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THE ARGONAUTICA

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Vc

BOOK III

SUMMARY OF BOOK III

INVOCATION of the Muse, Erato (1-5).—Hera and Athena, after consultation, visit Cypris to ask the aid of her son Eros on behalf of the Argonauts (6-110).—Eros promises to pierce with an arrow Medea, daughter of Aeetes: Jason lays his plans before his comrades (111-209).—Arrival of Jason and a few chosen companions at the palace of Aeetes, which is described: Eros performs his promise (210-298).—Interview between Aeetes and the heroes: Jason undertakes the task imposed by the king as the price of obtaining the golden fleece (299-438).—Anguish of Medea because of her love for Jason (439-470).—On the advice of Argus, it is decided to apply for Medea's aid through Chalciope, mother of Argus and sister of Medea (471-575).—Plans of Aeetes against the Argonauts (576-608).—Medea promises Chalciope to aid her sons and their companions (609-743).—After long hesitation Medea prepares to carry magic drugs to Jason and goes with her attendants to meet him at Hecate's temple (744-911).—Interview

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of Jason and Medea : return of Medea to the palace (912-1162).—Aetes hands over the dragon's teeth to Jason's messengers : Jason offers a nocturnal sacrifice to Hecate (1163-1224).—Preparations of Jason : he yokes the fiery bulls, sows the dragon's teeth, and compels the giants who spring up to slay one another, himself joining in the slaughter : the task is accomplished (1225-1407).

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COME now, Erato, stand by my side, and say next how Jason brought back the fleece to Iolcus aided by the love of Medea. For thou sharest the power of Cypris, and by thy love-cares dost charm unwedded maidens ; wherefore to thee too is attached a name that tells of love.

Thus the heroes, unobserved, were waiting in ambush amid the thick reed-beds ; but Hera and Athena took note of them, and, apart from Zeus and the other immortals, entered a chamber and took counsel together ; and Hera first made trial of Athena :

“Do thou now first, daughter of Zeus, give advice. What must be done ? Wilt thou devise some scheme whereby they may seize the golden fleece of Aetes and bear it to Hellas, or can they deceive the king with soft words and so work persuasion ? Of a truth he is terribly overweening. Still it is right to shrink from no endeavour.”

Thus she spake, and at once Athena addressed her : “I too was pondering such thoughts in my heart, Hera, when thou didst ask me outright. But not yet do I think that I have conceived a scheme to aid the courage of the heroes, though I have balanced many plans.”

She ended, and the goddesses fixed their eyes on the ground at their feet, brooding apart ; and

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straightway Hera was the first to speak her thought :
“Come, let us go to Cypris; let both of us accost her
and urge her to bid her son (if only he will obey)
speed his shaft at the daughter of Aetes, the
enchantress, and charm her with love for Jason.
And I deem that by her device he will bring back
the fleece to Hellas.”

Thus she spake, and the prudent plan pleased
Athena, and she addressed her in reply with gentle
words :

“Hera, my father begat me to be a stranger to
the darts of love, nor do I know any charm to work
desire. But if the word pleases thee, surely I will
follow ; but thou must speak when we meet her.”

So she said, and starting forth they came to the
mighty palace of Cypris, which her husband, the
halt-footed god, had built for her when first he
brought her from Zeus to be his wife. And entering
the court they stood beneath the gallery of the
chamber where the goddess prepared the couch of
Hephaestus. But he had gone early to his forge
and anvils to a broad cavern in a floating island where
with the blast of flame he wrought all manner of
curious work ; and she all alone was sitting within, on
an inlaid seat facing the door. And her white
shoulders on each side were covered with the mantle
of her hair and she was parting it with a golden
comb and about to braid up the long tresses ; but
when she saw the goddesses before her, she stayed
and called them within, and rose from her seat and
placed them on couches. Then she herself sat
down, and with her hands gathered up the locks
still uncombed. And smiling she addressed them
with crafty words :

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“Good friends, what intent, what occasion brings you here after so long? Why have ye come, not too frequent visitors before, chief among goddesses that ye are?”

And to her Hera replied: “Thou dost mock us, but our hearts are stirred with calamity. For already on the river Phasis the son of Aeson moors his ship, he and his comrades in quest of the fleece. For all their sakes we fear terribly (for the task is nigh at hand) but most for Aeson’s son. Him will I deliver, though he sail even to Hades to free Ixion below from his brazen chains, as far as strength lies in my limbs, so that Pelias may not mock at having escaped an evil doom—Pelias who left me unhonoured with sacrifice. Moreover Jason was greatly loved by me before, ever since at the mouth of Anaurus in flood, as I was making trial of men’s righteousness, he met me on his return from the chase; and all the mountains and long ridged peaks were sprinkled with snow, and from them the torrents rolling down were rushing with a roar. And he took pity on me in the likeness of an old crone, and raising me on his shoulders himself bore me through the headlong tide. So he is honoured by me unceasingly; nor will Pelias pay the penalty of his outrage, unless thou wilt grant Jason his return.”

Thus she spake, and speechlessness seized Cypris. And beholding Hera supplicating her she felt awe, and then addressed her with friendly words: “Dread goddess, may no viler thing than Cypris ever be found, if I disregard thy eager desire in word or deed, whatever my weak arms can effect; and let there be no favour in return.”

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She spake, and Hera again addressed her with prudence: "It is not in need of might or of strength that we have come. But just quietly bid thy boy charm Aetes' daughter with love for Jason. For if she will aid him with her kindly counsel, easily do I think he will win the fleece of gold and return to Iolcus, for she is full of wiles."

Thus she spake, and Cypris addressed them both: "Hera and Athena, he will obey you rather than me. For unabashed though he is, there will be some slight shame in his eyes before you; but he has no respect for me, but ever slights me in contentious mood. And, overborne by his naughtiness, I purpose to break his ill-sounding arrows and his bow in his very sight. For in his anger he has threatened that if I shall not keep my hands off him while he still masters his temper, I shall have cause to blame myself thereafter."

So she spake, and the goddesses smiled and looked at each other. But Cypris again spoke, vexed at heart: "To others my sorrows are a jest; nor ought I to tell them to all; I know them too well myself. But now, since this pleases you both, I will make the attempt and coax him, and he will not say me nay."

Thus she spake, and Hera took her slender hand and gently smiling, replied: "Perform this task, Cytherea, straightway, as thou sayest; and be not angry or contend with thy boy; he will cease hereafter to vex thee."

She spake, and left her seat, and Athena accompanied her and they went forth both hastening back. And Cypris went on her way through the glens of Olympus to find her boy. And she found him apart,

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in the blooming orchard of Zeus, not alone, but with him Ganymedes, whom once Zeus had set to dwell among the immortal gods, being enamoured of his beauty. And they were playing for golden dice, as like-minded boys are wont to do. And already greedy Eros was holding the palm of his left hand quite full of them under his breast, standing upright; and on the bloom of his cheeks a sweet blush was glowing. But the other sat crouching hard by, silent and downcast, and he had two dice left which he threw one after the other, and was angered by the loud laughter of Eros. And lo, losing them straightway with the former, he went off empty-handed, helpless, and noticed not the approach of Cypris. And she stood before her boy, and laying her hand on his lips, addressed him :

“Why dost thou smile in triumph, unutterable rogue? Hast thou cheated him thus, and unjustly overcome the innocent child? Come, be ready to perform for me the task I will tell thee of, and I will give thee Zeus’ all-beauteous plaything—the one which his dear nurse Adrasteia made for him, while he still lived a child, with childish ways, in the Idaean cave—a well-rounded ball; no better toy wilt thou get from the hands of Hephaestus. All of gold are its zones, and round each double seams run in a circle; but the stitches are hidden, and a dark blue spiral overlays them all. But if thou shouldst cast it with thy hands, lo, like a star, it sends a flaming track through the sky. This I will give thee; and do thou strike with thy shaft and charm the daughter of Aetes with love for Jason; and let there be no loitering. For then my thanks would be the slighter.”

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Thus she spake, and welcome were her words to the listening boy. . And he threw down all his toys, and eagerly seizing her robe on this side and on that, clung to the goddess. And he implored her to bestow the gift at once ; but she, facing him with kindly words, touched his cheeks, kissed him and drew him to her, and replied with a smile :

“ Be witness now thy dear head and mine, that surely I will give thee the gift and deceive thee not, if thou wilt strike with thy shaft Aetes’ daughter.”

