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HELIADOS

A MYTHICAL LEGEND

AMONGST the rocky Cyclades was a small island that by passing travellers of old was never visited. To the eye of the Grecian navigator its rugged cliffs appeared to promise a barren surface, unfit for the habitation of man, and tempted no adventurer to explore the recesses that lay within. But if any such had climbed the steep granite precipice,—as my imagination has done,—and had once safely gained the verdant slope that ascends to the inland plains, how rich a prospect would have rewarded the bold attempt!

Never did the glorious sun smile upon a lovelier spot of earth. Sparkling streams trickled along the green meadows, or leapt amidst the trees down the steep ravines, opening into beautiful valleys embosomed in groves below: where, between the dark cypress and graceful olive, glittered the marble dwellings whose light and stately forms proclaimed their inhabitants to be the sons of tasteful Greece. The mountain walls of the island rise highest to the north; but all around it is encircled by massive crags,—which, however, are deeply enough cleft for breezes continually to enter and, hiding amid the branches, to murmur out tales of sportive malice, about bewildered boats left tossing outside.

Beautiful Heliados! My subject is the hearts of thy children, yet I linger in fancy on the verdant summit of thy plains, and seem bathed in delight at the scene spread before me. The deep blue sea, dotted with distant islets, sleeps calm o'er the white ridges to south and west. Dark pines crown the peak that rises high to the north. But the eastern waves are all dancing in flame, because soon will the God of light ascend his radiant car, to lead his splendid course on this day of triumphant rejoicing. For the day beheld is indeed that on which Helios attains to his prime glory of solstitial dominion: the day of annual jubilee to his adorers.

Where was the worship of Helios rendered with purer and more exclusive honours than on his own island of Heliados?—He was to these scholars of nature the One Supreme Deity; while a secondary homage, and no more, was paid to the Queen of night and her attendant stars. The simple cult might seem to show an Eastern origin: yet this people was undoubtedly sprung from Greece. It was a colony that had been planted thence in what were now remote ages, and that consisted of some of the best and wisest of that land, banished in civic struggle from their native soil. The children of the first settlers soon forgot the traditions which they had heard from their fathers, save alone their one ever-memorable legend. The legend, namely, which related how, when the frail vessel that bore them was cast wildly about on raging waves, under heavens all wrapt in storm-clouds, the trembling exiles prayed to Helios, and He, the gracious God, divided the clouds, and stood—nay, stood forth in the divine beauty of his human form, and shot down an arrow before them into the sea,* whence immediately arose the rock-bound Heliados. They, singing aloud the praise of their Deliverer, beat their oars with renewed strength, and safely moored their bark in a cavern of the island,

* See Grote's "*Greece*," Vol. I., p. 327.

while the waves contended sullenly in vain against the outward walls, indignant for their rescued prey.

To Helios the grateful settlers dedicated their new abode. To Helios their pious offspring ascribed all the blessings that multiplied around them. The high-priest of Helios was the chief magistrate in their little state: without whose sanction the deliberations of their republican assemblies never passed into law.

For many generations the contented philosophic race cultivated their island without a wish beyond. But at length, as their skill increased, some adventurous youths were bold enough to explore the seas, and seek out their parent land. And thence they brought back to the wondering Heliadans a glowing report of the arts, and the science, and, above all, of the gods of Greece. By the knowledge of the latter the allegiance of some was nearly drawn aside from their own exclusive Deity. But the eloquence of the sage Philinos convinced all hearts anew of the superiority of their own simple faith. "Zeus, Athene, Heracles," said he, "are figments of tradition; but *our* God is visibly manifest, pouring down on us, from his benignant throne, life, light, and blessing." The people heard him with gladness, and proclaimed afresh with solemn vows that Helios alone was their God, and that only Him would they serve.

The communication with Greece was closed by the breaking out of the Persian war. But a new stimulus had been given to the minds of the inhabitants of Heliados.

