, chanting. Toward the portal were the minstrels with lyre, syrinx, harp, pipes, cymbals, and drum. At intervals these accompanied the priests, the people swelling the refrains.



On a dais near the middle door, sat the king in his robes of state, and about him on a lower dais were seated the nobles and their wives. Grouped about the statues of Poseidon and Cleito were the handmaids, attired in long flowing robes of thin white linen and garlanded with lilies. Each held a bunch of rarest flowers, beside. A charming spectacle were they of youthful grace and innocence. But the despairing Hellen, as he gazed, could but shudder and grow faint at thought of their probable fate.

At first he could not distinguish Æole, nor Electra. But erelong, he perceived them to the left of the statue of Poseidon; and soon was brightening under a loving look from the one and a smile from the other. Then, so great became the pressure of the crowd, that he lost sight of them, and thus turned his attention to the statues of the Nereids nearest him. These, as well as the others, were lavishly decorated with flowers conspicuous among which were the blue lotus, chrysanthemum, anemone, acacia blossom, convolvulus, water lily, rose, tuberose, lilac, and the graceful plumes of the papyrus. Tall shoots of the last,

over ten feet in height, also adorned the apertures, producing fine effect; whilst garlands and festoons hung from every available point. Most elegantly did the vast interior bear testimony to the Atlanteans' skill in flower culture.

When the temple was full, and but few stragglers arriving, the great silver gong was sounded before the altar by a priest. Profound became the quiet. And, almost instantly, the door leading to the inner sanctuary opened to admit the high priest, the chief priest, and the few priests of superior rank.

Of course, Oltis was the observed of all, not so much because of his office, nor the fact of his officiating so seldom, as that the people held an unconscious fear and distrust of him. Every eye was fixed.

Now, as he moved with slow, stately step toward the altar, a mighty shock came upon these quiescent islanders. Oltis had dared to make another innovation upon the ancient sacred customs! He had discarded the white linen robe of the priests, the silver circlet with its sapphire, and was resplendent in a purple woolen robe embroidered in gold and a miter richly jeweled. Worse, he was wearing these with an air indicating he would brook no interference.

The great throng began to sway, and murmur; and those that could, looked from Oltis to King Atlano, inquiringly, resentfully.

But Atlano was smiling back as response to the salutation of the high priest, appearing to think it in order that the priestly vestments should rival his own in color and splendor. For Atlano wore the royal purple sacred ever before to the king, and his high crown was no richer in gems than the high priest's miter.

When the king showed no disapproval, the murmurs of dissent grew louder, and even began to swell above the anthem the priests were raising to the accompaniment of the minstrels. But this anthem was long, and in honor of Poseidon, and of such beauty that the dissenting ones began to listen, charmed. When it ceased, the vast assemblage had calmed.

Then Oltis swept before the altar to chant with melodious voice an invocation to Poseidon, the while heaping upon it the fruits and flowers the people presented for offering. When the altar could hold no more, he turned and implored blessings from the gods in return for the virtues of their monarch. He dwelt long upon the king's moderation, justice, self-command, generosity, love of truth, freedom from covetousness and sensuality in so fulsome a manner that Hellen writhed; and next caught himself groaning as he wondered over the easy forbearance of this listening people.

When Oltis had finished, and was raising his head proudly to survey the immense audience, Hellen took in as never before his strong likeness to Atlano. Both were tall, powerfully formed, strong featured, slightly receding of forehead and chin, red of skin, and fiery-eyed. But, in Oltis' face was a look of dissimulation and craft that repelled even more than Atlano's sensual expression. In a flash Hellen understood.

"Ah," thought he, "Oltis hath aims beyond this temple. Can it be that he pandereth to Atlano with the view to be king himself? That royal robe meaneth much!"

While Oltis stood gazing at the people, and receiving with unconcern their dissatisfied looks, a great stir was heard in the entrance hall. As this increased, every eye that could turned to the portal, to behold there entering—Queen Atlana with her ladies, whilst Azu himself held up her long purple train!

At this most unusual appearance, the audience went wild—smiling, waving their hands, bursting into enthusiastic cries. The Atlanteans loved their queen, and her long absence from worship had been wondered at and deplored. Her vacant chair had been a protest of which they had not felt free to speak. But now all must be right, as she was coming back. So they went wild of their delight.

The astonished king had arisen. Oltis stood fixed and staring. Queen Atlana, crowned, clad in purple and gold, and ablaze with jewels, slowly advanced—the people joyfully giving way—until she had come nigh the king. With her ladies' assistance she mounted the few steps of the dais; and sank into the chair she had been wont to occupy at the side of the king, but which now was placed toward the edge of the dais. Then her ladies formed about her, and, following her example, bent in prayer.

Intense had grown the quiet. They were as spellbound, waiting for the queen to raise her head. When she did, it was to look toward the king. But his face was averted. Then her glance was toward the priests. Breathlessly watched the people. How would she accept the high priest's latest profanity?

Her eye was quick to distinguish Oltis in his royal robing. And she started violently. For this the people were prepared. But the olden spirit of Atlantis stirred within them, when, accepting to the full his intent, she arose and stared at him, astounded!

Despite himself, Oltis' eyes fell beneath hers. This encouraged the awakening islanders, who began to murmur rebelliously, even to hiss. Yes, it had come to this—a high priest of Atlantis was suffering indignity in the temple, and from its worshipers!

Shuddering, the queen again looked toward the king, to meet his scornful smile. This smile the people beheld, and further, the grand manner in which the queen drew herself up and questioned with her eloquent eyes. In their appreciation, they burst forth into their favorite cry of "All dear is Queen Atlana!" but at once hushed upon perceiving the baleful looks the king was casting at her.

Mute of their rage, they began to sway tumultuously, vengefully: then made as if they would array themselves about her as she tottered, and leaned upon the Lady Rica. And the ensuing mutterings grew into imprecations.

At this serious moment, diversion occurred. The door leading to the inner sanctuary opened, admitting a figure taller than any in that assemblage, and of such majesty that the surging crowd quieted, and a few cried out in awe:

"The 'Silent Priest'! The 'Silent Priest'!"

The 'Silent Priest' bowing in grand, yet benign manner, advanced until almost beside Oltis; then, facing the people, signed that the murmurings must cease, and the ceremonies continue. Most graceful and significant were his gestures: and even Atlano and Oltis followed them as if charmed.

As to Queen Atlana, her amazement was supreme. Never had she seen this priest, though much had she wondered over his mysterious advent upon the island, and what such presence meant. Thus she stood transfixed.

Rarely had the 'Silent Priest' appeared at the services. Yet, among the people, it was already whispered that, since his coming, things had changed for the better. Fewer were the animal offerings, and no handmaids had been forced into the inner sanctuary. Now it was plain that he exercised some subtle force not only upon the subordinate priests, but even upon King Atlano and the high priest as these were regarding him in reverence, in subservience.

When the king and queen were seated, the 'Silent Priest' went before the altar, there to raise his eyes and move his lips in prayer. But no sound came forth, for the 'Silent Priest' was voiceless. But such were his magnetism and expression that king, queen, priests and people followed him in awe, and partly comprehending.

When his prayer was finished, he went from the altar, a little to one side, and stood absorbed.

Then Oltis moved before the altar, and signed to the handmaids. These began to sing in such fashion that the people listened, enthralled. Soon they were gliding about the statues

of Poseidon and Cleito, and in and out among the Nereids, still singing. To Hellen, knowing what he did, it was unbearable to listen to the sweet voices, and watch the graceful movements of these beautiful, innocent, perhaps doomed young girls, each wearing so charmingly her robe of filmy white, her garland of purest lilies.

As they moved about Poseidon, they threw in his chariot their bunches of flowers, so that quickly he was standing amid heaping floral tributes. And Cleito was not neglected, for each took off the garland running from shoulder to waist, to lay it about her, after stooping to kiss her hand. And, oh, the grace of it all!

Quite a while did this last, to the delight of the beholders. After the handmaids had again resumed their places, all grew grave, for the time had come when Oltis was to deliver the speech eulogistic of Poseidon.

He stood up high before them in front of the altar, and his haughty tones rang out:

"Gracious King, Gracious Queen, Priests, Nobles, People: another year hath brought plenty upon Atlantis. Another year have the gods smiled: another year have they breathed into our minds their will. And, this day, as a year since, yea, as thousands of years since, we meet to joy in the festival of our Father Poseidon, and to plead for his further favor. I, his high priest, though far from worthy—"

Here was most fearful interruption. From the statue of Poseidon emanated a groan; and then it flung at Oltis this.

"Why art thou far from worthy?"

Oltis shrank back, mute, and gazed in horror at the statue. The people, screaming in terror, fell against each other. The king and queen started to their feet, and stood rigid.

But Oltis, with greatest effort, rallied. In loud, though shaking tones, he continued:

"I call myself far from worthy, because with the years I the better know my failings, my evil turnings—"

"Is thy new robe an evil turning?" was now spoken abruptly by a powerful voice at the rear of the assemblage.

There was a simultaneous looking backward to discover this speaker. Oltis stared in the same direction, paling even to his lips. Fearful was the hush that followed. At length, he desperately resumed:

"On this day so promising—"

But paused to gaze, petrified, at the people, who were reflecting his stony horror.

Far off, beneath the waters, was beginning a loud, menacing rumbling! It was approaching the island! On—on—it was coming—even to beneath their feet! Was the sea pouring into the bowels of the earth?

As they stood dazed, the massive walls began to shake violently, threatening to fall inward—the accompaniment to the earth now quivering fast beneath—that earth they had deemed so solid, so stable!

With the cry of panic, the islanders began to rush upon each other, no purpose in their movements. Great loss of life would have resulted had not the silver gong sounded imperatively.

The frantic people turned to see it held by the 'Silent Priest,' who was still standing in his place with mien undaunted. He returned their agonized looks by smiles; then gesticulated that the worst was over. Indeed, the earth was already quieting. Next, he pointed to Queen Atlana, as if beseeching their consideration. They looked to perceive her fainting in the arms of the Lady Rica. Then they calmed.

The oscillations had ceased. Atlano, haggard and trembling, signed that the queen must be taken out. Accordingly, she was placed in a chair and borne by some of the nobles to her

chariot, the people looking on mute, motionless.

But when she had been borne out, they began to hasten after her, with no regard for the benediction Oltis was endeavoring to mutter. When king and priests alone remained, these, by one accord, speeded to their respective passages, thence to escape into the air. Surely such a convulsion must have direfully disfigured the face of nature.

But without, all was bright, serene, unchanged. Not a stone had fallen. But—what did it mean? Never within the island's existence, had there been any evidence of the earth's instability. And it was Poseidon's Festival Day! Was there warning in this?

CHAPTER IX.

THE 'SILENT PRIEST.'

During the earthquake, Hellen had tried to force his way to Æole and Electra in face of the panic-stricken throng pressing toward the portal. He would have been crushed had not the people quieted under the magnetism of the 'Silent Priest.'

Æole and Electra were standing close to the statue of Poseidon when the queen became prostrated because of the king's baleful looks. And they could not hope to get beside her, so great was the surging of the people.

Then appeared this 'Silent Priest.' From the first glance, Æole had stood motionless, fascinated; and aroused only when her companions began to sing and march. During the evolutions, her eyes were continually turning to him. When in her place again beside the statue, she saw only him, heard not Oltis when he attempted his speech. Then came the shock of the mysterious voice.

"Ah, Electra, it speaketh again," she whispered: "It is the voice of our friend."

"Yea, but not the voice of a friend to these Atlanteans. Look at the queen!"

Æole turned to perceive both king and queen gazing stonily at the statue. She responded:

"Electra, I fear for her. Let us get to her."

Desperately they tried to make their way, but vain was their puny strength. It was some relief when the queen sat down; but again she arose when the voice came from the rear; and was as marble until the earthquake when she fell in Rica's arms.

Æole, of her dizziness, would have fallen also, had not a strong arm upheld her, and a tender voice whispered:

"Æole, strength. The worst is over."

It was Sensel, and he was offering his other arm to Electra; whilst about him were flocking the nearest handmaids, as though he alone could save them.

It was at this moment that Hellen succeeded in getting sight of the two. Reaching an aperture, he sprang up among its clustering papyrus plumes to perceive them with Sensel. By this time, the people were quieting, and Queen Atlana was being borne out. As the throng pressed after her, Hellen was the better able to watch. Great was his relief when Sensel began marshaling the handmaids to their door. "If he can but get them to the air," he thought, "before more evil cometh."

Hid among the papyrus, he waited until all had passed out even to the priest and handmaids in attendance upon the altar fire.

For once the great temple was deserted. Hellen was alone. As he realized this, an idea came that he was quick to act upon. Springing from the aperture, he darted across the great space toward the door of the handmaids, opened this, and beheld, stretching deep, the passage through which Sensel had conducted him to the priests' gathering room; and knew that some distance down, was the side passage leading to the cell where he had seen

the red-garbed figure. At the very end was a door leading, probably, to the building of the handmaids. If he could but run down this long passage, and come upon Æole and Electra!

As if urged by a force uncontrollable, he sped onward—his eyes, his thoughts on the door at the end. But, when midway, was arrested, and by a voice. It was as though a wall had sprung up in front of him. Low, strong in fear, it warned.

"Rash youth, thou wilt ruin all. Go back ere the priests come. Wouldst thou die?"

Hellen still would have pressed on.

"Call to mind thy promise. If here thou art found, at an end are the meetings with thy sister—the hope of freedom."

Hellen, now irresolute, was looking about him for the red-garbed figure, when Sensel appeared through the far door. For one moment, the latter stood motionless. Then he bounded toward Hellen. Seizing his wrist, he cried:

"If thou lovest thy sister, out of this. Fly!"

But Hellen shook off his hand as he answered:

"Touch me not. I will go of my own will."

Sensel, holding with the more strength, began to draw him along as with the force of the wind. On—on—they sped, and into the temple. Here it was still empty, but voices could be heard in the passage leading to the inner sanctuary. Sensel cried:

"On to the portal!" still holding fast. And Hellen, at last realizing his rashness, complied. But not to escape. The sanctuary door opened as they neared the portal; and in came Oltis and Urgis.

The former's assurance had returned. But he paused in dismay at beholding the temple thus deserted, and Hellen and Sensel by the portal. The former was freeing himself; the latter looked worsted, conquered rather than conquering.

Hurriedly the priests approached them. And Oltis asked:

"Sensel, what doeth the youth here with thee?"

"He went not with the others. I would have forced him away."

"The place of a messenger is in the outer court," said Urgis sternly.

"He is the brother of Æole the handmaid." Oltis' tone was meaningful; and his glare boded such evil that Hellen was roused to resentment. Though he returned with surprising calm:

"Yea, I am the brother of Æole—her wretched brother. When all fled the temple, I staid that I might follow her. I was making my way through the passage when set upon by Sensel, and carried back as if by the wind."

Oltis looked at Urgis. Triumph was in his eye. And triumph responded. Though Urgis, in hypocritical tone said:

"The temple doth pride itself upon this strength of Sensel."

"I thought I was strong," continued Hellen, as he regarded Sensel.

"Thou wilt find thy strength as naught here. Tell me—how far was he, Sensel?"

"Most Honored and High Priest, he was well in the passage. But I seized him, and speeded him here."—Sensel's tone was very low.

"Didst thou see aught?" demanded Oltis of Hellen.

"I saw naught but doors and Sensel. Those doors are the same I saw when brought before thee, Priest Urgis."

"Thou shouldst say, 'Chief of the Priests,'" corrected Urgis, angrily.

"Then,—'Chief of the Priests, Urgis.'" And Hellen bowed to the ground, but with little of reverence.

His manner was not lost upon Oltis. Though smooth his tones, his eyes emitted a lurid satisfaction.

"He who cometh into that passage not bidden, mocketh the holy laws of the temple. There is sore pain for this sin."

"There should be sore pain, then, for other sins. The presence of the handmaids is a sin. Are the gods waiting?"

Sensel's eyes were piercing the rash Hellen, in their indignation. Further, did they contain warning? It seemed as though the latter predominated as Hellen looked from Oltis to him. As for Oltis, he was exultant; though most grave was his expression.

"The youth would chide us of the great temple—would even chide the gods. For such sin there is worse than pain. He will go to the 'Deeps.'—Sensel, the guards!"

Sensel turned as if to obey, and then paused to arrange his sandal.

"Hasten, Sensel. Every moment he doth stay bringeth taint to the temple."

"Taint!" returned Hellen. "It is ye—thyself and Oltis—who bring taint upon the temple!—Thou, Oltis, hast brought upon its face the black look of guile, the slime of sense, the marring of every line of that pure grace so long its own.—Tell me, where are the handmaids thou didst thrust into thine inner holy place? Are they to be my neighbors in thy 'Deeps'?"

It was a revelation, the shrinking back of the two. Never before had been such braving, such questioning! Sensel and Hellen read but the one thing from their cowering attitude.

As the four stood mute, the door of the gathering room was heard to open; and there entered the 'Silent Priest' and several other priests. The latter at once resumed their neglected duties; but the silent one hastened toward the group by the portal.

Oltis and Urgis were again breathing. And, strangely, a great hope possessed Hellen as the 'Silent Priest' came opposite him. Eloquent was the mysterious priest's glance from one to the other, so eloquent that Oltis, as if against his will, explained:

"This youth hath sinned. He pressed within the west passage in search of his sister, the handmaid Æole. Further, he hath scorned, mocked, Urgis and myself. For these, he will go to the 'Deeps.'"

By a gesture, the 'Silent Priest' deprecated this going to the 'Deeps.' But Oltis, though with less of determination in voice and manner, iterated:

"He will go to the 'Deeps.'"

Merely by the movement of his expressive hands, the silent one referred to the earthquake and the mysterious voice, and advised clemency as the youth had erred from love of his sister. All Hellen was as quick to comprehend as the priests, so ably did the gestures speak. But Oltis continued:

"He hath chided the gods. It is the crowning sin. Sensel, the guards!"

Sensel still hesitated. The 'Silent Priest' had glanced at him, his glance expressing negation. As he stood irresolute, unmindful of the indignation of Oltis. The 'Silent Priest' took from an inside pocket a small roll of papyrus, and signed to Sensel for reed and ink.

When these were brought, he wrote in large Atlantean characters swiftly:

"It is the Festival of Poseidon. On this day, mercy is ever shown all sinners. It is one of the oldest laws, the law of King Atlas."

Oltis and Urgis read. And Oltis, with exceeding reluctance, replied:

"We know it. It hath ever been kept."

The silent one wrote again:

"There is an olden prophecy—'*When the stranger from a far land would seek his own within the temple, the high priest is safe in forbearing of the heart.*'"

"A prophecy I laugh at," sneered Oltis. Though his uncertain looks testified to the opposite.

He of silence again wrote:

"Putting the olden law beside the olden prophecy meaneth much on this day."

Oltis and Urgis looked at each other in doubt, more than in doubt. For fear lurked behind the doubt—the fear that comes of dread of penalty—the fear that will attack the stoutest, most reckless villains, at times. What was there in this mysterious priest that served to tongue-tie them, as it were—yet loosened every evil and falsity of their souls until their minds beholding, shrank from such as though they were ghastly phantoms? Finally, Urgis, in his quality of lesser villain, broke silence.

"Oltis, it would be well to think upon it. Let us speak together."

"I will speak here," vociferated Oltis. "There needeth no meddling priest, no speaking together to show me my duty. If olden law and olden prophecy join, I must obey. The youth can go free. But woe to him should he sin again!"

Well was it for Sensel that the two saw not the glad light that came into his eyes, the happy color that swept over his face. As for the silent one, the expression that irradiated him was not detected, either, as, at the beginning of Oltis' words to Urgis, he had turned as if to walk away. Yet again, and instantly, did he face them, for Hellen's voice was ringing:

"O 'Silent Priest' I thank thee, I bow to thee. In truth art thou of the gods—as the islanders say!"

The silent one stretched out his hands to him in blessing; and then, with a peculiar look at Oltis, moved away. Oltis, with a strange drooping about him, turned to Sensel with the order, "See the youth well away."

Then to Hellen, he added, "Youth, go. But forget not—that olden laws and olden prophecies will not ever be at hand to save thee."

When Hellen had bowed to each, he turned after Sensel; and followed his gliding, quivering, dust-colored self to the gateway of the outer court. After Sensel, without one word, had left him, Hellen went on to the palace as if in a dream, absorbed over the 'Silent Priest.' Wonderful was the power of this grand man, amazing the hopefulness that possessed him when this being came opposite him! Was he, indeed, more than mortal as the islanders hinted? Or were his powers natural in themselves, but seldom bestowed upon man?

That evening, it was evident to Æole and Electra that Hellen was unduly disturbed, for his voice was husky, his eyes and color feverish. As to themselves, they were very pale; and Æole owned to a feeling of weakness, even looking in apprehension at the hill they were about to mount. Perceiving this, Hellen, as he took an arm of each, whispered:

"Let us not climb the tower. We will go to the alley on its right. There no one cometh this late. Though, there are ears in the air."

"It is not so safe as the tower, Hellen."

"There is still the noise of the bulls, Æole."

"I forgot. May their zeal be great!"

Electra laughed; and a little color came into her face. "How I thank those bulls," she said naively. "Well are they worthy to be held in honor, and to be kept about the temple!"

The three laughed, their spirits lightening in accordance; and they began to walk with briskness towards the northern slope. As they neared the broad leafy alley that extended downward to the right of the tower, Æole paused to regard this distrustfully.

"We could be followed, and not know it because of the trees."

"My eyes and ears will be well open," said Hellen.

Down the alley they hurried to come upon a thicket: and here paused to listen. But no sounds could be heard save the songs of the night birds and the faint chanting of the priests—when the bulls permitted.

As they were about to pass around the thicket, Hellen thought to look backward up the alley—just as a tall slender shape showed itself in entering; and darted for this only to see it vanish. Vainly did he search on all sides, thereupon returning scant of breath, but yet with voice to air his indignation.

"It could but be that Sensel—so fast did he fly. He is an evil spirit!"

"Say not so, Hellen. He is good. Often doth he aid Electra and myself. And the other handmaids never tire of speaking of his kind deeds."

"Æole, I forget not that he came upon me without noise when I met the red shape."

"Hellen, I have the thought that good will come of those two," insisted Electra.

They were around the thicket; and had come upon one of the streams flowing down the mountain side. By this they sat so as to face the thicket; and, under cover of the noise of the bulls, Hellen began with this:

"Æole, Electra, I have seen the queen."

The two jumped to their feet, and as quickly sat down again. "Tell us!"—"Tell us!" they chorused.

Hellen recounted all save the terrible part concerning the handmaids. When he finished, they were weeping.

"Thinkest thou the queen will get well?" asked Æole, finally.

"Her spirit is mighty. She feeleth she should live to help us. I fear not she will die."

"Great is the wonder that she found strength to come to the temple."

"Yea, but it is herself," said Electra. "And well did Atlano and Oltis cower before her. It passeth belief that Oltis should thus deck himself when the law is strong the priests shall ever wear white linen."

"But, the 'Silent Priest,'" interposed Æole, "was he not as beyond earth? How did Oltis pale before him! What shame did his pure raiment and silver circlet cast upon the purple and gems of the high priest! And, even at my first look, what a spell took hold of me. Hard was it to draw from him mine eyes."

"He is a power," added Hellen. "The other priests fear him while they look up to him. And, he doth cause me to thrill with hope and strength at the first glance. What is it?—Ah—never can I forget how he came before these islanders!"

"Tell us of it, Hellen," said Electra. "I, also, am drawn to him. He seemeth more than man."

"Yea, Hellen—tell us—and hasten. The time doth fly."

"It is a year since. One morning, while I was on the sands, I chanced to see far off on the water a moving speck. As it drew on, it proved to be a boat, and a boat of strange behavior—for long it hovered far, as if it feared to draw nigher. The islanders also noting this, watched with me. After two hours, it began to near us a little. Then it stopped.

"So we on the sands beckoned. Thus on it came again. And soon we saw that it was of odd shape, and held two persons, one being clothed in white. Slow, very slow was it in nearing us; but at length drew up on the sands, amid our loud greetings.

"Then stepped among us this grand man robed in shining white, and wearing about his head a circlet of silver studded with golden stars. His was the garb of the priests of

Poseidon, save that he wore soft folds of white about his brow beneath the circlet. So we pressed about him to know whence he came. To our sorrow he answered not by speech; but, by signs, made the king, high priest, and all, to know that Amen had sent him to serve in the temple, and that he would speak at such time as the gods willed."

"How chanced the king and high priest on the sands?" inquired Electra.

"When we had watched the strange behavior of the boat for a while, we sent for them."

"But—the figure behind him?" asked Æole.

"He sat still until the 'Silent Priest' signed for him to come. It was Sensel."

"Now I call it to mind, Hellen. I heard thee tell of it, but had forgotten."

"Yea, I told thee. This second figure was Sensel. Out he glided, tall, slender, shining of eye, the color of dust, and swaying. We fell back as though he was a serpent; and watched him, charmed, as he took his place beside the 'Silent Priest.'"

"I think he is fair, noble," urged Electra, "in spite of his ugly dust garments and wavy walk. How his eyes shine beneath that low cap he ever weareth!"

This pleased Æole much. But Hellen looked severe. In grimmest tone, he said:

"Look to it that he throweth not his spells about you. Such charming is death!"

"Hellen, thou hast need of more heart," warned Æole. "Thou art getting to look but for the evil in people." And she turned from him.

This, coming from her, was a blow. Hellen was so smitten, that Electra entreated:

"Æole, thou hast wounded him. But—look upon him with thy fond eyes."

Æole obeyed to soften. Taking his hand, she said in her loving way:

"Dear Hellen, how could I thus hurt thee. Forgive me."

He kissed her. "Dear Æole, how can I forgive when naught doth need it. I am wrong to speak evil of Sensel when he is kind to thee and Electra."

The last sentence though somewhat lacking in firmness, yet was strong in its concession. In appreciation, sweet peace hovered over them again; and Electra, that the gentle presence might not go on the wing, hastened to say:

"But, Hellen, thou hast not told us all. And soon should we go back."

"There is little more. As to the 'Silent Priest' already were we looking upon him as a higher being. And this strange Sensel but added to our awe. When the king and high priest had spoken further, by their signs, we followed them to the temple. Here the new priest was given place. Now he is a power, checking even Atlano and Oltis. But few animals have been yielded on the altar; and no handmaids have been called to the inner holy place, since he hath been in the temple."

Æole and Electra shuddered. The latter whispered:

"Hellen, we are getting a dread of the inner holy place."

"What meanest thou?"

"The other handmaids tremble and grow pale at name of it."

"We found it thus the first day," added Æole. "Why is it?"

"Ask me not, Æole. But pray that no more handmaids may go in there."

They looked at him in fear.

"Hellen, much have we seen and heard that causeth us to believe evil goeth on in the inner parts. I feel as if the air, even, is not pure."

"Dwell not upon such thoughts. I am sure that it groweth brighter for us. Let me tell you what happened after the earth quaked, after Sensel had led you from the temple."

Hastily he recounted the whole, not omitting Sensel's perturbation. When he had finished, the two, of their doubt and anxiety, were silent. Finally, Æole murmured:

"Hellen, what a risk was thine to go in that passage. And thine awful words to the high priest."

"I have been smitten ever since. But the words would come."

"I know, Hellen. But, take cheer. Be not so cast down."

"I fear it will bring evil to thee and Electra."

"But—there are the 'Silent Priest' and Sensel," urged Electra.

"If Sensel is our friend. Though he came with the 'Silent Priest,' he hath gained favor with Atlano and Oltis. Both look to him; and both may have weight with him. It may be it was at their order that he came after us in the alley. He may be beyond that thicket now."—He pointed to the nearest clump.

"I will see," returned Electra.

Scarce had they accepted her words than she was speeding off to the place designated, hopeful of convincing Hellen of his injustice.

But, when almost there, paused because of a significant rustling. Though the pause was only for the instant. Bravely she resumed her way; and was at the thicket just as a tall form showed itself before vanishing!

Poor Electra, overcome, could only turn and look to Hellen, who had fast followed her. Pitiful was it to witness her trembling. Hellen, in his loving commiseration, put his arm about her, nay, both arms; and thus supported her.

"Come, dear Electra, come away. Thou wilt be sick."

She burst into tears; and was emulated by the approaching Æole. As she sobbed, she said:

"I grieve not to believe him our friend."

"It doth not make him the less our friend that he hath done this," spoke Æole, with head held high. "How know we but he is the more our friend in thus doing. It is plain he was not there to hearken. It is too far from the place where we sat." Sweet was her majesty.

"Why, then, didst thou weep?" asked the keen Hellen.

"I know not," she faltered, her head lowering. "Unless it was because—everything was so sudden—and Electra was trembling and weeping."

"Wert thou in fear, Electra?"

"Nay, Hellen, but I became without hope."

"And I am, likewise. I fear he is not for us." Hellen was gloomily looking down.

"I have it," exclaimed Æole. "He came to warn us!"

"Thou hast it, Æole!"—Glad was Electra to clutch at this straw.

"Why ran he then?" asked Hellen.

This was unanswerable. The two lovely heads bent, disconsolate, thus causing softening in Hellen. In gentlest tones, he said:

"Let us not question it. And, it is time to go back."

As they went, he thought to ask: "Where are those 'Deeps'?"

"They are beneath the temple. The handmaids whisper of them in horror," replied Electra.

Nothing further was said until they reached the hillside door, when they bade each other good-night dejectedly. As the door was opening, Hellen whispered:

"Beware of him!"

CHAPTER X.
LIGHT ON THE PATH.

The next evening, when Æole and Electra came out upon the hillside, Hellen was not awaiting them. Then did each own to anxiety; and, as the moments speeded, their uncertainty became sickening. Finally, as some relief, Æole proposed that they should go on to the alley. To this both inclined, the more as voices were heard nearing the temple from the southward. In the alley they would be quite secure from interruption, as it was seldom traversed after nightfall.

So they sought its shade; and, just within its entrance, paused to await Hellen.

Exceeding was their relief when he joined them a little later. Hard was he panting, not so much from his run, as from dread that he had missed them. He muttered:

"It hath been sore trouble to get here. It seemed as though the messages of the king would end not."

"It may be his thought to stop these meetings," spoke Æole.

"The voice is yet too young," reasoned Electra. "Though, Oltis may master him. Ah, that voice! My father told of one that was heard in a temple of Khemi, and how the people hearkened unto it."

"It seemeth a helper either of gods or man," said Æole. "It is ever in my thought that it cometh of our parents, whether they be of earth or heaven."

"Let us hope they are in heaven, Æole." Hellen's voice was savage in his despair. "If they are of earth, shame upon them!"

"Hellen, I will not own thee, brother. Thus to charge the best we have known in our lives. This is what Atlantis hath done for thee!"

Sweet peace was again spreading her wings. And Electra was fearful she would get far away. Yet, Æole, in her sweet indignation, was right. Hellen was almost impious. In dread, she looked from one to the other.

"Æole, our eyes were young when we were torn from them. Young eyes are fond; they see no faults."

"Would we had died young, Hellen. To grow old enough to see faults, such faults in those so dear—and to charge them—should cause one to sorrow for his birth."

"Well would it be had we never seen the light. Thinkest thou that I could have rested under it—thus to be robbed of my children? I would have rent heaven to get them!"

"Hush, Hellen," implored Electra. "Thou art sinning. To dare to think of warring upon the gods!"

"Yea—well could I war upon any gods, that could look down, and not check such evil. And make their heaven a thing of naught!"

He looked upon the shocked face of his reprove—to become penitent; and mourned:

"Electra—Æole—it is ye who make me sin. My days and nights hold but one thought—how to free you from the taint of the temple—from this island, this fair, most evil spot—from this your dire slavery."

