The Labours of Heracles

Apollodorus, The Library, Book II · translated by Sir James George Frazer (1921)

From The Library by Apollodorus, translated by Sir James George Frazer (Loeb Classical Library, London: William Heinemann, 1921), Book II, from the birth of Hercules (iv. 8) to his journey to Trachis (vii. 7). The English text, word for word, with Frazer's spelling and the names as he prints them (Hercules, not Heracles). Frazer's footnotes and the facing Greek are left out. Public domain.

Birth and Boyhood (II. iv. 8–12)

But before Amphitryon reached Thebes, Zeus came by night and prolonging the one night threefold he assumed the likeness of Amphitryon and bedded with Alcmena and related what had happened concerning the Teleboans. But when Amphitryon arrived and saw that he was not welcomed by his wife, he inquired the cause; and when she told him that he had come the night before and slept with her, he learned from Tiresias how Zeus had enjoyed her. And Alcmena bore two sons, to wit, Hercules, whom she had by Zeus and who was the elder by one night, and Iphicles, whom she had by Amphitryon. When the child was eight months old, Hera desired the destruction of the babe and sent two huge serpents to the bed. Alcmena called Amphitryon to her help, but Hercules arose and killed the serpents by strangling them with both his hands. However, Pherecydes says that it was Amphitryon who put the serpents in the bed, because he would know which of the two children was his, and that when Iphicles fled, and Hercules stood his ground, he knew that Iphicles was begotten of his body.

Hercules was taught to drive a chariot by Amphitryon, to wrestle by Autolycus, to shoot with the bow by Eurytus, to fence by Castor, and to play the lyre by Linus. This Linus was a brother of Orpheus; he came to Thebes and became a Theban, but was killed by Hercules with a blow of the lyre; for being struck by him, Hercules flew into a rage and slew him. When he was tried for murder, Hercules quoted a law of Rhadamanthys, who laid it down that whoever defends himself against a wrongful aggressor shall go free, and so he was acquitted. But fearing he might do the like again, Amphitryon sent him to the cattle farm; and there he was nurtured and outdid all in stature and strength. Even by the look of him it was plain that he was a son of Zeus; for his body measured four cubits, and he flashed a gleam of fire from his eyes; and he did not miss, neither with the bow nor with the javelin.

While he was with the herds and had reached his eighteenth year he slew the lion of Cithaeron, for that animal, sallying from Cithaeron, harried the kine of Amphitryon and of Thespius.

Now this Thespius was king of Thespiae, and Hercules went to him when he wished to catch the lion. The king entertained him for fifty days, and each night, as Hercules went forth to the hunt, Thespius bedded one of his daughters with him (fifty daughters having been borne to him by Megamede, daughter of Arneus); for he was anxious that all of them should have children by Hercules. Thus Hercules, though he thought that his bed-fellow was always the same, had intercourse with them all. And having vanquished the lion, he dressed himself in the skin and wore the scalp as a helmet.

As he was returning from the hunt, there met him heralds sent by Erginus to receive the tribute from the Thebans. Now the Thebans paid tribute to Erginus for the following reason. Clymenus, king of the Minyans, was wounded with a cast of a stone by a charioteer of Menoeceus, named Perieres, in a precinct of Poseidon at Onchestus; and being carried dying to Orchomenus, he with his last breath charged his son Erginus to avenge his death. So Erginus marched against Thebes, and after slaughtering not a few of the Thebans he concluded a treaty with them, confirmed by oaths, that they should send him tribute for twenty years, a hundred kine every year. Falling in with the heralds on their way to Thebes to demand this tribute, Hercules outraged them; for he cut off their ears and noses and hands, and having fastened them by ropes from their necks, he told them to carry that tribute to Erginus and the Minyans. Indignant at this outrage, Erginus marched against Thebes. But Hercules, having received weapons from Athena and taken the command, killed Erginus, put the Minyans to flight, and compelled them to pay double the tribute to the Thebans. And it chanced that in the fight Amphitryon fell fighting bravely. And Hercules received from Creon his eldest daughter Megara as a prize of valour, and by her he had three sons, Therimachus, Creontiades, and Deicoön. But Creon gave his younger daughter to Iphicles, who already had a son Iolaus by Automedusa, daughter of Alcathus. And Rhadamanthys, son of Zeus, married Alcmena after the death of Amphitryon, and dwelt as an exile at Ocaleae in Boeotia.

Having first learned from Eurytus the art of archery, Hercules received a sword from Hermes, a bow and arrows from Apollo, a golden breastplate from Hephaestus, and a robe from Athena; for he had himself cut a club at Nemea.

