

## **Labour III: Gathering the Golden Apples of the Hesperides Gemini, May 21 - June 20**

### **The Myth**

The great Presiding One, within the Council Chamber of the Lord, had watched the labours of the son of man who is a son of God. He and the Teacher saw the third great Gate, opening before the son of man, revealing a new chance to tread the *Way*. They noted how the labourer arose and prepared to enter on his task.

"Send out the word to guard the sacred tree. Let Hercules unfold the power to search without discouragement, deception or too great a speed. Let perseverance now be called upon. He has done well so far." And thus the word went forth.

Far in a distant country grew the sacred tree, the tree of wisdom, and on it grew the golden apples of the Hesperides. The fame of these sweet fruits had gone to distant lands, and all the sons of men who knew themselves to be likewise the sons of God desired them. Hercules, too, knew of these fruits, and when the word went forth to seek for them he sought the Teacher, asking Him the way to go and find the sacred tree and pick the apples.

"Tell me the way, O Teacher of my soul. I seek the apples and I need them quickly for my use. Show me the quickest way and I will go!"

"Not so, my son", replied the Teacher, "the way is long. Two things alone I will confide to you, and then it is for you to prove the truth of what I say. Remember that the sacred tree is guarded well. Three maidens fair cherish the tree, protecting well its fruit. A dragon with one hundred heads protects the maidens and the tree. Guard thyself well from strength too great for thee, from wiles too subtle for thy comprehension. Watch well. The second thing that I would say to thee is that thy search will carry thee where five great tests will meet thee on the *Way*. Each will afford thee scope for wisdom, understanding, skill and opportunity. Watch well. I fear, my son, that you will fail to recognize these points upon the *Way*. But time alone will show; God speed thee in thy search."

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With confidence, because success nor failure held for him a claim, Hercules went forth upon the *Way*, sure of himself, his wisdom and his strength. Through the third Gate he passed, going due north. Throughout the land he passed, seeking the sacred tree, but found it not. All men he met he questioned, but none could guide him on his way; none knew the place. Time passed, yet still he sought, wandering from place to place and returning oft upon his steps to the third Gate. Sad and discouraged, still he sought on every hand.

The Teacher, watching from afar, sent Nereus to see if he could aid. Time and again he came, in varying form and with differing words of truth, but Hercules responded not, nor knew him for the messenger he was. Skilled though he was in speech and wise with the deep wisdom of a son of God, Nereus failed, for Hercules was blind. He did not recognize the help so subtly proffered. Returned at length with sadness to the Teacher, Nereus spoke of failure.

"The first of the five lesser tests is passed," replied the Teacher, "and failure marks this stage. Let Hercules proceed."

Finding no sacred tree upon the northern way, Hercules turned towards the south and in the place of darkness continued with his search. At first he dreamed of quick success, but Antaeus, the serpent, met him on that way and wrestled with him, overcoming him at every point.

"He guards the tree," said Hercules, "this I was told, so near him must be the tree. I must break down his guard and, thus destroying him, break down and pluck the fruit." Yet, wrestling with much strength, he conquered not.

"Where lies my fault?" said Hercules. "Why can Antaeus conquer me? E'en when an infant I destroyed a serpent in my cot. With my own hands I strangled it. Why fail I now?"

Wrestling again with all his might, he grasped the serpent with both hands, lifting it high in air, away from off the ground. And lo! the deed was done: Antaeus, vanquished, spoke: "I come again in different guise at the eighth Gate. Prepare again to wrestle."

The Teacher, gazing from afar, saw all that happened, and to the great Presiding One who sits within the Council Chamber of the Lord he spoke, reporting on the deed. "The second test is passed. The danger is surmounted. Success at this point marks his way." And the great Presiding One replied: "Let him proceed."

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Happy and confident, Hercules went on, sure of himself and with new courage for the search. Now to the west he turned himself and, turning thus, he met disaster. He entered without thought upon the third great test and failure met him and for long delayed his steps.