Now see from all sides the white-robed trains that wind up the highest ascent, emulous to gain a place nearest to the rounded platform at the top. Here, in dazzling relief against the black pines that crown the summit, stands an altar with a semi-circular marble

alcove, fronting the mid-day sun: to which lead twelve steps, so numbered from the months of the year.

Foremost the Priests with stately gait lead up the procession, and range themselves around the altar. Next follows a troupe of young virgins, dedicated to the service of the temple. Train after train succeeds, till the whole mountain-side is covered with the band of worshippers, all robed in white, and garlanded with myrtle or with flowers. Motionless they stand, till from the glowing waves emerges the first beam. Then, all arms are raised aloft, instruments of music give forth a mighty clang, and as from one voice bursts forth the universal chorus,

“Hail to our God, all hail!”

The chorus swells into full harmony, and lasts until the full round orb hangs suspended o'er the sea—or, rather, until Helios has shaken the spray from his golden hair, and, casting one bright glance along the glittering waves, springs on in his car of flame to mount the unclouded heaven.

Then the measure of the music changes. The magnificent hymn subsides into a lighter strain. The multitudes separate into groups, and around the altar youths and maidens weave a mazy dance; while song and laughter resound, and all presents a scene of exuberant but graceful mirth. Meanwhile, one individual after another, in unbroken succession, ascends to the temple, and lays his offering of fruits or flowers upon the altar, loading the air with a delicious perfume.

Thus the hours wore on, until the fervid beams of the mounting sun began to fall too intensely on the exposed worshippers. The languid dancers sank on the heated ground, waving green branches over their heads. Offerings ceased to be brought, and the songs were gradually silenced. Especially within the temple the glare

reflected from the marble walls became intolerable.—At a signal from the High Priest, all fell prostrate on the ground, and a chorus broke forth, solemn and grand, but subdued and reverential to the degree of extreme awe:—

“Helios! Almighty! We have felt thy power. We adore thee. The creatures of earth cannot sustain thy glance. Be merciful in thy majesty!”

When the solemn strain was concluded, the priests led, and all followed, down the mountain to the shady plains below, while the virgins sang in cheerful measure,—

“He gave us groves for shelter, and running brooks.”

Various paths brought the festive crowds again to assemble on the cool borders of the translucent lake into which all the tricklings from the mountains discharged themselves. Here, abundant refreshments were placed, and, reclined on the soft turf, each indulged himself as his sportive fancy inclined. For wit and mirth were held an acceptable homage to the God of light and beauty, when in this way called forth, and consecrated by the conscience of his presence. It was thus that sang their poets, and thus that their priests approved; for the worship of the Grecian heart was joy. All-comprehensive must be the homage paid to Him who is Sovereign over all. Hence also, while the playfulness of lighter spirits was thus benignly regarded, the graver and the more philosophic spent the hours of this noontide repose in the fashion that was their own, of learned converse. Many a knot was gathered round some favourite sage, who explained results of scientific research; or hung on the lips of some traveller returned from Greece, instructing them in wonders of art, or showing to them the horrors of military invasion, contrasting with their own happy tranquility, or, still more appropriately to the day, giving them cause for a new exulting in the intelligence and simplicity of their own worship, through

description of idolatrous rites beheld there, to the multiplied deities of the divided land, where gods as much battled in heaven as their votaries below.

"But where is our Orthinos?" was inquired by many a disappointed group. "Has he no new discoveries to impart to us on this great day of our rejoicing? Who like him can exalt the praises of Helios, by bringing, as he has done to us, continually new proof of his mighty working?"

"See," said a child, "I have a wondrous gift from Orthinos. Through it I have seen the beauty of an insect's wing. The master said to me, 'Behold; thus are the lowly offspring of earth adorned by the All-bounteous One.' He also showed me the secret wonders of fruits and flowers."

And in the group where the priests sat apart, the Sovereign spoke with displeasure. "Where is Orthinos? Why addresses he not the people to-day?"

