

These twin brothers were Giants, but they did not look like the monsters of old. They were straight of form and noble of face. Homer says they were

Tallest of all that the life-giving earth with her bread ever nourished,

Handsomest too, after peerless Orion alone.

Virgil speaks chiefly of their mad ambition. He says they were

Twins, huge-bodied, who strove with their hands to destroy the high heavens,

Strove to push Jupiter down from his kingdom supernal.

They were the sons of Iphimedia, some say; others, of Canace. At all events, whoever their mother was, their father was certainly Poseidon, although they went generally by the name of the Aloadae, the sons of Aloeus, their mother's husband.

They were still very young when they set about proving that they were the gods' superiors. They imprisoned Ares, bound him with chains of brass and shut him up. The Olympians were reluctant to try to free him by force. They sent the cunning Hermes to his assistance, who contrived stealthily by night to get him out of his prison. Then the two arrogant youths dared still more. They threatened that they would pile Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa and scale the heights of heaven, as the Giants of old had piled Ossa on Pelion. This passed the endurance of the immortals, and Zeus got ready his thunderbolt to strike them. But before he hurled it Poseidon came begging him to spare them and promising to keep them in order. Zeus agreed and Poseidon was as good as his word. The twins stopped warring against heaven and Poseidon felt pleased with himself, but the fact was that the two had turned to other plans which interested them more.

Otus thought it would be an excellent adventure to carry Hera off, and Ephialtes was in love with Artemis, or thought he was. In truth the two brothers cared only for each other. Theirs was a great devotion. They drew lots to decide which should first seize his lady, and fortune favored Ephialtes. They sought Artemis everywhere over the hills and in the woods, but when at last they caught sight of her she was on the seashore, making directly for the sea. She knew their evil purpose and she knew too how she would punish them. They sprang after her, but she kept straight on over the sea. All of Poseidon's sons had the same power: they could run dry-shod on the sea as on the land, so the two followed her with no

trouble. She led them to the wooded island of Naxos, and there, when they had all but caught up with her, she disappeared. They saw instead a most lovely milk-white hind springing into the forest. At the sight they forgot the goddess and turned in pursuit of the beautiful creature. They lost her in the thick woods and they separated in order to double the chance of finding her. At the same moment each suddenly saw her standing with ears pricked in an open glade, but neither saw that back in the trees just beyond her was his brother. They threw their javelins and the hind vanished. The weapons sped on across the empty glade into the wood and there found their mark. The towering forms of the young hunters crashed to the ground, each pierced by the spear of the other, each slaying and being slain by the only creature he loved.

Such was the vengeance of Artemis.

## DAEDALUS

*Both Ovid and Apollodorus tell this story. Apollodorus lived probably more than a hundred years after Ovid. He is a very pedestrian writer and Ovid is far from that. But in this case I have followed Apollodorus. Ovid's account shows him at his worst, sentimental and exclamatory.*

Daedalus was the architect who had contrived the Labyrinth for the Minotaur in Crete, and who showed Ariadne how Theseus could escape from it.\* When King Minos learned that the Athenians had found their way out, he was convinced that they could have done so only if Daedalus had helped them. Accordingly he imprisoned him and his son Icarus in the Labyrinth, certainly a proof that it was excellently devised since not even the maker of it could discover the exit without a clue. But the great inventor was not at a loss. He told his son,

Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free,

and he made two pairs of wings for them. They put them on and just before they took flight Daedalus warned Icarus to keep a middle course over the sea. If he flew too high the sun might melt the glue and the wings drop off. However, as stories so often show, what elders say youth disregards. As the two flew lightly and without effort away from Crete the delight of

\* See Part Three. Chapter 10.

this new and wonderful power went to the boy's head. He soared exultingly up and up, paying no heed to his father's anguished commands. Then he fell. The wings had come off. He dropped into the sea and the waters closed over him. The afflicted father flew safely to Sicily, where he was received kindly by the King.

Minos was enraged at his escape and determined to find him. He made a cunning plan. He had it proclaimed everywhere that a great reward would be given to whoever could pass a thread through an intricately spiraled shell. Daedalus told the Sicilian king that he could do it. He bored a small hole in the closed end of the shell, fastened a thread to an ant, introduced the ant into the hole, and then closed it. When the ant finally came out at the other end, the thread, of course, was running clear through all the twists and turns. "Only Daedalus would think of that," Minos said, and he came to Sicily to seize him. But the King refused to surrender him, and in the contest Minos was slain.

## PART THREE

*The Great Heroes before the Trojan War*

## 9 Perseus

*This story is on the level of the fairy story. Hermes and Athena act like the fairy godmother in Cinderella. The magical wallet and cap belong to the properties fairy tales abound in everywhere. It is the only myth in which magic plays a decisive part, and it seems to have been a great favorite in Greece. Many poets allude to it. The description of Danaë in the wooden chest was the most famous passage of a famous poem by Simonides of Ceos, a great lyric poet who lived in the sixth century. The entire story is told by both Ovid and Apollodorus. The latter, probably a hundred years later than Ovid, is here the superior of the two. His account is simple and straightforward; Ovid's extremely verbose—for instance, he takes a hundred lines to kill the sea serpent. I have followed Apollodorus, but I have added the fragment from Simonides, and short quotations from other poets, notably Hesiod and Pindar.*

King Acrisius of Argos had only one child, a daughter, Danaë. She was beautiful above all the other women of the land, but this was small comfort to the King for not having a son. He journeyed to Delphi to ask the god if there was any hope that some day he would be the father of a boy. The priestess told him no, and added what was far worse: that his daughter would have a son who would kill him.