For there he met Busiris, the great arch-deceiver, son of the waters, of close kin to Poseidon. His is the work to bring delusion to the sons of men through words of seeming wisdom. He claims to know the truth and with quickness they believe. He speaks fair words saying: "I am the teacher. To me is given knowledge of the truth and sacrifice for me. Accept the way of life through me. I know, but no-one else. My truth is right. All other truth is wrong and false. Hark to my words; stay with me and be saved." And Hercules obeyed, and daily weakened on the early way (third test) seeking no further for the sacred tree. His strength was sapped. He loved, adored Busiris, and accepted all he said. Weaker from day to day he grew, until there came a day when his loved teacher bound him to an altar and kept him bound throughout a year.

Suddenly one day, when struggling to be free, and slowly seeing Busiris for what he was, words spoken long ago by Nereus came to his mind: "Truth lies within yourself. There is a higher power and strength and wisdom in yourself. Turn inwards and there evoke the strength which is, the power which is the heritage of all the sons of men who are the sons of God." Silent he lay a prisoner on the altar, bound to its corners four for one whole year. Then, with the strength which is the strength of all the sons of God, he broke his bonds, seized the false teacher (who had seemed so wise) and bound him to the altar in his place. He spoke no word, but left him there to learn.

The watching Teacher, from afar, noted the moment of release, and turning to Nereus said: "The third great test is passed. You taught him how to meet it and in due time he profited. Let him go forward on the *Way* and learn the secret of success."

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Chastened, yet full of questioning relief, Hercules continued with his search and wandered far. The year, spent prone upon the altar, had taught him much. He went with greater wisdom on his way.

Suddenly, he halted in his steps. A cry of deep distress smote on his ear. Some vultures circling o'er a distant rock caught his attention; then again the cry broke forth. Should he proceed upon his way, or should he seek the one who seemed in need and thus retard his steps? He pondered on the problem of delay; a year had now been lost; he felt the need for haste. Again a cry broke forth and Hercules, with rapid steps, sped to his brother's help. He found Prometheus chained upon a rock, suffering dire agonies of pain, caused by the vultures plucking at his liver, thus slowly killing him. He broke the binding chain and freed Prometheus, chasing the vultures to their distant lair, and tending the sick man until he had recovered from his wounds. Then, with much loss of time, he again started to make his way.

The Teacher, watching from afar, spoke to his seeking pupil these clear words, the first words spoken to him since he entered on his search: "The fourth stage on the way unto the sacred tree is passed. There has been no delay. The rule upon the chosen Path which hastens all success is, 'Learn to serve'."

The Presiding One, within the Council Chamber of the Lord, remarked: "He has done well. Continue with the tests."

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Upon all ways the search went on, and north and south and east and west, the sacred tree was sought, but was not found. There came a day when, worn with fear and travelling, he heard a rumor from a passing pilgrim on the way that, near a distant mountain, the tree was to be found, the first true statement given him as yet. Therefore he turned his feet to the high mountains of the east and, on a bright

and sunny day, he saw the object of his search and hastened then his steps. "Now I shall touch the sacred tree," he shouted in his joy, "surmount the guarding dragon; see the fair maidens of wide fame; and pluck the apples."

But again, he was arrested by a sense of deep distress. Atlas confronted him, staggering 'neath the load of worlds upon his back. His face was lined with suffering; his limbs were bowed with pain; his eyes were closed with agony; he asked no help; he saw not Hercules but stood bowed down with pain, with the weight of worlds. Hercules, trembling, watched and gauged the measure of the load and pain. He forgot about his search. The sacred tree and apples faded from mind; he only sought to aid the giant and that without delay; forward he rushed and eagerly removed the load, lifting it off the shoulders of his brother onto his own back, shouldering the burden of the worlds himself. He closed his eyes, bracing himself with effort, and lo! the load rolled off, and he stood free, and likewise Atlas.

Before him stood the giant and in his hand he held the golden apples, offering them, with love, to Hercules. The search was o'er.