Now it came to pass that after the battle with the Minyans Hercules was driven mad through the jealousy of Hera and flung his own children, whom he had by Megara, and two children of Iphicles into the fire; wherefore he condemned himself to exile, and was purified by Thespius, and repairing to Delphi he inquired of the god where he should dwell. The Pythian priestess then first called him Hercules, for hitherto he was called Alcides. And she told him to dwell in Tiryns, serving Eurystheus for twelve years and to perform the ten labours imposed on him, and so, she said, when the tasks were accomplished, he would be immortal.

First Labour: The Nemean Lion (II. v. 1)

When Hercules heard that, he went to Tiryns and did as he was bid by Eurystheus. First, Eurystheus ordered him to bring the skin of the Nemean lion; now that was an invulnerable beast begotten by Typhon. On his way to attack the lion he came to Cleonae and lodged at the house of a day-labourer, Molorchus; and when his host would have offered a victim in sacrifice, Hercules told him to wait for thirty days, and then, if he had returned safe from the hunt, to sacrifice to Saviour Zeus, but if he were dead, to sacrifice to him as to a hero. And having come to Nemea and tracked the lion, he first shot an arrow at him, but when he perceived that the beast was invulnerable, he heaved up his club and made after him. And when the lion took refuge in a cave with two mouths, Hercules built up the one entrance and came in upon the beast through the other, and putting his arm round its neck held it tight till he had choked it; so laying it on his shoulders he carried it to Cleonae. And finding Molorchus on the last of the thirty days about to sacrifice the victim to him as to a dead man, he sacrificed to Saviour Zeus and brought the lion to Mycenae. Amazed at his manhood, Eurystheus forbade him thenceforth to enter the city, but ordered him to exhibit the fruits of his labours before the gates. They say, too, that in his fear he had a bronze jar made for himself to hide in under the earth, and that he sent his commands for the labours through a herald, Copreus, son of Pelops the Elean. This Copreus had killed Iphitus and fled to Mycenae, where he was purified by Eurystheus and took up his abode.

Second Labour: The Lernaean Hydra (II. v. 2)

As a second labour he ordered him to kill the Lernaean hydra. That creature, bred in the swamp of Lerna, used to go forth into the plain and ravage both the cattle and the country. Now the hydra had a huge body, with nine heads, eight mortal, but the middle one immortal. So mounting a chariot driven by Iolaus, he came to Lerna, and having halted his horses, he discovered the hydra on a hill beside the springs of the Amymone, where was its den. By pelting it with fiery shafts he forced it to come out, and in the act of doing so he seized and held it fast. But the hydra wound itself about one of his feet and clung to him. Nor could he effect anything by smashing its heads with his club, for as fast as one head was smashed there grew up two. A huge crab also came to the help of the hydra by biting his foot. So he killed it, and in his turn called for help on Iolaus who, by setting fire to a piece of the neighbouring wood and burning the roots of the heads with the brands, prevented them from sprouting. Having thus got the better of the sprouting heads, he chopped off the immortal head, and buried it, and put a heavy rock on it, beside the road that leads through Lerna to Elaeus. But the body of the hydra he slit up and dipped his arrows in the gall. However, Eurystheus said that this labour should not be reckoned among the ten because he had not got the better of the hydra by himself, but with the help of Iolaus.

Third Labour: The Ceryneian Hind (II. v. 3)

As a third labour he ordered him to bring the Cerynitian hind alive to Mycenae. Now the hind was at Oenoe; it had golden horns and was sacred to Artemis; so wishing neither to kill nor wound it, Hercules hunted it a whole year. But when, weary with the chase, the beast took refuge on the mountain called Artemisius, and thence passed to the river Ladon, Hercules shot it just as it was about to cross the stream, and catching it put it on his shoulders and hastened through Arcadia. But Artemis with Apollo met him, and would have wrested the hind from him, and rebuked him for attempting to kill her sacred animal. Howbeit, by pleading necessity and laying the blame on Eurystheus, he appeased the anger of the goddess and carried the beast alive to Mycenae.

Fourth Labour: The Erymanthian Boar (II. v. 4)

