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THE SPARTAN TWINS

The Characters in this Story are:-

MELAS, a Spartan living on the Island of Salamis, just off the coast of Greece. He is Overseer on the Farm of Pericles, Archon of Athens.

LYDIA, Wife of Melas, and Mother of Dion and Daphne.

DION and DAPHNE, Twin Son and Daughter of Melas and Lydia.

CHLOE, a young slave girl, belonging to Melas and Lydia. She had been abandoned by her parents when she was a baby, and left by the roadside to die of neglect or be picked up by some passer-by. She was found by Lydia and brought up in her household as a slave.

ANAXAGORAS, "the Stranger," a Philosopher,--friend of Pericles.

PERICLES, Chief Archon of Athens.

LAMPON, a Priest.

A Priest of the Erechtheum.

DROMAS, LYCIAS, and Others, Slaves on the Farm of Pericles.

Time: About the middle of the Fifth Century B.C.

[Illustration: Plan of home of the Spartan Twins]

I

COMPANY AT THE FARM

One lovely spring morning long years ago in Hellas, Lydia, wife of Melas the Spartan, sat upon a stool in the court of her house, with her wool-basket beside her, spinning. She was a tall, strong-looking young woman with golden hair and blue eyes, and as she twirled her distaff and twisted the white wool between her fingers she sang a little song to herself that sounded like the humming of bees in a garden.

The little court of the house where she sat was open to the sky, and the afternoon sun came pouring over the wall which surrounded it, and made a brilliant patch of light upon the earthen floor. The little stones which were embedded in the earth to form a sort of pavement glistened in the sun and seemed to play at hide and seek with the moving shadow of Lydia's distaff as she spun. On the thatch which covered the arcade around three sides of the court pigeons crooned and preened their feathers, and from a room in the second story of the house, which opened upon a little gallery enclosing the fourth side of the court, came the _clack clack_ of a loom.

As she spun, the shadow of Lydia's distaff grew longer and longer across the floor until at last the sunlight disappeared behind the wall, leaving the whole court in gray shadow.

Under the gallery a large room opened into the court. The embers of a fire glowed dully upon a stone hearth in the center of this room, and beyond, through an open door, fowls could be seen wandering about the farm-yard. Suddenly the quiet of the late afternoon was broken by a medley of sounds. There were the bleating of sheep, and the tinkle of their bells, the lowing of cattle and the barking of a dog, the soft patter of bare feet and the voices of children.

Then there was a sudden squawking among the hens in the farm-yard, and through the back door, past the glowing hearth and into the court, rushed two children, followed by a huge shepherd dog. The children were blue-eyed and golden-haired, like their Mother, and looked so big and strong that they might easily have passed for twelve years of age, though they really were but ten. They were so exactly alike that their Mother herself could hardly tell which was Dion and which was Daphne, and, as for their Father, he didn't even try. He simply said whichever name came first to his lips, feeling quite sure that the children would always be able to tell themselves apart, at any rate. Daphne, to be sure, wore her chiton a little longer than Dion wore his, but when they were running

or playing games she often pulled it up shorter through her girdle, so even that was not a sure sign.

Lydia looked from one of them to the other as the children came bounding into the court, with Argos, the dog, barking and leaping about them, and smiled with pride.

"Where have you been, you wild creatures?" she said to the twins, "I haven't seen you since noon," and "Down, Argos, down," she cried to the dog, who had put his great paws in her lap and was trying to kiss her on the nose.

"We've been down in the field by the spring with Father," Dion shouted, "and Father is bringing a man home to supper!"

"Company!" gasped Lydia, throwing up her hands. "Whoever can it be at this time of the day and in such an out of the way place as this? And nothing but black broth ready for supper! I might have had a roast fowl at least if only I had known. Where are they now?"

"They are coming down the road," said Dion. "They stopped to see the sheep and cattle driven into the farm-yard. They'll be here soon."

Lydia thrust her distaff into the wool-basket by her side and rose hastily from her stool. "There's no time to lose," she said. "The Stranger will not wish to linger here if he expects to reach Ambelaca to-night. It is a good two miles to the village, and he'll not find a boat crossing to the mainland after dark. I am sure of that, unless perhaps he has one waiting for him there."

As she spoke, Lydia drew her skirt shorter through her girdle and started for the hearth-fire in the room beyond. "Shoo," she cried to the hens, which had followed the children into the house and were searching hopefully for something to eat among the ashes, "you'll burn your toes as like as not! Begone, unless you want to be put at once into the pot! Go for them, Argos! Dion, you feed them. They'll be under foot until they've had their supper, and it's time they were on the roost this minute! Daphne, your face is dirty; go wash it, while I get the fire started and see if I can't find something to eat more fitting to set before a guest."

While the children ran to carry out their Mother's orders, Lydia herself seized the bellows and blew upon the embers of the fire. "By all the Gods!" she cried, "there's not a stick of wood in the house." She dropped the bellows and ran into the court. From the room above still came the _clack clack_ of the loom. Lydia looked up at the gallery of the second story and clapped her hands.

"Chloe, Chloe," she called. The clacking suddenly stopped, and a young girl with black hair and eyes and red cheeks came out of the upper room and leaned over the balcony rail.

"Did you want me?" she asked.

"Indeed I want you!" answered her mistress. "Company is coming to supper and there is nothing in the house fit to set before him! Hurry and bring some wood. There's not even a fire!"

There was a sound of hasty footsteps on the stair, and Chloe disappeared into the farm-yard. In a moment she was back again with a basket of wood, which she placed beside the hearth. Lydia knelt on the floor and laid the wood upon the coals. Then she blew upon them energetically with the bellows. Chloe knelt beside her and blew too, but not with bellows. The ashes flew in every direction.

"Mercy!" cried Lydia, "you've a breath like the blasts of winter! You will blow the sparks clear across the court and set fire to the thatch if you keep on! Come! Get out the oven and start a charcoal fire! We can bake barley-cakes, at least, and there are sausages in the store-room. See if there is fresh water in the water-jar."

"There isn't a drop, I know," said Daphne. "I took the last to wash my face."

"Was there ever anything like it?" cried Lydia. "Fresh water first of all! Run at once to the spring, Chloe. I '11 get the oven myself. Daphne, you take the small water-jar and go with Chloe."

As Chloe and Daphne, with their water-jars on their shoulders, started out of the back door for the spring, the door at the front of the court opened, and Melas entered with a tall, bearded man wearing a long cloak.

The moment she heard the door move on its hinges, Lydia stood up straight and tall beside her hearth-fire, and, at a sign from her husband, came forward to greet the Stranger.

"You are welcome," she said, "to such entertainment as our plain house affords. I could wish it were better for your sake."

"I shall be honored by your hospitality," said the Stranger politely, "and what is good enough for a farmer is surely good enough for a philosopher, if I may call myself one."

"Though you are a philosopher, you are also, no doubt, an Athenian," replied Lydia, "and it is known to all the world that the feast of the Spartan is but common fare for those who live delicately as the Athenians do."

"I bring an appetite that would make a feast of bread alone," answered the Stranger.

Melas, a tall brown-faced man with a brown beard, now spoke for the first time.

"There is no haste, wife," he said. "The Stranger will spend the night under our roof. It is not yet late. While you get supper, we will rest beneath the olive trees and watch the sun go down behind the hills."

"Until I can better serve you, then," Lydia replied; and the two men went out again through the open door, and sat down upon a wooden bench which commanded a view of the little valley and the hills beyond.

Meanwhile, within doors, Lydia dropped the stately dignity of her company manners and became once more the busy housewife. When Chloe and Daphne returned from the spring, she had barley-cakes baking in the oven, and sausages were roasting before the hearth-fire. A kettle of broth steamed beside it.

"How good it smells!" cried Dion, when he came in with Argos from the farm-yard. "I could eat a whole pig myself. Do cook a lot of sausages, Mother. I am as hungry as a wolf."

"And you a Spartan boy!" said his Mother reprovingly. "You should think less of what you put in your stomach! Plain fare makes the strongest men. It is only polite to give a guest the best you have, but that's no excuse for being greedy and wanting to stuff yourself every day."

"Well, then," said Dion, "I wish Hermes, if he is the god who guides travelers, would bring them this way oftener. I'd like to be a strong man, but I like good things to eat, too, and when we have company, we have a feast."

His Mother did not answer him; she was too busy.

She sent Chloe to the closet for a jar of wine, and some goat's-milk cheese, and she herself went upstairs to get some dried figs from the store-room. Daphne followed Chloe to the closet, and for a moment there was no one beside the hearth-fire but Dion and Argos, and the sausages smelled very good indeed.

"I wonder if she counted them," thought Dion to himself, as he looked longingly at them. And then almost before he knew it himself he had snatched one of the sausages from the fire and had bitten a piece off the end! It was so very hot that it burned both his fingers and his tongue like everything, and when he tried to lick his fingers, he let go of the sausage, and Argos snapped it up and swallowed it whole. It burned all the way down to his stomach, and Argos gave a dreadful howl of pain and dashed through the door out into the farm-yard. Dion heard his Mother's footsteps coming down the stair. He thought perhaps he'd better join Argos.

When Lydia reached the hearth-fire once more, only Daphne was in the room. She set down the basket of figs and knelt to turn the sausages. She had counted them and she saw at once that one was missing. She was shocked and surprised, but she guessed what had become of it. Mothers are just like that. She rose from her knees and looked around for the culprit. She saw Daphne.

"You naughty boy!" she said sternly to Daphne. "What have you done with that sausage?"

"I didn't do anything with it; I never even saw it," cried poor Daphne.
"And, besides that, I'm not a naughty boy. I'm not a boy at all! I'm Daphne!"

"Where's Dion, then?" demanded Lydia.

"I don't know where he is," said Daphne. "I didn't see him either, but I heard Argos howl as if some one had stepped on his tail. Maybe he took the sausage."

Lydia went to the door and looked out into the farm-yard. Away off in the farthest corner by the sheep-pen she saw two dark shadows.

"Come here at once," she called.

Dion and Argos both obeyed, but they came very slowly, and Argos had his tail between his legs. Lydia pointed to the fire.

"Where is the other sausage?" she inquired, with stern emphasis.

"Argos ate it," said Dion.

"Open your mouth," said his Mother. She looked at Dion's tongue. It was all red where it was burned.

"I suppose Argos took it off the fire and made you bite it when it was hot," said Lydia grimly. "Very well, he is a bad dog and cannot have any sausage with his supper. And a boy that hasn't any more manners than a dog can't have any either. And neither one can be trusted in the kitchen where things are cooking. Go sit on the wood-pile until I call you."

She put both Dion and Argos out of doors and turned to her cooking again.

"Supper is nearly ready," she called at last to Chloe. "You and Daphne may bring out the couch and get the table ready."

Under the arcade in the court there was a small wooden table. Chloe and Daphne lifted it and brought it near the fire. Then they brought a plain wooden bench that also stood under the thatch and placed it beside the table. They arranged cushions of lamb's wool upon the bench, and near the foot set a low stool. Daphne brought the dishes, and when everything was ready, Lydia sent Chloe to call her husband and the Stranger, while she herself went out to the farm-yard. She found Dion and Argos sitting side by side on the wood-pile in dejected silence.

"Come in and wash your hands," she said to Dion. "If you get yourself clean, wrists and all, you may have your supper with us, but remember, no sausage. You have had your fingers with your food." This is what mothers used to say to their children in those days, because there were no knives or forks, and often not even spoons, to eat with.

Lydia didn't invite Argos in, but he came anyway, and lay down beside the

fire with his nose on his paws, just where people would be most likely to stumble over him.