The sisters three held still more golden apples, and pressed them likewise into his hands, and Aegle, that fair maid who is the glory of the setting sun, said unto him, placing an apple in his hand, "The *Way* to us is always marked by service. Deeds of love are signposts on the *Way*." Then Erytheia, who keeps the gate which all must pass before they stand alone before the great Presiding One, gave him an apple and upon its side, inscribed in light, was writ the golden word of *Service*. "Remember this," she said, "forget it not."

And lastly Hesperis came, the wonder of the evening star, and said to him with clarity and love, "Go forth and serve, and tread the way, from henceforth and for aye, of all world servers."

"Then I give back these apples for those who follow on," said Hercules, and returned from whence he came.

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Before the Teacher then he stood and rendered due account of all that had transpired. To him the Teacher gave the word of cheer and then with pointing finger indicated the fourth Gate and said to him: "Pass through that Gate. Capture the doe and enter once again the Holy Place."

- THE TIBETAN

### **The Nature of the Test**

We come now to the third labour, in the sign Gemini, concerning predominantly the active work of the aspirant on the physical plane as he comes to an understanding of himself. Before this active work becomes possible there must be a cycle of interior thought and mystical longing; the striving after the vision and a subjective process carried on, perhaps for a very long time, before the man on the physical plane really begins the **labour of unifying soul and body**. This is the theme of this labour. It is in this physical plane achievement, and in the work of gaining the golden apples of wisdom, that the real test of the sincerity of the aspirant takes place. A longing to be good, a deep desire to ascertain the facts of the spiritual life, spasmodic efforts at self-discipline, at prayer and meditation, precede, almost inevitably, this real and steady effort.

**The visionary must become a man of action: desire has to be carried forward into the world of completion, and herein lies the test in Gemini.** The physical plane is the place where experience is gained and where the causes, initiated in the world of mental effort, must manifest and achieve objectivity. It is the place also where the mechanism of contact is developed, where, little by little, the **five senses** open up to the human being new fields of awareness and present to him fresh spheres for conquest and achievement. It is the place, therefore, where **knowledge is gained**, and where that **knowledge must be transmuted into wisdom**.

**Knowledge**, we know, is the quest of sense, whilst **wisdom** is the omniscience of the synthetic knowledge of the soul. Without understanding in the application of knowledge, however, we perish; for **understanding** is the application of knowledge in the light of wisdom to the problems of life, and to the attainment of the goal.

In this labour, Hercules is faced with the tremendous task of **bringing together the two poles of his being** and of coordinating, or **at-one-ing, soul and body**, so that duality gives place to unity and the pairs of opposites are blended.

### *The Symbols*

Eurystheus, having watched Hercules achieve mental control and then ride the bull of desire over into the Temple of the Soul, now sets him the task of fetching the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides. The apple has long figured in mythology and in symbology. In the garden of Eden, as we know, the serpent gave the apple to Eve; and with the giving of that apple, and with its acceptance came the knowledge of good and of evil. This is a symbolic method of telling us the story of the appearance of mind, and of how it began to function in that early creature, which was neither animal nor strictly human. With the coming of mind came also the knowledge of duality, of the pull of the pairs of opposites, of the nature of the soul, which is good, and of the nature of the form, which is evil if it holds the soul and hinders it from full expression. It is not evil *per se*.

It is to be noted that in the garden of Eden one single apple was given to the human being, the symbol of separateness, isolation. Hercules had to hunt for the golden apples in another garden, and in the garden of the Hesperides the apples were the symbol of plurality, of synthesis, and of the many, nourished by the one tree of Life.

Hercules was told only three facts: that there was a garden containing a tree whereon grew the golden apples; that the tree was guarded by the hundred-headed serpent; that, when he found it, he would find there these three beautiful maidens. But in what direction lay the garden, and how to find it, he was not told. This time he was not confined to the wild lands, up and down which the man-eating mares ravaged; nor was he confined to the little island of Crete. The whole planet had to be searched, and he went up and down from north to south and from east to west, until at last he met Nereus, who was skilled in all wisdom and in all forms of speech. He is called in some of the classics, "the ancient of the sea". He was not only wise, but very elusive, assuming many forms, and refused ever to give to Hercules a direct answer. Finally, he hinted as to the direction in which the apples should be sought, sending him on his way alone and somewhat discouraged, with only a vague idea as to what he would have to do and where he would have to go. All he knew was that he had to turn south; a symbol of going back into the world, the opposite pole of spirit.