"Sacred Father," answered an aged priest with mild and kindly countenance, "thou knowest that Orthinos is dear to me as an only son. Last night I went to his dwelling, and found him so deeply plunged in his studies that he scarcely heeded my entrance. When I bid him remember the holy assembly of this day, the beam of his eye, as he looked up, was like that of Helios himself. He pressed my hand, and words seemed struggling for utterance; but when I listened as for the inspiration of the Glorious One, he turned away from me and entreated me to leave him. I obeyed, for I thought, surely the God is mighty within him, and he will pour forth his message to-morrow."

"Brother," said the High Priest, "I fear we have erred greatly in our regard to this man. He seeks too daringly to penetrate the mysteries of heaven. He has turned his magic instruments to the face of Helios him-

self—not for worship, but in presumptuous curiosity. We have held our peace, for we deemed him the favourite of our God. But am not I the accepted minister of Helios? And this day he is bold enough to disobey my ordinance. Henceforth, I will look nearer to this Orthinos.”

“Great King of heaven forbid!” exclaimed Chares. “Shall it be suspected that the brightest and noblest son of Heliados is an enemy to its God!—Is he not the descendant of that holy man who denounced the vanity of the gods of Greece, and first proclaimed the great Helios for our God alone?”

“Yes: but by the ordinance of that same Philinos was I appointed the minister of Helios, and the guardian of his people.”

When the intensity of noon-day heat was past, and the slanting beams of the descending sun fell with a milder but a richer glow on the turfy glades, again the song resounded, and the clang of tymbals woke the sprightly dance. And as the Monarch sank into his ocean bed, again did all voices unite in a solemn chorus of richest harmony, dying away in soft cadence with the fading tints of heaven.

Unwilling to disperse, the white bands yet lingered on the darkened hills:—for loving hearts are closer knit by the communion of gracious piety. But my fancy now follows alone the beautiful young maiden that steals silently away to the depths of a distant grove:—Selene, whose sweet voice has been trilling like the lark’s, as she has sung in delicious rapture the praises of the God of day.

In a dark chamber, amidst strange instruments of his own invention, sits Orthinos. Motionless he has remained since light vanished out of heaven. Nor yet now is he aroused by the light step of the maiden as she glides in,

till her soft arms have been laid about his neck, and she has whispered,—“My brother, would'st thou have me with thee?”

Orthinos drew her to his side, and passed his arm around her.

“So weary and sad!—and all but thee have been so happy on this glorious day! Would that thou too—Thou dost shake thy head. Then I know that some discovery has rewarded thy labour. Wilt thou not impart it to me?”

“Ask me not. Do thou rather, my Selene, tell me all the joy of thy innocent heart.”

“Ah! that my joy could shine out upon thy soul—that I could reflect on thee, like the Queen of night, all the gladness that has been mine on this day! Am not I thy Selene, thy moon, who have received from thee all the light of my mind?—And oh! my brother, this day when all werè rejoicing in the glory of our God, how much brighter was that glory to me for all thou hast taught me to know of him. I felt how blest was my lot to be near unto one so wise.—Why dost thou sigh?”

“Go on, my sister. Tell me all thou hast felt.”

“Never have I felt so vividly as this day the living influence of our religion. What would be the light of the sun to us if we knew not that it was the intelligent smile of our God! As plants collapse and shrivel without his vital warmth, so would even our souls without the blessed consciousness of his presence. Every chord of our nature is struck by him, and, tuned by piety, should respond like Memnon's lyre. Our eyes behold him; our senses feel his genial heat; our souls believe and worship. He is not a God hidden and unknown, but he suffers us to behold him as he dwells in mysterious solitude in the blue expanse of heaven. And though at times he may veil his form, for anger at our sins, or for trial of our faith, yet for ever he leaves us a glimmering assurance of his

presence. And when he dismisses us at night, in order that our mortal senses may have repose from too constant a communion with his Divineness, he commits us in charge to his gentle vicegerent. Here, Orthinos, how has thy science come in aid of religion. For, while our ancestors believed that in storm and at night Helios was departed from us, now we know that it is only our earth, changeful like its creature man, that then turns itself away, and that *He* rests for ever fixed in central repose, the Unchangeable!—I could smile, but that others believe them now, at the images which held my infant reverence, of a throned charioteer, careering round the level earth. How far more glorious is the revelation of thy science, of Helios holding-in worlds and worlds by his mighty energy, as they roll and roll around him, ever ready to dash off into destruction, if his hand were for an instant relaxed, —he himself being all the time throned immovably on the middle point of the universe!”