She spoke, and he gathered up his dice, and having well counted them all threw them into his mother’s gleaming lap. And straightway with golden baldric he slung round him his quiver from where it leant against a tree-trunk, and took up his curved bow. And he fared forth through the fruitful orchard of the palace of Zeus. Then he passed through the gates of Olympus high in air ; hence is a downward path from heaven ; and the twin poles rear aloft steep mountain tops—the highest crests of earth, where the risen sun grows ruddy with his first beams. And beneath him there appeared now the life-giving earth and cities of men and sacred streams of rivers, and now in turn mountain peaks and the ocean all around, as he swept through the vast expanse of air. x

Now the heroes apart in ambush, in a back-water of the river, were met in council, sitting on the benches of their ship. And Aeson’s son himself was speaking among them ; and they were listening silently in their places sitting row upon row : “ My friends, what pleases myself that will I say out ; it is for you to bring about its fulfilment. For in

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common is our task, and common to all alike is the right of speech ; and he who in silence withholds his thought and his counsel, let him know that it is he alone that bereaves this band of its home-return. Do ye others rest here in the ship quietly with your arms ; but I will go to the palace of Aetes, taking with me the sons of Phrixus and two comrades as well. And when I meet him I will first make trial with words to see if he will be willing to give up the golden fleece for friendship's sake or not, but trusting to his might will set at nought our quest. For so, learning his frowardness first from himself, we will consider whether we shall meet him in battle, or some other plan shall avail us, if we refrain from the war-cry. And let us not merely by force, before putting words to the test, deprive him of his own possession. But first it is better to go to him and win his favour by speech. Oftentimes, I ween, does speech accomplish at need what prowess could hardly carry through, smoothing the path in manner befitting. And he once welcomed noble Phrixus, a fugitive from his stepmother's wiles and the sacrifice prepared by his father. For all men everywhere, even the most shameless, reverence the ordinance of Zeus, god of strangers, and regard it."

Thus he spake, and the youths approved the words of Aeson's son with one accord, nor was there one to counsel otherwise. And then he summoned to go with him the sons of Phrixus, and Telamon and Augeias ; and himself took Hermes' wand ; and at once they passed forth from the ship beyond the reeds and the water to dry land, towards the rising ground of the plain. The plain, I wis, is called

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Circe's; and here in line grow many willows and osiers, on whose topmost branches hang corpses bound with cords. For even now it is an abomination with the Colchians to burn dead men with fire; nor is it lawful to place them in the earth and raise a mound above, but to wrap them in untanned oxhides and suspend them from trees far from the city. And so earth has an equal portion with air, seeing that they bury the women; for that is the custom of their land.

And as they went Hera with friendly thought spread a thick mist through the city, that they might fare to the palace of Aetes unseen by the countless hosts of the Colchians. But soon when from the plain they came to the city and Aetes' palace, then again Hera dispersed the mist. And they stood at the entrance, marvelling at the king's courts and the wide gates and columns which rose in ordered lines round the walls; and high up on the palace a coping of stone rested on brazen triglyphs. And silently they crossed the threshold. And close by garden vines covered with green foliage were in full bloom, lifted high in air. And beneath them ran four fountains, ever-flowing, which Hephaestus had delved out. One was gushing with milk, one with wine, while the third flowed with fragrant oil; and the fourth ran with water, which grew warm at the setting of the Pleiads, and in turn at their rising bubbled forth from the hollow rock, cold as ice. Such then were the wondrous works that the craftsman-god Hephaestus had fashioned in the palace of Cytaean Aetes. And he wrought for him bulls with feet of bronze, and their mouths were of bronze, and from them they breathed

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out a terrible flame of fire ; moreover he forged a plough of unbending adamant, all in one piece, in payment of thanks to Helios, who had taken the god up in his chariot when faint from the Phlegraean fight.¹ And here an inner-court was built, and round it were many well-fitted doors and chambers here and there, and all along on each side was a richly-wrought gallery. And on both sides loftier buildings stood obliquely. In one, which was the loftiest, lordly Aeetes dwelt with his queen ; and in another dwelt Apsyrtus, son of Aeetes, whom a Caucasian nymph, Asterodeia, bare before he made Eidyia his wedded wife, the youngest daughter of Tethys and Oceanus. And the sons of the Colchians called him by the new name of Phaëthon,² because he outshone all the youths. The other buildings the handmaidens had, and the two daughters of Aeetes, Chalciopé and Medea. Medea then [they found] going from chamber to chamber in search of her sister, for Hera detained her within that day ; but beforetime she was not wont to haunt the palace, but all day long was busied in Hecate's temple, since she herself was the priestess of the goddess. And when she saw them she cried aloud, and quickly Chalciopé caught the sound ; and her maids, throwing down at their feet their yarn and their thread, rushed forth all in a throng. And she, beholding her sons among them, raised her hands aloft through joy ; and so they likewise greeted their mother, and when they saw her embraced her in their gladness ; and she with many sobs spoke thus :

¹ *i.e.* the fight between the gods and the giants.

² *i.e.* the Shining One.

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“After all then, ye were not destined to leave me in your heedlessness and to wander far; but fate has turned you back. Poor wretch that I am! What a yearning for Hellas from some woeful madness seized you at the behest of your father Phrixus. Bitter sorrows for my heart did he ordain when dying. And why should ye go to the city of Orchomenus, whoever this Orchomenus is, for the sake of Athamas' wealth, leaving your mother alone to bear her grief?”

Such were her words; and Aetes came forth last of all and Eidyia herself came, the queen of Aetes, on hearing the voice of Chalciope; and straightway all the court was filled with a throng. Some of the thralls were busied with a mighty bull, others with the axe were cleaving dry billets, and others heating with fire water for the baths; nor was there one who relaxed his toil, serving the king

Meantime Eros passed unseen through the grey mist, causing confusion, as when against grazing heifers rises the gadfly, which oxherds call the breese. And quickly beneath the lintel in the porch he strung his bow and took from the quiver an arrow unshot before, messenger of pain. And with swift feet unmarked he passed the threshold and keenly glanced around; and gliding close by Aeson's son he laid the arrow-notch on the cord in the centre, and drawing wide apart with both hands he shot at Medea; and speechless amazement seized her soul. But the god himself flashed back again from the high-roofed hall, laughing loud; and the bolt burnt deep down in the maiden's heart, like a flame; and ever she kept darting bright glances straight up at Aeson's son, and within her breast her

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heart panted fast through anguish, all remembrance left her, and her soul melted with the sweet pain. And as a poor woman heaps dry twigs round a blazing brand—a daughter of toil, whose task is the spinning of wool, that she may kindle a blaze at night beneath her roof, when she has waked very early—and the flame waxing wondrous great from the small brand consumes all the twigs together; so, coiling round her heart, burnt secretly Love the destroyer; and the hue of her soft cheeks went and came, now pale, now red, in her soul's distraction.

Now when the thralls had laid a banquet ready before them, and they had refreshed themselves with warm baths, gladly did they please their souls with meat and drink. And thereafter Aetes questioned the sons of his daughter, addressing them with these words:

“Sons of my daughter and of Phrixus, whom beyond all strangers I honoured in my halls, how have ye come returning back to Aea? Did some calamity cut short your escape in the midst? Ye did not listen when I set before you the boundless length of the way. For I marked it once, whirled along in the chariot of my father Helios, when he was bringing my sister Circe to the western land and we came to the shore of the Tyrrhenian mainland, where even now she abides, exceeding far from Colchis. But what pleasure is there in words? Do ye tell me plainly what has been your fortune, and who these men are, your companions, and where from your hollow ship ye came ashore.”