When Melas and the Stranger came in, they sat down side by side on the couch. Chloe knelt before them, took off their sandals, and bathed their feet. Then the Stranger loosened his long, cloak-like garment, and he and Melas reclined side by side upon the couch, their left elbows resting on the lamb's-wool cushions. Chloe moved the little table within easy reach of their hands, and Lydia took her place on the stool beside the couch. It was now quite dark except for the light of the hearth-fire.

The Twins had been brought up to be seen and not heard, especially when there was company, and as Dion was not anxious to call attention to himself just then, the two children slipped quietly into their places on the floor by the hearth-fire just as Melas and the Stranger dipped their bread into their broth and began to eat.

It must be confessed that Melas seemed to enjoy the black broth much more than his guest did, but the stranger ate it nevertheless, and when the last drop was gone, the men both wiped their fingers on scraps of bread and threw them to Argos, who snapped them up as greedily as if his tongue had never been burned at all. Then Chloe brought the sausages hot from the fire, and barley-cakes from the oven. When she had served the men and had explained that these cakes were really not so good as her barley-cakes usually were, Lydia gave the Twins each one, and she gave Daphne a sausage. She just looked at Dion without a single word.

He knew perfectly well what she meant. He munched his barley-cake in mournful silence, and I suppose no sausage ever smelled quite so good to any little boy in the whole world as Daphne's did to Dion just then. However, there were plenty of barley-cakes, and his mother let him have honey to eat with them, which comforted Dion so much that when the Stranger began to talk to Melas, he forgot his troubles entirely. He forgot his manners too, and listened with his eyes and mouth both wide open until the honey ran off the barley-cake and down between his fingers. Then he licked his fingers!

No one saw him do it, not even his Mother, because she too was watching the the inhabitants of the little farm. They lived so far from the sea, and so far from highways of travel on the island, that the Twins in all their lives had seen but few persons besides their own family and the slaves who worked on the farm. The Stranger was to them a visitor from another world--the great outside world which lay beyond the shining blue waters of the bay. They had seen that distant world sometimes from a hill-top on a clear day, but they had never been farther from home than the little seaport of Ambelaca two miles away.

"How is it," the Stranger was saying to Melas, "that you, a Spartan, live here, so far from your native soil, and so near to Athens? The Spartans have but little love for the Athenians as a rule, nor for farming either, I am told."

"We love the Athenians quite as well as they love us," answered Melas;

"and as for my being here, I have my father to thank for that. He was a soldier of the Persian Wars and settled here after the Battle of Salamis. I grew up on the island, and thought myself fortunate when I had a chance to become overseer on this farm."

"Who is the owner of the farm?" asked the Stranger.

"Pericles, Chief Archon of Athens," answered Melas.

"You are indeed fortunate to be in his service," said the Stranger. "He is the greatest man in Athens, and consequently the greatest man in the world, as any Athenian would tell you!"

"Do you know him?" asked Dion, quite forgetting in his interest that children should be seen and not heard.

Lydia shook her head at Dion, but the Stranger answered just as politely as if Dion were forty years old instead of ten.

"Yes," he said, "I know Pericles well. I went with him only yesterday to see the new temple he is having built upon the great hill of the Acropolis in Athens. You have seen it, of course," he said, turning to Melas.

"No," answered Melas. "I sell most of my produce in the markets of the Piraeus, and go to Athens itself only when necessary to take fruit and vegetables to the city home of Pericles. There is no occasion to go in the winter, and the season for planting is only just begun. Perhaps later in the summer I shall go."

"When you do," said the Stranger, "do not fail to see the new building on the sacred hill. It is worth a longer journey than from here to Athens, I assure you. People will come from the ends of the earth to see it some day, or I am no true prophet."

"Oh," murmured Daphne to Dion, "don't you wish we could go too?"

"You can't go. You're a girl!" Dion whispered back. "Girls can't do such things, but I'm going to get Father to take me with him the very next time he goes."

Daphne turned up her nose at Dion. "I don't care if I am a girl," she whispered back. "I'm no Athenian sissy that never puts her nose out of doors, I can do everything you can do here on the farm, and I guess I could in Athens too. Besides, no one would know I'm a girl; I look just as much like a boy as you do. I look just like you."

"You do not," said Dion resentfully. "You can't look like a boy."

"Ail right," answered Daphne, "then you must look just like a girl, for you know very well Father can't tell us apart, so there now."

Dion opened his mouth to reply, but just then his Mother shook her head

at them, and at the same moment Chloe, coming in with the wine-jar, stumbled over Argos and nearly fell on the table. Argos yelped, and Dion and Daphne both laughed. Lydia was dreadfully ashamed because Chloe had been so awkward, and ashamed of the Twins for laughing. She apologized to the Stranger.

"Oh, well," said the Stranger, and he laughed a little too, even if he was a philosopher, "boys will be boys, and those seem two fine strong little fellows of yours. One of these days they'll be competing in the Olympian games, I suppose, and how proud you will be if they should bring home the wreath of victors!"

"They are as strong as the young Hercules, both of them," Melas answered, "but one is a girl, so we can hope to have but one victor in the family at best."

"Perhaps two would make you over proud," said the Stranger, smiling, "so it may be just as well that one is a girl, after all."

Dion sat up very straight at these words, but Daphne hung her head. "I do wish I were a boy too," she said, "they can do so many things a girl is not allowed to do. They get the best of everything."

"That must be as the Gods will," said the Stranger kindly. "And Spartan women have always been considered just as brave as men, even if they aren't quite as big. Anyway, some of us have to be women because we can't get along without women in the world."

Two bright spots glowed in Lydia's cheeks, and she twirled her distaff faster than ever. "I should think not, indeed," she said. "Men aren't much more fit to take care of themselves than children!"

Melas and the Stranger laughed, and the Stranger turned to Daphne.

"Don't you remember, my little maid, how glad Epimetheus was to welcome Pandora, even if she did bring trouble into the world with her?" he asked.

"No," said Daphne, "I don't know about Pandora. Please tell us about her!"

Lydia rose and glanced up at the stars. "It's getting near bed-time," she said to the Twins; and to the Stranger she added, "You must excuse the boldness of my children. They are brought up so far out of the world they scarcely understand the reverence due men like yourself. You must not permit them to impose upon your kindness."

"I will gladly tell them about Pandora if you are willing," said the Stranger. "The fine old tales of Hellas should be the birthright of every child. They will live so long as there are children in the world to hear them and old fellows like myself to tell them."

"If you will be so gracious then," said Lydia, "but first let us prepare

ourselves to listen."

She signed to Chloe, who immediately brought a basin and towel to the Stranger and Melas. When they had washed their hands, she carried away the basin and swept the crumbs into the fire, while Lydia filled cups with wine and water and set them before her husband and his guest. Then wood was piled upon the fire, and Lydia seated herself beside it once more with her distaff and wool-basket, while Chloe crept into the shadow behind her mistress's chair, and the Twins drew nearer to her footstool. When everything was quiet once more, the Stranger lifted his wine-cup.

"Since we are in the country," he said, "we will make our libation to Demeter, the Goddess of the fields. May yours be fruitful, with her blessing." He poured a little wine on the earthen floor as he spoke. There was a moment of reverent silence. Then while the flames of the hearth danced upward toward the sky and the stars winked down from above, the Stranger began his story.

II

THE STRANGER'S STORY

"Long, long ago, when the earth was young and the Gods mingled more freely with men than they do to-day, there lived in Hellas a beautiful youth named Epimetheus. I am not quite sure that he was the very first man that ever lived, but at any rate he was one of the first, and he was very lonely. The world was then more beautiful than I can say. The sun shone every day in the year, flowers bloomed everywhere, and the earth brought forth abundantly all that he needed for food, but still Epimetheus was not happy. The Gods saw how lonely he was and they felt sorry for him.

"Let us give him a companion," said Zeus, the father of all the Gods. 'Even sun-crowned Olympus would be a desolate place to me if I had to live all alone.' So the Gods all fell to hunting for just the right companion to send to poor lonely Epimetheus, and soon they found a lovely maiden whose name was Pandora. 'She's just the right one,' said Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. 'See how beautiful she is.' 'Yes,' said Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, 'but she will need more than beauty or Epimetheus will tire of her. One cannot love an empty head forever, even if it is a beautiful one. I will give her learning and wisdom.'

"I will give her a sweet voice for singing," said Apollo. In this way each one of the Gods gave to Pandora some wonderful gift, and when the time came for her departure from Olympus, where the Gods dwell, these gifts were packed away in a marriage-chest of curious workmanship, and were taken with her to the home of Epimetheus.

"You can imagine how glad Epimetheus was to receive a bride so nobly

endowed, and for a time everything went very happily upon the earth. At last, one sad day, a dreadful thing happened.

"Pandora had been told by the Gods that she must not open the box, lest she lose all the blessings it contained.

"But she was curious. She wished to see with her own eyes what was in it, and one day, when Epimetheus was away from home, she lifted the corner of the lid! Out flew the gifts of the Gods! She tried her best to close the lid again, but before she could do so, the blessings had flown away in a bright cloud.

"Poor Pandora! She sat down beside the box and wept the very first tears that were ever shed in this world. While she was weeping and blaming herself for her disobedience and the trouble it had caused, she heard a little voice, way down in the bottom of the box.

"Don't cry, dear Pandora!' the little voice said. 'You can never be quite unhappy when I am here, and I am always going to stay with you; I am Hope.' So Pandora dried her tears, and no matter how full of sorrow the world has been since, there has never been a time when Hope was gone. If that time should ever come, the world would be a desolate place indeed."

When he had finished the story, no one said anything at all for a minute, and then Daphne looked up at the Stranger.

"Is that really the way all the troubles began?" she asked. "Because if it isn't, I think it's mean to blame everything on poor Pandora."

"Why, Daphne!" said her Mother in a shocked voice; but the Stranger only smiled.

"I should not be surprised if Epimetheus were to blame for a few things himself," he said, stroking his beard. "Anyway, I'm sure he felt he would rather have Pandora and all the troubles in the world than to live without her, and men have felt the same way ever since."

"Well, then," began Daphne, her eyes shining like two blue sparks, "why don't--?"

"Daphne! Daphne!" cried Lydia warningly. "You are talking too much for a little girl."

The Stranger nodded kindly to Lydia. "Let her speak," he said. Daphne spoke.

"Didn't Athena say Epimetheus would get tired of Pandora if she had an empty head?"

"Yes," admitted the Stranger, "the story certainly runs that way."

"And have men felt like that ever since too?" Daphne asked.

"Yes, I think so," answered the Stranger. "Certainly women need wisdom now as much as Pandora did."

"Then why don't they let us learn things the same as boys," gasped Daphne, a little frightened at her own boldness. "Dion's always telling me I can't do things or go to places because I am a girl. I want to know things if I _am_ a girl. I can't try for the Olympian games and I can't even go to see them just because I am a girl." She stopped quite overcome.

Melas and Lydia and Dion were all too astonished to speak. Only the Stranger did not seem shocked. He drew Daphne up beside him.

"My dear," he said, "a child can ask questions which even a philosopher cannot answer. I do not know myself why the world feels as it does, but it certainly has always seemed to be afraid to let women know too much. It has always seemed to prefer they should have beauty rather than brains."

"Yes, but," urged Daphne, "I don't see why I can't try for the games too, when I am big enough. I can run just as fast as Dion and do everything he can do."

Melas smiled. "Daphne is true to her Spartan blood," he said. "The girls used to compete in the games at Sparta."

The Philosopher stroked Daphne's hair. "So your name is Daphne," he said, smiling, "And you can run fast and you have golden hair! Did you know it was to the fleet-footed nymph Daphne with golden hair that we owe the victor's crown at the Olympian games, even though no woman may wear it?"