“No!—He moves: Helios too moves!—Yesterday, while I was watching him intently, the idea occurred to me. This day I have re-examined all my evidence, and I am sure. He does not truly occupy the centre of the world of planets, but is just so far away from it as should have been, if they, in their turn, have a power over him, small but real, of the same kind as is that which he holds over them. And, if so—”

“And, if so, what then?”

“If so, he is no longer a God, but he is a world like our own!”—

“The voice of Orthinos uttering blasphemy!” exclaimed Chares, who suddenly entered.

“Convince him that he is wrong, father,” cried Selene, as she fell at the old man’s feet. “I am lost, myself, in a fearful amazement. But *you* will show to him his error.”

With eager enthusiasm, the philosopher drew forth his

charts, and rapidly unfolded the course of his discovery to the priest, who had been hitherto his admiring scholar, and repeated the awful result. "Is it not manifestly so? Every indication confirms the suspicion that this vast central power is governed by the same laws that determine our own inferior action, and is therefore of a similar nature."

"I am confounded, and know not how to answer thee," returned the simple-minded priest. "But this I know, that in thy blind pursuit of science thou art overthrowing a faith which is supported firmly in every other kind of way."

"Father, I have gone over the whole field of nature, so far as it lies open before me, but all strengthens me in the belief that there is a sameness of character in that bright orb of heaven and this our earth."

"I speak not of evidence that is of sense, rash Orthinus, but of the stronger proof that touches straight on the heart of man."

"I know not what may serve for conviction to other hearts; but I myself am a man, and have listened to the voice of my own heart; and it tells me that *that* alone is adorable which is true."

"Unhappy deluded one! does thy heart then say that there is no God?"

"Not so. On the contrary, all nature proclaims a Cause that is well thought of as Divine. But I see still that that Cause is far from such as we have believed."

"How! A God unseen, unfelt? What is that but the same as nothing—or, at least, a dim something in which we have no concern, and is therefore no better to us than nothing?"

"A heaven without our Helios!" cried Selene. "Cold, dread order, in the place of intelligence and love! To believe that day restores us to the sight of him, not by his loving, paternal will, but as a result of dead necessity,

—to feel but the sort of warmth we might derive from earthly fuel,—to see but a lamp in heaven, in place of that clear revelation of Deity, which through our senses draws our hearts to a constant living perception of a power above us!—And is this, then, the fruit of science: by the bringing us to nearer vision to annihilate the glorious mystery which dazzled our imagination, to disperse the divine phantoms of our own creation, and show to us that our heaven is but the magnified reflection of earth!—Shall then the faith of man for ever yearn and strive for a something above him, and for ever by knowledge be cast back upon himself!”

“I too have felt this,” said Orthinos, not unmoved. “But the light has come to me, and how shall I gainsay it?”

“Listen to me, my son,” rejoined Chares. “Have the traditions of our fathers any weight with thee?”

“None: I have observed too well how superstition can invent and disguise.”

“Then I will forbear to speak of these. But thou hast granted that all nature proclaims a Maker?”

“I have. I believe it.”

“Thou knowest that light and heat are the means of all growth—that no chemical change ever happens, not any blade of grass issues forth, no kind of living being is formed, and thence is no human soul produced, except through their ministering agency?”

“All this have my experiments gone to prove.”

“And light and heat come alone from the Sun?”

“Apparently.”

“Then is Helios the Author of all good!”

“Or the *Instrument*.”

“Granted, my son,” cried the old man triumphantly. “But so immediately, so exclusively the instrument, that he is, as it were, the right hand of all Godhead, the breath of its mouth, and the one form which it is pleased to put

on,—and therefore to us the same as full Deity, being that which is all that we can know of it.”