Such were his questions, and Argus, before all his brethren, being fearful for the mission of Aeson's son, gently replied, for he was the elder-born:

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“ Aetes, that ship forthwith stormy blasts tore asunder, and ourselves, crouching on the beams, a wave drove on to the beach of the isle of Enyalius¹ in the murky night; and some god preserved us. For even the birds of Ares that haunted the desert isle beforetime, not even them did we find. But these men had driven them off, having landed from their ship on the day before; and the will of Zeus taking pity on us, or some fate, detained them there, since they straightway gave us both food and clothing in abundance, when they heard the illustrious name of Phrixus and thine own; for to thy city are they faring. And if thou dost wish to know their errand, I will not hide it from thee. A certain king, vehemently longing to drive this man far from his fatherland and possessions, because in might he outshone all the sons of Aeolus, sends him to voyage hither on a bootless venture; and asserts that the stock of Aeolus will not escape the heart-grieving wrath and rage of implacable Zeus, nor the unbearable curse and vengeance due for Phrixus, until the fleece comes back to Hellas. And their ship was fashioned by Pallas Athena, not such a one as are the ships among the Colchians, on the vilest of which we chanced. For the fierce waves and wind broke her utterly to pieces; but the other holds firm with her bolts, even though all the blasts should buffet her. And with equal swiftness she speedeth before the wind and when the crew ply the oar with unresting hands. And he hath gathered in her the mightiest heroes of all Achaea, and hath come to thy city from wandering far through cities and gulfs of the dread ocean, in the hope that

¹ A name of Ares.

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thou wilt grant him the fleece. But as thou dost please, so shall it be, for he cometh not to use force, but is eager to pay thee a recompense for the gift. He has heard from me of thy bitter foes the Sauromatae, and he will subdue them to thy sway. And if thou desirest to know their names and lineage I will tell thee all. This man on whose account the rest were gathered from Hellas, they call Jason, son of Aeson, whom Cretheus begat. And if in truth he is of the stock of Cretheus himself, thus he would be our kinsman on the father's side. For Cretheus and Athamas were both sons of Aeolus; and Phrixus was the son of Athamas, son of Aeolus. And here, if thou hast heard at all of the seed of Helios, thou dost behold Augeias; and this is Telamon sprung from famous Aeacus; and Zeus himself begat Aeacus. And so all the rest, all the comrades that follow him, are the sons or grandsons of the immortals."

Such was the tale of Argus; but the king at his words was filled with rage as he heard; and his heart was lifted high in wrath. And he spake in heavy displeasure; and was angered most of all with the sons of Chalciopé; for he deemed that on their account the strangers had come; and in his fury his eyes flashed forth beneath his brows:

"Begone from my sight, felons, straightway, ye and your tricks, from the land, ere someone see a fleece and a Phrixus to his sorrow. Banded together with your friends from Hellas, not for the fleece, but to seize my sceptre and royal power have ye come hither. Had ye not first tasted of my table, surely

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would I have cut out your tongues and hewn off both hands and sent you forth with your feet alone, so that ye might be stayed from starting hereafter. And what lies have ye uttered against the blessed gods ! ”

Thus he spake in his wrath ; and mightily from its depths swelled the heart of Aeacus' son, and his soul within longed to speak a deadly word in defiance, but Aeson's son checked him, for he himself first made gentle answer :

“ Aeetes, bear with this armed band, I pray. For not in the way thou deemest have we come to thy city and palace, no, nor yet with such desires. For who would of his own will dare to cross so wide a sea for the goods of a stranger? But fate and the ruthless command of a presumptuous king urged me. Grant a favour to thy suppliants, and to all Hellas will I publish a glorious fame of thee ; yea, we are ready now to pay thee a swift recompense in war, whether it be the Sauromatae or some other people that thou art eager to subdue to thy sway.”

He spake, flattering him with gentle utterance ; but the king's soul brooded a twofold purpose within him, whether he should attack and slay them on the spot or should make trial of their might. And this, as he pondered, seemed the better way, and he addressed Jason in answer :

“ Stranger, why needest thou go through thy tale to the end ? For if ye are in truth of heavenly race, or have come in no wise inferior to me, to win the goods of strangers, I will give thee the fleece to bear away, if thou dost wish, when I have tried thee. For against brave men I bear no grudge, such as ye yourselves tell me of him who bears sway in Hellas.

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And the trial of your courage and might shall be a contest which I myself can compass with my hands, deadly though it be. Two bulls with feet of bronze I have that pasture on the plain of Ares, breathing forth flame from their jaws; them do I yoke and drive over the stubborn field of Ares, four plough-gates; and quickly cleaving it with the share up to the headland, I cast into the furrows for seed, not the corn of Demeter, but the teeth of a dread serpent that grow up into the fashion of armed men; them I slay at once, cutting them down beneath my spear as they rise against me on all sides. In the morning do I yoke the oxen, and at eventide I cease from the harvesting. And thou, if thou wilt accomplish such deeds as these, on that very day shalt carry off the fleece to the king's palace; ere that time comes I will not give it, expect it not. For indeed it is unseemly that a brave man should yield to a coward."

Thus he spake; and Jason, fixing his eyes on the ground, sat just as he was, speechless, helpless in his evil plight. For a long time he turned the matter this way and that, and could in no way take on him the task with courage, for a mighty task it seemed; and at last he made reply with crafty words:

"With thy plea of right, Aetes, thou dost shut me in overmuch. Wherefore also I will dare that contest, monstrous as it is, though it be my doom to die. For nothing will fall upon men more dread than dire necessity, which indeed constrained me to come hither at a king's command."

Thus he spake, smitten by his helpless plight; and the king with grim words addressed him, sore

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troubled as he was : " Go forth now to the gathering, since thou art eager for the toil ; but if thou shouldst fear to lift the yoke upon the oxen or shrink from the deadly harvesting, then all this shall be my care, so that another too may shudder to come to a man that is better than he."

He spake outright ; and Jason rose from his seat, and Augeias and Telamon at once ; and Argus followed alone, for he signed to his brothers to stay there on the spot meantime ; and so they went forth from the hall. And wonderfully among them all shone the son of Aeson for beauty and grace ; and the maiden looked at him with stealthy glance, holding her bright veil aside, her heart smouldering with pain ; and her soul creeping like a dream flitted in his track as he went. So they passed forth from the palace sorely troubled. And Chalciopè, shielding herself from the wrath of Aetes, had gone quickly to her chamber with her sons. And Medea likewise followed, and much she brooded in her soul all the cares that the Loves awaken. And before her eyes the vision still appeared—himself what like he was, with what vesture he was clad, what things he spake, how he sat on his seat, how he moved forth to the door—and as she pondered she deemed there never was such another man ; and ever in her ears rung his voice and the honey-sweet words which he uttered. And she feared for him, lest the oxen or Aetes with his own hand should slay him ; and she mourned him as though already slain outright, and in her affliction a round tear through very grievous pity coursed down her cheek ; and gently weeping she lifted up her voice aloud :

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“Why does this grief come upon me, poor wretch? Whether he be the best of heroes now about to perish, or the worst, let him go to his doom. Yet I would that he had escaped unharmed; yea, may this be so, revered goddess, daughter of Perses, may he avoid death and return home; but if it be his lot to be o’ermastered by the oxen, may he first learn this, that I at least do not rejoice in his cruel calamity.”

Thus then was the maiden’s heart racked by love-cares. But when the others had gone forth from the people and the city, along the path by which at the first they had come from the plain, then Argus addressed Jason with these words :

“Son of Aeson, thou wilt despise the counsel which I will tell thee, but, though in evil plight, it is not fitting to forbear from the trial. Ere now thou hast heard me tell of a maiden that uses sorcery under the guidance of Hecate, Perses’ daughter. If we could win her aid there will be no dread, methinks, of thy defeat in the contest; but terribly do I fear that my mother will not take this task upon her. Nevertheless I will go back again to entreat her, for a common destruction overhangs us all.”

He spake with goodwill, and Jason answered with these words: “Good friend, if this is good in thy sight, I say not nay. Go and move thy mother, beseeching her aid with prudent words; pitiful indeed is our hope when we have put our return in the keeping of women.” So he spake, and quickly they reached the back-water. And their comrades joyfully questioned them, when they saw them close at hand; and to them spoke Aeson’s son grieved at heart :

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“My friends, the heart of ruthless Aetes is utterly filled with wrath against us, for not at all can the goal be reached either by me or by you who question me. He said that two bulls with feet of bronze pasture on the plain of Ares, breathing forth flame from their jaws. And with these he bade me plough the field, four plough-gates; and said that he would give me from a serpent’s jaws seed which will raise up earthborn men in armour of bronze; and on the same day I must slay them. This task—for there was nothing better to devise—I took on myself outright.”

