THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ


ARGUMENT.—Œneus, king of Pleuron in Ætolia, had a fair daughter, Deianæira, and many sought her in marriage, chiefly the river god Acheloës, whom she dreaded even to look upon. And Heracles came, and conquered the river god, and took Deianæira as his bride. And as they journeyed to Tiryns, they passed the stream Euenos, where Nessos the Kentaur was wont to carry travellers across. And as he bore Deianæira, he laid rude hands on her, and Heracles, seeing this, shot him with an arrow, that had been dipped in the venom of the Lernæan hydra; and Nessos, as he died, gave a rag, dipped in the blood of his wound, to Deianæira, and told her that it would be a love-charm to win back her husband’s heart, should he ever prove unfaithful. And they lived together, and she bore him Hyllos and other children; and, though Heracles was light of love, yet she never used the charm, but kept her soul in patience.

And for many years Heracles went to and fro, fulfilling the labours which Eurystheus laid upon him, and, when these were over, being sore vexed, in his rage he slew Iphitos, the son of Eurytos, king of Æchalia, who had provoked him,
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and for this Zeus sentenced him to serve Omphale for a whole year in Lydia. And Deianira fled from Tiryns, for fear of Eurystheus, and abode at Trachis. Now when the year of bondage to Omphale was over, Heracles, being in love with Iole, daughter of Eurytos, invaded her father's kingdom, and laid it waste, and sent Iole and other captive women to Tiryns, while he stayed to offer sacrifice to Zeus after his victory. And all this time Deianira remained at home in much fear and trembling.