Daphne shook her head. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

"I mean this," said the Stranger. "It is said that once upon a time Apollo himself loved a beautiful nymph named Daphne. But Daphne did not love Apollo even though he was a God, and when he pursued her she ran away. She was as swift as the wind, but Apollo was still more swift, and when she saw that she could not escape him by flight, she prayed to her father, who was a river god, and, to protect her, he changed her form by magic. Her arms became branches, her golden hair became leaves, and her feet took root in the ground. When Apollo reached her side, she was no longer a beautiful maiden, but a lovely laurel tree. Apollo gathered some of the shining leaves and wove them into a wreath. 'If you will not be my bride,' he cried, 'you shall at least be my tree and your leaves shall be my crown,' and that is why at the games over which Apollo presides, the victor is still crowned with laurel. It was Apollo himself who gave us the custom and made it sacred. So, my little maid," he finished, "you give us our crowns even though you may not win them for yourselves, don't you see? Isn't that almost as good?"

"Maybe it is," sighed Daphne, thoughtfully, "but anyway I'd like to try it the other way." Then she slid from the Stranger's side to her Mother's

footstool, and sat down with her head against her Mother's knee.

"You are sleepy," said Lydia, stroking her hair. "It is time you children were in bed."

"Oh, Mother," pleaded Dion, "please let him tell just one more story. It isn't late, truly." Then he turned to their guest. "Those were very good stories," he said, "but they were both about girls. Won't you please tell me one about a boy?"

"Very well," said the Stranger, "if your Mother will let me, I will tell you the story of Perseus and how the great Goddess Athena helped him to cut off the Gorgon's head with its writhing snaky locks! There's a story for you! And if you don't believe it is true, some day, when you go to Athens with your Father, you can see the Gorgon's head, snakes and all, on the breastplate of the Goddess Athena, where she has worn it ever since."

"Is it the real Gorgon's head?" asked Dion breathlessly, "all snakes and blood and everything?"

"No," said the Stranger, laughing, "the blood of the Gorgon dried up long ago. It is a sculptured head that adorns the breastplate of Athena."

Then the Twins and Chloe listened with open mouth and round eyes to another of the most wonderful stories in the world, while Lydia forgot to spin and the wine-cup of Melas stood untouched within reach of his hand. Even Lydia forgot all about time, and when the story was finished, the moon had already risen and was looking down upon them over the wall. Lydia pointed to it with her distaff.

"See, children," she said, "the Goddess Artemis herself has come to light you to bed. Thank your kind friend and say good-night."

III

THE SHEPHERDS

The next morning Dion was wakened by feeling a cold wet nose wiggling about in the back of his neck. It was Argos' nose. Dion knew it at once. He had felt it before.

"Go away, Argos," he said crossly. He pulled the sheepskin coverings of his bed closer about his ears and turned over for another nap.

But Argos was a good shepherd dog and he knew that his first work that morning was to round up the Twins. So he gamboled about on his four clumsy paws and barked. Then, seeing that Dion had no intention of getting up, he seized the sheepskin covers and dragged them to the

floor.

"Bow-wow," he said.

Dion sat up shivering. "Good dog," said Dion, "go away from here; go wake Daphne!"

"Bow-wow, bow-wow," said Argos, and bounded off to Daphne's room to wake her too.

Dressing took only a minute, for the children each wore but one garment, and there were no buttons; so, though they were sleepy and their fingers were cold and clumsy, they appeared in the court while the roosters in the farm-yard were still crowing and the thrushes in the olive trees were in the midst of their sunrise song. Chloe had already gone out to feed the chickens. Lydia was bending over the hearth-fire, and their Father was just saying good-bye to the Stranger at the door of the court, and pointing out to him the road to the little seaport town.

"You will probably find a boat going over to the Piraeus some time to-day," he said, "and as they usually go early in the morning, it is well for you to make an early start from here. May Hermes speed you on your way."

"Farewell," said the Stranger, "and if ever a philosopher can serve a farmer, you have but to ask in the Piraeus for the home of Anaxagoras. I thank you for your hospitality," and with these words he was gone.

Melas had eaten his breakfast of bread and wine with his guest before dawn, and was now ready for the day's work in the fields. The slaves of Pericles were already in the farm-yard, yoking the oxen, milking the goats, and getting out the tools. There were pleasant early sounds all about, but the Twins hovered over the hearth-fire, for the morning was chill; and Dion yawned. Lydia saw him.

"Come," she said briskly, "wash your faces! That will wake you up, if you are still sleepy. And then I'll have a bite for you to eat, and some bread and cheese for you to carry with you to the hills."

"Are we going to the hills?" asked Dion.

"Yes," said Melas. "To-day you must watch the sheep. Dromas has to help me plough the corn-field. You are old enough now to look after the flock and bring the sheep all safe home again at night. Come, move quickly! 'Still on the sluggard hungry want attends.'"

"They were up too late," said Lydia. "If they can't wake up in the morning they must go to bed very early every night."

When Dion and Daphne heard their Mother say that, they became at once quite lively, and were soon washed and ready for their breakfast, which was nothing but cold barley-cakes left over from the night before and a drink of warm goat's milk. When they had eaten it, Daphne put the bread

and cheese which Lydia had wrapped up in a towel for their luncheon in the front of her dress and they were ready to start.

Melas and Dromas, the shepherd, were waiting for them at the farm-yard gate when the Twins came bounding out of the back door, Dion with a little reed pipe in his hand and Daphne carrying a shepherd's crook. The sheep were huddled together at the gate, waiting to be let out.

"Be sure you keep good watch of that old black ewe," said Dromas to the Twins as he went to open the gate. "She is a wanderer. I never saw a sheep like her. She is always straying off by herself. Quarrelsome too. Argos knows she has to be watched more than the others, and sometimes when she goes off by herself and he goes after her, she just puts her head down and butts at him like an old goat. The wolves will get her one of these days, as sure as my name is Dromas."

"Are there wolves in the hills?" asked Daphne.

"Maybe a few," answered Dromas, "but they don't usually come round when they see the flock together, and a good dog along. You needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid of anything," said Daphne proudly, and then the gate was opened, the sheep crowded through, and Dion and Daphne with Argos fell in behind the flock, and away they went toward the hills, to the music of Dion's pipe, the bleating of the sheep, and the tinkling of their bells.

The children followed the cart-path westward for some distance, and then left it to drive the flock up the southern slope of a rocky high hill, where the grass was already quite green in places and there was good pasture for the sheep. It was still so early in the morning that the sun threw long, long shadows before them, when they reached the hill pasture, though they were then two miles from home. The pasture was a lonely place. Even from the hill-tops there were no houses or villages to be seen. Far, far away toward the east they could see the olive and fig trees around their own house. On the western horizon there was a glimpse of blue sea. In a field nearer they could barely make out two brown specks moving slowly back and forth. They were oxen, and Dromas was ploughing with them. It was so still that the children could plainly hear the breathing of the sheep as they cropped the grass, and the ripple of the little stream which spread out into a shallow river and watered the valley below.

The hillside was bare except for shrubs and a few trees, but there were wonderful places to play among the rocks. Dion proposed that they play robber cave in a hollow place between two large boulders; but as he insisted on being the robber, and Daphne wouldn't play if she couldn't be the robber half the time, that game had to be given up.

Then Daphne said, "Come on! Let's play Apollo and Daphne! I'm Daphne anyway, and I can run like the wind. You can be Apollo, only I know you can't catch me! I can run so fast that even the real Apollo couldn't catch me!"

Dion looked scared.

"Don't you know the Gods are all about us, only we can't see them?" he demanded. "Apollo may have heard what you said, and if he should take a notion to punish you for bragging, I guess you'd be sorry. Maybe he'll turn you into a tree just like the other Daphne."

"Pooh," said Daphne. "I'm not afraid. I should think the Gods wouldn't have time to listen to everything little girls say! They can't be very busy if they do."

Dion was horrified. "That's a wicked thing to say," he said. "You must never speak that way of the Gods. Oh dear! This is bound to be an unlucky day. This morning when Argos woke me, I was having a bad dream! That's a very bad sign."

"It's a sign you ate too much last night," said Daphne. She said it very boldly, but really she was beginning to feel a little frightened too, for every one she knew believed in such signs and omens.

"Come along out of this place, anyway," said Dion. "Let's go somewhere else and play. Let's go to the brook."

The two children came out of their cave between the rocks and started toward the little stream, which was hidden from them by bushes. The sheep were all grazing contentedly along the hillside, the old black ewe browsing in the very middle of the flock. Argos was sitting on the hill-top in the sunshine, watching them, with his tongue hanging out. The sun was now quite high in the sky and the day was warm. The children paddled in the water and built a dam, and sent fleets of leaves down the stream, and played knuckle-bones on a flat rock beside it, until at last they were hungry, and then they ate their bread and cheese.

When they had finished the last crumb, Daphne curled herself up on the flat rock with her head on her arm.

"I'm so sleepy," she said. "I can't keep awake another minute."

You see, they had been up ever so many hours then, and the sunshine was very warm, and the bees buzzed so drowsily in the sunshine!

"You and Argos watch the sheep," she begged, and was asleep before you could say Jack Robinson.

Dion came out of the bushes and counted the flock like a careful shepherd. They were all there, and Argos was still on watch.

"I'll lie down a little while, too," said Dion to himself, "but I won't go to sleep. I'll just look at the sky."

He stretched himself out beside Daphne and watched the white clouds sailing away overhead, and in two minutes he was asleep too.

How long they slept the children never knew. They were awakened at last by a long, long howl, which seemed to come from the other side of the hill. They sat up and clutched each other in terror. There was an answering howl from Argos, and mingled with it they heard the dull thud of many feet, the bleating of sheep, and the frightened cries of lambs.

"The sheep are frightened. There's a stampede!" cried Dion.

The two children plunged through the bushes and gazed about them. The whole flock had disappeared! Their bells could be heard in a mad jangle of sound from the farther side of the hill, Argos was barking wildly.

"Come on," shouted Dion, springing out of the bushes, "We must get them back."

"Suppose it is a wolf!" shrieked Daphne, tumbling after him.

"We'll have to get the sheep back even if it is a bear," cried Dion, and he tore away over the crest of the hill and down the farther slope. Daphne followed after him, as fast as she could run.

The sheep were already a long distance away, in a region of the hills which the children had never seen before in their lives, but they did not stop to think of that. All they thought was that the sheep must be brought back at any cost. They could see Argos barking and circling round the frightened flock, and away in the distance a huge wild creature was just disappearing into the woods.

On the children ran, over rocks and through briars, until at last they reached the sheep, whose flight Argos had already checked. Dion ran beyond to turn them back, while Daphne herded them on one side and Argos on the other. When they had the flock together and quiet once more, the children counted them.

"There's one missing!" cried Daphne, aghast. "And it's the old black ewe! What will Father say?"

"It's all your fault," said Dion. "I told you you would have bad luck if you spoke about the Gods the way you did. I shouldn't wonder if that wasn't really a wolf that we saw. It may have been Pan himself! Or it may have been Apollo, and he meant to show you that you can't run even as fast as a sheep!"

"Anyway, the old black ewe is gone."

"Oh dear! Oh dear! What shall we do?" mourned Daphne.

By this time the sun was low in the sky, and it was late afternoon.

"The first thing to do is to get home as fast as we can," said Dion.

"Which way is home?" said Daphne.

Dion looked about him. "I don't know," he said. "Maybe Argos does. Here Argos! Good dog! Take 'em home! Home Argos! Home!"

Argos wagged his tail, and ran around behind the flock.

"Bow-wow, bow-wow," he barked, and nipped the heels of the wether. In a short time he had the whole flock moving toward a hollow between the hills. As they trotted along behind the sheep, Daphne struck her hands together in dismay.

"What else do you think I have done?" she cried. "I've left my crook in the robber's cave!"

"And I left my pipe there, too," Dion wailed.

"We can't get them to-night anyway," sobbed Daphne. "We could never find the place! And besides, it is too late. It will be dark before we get home."