Thus he spake; and to all the contest seemed one that none could accomplish, and long, quiet and silent, they looked at one another, bowed down with the calamity and their despair; but at last Peleus spake with courageous words among all the chiefs: “It is time to be counselling what we shall do. Yet there is not so much profit, I trow, in counsel as in the might of our hands. If thou then, hero son of Aeson, art minded to yoke Aetes’ oxen, and art eager for the toil, surely thou wilt keep thy promise and make thyself ready. But if thy soul trusts not her prowess utterly, then neither bestir thyself nor sit still and look round for some one else of these men. For it is not I who will flinch, since the bitterest pain will be but death.”

So spake the son of Aeacus; and Telamon’s soul was stirred, and quickly he started up in eagerness; and Idas rose up the third in his pride; and the twin sons of Tyndareus; and with them Oeneus’ son who was numbered among strong men, though even the soft down on his cheek showed not yet;

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with such courage was his soul uplifted. But the others gave way to these in silence. And straight-way Argus spake these words to those that longed for the contest :

“My friends, this indeed is left us at the last. But I deem that there will come to you some timely aid from my mother. Wherefore, eager though ye be, refrain and abide in your ship a little longer as before, for it is better to forbear than recklessly to choose an evil fate. There is a maiden, nurtured in the halls of Aetes, whom the goddess Hecate taught to handle magic herbs with exceeding skill—all that the land and flowing waters produce. With them is quenched the blast of unwearied flame, and at once she stays the course of rivers as they rush roaring on, and checks the stars and the paths of the sacred moon. Of her we bethought us as we came hither along the path from the palace, if haply my mother, her own sister, might persuade her to aid us in the venture. And if this is pleasing to you as well, surely on this very day will I return to the palace of Aetes to make trial ; and perchance with some god’s help shall I make the trial.”

Thus he spake, and the gods in their goodwill gave them a sign. A trembling dove in her flight from a mighty hawk fell from on high, terrified, into the lap of Aeson’s son, and the hawk fell impaled on the stern-ornament. And quickly Mopsus with prophetic words spake among them all :

“For you, friends, this sign has been wrought by the will of heaven ; in no other way is it possible to interpret its meaning better, than to seek out the maiden and entreat her with manifold skill. And I think she will not reject our prayer, if in truth

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Phineus said that our return should be with the help of the Cyprian goddess. It was her gentle bird that escaped death; and as my heart within me foresees according to this omen, so may it prove! But, my friends, let us call on Cytherea to aid us, and now at once obey the counsels of Argus."

He spake, and the warriors approved, remembering the injunctions of Phineus; but all alone leapt up Aphareian Idas and shouted loudly in terrible wrath: "Shame on us, have we come here fellow-voyagers with women, calling on Cypris for help and not on the mighty strength of Enyalius? And do ye look to doves and hawks to save yourselves from contests? Away with you, take thought not for deeds of war, but by supplication to beguile weakling girls."

Such were his eager words; and of his comrades many murmured low, but none uttered a word of answer back. And he sat down in wrath; and at once Jason roused them and uttered his own thought: "Let Argus set forth from the ship, since this pleases all; but we will now move from the river and openly fasten our hawsers to the shore. For surely it is not fitting for us to hide any longer cowering from the battle-cry."

So he spake, and straightway sent Argus to return in haste to the city; and they drew the anchors on board at the command of Aeson's son, and rowed the ship close to the shore, a little away from the back-water.

But straightway Aetes held an assembly of the Colchians far aloof from his palace at a spot where they sat in times before, to devise against the Minyae grim treachery and troubles. And he threatened

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that when first the oxen should have torn in pieces the man who had taken upon him to perform the heavy task, he would hew down the oak grove above the wooded hill, and burn the ship and her crew, that so they might vent forth in ruin their grievous insolence, for all their haughty schemes. For never would he have welcomed the Aeolid Phrixus as a guest in his halls, in spite of his sore need, Phrixus, who surpassed all strangers in gentleness and fear of the gods, had not Zeus himself sent Hermes his messenger down from heaven, so that he might meet with a friendly host; much less would pirates coming to his land be let go scatheless for long, men whose care it was to lift their hands and seize the goods of others, and to weave secret webs of guile, and harry the steadings of herdsmen with ill-sounding forays. And he said that besides all that the sons of Phrixus should pay a fitting penalty to himself for returning in consort with evil-doers, that they might recklessly drive him from his honour and his throne; for once he had heard a baleful prophecy from his father Helios, that he must avoid the secret treachery and schemes of his own offspring and their crafty mischief. Wherefore he was sending them, as they desired, to the Achaean land at the bidding of their father—a long journey. Nor had he ever so slight a fear of his daughters, that they would form some hateful scheme, nor of his son Apsyrtus; but this curse was being fulfilled in the children of Chalciopé. And he proclaimed terrible things in his rage against the strangers, and loudly threatened to keep watch over the ship and its crew, so that no one might escape calamity.

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Meantime Argus, going to Aetes' palace, with manifold pleading besought his mother to pray Medea's aid; and Chalciope herself already had the same thoughts, but fear checked her soul lest haply either fate should withstand and she should entreat her in vain, all distraught as she would be at her father's deadly wrath, or, if Medea yielded to her prayers, her deeds should be laid bare and open to view.

Now a deep slumber had relieved the maiden from her love-pains as she lay upon her couch. But straightway fearful dreams, deceitful, such as trouble one in grief, assailed her. And she thought that the stranger had taken on him the contest, not because he longed to win the ram's fleece, and that he had not come on that account to Aetes' city, but to lead her away, his wedded wife, to his own home; and she dreamed that herself contended with the oxen and wrought the task with exceeding ease; and that her own parents set at naught their promise, for it was not the maiden they had challenged to yoke the oxen but the stranger himself; from that arose a contention of doubtful issue between her father and the strangers; and both laid the decision upon her, to be as she should direct in her mind. But she suddenly, neglecting her parents, chose the stranger. And measureless anguish seized them and they shouted out in their wrath; and with the cry sleep released its hold upon her. Quivering with fear she started up, and stared round the walls of her chamber, and with difficulty did she gather her spirit within her as before, and lifted her voice aloud:

“ Poor wretch, how have gloomy dreams affrighted me! I fear that this voyage of the heroes will

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bring some great evil. My heart is trembling for the stranger. Let him woo some Achaean girl far away among his own folk ; let maidenhood be mine and the home of my parents. Yet, taking to myself a reckless heart, I will no more keep aloof but will make trial of my sister to see if she will entreat me to aid in the contest, through grief for her own sons ; this would quench the bitter pain in my heart."

She spake, and rising from her bed opened the door of her chamber, bare-footed, clad in one robe ; and verily she desired to go to her sister, and crossed the threshold. And for long she stayed there at the entrance of her chamber, held back by shame ; and she turned back once more ; and again she came forth from within, and again stole back ; and idly did her feet bear her this way and that ; yea, as oft as she went straight on, shame held her within the chamber, and though held back by shame, bold desire kept urging her on. Thrice she made the attempt and thrice she checked herself, the fourth time she fell on her bed face downward, writhing in pain. And as when a bride in her chamber bewails her youthful husband, to whom her brothers and parents have given her, nor yet does she hold converse with all her attendants for shame and for thinking of him ; but she sits apart in her grief ; and some doom has destroyed him, before they have had pleasure of each other's charms ; and she with heart on fire silently weeps, beholding her widowed couch, in fear lest the women should mock and revile her : like to her did Medea lament. And suddenly as she was in the midst of her tears, one of

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the handmaids came forth and noticed her, one who was her youthful attendant; and straightway she told Chalciopé, who sat in the midst of her sons devising how to win over her sister. And when Chalciopé heard the strange tale from the handmaid, not even so did she disregard it. And she rushed in dismay from her chamber right on to the chamber where the maiden lay in her anguish, having torn her cheeks on each side; and when Chalciopé saw her eyes all dimmed with tears, she thus addressed her:

“Ah me, Medea, why dost thou weep so? What hath befallen thee? What terrible grief has entered thy heart? Has some heaven-sent disease enwrapped thy frame, or hast thou heard from our father some deadly threat concerning me and my sons? Would that I did not behold this home of my parents, or the city, but dwelt at the ends of the earth, where not even the name of Colchians is known!”