As a fourth labour he ordered him to bring the Erymanthian boar alive; now that animal ravaged Psophis, sallying from a mountain which they call Erymanthus. So passing through Pholoe he was entertained by the centaur Pholus, a son of Silenus by a Melian nymph. He set roast meat before Hercules, while he himself ate his meat raw. When Hercules called for wine, he said he feared to open the jar which belonged to the centaurs in common. But Hercules, bidding him be of good courage, opened it, and not long afterwards, scenting the smell, the centaurs arrived at the cave of Pholus, armed with rocks and firs. The first who dared to enter, Anchius and Agrius, were repelled by Hercules with a shower of brands, and the rest of them he shot and pursued as far as Malea. Thence they took refuge with Chiron, who, driven by the Lapiths from Mount Pelion, took up his abode at Malea. As the centaurs cowered about Chiron, Hercules shot an arrow at them, which, passing through the arm of Elatus, stuck in the knee of Chiron. Distressed at this, Hercules ran up to him, drew out the shaft, and applied a medicine which Chiron gave him. But the hurt proving incurable, Chiron retired to the cave and there he wished to die, but he could not, for he was immortal. However, Prometheus offered himself to Zeus to be immortal in his stead, and so Chiron died. The rest of the centaurs fled in different directions, and some came to Mount Malea, and Eurytion to Pholoe, and Nessus to the river Evenus. The rest of them Poseidon received at Eleusis and hid them in a mountain. But Pholus, drawing the arrow from a corpse, wondered that so little a thing could kill such big fellows; howbeit, it slipped from his hand and lighting on his foot killed him on the spot. So when Hercules returned to Pholoe, he beheld Pholus dead; and he buried him and proceeded to the boar hunt. And when he had chased the boar with shouts from a certain thicket, he drove the exhausted animal into deep snow, trapped it, and brought it to Mycenae.

Fifth Labour: The Stable of Augeas (II. v. 5)

The fifth labour he laid on him was to carry out the dung of the cattle of Augeas in a single day. Now Augeas was king of Elis; some say that he was a son of the Sun, others that he was a son of Poseidon, and others that he was a son of Phorbas; and he had many herds of cattle. Hercules accosted him, and without revealing the command of Eurystheus, said that he would carry out the dung in one day, if Augeas would give him the tithe of the cattle. Augeas was incredulous, but promised. Having taken Augeas's son Phyleus to witness, Hercules made a breach in the foundations of the cattle-yard, and then, diverting the courses of the Alpheus and Peneus, which flowed near each other, he turned them into the yard, having first made an outlet for the water through another opening. When Augeas learned that this had been accomplished at the command of Eurystheus, he would not pay the reward; nay more, he denied that he had promised to pay it, and on that point he professed himself ready to submit to arbitration. The arbitrators having taken their seats, Phyleus was called by Hercules and bore witness against his father, affirming that he had agreed to give him a reward. In a rage Augeas, before the voting took place, ordered both Phyleus and Hercules to pack out of Elis. So Phyleus went to Dulichium and dwelt there, and Hercules repaired to Dexamenus at Olenus. He found Dexamenus on the point of betrothing perforce his daughter Mnesimache to the centaur Eurytion, and being called upon by him for help, he slew Eurytion when that centaur came to fetch his bride. But Eurystheus would not admit this labour either among the ten, alleging that it had been performed for hire.

Sixth Labour: The Stymphalian Birds (II. v. 6)

The sixth labour he enjoined on him was to chase away the Stymphalian birds. Now at the city of Stymphalus in Arcadia was the lake called Stymphalian, embosomed in a deep wood. To it countless birds had flocked for refuge, fearing to be preyed upon by the wolves. So when Hercules was at a loss how to drive the birds from the wood, Athena gave him brazen castanets, which she had received from Hephaestus. By clashing these on a certain mountain that overhung the lake, he scared the birds. They could not abide the sound, but fluttered up in a fright, and in that way Hercules shot them.

Seventh Labour: The Cretan Bull (II. v. 7)

The seventh labour he enjoined on him was to bring the Cretan bull. Acusilaus says that this was the bull that ferried across Europa for Zeus; but some say it was the bull that Poseidon sent up from the sea when Minos promised to sacrifice to Poseidon what should appear out of the sea. And they say that when he saw the beauty of the bull he sent it away to the herds and sacrificed another to Poseidon; at which the god was angry and made the bull savage. To attack this bull Hercules came to Crete, and when, in reply to his request for aid, Minos told him to fight and catch the bull for himself, he caught it and brought it to Eurystheus, and having shown it to him he let it afterwards go free. But the bull roamed to Sparta and all Arcadia, and traversing the Isthmus arrived at Marathon in Attica and harried the inhabitants.

Eighth Labour: The Mares of Diomedes (II. v. 8)

The eighth labour he enjoined on him was to bring the mares of Diomedes the Thracian to Mycenae. Now this Diomedes was a son of Ares and Cyrene, and he was king of the Bistones, a very war-like Thracian people, and he owned man-eating mares. So Hercules sailed with a band of volunteers, and having overpowered the grooms who were in charge of the mangers, he drove the mares to the sea. When the Bistones in arms came to the rescue, he committed the mares to the guardianship of Abderus, who was a son of Hermes, a native of Opus in Locris, and a minion of Hercules; but the mares killed him by dragging him after them. But Hercules fought against the Bistones, slew Diomedes and compelled the rest to flee. And he founded a city Abdera beside the grave of Abderus who had been done to death, and bringing the mares he gave them to Eurystheus. But Eurystheus let them go, and they came to Mount Olympus, as it is called, and there they were destroyed by the wild beasts.

