

## TWO FAMOUS STORIES FROM ANCIENT GREECE

### I. THE STORY OF THE WOODEN HORSE

FOR TEN YEARS the Greeks had laid siege to Troy and still the city was not taken. It was then that Odysseus (Ulysses), aided by the goddess Athena, devised the famous trick of the Wooden Horse. He had a Greek sculptor build an immense horse of wood, big as a mountain. It was large enough to contain a hundred armed warriors within its interior. Into it crept Odysseus, Menelaus, and others of the Greek heroes. The opening in its side was closed with strong bolts. Then the besieging Greeks broke up their camp and set sail, leaving the Wooden Horse.

When the Trojans saw the ships, that had so long been drawn up on the sands of their harbor, sail away and disappear in the mist, there was great rejoicing, for they thought the Greeks were returning to their homes.

Had they not left an image of a great Wooden Horse as a peace-offering to Athena who was angered because the Greeks had stolen her statue from Troy?

Some said this, and others argued that it was a Greek treachery, as they ran through the gates, joyful and curious, to gather about the great Horse.

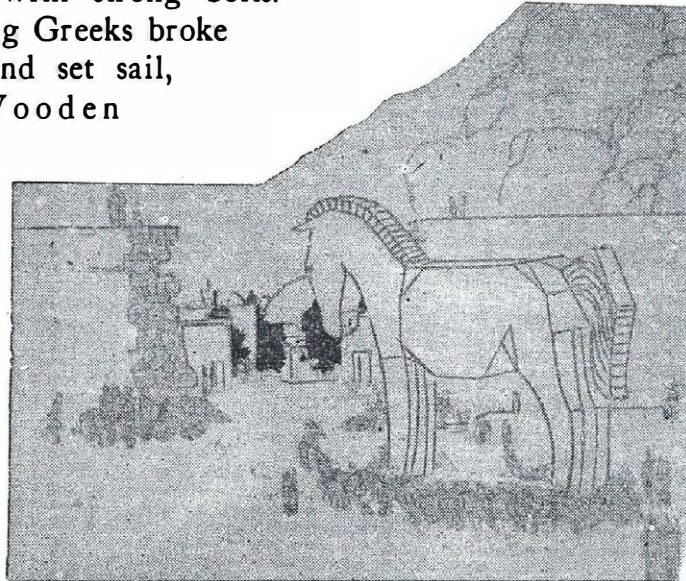
"Put no trust in the Horse, men of Troy," cried their priest. "Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks, even bearing gifts."

As the priest departed to offer sacrifice, he hurled his spear against the side of the Horse, and there came back a hollow sound.

But his warning was drowned in the shouts of the people, as they watched the approach of some shepherds who brought a captured Greek with fettered hands. The Trojans did not know that this captured Greek was the trusty friend of the crafty Odysseus, and had been left behind

to persuade the Trojans by a false story to take the Horse within the city of Troy.

"Have pity on me," the captive begged. "I escaped from the hands of the Greeks when they were about to sacrifice me to the gods. The Wooden Horse was built as a peace-offering