Thus she spake, and her sister's cheeks flushed; and though she was eager to reply, long did maiden shame restrain her. At one moment the word rose on the end of her tongue, at another it fluttered back deep within her breast. And often through her lovely lips it strove for utterance; but no sound came forth; till at last she spoke with guileful words; for the bold Loves were pressing her hard:

“Chalciopé, my heart is all trembling for thy sons, lest my father forthwith destroy them together with the strangers. Slumbering just now in a short-lived sleep such a ghastly dream did I see—may some god forbid its fulfilment and never mayst thou win for thyself bitter care on thy sons' account.”

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She spake, making trial of her sister to see if she first would entreat help for her sons. And utterly unbearable grief surged over Chalciope's soul for fear at what she heard; and then she replied: "Yea, I myself too have come to thee in eager furtherance of this purpose, if thou wouldst haply devise with me and prepare some help. But swear by Earth and Heaven that thou wilt keep secret in thy heart what I shall tell thee, and be fellow-worker with me. I implore thee by the blessed gods, by thyself and by thy parents, not to see them destroyed by an evil doom piteously; or else may I die with my dear sons and come back hereafter from Hades an avenging Fury to haunt thee."

Thus she spake, and straightway a torrent of tears gushed forth, and low down she clasped her sister's knees with both hands and let her head sink on to her breast. Then they both made piteous lamentation over each other, and through the halls rose the faint sound of women weeping in anguish. Medea, sore troubled, first addressed her sister:

"God help thee, what healing can I bring thee for what thou speakest of, horrible curses and Furies? Would that it were firmly in my power to save thy sons! Be witness that mighty oath of the Colchians by which thou urgest me to swear, the great Heaven, and Earth beneath, mother of the gods, that as far as strength lies in me, never shalt thou fail of help, if only thy prayers can be accomplished."

She spake, and Chalciope thus replied: "Couldst thou not then, for the stranger—who himself craves thy aid—devise some trick or some wise thought to win the contest, for the sake of my sons? And from

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him has come Argus urging me to try to win thy help; I left him in the palace meantime while I came hither."

Thus she spake, and Medea's heart bounded with joy within her, and at once her fair cheeks flushed, and a mist swam before her melting eyes, and she spake as follows: "Chalciope, as is dear and delightful to thee and thy sons, even so will I do. Never may the dawn appear again to my eyes, never mayst thou see me living any longer, if I should take thought for anything before thy life or thy sons' lives, for they are my brothers, my dear kinsmen and youthful companions. So do I declare myself to be thy sister, and thy daughter too, for thou didst lift me to thy breast when an infant equally with them, as I ever heard from my mother in past days. But go, bury my kindness in silence, so that I may carry out my promise unknown to my parents; and at dawn I will bring to Hecate's temple charms to cast a spell upon the bulls."

Thus Chalciope went back from the chamber, and made known to her sons the help given by her sister. And again did shame and hateful fear seize Medea thus left alone, that she should devise such deeds for a man in her father's despite.

Then did night draw darkness over the earth; and on the sea sailors from their ships looked towards the Bear and the stars of Orion; and now the wayfarer and the warder longed for sleep, and the pall of slumber wrapped round the mother whose children were dead; nor was there any more

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the barking of dogs through the city, nor sound of men's voices ; but silence held the blackening gloom. But not indeed upon Medea came sweet sleep. For in her love for Aeson's son many cares kept her wakeful, and she dreaded the mighty strength of the bulls, beneath whose fury he was like to perish by an unseemly fate in the field of Ares. And fast did her heart throb within her breast, as a sunbeam quivers upon the walls of a house when flung up from water, which is just poured forth in a caldron or a pail may be ; and hither and thither on the swift eddy does it dart and dance along ; even so the maiden's heart quivered in her breast. And the tear of pity flowed from her eyes, and ever within anguish tortured her, a smouldering fire through her frame, and about her fine nerves and deep down beneath the nape of the neck where the pain enters keenest, whenever the unwearied Loves direct against the heart their shafts of agony. And she thought now that she would give him the charms to cast a spell on the bulls, now that she would not, and that she herself would perish ; and again that she would not perish and would not give the charms, but just as she was would endure her fate in silence. Then sitting down she wavered in mind and said :

“ Poor wretch, must I toss hither and thither in woe ? On every side my heart is in despair ; nor is there any help for my pain ; but it burneth ever thus. Would that I had been slain by the swift shafts of Artemis before I had set eyes on him, before Chalciopé's sons reached the Achæan land. Some god or some Fury brought them hither for our grief, a cause of many tears. Let him perish in the contest if it be his lot to die in the field. For how

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could I prepare the charms without my parents' knowledge? What story can I tell them? What trick, what cunning device for aid can I find? If I see him alone, apart from his comrades, shall I greet him? Ill-starred that I am! I cannot hope that I should rest from my sorrows even though he perished; then will evil come to me when he is bereft of life. Perish all shame, perish all glory; may he, saved by my effort, go scatheless wherever his heart desires. But as for me, on the day when he bides the contest in triumph, may I die either straining my neck in the noose from the roof-tree or tasting drugs destructive of life. But even so, when I am dead, they will fling out taunts against me; and every city far away will ring with my doom, and the Colchian women, tossing my name on their lips hither and thither, will revile me with unseemly mocking—the maid who cared so much for a stranger that she died, the maid who disgraced her home and her parents, yielding to a mad passion. And what disgrace will not be mine? Alas for my infatuation! Far better would it be for me to forsake life this very night in my chamber by some mysterious fate, escaping all slanderous reproach, before I complete such nameless dishonour."

She spake, and brought a casket wherein lay many drugs, some for healing, others for killing, and placing it upon her knees she wept. And she drenched her bosom with ceaseless tears, which flowed in torrents as she sat, bitterly bewailing her own fate. And she longed to choose a murderous drug to taste it, and now she was loosening the bands of the casket eager to take it forth, unhappy maid! But suddenly a deadly fear of

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hateful Hades came upon her heart. And long she held back in speechless horror, and all around her thronged visions of the pleasing cares of life. She thought of all the delightful things that are among the living, she thought of her joyous play-mates, as a maiden will; and the sun grew sweeter than ever to behold, seeing that in truth her soul yearned for all. And she put the casket again from off her knees, all changed by the prompting of Hera, and no more did she waver in purpose; but longed for the rising dawn to appear quickly, that she might give him the charms to work the spell as she had promised, and meet him face to face. And often did she loosen the bolts of her door, to watch for the faint gleam: and welcome to her did the dayspring shed its light, and folk began to stir throughout the city.

Then Argus bade his brothers remain there to learn the maiden's mind and plans, but himself turned back and went to the ship.

Now soon as ever the maiden saw the light of dawn, with her hands she gathered up her golden tresses which were floating round her shoulders in careless disarray, and bathed her tear-stained cheeks, and made her skin shine with ointment sweet as nectar; and she donned a beautiful robe, fitted with well-bent clasps, and above on her head, divinely fair, she threw a veil gleaming like silver. And there, moving to and fro in the palace, she trod the ground forgetful of the heaven-sent woes thronging round her and of others that were destined to follow. And she called to her maids. Twelve they were, who lay during the night in the vestibule of her fragrant chamber, young as herself, not yet

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sharing the bridal couch, and she bade them hastily yoke the mules to the chariot to bear her to the beauteous shrine of Hecate. Thereupon the handmaids were making ready the chariot; and Medea meanwhile took from the hollow casket a charm which men say is called the charm of Prometheus. If a man should anoint his body therewithal, having first appeased the Maiden, the only-begotten, with sacrifice by night, surely that man could not be wounded by the stroke of bronze nor would he flinch from blazing fire; but for that day he would prove superior both in prowess and in might. It shot up first-born when the ravening eagle on the rugged flanks of Caucasus let drip to the earth the blood-like ichor¹ of tortured Prometheus. And its flower appeared a cubit above ground in colour like the Corycian crocus, rising on twin stalks; but in the earth the root was like newly-cut flesh. The dark juice of it, like the sap of a mountain-oak, she had gathered in a Caspian shell to make the charm withal, when she had first bathed in seven ever-flowing streams, and had called seven times on Brimo, nurse of youth, night-wandering Brimo, of the underworld, queen among the dead,—in the gloom of night, clad in dusky garments. And beneath, the dark earth shook and bellowed when the Titanian root was cut; and the son of Iapetus himself groaned, his soul distraught with pain. And she brought the charm forth and placed it in the fragrant band which engirdled her, just beneath her bosom, divinely fair. And going forth she mounted the swift chariot, and with her went two handmaidens on each side. And she herself took the reins and in

¹ *i.e.* the liquid that flows in the veins of gods.