Ninth Labour: The Belt of Hippolyte (II. v. 9)

The ninth labour he enjoined on Hercules was to bring the belt of Hippolyte. She was queen of the Amazons, who dwelt about the river Thermodon, a people great in war; for they cultivated the manly virtues, and if ever they gave birth to children through intercourse with the other sex, they reared the females; and they pinched off the right breasts that they might not be trammelled by them in throwing the javelin, but they kept the left breasts, that they might suckle. Now Hippolyte had the belt of Ares in token of her superiority to all the rest. Hercules was sent to fetch this belt because Admete, daughter of Eurystheus, desired to get it. So taking with him a band of volunteer comrades in a single ship he set sail and put in to the island of Paros, which was inhabited by the sons of Minos, to wit, Eurymedon, Chryses, Nephalion, and Philolaus. But it chanced that two of those in the ship landed and were killed by the sons of Minos. Indignant at this, Hercules killed the sons of Minos on the spot and besieged the rest closely, till they sent envoys to request that in the room of the murdered men he would take two, whom he pleased. So he raised the siege, and taking on board the sons of Androgeus, son of Minos, to wit, Alcaeus and Sthenelus, he came to Mysia, to the court of Lycus, son of Dascylus, and was entertained by him; and in a battle between him and the king of the Bebryces Hercules sided with Lycus and slew many, amongst others King Mygdon, brother of Amycus. And he took much land from the Bebryces and gave it to Lycus, who called it all Heraclea.

Having put in at the harbour of Themiscyra, he received a visit from Hippolyte, who inquired why he was come, and promised to give him the belt. But Hera in the likeness of an Amazon went up and down the multitude saying that the strangers who had arrived were carrying off the queen. So the Amazons in arms charged on horseback down on the ship. But when Hercules saw them in arms, he suspected treachery, and killing Hippolyte stripped her of her belt. And after fighting the rest he sailed away and touched at Troy.

But it chanced that the city was then in distress consequently on the wrath of Apollo and Poseidon. For desiring to put the wantonness of Laomedon to the proof, Apollo and Poseidon assumed the likeness of men and undertook to fortify Pergamum for wages. But when they had fortified it, he would not pay them their wages. Therefore Apollo sent a pestilence, and Poseidon a sea monster, which, carried up by a flood, snatched away the people of the plain. But as oracles foretold deliverance from these calamities if Laomedon would expose his daughter Hesione to be devoured by the sea monster, he exposed her by fastening her to the rocks near the sea. Seeing her exposed, Hercules promised to save her on condition of receiving from Laomedon the mares which Zeus had given in compensation for the rape of Ganymede. On Laomedon’s saying that he

would give them, Hercules killed the monster and saved Hesione. But when Laomedon would not give the stipulated reward, Hercules put to sea after threatening to make war on Troy.

And he touched at Aenus, where he was entertained by Poltys. And as he was sailing away he shot and killed on the Aenian beach a lewd fellow, Sarpedon, son of Poseidon and brother of Poltys. And having come to Thasos and subjugated the Thracians who dwelt in the island, he gave it to the sons of Androgeus to dwell in. From Thasos he proceeded to Torone, and there, being challenged to wrestle by Polygonus and Telegonus, sons of Proteus, son of Poseidon, he killed them in the wrestling match. And having brought the belt to Mycenae he gave it to Eurystheus.

Tenth Labour: The Kine of Geryon (II. v. 10)

As a tenth labour he was ordered to fetch the kine of Geryon from Erythia. Now Erythia was an island near the ocean; it is now called Gadira. This island was inhabited by Geryon, son of Chrysaor by Callirrhoe, daughter of Ocean. He had the body of three men grown together and joined in one at the waist, but parted in three from the flanks and thighs. He owned red kine, of which Eurytion was the herdsman and Orthus, the two-headed hound, begotten by Typhon on Echidna, was the watch-dog. So journeying through Europe to fetch the kine of Geryon he destroyed many wild beasts and set foot in Libya, and proceeding to Tartessus he erected as tokens of his journey two pillars over against each other at the boundaries of Europe and Libya. But being heated by the Sun on his journey, he bent his bow at the god, who in admiration of his hardihood, gave him a golden goblet in which he crossed the ocean. And having reached Erythia he lodged on Mount Abas. However the dog, perceiving him, rushed at him; but he smote it with his club, and when the herdsman Eurytion came to the help of the dog, Hercules killed him also. But Menoetes, who was there pasturing the kine of Hades, reported to Geryon what had occurred, and he, coming up with Hercules beside the river Anthemus, as he was driving away the kine, joined battle with him and was shot dead. And Hercules, embarking the kine in the goblet and sailing across to Tartessus, gave back the goblet to the Sun.