“Nay, but I have confident expectation that by searching I shall truly find out more.”

“Believe it not. Once quitting this safe and certain ground, a cold and dead negative alone will lie before thee. And for this thou wilt abandon the warm and cheering faith which animates the heart and rouses up the virtue of worshippers; which lifts their eyes from a grovelling on this base earth to the ennobling contemplation of heaven.—Interrupt me not. I read what thou would’st say. Who of the Heliadans has gazed upon heaven like thee? But oh! my son, to look upon heaven with bold inquiring eye, feeling that thy spirit is master of its secrets, and that heavenly bodies only lie as it were beneath thee, to be investigated,—what is this but a making of *thysself* the God thou worshippes? And how different, how incomparably more becoming to a mortal being, is the state of mind where the adoring believer bows consciously himself, before acknowledged Higher Being, seeing and feeling that he himself is ever subject to the inspection of Divinity.”

“Father,” returned Orthinos after a pause, “there is much weight in your appeal. I feel there is a moral difficulty to overcome.”

“Give heed to it, my son: give heed to it. Ponder it in thy heart; and above all beware that thou disturb not the faith of others.”

“I will not, while a doubt remains to my own mind. Too much already I have perhaps said. My Selene, go thou with this kind father, and let him pour comfort into thy heart.”

“I will not leave thee, my brother. But oh! father, bless me still in the name of Helios,” exclaimed the weeping girl as she knelt before Chares.

“May Helios beam into thy soul, my daughter, and

disperse thy doubts as he chaseth the mists of night. For thee, Orthinos"—and the old man hesitated and shuddered, "I *dare* not say, may Helios bless thee!"

Chares hastened away, and as he passed through the midnight shade of the grove, the thought of his mind was a trembling rejoicing that this blasphemy had not been uttered in the face of day.

With early dawn Selene left her restless couch that she might go forth, and meet the first glance of rising Deity. But in passing by the apartment where her brother was wont to study she stopped, for she saw that he remained still seated as she had left him over-night. There, amid his charts and instruments, he was slumbering with a smile upon his lips like a happy infant. Selene bent over him, and dropped a gentle kiss on his large smooth brow. Orthinos awoke, and the clear soul that beamed from his eyes seemed full of noble confidence, as of one that has been in communion with lofty thoughts. The ruddy dawn shone into the chamber as Selene extinguished the flickering lamp; and with one consent the brother and young sister issued forth.

She looked inquiringly in his face as she turned their steps to the accustomed hill.—"Whither thou wilt."

In silence they mounted the hill and turned to the crimson east.—"For worship, brother?" murmured the maiden.

"Yes, Selene, for worship:—here,—everywhere. Wherever we turn, new wonders unfold themselves, beyond the feeble ken of man. Never was my soul so tuned to worship as now that I seem to have first opened my eyes upon the miracles of nature. Last night, Selene, as I pursued my researches, schemes of such vastness of conception dawned on me as almost dazzled my imagination. As yet they are no more than faint gleams; but I shall trace them into the boundless space before me."

“And leave behind thy religion and thy God! What then shall science avail thee!”

“No! if my science be true,—and, I think, none can prove it false,—that which we have been adoring is no God, and his worship is superstition, not religion.”

“Whom, what, then shall we worship?”

“That yet is unknown. But do not shrink from the idea. He does not the less exist, because we are not yet able to discern Him.—I will confess to thee that at first, when it seemed to me truly that the Maker was annihilated from creation, I felt dismayed: as if the universe were suddenly dead, without a soul. But I re-consider, and find that it is our imagination about Him, not Himself, that in reality is departed. And though He is yet to seek, all the proofs we have ever had of His being still remain as much as ever in full force.”

“But oh! if invisible, if no object of sense, it seems to me that He can be no object of love!—Brother, are the arguments of Chares without weight?”