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her right hand the well-fashioned whip, and drove through the city ; and the rest, the handmaids, laid their hands on the chariot behind and ran along the broad highway ; and they kilted up their light robes above their white knees. And even as by the mild waters of Parthenius, or after bathing in the river Amnisus, Leto's daughter stands upon her golden chariot and courses over the hills with her swift-footed roes, to greet from afar some richly-steaming hecatomb ; and with her come the nymphs in attendance, gathering, some at the spring of Amnisus itself, others by the glens and many-fountained peaks ; and round her whine and fawn the beasts cowering as she moves along : thus they sped through the city ; and on both sides the people gave way, shunning the eyes of the royal maiden. But when she had left the city's well paved streets, and was approaching the shrine as she drove over the plains, then she alighted eagerly from the smooth-running chariot and spake as follows among her maidens :

“ Friends, verily have I sinned greatly and took no heed not to go among the stranger-folk¹ who roam over our land. The whole city is smitten with dismay ; wherefore no one of the women who formerly gathered here day by day has now come hither. But since we have come and no one else draws near, come, let us satisfy our souls without stint with soothing song, and when we have plucked the fair flowers amid the tender grass, that very hour will we

¹ or, reading *μήνιμ'*, “ took no heed of the cause of wrath with the stranger-folk ”

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return. And with many a gift shall ye reach home this very day, if ye will gladden me with this desire of mine. For Argus pleads with me, also Chalciopé herself; but this that ye hear from me keep silently in your hearts, lest the tale reach my father's ears. As for yon stranger who took on him the task with the oxen, they bid me receive his gifts and rescue him from the deadly contest. And I approved their counsel, and I have summoned him to come to my presence apart from his comrades, so that we may divide the gifts among ourselves if he bring them in his hands, and in return may give him a baleful charm. But when he comes, do ye stand aloof."

So she spake, and the crafty counsel pleased them all. And straightway Argus drew Aeson's son apart from his comrades as soon as he heard from his brothers that Medea had gone at daybreak to the holy shrine of Hecate, and led him over the plain; and with them went Mopsus, son of Ampycus, skilled to utter oracles from the appearance of birds, and skilled to give good counsel to those who set out on a journey.

Never yet had there been such a man in the days of old, neither of all the heroes of the lineage of Zeus himself, nor of those who sprung from the blood of the other gods, as on that day the bride of Zeus made Jason, both to look upon and to hold converse with. Even his comrades wondered as they gazed upon him, radiant with manifold graces; and the son of Ampycus rejoiced in their journey, already foreboding how all would end.

Now by the path along the plain there stands near the shrine a poplar with its crown of countless leaves, whereon often chattering crows would roost. One

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of them meantime as she clapped her wings aloft in the branches uttered the counsels of Hera :

“ What a pitiful seer is this, that has not the wit to conceive even what children know, how that no maiden will say a word of sweetness or love to a youth when strangers be near. Begone, sorry prophet, witless one ; on thee neither Cypris nor the gentle Loves breathe in their kindness.”

She spake chiding, and Mopsus smiled to hear the god-sent voice of the bird, and thus addressed them : “ Do thou, son of Aeson, pass on to the temple, where thou wilt find the maiden ; and very kind will her greeting be to thee through the prompting of Cypris, who will be thy helpmate in the contest, even as Phineus, Agenor’s son, foretold. But we two, Argus and I, will await thy return, apart in this very spot ; do thou all alone be a suppliant and win her over with prudent words.”

He spake wisely, and both at once gave approval. Nor was Medea’s heart turned to other thoughts, for all her singing, and never a song that she essayed pleased her long in her sport. But in confusion she ever faltered, nor did she keep her eyes resting quietly upon the throng of her handmaids ; but to the paths far off she strained her gaze, turning her face aside. Oft did her heart sink fainting within her bosom whenever she fancied she heard passing by the sound of a footfall or of the wind. But soon he appeared to her longing eyes, striding along loftily, like Sirius coming from ocean, which rises fair and clear to see, but brings unspeakable mischief to flocks ; thus then did Aeson’s son come to her, fair to see, but the sight of him brought love-sick

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care. Her heart fell from out her bosom, and a dark mist came over her eyes, and a hot blush covered her cheeks. And she had no strength to lift her knees backwards or forwards, but her feet beneath were rooted to the ground; and meantime all her handmaidens had drawn aside. So they two stood face to face without a word, without a sound, like oaks or lofty pines, which stand quietly side by side on the mountains when the wind is still; then again, when stirred by the breath of the wind, they murmur ceaselessly; so they two were destined to tell out all their tale, stirred by the breath of Love. And Aeson's son saw that she had fallen into some heaven-sent calamity, and with soothing words thus addressed her:

“Why, pray, maiden, dost thou fear me so much, all alone as I am? Never was I one of these idle boasters such as other men are—not even aforetime, when I dwelt in my own country. Wherefore, maiden, be not too much abashed before me, either to enquire whatever thou wilt or to speak thy mind. But since we have met one another with friendly hearts, in a hallowed spot, where it is wrong to sin, speak openly and ask questions, and beguile me not with pleasing words, for at the first thou didst promise thy sister to give me the charms my heart desires. I implore thee by Hecate herself, by thy parents, and by Zeus who holds his guardian hand over strangers and suppliants; I come here to thee both a suppliant and a stranger, bending the knee in my sore need. For without thee and thy sister never shall I prevail in the grievous contest. And to thee will I render thanks hereafter for thy aid, as is right and fitting for men who dwell far off,

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making glorious thy name and fame ; and the rest of the heroes, returning to Hellas, will spread thy renown and so will the heroes' wives and mothers, who now perhaps are sitting on the shore and making moan for us ; their painful affliction thou mightest scatter to the winds. In days past the maiden Ariadne, daughter of Minos, with kindly intent rescued Theseus from grim contests—the maiden whom Pasiphae daughter of Helios bare. But she, when Minos had lulled his wrath to rest, went aboard the ship with him and left her fatherland ; and her even the immortal gods loved, and, as a sign in mid-sky, a crown of stars, which men call Ariadne's crown, rolls along all night among the heavenly constellations. So to thee too shall be thanks from the gods, if thou wilt save so mighty an array of chieftains. For surely from thy lovely form thou art like to excel in gentle courtesy."

Thus he spake, honouring her ; and she cast her eyes down with a smile divinely sweet ; and her soul melted within her, uplifted by his praise, and she gazed upon him face to face ; nor did she know what word to utter first, but was eager to pour out everything at once. And forth from her fragrant girdle ungrudgingly she brought out the charm ; and he at once received it in his hands with joy. And she would even have drawn out all her soul from her breast and given it to him, exulting in his desire ; so wonderfully did love flash forth a sweet flame from the golden head of Aeson's son ; and he captivated her gleaming eyes ; and her heart within grew warm, melting away as the dew melts away round roses when warmed by the morning's light. And now both

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were fixing their eyes on the ground abashed, and again were throwing glances at each other, smiling with the light of love beneath their radiant brows. And at last and scarcely then did the maiden greet him :

“ Take heed now, that I may devise help for thee. When at thy coming my father has given thee the deadly teeth from the dragon’s jaws for sowing, then watch for the time when the night is parted in twain, then bathe in the stream of the tireless river, and alone, apart from others, clad in dusky raiment, dig a rounded pit ; and therein slay a ewe, and sacrifice it whole, heaping high the pyre on the very edge of the pit. And propitiate only-begotten Hecate, daughter of Perses, pouring from a goblet the hive-stored labour of bees. And then, when thou hast heedfully sought the grace of the goddess, retreat from the pyre ; and let neither the sound of feet drive thee to turn back, nor the baying of hounds, lest haply thou shouldst maim all the rites and thyself fail to return duly to thy comrades. And at dawn steep this charm in water, strip, and anoint thy body therewith as with oil ; and in it there will be boundless prowess and mighty strength, and thou wilt deem thyself a match not for men but for the immortal gods. And besides, let thy spear and shield and sword be sprinkled. Thereupon the spear-heads of the earthborn men shall not pierce thee, nor the flame of the deadly bulls as it rushes forth resistless. But such thou shalt be not for long, but for that one day ; still never flinch from the contest. And I will tell thee besides of yet another help. As soon as thou hast yoked the strong oxen, and with thy might and thy prowess

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hast ploughed all the stubborn fallow, and now along the furrows the Giants are springing up, when the serpent's teeth are sown on the dusky clods, if thou markest them uprising in throngs from the fallow, cast unseen among them a massy stone; and they over it, like ravening hounds over their food, will slay one another; and do thou thyself hasten to rush to the battle-strife, and the fleece thereupon thou shalt bear far away from Aea; nevertheless, depart wherever thou wilt, or thy pleasure takes thee, when thou hast gone hence."