Of their pity, they seized his hands. Each implored him not to be so bitter, but to be calm, even hopeful, and to consider that God's ways are not the ways of men.

Thus stood they absorbed, unheedful of a gliding, noiseless shape that was speeding toward them; that paused when near them to gaze with eyes of pity, love; that, of its magnetism, was quick to draw Hellen's glance upon itself.

Gently did Hellen release the two clinging figures as he eyed the quivering Sensel. Then, with a bound, he was almost upon him, his hands outstretched to strangle. But, swift as a dart, did Sensel move to one side, there to stand motionless, and regard Hellen with eyes wonderful in their keenness and brilliancy.

Again did Hellen bound almost upon him; and again did the swaying figure, with the same astonishing celerity, change its place.

"Enough of this play, Sensel," cried Hellen, seeing it was futile to come upon him. "Tell me—what meanest thou by stealing upon us to view our misery?"

Sensel gracefully pointed upward; and, in low, musical tones, answered:

"There are gods in the heavens. Why cease to hope?"

"There are not gods for us. Parents—heaven—gods—are proving myths. The evil spirits, though, have being." Meaningful was Hellen's tone and look. "Yea, the evil spirits have being, and to good purpose for this island."

"Thou hast thrown from thee, then, the warm feeling for the Higher Good, the trust of thine early years. Only the evil spirits have being!" Strong was Sensel in his rebuking. "Because sorrow is thine, there is no Higher Good. Because thou art not happy, only evil ruleth. Look to thyself! For false spirits close about thee. Their thoughts are thine. Therefore cometh thy lack of warmth to the gods, of trust—thy wicked thoughts. Hellen, beware!"

Æole and Electra drank in these words; and then looked furtively at Hellen. Glad were they to see he was touched, that he seemed conscience-stricken. And he was conscience-stricken, for Sensel's tones were even more forcible than his words. After some moments, he admitted:

"Sensel, I own that thou speakest truth. Of late, I have lost warmth, trust. The Higher Good hath been shunned. But I am wild—torn with fears for these. Therefore, canst thou wonder—blame?"

"I wonder not. I blame not. But I have come to tell thee the clouds will lift. Soon will light be on thy path. Be calm, and wait. Thou art not forgotten of gods or man."

With a farewell wave of the hand, he turned away, and glided beyond the thicket.

Hellen moved as if to follow him; but checking himself, moaned:

"He is right. Long is it since I have looked to the Higher Powers. My trust is gone. I have been mad."

"Hellen, my trust hath not failed. Sure am I that all is for our good."

"Æole, thine are ever warmth, trust. But I am cold, full of doubt."

"After the way of men," interposed Electra. "Men are cold of heart toward the Higher Powers, but to reason the more: and, of their reasoning, see the less."

"Thou art right. Ah, Electra, if thou wouldst but help me." He looked at her with tenderest eyes.

"Thou shouldst ask help only of the Higher Good and Truth, Hellen." Electra was blushing.

Æole, though listening, was thinking deep upon Sensel. During Hellen's last words, she was even saying to herself, "What a glance is that of Sensel. What a voice is his. Without

doubt, he is good. After this night, Hellen can but believe in him."

So full was she of this last thought, that out she spoke:

"Hellen, Sensel is our friend. Now wilt thou be sure."

"Unless he is full of guile, Æole." Then, because of her hurt expression, he hastened to add, "Æole, doubt hath firm hold of me. But thou wilt forgive."

She was silent. Therefore, Electra entreated:

"Hellen, thine is a strong, honest spirit,—but it is weighed down by these doubts. Throw them off that thou mayst soar to find trust, peace."

Hellen, gazing into her earnest eyes, and listening to her thrilling tones, was so carried away that he responded:

"Electra, but to hearken to thee is to rise higher. Come, dear one,—give me thy hand—that some of the grand ether filling thee may pass into my poor frame—to give life to my spirit, to raise it a little to the heights thou speakest. Ah, Electra, my strength is of the body. Give me that of the spirit."

Electra was mute, though she held out her hand. This he took, and continued:

"Dost thou not feel how my hand leapeth because of thy living words? And thine will I keep as we go back, for it is time that we part again." So did his look linger upon her, that she, paling, glanced at Æole to meet her sad eyes fixed upon them. Already was she understanding Hellen's feeling for Electra; and she feared for him, feared for his further suffering. Electra meeting this sad gaze, thought, "She is not pleased with me." And answered by a look so humble and beseeching that Æole darted to embrace her, and say with utmost expression:

"Dear, dear Electra!"

"Yea, dear Electra, it is!" Hellen was elated. "And dear Æole! Now, ye dear ones, take hold of me. For, it is time that we go."

Each clung to him; then buoyantly they sped to the temple.

The next evening, Hellen was again delayed; and again hastened to the alley, hoping there, as before, to rejoin the waiting ones.

But, in the alley, they were not. Neither beyond the thicket.

Back he rushed to the tower with the faint hope that they might be teasing. But neither were they here—not even at the top.

In a great dread, he tore down the staircase, and to the hillside door;—thence back through the alley, and beyond the thicket: and there paused to gaze on the stream as if it, if it would, might help him.

Then he called; and, for response, heard but the bulls that seemed to mock at him. Where were they? Could they be hiding? Were they laughing in some near nook over his distracted movements? No—too well he knew their tender hearts, their impatience ever to greet him!

But, perhaps Sensel had come beyond the thicket, was there laughing at his distress. Hellen waited, even hoping he might step forth. Hard was it to bear up as the moments crept on, as his imagination grew riotous.

Erelong, he started to run back to the alley. And was on the point of rounding the thicket, when a tall figure came upon him.

But, it was not Sensel. No, this was King Atlano! And without attendants.

At Hellen's stony stare, the king smiled derisively; and asked:

"Why art thou in such haste? Thou camest near falling upon me."

"King Atlano, I seek my sister and Electra." For his life Hellen could not bow.

This the king noted. Though he corrected him not, but said, as if indifferent:

"So, here is the place where ye meet."

"For two nights past have we met here—as thou knowest, King Atlano." Hellen was now calm, and looking fearlessly at his tormentor. "This third night, they come not."

"Nay—they come not!" The king laughed as the evil spirits might.

"King Atlano, will they come?"

"They will not come."

"Why?" The hot blood was surging now.

"I like not these meetings. Evil will come of it. Other handmaids will ask to creep out, and meet their brothers—or, fonder ones." Again the king laughed, and so that Hellen writhed.

"But, the voice hath willed that we meet."

"I doubt the voice. It may be jugglery[19]—jugglery known to Khemi. There such arts are beginning."

"Then is all in the temple jugglery!"

"Thou forgettest fear, awe. For such there is pain."

"Tell me, King Atlano, where are Æole and Electra?"

Again the king smiled, and replied suavely:

"This night hath Æole been called to the inner holy place. Electra will go in on the morrow." So gloating had become his look and tone that Hellen grasped at the air as if to steady himself; and repeated, dazed:

"In the inner holy place?"

"Yea." Atlano's tone was soft though his eyes gleamed cruelly. "The priests have willed that thou art to be parted from Æole and Electra. Their stay, for the coming time, is in the inner holy place."

Hellen's agony was bewildering. Despair so clogged his utterance that he could only gasp:

"Not that—not that!"

"It is a high honor." The king regarded him in triumph and derision.

Then Hellen's tongue loosed. He towered grand in his passion.

"Thou knowest it is not a high honor. Thou knowest thine inner holy place is a hell. Thou knowest that thyself and those priests are fiends worse than those of hell—for ye are fair in seeming, and fiends look what they are. Ye are monsters of self and sense! And, by your arts have ye worked upon these islanders, until they see with your eyes, walk in your ways.

"But—think ye there is no coming pain for this? Oh, poor, wretched, groveling King, I tell thee sorrow and pain fast near thee. In the height of this thy power cometh thy fall. The powers above are raging at thee. Their vengeance is sure. It playeth about thee now. It is ready to dart upon thee. It will crush thee. May it come this night!"

And Hellen sank upon his knees to implore:

"O ye Gods, send down your shafts of flame to confound this monster! O spare to Æole and Electra their purity! Smite them dead ere worse befalleth them!"

The king listened as if turned to stone. The audacity of this youth was more dreadful than his words. Whilst he stood glaring, and unable to speak, Hellen arose, and, in commanding tone, said:

"Yield to me Electra and Æole."

"Ah, thou askest for Electra first," was sneered with strange slowness and huskiness.

Hellen darted for him, and in his young strength, and emotion, would doubtless have prevailed had he not been mastered by the same force that had rendered him helpless when endeavoring to rescue Æole from the temple's guards. An essence pungent and pleasant was thrown at him by Atlano, and he sank upon the ground. As he lay inert, the king continued:

"As for thyself, it was meant thou shouldst join the warmen in a falling upon the Afrite coast at a place where treasure can be gained. But, because of thy words, thou shalt be yielded on the altar. Amen and Poseidon are again calling for blood, as the late troubles prove."

A fearful nausea came upon Hellen. He struggled to defy:

"Thou mockest Amen and Poseidon. My yielding upon the altar—all such—come of thy longing for blood. But the gods thou wouldst make so vile are ready to fall upon thee for the base deeds thou doest in their name. Rather would I be yielded on thine altar than stand in thy place!"

With fiendish face, the king bounded upon him, and would have strangled him had not a rustling been heard in the thicket. He looked to see Sensel glide out, quivering and pallid.

"King Atlano, thou art wanted in the temple. A great evil hath befallen."

"Æole! Electra!" panted Hellen.

The king turned to go, but Hellen's feeble hand caught at his robe.

"King Atlano, yield me upon thine altar if thou wilt, but spare Æole and Electra. It is but a crumb."

Atlano, smiling as the fiends, removed the hand, saying:

"Thou wilt hear from me with the morn."

Then, motioning to Sensel to lead the way, he rejoined the attendants awaiting him in the alley.

Hellen watched until he had disappeared. If he could but move—but fly after him—but crush him!

Not long though, did his agony endure. It was scarcely five minutes when the thicket again rustled. The startled Hellen listened, and with hope. The rustling was repeated. Then, wonderful, his muscles began to grow less rigid, his blood to course warmer. In another moment he was leaping to his feet, and towards the thicket—when, from behind it, appeared the 'Silent Priest'!

"The 'Silent Priest,'" murmured poor Hellen.

The silent one approached, and extended his hands to grasp Hellen's. Instantly, their soft, firm pressure gave confidence and strength to the forlorn youth. All fear and distrust vanished, and he looked into the noble countenance bending over him with strange yearning.

The priest signed that Hellen must follow him; and he acquiesced, feeling as if this strange being could draw him to the worlds end. Arm in arm they walked to the tower, to mount it, the priest showing an agility as great as Hellen's.

They sat down on the ledge. And, to Hellen's amaze, a sudden, strong hope possessed him. Could it be owing to the tender manner of this priest? Or could the warm pressure of his hand have aught to do with it? Neither spoke, and both turned their eyes to the water, in the direction of the far-off Pelasgia. After a little, Hellen moaned:

"Ah—home, home! As if we sorrowed not enough in being torn from it! Yet, what was that pain to this? The woe of this night! Tell me, 'Silent Priest'—how can I save my pure ones, or kill them ere too late?"

“My son, a way openeth. Thou wilt come out of this with thy sister. But woe—woe—to this wicked island!”

Great was the shock to Hellen at the first tones of this voice. But it was as nothing to that which followed. For, this hitherto voiceless priest was not only giving utterance to Atlantean speech at the first, but continuing his sentences in Pelasgian.

“Who art thou?” Hellen seized his garment and stared, bewildered, in his face.

“Have care, Hellen. I am no priest of Poseidon. Feelest thou not—who—I am?” The ‘Silent Priest’ extended his arms in longing.

Hellen was speechless from the ecstasy of hope.

“Hellen, this is but a mask—this garb. Feelest thou not—that—I am—?”

“My—father?”

“Yea—yea—Hellen, thy father!”

But Hellen was unconscious in the arms so eagerly enfolding him. His strained condition could not bear this quick change from agony to joy. Self-reproachful, his father chafed his hands, and gave him of a medicine he carried within his vestment. Overwhelming was his relief when Hellen unclosed his eyes to look at him, and opened his arms for a long embrace.

When he was able to sit up, his father whispered:

“We have need of care. The stones have eyes, the air hath ears. Now, hearken, for soon will I go back to the temple.”

Hellen pressed his hand in assent; then asked:

“But, first—mother. Is she well?”

“Thy mother is as well as she can be under her great grief.”

“The gods be thanked. Ah, what a wretch am I! Father, when thou knowest my evil heart, thou wilt not own me.”

“Fear not, Hellen. Thou art but man. And now, hearken.”

“I will.”

“Hellen, after the Atlanteans had borne away thyself and Æole, I reached Larissa to find thy mother nigh to death. Day and night I watched until she came out of the shadow. Then I besought ransom of the people. But they were deaf, in their rage at the Atlanteans. I ceased my pleadings after it was given me to feel, yea, to see—hidden things—and to be sure that all would end well.

“Then came new misery. The tribes to the north sought battle with us; and I was forced to leave thy mother, and go against them. For a year did this last.

“In the end, the loss and ruin were theirs. Then came I home to find thy mother again nigh to death. But, after a little, new life came to her, and with it hope. She was strong in the thought that we should get our children—was of one mind with me—for, if knowledge can come from above, such was mine. But of this later.

“Yea, thy mother was her old self, and urged me to again plead with the king and people for help. Our hopes proved in reason, for they agreed to lend us a few vessels. Then friends gathered about us to do the rest. And I built the boat in which I came hither.

“Thus, after years of dread waiting, thy mother and I, with these dear friends, sailed for the Great Rock that riseth where the Middle Sea joineth the ocean. There, under its shadow, I left them. And, as a priest of Poseidon, came to these Atlanteans.

“Ah, Hellen, that day I knew thee, even as my foot pressed the sands. Hard was it to keep from flinging myself upon thee in thy strong young grace and pure look. Hellen, my dear

son, all I had borne was as naught when I beheld thee. How it was that I ran not to thee to cry, 'Hellen, here is thy father!' I know not. So strong was my yearning."

"And, father, what were my feelings. Thy grand looks seemed beyond earth. Ah, how thou didst draw me! Though, after that, was I willing to think of thee evil."

"It was nature working in thee."

"But—how these Atlanteans have bent, yielded to thee."

"They fear the gods now that they have become wicked, and dare not make light of my warnings. Though Atlano and Oltis hate me, and would harm me if they dared. How often, by my signs, have I chided them, and made them cease their evil. Upon their fears am I working that I may free thyself and Æole. Oh, most wretched people!"

He had arisen. And raised his eyes as if imploring heaven's mercy.

"But—Sensel—who is he, father?"

Deucalion sat down again, and whispered:

"He is young Prince Pelasgus, the son of our king."

Hellen, of his surprise, exclaimed so loud that his father again cautioned him. As he sat confounded, it was to listen to this.

"During our struggle with the tribes to the north, he served under me; and dear did we become to each other. He is noble, brave, good, and so true that he would not hearken that I should come without him. Though with ill grace was his father willing. But in all Pelasgia, there was not a youth who could run, turn, and bend himself as Prince Pelasgus—not one so strong. Thus he asked to use these gifts as a mask in my service. After some days, he came before me in his present shape; and I saw that this mask of serpent look would aid me. I now know that I could not have done without him. Sensel is an able one. And—the voice is his."

"Father!"

"It is as I say. It is but in nature. Sensel learned it of a captive taken when the northern tribes fell upon us. He said it was quite common in his own land. But, as most of his tribe were killed, it is almost as if of the hidden."

"How will Æole and Electra glory in this," was said with due penitence. "From the first, they liked and trusted him. But I—how have I tried to stifle their belief in him. How have I scorned him for his serpent ways, his services to king and priests."

"It is a lesson for thee. But look—yonder he cometh."

"Let us go to him, father. I would kneel for his pardon."

"Not here, my son."

They descended from the tower. Upon meeting, Hellen would have embraced Sensel, had his father permitted it. As it was, his expressive face testified to his regret, his contrition for his unjust opinion, his former contempt, even before he whispered of such to the responsive Sensel.

Afterward, still under cover of the bulls, were imparted to Hellen confidences at which he marveled. Then Deucalion and Sensel hastened to the temple.

Hellen remained to walk up and down the alley in a condition of mind far removed from that in which he had parted from Atlano. Now hope was not only showing herself, but promising abiding.

NOTE.—"Down to the present century, ventriloquism was regarded as a physiological mystery. And, of old, it seemed awful when the river Nessus saluted Pythagoras, when a tree spoke before Apollonius, and when a newborn infant, or animals, or statues talked."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HAPPENING OF THE UNEXPECTED.

Deucalion entered the hillside door to be met in the court by several weeping handmaids, one of whom cried out to him:

"Æole is no more. Æole is no more!"

He paused, and his look questioned; when another handmaid answered.

"She had just been called to the inner holy place, when, therein, we heard a great stir, and Sensel ran out to cry that she was lying dead at the foot of the statue of Amen. He had borne her in there, as she, of her grief, fell even at the door. Ah, poor Æole—poor Æole!"

This handmaid began to sob so that she could not continue. Then another handmaid spoke for her.

"Thus we ran to the inner holy place, forgetting we should not go there. And, at the foot of Amen, beheld her as Sensel had said, whilst about her were gathering the high priest and the other priests. At first we could not believe her dead; and rubbed her hands, and bathed her brow. But she would not arouse. Now is the cold of death upon her."

And this handmaid began to sob loud, the others joining with her. So extreme was their grief that Deucalion could obtain no further information, in spite of his many signs. Thus he left them to hasten to the inner sanctuary.

This apartment, upon entering, gave the impression of mystery, luxury, sensuousness—anything save devotion—notwithstanding its golden altar at the eastern end, its sacred fire thereon; notwithstanding its great golden statues of Amen and Poseidon, the one to the altar's right, the other to its left, and both most wonderful in their size, majesty, and benignity of mien.

Everywhere in this inner sanctuary were gold and silver used lavishly. And, in the available places, were set magnificent gems, that, in their artful clustering, simulated flowers and fruits, thus affording the needful climax to all the splendors.

Glowing with orichalcum and clustering gems was the ceiling, while from it hung golden lamps resplendent in jewels. In corners, smoked silver vessels emitting perfumes whose subtlety overmastered the will. About the greenstone columns, the rarest flowers were wreathed.

Yet, incongruously with the taste displayed, the fitness of the splendors, were the effeminate furnishings. Softest mats covered the tiled floor; couches, stands, and tables of fantastic workmanship were scattered about; whilst, in the center, stood a larger table containing stimulating drinks, fruits and sweetmeats. And elegant hangings fell from the doors.—Could this indeed be a sanctuary?

The vast apartment was a dream of luxury and sensuousness; and, from the half-opened doors at its northern end, could be gained a faint idea of the sumptuousness of its withdrawing rooms. No wonder was it that, upon entering, the mind, instead of concentrating upon things divine, should become enthralled by dreams of sense!

The great Amen was represented as a human being with the head of a ram, for the reason, doubtless, that he was considered as standing in the same relation to the people that the ram does to the flock. He was guide, governor, and protector. And, about his head was a crown simulating the sun's rays. For, Amen was the Sun God.

Æole had been laid on a couch near this statue; and about her were gathered handmaids and priests. Yes, here, pale and motionless, lay the lovely form hushing the gazers into awe. Here, revelry had given away to a strange quiet. Here, the handmaids, with blanched faces, were restraining their sobbing. Here, priests were looking from the dead to each other, mystified and apprehensive. Here, Atlano and Oltis were ever casting terrified, quickly averted looks at the statue of Amen that seemed to frown in response.

As the 'Silent Priest' took his place among the watchers, they turned as one to regard him. But, unmindful of their questioning gaze, his eyes rested long upon the waxen form. Finally, at an impatient movement from Oltis, he raised his head, and flashed from him to Atlano a look so condemnatory that the spectators shook with dismay. Though neither of the ones thus rebuked gave any response, save to turn as if to look upon the dead girl.

Then, the 'Silent Priest' moved toward the statue of Amen. But, had scarcely reached it, when attracted by the sudden incoming of Electra. As if beside herself, she ran to kneel before him; and in tones as persuasive as piteous, entreated:

"O 'Silent Priest,' is this how the gods would help? If thou wilt but heed me. Beseech of them that I, too, may go. Life is such a woe that I am tempted to end it. Ah, to die with Æole! If thou wilt but plead with Amen and Poseidon to have mercy upon me—as they have had upon her. Let me go to her."

He took her hand. And, oh the sudden strength that came to her! In an instant, she was no longer despairing. Then, he signed for her to arise; and she stood up as a queen.

"'Silent Priest,' thou hast spoken. It is not mine to ask thee to beseech the gods. If it is their will I should sorrow more, I must bear. I will chafe no longer."

He regarded her with approbation; and bowed in acquiescence. She felt he was saying inwardly:

"Keep this, thy humility. It will lead thee to light. May the gods cheer thee."

Though the tears were welling thick in her eyes, for all her strength. As these fell, she moaned, "Hard, hard, will it be without Æole. How soon she filled my heart. From the first was I fond of her. And fond was she to me!" Then, impetuously, with arms outstretched, she turned to run toward the couch, when called by one of several handmaids entering from the passage.

She paused. They came beside her; and the handmaid who had called, whispered: "We have made ready the bed of lilies in front of the altar. There Æole will lie until the embalmers send the word. We have come for her."

Painful was it to witness Electra's pallor. She murmured: "Let us draw beside her. I would kiss her." Whereupon, this handmaid led the suffering girl in among the watchers, and to the place where she could take Æole's hand—to kiss, to bathe it with her tears.

One of the handmaids left then spoke to a priest. This priest, in turn, spoke to Oltis. Thus Oltis, in loud tone, asked:

"Where is Sensel?"

In answer, Sensel appeared in the passage. Oltis ordered:

"Bring the white robe."

Sensel left to return at once with a robe of lamb's wool, pure as snow. Oltis continued:

"Wrap therein the maiden. And bear her to the bed of lilies."

Touching was the reverence with which Sensel enfolded Æole in this. Amid the hysterical sobbing of the handmaids, he raised her in his arms. And bore her, as a babe might have been borne, through the great apartment to the passage, and thence into the temple; king, priests, handmaids following.

Upon the bed of lilies was Æole laid—the robe being removed. With loving touch, the handmaids drew her long gown about her feet, and arranged the hands and arms. Then they kissed the sweet forehead, and caressed the long, shining hair. After this, they ranged about her and the kneeling Electra, who had again taken a hand to clasp to her breast. Thus, they awaited the summons of the embalmer.

Crowds of people were arriving, so fast had spread the news. Even Queen Atlana came to hang stricken but unweeping over the body of this young girl she had loved so well. Hellen also came, to stand and gaze fixedly upon the dear, calm face.

In an hour, word was brought that the embalmers were ready. Amid the stir that ensued, the attendants deputed moved to the sides of the bed of lilies, in order to bear it with its lovely burden to the embalming room. But, scarcely had they taken their places than rendered motionless by the shrill cry from Hellen:

"See! Her eyelids quiver!"

Awful was the hush. Instantly, the 'Silent Priest' was beside Æole, and looking in her face. Breathlessly the people waited until he turned to sign that Hellen spoke the truth. Then went up a great cry of gladness. Then sank the relieved queen in the arms of her ladies. Then arose Electra from her knees to stare at the 'Silent Priest' incredulously.

Atlano and Oltis came forward for inspection; and found confirmation. Oltis said to the people:

"Of a truth, her eyelids quiver. She is not dead."

Another glad shouting went up. Each felt as thankful as though the young girl was his own. From Queen Atlana, the blessed tears of hope were beginning to flow; whilst Electra, in her revulsion of feeling, so tottered that Hellen darted to her side to sustain her.

Then, while the people were quieting somewhat, and the handmaids were sobbing loud for gladness, the attendants and messenger from the embalmers retired.

Still Æole lay passive. Even the eyelids had ceased to quiver. Yet, the faintest tinge of pink was coming into her cheeks. The great throng about her scarcely pulsated more than herself in its expectation of the unexpected when those beside her proclaimed this new development.

There was a long interval of suspense. Then arose the cry:

"Look! Her lips part!"

Terrible was the hush. Would she speak? Would her soft tones issue forth?

Instead, there came upon them a sound as of the sweeping wind—a sound, that, as it became intelligible, caused the listeners to shake as aspens. This must be the voice of a mighty spirit! And these words none could mistake.

"Atlanteans, I would warn. There are gods! Therefore, call to mind how ye have set aside the olden laws, what mockeries ye have brought upon temple and inner holy place.

"Further, hold no longer the Pelasgian children. This day, give them over unto the 'Silent Priest.' He, with the sun of the morrow, will bear them to their home."

The lips closed.

Atlano and the priests had listened, shivering. Theirs was the corruption of these islanders—theirs, the profanations of altar and sanctuary. The sharp spear of dread was piercing them. It was minutes before Atlano could control himself to ask humbly:

“Mighty Spirit, is it in truth the will of our Father Poseidon that we give over the captives to the ‘Silent Priest’?”

“Thou speakest it.”

“Tell our father that we hearken. We pray that he will plead for us with Amen.”

“It is heard.”

There succeeded an awful silence. It was felt that the mighty spirit had departed. And, as before, Æole lay as dead.

Though the throng, in its expectation wavered not—to be rewarded within an hour. For then, Hellen cried:

“Look—look! Again cometh the color into her cheeks!”

Frantically were they pressing about her when waved back by the ‘Silent Priest.’ The queen and Electra, of their trembling, required support. As to Atlano and Oltis, they seemed as if turned to stone.

There came another cry from Hellen:

“She doth breathe! Her eyes open!”

He bent over her in such agitation that the ‘Silent Priest’ thought best to lead him away, and beside Electra. She held out to him her hand, which he seized.

“Hellen, dear Hellen, be calm,” she whispered. “Our strength is needed. The gods are with us.”

She cast a grateful look at Sensel, who stood between them and Æole vibrating and brilliant, and who returned her look with one that meant victory.

Meanwhile, the handmaids had been applying to Æole’s nostrils a sponge dampened with a pungent liquor brought by Oltis. Under its influence, she quickly revived, and shortly was being propped up on cushions, whilst about her was tucked the robe of lambs’ wool. Afterward, the ‘Silent Priest’ brought her a drink which caused her to be quite herself, though her bewilderment at her surroundings proved her unconsciousness of what had occurred.

But the priests, of their doubt, would question her. Therefore, Oltis was not long in asking: “Handmaid Æole, didst thou dream in thy sleep?”

Æole, reddening and paling, replied feebly:

“Most Honored and High Priest, I dreamed not.”

“Knowest thou aught of what hath happened since thou wert found as if dead?”

“Most Honored and High Priest, I know naught since I fell before Amen in the inner holy place, and besought him to take me from this life.”

Oltis shrank back, and a murmur arose that swelled through the vast assemblage. This murmur grew to a shout as Queen Atlana, who had not shown herself, leaned over, and clasped Æole to her.

With a glad cry that brought tears to the eyes near her, the young girl returned the embrace, and kissed again and again the hands of this almost mother.

But soon Queen Atlana raised to her full height, to her lovely, gracious bearing, and looked about her.

“Atlanteans,” she said, with a world of meaning. Delighted cries answered her.

“Atlanteans, am I right to take her back to the palace—this fair young captive who hath grown to be my daughter?”

Deafening were the shouts:

“Yea! Yea!”

"Ye will aid me?"

"We will! We will!"

She turned to Rica, and said:

"Order a chair."

This Rica proceeded to do of an attendant, as Atlano, in a rage, vociferated:

"Nay!"

Queen Atlana again spoke to Rica: "I will have the chair." Then to Atlano, she said low, and with emphasis: "If I am not obeyed, I go not back to the palace."

They eyed each other as no man and wife should. Hard is it when a wife is obliged, in presence of others, to assert herself. Terrible is it to perceive a husband's face take on an expression murderous! The people again clamored their indignation until Atlana herself quieted them by the eloquence of her hands. Though there continued cries here and there for the chair.

King Atlano had turned aside in sullen discomfiture, when the queen again spoke the word for the chair. And now it was brought beside her, and eagerly, if it must be told.

The attendants were thronging to lift Æole therein when Sensel pressed in among them, to urge:

"It is mine to lift her, to bear her."

Before they had scarcely accepted his purpose, she was raised from the bed of lilies and placed in the chair, and he waited calm beside it.

The queen's look pierced him, but he returned it proudly, growing so brilliant that her look became one of amaze. Then, to her surprise, as well as that of the beholders, she bowed in consent. With that, Sensel and an attendant bore the chair on to the queen's chariot.

As Queen Atlana turned to follow, she beckoned to Electra. Electra then came beside her, and the queen subjoined:

"Electra, thou wilt come also."

Unmindful of the scowling king, she took the hand of the overjoyed young girl, and passed with gracious smiles through the lines of intent islanders, whose love showed in their looks, whose sympathy breathed in eloquent undertones. Quickly they were entering the great broad low chariot, on whose soft cushions reclined Æole.

Sensel was standing very near her. He had been talking with her, and she was smiling, rosy. Further, to the surprise of the queen and Electra, she held out her hand when they were about to drive off, and said, in her gracious way:

"I will give the parting word, Sensel."

"Thou wilt do that after I have seen thee in the palace," he returned, in his brilliant manner. Then the chariot drove away.

True to his word, he was in the courtyard when they arrived, and not only that, but would lift her out, would place her in the chair, would help to bear her within. When no more could be done for her, he said, in softest tone:

"Now is my parting word, Æole."

Then bowing low and elegantly to the queen, he darted away in his most undulatory fashion.

"What a strange being," exclaimed Queen Atlana. "But I like him."

"So do we," murmured Æole, and blushed.

CHAPTER XII.
THE EARTHQUAKE CONFOUNDS.

In the inner sanctuary, the lamps were casting feeble radiance, the altar fire acting strangely capricious, when Atlano, Oltis, Urgis, and the superior priests met for conference upon the day's awful events.

Close they drew their couches, and reclined to cast about them looks serious, apprehensive. Only too apparent was the ease affected by Atlano and Oltis as they surveyed the dark countenances upon which alarm was setting its seal—as they averted their faces from the majestic, upright figure that was eyeing them so fixedly.

This silent one—how they were longing to fall upon him, to strangle, to trample him under their feet! What was the strange power that held them—that forced them to his will? Cravens had they become!

After an ominous quiet of some minutes, and when Atlano was beginning to chafe under the anxious gaze of these white-robed, imposing figures, he said, with affected buoyancy,

"This night we meet not here for mirth. The troubles of the day claim our thought. But, first, I would ask are any among you shaken—weak of spirit?"

They looked at each other in doubt how to answer. Finally, Hafoe, a priest old in wickedness, spoke out.

"O King, I believe the gods are in this. I believe they look upon us in anger."

Atlano's was the utmost suavity. "Though why should the gods look upon us in anger, Hafoe?"

There was silence.

Oltis, who had been glaring at Hafoe, now addressed him.

"Thou believest the gods look upon us in anger, Hafoe? One week since, thou didst mock at our rites in the temple, thou didst laugh at the people because they still hold enough of the faith of their fathers to come and worship in form, if not in spirit—with the lip, if not with the heart."

"Who mocked, who laughed with me, High Priest Oltis?" returned Hafoe, angrily.

"I. And I mock and laugh still. I am not one to change. I tell thee, Hafoe, I mocked and laughed because I believe not. I fear no gods. I know not if there are any!" And Oltis brought his fist down heavily upon the small table at the head of his couch, in his defiance.

