

HELEN AND APHRODITE

THREE suns had set since that momentous hour
When Paris roamed the slopes of Ida's mount,
And seeking shelter from the noonday heat,
Had sunk to slumber in a sylvan bower.
Here Aphrodite and Athene met,
With Hera, lovely in her rainbow hues.
And each had bared her pure white limbs, each charm
From golden head, and snow-white breasts, to where
Her feet, like ivory, nestled in the ferns.
And Paris, waking from his blissful dreams
Drank in the beauty of those maidens three
Till every pulse was quickened, and his frame
Was thrilled with passion, all unknown before.
Then Aphrodite softly spoke, and said;
"Since by the wisdom of the gods' decree
To you 'tis given to crown with beauty's crown
The fairest goddess of the present three;
Now give the prize to me, and for thy bride
Shalt be the fairest maid this world doth know."
Then Hera in voluptuous beauty posed
Before the youth, and spake in liquid tones,
"The fruit of discord by the goddess thrown
To me as Queen among the queens, belongs;
Place in my hands the golden fruit, and thou,
A kingdom, and its wealth, shalt own, and sway."
Next came Athene, in her strength divine,
Whose arm the thunders from the heavens can hurl;
Whose ear to gentle love inclines; who weaves
The arts of warfare in the weft of peace.