And passing through Abderia he came to Liguria, where Ialebion and Dercynus, sons of Poseidon, attempted to rob him of the kine, but he killed them and went on his way through Tyrrhenia. But at Rhegium a bull broke away and hastily plunging into the sea swam across to Sicily, and having passed through the neighbouring country since called Italy after it, for the Tyrrhenians called the bull italus, came to the plain of Eryx, who reigned over the Elymi. Now Eryx was a son of Poseidon, and he mingled the bull with his own herds. So Hercules entrusted the kine to Hephaestus and hurried away in search of the bull. He found it in the herds of Eryx, and when the king refused to surrender it unless Hercules should beat him in a wrestling bout, Hercules beat him thrice, killed him in the wrestling, and taking the bull drove it with the rest of the herd to the Ionian Sea. But when he came to the creeks of the sea, Hera afflicted the cows with a gadfly, and they dispersed among the skirts of the mountains of Thrace. Hercules went in pursuit, and having caught some, drove them to the Hellespont; but the remainder were thenceforth wild. Having with difficulty collected the cows, Hercules blamed the river Strymon, and whereas it had been navigable before, he made it unnavigable by filling it with rocks; and he conveyed the kine and gave them to Eurystheus, who sacrificed them to Hera.

Eleventh Labour: The Apples of the Hesperides (II. v. 11)

When the labours had been performed in eight years and a month, Eurystheus ordered Hercules, as an eleventh labour, to fetch golden apples from the Hesperides, for he did not acknowledge the labour of the cattle of Augeas nor that of the hydra. These apples were not, as some have said, in Libya, but on Atlas among the Hyperboreans. They were presented <by Earth> to Zeus after his marriage with Hera, and guarded by an immortal dragon with a hundred heads, offspring of Typhon and Echidna, which spoke with many and divers sorts of voices. With it the Hesperides also were on guard, to wit, Aegle, Erythia, Hesperia, and Arethusa. So journeying he came to the river Echedorus. And Cycnus, son of Ares and Pyrene, challenged him to single combat. Ares championed the cause of Cycnus and marshalled the combat, but a thunderbolt was hurled between the two and parted the combatants. And going on foot through Illyria and hastening to the river Eridanus he came to the nymphs, the daughters of Zeus and Themis. They revealed Nereus to him, and Hercules seized him while he slept, and though the god turned himself into all kinds of shapes, the hero bound him and did not release him till he had learned from him where were the apples and the Hesperides. Being informed, he traversed Libya. That country was then ruled by Antaeus, son of Poseidon, who used to kill strangers by forcing them to wrestle. Being forced to wrestle with him, Hercules hugged him, lifted him aloft, broke and killed him; for when he touched earth so it was that he waxed stronger, wherefore some said that he was a son of Earth.

After Libya he traversed Egypt. That country was then ruled by Busiris, a son of Poseidon by Lysianassa, daughter of Epaphus. This Busiris used to sacrifice strangers on an altar of Zeus in accordance with a certain oracle. For Egypt was visited with dearth for nine years, and Phrasius, a learned seer who had come from Cyprus, said that the dearth would cease if they slaughtered a stranger man in honour of Zeus every year. Busiris began by slaughtering the seer himself and continued to slaughter the strangers who landed. So Hercules also was seized and haled to the altars, but he burst his bonds and slew both Busiris and his son Amphidamas.

And traversing Asia he put in to Thermydrae, the harbour of the Lindians. And having loosed one of the bullocks from the cart of a cowherd, he sacrificed it and feasted. But the cowherd, unable to protect himself, stood on a certain mountain and cursed. Wherefore to this day, when they sacrifice to Hercules, they do it with curses.

And passing by Arabia he slew Emathion, son of Tithonus, and journeying through Libya to the outer sea he received the goblet from the Sun. And having crossed to the opposite mainland he shot on the Caucasus the eagle, offspring of Echidna and Typhon, that was devouring the liver of

Prometheus, and he released Prometheus, after choosing for himself the bond of olive, and to Zeus he presented Chiron, who, though immortal, consented to die in his stead.

Now Prometheus had told Hercules not to go himself after the apples but to send Atlas, first relieving him of the burden of the sphere; so when he was come to Atlas in the land of the Hyperboreans, he took the advice and relieved Atlas. But when Atlas had received three apples from the Hesperides, he came to Hercules, and not wishing to support the sphere <he said that he would himself carry the apples to Eurystheus, and bade Hercules hold up the sky in his stead. Hercules promised to do so, but succeeded by craft in putting it on Atlas instead. For at the advice of Prometheus he begged Atlas to hold up the sky till he should> put a pad on his head. When Atlas heard that, he laid the apples down on the ground and took the sphere from Hercules. And so Hercules picked up the apples and departed. But some say that he did not get them from Atlas, but that he plucked the apples himself after killing the guardian snake. And having brought the apples he gave them to Eurystheus. But he, on receiving them, bestowed them on Hercules, from whom Athena got them and conveyed them back again; for it was not lawful that they should be laid down anywhere.