The other priests shivered. Whence had come this strange sensitiveness? Such language as that of Oltis and Hafoe, such derision of holy things, had been heard hourly in this inner sanctuary, and heard lightly—even by those who could not quite steel themselves in unbelief. But now, an indefinable dread, a strange horror, was creeping over them as they listened. Therefore, they looked with disapproval upon Oltis because of his defiance. They would have rebuked his temerity, had they dared, would have bid him incur no further displeasure from the all too evident Unseen.

Yet, even as they looked with growing disfavor, did they begin to wonder, and shortly, to stare in amaze.

What was coming over him?

Even as his hand fell had he become as it were transfixed. The hand that lay heavily, began to press heavily; the entire body grew in rigidity; and a deathlike pallor was overspreading his face. Atlano, who had been gazing alarmed, demanded:

"Oltis, what aileth thee? Cease that staring."

But Oltis continued to stare, and remain rigid. Fearful was it to see his pallor, even amid this deathlike repose, increase. Hafoe, wan and trembling, lifted his hand from the table. But it fell a dead weight. The eyes, in their growing glassiness, were horrible. Hafoe cried:

"Oltis, dost thou live?" But not a quiver of the eyelids answered, although the eyes lost none of their intelligence.

Stonily they watched, wondering if he would come out of this to laugh at them. Finally Atlano spoke.

"Oltis, cease thy spells. Wouldst thou have us as thyself?"

Upon this, the king arose stiffly, and, with some exertion, walked beside him to gaze in his face, and feel of his skin.

"Oltis, thou art a corpse, with life in it! What—aileth—thee?"

But Oltis replied not save by his eloquent eyes. Every other part of him was marble. Nervously, Atlano bade a priest bring the life cordial. This was applied to brow and nostrils, but had no effect. Still Oltis was as dead, except in glance.

Thus, Atlano sat down. To the terrified priests who had gathered about the stricken one, he said:

"Sit ye again. We will talk together—and Oltis can listen, that is if his ears are as alive as his eyes. Should we settle aught, such can be laid before him, when he cometh out of this."

But they were quivering with dread, and the calm they tried to assume, made it but the more apparent. The voice of Hafoe shook, his words dragged feebly.

"O King Atlano, let us have a care what we say!"

"We are here to talk upon the troubles of the day, and to settle this matter of the Pelasgian children," resumed Atlano. Voice and manner had gathered assurance.

"Was not the matter of the Pelasgian children settled this day?" asked Kluto, the youngest of the priests.

"It was not settled;" and Atlano looked at him confidently.

"King Atlano—meanest thou—that thou hast the thought to keep them—after thy promise?"

"My promise to what? Kluto, believest thou in that jugglery?"

"King Atlano, thou didst seem to believe even as much as we."

"Have a care!"

"I mean naught save to fall before thee. But I have the dread that the earth is about to fade away. Didst thou note the thick, dark look of the air before we came in here—and how gloomy was our supper room, even with its many lights?"

"I did."

"And, King Atlano, hast thou noted how faint is the flame on the altar of the temple—and on this?"

"I have."

"And these lamps in their paling?"

"I have."

"Then what thinkest thou of it all?"

"It is that the air is heavier than common."

"May such not be to our woe!"

"We can but wait and see." Atlano's laugh rang mockingly.

But with his words, the priests were startled at perceiving a change in Oltis. They pointed; and the king looked to see him slowly raising his hand from the table. Then it paused as if to warn.

"Ah—he doth rouse." And Atlano arose, and went to him. Lightly he seized the hand, saying as if to it, "Thou wouldst warn us—wouldst thou? Down!"

But the hand, in this position, was as iron; and moved not when Atlano, with all his strength, would have pressed it to the table again. It remained fixed in the air, enforcing its warning.

After several trials, Atlano returned to his couch. Very pale, but determined was his face. He said to the trembling priests as he stood and looked his haughtiest,

"Why cower ye? Think ye this is also of the gods? Think ye this will baffle me?"

The silent one, the only priest calm and undaunted, arose, and looked at the king in rebuke. Atlano, unwilling to own to himself the strange effect of this look, struggled to shout:

"And I would tell thee, 'Silent Priest,' that whether thou comest of heaven or hell—thou art not to stand and look at me thus. To thy couch! Further, turn from me thine evil eye. Or, thou too, wilt find that, when the king willeth, the highest in the temple, if it needeth, shall feed the holy fire."

The silent one stood calm, unblenching.

"Wilt thou to thy couch?"

And King Atlano made a step forward as if he would fall upon the man towering so grandly before him. Another step, and he called:

"Urgis, Hafoe, Sudor, Kluto—come—that we may bring him to the earth!"

But neither Urgis, Hafoe, Sudor, Kluto,—nor any other priest—moved at his bidding. They could but stare at this priest as he stood in his majesty and fearlessness, could but wonder at the strange power of his eyes. This strength of look must be what held them. Though, why held it not Atlano, who was still advancing, with hand stealing within his garment after his weapon, the mysterious liquor, that had rendered Hellen impotent.

Well the priests knew this liquor, for they, in their secret laboratory, had concocted it after an almost illegible receipt found among the possessions of the dead Viril, who had been their instructor in alchemic arts. Well they knew its power! Now, they awaited, in their immobility, for its sure effect.

Onward drew Atlano with gleaming eyes and stealing hand. And, when well upon the 'Silent Priest,' who still maintained his wonderful look, would have drawn the weapon forth to fell him. But, with the significant attempt, came dread resistance. The hand refused to move, to come from out the folds that held it!

Atlano, in his struggle to free the helpless member, grew black in the face, black of his terror and desire for revenge. Yet, he made as though he would still advance upon the immovable figure, desisting only when he found himself inert. Then did his tones ring through the sanctuary.

"Man—or demon—I fear thee not! I fear not thy spells. Think not this will confound me. I say to the voice—to those not seen—that I will not obey. I will not yield the Pelasgian children!"

Then went up the cry of terror from this inner sanctuary, from the priests so motionless before. But it was not because of Atlano's words. No, the earth was threatening again.

Again was smiting upon their ears the terrific rumbling of the day before. Again was the earth lurching as does a ship when at mercy of wind and wave.

Vibration after vibration increased in such force and velocity that it seemed the hanging lamps must come crashing down, the walls fall in upon them. Terrible was it to witness the statues of Amen and Poseidon sway as though they would kiss the floor—and this continuously. More terrible to hear Oltis' hand fall with a loud thud upon the table, and yet perceive that he remained rigid and staring. Most terrible to see Atlano wrench forth his hand, turn from the silent one, and fly to the passage, calling after him: "Come—come—ere it be too late!"

Never had he been so well obeyed. After him sprang the priests, Urgis leading. Scarce had the last escaped than the ceiling yielded its lamps, which fell with terrific noise, one almost grazing the hapless Oltis, who still sat as iron, listening to the swift running in passages and apartments, the shrieks that filled the air.

Through the tottering temple sped all to the great court—king, priests, handmaids, attendants—when there, pausing to watch the temple as it swayed in the semi-darkness. And, oh the fierce rocking of the earth beneath! Where could they run? Not toward the ocean, for that was white in its threatening. Naught was left but to fall on their knees, and utter prayers that for once were heartfelt.

The while, they watched the temple which was swaying less and less. Would it stop, though? Incredulity answered. But, when no longer in doubt, they fell to embracing each other; and laughed and wept spasmodically.

Then occurred another shock, a light one, that sent them into despair. These light ones continued at short intervals, so that they could but await the final one, which would bring down the temple.

People were thronging in to inquire as to the safety of the temple, remaining long enough to give their experiences, and receive those of the attendants. Meanwhile, the king stood in his chariot near the portico surrounded by his guards; whilst scattered about him were priests and shrinking handmaids, the latter under strict surveillance.

Long had Atlano been looking on every side in the gloom for the 'Silent Priest,' but without perceiving him. Finally, he beckoned to Kluto. And asked, "Hast thou seen the 'Silent Priest' since we fled?"

"O King, I have not seen him since we sped from the inner holy place. Then—he was lost in looking upon Oltis—with no mind for the terrors about him."

"Poor Oltis! I wonder whether he hath moved," was said ironically. Then, with concern, he added, "Could it be that the silent one was harmed—killed by the falling lamps?"

"It might be, oh King. He seemed fixed, and with no thought of flying."

"I will go back, and find what hath happened to him."

"Gracious king, dare it not. Wait until the shocks cease I beseech thee. Or I will go for thee."

"Nay—I would go. I can go in and out between them."

"There would be no time to get out should the heavy shock that we look for come whilst thou wert within.—Here is it now!"

But this proved light also. However, Atlano said, as if to himself: "I will wait a little.—But—it doth trouble me."

Thus, he fidgeted, and looked most anxious. And at last whispered to Urgis, who stood at his right, "Well would it be if the silent one were lying stark—stiffer than Oltis!"

"Gracious king, have a care."—Urgis looked in fear about him.

“I am having a care—a care for myself—for all of us. While he liveth, I cannot breathe. Of that, am I sure. Ah—to see him on the altar!”

Then, because of Urgis’ terrified look, he laughed recklessly. And subjoined:

“I wonder how are the queen and her children. At eve, when I asked after the sleeping one, I was told that herself and Electra were fastened within the inner room of the queen, where they were resting. Even the queen denied me, being therein also. In meek manner did I come away. But this day—that now is beginning—will they learn the power of the king!”

Again he laughed recklessly. Though Urgis and the others hearing this laugh could but shudder.

CHAPTER XIII.
IN THE 'DEEPS.'

As Kluto said, the 'Silent Priest' had remained in the inner sanctuary to gaze upon Oltis who still showed no life save in the eyes, that of his agony, were almost bursting from their sockets.

Yet alas for Oltis—the greatest shock was to come. His humiliation and despair were not complete.

When the fleeing priests were without, the 'Silent Priest' moved nearer; and standing over him, severe in his majesty, gave utterance to speech. Fearful was it to hear his deep tones in the gruesome apartment, but more fearful to witness the great beads that started upon Oltis' forehead at sound of this voice.

"Yea, Oltis—I can speak when I will. The time hath come. I have to say I go from thee for a little. I would look into the hidden things of the 'Deeps.' Then will I come back."

In Oltis' eyes was a look of utmost horror, and the perspiration rolled off him. Yet he stirred not—even when the 'Silent Priest' after lighting a hand lamp, had left the apartment to penetrate those mysteries which had been supposed so artfully veiled.

Deucalion entered the passage dividing the withdrawing rooms of Atlano, Oltis, and Urgis. Unheedful of the lavish luxury disclosed by the open doors, on he hastened, his eyes, his thoughts intent upon a door at the end that was set low in the wall.

Reaching this, he pressed the lower left hand corner. There was heard the sound of something smoothly moving. The door was disappearing within the wall, disclosing a stone stairway extending into darkness.

Lamp in hand, he darted down this to come upon two doors side by side. He pressed upon the lower right hand corner of the left one; and it yielded, gliding into the wall about the other which was but an imitation.

As though blinded, he stepped through.

When the film had cleared from his eyes, he beheld spreading deep, a vast, crypt-like apartment whose high ceiling was supported by pillars of red syenite; and about which were burning lamps securely fastened in niches. The walls were covered with a coating of lime so smooth that the figures painted thereon in rich colors and quite elegantly, stood out in fine relief.

As these figures treated of the gods and the future life, Deucalion would have been glad to study them, had the occasion allowed. As it was, he but glanced at them; and then his eyes darted from point to point. Almost instantly, at the farther end, where the shadows were thickest, they lighted upon some indistinct white objects, that moved with every vibration of the still rocking building.

It was a terrible moment for Deucalion. Over him swept a mighty dread—a dread to go nearer these. Yet, stifling this, he began to run down the long apartment, tottering as he ran. And came beside these large white objects—that proved to be beautifully sculptured coffins of alabaster, mounted on great blocks of red syenite.

In the extreme of weakness, he fell against the first; and moaned; and implored for courage to look within.

And arousing, did so—to weep and groan, to run like a madman from one to the other until he had looked in all.

For, here were no priests in these alabaster coffins. Instead, were the embalmed bodies of what had been fair maidens—each with a lifetime of woe upon its features. Such haggardness, such suffering, surely never before were stamped on young faces. So fine was the embalming that every line showed as in life—and with its weight of agony.

He ran from one to the other, crying, "Ye powers—could such things be? Their poor bodies tell the tale. The pretty ones—the tortured ones! Ah—those thrice-cursed monsters! Yet they live—live to gloat upon their work. Ye gods—crush them out. Never again let such work mar the face of earth. Æole, Æole—to see what was before thee!"

He fell on his knees, the tears streaming, and besought:

"Mercy, ye gods! Help! Set us free from this house of death! (Ye vile islanders—to lose these fair ones—and not pull down this pile!) Help me, ye gods, to save my dear ones. And give Electra, too. Aid me still to master king, priests, people, until I am on the sea, and bearing my dear ones to Pelasgia. Ah, Æole, Hellen—what sorrow is like unto this?"

He arose; and ran again, as if distracted, from coffin to coffin.

"Ye pretty ones! Where were your fathers—your mothers? Was it for this ye were given them? Do the gods grant that men may live lost to all save sense, and die in peace in such? Never! Thrice-cursed island, thou art doomed! Thou and thy vile people will vanish as down blown by the wind! And coming ages will doubt thy being; or, if not doubting, will mock at thee!"

When he had turned from the last coffin, and was staggering about aimlessly, he came upon a door set low under the stairway. "Ah," he muttered, "I know. It leadeth to the embalming room—the private one of these priests. Well know they the art—as these tortured ones show."

He hastened to this door, and pushed it open. Here again was darkness. He went for his lamp; and then stepped through into a low passage; and thence through another door into a very large apartment. As he had surmised, it was the private embalming room.

With lamp held high, he walked in its fell shadows, examining. Here was the crooked piece of iron for drawing out the brain through the nostrils. Here was the Ethiopian stone for making the incision in the side. There were the palm wine, the powdered myrrh, the cassia, the other aromatic drugs. There were the bandages of linen, the gum, the natron, even the cinnamon. And—yes—there in the most distant corner—were more of those pure, translucent alabaster coffins. Empty—waiting for whom?

The apartment was shaken with his groans. He felt if he staid longer his senses would give way. Wildly he ran back into the vault, and toward the stairway. His soul was filled with horror. His eyeballs burned. His body shook as if with palsy. So overcome was he that, on the topmost step, he fell panting. And could not rise for many minutes. When he did, it was to totter to the inner sanctuary. Here he fell on a couch, groaning repeatedly.

Finally, his strength returning, he went over to Oltis, and said, "I have been down the stairway."

Over the marble figure passed a tremor.

"I have seen the dead handmaids in their alabaster coffins!"

There was another tremor.

"Whose work was this?"

The marble lips moved.

“It was that of Atlano and myself.”

“This was in thy base search for that draught said to give life without end? To get this, thou hast tortured those fair young creatures?”

“Yea. And the younger and fairer, the more the power,” burst from Oltis. “Viril knew! Viril found it out for his own use! But was so base as not to tell us!—Though, among his goods, we found a torn piece of papyrus that gave us the clue. On it was written some of the parts forming the draught. The blood of maidens—lovely maidens—was one. And, as their blood dripped from them into the crucible, they were to stand and stir the blessed mixture. Ah, how we worked! How we tried to find the missing parts. Maiden after maiden lost her life!” Oltis had become gloating in his remembrance. “And if, at times, Atlano would have had mercy, I would not. His mercy, thou canst judge. As for myself, no maiden was so fair as the one, who, in her mixing, most promised the draught. For, there is power in maiden blood! Once, we almost reached it. Once, I believed I should be High Priest—King, forever! But it came to naught.” And his head sank on his breast.

“They died then?”

“Yea. Their blood was their life!”

“This was done in the room yonder?”

Deucalion had pointed to a door at the northwestern corner.

“Yea.” Oltis again raised his head;—his eyes were resuming their savageness. “Since thou camest—for some reason—we have not had the wish.”

“Then—why came Æole into this inner place?”

“Ask me not.”

“Ah—Æole—my child—my child!” cried Deucalion, involuntarily. And he fell on his knees to utter his gratitude.

“Thanks, ye gods! Thanks that I came in time. Thanks for these powers that have aided me to this. Ah—Æole—Hellen—to have you again in Pelasgia. To bring you to the arms of your mother!”

Most terrible was the cry that burst from Oltis. In his horror at this, sudden revelation, he started to his feet—but only to sink to his couch, helpless. Untold agony was upon him. Light had come that was paralyzing, blinding. Groan after groan rent his stiffened body.

Deucalion arose to gaze at him; and quickly he calmed almost to stupor. Then Deucalion questioned him.

“Where got ye the coffins?”

“They were made in Khemi;[20] and brought into the vault in the darkest night.”

“Doth Kluto know aught of this?”

“He knoweth not. He was raised to this inner holy place as thou camest. He hath not been told.”

“The other higher priests know?”

“They know, and aided, hoping for the draught. In the temples of all the great cities are the priests seeking. I have been among them.” Here was a sigh that had terrible meaning.

“The rulers, like the king, have aided?”

“Yea.”

“That is the reason the captains meet no more?”

“Yea.”

“That is the reason the sixth year was not kept?”

“That was the year before thou camest. We had not the time.”

“O most wretched people! With all thine ease, there is now no time for the keeping of thine oldest law, one handed down by thy father Poseidon! How couldst thou dare to let the sixth year go by, Oltis?”

“I care not for the olden laws. Thinkest thou because such are graved on their columns that they must stand forever? We can make laws now for ourselves; and have.”

Deucalion shivered.

This violation in not observing the sixth year was most heinous. The first men had inscribed its regulations on the great column of orichalcum, before mentioned, that stood in the grove of Poseidon in front of the gateway of the great court. Here, before this column, were the king and sub-kings (or royal rulers), to meet every fifth and sixth year alternately, in order to consult about public affairs, inquire into weighty transgressions, and afterward pass judgment. It was a grand Congress. But before judgment was passed, certain pledges were given, and in this wise:

The sacred bulls that ranged the inclosures on the northern slope of the mountain were hunted by ten chosen men with staves and nooses. When one was caught, he was led up to the column, and struck upon the head to fall dead before the inscription. Then, on the altar near the column, were his limbs offered a burnt sacrifice. Afterward, a cup was partly filled with his blood; and in this, each one of the Congress cast a blood clot. Then the rest of the victim was laid on the fire. Thereupon, each took a golden vessel, drew from the cup, and poured a libation upon the fire, at the same time swearing that he would punish transgressors, that he would not violate the inscriptions, and that he would not obey any ruler who would command him to act contrary to the laws of Poseidon. After drinking, each vessel was dedicated to the temple.

When supper was eaten, and the altar fire was out, they put on beautiful azure robes; and sat in the darkness before the embers of the sacrifice in order to receive and give judgment. At daybreak were written on golden tablets their sentences, which were then deposited in the temple as memorials, together with the robes.

At the end, they swore not to take up arms against each other; ever to aid the royal house in case of rebellion; and, in common, to deliberate upon war, giving the supremacy to the house of Atlas. Further, the king promised never to decide upon the life or death of a kinsman unless he had the assent of a majority of the sub-kings.[21]

This was the most ancient and most important of observances. Yet rulers and priests had combined to neglect it—whilst the people looked on. No wonder was it that Deucalion shivered.

Upon recovering somewhat, he exclaimed: “Oltis, it is the crowning crime!”

“We have not lost through it. Let not thy mind be weighted.” Scornful was his tone.

“Oltis, I am borne to earth. Yet will I rise that I may bring the people to the ‘Deeps’—there to behold thy work—there to open their eyes—shouldst thou not do as I bid thee.”

The figure again growing into marble shuddered. Great beads of perspiration started. But no words came.

“Oltis, when day breaketh, thou wilt go with me to the portico, and tell the people this: That the powers above will that the Pelasgian children leave with me at once. A few words will do. Else—”

The marble again quivered; the lips murmured, “I will.”

Deucalion sat down before the wretched man, and pondered.

“Those who pressed within this inner holy place yesterday, may have noted that there were no signs of the missing handmaids. And, of this, the people may have been told. They

should, then, be more than ever in doubt as to their present place—unless they are dead of all feeling.

"Though, what else can come of a people who can bear such mockeries, who break the marriage laws, who wed within forbidden limits, who are given over to feasting, drinking, pleasuring; who think no longer of raising higher the mind, but only of delighting the body; and yet, who, in the midst of all, daily see and touch monuments that speak with force of past virtue, of a worship once most pure.

"Should these islanders be brought in to see the sight below, it would not help. For the island is doomed. Not long could these evils last even if the islanders should still be as stone, after seeing. And any trouble now, will but hinder our going.

"I have it. I will write what I have seen; and ere leaving, will send it to the people of Chimo. They are the best and strongest of these islanders. Yea that will I do. It may help the handmaids, should the doom of the island be stayed a little.

"But, ah, this strange inner sight, why faileth it? Why, for many days, hath it left me, so that I know not if Pyrrha liveth. Yet, why should I doubt, after what I have felt and seen? Sure am I that she liveth. Sure am I that, in the end, joy will be ours. Yet am I weak—weak!"

Whilst thus Deucalion mused and suffered, the day broke. With the first entering rays of the sun, Oltis stirred; and gradually shook off the now willing iron bands. Shortly he arose, but only to fall back of his weakness. Then Deucalion gave him of the life cordial, after mixing with it a few drops of a red elixir. Thereupon, Oltis arose, and stretched as if arousing from sleep. Some minutes afterward, he was walking about unsteadily. And Deucalion waited a little.

"Oltis, lean upon me. We will go to the portico."

He complied. Sad was it to see the docility of this hitherto proud and intractable man. As they walked, Deucalion spoke low:

"Say but the words that will speed the children and myself on our way to Pelasgia."

"I know thee, at last, strange man," was returned wearily. "But what knowledge! Ah, if Atlano but knew! Even as it is—how hath he longed for thy blood. And—to find—thou art—Deucalion!"

"This knowledge must be thine alone. He is not to know."

"I will be dumb. But how hast thou mastered us."

"I will master you—when, with the children, I am on the sea, and facing Pelasgia."

"How didst thou get such power? Are there gods?"

"Oltis, there are. Know sorrow for thy sin, ere it be too late."

"I cannot. Of what use is such sorrow? It would come only of fear. Should the fear be no more, I would be as I have been."

"Thou speakest truth. Sorrow for sin should come of the heart alone. But that may be thine. Sorrow thus for warmth to the gods."

"Sir Deucalion, I know no warmth of feeling. I never knew such for aught of earth—not even for my children. How then could I know it for the gods, if such there be? I tell thee if there is a life beyond, I am doomed."

"Say not so, Oltis. If one spark of feeling could begin to glow in thy heart, it would spread, giving heat, life to all the inner man—wouldst thou grant it air. Faint though the spark, it groweth with little feeding."

Oltis sighed; then said, "I could strangle thee, now, had I the power. That is my spark of feeling! To be thus humbled, weakened! Oh, but to have my fingers about thy neck, to see

thine eyes burst from thy head, to fix that head on a pillar in the air, to watch the birds of prey gather its flesh, mite by mite! How I ache! How I pant for thy blood!"

"Have done," spoke Deucalion sternly, "or worse will befall thee than thou dreamest. Wouldst thou be given over to the tender mercy of the people?"

"I will do that I am forced to. But—for one moment of freedom!" Dreadful were his writhings.

"Calm thyself. We are almost at the portal."

And, at the portal they were—most suddenly to come out before the watching islanders.

The sun was just above the horizon when the shouts arose, "The High Priest!" "The 'Silent Priest'!" "Behold!" "Behold!"

Atlano, who was talking with Urgis, turned; and perceived the two standing on the portico. Intense chagrin was expressed in his face as he gazed and wondered. The 'Silent Priest' not killed! But, instead, thus appearing,—bearing up Oltis who was trembling as an aged man. "What meant it?"

But the high priest was beckoning. In answer, the people surged forward. When there was quiet, Oltis spoke.

"King Atlano, Priests, People, these troubles are of the gods. Anger them no further. Hearken to this, their will. Ere the morn is two hours older will the Pelasgian children leave, and with the 'Silent Priest.'"

Atlano's derisive laugh burst forth. But the people began to cry their acquiescence. It was:

"So shall it be!" "So shall it be!" "We will be rid of them!" "They are a scourge!"

The guards encircling Atlano appeared alarmed. Already they were fearing some manifestation against him. But he, with wonderful coolness, replied to Oltis, "How are we to believe that the gods thus will?"

"In like manner as the people believed that, at will of the gods, the handmaids were forced into the inner holy place—never to be seen more!" Loud rang the imperial voice, seeming to be thrown from high above.

Atlano paled in a terrible way. Many of the priests fell on their faces. The people groaned, and pressed about the guards so that the latter were forced to point their spears and raise their battle axes. And, oh the sullen discomfiture smoldering in some eyes, the menacing lightning ready to dart from others!

But Atlano was brave. He spoke again, with boldness, "Oltis, go within. Thou art feeble, too feeble, to stand there. Thy mind giveth way—as hath thy body. Go within."

Oltis indeed proved the weakness of his body by falling against the 'Silent Priest,' who lifted him, and bore him inside, after signifying that he would return.

When Oltis had been laid upon his couch in the inner sanctuary, the 'Silent Priest' reappeared before the ominously quiet people, and signed that he would at once depart, recommended them to the mercy of the gods, blessed them, and bade farewell.

Then to Sensel, who was near, he delivered a roll of papyrus addressed to the queen.

As for Atlano, he felt it was policy to be quiescent. After the besotted conduct of Oltis, there was no knowing what might happen. As to the voice, he would still disclaim it.

Then, as the ground was resting of its tremors, he ordered the guards to disperse the excited, awakening islanders. When the great court was quite emptied, he entered the temple to seek Oltis that he might upbraid him for his faint-heartedness.

Speedily he was beside the wretched high priest, who lay with closed eyes, scarcely breathing: though not a word was vouchsafed to all his questions and vituperations. Thus,

as a resource, he bethought him of the queen and her charges; and, returning to the courtyard, called his guards, and drove to the palace.

As he passed along, much the people marveled. Never before had a king of Atlantis been known to require protection in driving between the temple and the palace. Attendants, of course, were customary;—but guards! What meant such a passing as this?

CHAPTER XIV.
A TIMELY TORRENT.

Queen Atlana and her young charges were finishing a hurried meal in the most delightful of morning rooms. This was in the east garden, and had for floor, velvety grass; for ceiling, the interlacing boughs of two fragrant acacias; for background, a trellis overrun with morning-glories and flanked at each end by tall white lilies and the high blue shoots of the papyrus.

Further the favorite lotus flowers spread thick on the bosom of a stream to the eastward that was running blithely to lose itself in the beautiful Luith. Flowers, flowers were everywhere; for this was their land. And those of the trellis in their white, pink, blue, crimson, and purple, were preëminent for size and tint.

Who, with any spirituality, can look upon these thick-clustering morning-glories as they open joyfully to the morning sun, and not think of a higher blossoming? In their delicate texture, and soft rich coloring, they suggest the flowers of Heaven. Their ethereal loveliness fills the heart with a most tender rapture. Fit types are they of that fairer blooming of the Uplands, to which the eye has not yet pierced, to which the ear is yet unopened!

The grand eating apartment, or banqueting room, was in the western wing of the palace, and facing the south. But the breakfast room proper faced the east, and overlooked this garden morning room, the latter superseding the former for about three-fourths of the year, from the tenderness of the climate.

In the simplicity of their diet and table service, the Atlanteans might be held an example. Theirs were no cumbersome, broad tables weighed down with plate and ornamentations. The dishes and drinking vessels were of gold, silver, bronze, or tin, as accorded with the degree of the family using; and were of simplest pattern and beaten light, the spiral being the principal adornment. There were spiral handles, and spiral supports to the larger dishes, also. As to the tables, they were hollow, either broken circles or horseshoes in shape, and of three feet in width—of course affording seating capacity on the outer side only. Thus, well could the Atlanteans arrange for effective backgrounds, well could they be served. Further, such waitresses were theirs! Through the openings of these broken circles, or horseshoes, flitted beauteous maidens, white-robed and garlanded, who could but whet the appetite. Maidens ever served in Atlantis. Clever people!

In the middle of her table, sat Queen Atlana, with Æole on the right, and Electra on the left; while, farther along the broken circle, on either side, ranged her ladies. For this morning, there was a visitor—Hellen; and his place was at the end, on the queen's right.

All were facing the garden, and the sun which was well up; and feeling happily conscious of the fairy-like background, the soft singing stream, the warblers in the acacia blooms overhead, and the lovely gliding maidens attending their few wants.

Three feet was the space allotted each at the table; and the dividing lines were rows of flowers extending crosswise, flowers of scent so delicate that they could not interfere with the appetite of the most sensitive.

Fancy a breakfast of eggs, milk, honey, dried birds, fruit, and cakes made of corn and honey—ye epicures. Well would it be could ye more than fancy. Well would it be for your poor, ill-treated organs!

But, upon this sensible, paradisiacal breakfast was stealing the serpent. Through the garden was approaching Atlano, though not with the soft, quick gliding of the animal mentioned, but with infuriated stride. However, as the serpent is the symbol of sense, the comparison will hold.

And the happy eyes of the eaters fell as one upon him! For, they were happy, in spite of what had been undergone, in spite of the parting to come. They were happy in being together.

Very calmly, cheerfully did the queen arise to meet him as he drew near, though his scowling looks were sufficient to have chilled the stoutest heart. However, in response to her salutation, he forced a smile; and bowed to the others, who, following the queen's example, had also arisen and saluted him.

Then he said, in questioning tone, "Ye are early at the morning meal."

"Yea, Atlano. But—for very good cause." Rather faltering was the queen's reply.

"I have not broken fast since this troubled night."

"Come, then; and be strengthened." With the words, Atlana motioned him to the seat relinquished by Æole. Quite tractably he took this, and was permitting the maidens to serve him, when his eyes fell upon Hellen, who was standing beside Æole and Electra, and talking fast.

Direful was the anger that showed in his face; and this smote upon the queen. Though she tried to talk with ease as he grew even angrier, seeming with every morsel to choke the more. Finally, unable to restrain himself, he demanded in what is known as a stage undertone, "Why is Hellen here—and at this meal?"

"It is his last morning, as thou knowest."

"I know it not."

"They leave this day."

"I have not said the word."

"Thou hast promised."

"I meant it not."

"We have made ready."

"That doth not matter."

Then perceiving that the three had ceased their talking, and were watching him, he beckoned, and said, "Æole, come hither."

She, with the others, approached.

He arose from his scanty meal, and in softened tone, inquired:

"Æole, wouldst thou be glad to leave us?"

"Gracious King, I would be glad to go to my home; but am loth to leave Queen Atlana." The lovely face had become downcast.

"But Pelasgia is not so far," interposed the queen. "And we have good vessels. How strong is my wish to journey thither with thee, Æole, and place thee in the arms of thy mother!"

"Much good would the vessels do thee, Atlana," said the king with meaning. "It is not for thee to go so far."

"I forgot." She laughed in a sorrowful way. "Too well I know the need of my presence to the king!"

“And thou, Electra, what wilt thou do when Æole hath left us?”

“King Atlano, I will live in the hope of meeting her, if even in Pelasgia.”

“We will come for thee, Electra,” spoke Hellen. “Pelasgia will not be Pelasgia—nor my mother, mother—nor my father, father—without thee. Where thou art is the home for me. Rather would I stay here than go from thee to the brightest fate!”

“Hush, Hellen!” Poor Electra was trying hard to bear up.

“Through the night and this morning have I wavered between my home and thee. Now is my mind clear!” And Hellen looked about him, fierce in his determination.