They trudged along behind Argos and the sheep in dismal silence. Argos did not seem at all in doubt about the way home. He drove the sheep through the hollow between the hills and across two fields, and brought them out at last upon a roadway.

"This must be the road that goes by the house," cried Dion joyfully. For answer Daphne pointed toward the east. There some distance ahead of them was Dromas driving the oxen home from the day's ploughing.

Daphne clapped her hands for joy. "I knew Argos would find the way!" she cried.

The bright colors of the sunset were just fading from the sky when they reached the farm-yard gate. Dromas had gone in before them with the oxen, and Melas himself was waiting to let them in and to count the sheep.

"Where is the old black ewe?" he said sternly to the Twins, when the last sheep had passed through the gate.

"We don't know," sobbed Daphne. "We lost her. We lost the crook, and Dion's little pipe, too. A wolf frightened the flock, and they ran away, and--"

"_Maybe_ it was a wolf," said Dion darkly.

Then the Twins told the whole story to their Father. Melas did not say much to them. He was a man of few words at any time, but he made them feel very much ashamed. And when Lydia heard the things Daphne had said about the Gods, they felt worse than ever, at least Daphne did.

That night, before the family went to bed, Melas kindled a fire upon the little altar which stood in the middle of the court and offered upon it a handful of barley, and prayed to Pan and to Apollo that Daphne might be

forgiven for her wicked words.

IV

SOWING AND REAPING

The children were not allowed again to take the sheep to the hills. "They are not to be trusted," said Melas. "They are the sort of shepherds that go to sleep and let the wolves find the flock. They are not real Spartans."

Dion and Daphne felt this as a terrible reproach. Dromas now had to go with the sheep, and so could no longer help with the other farm work, and the ploughing and sowing of the corn-field had to be finished by Melas himself. The Twins did their best to help. When Melas scattered the grain, they followed with rakes and scratched a layer of earth over the seeds. The crows watched the planting with much interest.

"Look at them," cried Dion to his Father one afternoon. "There are five of them on that tree yonder, and the minute we get to one end of the field they begin to scratch up the grain at the other."

"We'll fix them," said Melas shortly.

He sent the Twins to the house for sticks and straw and his old worn-out sheepskin cloak and hat, and when they came back, Melas stuck two long sticks of wood in the ground and bound a cross piece to them with strips of leather. Then he wound the sticks with straw, and made a round bundle of straw at the top. He tied it all securely with thongs. Then he dressed it with the sheepskin and put on the hat. When it was done, it was the scariest looking scarecrow you ever saw!

"I guess that will frighten the crows!" said Dion, as he gazed at it admiringly. "It just about scares me."

"Caw, caw, caw!" screamed a crow.

A crow was flying right over his head! Dion shook his fist at him. "You old thief!" he cried.

"I know one more thing we can do," said Daphne. "Lycias told me about it." She got a small piece of bark and made a little amulet of it. She punched a hole through one end and put a leather string through it. Neither she nor Dion could write, so when she had explained what must be done Melas himself took a sharp stone and scratched a curse upon crows in the soft bark. When it was done Daphne hung it about the neck of the scarecrow. "There," said Melas grimly, "I don't believe he'll go to sleep on the job. He's a Spartan scarecrow! Now let's go home to supper, and to-morrow we'll see how it works."

The next morning the very first thing the Twins did was to rush out to the field and there, right on top of the scarecrow were three black crows, and more were on the ground eating up the seed!

"After all we did, just look at them!" cried Dion.

"Caw, caw," screamed the crows.

"You don't suppose Father made a mistake, and wrote a blessing instead of a curse on that amulet?" said Daphne anxiously. They ran back to the house as fast as they could go. Melas was just coming out of the farm-yard with a pruning-hook in his hand.

"Oh, Father," cried Dion, "the crows are roosting all over the scarecrow. Maybe he wasn't a Spartan scarecrow after all."

"Anyway, he seems to have gone to sleep on the job," added Daphne.

Melas stared at the crows in angry silence. "You children will have to get your clappers then, and just drive the old thieves away," he said at last, "You will have to spend the day in the field watching them. I've got to work in the vineyard. The vines must be pruned."

The Twins had not yet had their breakfast and they were hungry. So they ran to the kitchen, seized some barley-cakes and a little jar of milk, and in a few minutes were back again in the field. They sat down with the wooden clappers beside them, and ate their breakfast in the company of the scarecrow. All day long they watched the grain and rattled their clappers, or threw clods at the black marauders. It was lively work, and although they did not like it, they remembered the black ewe and stuck faithfully at it all through the long day.

When the sun was high overhead, Lydia brought them some figs and cheese and a drink of goat's milk. She also brought a message. This was the message. "Father says you are to stay here until after dark. You are to hunt around until you find a toad, and when you find it, you must be sure not to let it get away from you. He is going to put a magic spell on the field to keep the crows away, but the spell will not work except in the dark. So you must stay here until he comes."

Between keeping off the birds and hunting for the toad, the Twins spent a busy afternoon. And after the toad was found it was no joke to try to keep it. It was a wonderful hopper and nearly got away twice. At dusk the crows flew away to their nests, and the children were alone in the field until the twilight deepened into darkness. Owls had begun to hoot and bats were flying about, when at last they saw three dim, shadowy figures coming across the field.

The shadowy figures were Melas, Lydia, and Chloe. Lydia bore a jar, which she placed beside the scarecrow in the middle of the field. Melas took the toad in his hand, formed the others in line, and then solemnly headed the procession as the five walked slowly round the entire field, carrying

the toad. When they got back to the scarecrow again, Melas put the toad in the jar and sealed it. Then he buried the jar in the middle of the field, beside the scarecrow.

"There," said Lydia, when it was done, "that's the very strongest spell there is. If that doesn't protect the corn, I don't know another thing to do."

Whether it was the scarecrow, or the curse, or the spell, I cannot say, but it is certain that the corn grew well that summer, and when harvest time came, Melas was so proud of his crop that he decided to have an extra celebration. So one day in late summer every one on the entire farm rose with the dawn and hastened to the fields. It was the twelfth day of the month, which was counted a lucky day for harvesting, and every one was gay, as, with sickles in hand, slaves and master alike entered the field of ripe grain. Melas and two other men led the way, cutting the stalks and leaving them on the ground to be gathered into sheaves and stacked by others who followed after.

Meanwhile Lydia, Chloe, and the other women prepared an out-of-door feast. A calf had been killed and cut up for cooking, and in the afternoon a huge fire was built. Lydia had charge of the cooking. She set great pieces of meat before the fire to roast, and told the children to sit by and turn them often to keep them from burning. Dion and Daphne also brought wood for the fire, while the slave women mixed cakes of meal and baked them in the ashes, or went to the spring for water, or carried refreshing drinks to the workers in the field.

It was sundown when the last sheaf was stacked and Melas gave the signal to stop work. Chloe at once brought cool water from the spring to the tired harvesters, and when they had washed their hot hands and faces, Melas made a rude altar of stones, kindled a fire upon it, and, calling the people together, offered upon it a handful of the new grain and made a prayer of thanks to Demeter, the Goddess of the fields, for the rich harvest. When this was done, the feast was ready. The meat and cakes and wine were passed to the men by the women, and when they had been well served, the women too sat down under a tree and ate their supper. It was a gay party. After supper there were jokes and songs, and Dromas played upon his shepherd's pipe, until the night came on and the moon showed her round face over the crest of the hills.

Then Lycias, the oldest slave of all, began to tell stories. He had seen the battle of Salamis, and he told how he had watched the Persian ships go down, one after another, before the victorious Greeks. "And the King sat right on the high rocks north of the Piraeus and saw 'em go down," he chuckled. "It was a great sight."

When Lycias had finished his story, Dromas told the tale of how the God Pan had appeared to a shepherd he knew, as he was watching his sheep along on the hills. "It's all true," he declared, as the story ended. "I knew the man myself. All sorts of things happen when you're out alone on the hillsides."

The fire, meanwhile, had died down to a heap of brands and gleaming coals, and Melas told the Twins to bring some wood to replenish it. They had been gone only a short time on this errand when the group around the fire was amazed to see them come darting back into the circle, all out of breath and with eyes as big as saucers.

"What is it?" cried Lydia, springing to her feet.

"We don't know," gasped Dion. "It's big--and black--and there's two of it. It's right out by the brush-pile."

"We were just going to get an armful of brush," added Daphne, "when all of a sudden there it was--right beside us! We didn't wait to see it any more. We just ran like everything!"

Lydia poked the coals into a blaze and peered out into the surrounding darkness.

"It was wolves, I'll go bail," cried Lycias, and he started at once to climb a tree.

"Wolves!" shrieked Chloe, and got behind her mistress. The Twins were already holding to her skirts.

"Wolves!" howled the slaves, "a whole pack of them!" and as there was nothing for them to climb, each hastily tried to get behind some one else. In the struggle Dromas got crowded back and sat down on a hot coal. He hadn't many clothes on, so he got up very quickly, and the next howl he gave was not wholly on account of wolves. Only Lydia and Melas stood their ground beside the fire. Melas waved a burning brand in the air and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Fools! Rabbits! Don't you know wolves won't come near a fire?" but nothing soothed the frightened slaves. Something was coming, and if it wasn't wolves, they thought it was likely to be a worse creature. They could see two black figures bounding along in the moonlight, and behind them came a huge dog, barking with all his might. Bang into the row of cowering slaves they ran, and the biggest black thing roared "baa," and the little one bleated "maa," right into Dromas' ear. The "whole pack of wolves" was just the old black ewe and her little black lamb. Argos was chasing them and when he came tearing into the circle about the fire and saw the sheep safe with Dromas, he sat down panting, with his tongue hanging out, and looked very much pleased with himself. Dromas seized the lamb in his arms.

"It's a fine young ram," he cried, "and it's nothing short of a miracle that the wolves haven't got it, and its mother too, long before this!"

"I always said that old ewe was bewitched," quavered Lycias. "It's magic, I say. And the lamb is as black as Erebus too. No good will come of this!"

"Come, come! We must take them up to the farm-yard at once," said Melas, "before the old sheep takes it into her head to run away again. Dromas, you and Argos attend to her, and I'll carry the lamb myself."

"We will all go," said Lydia. "It is time for bed anyway." So the remains of the feast were gathered up, the fire was put out, and the whole company trailed back over the hill to the farm-house, Melas at the head of the procession, carrying the lamb in his arms. When the old sheep was corralled once more with the flock, and the slaves had gone home to their huts, Melas came in from the farm-yard with the lamb. He seemed strangely excited.

"Light the fire on the hearth, wife," he said to Lydia. "There's something queer about this lamb."

Lydia uncovered the coals, laid on some wood, and blew the fire to a blaze. By its light Melas examined the lamb carefully. Then he said to Lydia, who stood near with the Twins, "This ram has but one horn!"

"It can't be!" gasped Lydia. "Whoever heard of a ram with only one horn?"

"Feel it," said Melas briefly. Lydia felt it.

"By all the Gods," she cried, "here is a strange thing!"

"Let us feel," begged Dion and Daphne. They both felt. There was only one little budding horn to be found, and that was right in the middle of the lamb's forehead.

"What does it mean?" cried Lydia. "Is it a miracle? Is it a portent? Does it mean good luck or bad luck?"

"I don't know," said Melas. "Only a priest could tell that."

"Then take it to a priest," said Lydia.

"It is not my sheep," said Melas. "It belongs to Pericles."

"Then you must take it to him and let him decide what shall be done with it," cried Lydia. "And go soon, I beg of you. I don't wish to have the creature in the house. It may be bewitched. It may bring all kinds of bad luck to us."

"It is just as likely to bring good luck as bad," said Melas.

"Is Father really going to take the lamb to Athens?" asked Dion.

