



# Gods & Heroes: The Kingdom of Jupiter (Illustrated)

*Robert Francillon*

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THESE stories will, I trust, explain their own purpose; but a few words touching their form are due to critical readers.

It will be seen that the Mythology adopted throughout is strictly of the old-fashioned kind which goes to Ovid as its leading authority, and ignores the difference between the gods of Greece and the gods of Rome. I have deliberately followed this plan because, while there is not the remotest fear—quite the contrary—that young people, when or if they become scholars, will not be duly initiated into the mysteries of scientific and comparative mythology, there is considerable danger that the stories of the gods and heroes which have saturated literature, and have become essential portions of the thought and life of ages, may become explained away only too thoroughly. It is easy for my readers to acquire the science of the subject hereafter; but where mythology is concerned, the poetry must come before the prose, and it will be a distinct loss for them if, under scientific teaching, they have never been familiar with the ancient stories as they were read by the makers of literature in the præ-critical times. Without the mythology of the Latin poets, modern literature in all languages becomes almost a dead letter: hundreds of allusions become pointless, and thousands of substances fade into shadows. Of the three mythologies, the Greek, the Roman, and the Poetic or Conventional, I have selected the last, because—among other reasons—

It is as useful, and as needful to be known, as the others, on general grounds;

It is more useful, and more needful, than the others, as a portion of literature and as an intellectual influence;

It is preferable as a means of exciting an interest in the subject;

It is not in the remotest degree an obstacle to more accurate knowledge, for which indeed it is an almost indispensable preparation.

After these observations, there is no occasion to explain why I have made a point of employing Latin names and Latin spelling.

Another point to which I should call attention is the attempt to cover (within limits) the whole ground, so that the reader may not be left in ignorance of any considerable tract of the realm of Jove. The stories are not detached; they are brought, so far as I have been able to bring them, into a single saga, free from inconsistencies and contradictions. Omissions owing to the necessarily prescribed limits will, I think, always find a place to fall into. Altogether, the lines of the volume diverge so entirely from those of Kingsley, or Hawthorne, or any other story-teller known to me, that I may feel myself safe from the danger of fatal comparisons. Of course this aim at a certain completeness has implied the difficult task of selection among variants of the same story or incident. Sometimes I have preferred the most interesting, sometimes the version most consistent with the general plan. But I have endeavored, as a rule, to adopt the most usual or familiar, as being most in accordance with my original intention.

I need not, however, enumerate difficulties, which, if they are overcome, need no apology; and, if they are not, deserve none. The greatest and most obvious, the strict observance of the “Maxima reverentia,” will, and must always remain, crucial. In this, at least, I trust I have succeeded, in whatever else I may have failed.

These stories were begun for one who was very dear to me, and who was their first and best critic; and I shall be glad if what was begun, in hope, for him should be of use to others.

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