“Trouble thyself no longer, Hellen. Thou wilt never go back. Neither will Æole. I have need of thee, of her. Thou forgettest the pain in store for thee. I am not done with that. Never spoke Atlantean to king as hast thou, the stranger, the captive. This island may sink ere I forget it!”

The king was working himself into fury again. The listeners stood petrified, all but the queen. She spoke out with fine spirit:

“Atlano, I have this to tell thee. It hath been sent me that they are to go. A little after daybreak came the word. Since then my serving men have been making ready. I must tell thee,”—and she spoke faster,—“that I have ordered my galley. And another galley is making ready with food and drink for the use of Hellen and Æole. The two galleys are to sail down Luith to the coast, and up along that until they meet the ‘Silent Priest’ who will come in his boat.”

“Where gottest thou all this?” stammered the king.

“Didst thou not know? There came the written word from the ‘Silent Priest’ scarce an hour since. Sensel brought it.”

“Here is fine doing,” vociferated he. “And thou to obey! Art thou, like Oltis, becoming weak of mind? Art thou crazed?”

“If to be crazed is to wish well to Æole and Hellen, if to be crazed is to wish to see them well away from this island, if to be crazed is to wish to obey that grand priest—then that I am.” Drawing herself up, she looked at him with such brave eyes that he, in fear for what she might next say, temporized:

“Atlana, thou must know—everything hath gone wrong since this meddling priest set foot on the sands.”

“Have a care, King Atlano.”

“Ah, the fiery Electra speaketh. So, he is a favorite of thine.”

“He is. Better, he is the worker of the gods. That is why things have gone wrong, as thou callest it. Thy wrong meaneth right on the other side. There are two sides to all things.”

This was dreadful, but such was the force of example. If the queen would demean herself by speaking her mind, what could be expected of underlings. He glared from the rather aghast Atlana to this rebellious Electra, and said, as if hurling a weapon, “This, thy worker of the gods, is to come down from his height. Ere the day closeth, will he be yielded upon the altar!”

“Beware,” came from Hellen. And he made a step forward.

“Ha! Now it is the rash Hellen of ready tongue. Boy, thou art not in Pelasgia.”

“But soon will be.” Then his crest lowered, for he thought of Electra.

“Hellen,” urged the queen, “better would it be if thou didst not speak.” Then to the king, she said appealingly, “Atlano, of a truth, the galleys wait for us. Let us to them. As thou goest, it may be that thou wilt look with other eyes upon this.”

“Never will I look with other eyes. But I will go with thee to make this naught.”

“Make it not naught, King Atlano,” interposed Æole, to the amazement of all, even himself. Never before had she been known to address him. “Make not naught our going. The heart of Queen Atlana is in this. Let not her hopes come to naught. And, anger not the gods.”

“Hearken unto her, Atlano,” entreated the queen. “Let them go. Further, grant that I may go a short way with them. And come thou on this little sail.”

Atlano was looking into the beautiful, starry eyes that were even more eloquent than the sweet tones. And, most suddenly, felt like giving way. But, checking the impulse, he replied, as if to Atlana,

“However willing I may be for thee to enjoy thy ‘little sail,’ I may not grant it for strong reason. Thou knowest why.”

“Atlano, I will be gone but half the day. If thou wilt bring to mind, thou wert willing I should go to Chimo, and stay for days, not long since.”

“Then skies were fair, and the gods smiling. But, I take it, these late troubles make of need thy presence here.”

“Atlano, once thou didst laugh at that prophecy.”

“Then I was young, and not so wicked.” He laughed recklessly.

“Of a truth, a stay so short cannot work evil.”

“Atlana, thy words seem as though I had said this thing could be. Talk no more of it.”

“Gracious King,” urged Æole, again to the surprise of all, “shouldst thou say the word, and then come with us, thou art with the queen.”

“Æole, the prophecy doth run, ‘*With Atlana at the palace, no evil befalleth Atlano.*’ Wouldst thou have her go, did I grant it, after this?”

“Nay, King Atlano, not if it doth run thus.”

“Æole, thou dost yield too soon,” cried Electra, in her annoyance. “What are twenty prophecies to thy getting away!”

“Ah, it is Electra again,” sneered Atlano, “the lady of the tongue.”

“I bless heaven for my tongue if it doth wage for the right. So may all women. Only cowards or tyrants need fear the tongues of honest women; and of their fear they rail.”

“And thou, it seemeth, hast had the hope of sharing in this ‘little sail.’ Will this help thee to it?”

“The gods will help me.”

“The gods, it seemeth, are thy very good friends.” And, oh his mocking tone!

“Well would it be were they thy friends, King Atlano.”

Her eyes held more meaning even than her solemn tones. As if to ignore both, he turned to address Æole just as an attendant came from behind the trellis with the message that the galleys were in readiness. Then the ladies Rica and Elna who had gone within, reappeared, robed for the trip and bearing the queen’s wraps as well as those of Æole and Electra.

When Atlana’s mantle was placed about her, she addressed the king: “Now are we ready to go to the galleys—if it needeth to see them off—if it needeth to go with them a little. Say but the word, Atlano.”

He replied not. She continued, “Come. And thou, Æole, walk on this side. Electra, thou wilt follow with Hellen. Rica and Elna, ye will lead.—Where is Azu?”

For answer, there was heard a sound as of a falling body. All turned knowing what this meant, knowing they should behold Azu flat on his face. This was ever the manner in

which he testified his knowledge of the presence of the king. And there he was, prone in front of the trellis, behind which he had been awaiting call.

Even Atlano laughed. Then, as usual, he gave the word to arise, which Azu did in sprightly fashion, to stand grinning and bowing, and showing only the whites of his great round eyes.

"Come, Azu," said the queen. "Thou wilt hold up my robe."

Azu lurched to this; and held up the train tenderly. The queen continued, "Now will we go."

In this order, was the reluctant king borne through the garden, and on to the landing place. With scowling eyes fastened on the ground, he pondered as to the words he should speak upon arriving there. And no speech would he vouchsafe by the way.

Hellen and Electra, naturally, fell a little behind. When well beyond hearing, Hellen said low, "Electra, the king will never give the word."

"Hellen, the king will give the word."

"Thou art as full of hope as of strength. How didst thou come by a spirit so light?"

"Always hath it been mine. Never have I known fear."

"But, of late thou hast known it?"

"Nay. Though I lost hope when I believed Æole had passed away. How I prayed to go to her."

"Hadst thou no thought for me—for my double sorrow?"

"Hellen, I did think of thee. I knew thou wouldst sorrow much. But further, I knew it would not be for long. Thou wouldst have come to us. And what joy to be in the other life together!"

"Had I thy hope."

"Now shouldst thou have it if ever."

"It cometh. Electra, hearken. I hug to myself that which even Æole knoweth not. Who, thinkest thou, is the 'Silent Priest'?"

"One sent of the gods."

"But who—what person is he?"

She looked at him keenly, and noted his excitement.—"Thou meanest not—that he cometh from Pelasgia?"

"But I do—he cometh from there."

"It cannot be that—he is—thy father?" Her voice had sunk to an awed whisper.

"Electra, thou readest my mind. Yea, yea, he is my father, that father I have so doubted. Thou canst imagine a little my shame, my sorrow. But I have told him, and he hath said that he doth know—that it was but in nature. Such is his grand heart."

Electra had paused, and was breathing hard. For the first time in her life, words refused to come. Thus Hellen went on.

"Yea, and this is his plan for saving us. His wisdom hath caused these wonders—all save the quakings of the earth, and the voice. In Pelasgia, so much of hidden knowledge was his that the people called him the 'favorite of the gods.' And the gods are with him now."

"But—the voice—Hellen?"

"The voice—ah, that is Sensel." And he enlightened her. For the moment she stood motionless; and then seizing his arm that they might hasten on, murmured:

"Thou, Hellen, to further doubt! It is past belief. Help me to believe."

"Electra, where now is thy surety?" laughed he gaily and fondly.

“That is right, Hellen. Turn upon me. I merit it after making naught thy words.” She smiled bewitchingly.

“Turn upon thee, I will! If the king sayeth the word for us to go, thou wilt see such a turning upon, shouldst thou not be of us. I will turn away from them to thee. Thus will I turn upon thee. Never will I leave thee!”

Hard was it for Electra to bear up under this. And more might follow. Hellen would do the wildest, rashest things, without doubt; for this reason she must divert his thoughts.

“I think when the thought cometh to one as strong as it did to me, during last night, that we should this day go sailing from Atlantis, it meaneth much. It meaneth we shall go. But what a drear night was this last, Hellen.”

“It was spent with thee and Æole. Therefore, was it bright.”

There was danger again. Fortunately, a turn in the garden brought them in sight of the landing place, where the others of the party were pausing, with faces turned toward them expectantly. Thus, they quickened their pace.

At the marble landing place awaited the two galleys, gay in their bright-colored awnings and hangings; whilst hovering about, were other galleys belonging to the palace and the neighboring nobles. The queen’s galley, the smaller of the two, was built of cedar, and its sides were ornamented in ebony and gold. It had but one mast, whose sail was of the costly byssus. The hangings and awnings were also of byssus, white, and richly embroidered in pale blue and corn color. The deck was inlaid with fine woods; and in the middle was the withdrawing room. This was built of satin wood, and paneled within in sandalwood; and was furnished with rugs, couches, tables, and chairs, all luxurious. On either side of this apartment, were stretched awnings, beneath which were more rugs and couches.

The other galley was arranged much like the queen’s, but was not so luxurious in its appointments, or lavish in its hangings. Evidently it was built for use. Scattered about its deck were baskets of provisions; whilst near the prow was a shallow hold, also containing baskets, and jars large and small. The withdrawing room had doors instead of hangings. The one sail was square, large, and of strong linen colored blue. Indeed, there was an air about this galley indicating it meant work. Thus, the eyes were attracted toward it full as much as toward the elegant one of the queen.

The figurehead of the queen’s galley was a bust of Amen; that of Hellen’s, a bust of Poseidon. Both flaunted banners bearing the symbol of Atlantis, a cross surrounded by a circle,[22] in gold. From each, many pennants were flying symbolic of Poseidon’s arrival on the island and his meeting with Cleito, the symbols being wrought in gold upon a blue ground.

Of the sailors, or oarsmen belonging, a few were at the oars; but the greater number were on the decks of the neighboring galleys.

Overhead, the sky was welcoming the beauteous Aurora who was now treading securely on her way. The hush, the glow, the heavenliness of young morn was upon all; and a little of its peace fell upon the spirits of the queen and her young charges, so that they stood silent, for the moment; giving inward, upward voice to their yearnings, and finding hope.

O East, with thy potent beams! It was for reason that the most ancient nations looked in thy direction for the especial Divine presence! It was for reason that their temples faced thee, their altars were placed toward thee; that they themselves, when bending the knee, looked to thee! For reason was it that the Star was set in thee, that the wise men journeyed —of their knowledge—toward thee and It!

Already, on this bright morn, were the islanders forgetting their terrors of the night. Banks of canal and stream were lined with them, for they of their curiosity, were awaiting what the king would do. Would he obey the voices of the past few days? Would he fulfill his

promises to the Unseen? Would the queen show herself when her young charges were to leave?

And now,—here she was! Surely the king was about to make good his promises. With keenest expectation, they waited until the queen should look a little about her. Then, they shouted their love. She, deeply touched, bowed again and again; and smiled rarely.

But, there were no welcoming voices for the king; and the queen felt a culprit that she had received all. Meanwhile, Atlano had affected to be observing the galleys, such affectation giving place to interest until his dark face grew darker. Not long was he in bursting forth:

"Good work was this. And in an hour! Whom didst thou get—of these slow Atlanteans to manage this?"

"Sensel ran much—and helped in the bearing." The queen's tone was meekness itself.

"He is the spawn of evil," vociferated Atlano, regardless who might hear. "And his fitting master is that 'Silent Priest.' I tell thee, Atlana, it is they have brought these evils upon us. I am more than ever sure it is their presence that doth anger Amen. Now I again say—and before you all—that Hellen and Æole shall not go. Then for some fine gifts on the altar with the morrow. The gods would thus order! Ha—ha!"

He looked a demon. Queen Atlana became gray in her terror, and clasped Æole to her. Hellen, freeing himself from Electra's detaining grasp, was about to dart upon him when prevented in a manner as unexpected as appalling.

They were standing on a marble terrace beside a placid stream, beneath a smiling sky, and about them were heard the murmurings of the listening islanders. But, in an instant, came dread change. The sky darkened to blackness; great raindrops splashed down; and a shower succeeded that flooded the terrace in a moment. Further, wildest cries of terror arose from the fleeing islanders seeking cover.

Panic seized upon those on the landing place. They flew down the stairway to the shelter of the larger galley—Atlano leading and helping. Into the withdrawing room they sped, to close the doors, and drop upon the couches.

For full a minute the torrent beat—whilst they sat voiceless, cowering. Then it ceased as suddenly as it had come; and the sun poured its beams with such strength that they began to pant for the air. When the doors were opened, they looked out upon a scene so brilliant that they were obliged to shade their eyes. Never had the sun been as potent thus early.

They sank again upon the couches; and listened with dread to the running off of the water from the galley's deck.

"My poor galley," the queen murmured after a little, "in what a state is it. And the food—it is ruined."

"Thus is it that the gods smile upon me," triumphed Atlano.

The four confounded ones glanced hopelessly at each other. Even Electra was despairing. What evil fate was this?

Suddenly, footsteps were heard just without the door. Electra arose; and looked out to perceive Sensel.

"What is it, Sensel?"

"Naught is harmed." And he pointed toward the hold. It was closed and the deck shorn of its baskets. He pointed next to Azu, who like himself was dripping, but whose port was that of a conqueror. Then at Electra's inquiring look, he continued:

"I was in the hold when the sky darkened. It took scarce a minute to gather the baskets, throw them into the hold and close it. I had ended while ye stood confounded and then began to flee. As ye darted down the stairway, I called Azu; and we leaped from this galley

to that of the queen, and threw over her withdrawing room the shield used for showers, and drew in the outer rugs and couches. The awnings and hanging are dripping; but, with this sun, will dry in a few minutes. Thou shouldst have seen Azu work!"

"Sensel, thou hast saved us. Azu, the queen shall know." Then Electra turned to the eager listeners inside.

"Thou seest," she said to the king.

"I hear, and it is Electra," he returned mockingly. Though it was plain that Sensel's words had upset him, as he was paling and flushing in a manner distressing to witness; and his eyes were sullen and averted.

The queen was silently giving thanks. Then she arose, her expression most confident.

"Hellen, Æole, Electra, what is this strange heat but the more aid from above. Let us not sink under it, but go out, and look as it drieth everything."

They arose to follow her, therewith hearing the familiar sound of a body falling. Azu was ready. He again lay flat in expectation of the king.

But when they had passed out, and had waited, and the king came not, Queen Atlana said, "Azu, arise."

When he was on his feet, she continued, "Azu, I speak the thanks of all. Well hast thou done. May I never forget it!"

Azu's smile was ecstatic; and, between bows to the ground, and gasps, he managed to reply:

"Most gracious, most glorious Queen, for thee I can never do enough. What hast thou done for me!"

It was a long speech for him, and rather overcoming. Seeing this, the queen said in her kindest tone, "And now, Azu, my robe."

When he had shuffled behind her, and was holding her train in his loving manner, she beckoned to Sensel who came to kneel gallantly before her. Then she extended to him her hand which he kissed in prince-like fashion—and to her surprise.

"Sensel, thou wilt not look for words. None could speak what I feel."

"Gracious Queen, the smile thou givest me, speaketh beyond words. And, it was but little."

"It hath saved Æole and Hellen." Her low tone was so impressive that the hearers were thrilled. Then, in sprightly fashion she subjoined:

"Now, Sensel, arise. And lead us that we may note the power of this sun."

Thereupon, they walked about to exclaim, "The wonder of it!" "The wonder of it!" For, so rapid was the drying that clouds of vapor were ascending. Already was the deck as free from moisture as it had been before.

As to the king, long was he in appearing. When he came out to them, his head was drooping, his tones mumbling.

"Atlana, I yield. Hellen and Æole may go. And thou mayest take thy 'little sail;' though let it not go beyond a few hours. I look for thee by the wane of the day."

In the midst of the sudden joy, was felt perplexity, fear. What had come upon him? Was this most alarming interposition of the elements producing effect? Or, was there more beneath?

After some moments' quiet, the queen of her incredulity, asked, "Atlano, meanest thou—that I can go?"

"I mean it." Again were the words mumbled: then, with bent head, he turned to leave them.

But Æole, in her pity and gratitude, went after him; and said bravely:

"Gracious King—"

He faced her. "Speak, Æole."

"Gracious King, bid us good speed. And, we would thank thee."

"Æole, thank me not. I would have done thee—harm. But—the powers—have come—between!" He spoke with a queer reluctance of articulation. Then an expression came into his face that caused the beholders to shrink with horror. It was that of a soul that, at last, sees the vortex, the Gehenna, to which it has been trending; of a soul that, in spite of its better knowledge and its fast coming fate, would not shake off the evilness of its bent, the sensuality that had destroyed it!

Æole, alone, did not see this look. For, as the king faced her, she had glanced at Sensel to receive his intent gaze; and thereby had blushed, and bent her head. She lifted it to behold him staring at the king, horrified. When, in her alarm, she looked about her, it was but to see horror depicted on every face. As all eyes were on the king, she then turned to him.

The questioning look of her deep, clear, innocent eyes was as a shock to Atlano; and a good impulse stirred him. Possibly some unselfish spring was yet remaining within him. His lips moved as if he would speak, though no sound came at first, with all his effort; but finally, his unwilling tongue moved spasmodically.

"Good speed, Æole. And know—that—for thee—I would have dared earth and the powers beyond. But now I tell thee—I am glad that ruin doth threaten me—to thy saving!"

Bending over, he kissed her robe. Then with no look about him, moved from their sight.

Æole was so overcome that Sensel came beside her, and led her within the withdrawing room, and to a couch. As she sank thereon, he entreated, "Æole, cheer. The worst is past. Now for Pelasgia!"

"But thou, Sensel?" she murmured.

"I will go with thee. I came to go when I willed. It is my will to leave this island."

All precious was the joy that came into her face.

"Sensel, always have I felt that thou camest for our good."

"Æole, the service of my life is thine." Then, noting her changing color, her shrinking attitude, he added, in his usual voice, "Now will I go to the queen. She hath sore pain."

But the poor queen, weeping bitterly, was just about to enter, supported by Electra and Rica. These drew her to a couch. When she had calmed somewhat, Sensel bowed low before her, awaiting permission to address her. "What is it Sensel?" she was quick to ask.

"Gracious Queen, shall I give the word to the captains to call the oarsmen that we may go?"

"Yea, yea!" she cried brokenly. "And forever! May I never more see this landing. May Atlano be forever freed from my presence. Better were it for me to sink beneath the sea than to cumber him further. Oh, for death! So that he may no longer see my sad eyes, and through them the grieving heart beneath. Electra, I pray for death!"

"Not so, dear Queen," answered Electra, bending over her in tears. "It is not thine to pray for death. It was not mine to pray for death as I did when I thought Æole had passed away. It is ours to be calm, and bear, believing all is ordered."

"Electra," was whispered, "this moment I feel that I hate Æole; and now that I say it I am flooded with fond feeling for her. I am torn—torn!"

"Ever art thou fond of her, dear Queen. But, thou wouldst have reason, were she not so pure, to hate her without end. But, thou must think, it is Æole—pure, weak, grieving Æole."

“I know, I know. I will go to her; and clasp her.” With this, she arose, and went to sit beside Æole, to draw her to her as a mother might. Then they whispered together to their comforting.

Meanwhile, Sensel had informed the captains of the galleys that they were to depart; thus, pennants of red and gold were run up to call the oarsmen to their posts. When these were in their places, Sensel came again to the queen to report; and added:

“Queen Atlana, I go now to my master. We will meet the galleys off the great pile of rocks on the eastern coast.”

She smiled faintly, despite her sore heart. “Thanks to thee, Sensel. And, good speed to thee.”

After one look at Æole, he bounded from the galley to the stairway; and vanished.

Then the queen, with Æole, Electra, and her ladies went on board her own galley. Instantly the galleys moved off; and were followed by many of those of the nobles as well as those of less degree, in compliment to herself. While these glided through the canal, and through the water lilies of the stream, the islanders on the banks chanted their love for her. And happily they sang.

Atlana, in response, stood under her awning, bowing to right and left, and kissing her hand. Thus, on sped the galleys to the harbor; through the harbor to the ocean; and along the coast to the point where the ‘Silent Priest’ was to join them.

Here, opposite the pile of rocks, did himself and Sensel push off in the fantastic boat; whilst grouped on the sands, priests and people watched them, strangely quiet.

But, when the ‘Silent Priest’ had crossed the smiling water almost to the galleys, Queen Atlana showed herself. At once, the mass of islanders on the shore became vociferous in their acclamations. Many, of their zeal, threw off mantles, dashed into the surf, and swam even to her galley, arriving there almost with the silent one. When the latter had ascended, and was bowing low before her, the swimmers again burst forth in acclamations to be echoed strenuously by those on the galleys. The air was full of gladness.

Grouped under the queen’s awning were herself, the ‘Silent Priest,’ Hellen, Æole, Electra, and the ladies Rica and Elna—when the signal was given to move on. After Sensel had fastened the fantastic boat to the queen’s galley, he came on board also. At once, the voyage was resumed, and to the eastward, the swimmers and those remaining on the shore chanting melodiously their farewells.

CHAPTER XV.
THE ALTAR FIRES GO OUT.

On hastened Atlano to the courtyard of the palace. And from there, drove to the temple in wild fashion. For a great dread was besetting him.

When the others had gone out to watch the quick evaporation, he, whilst pondering in dismay upon Sensel's promptness, had suddenly realized that a strange torpor was overcoming him. Horrified, he essayed to break this, succeeding only after great struggling. Then, his tongue seemed to swell to twice its size, and clove to his mouth. In an agony of fear, he tried to burst its bands, it, at length, also yielding. Thereupon, an abject terror of his misdeeds and their penalty so possessed him that he hastened out, to atone in slightest measure, if possible, by accession to the voice's demands.

Further, spurred by his dread and some remnant of good yet left in him, he confessed his evil desire, and deprecated it. Now he was speeding to the temple to confer with Oltis as to what these evils might forbode, what might be done to ward off further visitations, aye, judgments!

In the temple, he found only the presiding priest Kluto, and the handmaids whose duty it was to attend the sacred fire.

"Kluto, where are the other priests?"

"Gracious King, they have gone to the sands that they may wait upon the silent one."

"Where is Urgis—that this hath been done?"

"Gracious King, Urgis hath gone, likewise."

"Urgis?"

"Gracious King, thus is it."

"And—hath the high priest gone?"

"Priest Hafoe hath told it that the high priest sitteth again as stone in the inner holy place."

"Why is the altar fire thus feeble?"

"Gracious King, I know not. In spite of us, it will but flicker, and, at times, doth threaten to go out."

Here was a dreadful omen.

The king would have spoken further, but his voice was thickening, his tongue growing sluggish: so, he turned abruptly from Kluto; and, with uncertain step, passed into the inner sanctuary. Here was still burning the 'Silent Priest's' hand lamp; here the altar fire flickered feebly as that of the temple proper; here the great apartment was in shadow save where the sun's beams entered faint through the hangings of the apertures.

In a passion of fear, Atlano looked about him, and called, "Oltis—Oltis!"

There was no response. Though quickly his eyes lighted upon the unhappy Oltis, who was sitting behind the statue of Amen, his rigid body bent forward, his eyes bright to madness.

The almost frenzied Atlano dragged a chair opposite him; and, as he sank into it, his sluggish tongue mumbled, “Oltis—speak.”

Oltis’ eyes showed his struggle to comply.

“Is thy tongue dead?”

Oltis gave a sigh so long and deep that the king shook in terror.

“Oltis, strive to shake off thy torpor. I felt the like coming but mastered it; though my tongue is not yet right.”

There was another sigh.

“Oltis, the silent one hath gone. Ere this, he hath joined the Pelasgian children. And they are sailing away—even to the queen.”

“The queen!”

The words burst from the marble Oltis, so terrifying Atlano that he leaped from his chair.

“Ah—thou speakest!”

“The queen hath left the palace?” vociferated Oltis.

“Yea, for half the day.”

“And—with the Pelasgian children—and—their father—Deucalion?”

Atlano almost fell back in his chair. As it was, he was obliged to lean upon it; and then stared at Oltis, his eyeballs protruding, his lips ashy.

“I say—with Deucalion. Thy Deucalion—the ‘Silent Priest’—hath mastered us.”

“Oltis, thou ravest!”

But Atlano felt it was not raving. Like a flash, it went through him. He fell into his chair, confounded, baffled. Great sparks danced before his eyes; his tongue refused to move. If he could but speak the dreadful thoughts surging in his brain; if he could but kill Oltis for telling him this!

Oltis spurred on, in spite of his helplessness and fear, continued:

“The Silent One is Deucalion. I knew it when ye had fled. He spoke to me. The horror of it!—He said he would search into the hidden things of the ‘Deeps.’ He opened the door. He went down the stairway. He saw the handmaids. He threatened to bring in the islanders. He forced me to go on the portico, and speak. Ah, he is a master!” The marble figure sighed as if it would rend itself.

Atlano was writhing and groaning in his torment. But joy—his voice was coming. He hissed, “Oltis, thou art a craven. Oh, for strength to get at thee! To aid—Deucalion! I will strangle thee for this. Then will I be king, high priest, chief priest in one. For Urgis shall die, likewise!”

Then he made the motion to spring, his hand out-clutched, Oltis, with tongue again mute, awaiting him: but in spite of his mad hatred, his baffled revenge, he had not power to arise. In his immobility and dread, he moaned:

“My foe—Deucalion—here—under my hand—and I not to feel it. How often have I longed to yield him on the altar—that ‘Silent Priest.’ Baffled, and by such arts! Oh, for Deucalion! To have him here for one instant, even!”

“Call to mind how thou didst pale before him but last night,” derided Oltis. “Wouldst thou grow weak again under his eyes? The man is master of strange, dire powers. Well is it he hath gone. Though—the queen!”

“Name her not. Ah, how hath she known thee. How hath she borne with me. What sorrow hath been hers. Mine eyes open to it. Fool that I am. Oltis, add another to thy doings. Call me fool!”

But Oltis again was dumb.

"Oltis, I curse thee! Some good was in me when I came to the throne. Some good was in me as long as I hearkened to the queen; but that good, thou hast turned to evil. The evil in me thou didst pander to—so that I am what I am. And why, Oltis, didst thou pander? It was not for warmth for me. Nay, nay, I read thee. I saw thou didst look to be king. I knew of thy draught of death; that thou hadst just got it in shape so that it would leave no sign. (Thy father, of his age, needed not such art.)—Ah, but I like to see thee writhe!—And well I bided, laughing at thee. Poor Atlana, how often hath she warned me. Now—for thee!"

He half arose, Oltis again awaiting him, his eyes flaming; but, as before, he sank in his chair, his muscles refusing to go farther.

"Why can I not walk?" he cried frantically. "Oltis, thou art bewitching me? Or, is it, in truth; the gods? We made the show not to believe in them—did we not? We believe now, ha—ha! Let us not fear. Let us curse each other—and them. Then will I go from here, and hunt up those lagging priests. This light on the altar groweth too dim. The gods will be getting in even worse temper because of it. Come, Oltis, raise thy voice. Let us curse together!"

Again he essayed to rise. But, in that moment, all power of volition forsook him. Instantly, his feet, hands, head, body, seemed encased in iron, in iron weighing tons. Not a muscle could he move for the immense pressure. His tongue was the deadest weight of all. His will was all of strength remaining him; and that struggled long, superhumanly. But the end was that he like Oltis could only sit as stone, and stare before him—and into the terrible eyes opposite.

Yet, how active was the mind becoming. How keenly, already, was it suffering in its recollections of evil, its regrets, its humiliation at being baffled—its horror of the oncoming fate. Oh, for madness, instead!

Thus sat the two in the growing gloom. Thus sat they when the priests returned from the seashore where they had been carried by the silent one's will. When they entered, the hand lamp was burned out, the altar fire so feeble that they hastened, alarmed, to restore it. The more than semi-darkness was terrifying.

Search was made for another hand lamp. When one was found and lighted, Atlano and Oltis were discovered sitting behind the statue of Amen. Both were marble, save their baleful eyes. At sight of them, the startled priests fell back one upon another; then turned, shrieking, to flee.

When without in the temple, Kluto said to them, "We have brought vengeance upon us. Let us try to win pardon while we may. But look—I cannot make this flame last long."

"We will help."

Terror-stricken, they fanned the dying blaze. Though no life would come in it. At length, they tottered to the portico, suffocating of dread.

But—what had come over the face of earth? It was smiling when they had entered the temple after returning from the shore; yet now, a strange gloom, a murkiness was enveloping sky, ocean, stream, valley, hill. And significant, far-off rumblings were beginning; the ocean was becoming white; the stream Luith, as well as the other streams, was leaping up its banks. On every side, people were crying out in affright. What was this?

Priests and handmaids ran out to the great court; and paused to look about in horror. Suddenly, lurid lights filled the northern heavens. Were the mountains of the northeast belching flame? Was that deafening noise to the east the roaring of the incensed waters? They fell on their knees to supplicate forlornly.

But Kluto, best of his fellows, could not pray long for thought of the king and high priest. He started to his feet, crying:

“Who will go with me to save King Atlano and High Priest Oltis?”

None answered. Indignant, he turned from his brethren to dart back to the temple; and flew through it to the inner sanctuary.

The hand lamp shed a feeble light. Upon the altar were a few faint sparks. Kluto made his way toward king and high priest who still sat rigid, glaring. He spoke, implored them to rise again and again—but only their despairing eyes answered.

Then he pulled the one, the other. As well might he have tried to move the temple itself. Almost frenzied, he cried:

“King Atlano, High Priest Oltis, come, come. The ocean seetheth, the streams leap their banks, the mountains throw forth fire, the earth grumbleth. Come, come! Break your bonds!”

But they stirred not, though their eyes grew like flames in their endeavors. Kluto then tried to lift Oltis’ hand. As well might he have tried to move the statue of Amen that frowned in front of them. Before this statue, he flung himself.

“O Amen, have mercy. Break their bonds!”

So alive was his faith, that he felt some answer must come to his passionate appeal; but the silence remained unbroken.

“Amen, I cannot go. I cannot leave them to this. I will share their fate!”

Now was the silence broken. There were heard the pattering of light feet and the cries of women. These, speeding through the western passage were the greater part of the handmaids who had been resting in their rooms after the vigils of the night; and who had just aroused to the terrors without. At their despairing tones, Kluto forgot king and priest, and ran out to them.

“Get ye to the great court, there to pray. For the end is upon us!”

They crowded about him, terrified and irresolute. When he had led them without among the priests and other handmaids, he went before the people thronging into the court, and bade them pray for the safety of the island.

But the majority, in scorn, received his words. Not even the most anxious could bring themselves to believe this paradisiacal island in danger. Possibly Atlano and Oltis might suffer, but their dear island could not come to harm! Had not the gods loved it? Had not one dwelt in it? And was he not their father? Had not blessings ever been showered upon it? No—no—their island must be safe!

But, as they ran in and out of the court, up and down the hill, along the banks of canal and stream, complaints of king and high priest began to rise.

“Said we not evil would follow that loss, ruin in Pelasgia?” murmured one.

“True, one evil bringeth another,” returned a second.

“It may be that the gods were angry then, with King Atlano,” whispered an old and thoughtful-looking man to his wife.