"Yes," answered Melas, with surprising promptness, "to-morrow."

"Oh," cried Dion and Daphne at the same instant, "_please_ let me go too."

"No," said Lydia at once, but Melas said, "Not so fast, wife. Seek guidance of the Gods. The children would learn much from such a journey, and their chances for learning are few. We should be gone but two days, if the sea is calm."

Lydia was silent for a moment while the Twins stood by breathless with suspense. At last she said, "Well,--if the Gods so will,--we will seek an omen. You could spend the night at the house of my brother, Phaon, the stone-cutter, I suppose. I have seen him but seldom since he married his Athenian wife, but no doubt he would make you welcome for the night."

She rose slowly as she spoke, and threw a handful of grain upon the family altar, at the same time praying to Hermes, the God of travelers, for guidance. Then she ran round the court with her hands over her ears, and as she came back to the group beside the hearth, suddenly uncovered them again. The Twins were talking together in low tones.

"Oh, do you suppose they will let me go?" Daphne was saying to Dion, and just at that moment Lydia took her hands from her ears. "Go" was the first word she heard.

"The omen is favorable," cried Lydia. "You are to go! I prayed to Hermes, then closed my ears, well knowing that the first word I should hear when I uncovered them would be the answer to my prayer. That word was 'Go.' Hasten to bed, my children, for you must make an early start to-morrow."

Daphne could scarcely believe her ears. Not a word had been said about her staying at home because she was a girl! She flew upstairs to bed lest some one should suddenly think of it.

V

THE TWINS GO TO ATHENS

In the gray dawn of the following morning Lydia stood in the doorway of her house and watched the three figures disappear down the road toward the little seaport town of Ambelaca. Melas walked ahead, carrying the lamb wrapped in his cloak, and the Twins followed, bearing between them a basket in which Lydia had carefully packed two dressed fowls, some fresh eggs, and a cheese, to be taken to the home of Pericles, besides bread and cheese for Melas and the children. The Twins were so excited they would have danced along the road instead of walking if it hadn't been for the basket, but every time Daphne got too lively, Dion said, "Remember the eggs," and every time Dion forgot and skipped, Daphne said the same thing to him.

They had gone nearly a mile in this way, when the road took them to the crest of a hill, from the top of which it seemed as if they could see the whole world. Just below them lay the little seaport town of Ambelaca, and beyond it the blue waters of the bay sparkled and danced in the morning breeze. On the farther side of the bay they could see the white buildings of the Piraeus, and beyond that in the distance was a chain of blue mountains over which the sun was just peeping. That sight was so

beautiful that the children set down their basket, and Melas too stood still to gaze.

"Those blue mountains beyond the Piraeus are the hills of Athens," said Melas. "The one with the flat top is the sacred hill of the Acropolis. And right down there," he added, pointing to a white house on a near-by hill-top, overlooking the sea, "is the house of Euripides, the Poet. He has come from the noise and confusion of the city to find a quiet refuge upon Salamis."

"Does he write real poetry?" asked Daphne.

"They say he does," answered Melas, "though I never read any of it myself."

"I wish I could write," sighed Daphne, "even if it wasn't poetry! Even if it were only curses to hang around a scarecrow's neck. I'd like to write!"

"Girls don't need to know how to write," said Melas. "It doesn't make them any better housekeepers. I don't even see how Dion is going to learn. There are no schools in Salamis."

"Oh dear!" thought Daphne, "there it is again." But she said nothing and followed Melas down the hill and into the village street.

Soon they found themselves at the dock where the boat was tied. There were already passengers on board when the Twins and their Father arrived. There were two farmers with baskets of eggs and vegetables, and there was an old woman with a large bundle of bread. Next to her sat a fisherman with a basket of eels. They were all going to the market in the Piraeus to sell their produce. Melas with the lamb in his arms climbed in beside one of the farmers and sat facing the fisherman. Dion sat next to him with the basket on his knee, and Daphne had to sit beside the fisherman and the eels. The eels squirmed frightfully, and Daphne squirmed too every time she looked at them. She was afraid one might get out and wrap itself around her legs. They did look so horribly like snakes, and Daphne felt about snakes just as most girls do. However, she knew it was useless to say anything. There was no other seat for her, and so she remembered that she was a Spartan and tried not to look at them.

When they were all seated, the rowers took their places on the rowing-benches, the captain gave the signal, and off they went over the blue waters toward the distant shore. For a time everything went smoothly. There was no sound but the rattling of the oarlocks, the chant of the rowers as they dipped their oars, and the rippling of the water against the sides of the boat. Up to this time the black lamb had lain quietly in Melas' arms, but now something seemed to disturb him. He lifted his head, gave a sudden bleat, and somehow flung himself out of Melas' arms directly into the basket of eels! Such a squirming as there was then! The eels squirmed, and the lamb squirmed, and if his legs had not been securely tied together he undoubtedly would have flopped right into the water, and then this story would never have been written.

The fisherman gave an angry roar. "Keep your miserable lamb out of my eel basket," he shouted.

Melas had not waited to be told. He had already seized the lamb, but it struggled hard to get away, and between the lamb and the eels there was a disturbance that threatened to upset the boat.

"Sit still," roared the captain. "Have you no sense? Do you all want to go to the bottom?"

"May Poseidon defend us!" cried the old woman with the bread. "I've no wish to be made into eel-bait."

"Nor I," said one of the farmers angrily. "You'd better kill your lambs before you take them to market," he said to Melas; "it will be safer for the rest of us."

"The lamb is not for market," Melas answered. "I would not dare kill it. It bears a portent on its brow!"

"A portent?" gasped the old woman.

"May all the Gods defend us! What portent?" Melas pointed to the horn. "It has but one horn," he said.

They all became still at once. They all looked at the lamb. They all felt of his horn. Their eyes grew big.

"There was never such a thing known," said the farmer.

"Whose is the lamb?" asked another. "Is it yours?"

"No," said Melas, "it belongs to Pericles the Archon. It was born on his farm. I am taking it to him so that he may decide what to do with it."

"A portent on the farm of Pericles?" cried the old woman. "I'll warrant it will be read as favoring him, since he already has a world at his feet. May the Gods forgive me, but it seems to me they are often more partial than just."

"Hush, woman," said one of the farmers. "Speak no ill of the Gods, not until we are safe on the land at any rate."

The woman snapped her mouth shut. The farmers and the fisherman settled themselves as far away as possible from the Twins and Melas, and nothing more was said until the boat touched the other shore, and all the passengers scrambled out upon the dock. The farmers and the fisherman and the old woman all hastened away to the marketplace, and when they reached it, they must have kept their tongues busy, for as Melas and the Twins passed through it on their way to Athens a few moments later, they were followed by a crowd of curious people who wanted to see the lamb and who had a great deal to say about what such a miracle might mean.

Melas paid little attention to them, but hastened on his way, and soon they reached the eastern edge of the town and started along the paved road which ran from the Piraeus to Athens proper. This road was nearly five miles long and ran between two high walls of stone some distance apart. The curious crowd left them at this point and the three walked on alone through olive orchards and past little vineyards, toward Athens.

"Nobody could get lost on this road," said Dion to his Father, "not even if he tried! He couldn't get over the walls."

"What are the walls for?" asked Daphne. "It seems silly to build high walls like this right out in the country."

"Not so silly when you think about it," answered Melas. "These walls were built by Pericles, so that if any enemy should make an invasion, Athens would always have a safe access to the sea. Without that she could be starved within her own walls in a very short time."

"Pericles must be almost as powerful and wise as the Gods themselves, I should think," said Daphne.

"He does all these things by the help of the Gods, without doubt," said Melas.

When they were halfway on their journey to the city, Dion suddenly let down his side of the basket with a thump.

"Remember the eggs!" cried Daphne sharply, but Dion did not seem to hear.

"Look! Look!" he cried and pointed toward the east. There against the sky, on the top of the sacred mountain, stood a gigantic figure shining in the sun.

"What is it?" cried both children at once.

"That is the bronze statue of Athena, the Goddess who gives protection to Athens," said Melas.

"Did Pericles make that too?" asked Daphne.

Melas laughed. "No," he said; "you must not think Pericles made everything you may see in Athens. Great as he is, he is not a sculptor."

"Oh, oh," cried Dion, "I want to see the Gorgon's head with snaky locks. Don't you remember the Stranger said it was on the breastplate of the statue?"

"Ugh," said Daphne, shuddering. "I don't believe I'd like it. It must look just like eels."

"Come, come," said Melas. "At this rate you won't have a chance. The day will be gone before we know it."

The Twins picked up the basket, and the three marched on toward the city, and it was not long before they had entered the gate and were passing along closely built-up streets to the home of the greatest man in Athens.

"This is the place," said Melas at last, stopping at one of the houses.

"This isn't Pericles' house, is it?" cried Daphne. "Why, I thought it would be the biggest house in Athens, and it looks just like the others."

"Pericles does not put on much style," said Melas, as he lifted the knocker on the door. "He is too great to need display. He cares more about fine public buildings for the city than about making his neighbors envious by living better than they do. Just get the idea out of your head that greatness means wealth and luxury, or you are no true Spartans, nor even good Athenians."

As he said this, Melas let the knocker fall. The door was immediately opened by a porter, who looked surprised when he saw Melas and the Twins.

"What brings you in from the farm?" he said.

"I wish to see your mistress, the wife of Pericles," said Melas, with dignity. "I have business of importance."

"Come in, come in," said the porter, grinning good-naturedly; "and you, too, little boys," he added graciously to the Twins, and led the way into the house. Dion was just opening his mouth to explain that Daphne wasn't a boy, but Daphne poked him in the ribs and shook her head at him. "Let him think so," she said, jerking her chiton up shorter through her girdle.

They were ushered through a passageway into the court of the house, and there the porter left them while he went to call his mistress. The house, though little different from the other houses of well-to-do Athenians, was still much finer than anything the Twins had ever seen. The floor was of marble, and the altar of Zeus which stood in the center of the court was beautifully carved. The doorways which opened into the various rooms of the house were hung with blue curtains. A room opening into the court at the back had a hearth-fire in the middle of it, much like that in the children's own home. Soon a door in the back of the house opened, and Telesippe, the wife of Pericles, appeared. She was a large coarse-looking woman, and with her were three boys, her own two and Alcibiades, a handsome lad, who was a ward of Pericles and a member of his family.

Melas approached her and opened his cloak.

"Why, Melas, what have you there?" cried Telesippe in amazement, as she saw the little black ram.

"A portent, Madam," said Melas with solemnity. "This ram, born on your husband's farm, is a prodigy, it has but one horn. I have brought it to you, that the omen might be interpreted. I trust it may prove a favorable

one."

Telesippe looked at the lamb and turned pale. She struck her hands together. The porter and another slave at once appeared.

"Go to the temple and bring Lampon, the priest," she said to the slave; and to the porter she added, "and you, the moment the priest arrives, call your master."

The slave instantly disappeared, and the porter went back to his post by the entrance. Although Telesippe was evidently disturbed and anxious about the portent, she now turned her attention to the basket, which Dion and Daphne had placed before her, and when their luncheon had been taken out, she called a slave woman and gave the fowl and the eggs and cheese into her care.

The three boys, meanwhile, crowded around Melas and the lamb and asked questions of all sorts about it and about the farm. It seemed but a short time when the porter opened the door once more and ushered in the priest. The Twins had never seen a priest, since there were none on the island, and they looked with awe upon this man who could read omens and interpret dreams. He was a tall, spare man with piercing dark eyes. He was dressed in a long white robe, and wore a wreath of laurel upon his brow, and his black hair fell over his neck in long, straggling locks.