Twelfth Labour: Cerberus (II. v. 12)

A twelfth labour imposed on Hercules was to bring Cerberus from Hades. Now this Cerberus had three heads of dogs, the tail of a dragon, and on his back the heads of all sorts of snakes. When Hercules was about to depart to fetch him, he went to Eumolpus at Eleusis, wishing to be initiated. However it was not then lawful for foreigners to be initiated: since he proposed to be initiated as the adoptive son of Pylius. But not being able to see the mysteries because he had not been cleansed of the slaughter of the centaurs, he was cleansed by Eumolpus and then initiated. And having come to Taenarum in Laconia, where is the mouth of the descent to Hades, he descended through it. But when the souls saw him, they fled, save Meleager and the Gorgon Medusa. And Hercules drew his sword against the Gorgon, as if she were alive, but he learned from Hermes that she was an empty phantom. And being come near to the gates of Hades he found Theseus and Pirithous, him who wooed Persephone in wedlock and was therefore bound fast. And when they beheld Hercules, they stretched out their hands as if they should be raised from the dead by his might. And Theseus, indeed, he took by the hand and raised up, but when he would have brought up Pirithous, the earth quaked and he let go. And he rolled away also the stone of Ascalaphus. And wishing to provide the souls with blood, he slaughtered one of the kine of Hades. But Menoetes, son of Ceuthonymus, who tended the kine, challenged Hercules to wrestle, and, being seized round the middle, had his ribs broken; howbeit, he was let off at the request of Persephone. When Hercules asked Pluto for Cerberus, Pluto ordered him to take the animal provided he mastered him without the use of the weapons which he carried. Hercules found him at the gates of Acheron, and, cased in his cuirass and covered by the lion’s skin, he flung his arms round the head of the brute, and though the dragon in its tail bit him, he never relaxed his grip and pressure till it yielded. So he carried it off and ascended through Troezen. But Demeter turned Ascalaphus into a short-eared owl, and Hercules, after showing Cerberus to Eurystheus, carried him back to Hades.

After the Labours (II. vi. 1–4)

After his labours Hercules went to Thebes and gave Megara to Iolaus, and, wishing himself to wed, he ascertained that Eurytus, prince of Oechalia, had proposed the hand of his daughter Iole as a prize to him who should vanquish himself and his sons in archery. So he came to Oechalia, and though he proved himself better than them at archery, yet he did not get the bride; for while Iphitus, the elder of Eurytus's sons, said that Iole should be given to Hercules, Eurytus and the others refused, and said they feared that, if he got children, he would again kill his offspring.

Not long after, some cattle were stolen from Euboea by Autolycus, and Eurytus supposed that it was done by Hercules; but Iphitus did not believe it and went to Hercules. And meeting him, as he came from Pherae after saving the dead Alcestis for Admetus, he invited him to seek the kine with him. Hercules promised to do so and entertained him; but going mad again he threw him from the walls of Tiryns. Wishing to be purified of the murder he repaired to Neleus, who was prince of the Pylians. And when Neleus rejected his request on the score of his friendship with Eurytus, he went to Amyclae and was purified by Deiphobus, son of Hippolytus. But being afflicted with a dire disease on account of the murder of Iphitus he went to Delphi and inquired how he might be rid of the disease. As the Pythian priestess answered him not by oracles, he was fain to plunder the temple, and, carrying off the tripod, to institute an oracle of his own. But Apollo fought him, and Zeus threw a thunderbolt between them. When they had thus been parted, Hercules received an oracle, which declared that the remedy for his disease was for him to be sold, and to serve for three years, and to pay compensation for the murder to Eurytus.

After the delivery of the oracle, Hermes sold Hercules, and he was bought by Omphale, daughter of Iardanes, queen of Lydia, to whom at his death her husband Tmolus had bequeathed the government. Eurytus did not accept the compensation when it was presented to him, but Hercules served Omphale as a slave, and in the course of his servitude he seized and bound the Cercopes at Ephesus; and as for Syleus in Aulis, who compelled passing strangers to dig, Hercules killed him with his daughter Xenodice, after burning the vines with the roots. And having put in to the island of Doliche, he saw the body of Icarus washed ashore and buried it, and he called the island Icaria instead of Doliche. In return Daedalus made a portrait statue of Hercules at Pisa, which Hercules mistook at night for living and threw a stone and hit it. And during the time of his servitude with Omphale it is said that the voyage to Colchis and the hunt of the Calydonian boar took place, and that Theseus on his way from Troezen cleared the Isthmus of malefactors.