“But, Queen Atlana is good,” spoke their daughter, a young mother who was standing beside them with a little child clinging to each hand, and who was eyeing in dread the encroaching water of the stream. “Would she were here. Why, why did she sail away?—But look, Father, Mother! The water riseth even to the top of the bank! Oh, my dear ones!” And she kneeled to draw forlornly within her arms her little ones. “Oh, wert thy father but here!”

For their father was afar. He was the captain of the queen’s galley.

Past this kneeling, weeping mother were surging the distracted islanders, some making their way to the shore others rushing to gaze upon the menacing streams, others flying to the court of the temple there to plead for mercy, others running to the summit of the hill in

order to view better the fast brightening sky of the northeast. And continuously now was the earth shaking, groaning beneath them—whilst great raindrops were beginning to fall, and Amen's thunderbolts to play.

About this mother moaning over her children gathered other mothers with their husbands and little ones, the plaints mingling in chorus. But soon came a shaking so long and severe that every voice hushed, every face set in terror. Then all groveled on the ground.

When the trembling had subsided, and they were standing erect again, an old woman said to be the most aged person on the island, spoke in shrillest tone:

"This is what cometh of handmaids and animal gifts upon the altar. Think ye your fathers would have been thus led to evil. Oh, ye fools of Atlantis!"

She eyed the islanders about her with such derision that they forgot their terror, and felt like rushing upon her in a body.

A gray-haired, quivering man retorted:

"It is well for thee, old Nogoa, to stand there and taunt us islanders when it is known thou hast ever been loudest in favor of these new doings. Oh, thou old feather that goeth with the wind! Have a care—or thou wilt be more dragged in the dirt than thou hast been!"

"Hah, it is the craven Puppo who speaketh," returned Nogoa viciously. "He who saw his daughter forced into the inner holy place, and lifted not his voice to man or heaven against it. It seemeth he can cry out only when an old woman talketh."

Puppo darted for her. As she fell over backward in her effort to get out of his reach, a tall young man rushed between them.

"Puppo, she speaketh truth. Thou wert a craven; and hast been a toad to king and priests ever since. Look at me," he continued to the people. "Dear to me was his daughter Lota, and I would have made her my wife. And in an hour—ah instant—the world became black to me. But became it black to him? Hath he not laughed with the loudest, bent the lowest, slept through it? Thou worse than hypocrite! Get thee away!"

He looked so evilly upon Puppo, and was so seconded by those listening, that Puppo, after a wicked glance at old Nogoa who had been lifted up and placed on a fallen bough, slunk off.

The young man continued: "Nogoa, though as false, as full of guile as Puppo, is right in this: we have looked on when Atlano and Oltis changed the worship in these vile ways with never a nay. For this, woe is upon us! I come from my cave on yon mount where the fires rage to bid you flee in your galleys while there is time."

"Why dost thou not flee, Monon? Show us the way," screeched Puppo, who was now brave because he was quite well to one side.

"I flee not because I wish death. Every moment have I longed for it—as thou shouldst have done—since thy daughter vanished!"

A shout of derision went up for the benefit of the hidden Puppo, whose habitual discretion forbade further speech for the while.

"Monon," shouted a young man at his right, "I, for one, will stand by the island to the last!"

Vociferous became the outcries in accordance. When these were subsiding, a scream was heard from the wife of the galley captain: and then the words, "Look, look! Luith floweth up over the bank; and higher—higher!"

They followed her glance to perceive that the stream was rising even above its banks, whilst the affrighted islanders thereon were beginning to flee, shrieking. The beholders, in their terror, swayed as one; and then groveled to implore mercy.

But in wilder terror, at once arose to shake off the gray dust that was beginning to fall everywhere. And one voice shrieked, “The ashes from the mouth of the mountain! To the sands—to the sands!”

The mass stood irresolute, dazed. Then went up the cry, “Yea, the sands—the sands!”

They parted to hasten toward that goal, youths supporting the aged, parents bearing their tender young. But they had not gone far, when, from the east, came one running as if pursued by demons; and he was crying:

“We are lost! We are lost! The sea riseth even to cover the great pile of rocks! It will be upon us!”

Therewith he fell senseless among them.

After him came others running like madmen, and repeating his words. One of these asked, “Where is the king?” Another, “Where is the high priest?”

An islander who had been in the court when the priests and handmaids hastened from the temple, answered:

“Atlano and Oltis sit in the inner holy place behind the statue of Amen, frozen in body, burning in torment of mind. There they will stay until the end, for no one hath power to move them.”

A cry of horror went up.

“How knowest thou this?” asked another of the newcomers, as he wiped the ashes from his lips.

“I heard the chief priest and Priest Hafoe tell of it after they had fled the temple.”

“Who fled from the temple?”

“The priests, handmaids, and serving men. None are left save those two frozen ones. Good company are they for each other!”

Unanimous were the angry outcries of agreement.

“Well is it that the queen hath gone,” remarked another newcomer. “We saw her off. May she have sailed too far to get back to this. The sea doeth its best to keep her away.”

“The dear queen!” cried one after another.

“Poor queen—she hath sorrowed and been meek.”

“And we have known it, and lifted not our voices,” rang Monon’s tones.

“Yea; and many of us wives have been treated as herself,” said a clear voice from among a group of women.

The male hearers accepted this in different ways. Some smiled scornfully; others glanced furtively at their fellows; a few appeared conscience stricken. A brave one exclaimed:

“I will own I have sinned. I wedded my niece, which was against the old law. But—there is Puppo—he wedded his aunt!”

“And tormented his first wife, the mother of Lota, to her death that he might do it,” screamed old Nogoa.

“Who put away five husbands?” yelled the unseen Puppo. There was silence. Then he answered sepulchrally, “Old Nogoa!”

Old Nogoa was speechless.

But Monon spoke up, “Nogoa is not the only one. How many are there who have done as she! Until these last years, how holy hath been wedlock; yet now, on every side, is its mockery. The handmaids and the animal gifts on the altar are but a few of the wicked changes in the laws of our olden fathers. Further, the curse of avarice is upon this island. And we have been steeped in pleasure, in sense. The body of flesh hath been our one thought. The inner body—the spirit—hath been forgotten, hath become of evil shape—is

evil. Let us look to it! Should this storm pass by, let us begin a better growth of the spirit. Let us go back to the warmth and trust of our fathers. Then may we have the knowledge of heaven that was theirs."

"Thinkest thou there is still hope, Monon?" interrupted a by-stander.

"Of what?"

"That we may come out of this?"

"I believe there is no hope. But, we can die without murmur."

In the next instant, he pointed to the temple gateway.

"Behold—Priest Kluto and the handmaids."

They looked to perceive Kluto marshaling the handmaids without. Well had he pleaded for this with Chief Urgis, pleaded that the wretched young creatures might be restored to the arms of their kindred whom he knew must be awaiting them. And he prevailed, as Urgis and the other priests had become so given over to terror as not to care for consequences.

Further, Kluto was in the main, correct; for, as the handmaids stood clinging to each other, and glancing piteously about them through the falling ashes and rain, they were surrounded by watching, anxious dear ones; and began to be suffocated almost of embraces. All save three!

Yes, three there were that stood shrinking, as they lost hope of recognition. In dreary silence, they waited a little, and then moved beside Priest Kluto, who had been looking inquiringly from them to the islanders. But all, excepting those caressing the fortunate handmaids, were acting dazed because of the thickening showers of ashes and the now pelting rain. And prayers and groans were filling the air.

So Priest Kluto gathered closer the three handmaids; and whispered to them. Thereupon, the four began to make their way through the excited, ejaculating crowds in order to ascend to the summit, to the temple of Poseidon and Cleito.

"Priest Kluto, thou goest the wrong way," called out a youth as he pointed to several galleys, that, unfastened from their moorings, were being borne higher and higher by the rising stream. "Why not set off in those galleys, and save the handmaids?"

"No galley could live on the white water beyond. We go to the summit, to beseech the mercy of Amen and Poseidon; and, should the last moment draw nigh, to meet it as becometh us." With encouragement, he looked upon the shrinking handmaids.

But one cried hysterically, "If my mother and father were not in Chimo. There is cheer in dying together!"

In sweet, plaintive tones, spoke the second, "There is cheer in not being forgotten. I have father, mother, sisters, brothers. Yet not one cometh to look for me!"

"For very good cause," screamed old Nogoa, who was still sitting on the fallen bough, and whom they were passing. "Celesa, I saw thy father, mother, sisters, and brothers go off in their galley after the queen."

"I thank the gods!" And Celesa, with face illumined, fell on her knees to implore that they might be beyond danger; to give further thanks that she was not forgotten, that she alone of her family was selected to suffer.

But Kluto raised her, and drew her arm within his. Then the third handmaid spoke low, "Happy are ye two! Though I have neither father, mother, sister, nor brother, yet one there was who cared for me when I was dragged to the temple. But him I see not. He hath not watched to know if I should need him. Yet—we played together—as children!" She laid her head upon Celesa's breast, and sobbed.

"His name?" whispered Celesa.

"Veris."

"Where is the youth Veris?" inquired Celesa in low, clear tones, but without looking about her.

A voice quite near replied, "It is even now time for him to come back from Chimo, whither he went a few days since."

Luta was overjoyed. What were these dangers if she was not forgotten? What was death if Veris shared it? Her face lighted rosily as she looked around her, half expecting to see him speeding through the blinding showers of ashes and rain. Then she seized Celesa's arm, and said in exultation, "Now Priest Kluto, can I follow thee even unto death!"

Thus, when Priest Kluto had given his other arm to the first handmaid, did the four stand abreast, and look up to the summit, and at the volcano's light beyond undauntedly. They began to move upward, upon their faces coming the expression of the loving, trusting martyr. In amaze, the people beheld them; and could not but show some reflection. One cried: "They will die well. Why cannot we?" Then he, being a singer, commenced a hymn to Amen. So magnetic were his tones that the people about him joined in; a moment more, and the multitude was swelling the refrain. To this music, the four ascended to the summit, there to kneel before the temple of Poseidon and Cleito.

But along by the palace was coming a horseman from the west, his horse smoking and foaming, for he had fairly flown over the country between Chimo and this place. As horse and rider came in among the chanting multitude, the singing ceased, and many voices cried, "Veris! Veris!"

Veris, as he walked his horse in among them, shouted, "The island sinketh! Everywhere as I came across, rise the streams! Already hath the sea laid Chimo half under water!"

He had been nearing the temple gateway. In a few moments more, he was looking through with most anxious face. Then he said, "I will go in."

"Veris, look not there for Luta," called an islander who had been running after him.

"Whither shall I look?"

"Herself and two other handmaids have gone with Priest Kluto to the temple above to pray." And the man pointed in the direction.

"I will join them." Then, in happy tones, Veris thanked his friend, shook his hand, and turned to mount the hill; and as he mounted, the rain began to fall in sheets, the thunderbolts to strike.

Terror-stricken, the people scattered, seeking shelter. Some ran to their homes, others to the palace. But many rushed into the great court of the temple, thence on to the temple, there to utter dismayed cries at beholding the altar fire but a faint spark. Despite the almost darkness they pressed on, invading the sacredness of the inner sanctuary. Here, by the dim lamplight, did they further behold Atlano and Oltis, still as iron, still glaring at each other. And but a faint spark was remaining on this altar, likewise!

Shriek after shriek went up as these intruders looked upon king and priest; these shrieks being echoed by the dazed ones running through passages, apartments, and temple until it seemed as though the weight of sound must bring the walls about them.

Some of these intruders even ventured to pass on through the private passage of Atlano and Oltis. Perceiving the end door open, they went toward it, and its dark stairway allured them. Down they rushed to the open door below through which a faint light could be seen. And hustled, awed, into the crypt-like apartment whose lamps were still burning, there to look about them in wonder, terror; and then dashed for the white objects at the far end!

There was an agonized staring, screams, yells, a frenzied retreat up the stairway, frantic disclosures when they reached the inner sanctuary. "The lost handmaids!" "Dead—dead!"

“In the vault below!” “See for yourselves!” were the cries to the ones that were here.

Many of these ran down to look for themselves, whilst the discoverers hastened out to inform others. The second party, in turn, came tearing up, maddened; and rushed without to corroborate the reports of the first. The listening islanders, aroused to their gross neglect, their insensate yielding, were excited to extreme hatred and desire for revenge. With Monon as leader, they hastened in mass to the inner sanctuary, showering curses the while upon Atlano and Oltis. And, when before them, further cursed; then spat upon them. Yet still the two sat rigid.

As they were thus reviled—as the revilers endeavored to tear them from their seats—the great structure began to rock, and so terrifically that the infuriated ones, forgetful even of their revenge, turned to flee. Better the rain, the lurid sky, the unearthly gloom, the showering ashes, the thunderbolts than this!

The last to leave cried in their flight, “The spark is out! The spark is out!” but to repeat the same when the temple’s altar was shot by!

But Luta was in Veris’ arms; and Kluto was holding fast Celesa—whilst, on the summit, the four received the full fury of the elements. But they were happy. As to the first handmaid, she had passed away while praying. And was lonely no longer!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SILENT ONE SPEAKS.

As the galleys sailed to the east, the Atlantean eyes lingered with pride upon the island. Never had it looked fairer. What other spot of earth was so fitting to be chosen the abode of a god? What other land had so thriven, so conquered, so repeated itself even in the farthest climes? Surely upon this island the sun must shine forever!

Thus, in happy accord, did they begin to sing praises to their father Poseidon, the while throwing back fond kisses at their island, and even at the water which was alive with porpoises and dolphins, the former leaping their highest in their sportive appreciation of the music, the latter enjoying it with a dignified serenity befitting the state which the Atlanteans ever accorded them.

Yet continually were the singers of every galley glancing at the group under the queen's awning. In the midst, stood the 'Silent Priest' before the queen; and about them were Æole, Electra, and Hellen; while near swayed Sensel, a being as mysterious as the silent one. Small wonder is it that the inquisitive islanders would have gladly ceased their singing could they have heard what was spoken by those so interested.

When presented to the queen, the 'Silent Priest' had bowed, then taken the hand she extended, and regarded her fixedly. At his magnetic touch, his eloquent look, she thrilled; and her voice trembled, as she said:

"Father—whom we call the 'Silent,' rather should I bow to thee. For thou art one whom the gods favor. Of a truth, art thou sent of them."

As the silent one stood calm, intent, Æole thought, "How is this grand being to answer the queen?" And she drew nearer to him, her eyes filled with love rather than awe. Noting this, Hellen, Electra, and Sensel watched her eagerly.

The next moment, she received a shock. The silent one, though gesticulating as usual, was also speaking, though in lowest tone.

"Queen Atlana, now will I loose my tongue. In truth, can I say the gods have favored me."

As his deep, musical tones continued, Æole had seized his robe, then his arm; and next was looking up wistfully in his face. Therewith, Electra began to weep; and Hellen and Sensel turned away, for they could bear no longer this look so commingled of remembrance, longing, hope, doubt.

The queen of her wonder and perturbation, exclaimed, "We believed thee dumb!"

"Queen Atlana, I spoke not that I might baffle."

"Baffle what?"—Very faint was the queen's voice.

"The foes of Æole and Hellen, gracious Queen." He put his arm about the half-fainting Æole, and drew her to him. And Sensel glided beside them to whisper, "Be strong, be strong, dear Æole."

She, though but half conscious, comprehended: and never had she been so happy. In her ears was the music of this sympathetic voice; upon her had come a tranquillity hardly of

earth. In these arms so strongly enfolding her was she to be borne to heaven? Were the years on the island a dream? Surely these were the arms in which she had been wont to rest when the rambles over the dear Pelasgian fields had been too long, this was the touch that had ever soothed her!

Meanwhile, the queen was noting the astonishment of the sailors, who had ceased singing, and were resting on their oars. Thus, she whispered to Sensel:

"Look that no one is within the withdrawing room. Hither will we go."

Sensel glided off. The queen said, as though to herself, "The 'Silent Priest' can only answer there."

Great was her agitation. The priest, because of the quiet about them, bowed in acquiescence; further, signing that there he would make all plain.

Sensel returned to say the apartment was ready. Waving for her ladies to remain, the queen walked off supported by Electra; and was followed by the priest bearing Æole, and Hellen and Sensel.

Deep was the hush as they passed along. Not only those of their own galley were interested. The occupants of the galleys attending them had also quieted. Every eye was fastened in wonder. When the six had entered the withdrawing room, the hush continued as the galleys pursued their way.

The priest placed Æole upon a couch. But, as she regained strength, she arose to her feet to gaze at him as if charmed.

Meanwhile the queen had sat down; and now was motioning for the others to sit also. But the priest shook his head, thereby causing her to question by her look.

"Queen Atlana, I will stand until all things are made plain to thee."

The others chose to stand also. Electra brought a fan, and fanned the queen, who had closed her eyes.

Shortly Atlana was able to ask, "Thou whom we call the 'Silent Priest'—who—art—thou?"

"Queen Atlana—I am—of Pelasgia."

He spoke in Atlantean; and repeated in Pelasgian.

As the once familiar tongue was heard, Æole ran half way toward him, clasped her hands, and looked up in his face with eyes brilliant from unspeakable hope. The most beautiful color came into her cheeks, and her lips parted in a heavenly smile. So lovely, so angelic was her expression that the beholders gazed spellbound. And low, fervent were her tones.

"I felt it, I felt it!—'Silent Priest' who art thou? Thy name?"

"Daughter," and he approached her, his arms extended, "my name—is—Deucalion."

"Father!" She would have fallen at his feet, had he not caught her.

The strong man was sobbing. "Ah, Æole, Æole, to hold thee once again!"

"Father, father, after these years! But I knew thou wouldst come, if of earth!"

The rapture of her tone was so intense that he began to fear for her. Thus, he bore her to a couch, and sat beside her, supporting her; and then Electra came to chafe her hands, and bathe her brow. Her trembling was excessive; and she kept repeating, "Father—father. Thanks—thanks!" Though soon she calmed to question, "Father, tell me of mother. Is she well?" And extreme was the pathos of her tone.

"Æole, thy mother waiteth for thee."

"What, then, is the past? One look from her will heal all. Mother—mother!" So intense were tone and look that Sensel turned away. And Electra sobbed.

Throughout this scene, Queen Atlana had gazed stonily. Though, at Æole's cry for her mother, she thrilled, and her eyes moistened. But she conquered her feeling, and now asked in irony: "Sir Deucalion, doth this—thy guile—come of the gods?"

He arose, and bowed. "Most gracious Queen, this is not guile."

"How callest thou it?"

"I call it working to the best end a matter between Pelasgia and Atlantis."

"That is the look from thine eyes. I can see it in but one light."

"Queen Atlana, I have a right to mine own."

"But not a right to lead us wrong—to—to use us."

"Queen Atlana, how have we been used?"

She answered not.

"Queen Atlana, to gain my children, I have used powers given from above. If through such, I have mastered king and priests, have caused the sleep of Æole, have drawn thee, judge whether or not the gods are with me. Answer me in this, seemeth they to be with Atlantis?"

The queen arose; and ignoring his question, demanded, "Sir Deucalion of Pelasgia, if it doth agree with thy will, let it be ordered that the galleys turn toward Atlantis." Bitter, scornful was her tone.

"Dear Queen Atlana, not yet," interposed Electra. "If thou wilt think for a moment, thou wilt judge he hath done what thou wouldst have done in his place. Wouldst thou not have done as much for children of thine own—even for Æole and myself? Further, with all his art, his power, none hath borne pain, hath lost life. Think, he might have brought an army upon Atlantis."

"Electra, I could stand the bringing of an army better than this. How have I been tricked! To think I have set myself against the king, even to coming on this 'little sail.' And to please whom, to wait upon whom? Why, his foe Deucalion. Atlano—Atlano!" Utter despair was in tone and gesture.

"Queen Atlana, thy coming is not of thine ordering. Cast such thought from thee. If it hath been of mine ordering, the higher will is behind," urged Deucalion.

"Sir Deucalion, thy words are idle. As if the Higher Good should set aside thought for all save thee and thine. Thou hast high thought of self. But the sun shineth on all. It is my will that my galley be turned." Hard had it been to control herself. And now her tones broke. "Should harm come to Atlano, I cease to live! The blame, the grief, I could not bear! Sir Deucalion, why hast thou not moved? My galleys are not ordered!" And she turned to Sensel, as if he might help her.

"One moment, Queen Atlana, and I will. But first, think not thy presence with Atlano could turn aside that which doth threaten."

"What meanest thou?"

"Thy presence, can it turn aside the judgment of the gods?"

Faint, wondering was her tone, "So runneth the prophecy—so runneth the prophecy." She clasped her hands to her forehead, gasping, "I shall go mad with this dread upon me!"

Æole ran to her, and put her arm around her. "Dear Queen Atlana, call to mind it was thy kind thought for us that made thee leave the king for this short season. Could the gods make use of such?"

At her touch and voice, the queen shivered, and averted her face. "Æole, Æole, what thou hast cost me!"

"Dear Queen, thou hast not ceased to care for me?"

Atlana held out her hand; and as Æole took it, replied: “Nay, I have not ceased to care for thee. For thy sake, I could joy over this. But, the king! Atlano—Atlano!”

There was a painful hush for a little, until she stooped to kiss the suffering girl. Afterward, with her old dignity, she commanded: “Sensel, as Sir Deucalion heedeth not, I ask that thou wilt order the galleys to be turned.”

“Dear Queen Atlana,” explained Deucalion, “how could I give the order whilst thou art angered with me?”

His tone and manner touched her. “Sir Deucalion, speak not of anger. Let us have no further words as to the right or wrong. We will part in peace.”

He stooped and kissed her robe. “Queen Atlana, thou art a queen, in truth. I go to make good thine order.”

“Father,” burst from Hellen, “wilt thou note this fast gathering darkness?”

In his absorption, Deucalion had not remarked the very sudden change. With serious, awed countenance, he looked about him; and then spoke lightly, hoping to reassure the blanching queen.

“It meaneth rain. It seemeth as if the clouds gather.”

But the suddenness of this gloom was as nothing to the way in which it was deepening. It threatened to hide them from each other. In her alarm, the queen moved toward the door; and this was opened for her by Sensel just as her ladies were about to knock.

“Gracious Queen,” said Rica, the first lady, “it will storm. All is dark.”

Atlana stepped out; and those behind her, followed. They looked to become appalled.

The atmosphere was thick and dark. The heavens were obscure. An inky cloud lay over the island. The sea was in foam. And the galleys were trying to keep close, whilst on their decks were huddled the fear-stricken islanders. These, upon perceiving the queen, cheered faintly. Then a spokesman inquired: “Most gracious Queen, shall we now go back?”

“The order hath been given,” shouted Hellen, at behest of the almost rigid queen.

Instantly, Sensel went to the captain of the queen’s galley, who, thereupon, gave orders to the other galleys. Thus, all the galleys were speedily pointed for Atlantis, excepting the one appropriated to Hellen and Æole.

Then did Hellen’s and Æole’s thought turn to the downcast Electra. Indeed, poor Electra seemed overwhelmed. Hellen, feeling he could not part with her, grew fierce in his determination to the declaring, “Father, if Electra goeth back, I go with her!”

This was an unexpected obstacle, as Hellen looked a rock. For the moment, Deucalion felt he was not equal to it; and then spoke hesitatingly. “Queen Atlana, can we have Electra?”

The queen recovering somewhat, was resolute. “Sir Deucalion, Electra will go with me.”

“To go again into the temple?” demanded Hellen. “To be forced within the inner holy place? To—”

“To lose her life?” interrupted Deucalion. “To pour out her blood as water to aid the vain, fiendish quest of king and priest? To stand over the crucible, and stir this lifeblood until she perisheth of the drain? Thrice cursed draught! The ‘Deeps’ tell the tale!”

They stared aghast at Deucalion. But the queen interpreted. Every unguarded sentence, every sudden pause of Atlano reverted to her until she felt like accusing her memory for its tenacity. And her horror grew. Tornado-like it swept over her—the sufferings she had borne through him, his contempt, his neglect, his indignities, his infidelities. Now this revelation of Deucalion filled the measure.

Her spirit revolted. The words came clear and firm. “Electra will not go back. I go to the king without her. He can but yield me on the altar. Or try the blood of a queen, for change, in seeking his draught.”

Electra ran to embrace her. “Speak not of the altar, dear Queen. After that, I cannot leave thee.”

Atlana kissed her. “Dear Electra, I meant but to jest when I spoke of the altar. We know the need of my presence to the king.” Sad, bitter was her tone. Then, bethinking her of their present condition, remorse swept over her so that she tottered, and would have fallen but for Sensel.

At this moment, the blackness of the atmosphere became appalling; and a cry of horror went up from the galleys. All were pointing to the island. The queen looked, and fell half fainting upon Deucalion. As he sustained her, he whispered to Sensel: “It hath come!”

Yes, it had come. There lay their beloved island at the mercy of fierce warring elements. For, about it were dread waterspouts; upon it were falling sheets of water; above it were playing the fiery messengers of Amen. And the ocean responded white.

Although so terror-stricken, the occupants of the galleys were anxious to return; and but waited to follow the queen. Already she was reviving; and presently stood up for another view, saying reproachfully, “We move not toward it.”

“Look! Look!” cried many voices.

And utter despair came upon all. The island was rocking as if in the throes of a mighty earthquake, the waves were leaping up its cliffs, the waterspouts were breaking, the thunderbolts falling, the northern sky beginning to blaze.

“The mountain burneth!” they cried. And fell on their knees. Once, only, in the history of the island, had this volcano burst its bands.

Queen Atlana had looked to fall back insensible into the arms of Deucalion. He bore her to a couch in the withdrawing room; and then hung over her with restoratives, Electra, Æole, and the ladies—each dumb with apprehension.

Outside, Hellen was addressing the galleys with tones firm and far-reaching, for he felt all-powerful now that Electra was not to return.

“Ye Nobles, Elders, and Captains; the ‘Silent Priest’ is firm that the island is doomed. If ye go back, it is to your death. If ye press on with us toward the Middle Sea, ye will be saved. What say ye, captains of the galleys?”

There followed hurried consultations between the captains and their employers. Finally, one captain answered, “We, of this galley, will press on.”

Another captain, he of the queen’s galley, spoke loud: “My wife, my children are on the island. I would go to them.”

“Thou art the captain of the galley of the queen,” cried another captain. “Wouldst thou leave the queen?”

The poor captain looked irresolute for an instant.

“The queen is dear; but my family is dearer. I take it—my duty is to them, even more than to the queen. There are other captains!”

“Yea, there are other captains,” rang Hellen’s voice. “The captain of my galley can take thy place, and I will take his. Thus mayst thou go back, if any do, to the island.”

The captain of the galley containing the relatives of the handmaid Celesa now called: “We will go back. Come with us, captain of the galley of the queen.”

The captain of the queen’s galley looked upon the foaming sea, the beset island, his sailors at their oars—the door of the withdrawing room through which the fainting queen had been borne.

“How can I leave the queen? My men? I will not. I will stay. Heaven help me to bear this. Heaven help my wife, my little ones!” One heartrending sob burst from him. Then he stood firm, resigned.

Loud cheers rent the air, though little cared he for these. He stood, as in a dream, seeing only his wife, his little ones, in their sore extremity.

Immediately, the captain who had said he would return, parted from them; and after him, went a few galleys heroically. But the greater number, those bearing entire families, determined to press on.

Then Hellen called: “Captains, your queen—our dear Queen Atlana—lieth as one dead. The captain of her galley will lead us. In my galley is food enough for a few days, if shared with care. Moreover, there are islands near. And the Afrite Coast is not far.”

A faint cheering replied.

Hellen then spoke apart with his father. “Would we could get the queen, her ladies, Æole and Electra on my galley, for it is stronger, and holdeth the food. It might be tempted to leave us.”

“That is well thought of. But how to get them on board? The rowers cannot keep near enough, so fierce groweth the sea. I like not the crest of these waves.”

“It would be well to throw the ropes, to keep the galleys close. The sea may quiet a little; and then can they pass over.”

“Sensel, what thinkest thou?” inquired Deucalion.

“It can be done, should the sea calm a little. It would be well to throw the ropes, when the rowers have come as nigh as they can.”

“It is well.”

At the word, Hellen’s galley drew as near as it could for the tossing sea. Then, the ropes were thrown bringing them within unsteady touch, almost. Whilst thus engaged, Hellen remarked: “Father, the air seemeth more than full of rain. And yet none droppeth.”

“I, too, have wondered over it. But, where is Sensel?”

For Sensel had most suddenly disappeared.

But even as they began to look about for him he reappeared, coming from the direction of the withdrawing room. And in each hand was held a lamp of beautiful pattern. These he hastened to lay before Deucalion.

“Thou hast it, Sensel,” exclaimed the latter, his eyes brightening.

“Yea I thought this oil might ease the troubled waters.”

“Thou thinkest of everything.”

“Thou hast taught me.”

“What meaneth it, father?” interposed the wondering Hellen.

“It is the Pelasgian custom in storms, Hellen. Tell him, Sensel.”

“I will. But first, there is quite a vessel of oil upon thy galley, Hellen, as I found when I was saving the food from that torrent. It is for thee to order that a little of that oil be dropped upon the water about thy galley when we have done the like with this.”

“I will to it, Sensel. But, meanest thou that the oil hath the power to still the waves?”

“It hath.”

“It doth amaze.” Then, at Sensel’s behest, he stood at that side of the galley toward his own, and slowly allowed some drops to fall from the lamp upon the tumultuous sea; and perceived that this small amount spread rapidly, forming an expansive thin film upon the water.

Meanwhile, with the second lamp, Sensel was acting to as good purpose on the other side of the galley. For, in scarce less time, was an even more expansive film spreading from his side also. Then he called, "Hellen, speak now to thy galley. The oil is in an earthen jar in the hold. They are to drop it at each side."

The film was continuing to spread in a manner astonishing; and more astonishing, the water about them was unable to tear this film and send its wavelets to the crest. The fierce sea was becoming subdued, threatening no longer with its cresting waves. There was now but a swell that was growing less and less. As Hellen comprehended this, a passion of hope possessed him. Enthusiastically, he called to his galley, and gave commands that those on board were quick to understand. For, in scarce more than a minute were men stationed to pour the precious drops on the cresting waves beneath.

Meanwhile, the occupants of the other galleys were watching, and gradually taking in this new position of affairs. In a few minutes, there was not a galley but had its men dropping oil; for each was supplied with lamps.

And, oh the cheering that prevailed as the waves grew quieter, as the blanket of oil—the thin, almost gossamer film—continued to spread, the spreading so conquering the waters that the other galleys soon lay at ease near Hellen's galley, in obedience to his command!

When the ropes had well united the queen's galley with Hellen's, Sensel called: "Now is the time. Thou Deucalion, wilt bear the queen. Hellen, thou wilt lead Electra. I will look to Æole and the ladies. And, thou, Captain of the galley, wilt go over with us, and take charge for the queen."

"Quick," added Hellen, nervously.

The three ran to the withdrawing room, and each seized his charge. The queen was still unconscious; but to the others, explanations were made as they were hurried along.

Sensel, in delight that the calm was continuing, leaped over, and then held out his arms, when, with Hellen's assistance, Æole was passed over. Then followed the queen, Electra, and the ladies in waiting. Next was transferred Deucalion's boat.

Then went over the captain of the queen's galley with his men, the captain and men of Hellen's galley taking their places. Meanwhile, Hellen was gathering rugs and cushions, and throwing these over. Even a few couches were transferred. Then himself and Deucalion passed over, after Azu.

Immediately the men on Hellen's galley bestirred themselves to supply the queen's galley and the now adjacent other galleys with food, though small was the portion allotted each. But, as Hellen had said, the African Coast was not far; and several islands were between.

