

**THE MUSES' PAGEANT.
MYTHS & LEGENDS OF
ANCIENT GREECE. VOLUME
1. MYTHS OF THE GODS**

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The Muses' pageant. Myths & legends of ancient Greece. Volume 1. Myths of the Gods by W. M. L. Hutchinson

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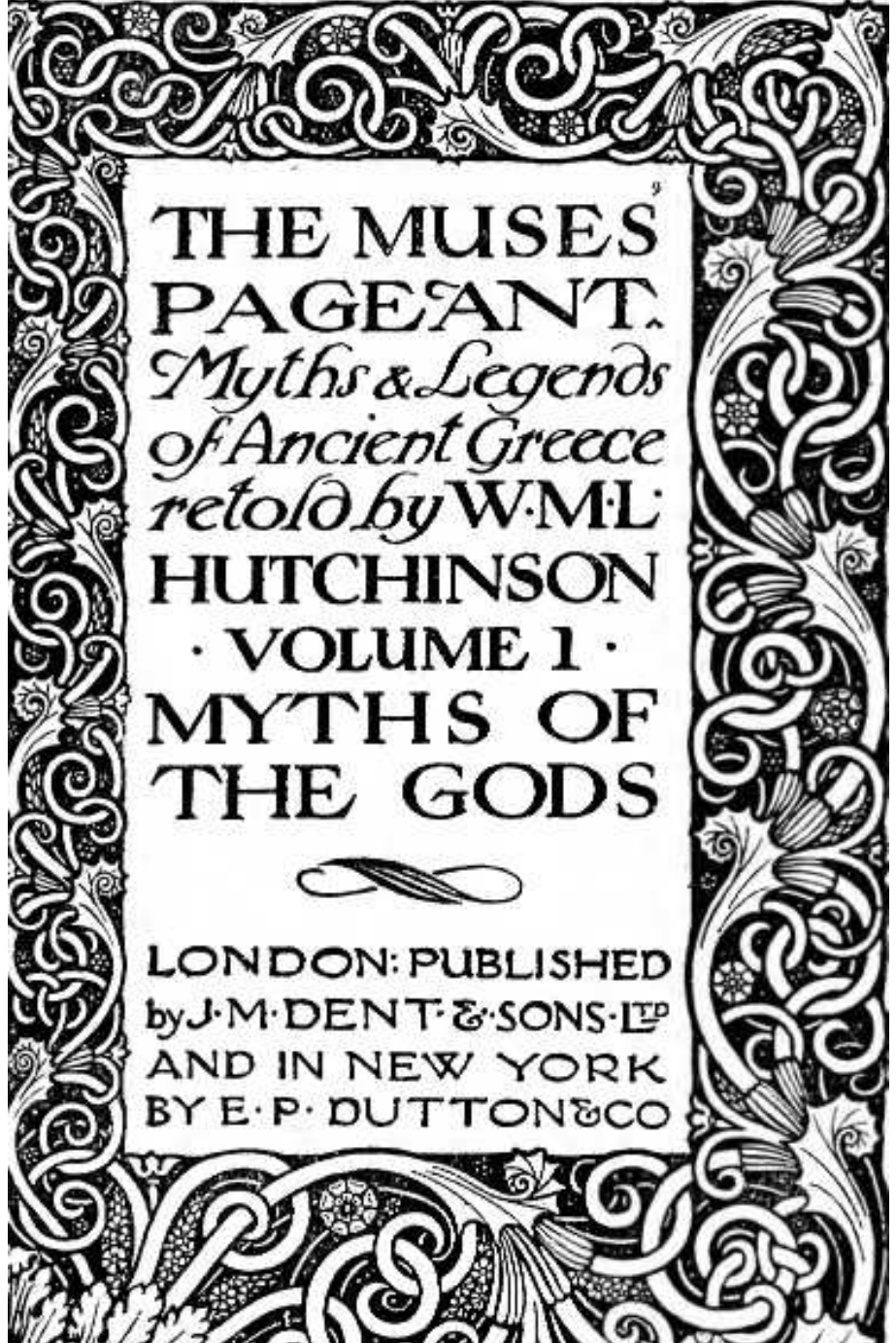
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W. M. L. HUTCHINSON

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THE
SAGES
OF OLD
LIVE
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THE MUSES⁹
PAGEANT.
*Myths & Legends
of Ancient Greece
retold by W. M. L.
HUTCHINSON*
· VOLUME I ·
MYTHS OF
THE GODS

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“ La connaissance des contes helléniques, dont s'inspirent encore la littérature et l'art, est indispensable à tout homme cultivé.”