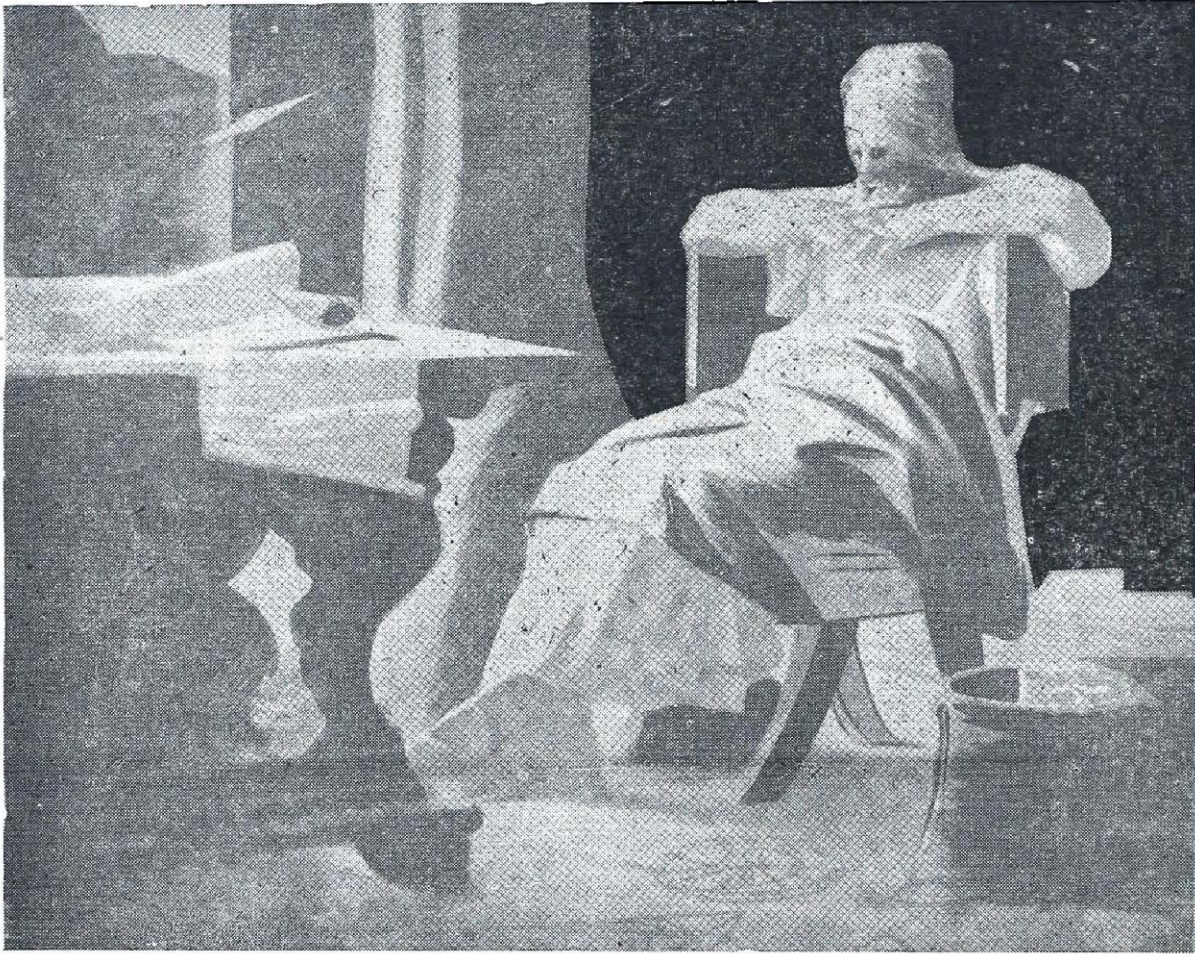
*The Wooden Horse Entering Troy*

to the offended Athena. It was made of such immense size as to prevent you from taking it within your gates. Because if it were taken into Troy, then the favor of Athena would be transferred to the Trojans."

Some still doubted, but a thing happened before their eyes which seemed an omen from the gods. Two huge serpents rose from the water, and, entwining themselves about the priest Laocoon and his

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## II. ARCHIMEDES, ANCIENT MATHEMATICIAN



*"Don't disturb my circles."*

"GIVE me a place to stand and to rest my lever on," said Archimedes (pronounced *ar-ki-me-dez*, with the accent on the third syllable), ancient Greek mathematician and inventor, "and I can move the earth."

One time, it is said, Archimedes ran naked through the streets of his native city, crying "*Eureka! Eureka!*", which is Greek for "I have found it!" The ruler of the city had ordered a goldsmith to make a crown of pure gold; and suspecting that the goldsmith had cheated him by dishonestly adding alloy, he handed the crown to Archimedes and asked him to find out if this was so. Archimedes discovered the solution to the

problem by observing the amount of water displaced by his own body while taking a bath. It was this observation which caused him absent-mindedly to run home, without his clothes, to try the same experiment with the crown.

Archimedes proved that the goldsmith was dishonest. At the same time he proved this principle of the science of hydrostatics: "A body immersed in a fluid loses as much in weight as the weight of an equal volume of the fluid."

Not only was Archimedes the greatest mathematician and writer on the science of mechanics among the ancients; he was

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DVORAK

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Out on the plains of the midwestern part of the United States Dvorak went to visit a colony of Bohemian immigrants. Some people say that the loneliness of these country-men, living in a foreign land, inspired the composer to write the haunting melody of this *Largo* in his *The New World Symphony*. By all means hear it played by an orchestra or on a phonograph (there are excellent phonograph records of this symphony) whenever you have an opportunity.

Dvorak should have been happy in America, where he was appreciated, but homesickness drove him back to Prague to spend the last years of his life composing and directing the conservatory of music there. He died in 1904.

Dvorak wrote a beautiful sacred composition called *Stabat Mater* which you should hear when possible. You should also hear his short composition *Humoreske*. He wrote in all five symphonies, some symphonic poems, chamber music, and lovely songs, which are popular in the best sense, for they are beloved by the people.

You should remember

ARCHIMEDES

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in addition their greatest inventor. He was first to realize the enormous power that can be exerted by means of a lever. He also invented the compound pulley, and a spiral screw for raising water and other substances which is still called "Archimedes' screw."

Now for the famous story about Archimedes: When Syracuse in Sicily, the native city of Archimedes, was besieged by the Romans, the Romans took the city, after a siege of three years. It is said that what particularly angered the Roman soldiers was that when they burst into his house, Archimedes was absorbed in the study of geometrical figures which he had drawn on the sand. To the soldier who interrupted him, he merely said, "Don't disturb my circles." Archimedes was slain in the massacre which followed.

these things; (1) the proper spelling and pronunciation of the name Dvorak (*dvor-zhak*); (2) that he is considered the greatest Bohemian composer; (3) that he wrote the famous *New World Symphony*.

THE WOODEN HORSE

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two sons, crushed them to death.

"Surely this is a punishment for the priest's sacrilege against the sacred gift," cried the Trojans.

Since the gates were not wide enough, a breach was made in the wall, and the Horse was brought into the city. Then there was rejoicing. All men went to sleep, secure in the belief that the gods were kind.

But while they slept, the Greek who had been captured—for so it had been planned—drew the bolts from the door of this "gift to Athena," and out came the hidden Greeks. Then a fire was lighted as a signal to the ships, which had turned back to sight of land. Soon thousands of Greek warriors swarmed in the streets of Troy.

All night the slaughter continued, and by morning only a mass of smouldering ruins marked the place where once had stood the proud city. The Trojan king's headless body lay on the seashore. So perished the Trojans except the few who escaped.

A REVIEW

1. What do you know of ancient Greece? (See the encyclopedia.)