Scarcely had all this been accomplished than a noise as of muffled thunder was heard beneath the water, the galleys receiving the shock as though they had struck upon the rocks. Again the waters began to rage and foam. The films of oil had yielded. Again were the waves cresting, and most threateningly.

"Let us move on," shouted Sensel. "And more oil!"

"The island!"—"The island!" cried a few agonized voices.

The island was shaking terrifically. And it had certainly lost in height. Deucalion, as he looked, exclaimed wildly: "Sensel—Hellen—it sinketh. It is lost!"

He spoke very loud, forgetting himself, and the listening islanders, in their amazement, concluded that the time had arrived when the 'Silent Priest' could speak the will of the gods.

"He knoweth," called one captain to the others. "Let us press on!"

"Yea—press on," cried Deucalion in his mightiest tone. "Further, forget not the oil!"

Then to Hellen and Sensel, he added, “Ye will press on to the fifth island to the east, and there wait for me. I will take oil, food, and drink, and stay here in my boat, that I may witness the death throes of the island.”

“I will stay with thee,” said Sensel.

“And I,” added Hellen.

“I will stay alone. Your duty is with those on this galley. Hellen, call to mind that thy mother looketh for thee and Æole.”

“She looketh for thee, likewise.”

“I will come.”

Hellen, of his impatience, turned away. He dared not speak.

“Sensel, thou wilt aid Hellen in caring for Æole, Electra, and the queen. Further, forget not to take in water at that fifth island. It is fine.”

Fierce was Hellen’s tone. “Father, if thou goest, I go also. I will share thy watch!”

“Nay, I will share it,” urged Sensel. “I came with him. I stay with him to the end!”

“Thou art not his son!”

“Hellen, calm thyself. I will bide alone. Look ye to the queen, and to Æole and Electra. Bring me the food, drink, and oil while I go to speak with them.”

They gazed at him, irresolute. But, as he regarded them, they at length turned to comply; whereupon, he repaired to the withdrawing room to find that the queen was still unconscious, whilst beside her sat Æole and Electra. He took a hand of each, saying, “I would speak with you.”

When the ladies in waiting had withdrawn, he continued: “Æole, Electra, gather your strength. I have to tell you that I will stay here in my boat after the galleys pass on to the east, that I may witness the last of the island.”

They were bewildered. Thus, he repeated his words, and with such conviction that they became horrified, and piteously besought him not to leave them, not to go to his death.

“Do ye not feel I shall come back? Æole, gather thy trust. Electra, where is thy strength?”

“Gone, gone is my strength,” moaned Electra. “I now know fear. Ah, Sir Deucalion, think of us. Yield not to this wish. What is its furthering to the delight of joining thy wife, of bringing before her Æole and Hellen. And, tempt not the gods.”

“Thou meanest be not too sure of the favor of the gods, Electra.”

She blushed; but regarded him bravely. “I have said it. Take it as thou wilt. Either is my thought.”

“Thou art a ready one. And I like thy truth. But no talking will hold me. I go.”

He took them in his arms, and kissed them. “Now is my parting word for a little. But I shall come back. And, give of this to the queen when I am gone, a drop with every hour.”

He laid a vial upon the table; then led them to a couch, and bade them comfort each other. They replied not to him, but drooped their heads forlornly as he passed out. As for Æole, she seemed turning to marble.

At the threshold were awaiting Hellen and Sensel with their supplies; and each looked most determined as he passed onward. Then, Sensel knocked lightly at the door, when Electra opened to them.

Sensel hurried on toward Æole; but Hellen paused by the door. “Electra, I go with my father. Sensel will care for thee and Æole. And now to kiss thee. For never shall I see thee more!”

The last words seemed to tear him. Electra, pallid and trembling, whispered: “Thou art right to go. But—the pain!”

He caught her to him, declaring how dear she was, and begging she would not forget his love; then kissed her, and ran out.

Meanwhile, Sensel was pressing Æole's hand so that she revived, and looked up at him. At sight of the anguish in her eyes, he forgot himself, and kissed her hair, her hands, her robe, as he cried, "Æole—Æole!"

She, flushing and paling, would have arisen. But he said, "Nay, nay!" And after again kissing her hand, sped to the door where he paused to bid farewell to Electra, and then vanished.

Deucalion stood at the stern. When they joined him, he said as though giving some simple order, "Press on to the island. There will I come to you."

The two received his embraces, each biding his time, each watching the other. Into the boat, they threw the bags of food, the skins of water and wine; then, handing him the oil, waited as he began the descent, each purposing to throw himself after.

But Deucalion was not half way, when, in the hush of the amazed beholders, was heard a sharp cry from Electra. Instantly, Hellen turned, and ran to the withdrawing room. Thus Sensel found no bar to his resolve. In a trice, he had leaped down beside Deucalion. "I came with thee, I go with thee!" he cried. With this, he detached the rope, and the boat tossed away.

Deucalion, surprised at his insistency, demurred, "Rash youth, rash prince, thy life is of too much worth."

Sensel smiled as he answered, "Is not thy life of worth?"

"We shall have evil work."

"It looketh it." Then Sensel waved his hand gaily to the astounded Hellen, who was looking over at them; and who could only gasp, "Father!"

"It is well. Be not troubled, my son. Think of thy mother. What aileth Electra?"

"Æole sleepeth as she did in the temple."

"Again is it well. Should I know I could not come out of this, I would cause her to awake. But, let her sleep for three days, should I not come back. Then, the written word I left for thee in my case will show thee how to arouse her. Further, my son, press on with speed. Show thy fond feeling for me in this. And forget not, my last word is for thy mother."

Hellen could not reply; but merely waved his hand in farewell. As the boat shot off, he turned away without hope.

But the galleys were awaiting his lead. Thus he imparted the directions of his father to their occupants who were regarding the returning boat in dismay.

Then quickly certain whispers spread. Was the 'Silent Priest' an evil spirit? And, was he going back to gloat over the condition of their island? Or, was he indeed of the gods, and going to aid? Nobles, elders, captains, sailors, women and children were divided, some judging him to be on the side of evil, others on the side of good. But the majority inclined to the evil. However, his directions must be followed, as whether good or evil, he had shown proper knowledge of the fitness of the fifth island as a stopping place. And much they needed the water.

After the opinions had been well expressed, they grew mute, for the vessels began to labor eastward. It seemed as though their eyes must remain with the island, their heavy hearts drag them to the bottom. Alas, these poor Atlanteans!

When they had well gone on, Deucalion and Sensel stayed their course; and shortly bounded back to the place they had left, from there to watch the doomed Atlantis! That is, to watch the points within their vision of this great, this magnificent island.

CHAPTER XVII.
THE SINKING OF THE ISLAND.

The two watchers were interested not only in the island, but also in the galleys speeding eastward. Erelong, the galleys that had turned back thought better of their resolution; and changed course again in order to rejoin their fellows But one continued toward Atlantis, that containing Celesa's relatives; and soon this disappeared, thus leaving Deucalion and Sensel sole spectators of the sequel of this frenzy of the elements.

Through the night, the island seemed as if afire from the continual thunderbolts and the volcano's stream. The fiery river of the latter had coursed down mountain and hill to the sea, and was leaping the cliffs a tremendous fall of flame; whilst the released gases, in their detonation, outrivaled the thunder. And waterspout was succeeding waterspout, each discharging its angry contents; the rain, meanwhile, falling as do the avalanches. It was indeed a deluge.

Toward dawn, Sensel inquired, "Would it not be well to get farther away? Should the island sink we are too near."

"There is yet time. Ah, the island rocketh again! Sensel, my heart faileth me."

"The poor islanders! They merit it not."

"The gods know." Yet Deucalion's face was drawn in agony. As for Sensel, his pallor was extreme. For many minutes, neither spoke; and their eyes were turned from the dreadful sight. Then Sensel said, "Let us beseech that they come out of this." And he fell to plead silently, Deucalion emulating him. In the bounding boat, the two found it hard to keep on their knees as they implored heaven's mercy, and hoped it would come.

But mercy was not for the island. They gave up hope when another volcano shot up, and poured its torrent broadcast to the left of the first. Then said Deucalion, "Let us press on until the island looketh to be on the line where sky and water meet."

When thus well away, they stood in the tossing boat, and gazed long, in mute anguish, for the island though ceasing to rock, had sunk far down in the water—was still sinking. Then their exhausted frames insisted upon support. So they broke their fast, refreshing themselves with the bread, dried meat, pulse, fruit, and wine. "Soon shall we need our strength," said Deucalion. "For the end is near."

By judicious use of the oil, the tempestuous waves were kept in abeyance. Thus they watched until the early morning, amidst the din of the rumblings underneath, explosions of gases, burstings of waterspouts, and crashings of thunderbolts. The island was scarcely visible for the great white waves leaping high upon it. The heavens were lurid with the volcano's flames; and two broad torrents of molten, fiery matter were springing from the island to the sea, that answered in tornadoes of spray. Whilst the dense vapors rolling toward them threatened to shut off the spectacle entirely.

Through all, the doomed mass was slowly, determinedly sinking down—down—into the mad waters, the consolidating thunderbolts seeming to press upon it to hasten its descent. The vapors, in their thickening, obliged Deucalion to move the boat from point to point in order to retain the view of what was now but the elevated portions of the island. A few

times had this been done when there came a shaking so excessive in its length and severity that the two shrieked and closed their eyes. When they looked, the island was disappearing even to the peaks. In an instant more it vanished! And the waters lashed over it in a vortex threatening all things—a vortex flame, steam, and smoke mounted!

"Now will we fly," shouted Deucalion, "or we shall follow the island. Scarce will the oil be of use!"

Though Sensel continued to drop, as Deucalion began his management. The boat bounded over the water, hardly touching it. It seemed to fly. As Sensel watched, he became awed, so bird-like, so sentient were the movements of the slender frame! The water frothing madly about them might be the verge of the vortex! Would its terrific suction seize them, bear them down to share the fate of the vanished island? As they labored, they scarce breathed of their dread.

But the boat continued to respond to the promptings—bounding, skimming, flying over the turbid, grasping waters. A half hour's intensity of labor brought them relief. The sea was certainly less violent. At times, the boat could even rest. With hope, they began to regard each other as they relaxed a little in their efforts. Though hardly could they dare to accept it, when there was no longer any impetuosity of movement, but merely the rocking and rolling of rough contact. Shortly, there was not even rocking or rolling, but rather a gliding. Then fell they on their knees.

And that night, slept peacefully, in turn,—as the boat made good time, in the morning coming upon a region of sunshine.

Past island after island they speeded, keeping ever to the east by means of Deucalion's knowledge of the heavens, as well as by a kind of rude compass known even in those days. This was a magnetized needle floating in water crosswise upon a reed.[23] For well were the properties of the loadstone understood, and utilized.

On the morning of the second day, they sighted the vessels, that, with some escaped vessels of Chimo, lay moored in a cove of the island indicated by Deucalion. And then upon the two came a mighty dread. How were they to tell these Atlanteans, these Atlanteans already signaling to them gladly. Thus, in telltale manner, did they slacken their oncoming, to the quick appreciation of the impatient islanders. The waiting vessels showed only despairing faces, as the boat more and more reluctantly approached. Then, when within earshot, a few would-be hopeful ones began to cry out welcomings and inquiries.

Standing mute, downcast, Deucalion and Sensel moved in among them. Though this was not enough; for there came the cries, "The island—is it well?" "Tell us the good word!" And so on.

Yet still continued Deucalion and Sensel mute.

Then demanded a voice, "Tell us the worst!"

"That can I tell you," answered Deucalion.

"What is it?"

"The island is no more. It hath sunk."

Wails, shouts of incredulity responded.

Deucalion repeated his words, and convincingly. There were no more incredulous tones, but instead despairing cries, wails, groans, fierce imprecations. The wildest sounds of woe prevailed. At length, the same voice that had asked for the worst rang loud, imperative, this time demanding silence. It proved to be that of the captain of the queen's galley. He agonized, but firm, was standing out on the prow of Hellen's galley; and continued:

"Sir Priest, in truth, is Atlantis no more? Have a care—there left we our dear ones." His voice broke, but he stood straight and strong.

“Captain of the galley of the queen—thy wife, thy little ones—are above. Look not for them—or the island—on earth.” Deucalion’s tones were faltering, but he also stood firm.

“We have but thy word. How can we believe? I cannot. I would see with mine own eyes.”

“And I!” “And I!” rang many voices.

“Sir Captain, thy doubts are in reason. I should feel as thou. It is but a short sail. Further, the queen should hear of it from Atlanteans.”

There were cries of approbation.

“Sir Captain, I ask that thou wilt lead a few galleys back, bearing the nobles and elders who are with us Their word the queen will believe.”

Loud rang the cries of approbation.

“It is well. But what of the galley that went on to Cleit?”

“We saw it no more.”

“It was lost?”

“Without doubt.”

“We may come upon some who live?”

“It cannot be.”

“We will go back.” Sorely overcome, the captain held out a hand to one of the sailors, with this aid, tottered from the prow to the deck, and then hid himself.

After further deliberation, it was decided that the few vessels should return at once, and all the others await them here. Hard did Deucalion struggle with his impatience to be off!

Shortly, the two captains had again exchanged galleys. When the captain of the queen’s galley was once more on board his own, and had been supplied with food from the plenteous stores of the Chimoan vessels, he moved off; and was followed by two of the Chimoan vessels bearing such of the nobles as would return. To dire sounds, the three hastened away.

When they were well off, Deucalion and Sensel went on to Hellen’s galley, which lay quite to itself beyond the others—the queen’s condition demanding this. Dimmer and dimmer grew Sensel’s eyes, and more and more fluttering his heart. Was it well with Æole? When departing, her unconsciousness had been his comfort; but, had such continued? Or, had she come out of it to keenest suffering—not only for her father, but also for himself? (This last thought, he held in humility, so little did his selfhood prevail.)

Continually was he imploring that she might still be sleeping. But when beside the galley, his emotion became most evident.

“Sensel, what aileth thee?”

“Æole—thinkest thou she still sleepeth?”

“Her sleep will not end until we are with her.”

“Unless Hellen hath waked her.”

He then became as in a dream until Hellen’s voice was heard in greeting, when he looked up to perceive himself and Electra leaning over the galley’s side. Notwithstanding the woe about them, the two were finding it hard to restrain their joy. Near them were a few nobles, and their attendants; farther back, stood the captain and sailors;—and all statues of grief.

Deucalion ascended; and was clasped in Hellen’s arms. Sensel went up, still as in a dream; as in a vision beholding Æole in repose upon the couch where he had left her. But he was recalled by the grasp of Electra’s hand, her words of welcome.

“Electra, the sight of thee doth gladden. Almost can I forget the horrors we have passed through.”

“Sensel, we thought never to see thyself or Sir Deucalion more on earth. Drear was our way over the waters. And we reached this to learn there had been a dire rocking of the land for days.”

“I wonder that an island is left. But tell me, Electra, how is it with Æole?”

“She sleepeth as doth the babe in the arms of its mother.”

The color flashed over his face, the light into his eyes. He was so transfigured that Electra stared at him. “Sensel, art thou not wearied after thy watching?”

“Wearied! I feel as though I had come out of a long, sweet sleep.”

And now, Hellen was seizing his hand. The two embraced as Deucalion and Electra spoke together.

“Electra, Æole doth still sleep?”

“She doth.”

“And the queen?”

“She aroused but to faint again; and hath lain in a stupor through the night.”

“We will hasten to her,” spoke Deucalion hurriedly. “But first, Æole.”

Æole lay as marble on a couch near that of the queen. Indeed, her immobility would have alarmed one not acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of her case. But, in her cheeks, was a reassuring, faintest tinge of pink, and her lips retained their color and dewiness. It was as though a rare statue was becoming replete with life; and these beholding, continued to gaze in admiring wonder tinctured with awe.

Sensel’s face was a study in its love and thanksgiving. He could not raise his eyes from this enthrallment.

After one keen look, Deucalion bowed his head as if satisfied, and whispered: “I will first look to the queen.”

He found Atlana’s set face like that of death, and instantly was applying restoratives. Then leaving Rica and Elna to chafe her hands, he returned beside Æole.

Sensel seized his hand. “Ah, Deucalion, what a power is thine!”

“Yea, Father. But, how camest thou by it? Never hath the like been known in Atlantis. Else those priests would not have been mastered.”

“Long hath it been mine, Hellen. Though I know not what it is. It must be a hidden force of nature that few hold. Often through it have I soothed thy mother. And, when Æole was a child, I used it upon her when she was hurt, and in pain. With her, there came a state like sleep. Again I used this force when she was called into the inner holy place; and to my amaze. But, it is a dread power. Such evil could come of it.”

“I can well see that,” said Sensel.

“Hush, hush,” here whispered Electra.

“Yea, hush ye all. Æole doth waken.” And Deucalion leaned over her, the while signing for them to withdraw.

The color was deepening, the eyelids fluttering, the lips parting. Scarcely were they outside, than she opened her eyes. A joyous smile lighted her face at sight of this dear father; and she held out her arms.

When they had embraced, he raised her to a sitting posture, and supported her. She said, in glad tone, “Father, thou didst not go. It was good of thee to hearken unto us.”

“But, I did go. And have but now come back.”

“Thou art pleased to jest. Is jesting a habit of the Pelasgians? I thought them a people sober of mind.”

He laughed. “Æole, thy chiding is fitting. But, I say again that I have but just come back. I caused thee to sleep.”

“As thou didst in the temple?”

“Yea.”

“I did not feel it come upon me. Why is that?”

“I know not. I know this—thou yieldest well.”

“Father, thou art an able one. It is well thou couldst do it, for my pain would have been sore. Yet, Hellen and Electra, how bore they it?”

“Well, as I knew. Each had the other.”

“But—Sensel?”

“Sensel went with me.”

“Father!”—There was a fine condensation of amazement, horror, reproach.

“It was not of my will. He and Hellen were strong in saying they would go, when Electra screamed because thou hadst fallen into this sleep. Thou shouldst have seen Hellen. Forgetting me, he darted to her. Here was the chance for Sensel. He leaped down beside me, and loosed the boat. I could but yield.”

“It was wrong of thee, of him. There are other things than that island. Thou shouldst have turned back rather than have risked a life so young and noble as that of Sensel. And, for thee—thou wouldst have bereft a waiting, sorrowing wife and fond children. Should not wife, children, Sensel, have had more weight than the fate of fifty islands? Father, I thought better of thee!”

He rubbed his hands hard in his satisfaction. “That is right, Æole. I merit thy chiding. Yet I could not but go. It is worth the going to hearken to thy scolding.” His eyes were twinkling.

“A fine thing will it be to tell mother.” Then her voice lowered in dread. “If she be but well? If she hath not sunk beneath her woe? The doubt doth torture.”

Deucalion shivered. He also was doubting; though she must not know. Thus he insisted:

“Æole, the gods can but bring joy to thy mother. Never hath she murmured, never hath her trust lessened. But come. Let us go out into the air.” (Though he turned for the moment aside.)

The queen was stirring; her eyes were opening. Before passing out, Deucalion whispered to her ladies, “She is better. When she rouseth, say not aught of what hath happened.”

They went out to come upon Sensel who was standing near the door. At sight of Æole, he hastened to draw a couch more under the awning, with the words,

“Æole, thou wilt find ease on this.”

Much wondering at the sudden exhilaration possessing her, she sat down.

“Æole, thou art well?”

“In truth am I.”

“She is well, and even strong enough to hear of the past night,” said Deucalion, roguishly.

“Father!”

“Æole!”

“I asked thee not of the island. How could I forget!”

“Thou hadst much to do in chiding. Now will Sensel tell thee. I go to Hellen and Electra.” And off he moved toward the other couple, who, at sound of his footsteps, faced him; and both exclaimed, “There is Æole!”

"Yea, she is well wakened."

The two laughed gaily, then, blushing, looked off on the water. Though soon spoke Electra.

"Sir Deucalion, we would hear of the past night."

"For that I have come."

In a few words, he described the sinking of the island. When he had finished, Hellen reproached him.

"Father, thou didst dare too much. What pain hath it caused Electra and myself."

"I knew ye would cheer each other. Further, there was the thought for the queen."

"In truth, it was dire thought for her, for thee, and for Sensel, day and night," spoke Electra. "It was not right of thee!"

"Now is thy time, Electra, to chide, to scold. Already hath Æole done her part. I will hearken well, for I merit all."

"If she can scold who hath lain in her sleep, free of dread, what might I say who have been waking through it all. Sir Deucalion, I will seal my lips. I should say too much."

"Right, Electra, say no more," interposed Hellen. "Or, I, too, will join thee. But, father, instead, will I speak of Electra. Without her, I could not have borne it. Though she was torn with grief, she waited upon the queen, helped the ladies, cheered poor Azu who hath been stricken over the queen; and at times, walked with me talking in bright manner—and to the helping of the captain and sailors—for the captain told me they watched her white robe as it were a beacon."

"But I knew she would do thus, Hellen."

"Ye will spoil me. I have done but what I should."

Deucalion was suddenly falling into revery. Hellen was about to address him, when Electra checked him. Then the two began to pace about the deck, ever regarding him anxiously. After a little, Electra whispered:

"Thy mother?"

"Yea, he is lost upon her. The fear is great, at times, that she may have passed beyond."

"The gods are kind, Hellen. Ye will see her."

Meanwhile, Sensel was giving his account to Æole.

"Æole, we staid to see the island beset by high pillars of water, pressed upon by bolts of flame, and as if on fire from the burning mountain. The seething waves were leaping higher and higher upon it: and it was plain it was sinking. Later, another mountain began to send forth fire. Imagine, if thou canst, those fiery streams rising high above the island to fall in rivers of flame, that rushed in fury onward to the cliffs—from there to leap to the mad waters that answered in tempests of boiling, hissing spray! And through all was the noise deafening. Ever were the pent airs[24] bursting from the mountain with noise as of thunder, the pillars of water breaking, the bolts of flame crashing—whilst the rain fell in sheets, the ashes in showers!"

"Did the rain and ashes fall upon you?"

"They touched us not to our wonder."

Æole sighed, relieved; then shivered.

"It is too much for thee, Æole."

"Say on, Sensel. I would hearken to all."

"The island was sinking fast, whilst toward us speeded dense vapors that we feared would hide the end. Thus we moved from point to point that we might still behold. Though not for long: as, in the early morning came the end. There was a long and severe trembling

—as if heaven and earth were rending apart! We closed our eyes knowing the worst had come. We opened them to behold the island vanishing!

"Yea, in a moment more, we saw it not—saw naught but the meeting waters, the whirl of their drawing—with flame and smoke rising high above! Then cried thy father, 'Now will we fly!'—And amazing became his guiding of the boat. We bounded, leaped, flew, scarce touching the hungry waves that we feared would draw us down. Long we thought we should not get beyond. But the boat is charmed. And so is thy father. We bounded, leaped, flew on—on—to less raging waters; thence to smooth ones; later sighting these vessels to be stricken with further dread. For, how were we to tell these Atlanteans that their island was no more?"

"Ah—how?"

"Though thy father did it, Æole."

"The poor Atlanteans!"

"Æole, through it all, thou wert of more thought than the island. Ever was I fearing thou wouldst come out of thy sleep. As I helped thy father, I was dwelling upon thy grief shouldst thou waken ere we reached thee. Less worked I for life than for thy peace of mind. Though life is without price whilst thou art of it. Now, it is past belief that I am with thee, that peace and joy are our own, that I hold thy hand, that I kiss it thus!"

Æole had never seen anything so beautiful as his smile. She looked down at her hand, then at his; and upon her came the desire to kiss this hand so enfolding hers. But, her look was more than many kisses, as she said: "Sensel, our lives will prove our thanks."

"Our life, Æole."

Now upon his ears smote sore interruption. The voices of Hellen and Electra were very near. Thus he murmured, "There can be but one life for us, Æole."

Then in came the two under the awning. They sat down unmindful of the agitation of Sensel and Æole, being all occupied with their own sweet emotions. But, they began to speak of the events of the night; and Sensel, in greatest patience, replied to their questions. Glad was he when Deucalion appeared. Then he excused himself. And, when outside, fell to pacing the deck absorbed; at times, pausing to gaze in somnambulistic fashion upon the water.

Under this awning, the evening meal was partaken of. This consisted of bread, pulse, dried meats, honey, melons, pomegranates, wine, and a sherbet made of almonds and honey—so well were the fleeing Chimoan vessels victualed, so generous was the fifth island in its offerings of fruit.

Moreover, Azu served them. He was quite himself now that Deucalion had assured him the queen would recover, that he would again bear her train. Though, in this serving, his lurches threatened the gravity of the eaters full as much as the downfalling of the things he bore. Indeed, not a few of the latter came to grief, thus conducing to the lightening of spirit of those being served. Azu was Azu.

The night was soft and bright, to the comfort of Deucalion, Sensel, and Hellen, who reposed on couches under the awning, using the rugs as coverings. The oarsmen spread themselves about the deck. As to the ladies, they were well housed in the withdrawing room.

Every night was as this in temperature. Never a cloud obscured the heavens. Thus were they favored.

But a few more days, and the sails of the three returning vessels were sighted. Then, as had been agreed, all the waiting vessels save the one containing the queen, went noiselessly out to meet them. Laggard was the approach of these three: and this told the story. At last they met, far out on the water.

The queen's galley was ahead of the other two; and, at its prow, stood the bowed form of the captain. Now was the worst verified!

They called on him to speak.

Slow were his words in coming: though, they burst forth with frantic vehemence.

"Atlanteans, we hearkened unto the truth! Our island hath vanished—all save the highest peaks[25] far to the northeast! Scarce could we push to where it hath lain for the mud and ashes that thicken the water!—And dead men fill the sea even as the fishes!"

CHAPTER XVIII.
PYRRHA.

Soft continued the nights and bright the days as they sailed by the islands, and along the Afrite Coast. Quick were they in sighting the green gay Atlas Mountains, and then Cape Spartel. Upon viewing the latter, intense became Deucalion's emotion. With eyes eager and face flushing, he cried in husky tones: "Ah Æole, Hellen, now is your mother near! With what a heart I passed yon point to go onward to Atlantis! Sensel, can we ever forget?"

Sensel could reply only by pressing the hands held out to him. Then, with moistening eyes, both watched, as did the three beside them.

On they pressed into a strait; and toward a point on the African Coast, the ancient Abyla and the Ape's Hill of the moderns. Nine miles across lay the great rock, afterward named Alube by the Phœnicians, and Calpe by the Greeks. It is the Gibraltar of to-day.

These two points, the Rock of Gibraltar and Ape's Hill, constituted the ancient Pillars of Hercules. Not that the Greek hero had any part in their naming. Rather they were named for the Tyrian deity whose worship the Phœnicians introduced into all their settlements. Long after the sinking of Atlantis, in a forgetting, perhaps unbelieving age of maritime sloth, these Pillars, the guards of the Mediterranean, came to be considered the ends of the earth. Thus sank the glories of the island into fable!

When well off Abyla, the vessels steered northward toward the famous Rock, the rock that was raising its mammoth proportions high—that rock that has since been called "a mountain of histories"—the rock that was overshadowing the waiting ones!

Eyes hopeful yet fearing, eyes sad to desperation, were fixed upon it—every heart throbbed wild—as the vessels crossed the waters of the strait to the green and gray coast from which the Great Rock jutted invitingly in its virgin stillness, even then exerting its strange fascination: a fascination that would impel to itself the Saracen Tarik, thousands of years later; a fascination that would cause Moor and Christian to engage in warfare, as the years went on; a fascination that would bring contention between Christian Spain and Christian England in the Middle Ages; a fascination that would draw upon itself, in modern times, that memorable, terrible siege of four years when French and Spanish exhausted their resources but to prove its latent magnetism—in that it continued to hold, against all odds, the English garrison that had so long nestled in its rugged bosom!

On their right, spread the beauteous Mediterranean; on the left, was a small bay toward which lay the Rock's only sloping side. Erelong, all eyes began to ask of Deucalion which course should they take, this Deucalion who was standing so motionless with rapt face. Before them was the south end of the Great Rock, steep, precipitous, inaccessible; and upon its grim height they began to look in fear. Should they go to its left or its right?

But, when the moment came, Deucalion was ready to give the order. "Behold, the point on the right. That will we round. There left we the vessels. Æole, Hellen, then shall we sight them!"

So extreme was his agitation, that they forgot their fears in desiring to calm him. Bravely Æole spoke:

“Yea, Father, mother is there—as thou didst say.”

“Yea, mother is there,” echoed Hellen.

“As I did say,” murmured Deucalion vaguely. Then he closed his eyes, for they were drawing very near. Already the Great Rock seemed looming over them.

“Round that point, Hellen, with speed,” he aroused to command. “Then shall we behold them!”

Hellen’s galley rounded the point, but not speedily; rather slowly, timidly. Would the vessels of Pyrrha and her friends be there moored? Would Pyrrha appear in answer to their shouts?

In the moment of rounding, none of these interested ones dared raise their eyes. But blessed sounds broke from the Atlantean sailors. In this moment of rounding, they burst into cheers, for all their saddened hearts. Then the fearing ones took courage. They lifted their eyes; they looked; they beheld the Pelasgian vessels lying as if enchanted on the bright, smooth waters of the beautiful haven.

The cheerings strengthened as the other vessels also rounded. These mighty tones quickly brought life to the enchanted vessels. Their decks filled with patient, faithful, loving ones whose joyous welcomings answered these newcomers—these returning Pelasgians, these sad-eyed Atlanteans.

But Deucalion, Æole and Hellen stood faint—waiting for the one form to appear. The moments seemed ages.

Though surely the hurrying of a few officers below on Pyrrha’s vessel boded good. The three strained their eyes for the view of that dear form when it should hasten to respond. Holding each other tight, they reeled, when an officer returned, leading, rather supporting a white-robed lady. That was she. That was the wife! That was the mother! Deucalion and his children staggered to the edge of the prow, to wave and kiss their hands. And it was “Pyrrha, wife!” “Mother!” “Mother!”

Pyrrha raised her head, and looked; and ran, weeping her thanks, to lean far over the vessel’s side, and hold out her arms.

On went the galleys toward her. When Hellen’s was alongside, the rope thrown, and the plank laid, such a speeding across as there was by Deucalion and Hellen, with Æole between.

Pyrrha awaited at the end of the plank. The spectators, as one, burst into cheers, when the four met and entwined. Though their fears were for the mother. Would she faint, perhaps sink under her happiness?

And indeed dizziness did overcome Pyrrha for the moment. But Deucalion held her; and whispered reviving words. Besides, these were her children kissing her hands, her face, her hair, her robe, and calling in heavenly fashion, “Mother!” “Mother!”

So she strengthened to weep of her joy; to look from Hellen to Æole, from Æole to Hellen in wonderment, so striking was their beauty, aye, better still, their nobility, their purity of expression.

And these children, in transport, were gazing upon their mother. They had borne into captivity an enduring remembrance of her grace, nobility and beauty; but the remembrance was as naught to this reality. They could not take their eyes from her; and, at last, Hellen exclaimed:

“Mother, how fair, how grand art thou. Sorrow hath not marred, but glorified thee!”

“She is a bright spirit,” added Deucalion. “Nay, Pyrrha, thou art a goddess.”

“Hail to the goddess Pyrrha!” cried Hellen.

At this, the officers and crew of Pyrrha's vessel shouted as one, "Yea, yea, hail to the good goddess, Pyrrha!"

"They know thee, dear Wife," whispered Deucalion, "the *good* fitteth well."

But Pyrrha knew she was not good—that none are good save the Divine. She could not *be* good, but she could *do* good through the Divine influx.