“Not entirely so. The practical worth of any doctrine is a testimony in its favour. The moral value found in it ought to serve as a guard against our rashly abandoning it. But it cannot prove, nor can anything prove, that it is criminal to seek for more knowledge; and much less can it impugn the claim on us which is that of any knowledge once surely gained. The really good must be inevitably at one with the really true. But how can we know under what influence the old ideas may have sprung forth, which now are clothed with the sacred form of religion, and which, having been received as such, have twined themselves about the deepest and the dearest parts of our nature—nay, which indeed have by a beautiful sublimation in character become actually that which they at first but pretended to be? I have spoken to thee of successive eras in the formation of our globe;—so, in the progress of humanity, has religious faith taken stand on

different stages, as new layers of moral civilization have spread over the rude mental world; and in each successive case, no sooner have the flooding waters subsided than life newly has shot from every pore, fresh verdure has covered the rocky bed, and a glad creation has arisen as if it were to endure for ever! How ruthless appears to us, the ephemeral creatures of earth, the destruction that has repeatedly swept over it, appearing as if destined to hurl nature back into chaos:—instead of which, each instance of destruction has brought it to onward stages of perfection. Even so it is painful to break up old forms of religion—to tear away from the heart its long-cherished associations. Even so is there destruction for a while, in partial measure, to even morality and virtue. But fear not in the end for either virtue or religion. These truly *are* divine—divine in themselves. They are immortal energies, inseparable from true human nature, however the facile images they have been decked in by rude invention may truly prove destined to perish.”

Orthinus paused, for Helios was breaking forth from the waves. It was the signal at which all Heliadans were wont to fall prostrate, and worship. Selene threw her arms around her brother. He pressed her to his bosom, and together they watched the noblest spectacle of nature.

“Glorious is that beam,” said the philosopher, “but more glorious to me, Selene, was the light that broke in upon my mind, when the thought flashed on me of the wondrous balance on which are worlds poised in the real heaven.”

They descended the hill, and Selene felt that there was a power in her brother’s soul on which she could rest, even as she hung upon his arm for bodily support.

Orthinus returned to his study, and the maiden wandered alone. Alone! yes, Selene felt that she was indeed alone! She sought the thickest groves, and if a sunbeam crossed

her path, she shrank aside. But the shades were oppressive, and seemed to her like the mansion of death. And when the voices of distant virgins, chanting their morning hymn to Helios, were borne to her on the breezes, Selene wept. Yet not in thought did she reproach her brother that he had revealed to her truths too vast and stern for her weaker soul. She gloried in his superior mind. She felt her own enlarged: for hers was of the kindred nature which could receive, if not originate; it could appreciate and admire, if it could not itself accomplish, the daring and undeviating pursuit of truth. Hers too was the love that would share in all things. He could not lead, where she was unwilling to follow. But, now, as a thousand images of home-nourished association crowded into her mind, she felt as if the pathway before her were a drear and barren wilderness, beyond which, if there lay a fairer home, her strength might fail to reach it. *He*, her guide, it appeared to her, was now to be her all, in earth and heaven.

Meanwhile the youths who were accustomed to be taught by Orthinos, lamented that he came not forth. Still by these, who respected his retirement, he was left in quiet. Nevertheless, it was not long that his study was undisturbed. For the High Priest sent Chares to summon him to the royal presence.

Orthinos prayed his friend that he might delay till he had finished the calculation in which he was plunged. But the command was imperative, and reluctantly he obeyed. "The Ruler of our Isle," he said, "has a right to know the doctrines that are promulgated among his people; and I am willing to explain to him, as to all Heliadans, the discoveries that have opened themselves to me."

"I beseech thee, forbear! Dost thou not perceive that these notions of thine are utterly subversive, not only of

the religion, but of the whole government of our Isle ; and that therefore thou must appear to the Ruler, not only as an impious blasphemer, but also as a rebel ? ”

The idea was startling to Orthinos. For, wholly immersed as he had been in his discoveries, he had never yet contemplated this consequence.

