

HERAKLES

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Herakles by George Cabot Lodge

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“ . . . AMPHITRYON, banished from Tiryns, established himself at Thebes. Herakles, brought up in that city and skilful in physical exercises, surpassed all other men in the strength of his body and the greatness of his soul. He was scarcely adolescent when he delivered Thebes [from the tyranny of Erginus and the Minyans], and thus paid his debt of gratitude to his country. . . . The fame of this exploit spread through the whole of Greece, and every one admired it as a prodigy. Creon, the King, himself impressed by the courage of the young man, gave him his daughter Megara in marriage; and, treating him like his own son, confided to him the government of his kingdom. But Eurystheus, King of Argos, jealous of the growth of the power of Herakles, summoned him to appear before him, and ordered him to perform his labours. At first Herakles refused, but Zeus commanded him to obey Eurystheus. Herakles went to Delphi, and, having consulted the oracle, he was told that the Gods ordered him to perform the twelve labours, and that, after their completion, he would receive immortality.

“ On receiving this command, Herakles fell into great distress [of mind] . . . he was seized with a frenzy. . . . Madness took possession of his sick mind . . . in one of his ecstasies of fury, . . . Herakles pierced with arrows the children which he had had by Megara. .

[v]

Having recovered from his madness and become aware of his error, he was greatly afflicted by the excess of his misfortune . . . he remained quietly withdrawn in his house for a long time, avoiding all human society. Time having calmed his grief, Herakles went to Eurystheus, determined to affront every peril [and perform the labours]. . . .

“Zeus kept Prometheus chained for having given fire to mankind, and caused his heart to be devoured by an eagle. Herakles, seeing that Prometheus was punished only for having done good to men, . . . saved the common benefactor.”

DIODORUS SICULUS, IV, 10-11, and 15.

CHARACTERS

HERAKLES

MEGARA, his wife

AMPHITRYON, his father

ALCMENA, his mother

IOLAUS, his nephew

THE THREE SONS OF HERAKLES (in infancy)

THE POET

THE WOMAN

CREON, King of Thebes, father of MEGARA

THE MESSENGER OF EURYSTHEUS

TEIRESIAS

THE PYTHIA, at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

THE PROPHETES at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

PROMETHEUS

also

MEN AND HARLOTS FROM THE TAVERN

THE CHORUS OF RESPONDENTS, in the Temple of Zeus
at Thebes

THE CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS, before the Temple of
Apollo at Delphi

THE CHORUS OF OLD MEN, before the Temple of Hera at
Thebes

also

Guests at the King's feast, Populace, Soldiers, Messen-
gers, Slaves, etc.

FIRST SCENE

The Agora at Thebes. Sunset.

The Agora is empty except for the WOMAN, who is seated on a bench against the wall of a house, and the POET, who stands before her, facing the sunset.