No sooner had he entered the court and taken his place beside the altar than the blue curtains of a door at the right parted and a tall noble-looking man entered the room. Dion and Daphne knew at once that it must be Pericles. No other man, they thought, could look so majestic. Their knees shook under them, and they felt just as you would feel if you were suddenly to meet the President of the United States. Pericles was not alone. A man also tall, and wearing a long white cloak, followed him through the curtains and joined the group about the altar.

"The Stranger!" gasped Daphne to Dion in a whisper. "Don't you remember? He said he knew Pericles!"

The Stranger spoke to Melas and laid his hand playfully upon the heads of the Twins.

"These are old friends of mine," he said to Pericles. "I stayed at their house one night last spring."

Pericles had already greeted the priest. Now he smiled pleasantly at the children, and spoke to Melas.

"I hear a miracle has occurred on my farm," he said.

For answer Melas showed the lamb, which now began to jump and wriggle in his arms.

"There can be no doubt that the portent concerns the Great Archon," said the priest solemnly. "See how the ram leaps the moment he appears!"

Pericles beckoned to the Stranger. "What do you think of this, Anaxagoras?" he said, smiling.

"I am no soothsayer," answered the Stranger, smiling too. "The priest is the one to expound the riddle."

Lampon now came forward, and, with an air of importance, pulled a few hairs from the lamb's fleece, and laid them upon the live coals of the altar. He watched the hair curl up as it burned and bent his ear to listen. "It burns with a crackling sound," he said; "the omen is therefore favorable to your house, O Pericles. Instead of two horns, the animal has but one! Instead of two factions in Athens, one favorable to Pericles, one opposed, there will henceforth be but one! All the city will unite under the leadership of Pericles the Olympian."

"The Gods be praised!" exclaimed Telesippe, with fervor.

The priest clapped his hands and bowed his head, and Dion saw him peer cautiously through the tangled locks which fell over his face to see how Pericles had taken this prophecy. The Great Archon was standing quietly beside Anaxagoras, and neither one gave any sign of being impressed by the oracle. The priest scowled under his wreath.

"What shall be done with the ram?" asked Telesippe, when Lampon again lifted his head.

"Let it be sent to the temple as an offering. Since it is black it must be sacrificed to the Gods of the lower world," answered the priest.

Telesippe at once called a slave. Melas gave the ram into his hands; the priest received a present of money from Pericles, and, followed by the slave with the ram, disappeared through the doorway.

"You did well to bring the ram to me at once," said Pericles to Melas when the door closed behind the priest. "Take this present for your pains," and he placed a gold-piece in Melas' hand. "And these little boys," he added, smiling pleasantly at the Twins, "they too have done their share in bringing the portent. They must have a reward as well." He gave them each a coin, and, when he had received their thanks, at once left the house, followed by Anaxagoras. The Twins and Melas then said good-bye to Telesippe and the boys and took their leave.

When they turned the corner into the next street, Melas said with a sigh, "There, that's off my mind. And I hope there will be no more miracles for a while."

"If it would take us to the house of Pericles every time, I'd like them at least once a week!" cried Dion, looking longingly at the coin Pericles had given him.

"So would I," Daphne added fervently. "Even if Pericles didn't give us anything at all, I'd come to Athens just to look at him! He looks just

like the Gods. I know he does."

Melas laughed. "You're just like the Athenians," he said, "They call him the Olympian because they feel the same way about him. Give me your coins," he added. "I will put them in my purse for safe-keeping."

"Anyway," said Daphne, as she and Dion gave their Father the money, "I'm glad the portent was favorable to Pericles. The old woman on the boat was right. She said it would be."

VI

THE FESTIVAL OF ATHENA

The day had begun so early that it was still morning when Melas and the Twins left the house of Pericles and took their way toward the Agora, which was the business and social center of Athens. Here were the markets where everything necessary to the daily life of the Athenians was sold. The Twins had never dreamed there were so many things to be found in the world. Not only were there fruits, meats, fish, vegetables, and flowers, but there were stalls filled with beautiful pottery or with dyed and embroidered garments gorgeous in color, and even with books. The books were not bound as ours are. They were written on rolls of parchment and were piled up in the stalls like sticks of wood. Around the marketplace there were arcades supported by marble columns, and ornamented by rows of bronze statues. In the center stood a magnificent altar to the twelve Gods of Olympus, whom the people of Hellas believed to be the greatest of their many Gods. There were temples opening on the Agora, and beyond the temples there were the hills of Athens, with the Sacred Mount of the Acropolis, the holiest of all holy places, bounding it on the south.

Melas had seen all these sights before, but to the Twins it was like stepping right into the middle of an enchanted world. Melas took them each by the hand, and found an out-of-the-way corner near a stall where young girls were selling wreaths, and there they ate their luncheon, while they watched the people swarming about them.

The flowers-sellers, the bread-women, and some flute-girls were almost the only women in sight, but the whole Agora was full of men. There were fathers of families buying provisions for the day. Each was followed by a slave with a basket, for no Athenian gentleman would carry his own packages. There were always slaves to do that. There were grave men in long cloak-like garments with fillets around their heads who walked back and forth talking together. There were boys, followed by their "pedagogues," old slaves who carried their books for them, and saw to it that their young charges got into as little mischief as possible, as they went about the streets.

Suddenly at some signal which neither Melas nor the Twins saw, the whole

crowd began to move toward the south.

"Where are they going?" asked Dion.

"Listen to that little Spartan savage," said one of the wreath-sellers, laughing. "He doesn't even know it's the regular festival of Athena. Run along, bumpkin, and see the sights."

Melas gave the girl a black look. He didn't like to have Dion called a "Spartan savage," nor a "bumpkin" either, but he knew very well Spartans might expect scant courtesy in Athens, so he said nothing, but he rose from his corner at once and, telling the children to follow, started after the crowd.

They reached the steep incline which led up to the Acropolis, and, still following the crowd, had gone part way to the summit, when there was a mighty pushing and jostling among the people, and loud voices cried, "Make way for the sacred procession." The crowd parted, and Melas and the Twins were pushed back toward one side, but as they were lucky enough to be on the border of the crowd, instead of being pressed farther back, they were able to see the sacred procession of the Goddess Athena as it mounted the long slope and disappeared through the great gate.

In one of the oldest temples on the Acropolis, called the Erechtheum, there was an ancient wooden statue of Athena which the Athenians believed had fallen from heaven. It was very sacred in their eyes, and every year they celebrated a festival when the robes and ornaments of the statue were taken off and cleaned. This year the maidens of Athens had embroidered a new and beautiful robe, and it was being carried in state to the temple to be offered to the Goddess and placed upon her statue.

The Twins had never seen so many people in all their lives before. The procession was headed by some of the chief men of Athens, and foremost among them the children recognized Pericles. Near him walked Anaxagoras the Philosopher, with Phidias, the great sculptor, and Ictinus, the architect of the new temple of which the Stranger had told the Twins on the spring evening so long before. There were also Sophocles the dramatist and Euripides the poet. Melas recognized them all, for they were known to every one and he had seen them at the house of Pericles or walking about the Agora on previous journeys. He pointed them out to the Twins.

"That queer snub-nosed man back of Sophocles is Socrates the philosopher," he said. "He is a friend of Pericles also, though he is poor and queer, and is always standing about the market-place talking to any one who will listen to him."

"Are there two philosophers in Athens?" asked Dion. "I thought Anaxagoras was the philosopher."

Melas laughed. "Philosophers are as thick in Athens as bees in a hive," he said, "and poets too."

The beautiful embroidered robe, borne on a chariot shaped like a ship, now appeared in the procession, and the crowd breathed a long sigh of wonder and admiration as it passed. Then came a long row of young girls bearing baskets and jars upon their shoulders. They were followed by older women, for women were allowed to take part in this festival. After them came youths on horseback, and then more youths leading garlanded oxen for the sacrifice. The procession was so long that the end of it was still winding through the streets below some time after the head had reached the top of the incline. Right up the steep slope it streamed, between the gaping crowds massed on either side, and when the very end of it had passed out of sight, the people closed in behind it and swarmed over the level height of the sacred hill.

Melas and the children pushed their way with the others, but the crowd was so great and the movement so slow that when at last they got near the sacred altars before the Erechtheum, the ceremonies were over and the air was already filled with smoke and the smell of roasting meat.

It was late afternoon before the feasting was over, and, meanwhile, the entire hill-top of the Acropolis was covered with moving crowds. As a part of the festival, there were all sorts of games and side shows. Dion and Daphne were so busy watching sword-swallowers, and tumblers, and men performing all sorts of strange and wonderful tricks, they almost forgot entirely the Gorgon's head with the snaky locks, which the Stranger had told them about, and which Dion so much wished to see. Daphne was the first to remember it.

"I'm going to see the new temple that Pericles is building over there. Don't you want to see it, too?" said Melas to the Twins. "Where?" said Dion. Melas pointed to a great heap of marble blocks toward the southern side of the Acropolis. It was then that Daphne thought about the statue.

"Dion wants to see the Gorgon's head," she said.

"Well, then," answered Melas, "hurry up about it, for it is getting late and we must soon be starting for your uncle's house."

The two children trotted away toward the great bronze statue near the entrance without another word, and it was not until they were quite out of sight that Melas remembered he had not told them where to meet him.

"I shall find them by the statue anyway," he said to himself, and went on examining the foundations of the Parthenon.

Meanwhile the children ran round to the front of the statue and gazed up at the breastplate of the Goddess, upon which Phidias had carved the Gorgon's head. There it was with its staring eyes and twisting locks, looking right down at them.

"Ugh! I don't like it a bit better than I thought I should," said Daphne, covering her eyes. "It's worse than eels."

"I'd rather see the man swallowing swords any day," answered Dion. "Let's

go and see if we can't find him again," and off they went toward a crowd of people gathered about a little booth beyond the Erechtheum.

It was not until they had seen him swallow swords twice and eat fire once, and the conjurer had begun to pack his things to go away that the Twins thought at all about time. When at last they woke up to the fact that the sun was setting behind the purple hills, and looked about them, there were very few people left on the Acropolis, and their Father was nowhere to be seen. The two children ran as fast as they could go to the place where the Parthenon was building, but there was no one there. Even the workmen had gone. Then they ran back and looked down the long incline up which the procession had come in the morning, but Melas was not to be seen. The Twins returned to the statue of Athena, but no one awaited them there. The Gorgon's head looked down at them with its dreadful staring eyes, and Daphne thought she saw one of the snaky locks move.

"Oh, let's run," she cried.

"Where?" asked Dion.

"I don't know," said Daphne. "Anywhere away from here! Let's go back to the Erechtheum. Perhaps Father will be there looking for us."

They went all round the old temple, which was partly in ruins, and when they found no trace of their Father, sat down miserably upon the steps of the great porch of the Maidens on the southern side. It was called the Porch of the Maidens because, instead of columns of marble, statues of beautiful maidens supported the roof. Daphne looked up at them.

"They look strong, like Mother," she said. "It doesn't seem quite so lonesome here with them. Maybe we shall have to stay here all night."

"Don't you think we could find Uncle Phaon's house by ourselves?" asked Dion.

"Oh," cried Daphne, shuddering, "never! We couldn't even by daylight, and now it is almost dark."

"Anyway," said Dion, "we're safer being lost here than anywhere else in Athens. It's where the Gods live. Maybe they'll take care of us."

"We might sacrifice something on an altar," said Daphne, "and pray, the way Father does."

"We haven't a thing to sacrifice," answered Dion. "We haven't anything to eat even for ourselves."

They were so tired and hungry and discouraged by this time that they didn't say another word. They just sat still in the gathering darkness, and wished with all their hearts that they had never come to Athens at all.

They were startled by hearing footsteps above them on the porch. The

stone balustrade was so high, and the children were crouched so far below it near the ground, that they could not be seen by people above unless they should lean over the balustrade and look down. The twins snuggled closer together in the darkness and kept very still. Suddenly they heard voices above them; there were two men on the porch talking together in low tones. One was the voice of Lampon the priest; the children both recognized it at once.