“ Be guided by me, my son, ” urged the old man, with tears of earnest affection. “ Keep these thoughts all within thy own breast. ”

“ It is impossible ! For all will come and question me — unless, indeed, I be shut up, or banished from communion with men. — I have no wish to interfere with the government of our Isle. We have lived freely and happily under the paternal sway of our Priest. — Yet, I bethink me, this was owing to the cause that our religion gave its sanction to the yoke, whence voluntarily was it that we bent to it. I see that if truly our faith be changed, nought can hinder but that discord and rebellion will follow. — Even so was it, father, that in the realm of my own nature were discord and rebellion also stirred. But not for these, nevertheless, did I swerve from my course. Nor will I now, from any fear of what may happen to others. For them and me, I am persuaded, there is no better guide than honest truth. ”

Chares would have urged farther, but reverence for his Sovereign, and religion towards his God, restrained his lips.

Boldly, but without defiance, Orthinos made his confession before the High Priest ; and, subsequently, before the assembled chiefs of the island. Horror and dismay were in all hearts, contending with the esteem in which he was universally held, as the wisest of their learned men. Hitherto, it had never happened in Heliados that any shedding of blood should appear needful at the bar of justice. But this was an unheard-of crime ; and how

should they arrest its fearful contagion from spreading amongst the people? They would gladly have imposed silence, and left the inflicting of punishment to the offended Deity himself. But little would this avail. "Know," said Orthinos, "that the way of science which I have opened to multitudes of young inquiring minds will lead also them to the same end that I have gained. In spite of any endeavours to stop the current of thought, my example will be repeated a hundred fold. Yes, surely as the light of another morrow will succeed on the darkness of night, will truth arise on other souls as it has arisen on mine."

"He has spoken to his own condemnation," said the High Priest. "It is true that even now are there rumours afloat of impiety diffused among the people. And we must therefore set a warning before them to restrain them from following his example. The denier of Helios must die!"

Thus the deliberations of the day were ended. And at midnight the prisoner was left for the few short hours of darkness to feel the unutterable cruelty of his doom. He prayed that for one year,—one month,—he might enjoy the precious boon of life. He prayed, at least, that this night they would allow him his instruments and papers, that he might finish the scheme on which he had entered. But the judges—the priestly judges—were inexorable; and he repressed the deep anguish of his soul. All access to his polluting presence was denied. Selene had been committed to the charge of Chares, who was rendered responsible that she should neither imbibe nor propagate the impiety of her brother.

A third morning dawned on Heliados. And once more the people assembled in crowds on the temple mountain. But it was not now for joy and exulting worship. On *this* day is a sacrifice to be rendered to the Mighty One:—

a crowning act of homage, but one of which the memory will embitter all the worship to follow after.

Again arises Helios, glorious and unclouded in his majesty. But a blighting mist is already filling the moral atmosphere that will speedily dim for ever the faith of his votaries.

The people whispered amongst one another in wondering indefinite alarm till the white band of priests appeared and wound up the ascent. Then an utter consternation seized on all, for as the priests opened their ranks, and stood around the altar, they discovered in the midst their Orthinos! The Sovereign Pontiff stood forth, and with hand out-stretched towards the God of day, commanded in the name of Helios that all should listen.

“This man whom I have sanctioned to teach, and from whom ye have loved to learn, has become a blasphemer of our God. While the hearts of all his countrymen have been glowing with a loving and grateful homage to their Founder and Preserver, he has buried himself in darkness with the spirits of darkness, and has only come forth to deny the very being of our Helios. What fiery indignation, what plagues, may not the offended God hurl down on us, if we suffer this great criminal to dwell amongst us unpunished! Wherefore I have commanded him to be brought here, that he may either worship, or die.”

Then all fixed their eyes with trembling horror on the prisoner, waiting breathless for his reply.

“I have found that Helios is no God, and I cannot worship him.”

“Ye have heard his blasphemy, O Heliadans. Lift up your voices with me, and deprecate the wrath of the Mighty One from falling on us also.”

And the people obeyed, while at the signal of their Sovereign the priests bound Orthinos to the altar; placing

at his feet the instruments of his science, the fruits of the labour of his life, doomed also to destruction.