After his servitude, being rid of his disease he mustered an army of noble volunteers and sailed for Ilium with eighteen ships of fifty oars each. And having come to port at Ilium, he left the

guard of the ships to Oicles and himself with the rest of the champions set out to attack the city. Howbeit Laomedon marched against the ships with the multitude and slew Oicles in battle, but being repulsed by the troops of Hercules, he was besieged. The siege once laid, Telamon was the first to breach the wall and enter the city, and after him Hercules. But when he saw that Telamon had entered it first, he drew his sword and rushed at him, loath that anybody should be reputed a better man than himself. Perceiving that, Telamon collected stones that lay to hand, and when Hercules asked him what he did, he said he was building an altar to Hercules the Glorious Victor. Hercules thanked him, and when he had taken the city and shot down Laomedon and his sons, except Podarces, he assigned Laomedon's daughter Hesione as a prize to Telamon and allowed her to take with her whomsoever of the captives she would. When she chose her brother Podarces, Hercules said that he must first be a slave and then be ransomed by her. So when he was being sold she took the veil from her head and gave it as a ransom; hence Podarces was called Priam.

Troy, Elis, Pylus and Lacedaemon (II. vii. 1–3)

When Hercules was sailing from Troy, Hera sent grievous storms, which so vexed Zeus that he hung her from Olympus. Hercules sailed to Cos, and the Coans, thinking he was leading a piratical squadron, endeavoured to prevent his approach by a shower of stones. But he forced his way in and took the city by night, and slew the king, Eurypylus, son of Poseidon by Astypalaea. And Hercules was wounded in the battle by Chalcedon; but Zeus snatched him away, so that he took no harm. And having laid waste Cos, he came through Athena's agency to Phlegra, and sided with the gods in their victorious war on the giants.

Not long afterwards he collected an Arcadian army, and being joined by volunteers from the first men in Greece he marched against Augeas. But Augeas, hearing of the war that Hercules was levying, appointed Eurytus and Cteatus generals of the Eleans. They were two men joined in one, who surpassed all of that generation in strength and were sons of Actor by Molione, though their father was said to be Poseidon; now Actor was a brother of Augeas. But it came to pass that on the expedition Hercules fell sick; hence he concluded a truce with the Molionides. But afterwards, being apprized of his illness, they attacked the army and slew many. On that occasion, therefore, Hercules beat a retreat; but afterwards at the celebration of the third Isthmian festival, when the Eleans sent the Molionides to take part in the sacrifices, Hercules waylaid and killed them at Cleonae, and marching on Elis took the city. And having killed Augeas and his sons, he restored Phyleus and bestowed on him the kingdom. He also celebrated the Olympian games and founded an altar of Pelops, and built six altars of the twelve gods.

After the capture of Elis he marched against Pylus, and having taken the city he slew Periclymenus, the most valiant of the sons of Neleus, who used to change his shape in battle. And he slew Neleus and his sons, except Nestor; for he was a youth and was being brought up among the Gerenians. In the fight he also wounded Hades, who was siding with the Pylians.

Having taken Pylus he marched against Lacedaemon, wishing to punish the sons of Hippocoon, for he was angry with them, both because they fought for Neleus, and still angrier because they had killed the son of Licymnius. For when he was looking at the palace of Hippocoon, a hound of the Molossian breed ran out and rushed at him, and he threw a stone and hit the dog, whereupon the Hippocoöntids darted out and despatched him with blows of their cudgels. It was to avenge his death that Hercules mustered an army against the Lacedaemonians. And having come to Arcadia he begged Cepheus to join him with his sons, of whom he had twenty. But fearing lest, if he quitted Tegea, the Argives would march against it, Cepheus refused to join the expedition. But Hercules had received from Athena a lock of the Gorgon's hair in a bronze jar and gave it to Sterope, daughter of Cepheus, saying that if an army advanced against the city, she

was to hold up the lock of hair thrice from the walls, and that, provided she did not look before her, the enemy would be turned to flight. That being so, Cepheus and his sons took the field, and in the battle he and his sons perished, and besides them Iphicles, the brother of Hercules. Having killed Hippocoon and his sons and subjugated the city, Hercules restored Tyndareus and entrusted the kingdom to him.

Auge, Deianira and Oechalia (II. vii. 4–7)

Passing by Tegea, Hercules debauched Auge, not knowing her to be a daughter of Aleus. And she brought forth her babe secretly and deposited it in the precinct of Athena. But the country being wasted by a pestilence, Aleus entered the precinct and on investigation discovered his daughter's motherhood. So he exposed the babe on Mount Parthenius, and by the providence of the gods it was preserved: for a doe that had just cast her fawn gave it suck, and shepherds took up the babe and called it Telephus. And her father gave Auge to Nauplius, son of Poseidon, to sell far away in a foreign land; and Nauplius gave her to Teuthras, the prince of Teuthrania, who made her his wife.