Thus she spake, and cast her eyes to her feet in silence, and her cheek, divinely fair, was wet with warm tears as she sorrowed for that he was about to wander far from her side over the wide sea: and once again she addressed him face to face with mournful words, and took his right hand; for now shame had left her eyes:

"Remember, if haply thou returnest to thy home, Medea's name; and so will I remember thine, though thou be far away. And of thy kindness tell me this, where is thy home, whither wilt thou sail hence in thy ship over the sea; wilt thou come near wealthy Orchomenus, or near the Aeaean isle? And tell me of the maiden, whosoever she be that thou hast named, the far-renowned daughter of Pasiphae, who is kinswoman to my father."

Thus she spake; and over him too, at the tears of the maiden, stole Love the destroyer, and he thus answered her:

"All too surely do I deem that never by night and never by day will I forget thee if I escape death and indeed make my way in safety to the Achaean land, and Aetes set not before us some other

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contest worse than this. And if it pleases thee to know about my fatherland, I will tell it out; for indeed my own heart bids me do that. There is a land encircled by lofty mountains, rich in sheep and in pasture, where Prometheus, son of Iapetus, begat goodly Deucalion, who first founded cities and reared temples to the immortal gods, and first ruled over men. This land the neighbours who dwell around call Haemonia. And in it stands Iolcus, my city, and in it many others, where they have not so much as heard the name of the Aean isle; yet there is a story that Minyas starting thence, Minyas son of Aeolus, built long ago the city of Orchomenus that borders on the Cadmeians. But why do I tell thee all this vain talk, of our home and of Minos' daughter, far-famed Ariadne, by which glorious name they called that lovely maiden of whom thou askest me? Would that, as Minos then was well inclined to Theseus for her sake, so may thy father be joined to us in friendship!"

Thus he spake, soothing her with gentle converse. But pangs most bitter stirred her heart and in grief did she address him with vehement words:

"In Hellas, I ween, this is fair—to pay heed to covenants; but Aeetes is not such a man among men as thou sayest was Pasiphae's husband, Minos; nor can I liken myself to Ariadne; wherefore speak not of guest-love. But only do thou, when thou hast reached Iolcus, remember me, and thee even in my parents' despite, will I remember. And from far off may a rumour come to me or some messenger-bird; when thou forgettest me; or me, even me, may swift blasts catch up and bear over the sea hence to

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Iolcus, that so I may cast reproaches in thy face and remind thee that it was by my good will thou didst escape. May I then be seated in thy halls, an unexpected guest !”

Thus she spake with piteous tears falling down her cheeks, and to her Jason replied : “ Let the empty blasts wander at will, lady, and the messenger-bird, for vain is thy talk. But if thou comest to those abodes and to the land of Hellas, honoured and revered shalt thou be by women and men ; and they shall worship thee even as a goddess, for that by thy counsel their sons came home again, their brothers and kinsmen and stalwart husbands were saved from calamity. And in our bridal chamber shalt thou prepare our couch ; and nothing shall come between our love till the doom of death fold us round.”

Thus he spake ; and her soul melted within her to hear his words ; nevertheless she shuddered to behold the deeds of destruction to come. Poor wretch ! Not long was she destined to refuse a home in Hellas. For thus Hera devised it, that Aeaean Medea might come to Iolcus for a bane to Pelias, forsaking her native land.

And now her handmaids, glancing at them from a distance, were grieving in silence ; and the time of day required that the maiden should return home to her mother’s side. But she thought not yet of departing, for her soul delighted both in his beauty and in his winsome words, but Aeson’s son took heed, and spake at last, though late : “ It is time to depart, lest the sunlight sink before we know it, and some stranger notice all ; but again will we come and meet here.”

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So did they two make trial of one another thus far with gentle words; and thereafter parted. Jason hastened to return in joyous mood to his comrades and the ship, she to her handmaids; and they all together came near to meet her, but she marked them not at all as they thronged around. For her soul had soared aloft amid the clouds. And her feet of their own accord mounted the swift chariot, and with one hand she took the reins, and with the other the whip of cunning workmanship, to drive the mules; and they rushed hasting to the city and the palace. And when she was come Chalciopé in grief for her sons questioned her; but Medea, distraught by swiftly-changing thoughts, neither heard her words nor was eager to speak in answer to her questions. But she sat upon a low stool at the foot of her couch, bending down, her cheek leaning on her left hand, and her eyes were wet with tears as she pondered what an evil deed she had taken part in by her counsels.

Now when Aeson's son had joined his comrades again in the spot where he had left them when he departed, he set out to go with them, telling them all the story, to the gathering of the heroes; and together they approached the ship. And when they saw Jason they embraced him and questioned him. And he told to all the counsels of the maiden and showed the dread charm; but Idas alone of his comrades sat apart biting down his wrath; and the rest joyous in heart, at the hour when the darkness of night stayed them, peacefully took thought for themselves. But at daybreak they sent two men to go to Aetes and ask for the seed, first Telamon himself, dear to Ares, and with him Aethalides, Hermes' famous

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son. So they went and made no vain journey; but when they came, lordly Aetes gave them for the contest the fell teeth of the Aonian dragon which Cadmus found in Ogygian Thebes when he came seeking for Europa and there slew—the warder of the spring of Ares. There he settled by the guidance of the heifer whom Apollo by his prophetic word granted him to lead him on his way. But the teeth the Tritonian goddess tore away from the dragon's jaws and bestowed as a gift upon Aetes and the slayer. And Agenor's son, Cadmus, sowed them on the Aonian plains and founded an earthborn people of all who were left from the spear when Ares did the reaping; and the teeth Aetes then readily gave to be borne to the ship, for he deemed not that Jason would bring the contest to an end, even though he should cast the yoke upon the oxen.

Far away in the west the sun was sailing beneath the dark earth, beyond the furthest hills of the Aethiopians; and Night was laying the yoke upon her steeds; and the heroes were preparing their beds by the hawsers. But Jason, as soon as the stars of Helice, the bright-gleaming bear, had set, and the air had all grown still under heaven, went to a desert spot, like some stealthy thief, with all that was needful; for beforehand in the daytime had he taken thought for everything; and Argus came bringing a ewe and milk from the flock; and then he took from the ship. But when the hero saw a place which was far away from the tread of men, in a clear meadow beneath the open sky, there first of all he bathed his tender body reverently in the sacred river; and round him he placed a dark robe, which Hypsipyle of Lemnos had given him aforetime, a memorial of many

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a loving embrace. Then he dug a pit in the ground of a cubit's depth and heaped up billets of wood, and over it he cut the throat of the sheep, and duly placed the carcase above; and he kindled the logs placing fire beneath, and poured over them mingled libations, calling on Hecate Brimo to aid him in the contests. And when he had called on her he drew back; and she heard him, the dread goddess, from the uttermost depths and came to the sacrifice of Aeson's son; and round her horrible serpents twined themselves among the oak boughs; and there was a gleam of countless torches; and sharply howled around her the hounds of hell. All the meadows trembled at her step; and the nymphs that haunt the marsh and the river shrieked, all who dance round that mead of Amarantian Phasis. And fear seized Aeson's son, but not even so did he turn round as his feet bore him forth, till he came back to his comrades; and now early dawn arose and shed her light above snowy Caucasus.