"Look over there," it was saying. "Pericles is building new temples in Athens, to the dishonor and neglect of the oldest and most sacred of all. Pericles does not fear the Gods, even though they have raised him to his proud position. He is a traitor to our holy office, and I hate him."

"You speak strongly," said the other voice.

"It isn't only that he neglects the old temples and refuses to restore them, but he actually builds a new one before our eyes on this holy hill," went on the voice of Lampon. "It is not only an impiety in itself, but an affront to you and your holy office. I myself saw his scorn and indifference this very day. I was called to his house by his pious wife to see a prodigy. A ram was brought from his country estate that had but one horn,--a marvel, truly!"

"How did you read the portent?" asked the other voice.

"As favorable to him, of course," answered Lampon. "What else could I do with Pericles himself watching me, and with that old fox of an Anaxagoras by his side?"

"The Gods punish people who do not believe in them," said the other voice, "and we are the priests of the Gods. Should we not do all we can to bring such wicked men to justice?"

"Yes, but," said Lampon, "the people adore Pericles. They would not believe evil of him. We must act carefully, lest we ourselves receive the blow that we aim at him."

"I have found out that he went to the boat-race at the Piraeus this afternoon," answered the voice of the other priest, "and after that he goes to a banquet at the house of the rich Hipponicus, and will return late to his home. If we could waylay him and make him angry, he might say something blasphemous to us, not knowing we were priests. He might even offer us violence! Disrespect to a priest is disrespect to the Gods, and no man in Athens, not even Pericles, can insult the representatives of the Gods and live."

"A good idea, truly, and worthy of the priest of Erechtheus," said the voice of Lampon.

"We will doff our priestly robes and appear as men of the people. Pericles must not suspect who we are, or of course he will be too clever to allow himself to speak the insults we know only too well he would like to offer us as priests. We can each be witness for the other; and he

cannot deny our report."

If Daphne had not sneezed just at this moment, everything that happened after that would almost surely have been quite different. But she did sneeze! The air was damp and chill, she was sitting on a cold stone step, and a loud "kerchoo" suddenly startled the two plotters on the porch. The children were so frightened they could not move, but they rolled up their eyes, and over the edge of the balustrade they saw two shadowy heads looking down at them.

"Who's there?" said the voice of Lampon.

The children were too frightened to answer.

"Bring a torch," cried the voice of the other priest, and soon the two heads were again hanging over the balustrade and a torch in the hand of Lampon threw light on the upturned faces of the Twins.

"Who are you?" said the priest of the Erechtheum, "and what are you doing here at this hour, you miserable little spies?"

"Oh, please, we aren't spies at all," cried Dion. He didn't know what a spy was, but he thought it safe to say he wasn't one. "We are lost."

"Come up here at once." It was Lampon who spoke.

The children, half dead with terror, went round to the other side of the porch, climbed the steps to the entrance, and stood trembling before the priests. Lampon lifted his torch and looked at them carefully.

"Didn't I see you this morning at the house of Pericles?" he asked sternly. The Twins nodded.

"Who sent you here?" he asked.

"Nobody sent us. We're lost," cried poor Daphne.

"Humph!" said the other priest. "That's a likely story."

"Did you hear what we were talking about?" asked Lampon. He took Dion by the shoulder, and as he did not answer at once, shook him.

"Come, yes or no," he said.

"Ye-e-es," stammered Dion.

The two priests looked at each other, and Lampon said: "They are the children of the farmer who brought the lamb to Pericles. They live on his farm."

"It will be a long time before they see the farm again," answered the other shortly. "They say they are lost. Very well, we will see to it that those words are made true. What do you say to shipping them to Africa?"

They would make a pretty pair of slaves, and a ship sails for Alexandria to-morrow. It can easily be arranged. I know the captain."

"A good idea!" said Lampon. "Since these children are in a sense wards of Pericles, they are for that reason the more likely to be enemies of the Gods. It would be an act of piety to send them where they could do no harm by betraying the secrets of the temple."

The children were speechless with fright. Their two captors pushed them roughly before them into the temple and drove them through the great gloomy interior, lighted only by a few torches, to a small closet-like room somewhere in the rear. As they walked, huge black shadows cast by the torch of Lampon danced grotesquely before them. At the closet the two priests stopped to unlock the door.

"Here is a safe harbor for you for the night," said Lampon, as he pushed the children into the closet. "To-morrow we may find a yet safer place for you," and with these words he locked them in.

The children were so exhausted by hunger and fright that, even though they were Spartans, they sat down on the cold stone floor and wept in each other's arms.

"Oh, Mother, Mother," sobbed Daphne, "why did we ever leave you?"

"Don't you remember," said Dion, struggling with his tears, "that the signs were favorable? It must be all right somehow, for the word Mother heard was 'Go.'"

"If I only hadn't sneezed!" sobbed Daphne.

"But a sneeze is always a good sign," said Dion.

"Well, anyway," said Daphne bravely, though her voice shook and her teeth chattered, "crying won't do any good. Let's feel around and see if there is anything in this room."

It was dark, except for a gray patch of dim light from a window high up in the wall. Dion and Daphne kept close together and went carefully round the room, feeling the wall with their hands. Dion stumbled against something. It was a chest where the priests' robes were kept.

"Do you suppose we could move it?" whispered Daphne. "If we could, maybe we could look out of the window and see where we are."

They both got on the same side of it and pushed with all their strength. The chest moved a little and made a horrible screeching sound on the stone floor.

"Sh-sh-sh," whispered Daphne, as if the chest could hear. They held their breath to listen for footsteps. There was no sound outside. They waited a little while and pushed again. Again the chest screeched, and again they stopped to listen. After many such efforts it was finally moved under

the window, and the two sprang up on the top of it to look out. By standing on tiptoe they could just see over the sill. There was no glass, for there was no window-glass anywhere at that time, and the cool night air blew in on their faces. The Acropolis was bathed in moonlight. There was no sound outside, and no one in sight anywhere. Apparently the world was asleep. Suddenly the stillness was broken by the hoot of an owl, and they could see the great bird flying toward them.

"It's Athena's own bird," whispered Dion, "and it's flying from the east. That means good luck. Oh, maybe we can get away from this dreadful place after all!"

"Let's pray to Athena," quavered Daphne. "We can't sacrifice, but maybe she'll hear us just the same."

The two little prisoners spread their hands toward the sky, and Dion whispered, "Help us, O Athena, just the way you helped Perseus kill the Gorgon."

"Give us wisdom to get out of this place and to save Pericles from these wicked men," added Daphne.

"Sh-sh," whispered Dion, "they're priests."

"They are wicked, anyway, whatever they are, to want to kill Pericles," said Daphne stoutly. Then she added: "Maybe that's why we're here! Maybe we could warn him about the priests if we could just get out. Anyway, we're Spartans, and we've got to stop crying and do our best."

Dion put his hands on the window-sill and gave a jump.

"I believe I could get up here if you'd give me a boost," he said.

"But how shall I get up?" asked Daphne. "There'll be nobody to boost me."

"I'll pull you," said Dion.

"You might fall out backwards, or fall in head first doing it," said Daphne.

"Let's try, anyway," said Dion.

Daphne boosted, and Dion climbed, and in another minute he was sitting on the window-sill with one foot hanging down outside and the other firmly braced against the side of the window. He held on with his left hand and, leaning over, was able with his right to clasp Daphne. She hooked her left arm on his, put her hand on the sill and leaped. The next instant she was lying on her stomach over the sill, and Dion was helping her to a sitting position.

"It isn't so very far to drop," whispered Dion. "I've dropped from the balustrade into the court lots of times at home."

"All right," said Daphne, "You drop first, and I'll follow."

Dion turned, stuck his head out as far as possible, and looked in every direction. Then he let himself down from the sill, hung to it for a moment by his hands, and dropped like a cat to the ground. He flattened himself against the wall of the temple, and in another moment Daphne was safe beside him.

"Now," whispered Dion, "we'll run like everything around behind the temple to the statue of Athena."

Hand in hand through the moonlight they sped, and were soon in the shadow of the great bronze statue.

"Let's wait here a minute and look around," whispered Dion.

They crouched down in the shadow and looked back. Their hearts almost stopped beating when they saw two cloaked figures emerge from the temple, and they recognized Lampon and the priest of the Erechthcum. The two men passed so near the statue that the children could plainly hear their voices, though they spoke in low tones.

"We will wait at the head of the street of the Amphorae," they heard Lampon say. "He is sure to pass that way. It will relieve my tongue to tell him some things in the guise of a common ruffian which I could not say as a priest."

"You did well to recognize those brats," said the priest of the Erechtheum. "They might have upset all our plans if we had not kept them safe."

The two brats behind the statue shook their fists at the retreating figures. They waited until the sound of footsteps had died away, and then they made a quick dash from the shadow and flew down the incline up which the procession had come in the morning. In a moment they were at the bottom. They could just see the dark figures of the priests disappearing toward the north. The children shrank back again into the shadow.

"What shall we do next?" said Daphne. "We don't know our way anywhere at all. We don't even know where our uncle lives."

"What was the name of that rich man at whose house they said Pericles was going to the banquet?" asked Dion, with a sudden inspiration.

"Oh, dear," said Daphne, "I can't think. Let me see. Hip---Hip--"

"Ponicus," finished Dion, "that's it! Surely any Athenian would know where a rich man like Hipponicus lives. We must just go along until we meet some one we can ask."

"Suppose we should meet Lampon!" shuddered Daphne.

"We shan't," said Dion; "they've gone off that way. They are going to the street of the Amphorae. We should recognize that street. It has the long row of vases, don't you remember? We went through it this morning."

"If we can find the house of Hipponicus and warn Pericles about the priests, I'm sure he'll take care of us," said Daphne.

Encouraged by this thought, the two children passed boldly out of the shadow and ran westward. They passed a few people, but for the most part, the street was deserted, and they met no one they dared speak to. At last they came to the city wall and a gate.

"Now what shall we do?" murmured Daphne. "We can't go any farther this way."

"Why, I know this place," Dion whispered joyfully. "It's the gate that opens into the paved road to the Piraeus. It's the very gate we came through this morning! The luck is surely with us now."

"Let's stay here and speak to the first person that comes along," said Daphne. "I'm sure it will be the right one."

The two children waited with beating hearts. A tall figure now appeared walking toward the gate, followed by a slave carrying a torch. As the man drew near, the children went boldly out to meet him.

"Can you tell us the way to the house of Hipponicus?" asked Dion politely.

The man stopped, and the slave held the torch so his master could see the faces of the children.

"By all the Gods," said the man, "what are you children doing out here at this time of the night?"

"The Stranger! Anaxagoras!" cried Daphne. "Oh, I knew Athena would help us!" and the two children threw themselves into his arms, so great was their relief and joy.

They told him the whole story of their adventure on the Acropolis and why they wanted to find the house of Hipponicus.

"Well," said Anaxagoras, when they had finished, "I live in the Piraeus. I was on my way home, but now I shall go with you to the house of Hipponicus, and you shall tell your story to Pericles himself."

VII

HOME AGAIN

Under the guidance and protection of Anaxagoras and the slave, the children were soon ushered into the court of the richest house in Athens, and then Anaxagoras sent a message to Pericles, who was dining with a group of men in a large room opening off the court. When the slave opened the door of the banquet-room, the children caught a glimpse of men reclining on couches, with wreaths about their heads, and heard for an instant the sound of laughter and gay voices. The smell of food came also, and the Twins sniffed the delicious odor hungrily. Soon Pericles appeared, wearing a wreath upon his brow, and, as Daphne thought, looking more like a God than ever. Anaxagoras told him the story which the Twins had told to him.