And having come to Calydon, Hercules wooed Deianira, daughter of Oeneus. He wrestled for her hand with Achelous, who assumed the likeness of a bull; but Hercules broke off one of his horns. So Hercules married Deianira, but Achelous recovered the horn by giving the horn of Amalthea in its stead. Now Amalthea was a daughter of Haemonius, and she had a bull's horn, which, according to Pherecydes, had the power of supplying meat or drink in abundance, whatever one might wish.

And Hercules marched with the Calydonians against the Thesprotians, and having taken the city of Ephyra, of which Phylas was king, he had intercourse with the king's daughter Astyoche, and became the father of Tlepolemus. While he stayed among them, he sent word to Thespius to keep seven of his sons, to send three to Thebes and to despatch the remaining forty to the island of Sardinia to plant a colony. After these events, as he was feasting with Oeneus, he killed with a blow of his knuckles Eunomus, son of Architeles, when the lad was pouring water on his hands; now the lad was a kinsman of Oeneus. Seeing that it was an accident, the lad's father pardoned Hercules; but Hercules wished, in accordance with the law, to suffer the penalty of exile, and resolved to depart to Ceyx at Trachis. And taking Deianira with him, he came to the river Evenus, at which the centaur Nessus sat and ferried passengers across for hire, alleging that he had received the ferry from the gods for his righteousness. So Hercules crossed the river by himself, but on being asked to pay the fare he entrusted Deianira to Nessus to carry over. But he, in ferrying her across, attempted to violate her. She cried out, Hercules heard her, and shot Nessus to the heart when he emerged from the river. Being at the point of death, Nessus called Deianira to him and said that if she would have a love charm to operate on Hercules she should mix the seed he had dropped on the ground with the blood that flowed from the wound inflicted by the barb. She did so and kept it by her.

Going through the country of the Dryopes and being in lack of food, Hercules met Thiodamas driving a pair of bullocks; so he unloosed and slaughtered one of the bullocks and feasted. And

when he came to Ceyx at Trachis he was received by him and conquered the Dryopes.

And afterwards setting out from there, he fought as an ally of Aegimius, king of the Dorians. For the Lapiths, commanded by Coronus, made war on him in a dispute about the boundaries of the country; and being besieged he called in the help of Hercules, offering him a share of the country. So Hercules came to his help and slew Coronus and others, and handed the whole country over to Aegimius free. He slew also Laogoras, king of the Dryopes, with his children, as he was banqueting in a precinct of Apollo; for the king was a wanton fellow and an ally of the Lapiths. And as he passed by Itonus he was challenged to single combat by Cycnus a son of Ares and Pelopia; and closing with him Hercules slew him also. But when he was come to Ormenium, king Amyntor took arms and forbade him to march through; but when he would have hindered his passage, Hercules slew him also.

On his arrival at Trachis he mustered an army to attack Oechalia, wishing to punish Eurytus. Being joined by Arcadians, Melians from Trachis, and Epicnemidian Locrians, he slew Eurytus and his sons and took the city. After burying those of his own side who had fallen, to wit, Hippasus, son of Ceyx, and Argius and Melas, the sons of Licymnius, he pillaged the city and led Iole captive. And having put in at Cenaeum, a headland of Euboea, he built an altar of Cenaean Zeus. Intending to offer sacrifice, he sent the herald Lichas to Trachis to fetch fine raiment. From him Deianira learned about Iole, and fearing that Hercules might love that damsel more than herself, she supposed that the spilt blood of Nessus was in truth a love-charm, and with it she smeared the tunic. So Hercules put it on and proceeded to offer sacrifice. But no sooner was the tunic warmed than the poison of the hydra began to corrode his skin; and on that he lifted Lichas by the feet, hurled him down from the headland, and tore off the tunic, which clung to his body, so that his flesh was torn away with it. In such a sad plight he was carried on shipboard to Trachis: and Deianira, on learning what had happened, hanged herself. But Hercules, after charging Hyllus his elder son by Deianira, to marry Iole when he came of age, proceeded to Mount Oeta, in the Trachinian territory, and there constructed a pyre, mounted it, and gave orders to kindle it. When no one would do so, Poeas, passing by to look for his flocks, set a light to it. On him Hercules bestowed his bow. While the pyre was burning, it is said that a cloud passed under Hercules and with a peal of thunder wafted him up to heaven. Thereafter he obtained immortality, and being reconciled to Hera he married her daughter Hebe, by whom he had sons, Alexiares and Anicetus.