

deep-seated than he had imagined. For several moments he sat in silence, as though puzzling out a difficult problem. Then his brow cleared, and he smiled, his own, cheery smile.

"Hilary, pack your boxes, and get ready to go up to London with me on Monday week. If you are seventeen, you are old enough to pay visits, and we will stay for a fortnight with my old friend, Miss Carr, in Kensington. She is a clever woman, and I will talk to her and see what can be done. I can't work miracles, but I will do what I can

to please you. May I be allowed to have another cup of tea, Miss Seventeen?"

"Poor, dear, old father! Don't look so subdued. You may have a dozen if you like. Monday next! How lovely! You are the dearest father in all the world!"

Mr. Bertrand shrugged his shoulders. "When I give you your own way," he said drily. "Pass the cake, Lettice. If I have three grown-up daughters on my hands I must keep up my strength."

Lettice and Norah had a little conver-

sation on the stairs as they went upstairs to change their dresses for dinner.

"It's very nice for Hilary going up to London, but it doesn't do us any good. When is something going to happen for us?"

"I suppose we shall have to wait for our turn," sighed Lettice dolefully; but that very evening an unexpected excitement took place, though the Mouse's prophecy was fulfilled, inasmuch as it could hardly be called an incident of a cheerful nature.

(To be continued.)

HERCULES.

"Oh, it was grand to hear Of how he went, the champion of his race Mighty in war, mighty in love, now bent To more than human tasks, now lapt in ease, Now suffering, now enjoying. Strong vast soul, Tuned to heroic deeds, and set on high Above the range of common petty sins Too high to mate with an unequal soul Too full of striving for contented days."

Epic of Hades.

MANY years ago, how many hardly matters now, the writer of this article heard Ruskin lecture on the myths of the Greek legends.

That lecture was a revelation; the old mythological character so familiar in school books came forward dressed in new fashion and beauty; fables read in other and stranger lights revealed new wisdom; under the ideal lurked the real.

What depths of meaning lay hidden and many-folded under those quaint legends.

The lapse of time that has passed since then has hindered full recollection, but one sentence still stands out clearly in my memory: "Every time you open your window to the fresh morning air you are admitting Pallas Athéné;" and in Ruskin's skilful word-painting the cold, wise daughter of Zeus was presented to us under a new aspect.

The study of mythology to a thoughtful mind is pregnant with the deepest interest, we can drink deep draughts of wisdom out of these classic wells, nay, more, some of the truest lessons of humanity can be learned from those old fables.

Who amongst the youngest of us has not heard of Hercules, the most celebrated of all the heroes of antiquity? Hercules son of Zeus (Jupiter), the strong and much-enduring man whose mighty labours were rewarded by immortality. Hercules or Heracles as he is called by the Greeks is the hero of heroes; he is the impersonation of strength and energy, his life is the life of effort; he is the brave, strong, loving servant of humanity, the leveller of abuses, the champion against evil, the destroyer of monsters. What fairy story is so interesting as the life of this Greek hero; even in his cradle the wondrous babe strangles the serpent with his infant hands. In his eighteenth year while watching his father's oxen he slays the huge Nemean lion, and from this time his life is one recital of marvellous exploits.

There is a marble at Naples that represents him slaying the Hydra; this is one of the twelve labours that he undertook for Eurystheus, he was his servant for twelve years, after which he was to become immortal.

The Lernean hydra was a monster with nine heads that ravaged the country of Lerne near Argos, and dwelt in a swamp near the well of Amymone. Its middle head was immortal. A prodigious fight ensued. Hercules

struck off its heads with the club that he had cut for himself, but alas in the place of each head he cut off two new ones grew forth each time.

The old myth tells us that he was obliged to have recourse to the assistance of his faithful servant Iolaus, and that together they burnt away the heads of the monster and buried the immortal, never-dying head under a great rock.

What a strange story you say with a half smile, what a monstrous fable! who cares to read about Hercules nowadays!