Then Aetes arrayed his breast in the stiff corslet which Ares gave him when he had slain Phlegraean Mimas with his own hands; and upon his head he placed a golden helmet with four plumes, gleaming like the sun's round light when he first rises from Ocean. And he wielded his shield of many hides, and his spear, terrible, resistless; none of the heroes could have withstood its shock now that they had left behind Heracles far away, who alone could have met it in battle. For the king his well-fashioned chariot of swift steeds was held near at hand by Phaëthon, for him to mount; and he mounted, and held the reins in his hands. Then from the city he drove along the broad highway, that

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he might be present at the contest ; and with him a countless multitude rushed forth. And as Poseidon rides, mounted in his chariot, to the Isthmian contest or to Taenarus, or to Lerna's water, or through the grove of Hyantian Onchestus, and thereafter passes even to Calauria with his steeds, and the Haemonian rock, or well-wooded Geraestus ; even so was Aeetes, lord of the Colchians, to behold.

Meanwhile, prompted by Medea, Jason steeped the charm in water and sprinkled with it his shield and sturdy spear, and sword ; and his comrades round him made proof of his weapons with might and main, but could not bend that spear even a little, but it remained firm in their stalwart hands unbroken as before. But in furious rage with them Idas, Aphareus' son, with his great sword hewed at the spear near the butt, and the edge leapt back repelled by the shock, like a hammer from the anvil ; and the heroes shouted with joy for their hope in the contest. And then he sprinkled his body, and terrible prowess entered into him, unspeakable, dauntless ; and his hands on both sides thrilled vigorously as they swelled with strength. And as when a warlike steed eager for the fight neighs and beats the ground with his hoof, while rejoicing he lifts his neck on high with ears erect ; in such wise did Aeson's son rejoice in the strength of his limbs. And often hither and thither did he leap high in air tossing in his hands his shield of bronze and ashen spear. Thou wouldst say that wintry lightning flashing from the gloomy sky kept on darting forth from the clouds what time they bring with them their blackest rainstorm. Not long after that were the heroes to hold back from the contests ; but sitting in rows on

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their benches they sped swiftly on to the plain of Ares. And it lay in front of them on the opposite side of the city, as far off as is the turning-post that a chariot must reach from the starting-point, when the kinsmen of a dead king appoint funeral games for footmen and horsemen. And they found Aetes and the tribes of the Colchians; these were stationed on the Caucasian heights, but the king by the winding brink of the river.

Now Aeson's son, as soon as his comrades had made the hawsers fast, leapt from the ship, and with spear and shield came forth to the contest; and at the same time he took the gleaming helmet of bronze filled with sharp teeth, and his sword girt round his shoulders, his body stripped, in somewise resembling Ares and in somewise Apollo of the golden sword. And gazing over the field he saw the bulls' yoke of bronze and near it the plough, all of one piece, of stubborn adamant. Then he came near, and fixed his sturdy spear upright on its butt, and taking his helmet off leant it against the spear. And he went forward with shield alone to examine the countless tracks of the bulls, and they from some unseen lair beneath the earth, where was their strong steading, wrapt in murky smoke, both rushed out together, breathing forth flaming fire. And sore afraid were the heroes at the sight. But Jason, setting wide his feet, withstood their onset, as in the sea a rocky reef withstands the waves tossed by the countless blasts. Then in front of him he held his shield; and both the bulls with loud bellowing attacked him with their mighty horns; nor did they stir him a jot by their onset. And as when through the holes of the furnace the armourers' bellows anon

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gleam brightly, kindling the ravening flame, and anon cease from blowing, and a terrible roar rises from the fire when it darts up from below; so the bulls roared, breathing forth swift flame from their mouths, while the consuming heat played round him, smiting like lightning; but the maiden's charms protected him. Then grasping the tip of the horn of the right-hand bull, he dragged it mightily with all his strength to bring it near the yoke of bronze, and forced it down on to its knees, suddenly striking with his foot the foot of bronze. So also he threw the other bull on to its knees as it rushed upon him, and smote it down with one blow. And throwing to the ground his broad shield, he held them both down where they had fallen on their fore-knees, as he strode from side to side, now here, now there, and rushed swiftly through the flame. But Aetes marvelled at the hero's might. And meantime the sons of Tyndareus—for long since had it been thus ordained for them—near at hand gave him the yoke from the ground to cast round them. Then tightly did he bind their necks; and lifting the pole of bronze between them, he fastened it to the yoke by its golden tip. So the twin heroes started back from the fire to the ship. But Jason took up again his shield and cast it on his back behind him, and grasped the strong helmet filled with sharp teeth, and his resistless spear, wherewith, like some ploughman with a Pelasgian goad, he pricked the bulls beneath, striking their flanks; and very firmly did he guide the well fitted plough handle, fashioned of adamant.

The bulls meantime raged exceedingly, breathing forth furious flame of fire; and their breath rose

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up like the roar of blustering winds, in fear of which above all seafaring men furl their large sail. But not long after that they moved on at the bidding of the spear ; and behind them the rugged fallow was broken up, cloven by the might of the bulls and the sturdy ploughman. Then terribly groaned the clods withal along the furrows of the plough as they were rent, each a man's burden ; and Jason followed, pressing down the ploughshare with firm foot ; and far from him he ever sowed the teeth along the clods as each was ploughed, turning his head back for fear lest the deadly crop of earthborn men should rise against him first ; and the bulls toiled onwards treading with their hoofs of bronze.

But when the third part of the day was still left as it wanes from dawn, and wearied labourers call for the sweet hour of unyoking to come to them straightway, then the fallow was ploughed by the tireless ploughman, four plough-gates though it was ; and he loosed the plough from the oxen. Then he scared in flight towards the plain ; but he went back again to the ship, while he still saw the furrows free of the earthborn men. And all round his comrades heartened him with their shouts. And in the helmet he drew from the river's stream and quenched his thirst with the water. Then he bent his knees till they grew supple, and filled his mighty heart with courage, raging like a boar, when it sharpens its teeth against the hunters, while from its wrathful mouth plenteous foam drips to the ground. By now the earthborn men were springing up over all the field ; and the plot of Ares, the death-dealer, bristled with sturdy shields and

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double-pointed spears and shining helmets ; and the gleam reached Olympus from beneath, flashing through the air. And as when abundant snow has fallen on the earth and the storm blasts have dispersed the wintry clouds under the murky night, and all the hosts of the stars appear shining through the gloom ; so did those warriors shine springing up above the earth. But Jason bethought him of the counsels of Medea full of craft, and seized from the plain a huge round boulder, a terrible quoit of Ares Enyalios ; four stalwart youths could not have raised it from the ground even a little. Taking it in his hands he threw it with a rush far away into their midst ; and himself crouched unseen behind his shield, with full confidence. And the Colchians gave a loud cry, like the roar of the sea when it beats upon sharp crags ; and speechless amazement seized Aetes at the rush of the sturdy quoit. And the Earthborn, like fleet-footed hounds, leaped upon one another and slew with loud yells ; and on earth their mother they fell beneath their own spears, like pines or oaks, which storms of wind beat down. And even as a fiery star leaps from heaven, trailing a furrow of light, a portent to men, whoever see it darting with a gleam through the dusky sky ; in such wise did Aeson's son rush upon the earthborn men, and he drew from the sheath his bare sword, and smote here and there, mowing them down, many on the belly and side, half risen to the air—and some that had risen as far as the shoulders—and some just standing upright, and others even now rushing to battle. And as when a fight is stirred up concerning boundaries, and a husbandman, in fear lest they should ravage his

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fields, seizes in his hand a curved sickle, newly sharpened, and hastily cuts the unripe crop, and waits not for it to be parched in due season by the beams of the sun; so at that time did Jason cut down the crop of the Earthborn; and the furrows were filled with blood, as the channels of a spring with water. And they fell, some on their faces biting the rough clod of earth with their teeth, some on their backs, and others on their hands and sides, like to sea-monsters to behold. And many, smitten before raising their feet from the earth, bowed down as far to the ground as they had risen to the air, and rested there with the damp of death on their brows. Even so, I ween, when Zeus has sent a measureless rain, new planted orchard-shoots droop to the ground, cut off by the root—the toil of gardening men; but heaviness of heart and deadly anguish come to the owner of the farm, who planted them; so at that time did bitter grief come upon the heart of King Aetes. And he went back to the city among the Colchians, pondering how he might most quickly oppose the heroes. And the day died, and Jason's contest was ended.