

STORIES OF THE STATUES. PART 1-7

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Stories of the Statues. Part 1-7 by Various

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**STORIES OF THE
STATUES. PART 1-7**



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Stories of the Statues

1. The Venus of Melos.



Newark, N. J.
The Newark Museum Association
1913

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The Most Beautiful Goddess—Venus.

Almost a hundred years ago, workmen were digging up the ground in a cave on the little island of Melos, not far from the coast of Greece, and found this statue, where it had been placed many hundreds of years before.

In that early time the Greeks were very fond of all beautiful things and they carved, often with very great skill, statues of the gods and goddesses they loved and worshipped. They built large and magnificent temples of many-colored marbles in which to place these statues, where they burned incense before them and sacrificed young animals in their honor.

Loving all beauty, it was the goddess of beauty they loved most of all, and they said to each other: "We must carve the most beautiful statue we can for the goddess we love the most." It was this statue among many others, that they then carved.

A French official at Constantinople heard of its great beauty and said: "I must take that statue as a present to my king." He went to Melos, bought it and took it to Paris. The king, Louis XVIII, was pleased at receiving so beautiful a gift. He put it into a museum at Paris, called the Louvre, where his people could see it every day.

There it still stands. Many copies of it have been made in bronze, marble and plaster, so that people all

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over the world can see it—and now we in Newark also.

No one knows who took the statue out of its temple and put it in the cave. It is thought that, at a time when most men in that region came to prize the value of marble as mere stone or as something they could burn to make lime, more than their gods and the beauty that had been carved into statues, some one, who still loved beautiful things, hid this Venus in a cave, that she might not be destroyed or carried away. All this happened over a thousand years ago. The statue is thought to be now about two thousand years old.

Venus is the goddess of love and beauty and the mother of little Cupid. She was born on the crest of a wave. The ocean nymphs at once fell in love with the beautiful baby and took her to their home beneath the waves, where they cared for her tenderly until she grew up.

When she was old enough to leave them and go to Mount Olympus, the home of all the gods, the Nymphs chose a beautiful shell, large enough for her to stand in and called upon Triton and Nereids, servants of Neptune the Sea-god, to draw it over the water to the shore. The wind goddess, Zephyr, blew a gentle breeze to waft her along, and thus she came, not to Mount Olympus, but to the Island of Cyprus.

Every one on the shore bowed down before her great beauty and the dwellers on Cyprus admired her so much that they made sacred to her their cities with their temples and altars and their groves.

She lived for a time on Cyprus, but reached Olympus at last. Here she became the wife of Vulcan, and was always escorted by Cupids and Graces when she walked about.

But after some years she left the home of the gods and came down to earth to show her beauty to mankind. Being the goddess of beauty and love, she gave her aid to all lovers and often sent her little son Cupid to shoot his arrows into the hearts of obstinate youths and maidens to make them fall in love.

Venus had a kind heart and always meant to make people happy, but sometimes she made mistakes. Indeed, she was once so vain that she caused an entire city to be destroyed.

It all came about at a wedding at which Venus and many other gods and goddesses were guests. An ugly goddess, however, had not been invited and, to cause discord among those who were enjoying themselves so much, she threw among them an apple, on which were written the words, "For the fairest."

Of course each goddess thought the apple was meant for her and each tried to pick it up-- and then the trouble began!

All agreed at last that Juno or Minerva or Venus should have it, but no one could say which. It was decided that they must go to a beautiful shepherd named Paris, who tended his flocks on Mt. Ida, and ask him to select the fairest.

The three goddesses set forth, each eager to appear beautiful to the judge. Minerva came in glittering armor and promised the youth great wisdom if she won the prize. Juno, the queen of the gods, put on her royal robes and offered him endless wealth and power if he would award the apple to her. Venus buckled about her the magic belt which made everyone unable to resist the charm of her beauty. She whispered to Paris that if he chose her she would give him a bride as fair as herself. Paris did not consider long. He was overcome by her great beauty and by the thought of a bride as beautiful. He handed her the apple, and thus gained the hatred of Minerva and Juno.

The promised bride was Helen, fairest of all women, and already the wife of King Menelaus. As Venus had promised, she left Menelaus and went with Paris, who proved to be a son of King Priam, to Troy, his father's famous city. Menelaus called on his fellow kings of Greece to help him bring Helen back. They besieged Troy for ten years, and at last captured and burnt it. And thus Venus, through the lovely Helen, caused a fair city to be destroyed.

If the arms of this statue of Venus had not been broken off when it was hidden in the cave, how would they appear? Perhaps the goddess would have been leaning on a shield or holding up her drapery; no one knows. They may have been raised to smooth her hair before setting forth to win the golden apple, for the poet Cowper tells us,

"Venus oft with anxious care
Adjusted twice a single hair."



Map of Greece and the Aegean Sea, showing the location of Melos.