S. REINACH.

INTRODUCTION

THE title of this book, the *Muses' Pageant*, may serve to indicate its scope and aim. Just as, in the spectacles that have lately become popular among us, the heroes and heroines of our island story pass over the scene in their habits as they lived; so, in these pages, the divine and human figures of the Greek Mythology are presented after a fashion which, it is hoped, may bring them more vividly before the mind's eye. The promoters of our modern English pageants lay stress on their value as object lessons in national or local history; and this collection of the myths of ancient Hellas has been made with a kindred purpose—to give the general reader a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of “the realms of gold.”

Again, our Pageant, though set forth in prose, is of the Muses; in other words, the legends it reproduces are those immortalised by the Greek poets. Classical mythology may be broadly divided into (1) Popular, (2) Poetical; the former division is, of course, the foundation of the latter, and, as embodied in local cults and traditions, is of primary importance to the folklorist and the anthropologist. But that division “belongs to another inquiry;” it is the poetical mythology of Greece only with which we are here concerned; for it is that alone

which, through its profound influence on medieval and modern literature and art, has an abiding interest for "Everyman" to-day. And of this mythology, as the Greeks devoutly believed, the Muses were the authentic, infallible source.

For that beautiful conception of the relation between the Poet and the Muse—so familiar by endless repetition that it has lost its savour for us—was no mere trope or allegory to the people whose supreme poetic instinct created it. To the Greeks, the Nine Muses were not personified abstractions, but most real persons—"the clear-voiced daughters of Zeus," whom the Titaness Mnemosyne bore to him in a glen of Pieria; who had their chosen habitation on Mount Helicon in Boeotia; and whose delight was with the sons of men, insomuch that they disdained not to become the brides and mothers of mortals. Thus the sweet singers Orpheus and Linus, the beautiful boy Hyacinthus whom Apollo loved, and the Thracian King Rhesus who came to the help of the Trojans against the Greeks, were the children of Muses by human sires. As for the functions of the Nine, the idea that each Sister had her own special department in poesy, music, or dancing was of comparatively late growth; in Homer, "the Bible of the Greeks," and Hesiod, their next earliest authority, it is the office of the Muses one and all to gladden the Gods banqueting on Olympus with their lovely choric song and dance, to the accompaniment of Apollo's golden lyre. It is also their common prerogative to inspire men on earth—if they are kings, with

all-prevailing eloquence—if bards, not only with poetic power and charm but with supernatural knowledge of divine things. Especially are they revealers of the true history of the Gods from the beginning—their pedigrees, births, natures, works, and ways; and to teach men this knowledge, so essential for the right performance of ritual, is the peculiar privilege of the Bard as the accredited servant and spokesman of the Muses.

It will be worth our while to notice briefly the unique importance among these inspired myth-makers which the Greeks attributed to the two poets just mentioned. "Hesiod and Homer," says the historian Herodotus in a famous passage, "made a *Theogony* for the Greeks;" that is to say, the poems which went under their names gave the earliest systematic accounts of the origins of the gods, combining the sporadic myths of different tribes and localities. Now, the "Homer" we know consists of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in neither of which is there any such account; hence it is conjectured that Herodotus here ascribes to Homer himself a "Theogony" known to have been included in a lost series of epics (the so-called "Epic Cycle"), composed by members of the Ionian school or guild of poets who named themselves Homeridae—"sons of Homer"—after their founder. Neither fragments or notices of this Homeric Theogony survive; but we possess a hexameter poem entitled "The Theogony of Hesiod," which, though much mutilated and interpolated, is probably the work referred to by Herodotus. Whether any part of it is the actual