Yet these exaggerated expressions were dear, coming as they did of love. For ever is love precious. So she received them, blushing even as a girl. No fear was there now of her fainting. Strong she stood with an arm about each child as the friends from the neighboring vessels came aboard to greet her husband. Sensel came also to clasp her hand, and glide away.

Very soon Hellen went to bring Electra. When this beauteous maiden bent before her, Pyrrha gazed surprised, admiring; and next held out her hand and drew her to her to kiss her well. Still retaining the hand, she asked of Deucalion, "Are all the Atlanteans like this?"

"Would that they were. The spirit of Electra is as fair as is her body of flesh. With them the outer body was fair, but the inner one had become evil of shape. Moreover Electra hath in her veins the best blood of Atlantis and Khemi."

"Hath she parents?"

"Her parents are above. There were Alto the king and his two brothers. Alto was the father of the last king, Atlano. The wife of King Atlano was Atlana, the daughter of the second brother by a princess of Khemi. The mother of Electra was the daughter of the third brother and wife of a prince of Khemi; and her brother was Oltis, the last high priest. Yet, though Electra was a princess and his niece, Oltis placed her in the temple as handmaid. From there, we freed her."

"Why did Oltis thus?"

"He hated her father Cairais because Cairais well knew his evil spirit. And he longed for the riches, that would come to Electra. Further, he wished to trouble Queen Atlana who loved Electra well, after her mother."

"Father, sudden was the passing away of Cairais. Could it be that Oltis poisoned him?"

"Ask me not, Hellen."

"If Atlano had died, would Queen Atlana have reigned?"

"I feel sure that she would, though she is not all Atlantean. Hitherto, the kings and queens have been of pure race. But the Atlanteans were so fond of Queen Atlana that they would have made light of her Khemian blood; and the more so that they hated Oltis."

Pyrrha had continued to hold Electra's hand; and the latter had been regarding her brightly in her lack of comprehension of Deucalion's and Hellen's words. Thus Pyrrha's heart warmed the more.

"Would that she knew our tongue, Deucalion."

"It will come to her soon. In six months Sensel and myself mastered Atlantean."

Pyrrha looked again at Electra. It was strange how this young girl attracted her. With growing delight, Hellen watched his mother's interest. As to Deucalion, he was exultant—that is, within. Things were going as he wished.

For the next half hour, Deucalion was busy recounting to Pyrrha and their tried friends the main events as they had occurred since he parted from them. They listened to exclaim continually. When he had finished, for this time, he spoke in touching manner of his gratitude to these dear Pelasgians, exalting their constancy to Pyrrha and himself.

In turn, Illyr and wife, Ephes and wife, Pelop and wife, with their children, declared the stay with Pyrrha had been a bright holiday, and that theirs was the pleasure of gratitude.

Stoutly they insisted that the obligation was on their side. This sweet wrangling was to the keen enjoyment of Hellen, who, with Æole and Electra, still stood beside Pyrrha.

But, where was Sensel? After kissing Pyrrha's hand, he had vanished, not to return. Repeatedly had Æole looked about the vessel for him; and had as often wondered if he were within the small cabin, or had gone below to the sleeping apartments. At last, as she was gazing wistfully at the stairway leading to the latter, she perceived a head rising into view. But this was a head on which was a cap of white linen with crown encircled by a fillet of scarlet cloth that tied in a bow behind and with ends depending!

Moreover, this figure, as it further arose into view, displayed a most elegant garb. There was a broad cape of purple wool fitted to the shoulder, and reaching to the waist; and adorned with yellow lace. Beneath, was a coat of scarlet cloth fitting close to the body, opening in front, and reaching to the knees. Still beneath was an inner garment of yellow linen that fell in graceful fullness to the ankles. About the waist was a golden girdle; and shoes of red leather ornamented the feet.

It took but a few moments to view all this. And ah, but it was a rare figure and garb; and bewildering—for the height was Sensel's!—Further, were not these brilliant eyes meeting hers, Sensel's, also? Was not this his smile?

Her head swam as this noble, elegant, lissome shape approached to bow gracefully, grandly to her and all. Next, she began to wonder why everyone, even to her father, should bend with utmost deference, in return.

But Deucalion, who was much enjoying her perplexity, hastened to explain.

"Æole, Sensel hath left us. In his place is Prince Pelasgus, the son of our king."

She closed her eyes, stunned. But the prince was taking her hand. Thereupon, recovering somewhat, she opened her eyes, looked at him calmly; and withdrawing her hand, made a low obeisance. He was the prince. He was not Sensel!—Though most unhappy thoughts were crowding upon the shock of this revealment, she managed to speak with sweet dignity.

"Prince Pelasgus, this cometh upon me without warning. Little dreamed I that Sensel was other than he seemed."

Deucalion's satisfaction was something to behold; and this the keen-eyed Pelop laughed over to himself. For, the former was thinking, "Æole is like her mother. She will rise above the pressing weight ever." Then aloud, he added, in Atlantean, that Electra might be benefited.

"Yea, Æole, this is the young prince who shared with me the perils of war, and who was firm in his wish to aid in freeing thyself and Hellen. And, who, after short trial, so ably took upon himself the shape of Sensel."

"Ever have I known the noble spirit of Sensel," she returned.

"So ever have I," interposed Electra. "Scarce did I open mine eyes when I heard he was the prince."

"Thou—didst know—he was the prince?"

"Hellen told me but this morn."

"Why was not I told?"

"It was for the reason that the prince wished thou shouldst believe him but Sensel until we reached here."

"*But Sensel*"—Æole checking herself, turned to the prince. "Why was this, Prince Pelasgus?"

"I knew that thou didst look upon Sensel with good will; but I knew not how thou wouldst look upon the prince."

A great load seemed lifted. She said naively, charmingly, “Thou wert right to think I should like the old beyond the new. There have been many princes, but never another Sensel. Prince Pelasgus, ever shall I joy to think of thee as Sensel. No higher thought could I have for thee.”

Over Sensel’s—Prince Pelasgus’ face passed a beautiful glow, and his eyes shone with a loving light that all might see. Pyrrha, comprehending, glanced at Deucalion, to find him watching the two in delight. As to the friends of their exile, they were receptive also.

For one, the keen-eyed Pelop whispered to his wife:

“I see it. Those two are fond.”

She was as interested. “They are a noble pair. And most fair to look upon. May it be so. Well I like it that his eyes are so dark, and hers so blue. As thine and mine.”

Pelop laughed to himself. Well he knew his Peloppa’s taste for romance. Then he looked about with a view to further discovery.

“Look at Hellen. How he bendeth over that fair Atlantean.”

“It is another pair, that I see. Ah, Pelop, but our voyage over the Middle Sea will not drag!”

Again Pelop laughed, and hugged himself; and said with feeling, “We were young once, Wife.”

“And not so old now. Thou wilt speak for thyself; and I for myself. Ah, but our own joy maketh me kind to all who wish to pair. May I live to aid our children along the same bright path!” And she looked at her gamboling ones with the air of a prophetess.

“If one were old enough now, Peloppa. But matters will soon mend. And our Zoe will be another like thyself.”

“How?”

“She is bright of mind.”

“She is.”

“She hath a quick tongue.”

“Pelop!”

“And—a most tender heart.”

“It is well thou didst add that.”

“And—she is one to hold most dear.” Here his tone was such that Peloppa, in spite of the eyes about her, could but put her hand within the one he so eagerly held out.

Then they forbore further talking in order to listen to Deucalion, who, at inquiry of Epha, was again started upon the subject of Atlantis; whilst Prince Pelasgus talked with Pyrrha and translated much to Electra, who stood with an arm about Æole.

After a little, Pyrrha inquired of her husband, “When can I see the queen?”

“On the morrow, I hope. She is better, though she seemeth to see no one about her, not even her ladies. If she could but arouse. It may be that thou wilt do it, that thou wilt bring her back to peace. She is lost in grief.”

“The poor queen—without kin, without a land!”

“Poor people!” said Prince Pelasgus.

“We will make it bright for them in Pelasgia,” spoke Hellen.

“We will,” declared Deucalion.

“We will,” echoed all.

“We know what it is to be strangers in a far land,” added Hellen.

“Yet—we had our land to look to,” said Æole.

“Ho for Pelasgia!” cried these Pelasgians. And then looked sadly over at the Atlantean vessels. As with one impulse, they moved to the vessel’s side to watch the Atlanteans long and affectionately; and thus adopted them into their hearts.

The Atlanteans appeared to understand, for they returned the looking with smiles, sad though they were to desperation. Not one of them but was mourning the loss of near or dear ones. Indeed, many were envying Celesa’s relatives, that they had returned. But their grief must be in silence, for they yet had their queen.

On the morn of the morrow, Pyrrha left her vessel elated. At last she was to behold this woman who had so tenderly cared for her children; and entered the withdrawing room confident that she could help.

As she passed on to the queen, Deucalion beckoned for the ladies in waiting to come out. These, after listening to his explanations, sat down under the awning, and regarded each other in wonder. Was this Pyrrha—this fair, grand, most lovable looking woman but one of a type? If so, what a race was the Pelasgian, after Deucalion and his children!

Pyrrha stood beside the queen reverently, adoringly. Indeed her love so went out from her as to affect the pale, passive recipient. For Pyrrha had gazed but a little while, when Atlana turned and looked full at her, and this though she had come without noise.

Of her amaze, the queen strengthened to raise somewhat, and stare at the angelic face bending over her; and finally whispered:

“Who art thou? Comest thou of the gods?”

Though the tongue was unknown, Pyrrha comprehended.

“Gracious Queen, I am of earth. I am one who holdeth thee deep in her heart, whose prayers will ever call down blessings upon thee, whose days and nights will be favored in thanking thee.”

“Thou sayest thou art of earth?” asked Atlana in Pelasgian, and so correctly that Pyrrha answered not for wonder.—“Thou sayest thou art of earth?” she repeated, after waiting.

“Dear Queen, I am of earth,—and until these last weeks—one of its most sorrowing daughters.”

“Most sorrowing. Then know I how thou hast felt. But—why wert thou sorrowing?”

“Dear Queen, I was a mother bereft of her children. Not that the gods had taken them to make Heaven more dear. But, through war—through fierce, cruel man—had they been torn from me!”

Atlana was rising higher, was looking at her piercingly.

“Dear Queen, it cometh to thee. Why should I hold thee so dear, why should I bow down to thee—I, a mother bereft of her children. Few such mothers are there in this happy world!”

“Thou—art—not—?”

“But I am—I am! I am that mother who mourned for her children, Hellen and Æole!”

Atlana, who had raised until she was sitting erect, burst into tears, weeping as if she could never cease. Pyrrha, as she supported her, looked around for Deucalion; and beheld him standing near the door, smiling. He signed that it was well. So she began to dry the queen’s tears, pausing at times to embrace her, upon perceiving that such pleased her.

Still the life-giving tears ran on, sobs coming heart-rendingly, so that Deucalion looked upward to murmur:

“Thanks, ye Powers! And let the stream run long and fast. Let it be the beginning of life to the desert place. May that parched field, her mind, be so well watered that new flowers of hope may bloom again, and shed their fragrance upon her sad Atlanteans. Ah, poor queen, poor people!”

Long was it before the tears were spent. Then Atlana put out her hand for Pyrrha's. "I would kiss thee," she murmured.

Pyrrha leaned over. When Atlana had kissed her cheek, she pleaded, "Thou wilt not leave me?"

"Dear Queen, from now, am I thy sister, nurse."

"Ever wilt thou be my sister. But not for long my nurse. Already, I feel new life. And thou hast caused it—thou—sweet spirit—thou—"

"Pyrrha, call me Pyrrha."

"Thou—sweet Pyrrha—thou mother of Æole and Hellen." So lovingly lingered she over these names that Pyrrha kissed her again and again, while Atlana sighed, content. Afterward, she asked as a child might, "Am I to know rest again? Long is it since I have felt such ease?. I could sleep. Should I, dear Pyrrha, thou wilt not loose my hand?"

"Nay, dear Queen. I will but hold it closer."

With the confidence of a child, Atlana pressed the hand to her heart, and lay back passive, drowsy, shortly to slumber so serenely that Pyrrha marveled.

Soon Deucalion drew near. "All will be well," he whispered, "but how knew she our tongue? Never was I so wondering!"

"Nor I, though I knew she had studied it, so well did she speak. Only this morning Æole told me that, when herself and Hellen had learned somewhat of Atlantean, the queen began to study Pelasgian. Thus, it came to pass that, on the one day, they would talk in Atlantean; and, on the next, in Pelasgian."

"As thou sayest, she speaketh it well."

"She looketh wise; and, of a truth, is sweet and fond."

"Ah, Pyrrha, such a heart is hers. But it was wasted on her husband. How hath she missed the good thing in life. Atlano could care but for himself."

At this dread name, Pyrrha shivered. Deucalion put his arm about her, and bade her lean upon him. Then she whispered, "Ah poor queen, life hath not been life to her! To be so fond, and have naught but a stone!"

"Say, rather, life is not life to the one who is not fond. Life was not life to Atlano. Life is not life to the wife or husband who knoweth not tender feeling. Such pluck but dead fruit."

"Ah but thou speakest truth. With each moment of our wedded life how glad have I been that thou wert so dear. All bitter hath had its sweet. Though grief hath held me, yet have I had thee to think upon, to look for, to hearken unto."

"Yea, and to joy in, for of me art thou sure. To think I have come into heaven again! And from hell. Ah, that island, Pyrrha, that fair Atlantis! The thought of it cometh upon me strong at times, so that I find it hard to bear up. That fair, grand, most favored spot—a heaven but for man!"

Thus, on they talked—of past horrors, of the present brightness, of the happiness fore-gleaming from their children's hopes—until the queen began to stir. Her restlessness increased. Erelong, she was turning toward them. After an intent look, she extended her hand to Deucalion.

"I wronged thee," she murmured. "Forgive."

"Gracious Queen, I have naught to forgive. We will be but the dearer friends. It is all in knowing the right. Thou hast thought it over since."

"Well and long have I thought it over. And I know the worst. Think not I have been deaf whilst lying here. My body hath been as a stone, but the mind hath been quick. My poor Atlanteans! Oh, to be of help to them! We are bereft, bereft!"

“Then—thou knowest?”

“Yea, whilst lying here, I have heard that within and without to make me know our island is no more.”

“Some of thy people are left thee.”

“Call them not people. Call them Atlanteans. It is the dearer name. We are of Atlantis—though it is no more.”

“Dear Queen Atlana, thy thought for these thy Atlanteans will make it well for thee. Thy wish to cheer them will bring thee cheer. Cheer cometh in giving cheer. And, here is Pyrrha for thy sister. Erelong we hope to see thee thine old self.”

“Never, Sir Deucalion, can I be mine old self. Mine old self was full of hope, of joy, of sweet, warm feeling. Mine own self! Ah, I am dead—dead!”

She leaned back, and closed her eyes. Deucalion pressed her wasted hand and spoke in softest tone, with intent to bring her out of her sad thought.

“Dear Queen, I should have said a little like thine old self. That will be much. And now I would warn thee when next thou seest me, I will be more of my old self—in garb. I shall be no priest of Poseidon. I shall be in Pelasgian dress, fairer of skin, and shorn of this beard. I would not change until thou couldst be told.”

“In any dress, thou art Deucalion, the kind, the noble. Pyrrha, how blest art thou! But go, Sir Deucalion, that I may soon behold thee as Pelasgian. Whilst thou art gone, I will look at Pyrrha.”

“Not this day, dear Queen. But on the morrow. Though now will I leave thee that thou mayst look upon Pyrrha.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEGINNING OF PEACE.

The next morning, the vessels began their course up the Middle Sea. And with what a difference in the hearts they carried. Truly the Pelasgian vessels were bearing feathers, the Atlantean vessels stones. Alas for these poor Atlanteans! Well did their vessels, even in their port, testify to the weighty spirits of those aboard them, for they ploughed the water unwillingly, heavily.

Later in the day, the noblest of Pelasgians appeared before his children and Electra to dazzle their eyes; whereupon, Hellen after much interchange of criticism with Æole, asseverated:

"Ah, father, we would have known thee but for the beard. That it was that hid thee."

But Electra said nothing so engrossed was she with the beauty of each separate feature. Now were disclosed the noblest of chins, the firmest, kindest of mouths, the perfect contour, the strength and sweetness of expression, the high purpose. She could not gaze enough.

And thus felt Queen Atlana when Deucalion presented himself in this beautiful costume much like that of Prince Pelasgus, the difference being that there was less of trimming, and that the cape and coat were of one color, a rich deep blue. It was fine to see her admiration, finer to hear it expressed. Thus, Deucalion really blushed, and to steady himself, said, "Ah, dear Queen, if thou thinkest this so fine, wait until I bring before thee two noble youths of Pelasgia, which will be on the morrow, if thou art willing."

"Who are they?" she asked absently, in her study of his grand beauty.

"The first is young Prince Pelasgus, the son of our king. The second is my Hellen. Then wilt thou behold garbs."

"Dear Hellen! I can see him, as he will look. But when came this young Prince Pelasgus?"

"It is a year since he first saw Atlantis."

"What sayest thou?"

"It is a year since he went with me to Atlantis—a year since he began to serve in the temple—but a few months since thou didst see fit to praise him. Call to mind his tall shape, his garb of dust color, his shining eyes, his tender tones, his smile, the grace of his swaying body."

It was most evident that Atlana called all this to mind, so overwhelmed did she show herself. She could only implore him by a gesture to continue.

"Yea, dear Queen, young Prince Pelasgus came upon the island with me as Sensel. Well had he served with me in war; and fond did we grow of each other. When I would come after my children, he would come with me in the shape of Sensel. And, as thou shouldst know, well did he aid me. Though little canst thou, or any other, know what he hath been to me. But for him I could not have mastered."

"I believe it, Sir Deucalion."

She pondered awhile; and then said, "I would see the Pelasgian youths now."

“Dear Queen, on the morrow. It is enough for this day.”

She acquiesced, bending her head; and lay back in a sweet quiet, shortly whispering, “On the morrow.”

And on the morrow, did these youths of Pelasgia kneel before her.

First entered the prince in his brightness, elegance, grace, and beauty. Charmingly he knelt to kiss her hand, his courtesy so affecting her that a faint smile came into her face as she gave him greeting.

Then Hellen followed, kneeling and taking her other hand. Thus, the smile blended with glad tears. Here was her handsome, brave, impulsive, fiery Hellen, clad in blue and buff, and looking a young demi-god in his rebound to freedom and happiness. His face was transfigured; and hers grew in brightness as she greeted him. And she thought, as she pressed the two hands, “Am I, in truth, to smile again?”

Then in her gracious way she spoke. “Noble youths of Pelasgia, with fond pride is my greeting. But rise that I may look with even more pride upon you, that I may feast my eyes upon your brave, free port.—Ah, what garments!”

Gleeful was their laughter. Whereupon, she smiled back quite in her olden way.

“What thrills of joy ye cause me. Ah, Hellen—Hellen!”

“Fine is it to be thus looked upon,” burst from him naively. “All day could I hearken to thy praises. And to think I am that Hellen,”—he paused, fearing to bring sad thought to her forgetting self, and changed, “that Hellen, who, but yesterday, was lamenting his old garments, who feared to put them on so worn were they, who was lost in wondering where others would come from. When behold, this morning, did my father bring me these.”

“It was not that his garments were so old,” interposed Deucalion, “but that he was rent with envy upon beholding me in my change of garb, yesterday.”

“Have it thus, if thou wilt, father. It is rising high to envy thee in any state, or garb.”

“That is well said, Hellen,” spoke the queen. “But I know thine envy hath for meaning the wish to be like him.”

“He will never reach to his wish,” said Prince Pelasgus, solemnly. “That is for me. For I hold Deucalion more dear even than doth he.”

At this calumny, Hellen made as if he would dart upon him; whereupon, he took to his old posturing and evading. Then the two burst into laughter. It was plain they were the best of friends. This so pleased the queen that she declared:

“Now is my spirit cheered to the full. Or will be when I have looked upon Æole and Electra. Where are they?”

Immediately two glad voices cried from without the door, “Here!” “Here!”

In a trice, their arms—the arms of these two young girls she had so befriended and suffered for—were about her, their fervent kisses on brow, lip, and cheek.

“Dear Queen!” “Dear Queen!” they cried.

She embraced one, and then the other. Speak she could not. Then she lay back to marvel at the change that happiness had effected—even in them. In their white, flowing robes and golden girdles, with long waving hair crowned with chaplets of flowers—flowers brought from beside the Great Rock in the early morning by Hellen and Sensel—with eyes lustrous from rest, happiness, and young love, they were beauteous as Aurora when she early treads her golden days!

And these lovely flowers they were pressing into her hands but completed the spell. Supreme became her satisfaction, her delight. Surely now had come compensation. Here were these four youthful ones, here were Deucalion and Pyrrha, here were flowers that of

themselves brought peaceful rapture. No, her suffering had not been for naught. A tide of thanksgiving surged in her heart; and she closed her eyes to allow it full sway.

They waited, mute, until she should again look at them. When she did, new light, new life was in her face. Here before her were these motionless ones, statues of sweet solicitude. In answering their gaze, she thought only of them, for the moment. Thus joyous was her tone. “Sir Deucalion, thou wert right. Much is there yet to live for. My life cannot be void, barren. It hath its bright, its fertile spots. I see them. They cheer me.”

She held out her hand to him. On his knees, he kissed it, the others, thereupon, emulating him: then, at his sign, the young people turned to withdraw with him. And Atlana and Pyrrha were left together.

Not many days after, Queen Atlana was able to show herself to her Atlanteans, the while allowing the delighted Azu to bear her train. Rapturously was she greeted, so that she wept for joy. In these tears had gladness no place. For, gladness comes of the body, joy of the spirit. The queen’s spirit was moved to its depths, for ever, as now, had the Atlanteans shown her love and fealty. Never had they been lacking. Always might she be sure of them.

Well did Deucalion speak her words. Her Atlanteans with her were to weep no more, with her were to hope, with her were to begin a new life in the country of their refuge, Pelasgia.

To which were returned assurances the most comforting. For, like herself, her subjects were trying to look upon the side least dark. Thus they declared their homage: that they would rally about her with no fear and all zeal, and make a new Atlantis for her and themselves.

She, standing stately, signified her satisfaction. And, thereafter, retired to weep her last, and find the beginning of peace.

CHAPTER XX.
HAPPY PAIRS.

Meanwhile, the young people had been reveling in their happiness, and this bright, smooth sailing over the Middle Sea. The hours were winged. As well were they winged to Pelop and Peloppa, whose eyes found constant entertainment, whose tongues, continual employment. Even Pyrrha and Deucalion were as fruitful a source of interest as the young lovers. Thus, Pelop and Peloppa were ever finding means to get upon their vessel that they might watch the tender emotions so prevalent.

One soft, breezeless, starlit evening, the friends met together on Pyrrha's vessel. Of course, conversation was not long in reaching its accustomed height; when, in the midst of the noise, Hellen, who had been standing at the stern, came beside Electra.

"Electra, it is the night for a ride. Let us get in the boat. It tempteth as it followeth in such ease."

For the fantastic boat had been attached to the vessel; and it was Deucalion and Pyrrha's habit to sit in it of mornings, and be pulled slowly or swiftly, as the vessel pleased.

Hellen's tone, though subdued, was most eager. Thus, Electra, who had never been in the boat, and who longed for the ride, answered fitly, "Yea." And at once arose and walked off with him.

When they were at the stern, and looking over, Pelop, who had apparently been all intent upon some remark of Ephes, turned and confided:

"Ah, Peloppa, but that young Hellen is a wary one! Didst thou note him? Well can I see what he meaneth."

Peloppa, who had been no less interested, returned, "I have lost naught. And how quick is she to further him. What haste was in her gait, what hope was in her eye. Is that Atlantean modesty?"

"She hath no thought of his meaning." Pelop's tone was indignant. "If she had thought of it, she would have looked wise, and said 'Nay,' however much against her will. As if I know not young women!"

"That is thou dost flatter thyself thou knowest them."

"Thou canst not deny I have had my trials." Here he coughed and winked in his waggish way, so that Peloppa laughed, as she retorted:

"Of a truth, thy trials have been sore—if thou meanest me. Ah, to think I was once young, Pelop. And what a race I led thee. There was no such willing way as this, though I felt but the more willing within."

"That is why I boast of my trials. When thou saidst 'Nay,' and ran away, I read thee, and laughed. But caught thee soon."

"Forsake not the truth, Pelop. And—young was I."

"Of a truth, wert thou young. And art young still. Therefore, in thy youth of body and mirth of spirit, go not beyond the bounds of kind thought. I speak of Electra."

“Thou hast the right, as ever, Pelop. I fear I have judged in haste. But, as thou knowest so well young women, thou shouldst have knowledge, also, of riper ones. We love to set up our sex in judgment.”

“And yet, after judging, are but the more ready to forgive,” was the gallant answer.

Pelop, honor to him, was right. In all innocence had Electra gone with Hellen. So, when he had descended the ladder, brought the boat well under it, and attached it, she was ready to follow him; and did. When at the bottom, she turned, and held out her hand to make the spring. Hellen, as he stood firmly in the boat, spoke in calmest of tones: “Jump, Electra.”

She obeyed, holding out both hands to him. But ignoring the hands, he caught herself, to hug her close and with the strength of his eager young love as he drew her down to a seat. Rapturous was his whisper, “Now have I thee to myself, Electra!”

It must be confessed that, for the moment, Electra was helpless from delight. But, womanlike, in the next, she rallied to say and do that which was most foreign to her inclination. For all the times were so ancient, she remonstrated with the usual dignified manner of to-day.

“Shame, Hellen! Let me go. Thou dost forget thyself!”

“Forget myself, Electra! At last am I acting my true self. At last am I doing what I have longed for day and night, at last I clasp thee!” Here he hugged her even harder. “And thus clasping thee, could I die, did I think thou wouldst not look upon me. For beyond words art thou dear—as thou shouldst know. Now, wilt thou be my wife?”

This suddenness was overwhelming. But such was Hellen. As she struggled to free herself, she spoke with fine reason. “For thee to talk of wedding! Thou art too young. As am I. Let me go.”

“Never—until thou answerest.”

“Give me but breath to answer.”

“Make not merry. Come, let me see thine eyes.”

Hard he tried to turn her head; but she was strong, firm. There, under the starlight, with the noise of the talking above, and to the purling of the water against the neighboring vessels, they both persisted, he in holding her, and she in trying to get away. Pathetically, he continued:

“As thou sayest, Electra, we are young in years, but thou canst not add we are young in sorrowing. We are ages old in that we have borne!”

Too much was this for Electra. The dreadful past at once swept over her. She thought of that time when she had first beheld Hellen in the temple; of the swift outgoing of her sympathy, aye, love; of those meetings in which she had come to know of his independence, his impetuosity, his agonies. Then her eyes suffusing, she turned to look at him—looked to perceive the old anxiety reappearing, for again was he doubting, fearing. And this decided her. No more suffering should be his through her. Instantly, her struggling ceased. Then her arms got about him to fond murmuring,

“As if ever I could forget aught that thou hast borne. Hellen—dear Hellen!”

His was then the distraction of joy. In a mad way did he embrace her, the while whispering vehemently, “Electra, as soon as we set foot in Pelasgia, will we wed.”

Intent upon soothing him, she answered, “Yea, yea, Hellen, we will. But I beg thee to be calm. I worry for thee.”

He held her close, not speaking. She subjoined in a faint tone, for the pressure was trying,

“Hellen, I beg, let us behave.”

“Callest thou not this behaving?” he entreated.

She had to laugh; and this so impaired the small quantity of breath remaining that he was obliged to hold her more at arm's length. And well was it that he did. For scarcely were his arms removed than a voice was heard above. In the next instant, Deucalion was looking over at them, and marveling at the staid manner in which they were comporting themselves.

"How is it with you?" he inquired dryly.

"Never as well, Father! Come down."

"I think not."

"But I beg thee, Father. We have somewhat to tell thee."

"Can it not wait?"

"Not many moments. Come—come!"

Therefore, Deucalion descended. When he was well steadied in the boat, Hellen said, with due caution, "Father—but now—have I asked Electra to be my wife."

Hellen had thought to overwhelm his father. But nothing of the kind, for Deucalion only looked from one to the other with provoking coolness. "So I judged. I knew why thou didst wish Electra to come down here. We all did."

"Father!"

"Thinkest thou we are blind? Hath it not long been clear that thyself and Electra would come to this? It is nature, and cannot be hid.—Come, Electra, look at me."

Electra, after several invitations, complied; but her eyes were shifting, and her color high. Deucalion, that he might reassure her, said, with much affection, "Electra, after Æole, no one could be so dear a daughter as thou. Of this, thou shouldst be sure."

She murmured, "Yea, yea, I know it." Then with more strength, added, "And where could I find such a father?"

"I know thy mind. We are both pleased. So now to tell those above. Now to delight Pelop and Peloppa after thy mother."

"What meanest thou, Father?"

"It is that Pelop and Peloppa, after thy mother and myself, have looked with strong favor upon thy heart for each other."

Great was the astonishment of the two. "But—how knew they it, Father?"

"Call to mind that thyself and Electra have been so bent upon this as to be without eyes for others."

"True—true!"

"Thus was I. Thy mother caused me to think of naught but herself."

"Then canst thou feel for us. For, will not I feel with my children when they come to this? Ah, but they will find in me the feeling they crave, that sweet knowledge they will believe none have known but themselves. Yea, this my delight, will live again in theirs. Its memory, even, will be delight. Thinkest thou not with me, Electra?"

Scarcely could Electra reply to so much. But Deucalion spoke for her. "Hellen, leave that which may happen in the coming years to itself. Come back to the present. There art thou on safe ground. There can Electra answer thee. And that she may answer, I will leave you together, while I go to tell those above."

"That is it, Father. After some little time, will we follow thee."

"Take thy time—take thy time. Life is too short to be in a hurry." With these last wise words, and a merry twinkling of the eyes toward the blushing Electra, he turned to ascend the ladder.

But the bliss of being left to themselves was like all bliss in general. It did not last long. Scarce seemed it a minute when Pyrrha's voice was heard calling to them. Thus warned, they sat up properly to await the moment when her dear eyes should be looking down upon them. Then it was, "Come, come, my children. Come, that I may clasp you."

"Ah, Mother, if thou wouldst but wait a little. I have but just begun!"

"Hellen!" reprimanded Electra; and so comically that Deucalion, who was peering over, burst into a laugh. This brought all the friends about him to peer over also. Foremost was Pelop. Upon catching his roguish look, Hellen was forced to laugh himself, though he said thereafter, lugubriously: "Electra, up will we go. No peace is our own for this night, I know."

So, up they hastened to be caressed and congratulated in Pyrrha's sweetest fashion, and then set upon by the friends and the rather pensive Sensel. As to Æole, she was in such a flutter of sympathy and delight that her lips refused duty, though her eyes answered for both: and her blushes almost equaled Electra's.

High ran the enthusiasm. Then succeeded the usual calm. So it was that the plighted ones fell to regarding each other in surprise. It seemed as though months had passed, so much at home did they feel in this new condition. Upon parting for the night, Electra whispered:

"Of a truth, Hellen, it seemeth an age since we left the boat."

The world was now of a rare brightness to these lovers, and this increased in quality, if possible, with the days. Sensel, beholding, rejoiced; and yet pined with envy. Why could not he become thus positive as regarded Æole? It was sinful further to fritter away the precious time! He, like Hellen, must make opportunity. But how? The boat was an old story. What could he devise instead?