“Thus,” said the High Priest, “we commend to Helios his own victim. In darkness has this sin been engendered: let him now feel the potency of the God, warm and gracious at first, but increasing to fierce overpowering might. Until noon shall he remain, in order that perchance the God may have mercy on him, and touch his heart.”

Orthinos would have spoken to the people, but they were bidden to retire out of hearing of his voice, “in order,” it was said, “that he might commune with Helios alone.”

But there was one whom no command could force to retire. On the steps of the altar knelt Selene, her appalled guardian at her side. The woeful interval had been passed by them in alternate efforts on his part to console the maiden, and to renew her shaken faith. Now, in the weariness of her intense sorrow there was but one thought that remained to her:—“If Helios be a God, he will spare my godlike brother.” And the vehemence of this assurance still upheld her.

The hours moved slowly on, and the heat became more and more intense, so that those that stood within the temple sickened and grew faint. And yet no cloudy veil was spread in mercy, no breeze was made to fan the heavy air. The fire of heaven burned fiercely, as if with indignant ire.

The shadow of the altar dwindled till it fell only on the very centre of the alcove. Then the Pontiff once more approached, and addressed his victim. “Dost thou now adore the Omnipotent Helios?”

Orthinos raised his languid head, and once more cast a glance around on the exquisitely-beautiful landscape, —on the many well-loved ones whose hearts were now agonizing for him,—on her, chiefly, who was the nearest

and best loved. And his soul shrank from the blank region of death, the dread expanse without a shore and without a God:—and it struggled convulsively for life. But on this side was a *Lie*. And his lips uttered the firm resolve, “Let me die!”

Then the priests drew from amongst his instruments a clear transparent circle, by the aid of which he had been wont to regard the heavens. “With this,” said the High Priest, “has he lifted presumptuous gaze to the mysteries of heaven. Behold, what shall happen when the God in like manner looks down upon *him!*”

And they held it over the head of the victim. The glowing beams were concentrated on his brow and pierced direct to his brain. Sense and life were instantaneously extinguished, and the stricken frame held Orthinos no more.

What should have followed for a people thus robbed of their noblest teacher but a bitter season of contention, between those who admired him and those who condemned:—between those who would have saved him with their lives, and those who abhorred him with all their souls?

I see the image of my unhappy Selene, after she had passed through the paroxysm of her anguish, reviving somewhat into a gentle consolation, through the force of her pure instincts. Her thoughts hovered ceaselessly over the region where the spirit of her brother was now a sojourner. Faith grew up for her out of love, and her loving faith created or discovered a Heaven. Nor was it long ere thither also her own spirit followed.

For the God-deprived island in general, however, increasing discord and increasing persecution raged long in the manner of unholy demons:—until at last a great

solution was evolved. The conviction was brought forth into a ripe truth, that undoubtedly is the soul of man in itself a surer medium for the manifesting of Deity than any exhibitor of mere physical glory. And it happened therefore, inevitably, that the repentant and grateful countrymen of Orthinos turned to worship himself as their God.

With this consummation the history of the Heliadans closed. Shortly after, their island was submerged by an earthquake.

SARA S. HENNELL.

HACKNEY, *November*, 1846.



[*This little tale is now printed with a view to private use. The date attached to the manuscript copy is retained as a necessary index; but none the less, as requires to be acknowledged, has the original version been subjected throughout, under present revision, to some measure of correction of a slight kind.*

The passage from Grote's "Greece" which is referred to, and which was the obvious source of the whole story's composition, is the following:—

"After leaving Corcyra, the Argo was overtaken by a perilous storm near the island of Thera: the heroes were saved from imminent peril by the supernatural aid of Apollo, who, shooting from his golden bow an arrow which pierced the waves like a track of light, caused a new island suddenly to spring up in their track and present to them a port of refuge. The island was called Anaphê; and the grateful Argonauts established upon it an altar and sacrifices to Apollo Ægletes, which were ever afterwards continued, and traced back by the inhabitants to this originating adventure."

S. S. H.]

COVENTRY, *March*, 1884.

