

*THE MYRMIDONS*

These were men created from ants on the island of Aegina, in the reign of Aeacus, Achilles' grandfather, and they were Achilles' followers in the Trojan War. Not only were they thrifty and industrious, as one would suppose from their origin, but they were also brave. They were changed into men from ants because of one of Hera's attacks of jealousy. She was angry because Zeus loved Aegina, the maiden for whom the island was named, and whose son, Aeacus, became its king. Hera sent a fearful pestilence which destroyed the people by thousands. It seemed that no one would be left alive. Aeacus climbed to the lofty temple of Zeus and prayed to him, reminding him that he was his son and the son of a woman the god had loved. As he spoke he saw a troop of busy ants. "O Father," he cried, "make of these creatures a people for me, as numerous as they, and fill my empty city." A peal of thunder seemed to answer him and that night he dreamed that he saw the ants being transformed into human shape. At day-break his son Telamon woke him saying that a great host of men was approaching the palace. He went out and saw a multitude, as many as the ants in number, all crying out that they were his faithful subjects. So Aegina was repopulated from an ant hill and its people were called Myrmidons after the ant (*myrmex*) from which they had sprung.

*NISUS AND SCYLLA*

Nisus, King of Megara, had on his head, a purple lock of hair which he had been warned never to cut. The safety of his throne depended upon his preserving it. Minos of Crete laid siege to his city, but Nisus knew that no harm would come to it as long as he had the purple lock. His daughter, Scylla, used to watch Minos from the city wall and she fell madly in love with him. She could think of no way to make him care for her except by taking her father's lock of hair to him and enabling him to conquer the town. She did this; she cut it from her father's head in his sleep and carrying it to Minos she confessed what she had done. He shrank from her in horror and drove her out of his sight. When the city had been conquered and the Cretans launched their ships to sail home, she came rushing to the shore, mad with passion, and leaping into the water seized the rudder of the boat that carried Minos. But at this moment a great eagle swooped down upon her. It was her father, whom the gods had saved by changing him into a bird. In terror she let go her hold, and would have fallen

into the water, but suddenly she too became a bird. Some god had pity on her, traitor though she was, because she had sinned through love.

*ORION*

He was a young man of gigantic stature and great beauty, and a mighty hunter. He fell in love with the daughter of the King of Chios, and for love of her he cleared the island of wild beasts. The spoils of the chase he brought always home to his beloved, whose name is sometimes said to be Aero, sometimes Merope. Her father, Oenopion, agreed to give her to Orion, but he kept putting the marriage off. One day when Orion was drunk he insulted the maiden, and Oenopion appealed to Dionysus to punish him. The god threw him into a deep sleep and Oenopion blinded him. An oracle told him, however, that he would be able to see again if he went to the east and let the rays of the rising sun fall on his eyes. He went as far east as Lemnos and there he recovered his sight. Instantly he started back to Chios to take vengeance on the king, but he had fled and Orion could not find him. He went on to Crete, and lived there as Artemis' huntsman. Nevertheless in the end the goddess killed him. Some say that Dawn, also called Aurora, loved him and that Artemis in jealous anger shot him. Others say that he made Apollo angry and that the god by a trick got his sister to slay him. After his death he was placed in heaven as a constellation, which shows him with a girdle, sword, club and lion's skin.

*THE PLEIADES*

They were the daughters of Atlas, seven in number. Their names were Electra, Maia, Taygete, Alcyone, Merope, Celaeno, Sterope. Orion pursued them but they fled before him and he could never seize any of them. Still he continued to follow them until Zeus, pitying them, placed them in the heavens as stars. But it was said that even there Orion continued his pursuit, always unsuccessful, yet persistent. While they lived on earth one of them, Maia, was the mother of Hermes. Another, Electra, was the mother of Dardanus, the founder of the Trojan race. Although it is agreed that there were seven of them, only six stars are clearly visible. The seventh is invisible except to those who have specially keen sight.