Thus he fell to planning, as his eyes followed wistfully the happy pair that were ever moving about together. He and Æole might be as they. Yet were the precious hours wasting.

Not that Sensel was always following with his eyes this couple. No, it was only at such times as Æole was not in sight; otherwise his absorption was in her, and was ecstatic. For with the happiness that had come about her, she had grown even lovelier; and further, seemed to tread the air. Besides, several times had Sensel surprised her regarding intently himself when he had turned back to look upon her—and to her evident discomfiture. For it must be admitted that, at such times, she was deep in thought to some such effect:

"What a noble beauty covereth the good in Sensel! What an air, what a movement is his! He walketh not—he soareth! Never was there such grace, such a tread in man before. It is no wonder he could so well take his strange part. And, can I ever cease to think upon him as Sensel? Hard is it ever to bring to mind that he is Prince Pelasgus, harder to call him that. Ever will he be to me Sensel—dear Sensel. And to think that his was the voice!"

But Sensel would have been no true, ardent lover had he not managed a way to press his suit. His first move was to confess his love to Deucalion, and his desire to speak with Æole. Whereupon, Deucalion replied to the effect that he knew this was coming, and was in sympathy, but that he could not give consent without that of King Pelasgus as he might have other views. However, his scruples were removed when the prince assured him it had ever been the advice of his father and mother that he should wed for love, and seek love. He was to scorn all thought of worldly advantage. Thus, there could be no bar to consent. His parents would think with him, especially as his love was the daughter of the man most revered in Pelasgia. At the end, he entreated:

"Dear Deucalion, in this manner I ask thy help. On the morrow, in the morning, let there be no company. Then give Hellen the word. And afterward, go with Pyrrha to visit Queen

Atlana. Thus will open the way."

"Prince Pelasgus, it shall be as thou sayest."

"Thou dost not speak with cheer, Deucalion."

"For reason, dear Prince. It is no light matter to find that children are going from one, are eager to make nests for themselves, that they pine not to leave the home tree. Yet, how much more is the weight when these children have been gone weary, cruel years; and make naught of those years in the strength of new, fond feeling."

"Deucalion, were I the father, I should feel as thou. Yet, there is much that is bright. For, though Æole and Hellen go from thyself and Pyrrha, their sweetest hopes have full being. Happy art thou in that!"

"It is well said. But it cometh hard. When thine own go from thee, thou wilt the better know."

"May it come to that, dear Deucalion!" He spoke in high glee. "May it come to that—that Æole and I may live to see our children go from us in this way. Then will I think of this and speed them."

"Thou art of a kind with Peloppa," laughed Deucalion. And then laughed the prince. For, well had both listened to Friend Pelop: only with this difference that the latter had listened to what concerned Hellen and Electra alone.

"It is great praise to be thus likened, Deucalion. Peloppa is a dear, kind soul. Often have I wanted to listen to her when she hath taken Pelop to one side. Well I know what are her thoughts upon the giving up of children. Well I know what would be her words of cheer did she dream of my hope for Æole. There would I get feeling for feeling!"

"Did she dream of thy hope for Æole? Thinkest thou her eyes have been open but for the other pair? Many times hath Pelop come to whisper what she hath noted, and how warm is her heart for thee. Well is everything for you two settled in her busy mind!"

This left Prince Pelasgus without words. As he stood thus routed, Deucalion, smiling roguishly, turned away.

"Dear Prince, I will leave thee to think upon it."

As to the visiting, it had been well kept up in these day of calm sailing. For, as the vessels stood at no great height above the water, it was easy to get from one to the other, especially as certain ingenious ladders had been made by the sailors. But, if the visiting went on briskly, even more briskly moved the Pelasgian tongues.

The next morning, Deucalion spoke with Hellen; and then took Pyrrha over to the queen. Thus the four young people were left to themselves in the cabin, Æole and Electra being busied in needlework, and Sensel and Hellen interested in watching them.

But they had not long enjoyed this when Hellen, with abruptness, spoke fast, "Electra, it cometh to me that I would see the captain. Wilt thou come?"

She at once arose, the while apologizing, "Æole, we will come back ere a little."

Then out they hastened. And Sensel arose as if to look after them. But, chancing to turn before he reached the door, he again met Æole's eloquent look.

He went toward her. "What is it, Æole?"

Though somewhat confused, she answered calmly, "Sensel—Prince Pelasgus—I was wondering at thy manner of moving. Whence is it?"

He sat down beside her. "Æole, as a child, I was strong and quick. As a youth, I was first in the games. It is a gift."

"Well didst thou bear thy part. After that, I shall ever feel kind to their serpent selves. And, that well-streaked garment of dust, where is it?"

"It is laid away, ever to be kept."

"It is good. But thine eyes, they puzzle me. Though they shine now, they shone even more then. They knew how to pierce. And thy skin was less fair."

"It was but a little coloring for both."

"How often do Electra and I talk of thy kind deeds to us. Thou wert ever ready, never weary."

"Was it not delight to serve thee and her?"

"But—the priests. Strange it seemed that they should look so much to thee."

"I was quick. They were sluggish—as were the serving men."

"Though Electra and myself were firm in the thought that thou wert our friend—yet there was every reason for believing thee the helper of the king and high priest."

"I wonder that they so soon looked to me. But thy father willed it. Thou knowest his power."

"And thy mastery of the Atlantean tongue. Well was it ye were able to speak it before we were called to the temple."

"Couldst thou have seen thy father and myself at our study when the noise and mirth of the temple were over for the night!"

She shivered at the words *noise and mirth*. Then said low, "Often have I wanted to ask thee why thou didst watch us from behind that thicket."

"I was there at wish of thy father. He feared Atlano might send spies upon you. Further, I wished to speak with Hellen."

"Were there spies?"

"Twice, far off, I saw figures; but, as I bounded toward them, they fled."

"What a mercy! And what good did thy words do Hellen. Dear Hellen, what he hath borne! But he forgetteth, now that he is thus happy."

He looked at her intently. "Æole, hast thou ever witnessed any as happy as himself and Electra?"

"Never have I been with two that have promised to wed. But there are my mother and father, Pelop and Peloppa."

"Mighty is such feeling; and mightiest, if answered."

Æole, affected at his tone, looked at him to find that he was gazing at her very strangely. If ever eyes were full of love, his were. And he was seizing her hand. The moment had come. Oh, for time to speak!

"Æole, thou must know why I spoke thus of Hellen and Electra. They are one pair. There should be another. We should be as they. Tell me that thou carest for me. For ever since I first beheld thee in the temple hath my heart gone out to thee. Only thou canst be my wife!"

Her hands were pressed hard in his, her little hands, that, like her whole body, were trembling; and her face had become as a lily. Scarcely could she support herself. Perceiving this, he relinquished the hands, and put his arms about her.

But Æole, rallying, entreated, "Prince Pelasgus, I ask that thou wilt take away thine arms. Thou hast not had leave to place them thus. And hearken, I beseech thee."

He withdrew his arms. "To good words will I hearken. Can aught else come from thee? Say but the *yea*, first, dear Æole. Then will I hearken the day long!"

"As if thou hadst not spoken words that bring me joy—in speaking as thou hast, in asking me for thy wife—words that would bring *yea* but for this." Here she was obliged to repress

his ardor, and with difficulty. “Thy father is the king. His will thou shouldst know I ask thee to wait until thou hast spoken with him.”

“Afterward will I speak with him. Where is thy yea?”

“Think—thou art the son of the king.”

“I do think of it. And now am I most honoring him! Ever hath my father said I should be free in my choice, his own happy life so bearing upon him. Further, such is the custom of the Pelasgians, high and low. They wed as did the people of the Golden Age. There is tender thought before all else. It is such thought in wedlock that causeth their sun to shine on happy days, their moon and stars to light sweet nights of rest. Ah, our Pelasgia is the land of lands! And Heaven, after Atlantis!—But, thou tremblest, Æole. Wrong am I to name that island. Rather will I speak of the feeling my father hath for thine. None doth he honor as Deucalion! Then is thy doubt gone. There is no other?”

“Prince Pelasgus, that was my one doubt.”

He drew her to him, and neither spoke for a little. Then he said:

“Æole, I went to Atlantis, out of the feeling I bore thy father. Little thought I that it could hold the one of all the world for me! But, at the moment of first beholding thee, there was such a springing up of strong, fond wish for thee that I became stricken with fear that such might be for naught, that thou wouldst feel for me but pity, because of my looks and state. Ah, what I bore! Tell me, dear Æole, that thou didst not feel thus.”

“Sensel, from the first was I drawn to thee, and often did I wonder over my feelings. But when thou didst bear me from the temple to the chariot of the queen, then I knew—knew how dear wert thou. And how hath it grown. Should we be parted, life would be more than an Atlantis of sorrow!”

His beautiful eyes moistened. He whispered, “It hath come, it hath come!”

Long they communed before Æole bethought her of the two that had gone off to speak with the captain. “Where can they be?” she exclaimed.

“Who?”

“Hellen and Electra. Never have I thought of them!”

“It is with thought they are staying away.”

“What meanest thou?”

“When Hellen took off Electra, he meant not to come back. Without doubt, he hath made it known to her; and she, of her feeling, hath asked that they visit the queen.”

“What hath he made known to her?”

“That I wished to be alone with thee.”

“Didst thou speak thus to Hellen?”

“Nay; but thy father did.”

“My father!”

“Yea; thy father.”

“Why should my father do thus?”

“Because I told him my wish. Because I asked him to go away with thy mother, and bid Hellen take off Electra. Thus could I have thee alone.”

“Wouldst thou tell me this is a plot?”

“Call it what thou wilt, dear Æole. If plot, it is my plot. And full as good is it as the way Hellen took. Yea, even better, for look how long I have had thee to myself in this the beginning of our bliss.”

“Sensel!” More than volumes was in her tone as she arose.

“Æole, much doth that air become thee. Have a care!”

She looked down upon him in rebuke, and full of enjoyment was he over her dignity.

“Prince Pelasgus, thou didst plot with my father!”

“I did, Æole. Firm was I to have thee to myself, for I was wild for this thy sweet word. And now have I it! As to thy father, ah the delight of his feeling for me, and better, his furthering! Moreover, there is the feeling, the furthering of Hellen. Did he not hasten off with Electra? Thus hath it come to pass. Thus have I thy word to be mine forever!”

He also had arisen.

“And thou thinkest I can bear to be plotted about? I have the thought to take back my word. It hath gone too soon. Yea, I will have it again. Sensel, give it to me.”

“Atlantis will rise ere I yield it! Ah, but I should like well to have thee take it back, though.” He had now caught her to him. “Yea, dear Æole, much should I like thee to take it back—for only with me will it go!”

CHAPTER XXI.
IN PELASGIA.

Fast were they nearing the dear Pelasgian coast. And jubilant became those returning. Hardly seemed it reality when they began to thread the islands off-lying their land. But the exuberance of feeling was hidden because of the sad-eyed Atlanteans, whose vessels followed dispiritedly. Thus, the Pelasgians hugged their joy to themselves. Never had the sky been a blue so deep, never the water so calm and tender, never the islands so enchanting, never the breezes so odorous. For home was near.

But the morning before entering harbor, this happened.

Deucalion called Pyrrha to their small sleeping room, and when none could hear, said: "Pyrrha, thou knowest that, since a little before the sinking of Atlantis, my strange sight hath failed me. Thus, I thought it had gone from me. But, a few minutes since, whilst sitting here thinking upon our present happy state, again I saw clearly." He paused, overcome.

"Deucalion, what is it?"

"Pyrrha, I saw our harbor lying waste, as though many waters had rushed upon it. Naught was left. Houses, vessels, landings—all were gone. In a flash it passed before me. But, ah how plain! Pyrrha, our harbor is a ruin. The floods have swept it!"

She was stricken with fear. "Deucalion, never hath that strange inner sight failed thee. What thou didst behold in that moment, *is*!"

"Pyrrha, I was not thinking of home. I was dwelling upon our life on this vessel—when it came upon me."

"It is a strange, a dread power. Thinkest thou it cometh of some fine, airy force of the spirit?"

"It may. But what is that force?"

She mused a little to brighten and say confidently, "Could it be that—that—for the moment—thy spirit leaveth its shell—and, as in a flash—traveleth far—and back? That, in this, is thine inner sight?"

He was surprised. "Pyrrha, thou mayest have it. I have wondered much if the sight of my body dulled before the sight of the spirit. It is in my mind that the cares of the body hamper the spirit; but, if such cares become as naught, the spirit hath full power, and then are the inner sight and hearing opened. Again, I have questioned whether this strange sight cometh not of some hidden force of matter. Ah, it doth confound me!—For, all things are as air before it. They stand not in the way, however far the seeing.

"Yea—yea—either the spirit flasheth out and back, or the sight of the body giveth way to this second sight, this seeing of the spirit. When at war, how often did I see thee. When our children were in Atlantis, how often were they before me. And, when I was in Atlantis, how often I saw thee, until a little ere I left. Then did this inner sight fail me. Thus became I worried over thee—to fall into doubt. Why could I not see thee then? Nor afterward?"

“Thy spirit was so torn with the evils about thee, the dangers besetting the children, the risk in setting them free, that it could not become calm enough to see.”

“That is it. Though, through all was I sure that I would master. Yet, the dread.”

“Thou art but man. Therefore must hope join hands with dread, at times. But tell me, why, if the children were so much before thee when in Atlantis, didst thou not know of the Pelasgian speech of the queen?” She smiled through her tears, hoping to tease him a little.

But he was ready. “Smile, if thou wilt, Pyrrha. Then will I. It was not every day that I could see them; but only on those days when Atlantean was spoken. Thou wilt call to mind that thou didst tell me the talk of one day was in Atlantean, the next in Pelasgian.”

“Ah, but thou hast the last! As I might have known. Never art thou at a loss!”

“Not whilst thou art of earth, Pyrrha. All is gain, cheer, with thee beside me. And now wilt thou do thy best. For my heart faileth.”

“Yet here am I jesting, smiling.”

“It is well. But, ah, the vision! How plain was it. Thus are we warned. But woe to Prince Pelasgus!”

“What is it?”

“His father is not of earth. He is with his wife above.”

“Deucalion!”

“Yea, yea, I feel it. Call to mind that I felt the ruin that was to come upon Atlantis: and, that with all, I should save our children. Call to mind that I felt their state in Atlantis even before my inner sight showed such. Think how often I saw them afterward when under the care of the queen. Did not I picture the queen? Did not I tell thee of their daily life?”

“Thou didst—thou didst!”

“And—I felt—even before I saw.”

“I call it to mind.”

“So now I feel this about the king and queen.”

“Wilt thou tell the prince?”

“Ah, Pyrrha—he is so happy.”

“Wouldst thou have me tell him?”

“We will wait, and think upon it.”

The two, dejected, sat down to ponder. After a little, Deucalion concluded, “Pyrrha, this night will I speak with him. Let him spend one more day of joy. Before he seeketh his couch will I warn him.”

“I know thou wilt cheer him. Ah, what misery is ever ready to swoop upon us of earth! Here are these poor Atlanteans with grief sorely checking their pulses, beginning to rouse a little. Their sluggish hearts are quickening. And to what? To further misery, further death of hope. Ah, our own misery will be as naught beside theirs!”

“True—true. It doth confound me.”

Too soon came the night. When all had parted for rest, the unhappy Deucalion led the prince aside that he might relate the vision. The latter, though greatly shaken, could not bring himself to accept it, but again and again insisted:

“Deucalion, thou art wrong. For once, mayst thou be wrong. I cannot believe. Our dear harbor, the vessels that have done such service, the homes, the lives!”

Deucalion was agonized; and his pallor was extreme.

“Deucalion, be not thus wrought. Let mine be the sorrow. Enough hast thou borne.”

“It may be that I should not have told thee.”

“Thou hast my thanks. Should the worst come, I am ready. Shouldst thou be wrong, should our harbor welcome us in its pride, there is the more cause for joy.”

Deucalion looked upon him piteously; then taking his hand kissed it. “Dear Prince,” he wept, “Dear Prince!”

“Thou hast more to tell, Deucalion? My father, my mother—is it well with them?”

“Dear Prince, it is well with them—too well.”

“Too well?”

“I fear it.”

“Thou hast seen?”

“Nay, I have but felt.”

“Ah—I know what that meaneth!”

The words came in gasps. He turned aside, forlorn. But Deucalion, seizing his hands, besought. “May I be wrong—may I be wrong!”

The prince shook his head. A deathly paleness was upon him, and he began to totter. Deucalion, as he sustained him, implored him not to be overcome; and led him to a couch. Here he remained as if in stupor; but, erelong, stood up, himself, calm and resolute.

“Deucalion, I will look for the worst. But will beseech thou mayst be wrong.”

Then, under the stars, the two walked and whispered through the dreary night.

Early the next morning, they drew nigh the harbor. Almost was the moment at hand when the dear port in its tranquillity and beauty would gladden their eyes. Eagerly did the strangers, as well as the returning ones, await the first glimpse of this lauded haven.

And it came.

They looked to see—the peaceful bay, the busy landings, the speeding or quiescent vessels, the houses, the hurrying figures of the port, the glory of the distant hills?—

Alas, they saw them not!

What was this? In mistake had they entered some unknown bay that had been scourged by the furious elements? Yon hills were blasted. This was not their tranquil harbor, their happy port! Where were the vessels, the houses, the active figures, the smiling hills? This place was a nightmare!

Almost frenzied, strangers and returning ones looked about them—all save Deucalion and Prince Pelasgus who stood frozen.

But—on went the vessels—the fact growing upon the horrified beholders that some mighty rush of waters must have swept the place—this harbor they had hoped to enter, some in resignation, some in exultation. For, trunks of trees, pieces of houses, portions of vessels, everywhere began to impede their progress. Soon were descried the floating remains of animals—and later, here and there a gruesome remnant of humanity. At sight of the first of the latter, the women fled shrieking below. The men could but remain to gaze mute, despairing, heartsick. And some, in derision, thought, “Is this the haven of peace promised the stricken Atlanteans?”—It was a mockery.

But on they went, their eyes fastened on the wrecked haven, the ruined hills, until Deucalion ordered,

“We will turn yonder point.”

It was done. They rounded this to perceive, in a sheltered cove, a few vessels and some apparently hastily constructed cots on the shore. They shouted. And figures appeared on the vessels to answer lustily. Then spoke Prince Pelasgus:

“Deucalion, come with me into the boat that we may question them. Let the vessels rest.”

At the order, the vessels paused. Then Deucalion and the prince moved off in the fantastic boat. Upon reaching the nearest vessel, Deucalion, at behest of the prince, called, "We would speak with the captain."

The captain proclaimed himself. Deucalion asked, "Sir Captain, when came the flood?"

"Sir, the flood came the full of the moon four moons since."

"It was then Atlantis sank," whispered the prince.

Deucalion continued, "Sir Captain, tell us of it."

"Sir, these vessels here lying have since come into harbor from their voyages. This they found. Now we wait for others, when we will build again the port. Some of yonder vessels look Pelasgian; and thou art of us. Tell me, when sailed thy vessels? And greeting to them, and thee. So much will every vessel and every man help to bring the port to itself."

The prince now spoke. "Thou wilt find us but too glad to help. But, Sir Captain, I would question thee. Do any of the port live?"

"Not one liveth."

"Doth the king know?"

"The king! Ah, the king lieth low!"

"What sayest thou?"

"The king, with some of his mighty men, was tenting in a vale to the north of this place. There the sudden torrents came upon them, there broke upon them the spouts of water from the hills, there were they swept to death!"

"How knowest thou?"

"Two of the mighty men who were on the mountains above the vale hunting, and who had gone within a cave to rest, are the sole living ones. They are ill in yon cot. They beheld the waters rush upon the fleeing ones."

"The queen?"

"The queen had been one week dead. They had but come from her burial in the country above."

"They are together, then," moaned the prince. "It is well. Ah, my father! I see thee—running—followed fast by the cruel waters!"

"Thy father! Thou art not the prince?"

The prince threw aside his mantle. "Sir Captain Pelio of Magnesia, thou canst but know me."

The captain sank upon his knees, as did his officers and sailors. Of their quickness, the observing ones on the neighboring vessels did likewise. Indeed, others of the captains were familiar with the looks of the prince.

When the prince had bidden them arise, Captain Pelio spoke out loud, and in reverence:

"Thou art our king! We had begun to fear thou wouldst not come back. Long mayst thou live—and in our hearts—as did thy father!"

"Ah, king it is. If it could but be 'Sir Prince'!—But, Sir Captain, tell me of my father."

"King Pelasgus, I would tell thee this. Think not that thy father ran from the waters. Ah, no. From the heights, the two mighty men beheld him meet the waters as if in glad greeting. He tried not to fly as did the others."

"It is no wonder, with my mother gone."

He was so weak and trembling, and hoarse of voice, that Deucalion put his arm about him, and asked for him, "Sir Captain, where lieth the body of the king?"

"It lieth beside that of the queen."

Deucalion was trembling sorely, but the bowed figure of the prince forced him to continue. “Sir Captain, as thou seest, the prince, our king, is weak of his grief. If I am faint, what is his state. It is best we go back to our vessels for this day; but, on the morrow, we will see thee and all, again. And now, for the prince, I thank thee.”

The captain bowed low. Of his pity, he could not speak.

Gently did Deucalion seat the pliant prince. Then, after waving farewell, he speeded off. Hard, hard was it to watch the suffering in this face so dear, harder to note the dryness of the eyes, the rocking of the body. And no reply could he get upon speaking. In anguish rowed Deucalion on.

He reached the vessel to find Æole bending over its side, pale, resolved; and surely she comprehended, from her eyes.

“Father,” she said in lowest tone, “Father, I will come down, after thou hast come up.”

“It is well.”

He ascended, and assisted her. When almost at the bottom of the ladder, she spoke:

“Help me, Sensel.”

This dear voice aroused him. He stood, and held out his arms. Into these she crept, knowing well how to comfort him. Then she coaxed him to sit down beside her that they might talk. With her hand in his, and no thought for the eyes upon them, she whispered, “What is it, Sensel?”

Little by little, he related the sad story. At the end, she was weeping. Distressed, he begged her not to be overcome. But the tears were as much for himself as for the evil news, so changed was he from the happy, ardent, brilliant Sensel who had so fondly dwelt upon his hopes only the night before.

He begged her to grow calm, whereupon she cried the more giving this as reason, “How can I not weep when I behold thee in such grief?”

Then started the tears in his own eyes; and they wept together, to their comforting. Thus does nature afford compensation.

But shortly they were drawn from this by calls from Queen Atlana’s galley, and looked to find Deucalion was beckoning to them. So Prince Pelasgus began to row to him, when near enough receiving this as explanation:

“I have but just brought hither, Pyrrha. And the queen would speak with thee, dear Prince.”

When aboard, the prince with Æole, hastened beneath the awning where sat the queen and Pyrrha. Then talked lovingly, consolingly, these two women who had known so much of sorrow. Long, with Æole’s hand in his, sat the prince—to watch the gruesome hills, the floating timbers. And finally he said:

“Deucalion, on the morrow, will we go where my father and mother are laid. Then for my duty to Pelasgia.”

After King Pelasgus had knelt beside the tomb of his parents, he repaired with Deucalion to Thessaly, which had been undisturbed by the flood. In his beloved Larissa, Deucalion was joyously welcomed; and the king was hailed with loving fealty. Though, only for a little, could King Pelasgus tarry with Æole, as for a brief season, he must return to the port, which was already rebuilding.

Deucalion’s Thessalian compatriots would have accorded him godlike honors upon learning of his adventures, his successes; and hard he found it to convince them he was but mortal. As to Pyrrha, they had always adored her. She was their goddess, indeed.

Here, in Thessaly, the ardent Hellen speedily married Electra. Here, in Thessaly, King Pelasgus won his bride. Here continued Queen Atlana and Pyrrha in sisterly devotion, death parting them but a brief spell when advanced in years, Atlana going first. Here, the polished Atlanteans introduced their language, arts, and ancient purity of religion—a few generations later finding the two races merged in the cultured Hellenes, and speaking a tongue, the Æolic, very different from either Atlantean or Pelasgian. Indeed, this Æolic may be said to bear the same relation to the Pelasgian that English does to the Anglo-Saxon; and it, in turn, has colored the various dialects of Greece since existing.

Here, in Thessaly, Deucalion continued chief among his countrymen; and finally became their king at behest of King Pelasgus. Here to himself and Pyrrha was born another son, the hero Amphictyon and the originator of the famous Amphictyonic Council that so long held the Greek tribes together in a bond surviving even their independence. Here, Hellen succeeded his father; and from him sprang that great race of the Hellenes that gave Greece its ancient name of *Hellas*.

Here were born Hellen's sons, Æolus, Doris, and Xuthus; and Xuthus' sons, Ion and Achæus. Here, Æolus was king after Hellen; and from here spread his descendants over Central Greece as far as the Isthmus of Corinth, even occupying the western coast of the Peloponnesus. From this central region branched the great divisions of the Hellenic race, the Dorians, the Æolians, the Ionians, and the Achæans.

King Pelasgus missed not the portion of his kingdom given over to Deucalion—for his also, was the mighty spiritual kingdom of love; and Æole was its queen as well as queen of the natural kingdom. The mighty kingdom was theirs for eternity. Over the natural, they reigned long and well, ever furthering the progress of the Atlantean industries.

Thus, the arts flourished especially in Thessaly; and the Atlantean industries in the New Pelasgia. Whilst commerce became supreme.

And, from the union of these primeval Pelasgians and the more cultivated Hellenes, generations afterward, sprang a people that were the fathers of the great intellectual Grecian race of antiquity.

NOTES.

"Atlantis, according to the tradition of the Greek geographers, a large island in the Atlantic Ocean to the west of the northwest coast of Africa and the Pillars of Hercules. It was fabled to possess a numerous population begotten by Neptune of mortal women. The sea-kings of Atlantis were said to have invaded the west of Europe and Africa, and to have been defeated by the Athenians and their allies. The inhabitants finally became desperately wicked, and the island was swept away by a deluge. Plato mentions the island in his 'Timæus.' On the old Venetian maps, Atlantis is put to the west of the Azores and Canaries."—*The American Cyclopedia.*

Atlantis.—"Now, in the island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire, which had rule over the whole island, and several others, as well as over parts of the Continent; and besides these, they subjected the parts of Libya within the Columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia. The vast power thus gathered into one, endeavored to subdue at one blow our country and yours, and the whole of the land which was within the straits; and then, Solon, your country shone forth, in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind; for she was the first in courage and military skill.... And when the rest fell off from her, she defeated and triumphed over the invaders....

"But afterward there occurred violent earthquakes and floods, and in a single day and night of rain all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth; and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared, and was sunk beneath the sea."—Plato's "Timæus"—*per* "Atlantis."

Athens.—"For there was a time, Solon, before that great deluge of all, when the city which now is Athens was first in war, and was preëminent for the excellence of her laws, and is said to have performed the noblest deeds, and to have had the fairest constitution of any of which tradition tells, under the face of heaven."—Plato's "Timæus," *per* "Atlantis."

Pelasgians.—"Amidst all the obscurity that hangs about the name of the Pelasgians, it is admitted that they were the earliest known inhabitants both of Greece and Southern Italy —at least of the Indo-Germanic stock; for throughout Europe, as well as Asia, there appears to have been a still earlier population. Now we are distinctly told that the whole seaboard of Ionia and the neighboring islands was formerly peopled by Pelasgians. They are enumerated by Homer among the allies of the Trojans; Herodotus found traces of them on the Propontis, and Agathias in Caria; and the name Magnesia, which occurs twice in Lydia, as well as in Thessaly, seems to be certainly as Pelasgic. They were found in the islands of the Ægean from Samothrace, Imbros and Lemnos, in the north, to Crete, in the south, as well as in the Cyclades, which form the natural stepping-stones from Asia Minor to the Peloponnesus. Hence, they seem to have passed from one continent to the other both round the head of the Ægean and across its islands; and, accordingly, the chief remnants of the race after they were overpowered by the Hellenes, are found in Thessaly, in Epirus, in Attica, and in the heart of Acadia. From Greece they passed over to Southern Italy; where, perhaps, the 'golden age of Saturn' is a tradition of the peaceful agricultural character which is everywhere attributed to the Pelasgians, in contrast to the piratical habits of the Carians and Leleges. It remains, however, a question whether the Pelasgi

were a branch of the Phrygian migration, or a still earlier movement of the Indo-European race from their primeval seats. The latter seems highly probable; but, at all events the two races were very nearly akin, and it is hardly practicable to distinguish their migrations."—"*The Ancient History of the East*," by *Philip Smith, B. A.*

"The *Hellenes* and the *Pelasgi* are the two races identified with Greece's earliest traditions; but when we appeal to history for their origin, or seek for the part that each has played in the majestic drama of antiquity, there is little more than conjecture to guide us."—Nott and Gliddon's "Types of Mankind," page 103.

Deucalion and Pyrrha.—"Deucalion married Pyrrha, daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora. Zeus determined to destroy the degenerate race of man, but Deucalion and Pyrrha, on account of their piety, were preserved. Deucalion built a ship, in which he and Pyrrha floated in safety, while a nine days' flood devastated Hellas."

Hellen.—"The sons of the above were Hellen and Amphictyon. Hellen was king of Phthia in Thessaly. Amphictyon was said to have founded the Amphictyonic of Thermopylae."—Scull's "Greek Mythology Systematized."

Deucalion and Pyrrha.—"Deucalion, king of Phthia, in Thessaly, son of Prometheus and Clymene. According to tradition, being forewarned by his father of an approaching deluge, he built a ship in which he and his wife Pyrrha were saved from an inundation which destroyed all the rest of mankind," etc.—The American Cyclopedia.

Hellen.—"The Greeks were fond of tracing their origin back to a common ancestor, Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha who were the survivors of a deluge," etc.—Page 107, Vol. VIII, American Cyclopedia.

Orichalcum.—"That which is now only a name, and was then something more than a name—orichalcum—was dug out of the earth in many parts of the island, and, with the exception of gold, was esteemed the most precious of metals among the men of those days."—Plato.

Spiral.—"A favorite design of the men of the Bronze Age in Europe is the spiral or double spiral form."... "We find the same figure in an ancient fragment of pottery from the Little Colorado."... "The same design is also found in ancient rock etchings of the Zunis of New Mexico."—Ignatius Donnelly.

Handmaid.—"And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah, Zilpah his maid, for an handmaid."—Genesis xxix: 24.

Feather Robes.—The Maya nobles of ancient Yucatan wore fine robes of feather work on all occasions.—Author.

Magnet.—"The Phœnicians were familiar with the use of the magnet. At the prow of their vessels stood the figure of a woman (Astarte) holding a cross in one hand and pointing the way with the other; the cross represented the compass, which was a magnetized needle, floating in water crosswise upon a piece of reed or wood."—Ignatius Donnelly.

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1. Dog-headed apes.

2. Chimu—in Peru.

3. Ireland.

4. Mediterranean.

5. Bank of Mississippi (east).

6. Eskaldi—Iberians, in Gaul—Basques.

7. Egypt.

8. Spain.

9. Plato.

10. These less ancient names will be used for convenience.

11. Port of Athens.

12. The Berbers of North Africa.

13. Iberians (in Gaul) same as Basques.

14. Spain.

15. Africa.

16. Faith—fidelity.

17. Plato's "Timæus."

18. Plato.

19. Common jugglery is said to have originated in Egypt; and been thence introduced into Greece.

20. Sharpe's History of Egypt.

21. Plato.

22. Ignatius Donnelly, in "Atlantis."

23. Donnelly's "Atlantis."

24. Gases.

25. The Azores—according to Donnelly.