Wait a moment, there is a lesson to be learned here, there is something to us unutterably pathetic in the picture of this strong but weary man, whose whole life was spent from the cradle to the funeral pyre in overcoming difficulties, who sinned but repented, who had brief moods of madness, who suffered and worked and lived and loved and did mighty deeds of good; Hercules the patient toiler, the destroyer of monsters!

What, shall the fearless arm and strong club teach us nothing? Has girlhood no difficult toils,

"Labours endured and hand-fought fights with ill
Now vanquished now triumphant,"

is there no hydra, no misshapen growth of evil to encounter and overcome?

Hercules was young and ardent, but for a long time his efforts were vain; the strong arm, the thick club availed nothing; for every severed head sprang up two others; the monster must be burned, utterly destroyed, not mutilated; the living head buried under a rock.

The hydra is the embodiment of evil, Hercules is the impersonation of youth.

In the old mythologies the heroes of antiquity are represented in perpetual combat; impossible tasks are appointed, impossible actions achieved; to do and to suffer is the aim and object of their life; to win golden fruit, to slay monsters, to cleanse the foul abuses of the past, is the work of the young Hercules.

And herein lies a noble lesson.

The Book of books teaches us that life is a battleground, a perpetual combat from the cradle to the grave; the infant Hercules strangled the serpent, but in the flush of his youth the Nemean lion met him, later on the monster hydra towered in his path.

So do evil habits stretch their misshapen heads before our eyes in every life, in yours and mine, dear girls, is the old story of Hercules and the hydra enacted.

We overcome sloth, we rise perhaps a little earlier than our wont that our devotions may be less hurried, or some necessary work be done, we do it unwillingly but still we achieve it; that is striking off one of the heads of the hydra.

Perhaps sloth or want of energy is our besetting sin; conscience tells us this, and the grace of God in our hearts leads us to a

fervent resolve to wage war against this enemy of our peace.

We arm ourselves with our club, a very tough and weird resolution, we will perform such and such a task, we say there shall be no more idleness, no more half-hearted pretence at work.

Ah, take care! Hercules had to summon assistance; the head may be struck off, the task done, but what if two more heads, pride and self-pleasing, spring up in its place; the lesson may be learned, the work done, but if we have relied on ourselves, if we have inconvenienced others in our mode of doing it, it will be the old story of the hydra again.

There is one specious form of temptation common to girls of an imaginative and impulsive temperament, the longing to do something great—something out of the common order of things. Dickens has embodied this idea very cleverly in his never-to-be-forgotten character of Mrs. Jellaby, whose eyes were ever directed to Africa and missions, while her husband and children were neglected at home.

These sort of star-gazing, far-looking natures would willingly lead a crusade to the end of the earth, when perhaps their mission is a sick mother or a tiresome younger sister at home; they would rather pick lint for hospitals than mend their own stockings. There is a quaint old poem called "Doe the nexte thyng" that touches finely on this thought and seems to clear up doubt, for if we "do the next thing" we shall surely do our duty.

Yes dear girls,

"Do it immediately
Do it with prayer,
Do it reliantly
Casting all care,
Do it with reverence
Tracing His Hand
Who hath placed it before thee
With earnest command,
Stayed on omnipotence
Safe 'neath His wing
Secure all resulting
Do the next thing."

Little duties lovingly undertaken, petty offences patiently borne, kind words blunting the edge of hasty ones, a gentle welcome to the weary father and mother at the end of a toilsome day; cheerfulness cultivated as a duty and selfish gloom repelled as an enemy, tiny seeds of daily virtue dropped broadcast into the soil of life; these seem little things, but as we do them we are burning out and reducing to ashes one of the many heads of the hydra, for as exercise braces the muscles so effort strengthens the moral fibres of our nature and gives us force for the Herculean labour of our lives, the overcoming our bad habits and the evil habits and the evil tendencies of our own natures.

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