"A very neat plot! Is it not?" said Pericles gravely, when Anaxagoras had finished.

"They said something about you too," said Daphne, lifting her eyes to Anaxagoras.

"Indeed!" said Anaxagoras. "So I am in it, too! What did they say?"

"They said you were an old fox," said Daphne. The two men laughed.

"I trust I may live up to their opinion of me," said Anaxagoras.

Then Pericles looked at the children and laid his hand gently upon their tousled heads.

"So you ran alone through Athens at night to warn me, did you?" he said. "And you have been in great danger for my sake? I shall know how to deal with those two pious old serpents of the Acropolis. Thanks to you, I shall not fall into their coils. And Pericles does not forget an obligation. Now, my little Spartans," he added, tipping up their chins and looking at their pale and pinched faces, "it's time you had something to eat!"

He clapped his hands and a slave appeared. "Say to Hipponicus that two friends of Pericles are in the court, and he begs that they may be served there with the best the house affords."

The slave disappeared and soon returned bringing such a feast as the Twins had never tasted in their whole lives before. Pericles waited, talking quietly with Anaxagoras, until their hunger was partly appeased, and then he spoke to them again.

"Now, my brave Spartans," he said, "since you have been so considerate of my safety, it is well that I should look after yours. Have you any idea where your Father may be found? He is probably searching the town for you."

"We were to spend the night at the house of my Uncle Phaon, the stone-cutter," said Dion, "but we don't know where he lives."

"Phaon," said Pericles, stroking his beard. "Is he not a workman in the shop of Phidias the sculptor? He has a stone-cutter of that name, and, now I think of it, he is called Phaon the Spartan."

"That must be my uncle," said Dion, "but I don't know where he lives. I have never been to Athens before, and Uncle Phaon does not come to the farm."

"We can find out from Phidias," said Anaxagoras, and, turning to his slave, he said, "Run quickly to the house of Phidias and say to him that Pericles the Archon wishes to know where to find the house of Phaon the stone-cutter."

The slave sped away and returned in a short time with the message that Phaon lived near the northwest gate. "And I know the way there," added the slave.

"Very well," said Anaxagoras. "We will take these children there. Then I will await you at your house, Pericles, for I wish to hear the end of the story, and to know how you deal with those two old traitors."

"Now that I know their purpose," said Pericles, "it is easy to defeat it! I shall return no word to their abuse. When I reach my house, I shall politely offer my assailant the escort of my slave, to light him home with his torch."

Anaxagoras laughed heartily.

"Good," he cried, "and humorous as well. A torch to light up their evil faces is the last thing in the world they would wish to have. You could not devise a more perfect plan to foil their wicked schemes."

"I wish all plots might be as easily frustrated," said Pericles gravely. Then, turning to the children, he added kindly: "You have nothing further to fear. My good friend Anaxagoras and his slave will see you safely to your uncle's house, and he will surely know where to find your Father."

"You won't let Lampon catch us and sell us for slaves, will you?" begged Daphne, shuddering. "They said they would sell us in Alexandria."

Pericles' brow darkened. "They threatened that, did they?" he exclaimed. "The wretches shall not lay a finger on you! Pericles the Archon has said it. And now you must hurry away. Your Father will be torn with anxiety until he sees you again. To-morrow morning I shall send a messenger to your uncle's house with a package for you, which you must not open until you are safe at home again. And when you grow up to be strong, brave men, I shall expect you to be generals in the army of Athens at the very least."

"I can't grow up to be a strong, brave man," said Daphne in a very small voice. "I wish I could. But I'm a girl."

"A girl!" cried Pericles in amazement, "and so brave! Surely then you

will at least be the mother of heroes some time. But after this stay more quietly at home, my child. Women should have no history." And he disappeared through the door into the banquet-hall.

When the Twins, accompanied by Anaxagoras and the slave, finally reached the house of their uncle, they found the door open and people hurrying excitedly to and fro, carrying torches in their hands. In the court of the house stood Melas, talking with Phaon and his wife.

"I have searched every nook and cranny of the Acropolis," Melas was saying. "I do not see how they could have escaped me."

"It's a punishment of the Gods," said the wife of Phaon. "You should not have let Daphne run the streets like a boy. It's against nature. No decent Athenian girl would be allowed to. I never put my nose out of my Mother's house except on the days of women's festivals until I was married."

"But, my dear," said Phaon mildly, "you forget the Spartans are different."

"I should say they were!" snapped the wife of Phaon, "and now they may see what comes of it. It's my opinion these wild children have fallen off the cliffs on the north side of the Acropolis."

Melas shuddered, sank down upon a stool, and hid his face. Just at that moment there was a sudden rush of feet behind him and he felt four arms flung about his neck. Spartan though he was, Melas trembled, and his eyes were wet as he clasped his children in his arms, Anaxagoras stood in the doorway a moment smiling at the happy group, and then gently slipped away without waiting for any thanks.

Early the next morning a basket addressed to the "brave children of Melas the Spartan, from Pericles the Archon," was delivered by a slave at the door of Phaon. The Twins had been eagerly expecting it, and when it arrived they were no less eager to start for home, since Pericles had told them not to open it until they were under their own roof once more. Their aunt, the wife of Phaon, was filled with curiosity to know the contents. Moreover, since she had learned the whole story of the night before and knew that the children had won the favor and were now under the avowed protection of Pericles, her respect for them and for Spartans in general had greatly increased.

"Let us see what gifts the great Pericles has sent you!" she cried, when the package came.

"No, no," said Daphne hastily. "He said we should not open it until we got home."

"Very well, then," said the wife of Phaon, sulkily, "only then I shall never see what's in it."

"Well," said Daphne piously, "you remember about Pandora, don't you? I

wouldn't dare open it until the time comes!"

To this the aunt could make no reply, Melas, too, had no wish to linger in Athens after the experience of the day before. The children were in terror of meeting Lampon, and Melas himself felt it would be a great load off his mind to get them safely back to their quiet house on Salamis once more and into their Mother's care. So they bade Phaon and his wife good-bye and started before noon for the Piræus.

At the dock they found the boat ready for its return journey across the bay. Nearby was the large black hull of an African ship, bound for Alexandria. Dion pointed to it.

"Suppose we were on that this minute," he said to Daphne, and Daphne covered her eyes and shook with horror at the mere thought of it.

It was nearly night when the three weary wanderers climbed the last hill and turned from the roadway into the path which led to the old farm-house. Lydia was standing in the doorway with Chloe behind her, smiling, and Argos came bounding out to meet them, wagging his tail and barking for joy.

It was a happy party that gathered around the hearth fire that night. Lydia had prepared a wonderful feast to greet the travelers. There were roast chicken, and sausages too, and goat's milk, and figs. They opened the basket by fire-light, and if all the Christmases of your whole life had been rolled into one, it couldn't have been more wonderful to you than the gifts of Pericles were to Dion and Daphne. There was a soft robe of scarlet for each of them, with golden clasps to fasten it. There were a purse of gold coins and two beautiful parchment books--all written by hand, for of course there were no printed books in those days. There were gifts for their Father and Mother, too, and, best of all, a letter written with Pericles' own hand and addressed to "Euripides the Poet, of Salamis." With it came a note to Melas, saying he might read the letter, as he wished him to know its contents. This was the letter:--

"Pericles the Archon to Euripides the Poet, Greetings.

"The bearers of this letter are friends of mine who have rendered me a great service. By their timely warning I was enabled to foil a plot to make me appear to the public as an enemy of the Gods. As sufficient recompense I commend them to your friendship. No greater service can be rendered Athens than to raise up noble and patriotic defenders. To this end I commit these children to your guidance, the girl no less than the boy. Give them, I beg, the benefit of your wisdom, since they have proven themselves worthy of such honor, and Athens shall one day thank you for this service."

And so it was that Dion and Daphne, the Spartans, not only mastered the learning of their time, but also became the friends of Pericles the Athenian and of Euripides the Poet, and perhaps now wander with them in the Elysian Fields.

* * * * *

A study period for the working out of the pronunciation of the more difficult names and words will be the only preparation for reading The Spartan Twins, needed by the average fifth grade class. The story can usually be read at sight in the sixth grade.

It will admirably supplement the study of Greek History in these grades. The essential thing is for the teacher to provide the proper background for the story. The value in the history of the Greeks lies in the lessons of bravery and of love of country that it brings us, and in the inspiration and beauty of the myths, dramas, poems, and orations, the statues and temples that survive to our time. The fundamental aim in its study in the fifth and sixth grades is not so much to store the child's mind with details as to make such impressions as will guide him to a later appreciation of why we remember the Greeks, and what we have learned from them.

In these days of a "new internationalism," the teacher's most immediate duty is to bring her pupils to a realization of what Americanism and democracy mean, and that each is a development from the past. To do this, she should explain that before there were immigrants, there were discoverers and colonists, from Spain, England, and France; and that these countries had their origin in colonies from Rome, herself a colony from Greece. The teacher should explain that the spirit in these ancient cities that inspired colonization, trade, and empire was the inherent and ineradicable desire of men, first, for the opportunity of ruling themselves, and then to establish bonds of union against foreign aggression. Children will then perceive that the ancient Greeks were men quite like ourselves; and that they began the ways of government which we have, and which our forefathers brought to America. So much for what we learned from the Greeks.

As to why we remember them, let the teacher recall the stories already familiar through supplementary reading in literature, the Golden Fleece, Hercules, the Siege of Troy, the Wanderings of Ulysses; let her point out Greek cities which still exist, Athens, Marseilles, Alexandria, Constantinople; let her tell the stories of Marathon, of Leonidas and Thermopylae, and of Salamis; let her show pictures of Athens, the most splendid city of ancient Greece, of the Acropolis, the Parthenon, the Venus of Milo, the Hermes of Praxiteles, the Discus Thrower, and so on.

This book affords opportunity to contrast the way in which children were brought up in Sparta with the way in which they were brought up in Athens. The ideals of these two city-states also may be contrasted. Although cities might have separate interests, it should be shown that throughout Greece there were interests in common, of which the people were reminded through the Olympic games.

The teacher is referred to the following volumes for further assistance in re-creating the atmosphere of ancient Greece:--

Tappan's The Story of the Greek People, Old World Hero Stories, and

Our European Ancestors; Hawthorne's Wonder-Book and Tanglewood Tales; Peabody's Old Creek Folk Stories; Bryant's translation of the Odyssey and of the Iliad; Palmer's translation of the Odyssey; Hopkinson's Greek Leaders; Plutarch's Alexander the Great; Marden's Greece and the Aegean Islands; Hurl's Greek Sculpture and How to Show Pictures to Children; Masterpieces of Greek Literature.

Like all the other Volumes in the "Twins Series," The Spartan Twins furnishes ample subjects for dramatization. The unique illustrations should be of assistance, and other illustrations in most of the books referred to above also will help to show scenery, costumes, furniture, and utensils.

The story will suggest many topics for class discussion, and in addition such questions as the following will help the pupils to visualize the Greece of the past:--

1. Why would ancient Greece have been a pleasant country to live in?
2. How would it affect your home town if it were shut off from all others?
3. Judging from the Greek stories, what sort of men did they regard as heroes? What sort of men do we regard as heroes to-day?
4. In the stories of gods and heroes, are there scenes that would make good pictures?
5. Imagine you are Pericles, and make a speech telling the Athenians why they ought to beautify their city.
6. What could be done to beautify the place in which you live?
7. Which one of the Greeks or their heroes do you regard as the greatest man? Why?
8. What was good and what was not good in the training of the Spartan boys?
9. In what respects was the training of the Athenian boys better?
10. How do the ideas of one child become known to other children? How do the ideas of one country become known to other countries?
11. Had the Greeks good reasons for emigrating?
12. Imagine that you are an ancient Greek and tell why you became a colonist.

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