



The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome

E.M. Berens

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Berens' book is a voluminous look at both ancient mythology and some of the heroic figures of Greek and Roman history. From the preface: "The want of an interesting work on Greek and Roman mythology, suitable for the requirements of both boys and girls, has long been recognized by the principals of our advanced schools. The study of the classics themselves, even where the attainments of the pupil have rendered this feasible, has not been found altogether successful in giving to the student a clear and succinct idea of the religious beliefs of the ancients, and it has been suggested that a work which would so deal with the subject as to render it at once interesting and instructive would be hailed as a valuable introduction to the study of classic authors, and would be found to assist materially the labours of both master and pupil. In endeavouring to supply this want I have sought to place before the reader a lifelike picture of the deities of classical times as they were conceived and worshipped by the ancients themselves, and thereby to awaken in the minds of young students a desire to become more intimately acquainted with the noble productions of classical antiquity. It has been my aim to render the Legends, which form the second portion of the work, a picture, as it were, of old Greek life; its customs, its superstitions, and its princely hospitalities, for which reason they are given at somewhat greater length than is usual in works of the kind. In a chapter devoted to the purpose some interesting particulars have been collected respecting the public worship of the ancient Greeks and Romans (more especially of the former), to which is subjoined an account of their principal festivals. I may add that no pains have been spared in order that, without passing over details the omission of which would have marred the completeness of the work, not a single passage should be found which could possibly offend the most scrupulous delicacy; and also that I have purposely treated the subject with that reverence which I consider due to every religious system, however erroneous. It is hardly necessary to dwell upon the importance of the study of Mythology: our poems, our novels, and even our daily journals teem with classical allusions; nor can a visit to our art galleries and museums be fully enjoyed without something more than a mere superficial knowledge of a subject which has in all ages inspired painters, sculptors, and poets. It therefore only remains for me to express a hope that my little work may prove useful, not only to teachers and scholars, but also to a large class of general readers, who, in whiling away a leisure hour, may derive some pleasure and profit from its perusal."

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