He had no sooner done so than he met the serpent with whom he had to wrestle. [Known in mythology also as the giant, Antaeus, the son of Poseidon, god of waters, and Gea, the earth. Hence when in touch with the earth, his mother, he was invincible.] In his search for the golden apples on the physical plane, Hercules had to conquer, as do all disciples, glamor and illusion; for in the carrying forward of spiritual aspiration, the disciple is very apt to be taken in by astralism and lower psychism in one form or another. As Hercules wrestled with the serpent, he found he could not overcome it until he discovered that it was invincible only so long as it was in contact with the earth. just as soon as Hercules lifted the serpent (Antaeus) high into the air, it became utterly weak and unable to defeat him.

Gemini is an air sign, a mutable or common sign. Glamour is ever changing, ever taking one form or another. It concerns appearance and not reality, and the earth stands for appearances.

Having vanquished the serpent that stood in his way, Hercules passed on in his search. His next encounter was with glamor in another form. Busiris was a son of Poseidon, the god of the waters, but his mother was a mere mortal. He claimed to be a great teacher. He was fluent in speech and captivating in what he said. He made great claims for himself, leading Hercules to believe that he could show him the way, that he could lead him out into the light, and that he was the custodian of truth. Hercules was completely deceived. Little by little he fell under the power and spell of Busiris; little by little he yielded up his will and his mind and accepted him as his teacher and guide. Finally, when Busiris had Hercules entirely under his control, he bound him to the altar of sacrifice and forced him to forget Nereus. The myth tells that Hercules eventually freed himself and resumed his search, binding Busiris to the altar whereon he himself had lain. Again we find discouragement, delay, failure and deceit characterizing this part of the test.

Still searching up and down, he found Prometheus bound to a rock with the vultures tearing at his liver. The sight of such suffering was more than Hercules could bear and he turned aside from his search to release Prometheus, thus putting him in a position to drive away the vultures.

We come now to the crucial point of the Labour and to that which constituted the **real test**. Hercules finds Atlas bearing the load of the world on his shoulders, and staggering under the weight of the task he had undertaken. Hercules is so overcome by the stupendous enterprise of Atlas, and so concerned over his sufferings as he seeks to carry the weight of the world, that he gives up his search for the golden apples. He forgets what he himself has set out to do and, in pity, takes the load off the shoulders of Atlas and bears it himself. Then we are told in the wonderful consummation of the story, that Atlas, freed from his burden, goes to the garden of the Hesperides, plucks the golden apples without any let or hindrance from the hundred-headed serpent, with the enthusiastic help of the three beautiful maidens, and brings the apples to Hercules, who now also stands free, in spite of all the obstacles and hindrances, the deviations due to glamor and illusion. Despite failures and the length of time it has taken him to arrive at wisdom, Hercules does obtain the golden apples. Note that the opposite, or consummating sign, of Gemini is that of Sagittarius, the Archer, who shoots straight and rides unhindered to the goal. no deviations, no failure! There is only a steady going forward.

### *The Field of the Labour*

**Gemini** has in it two stars, called by the Greeks, **Castor** and **Pollux**, or the Twins. These personify two major groups of stars, the Seven **Pleiades**, and the Seven Stars of the **Great Bear**, which are the two constellations, in the north, around which our universe seems to revolve. One star represents each constellation. From the standpoint of esotericism, the great mystery of God incarnate in matter, and the crucifixion of the cosmic Christ upon the cross of matter, is tied up with the relationship (presumed from most ancient times to exist) between the stars of the Pleiades and those of the Great Bear. These two groups of stars represent God, the macrocosm, whilst in Gemini, Castor and Pollux were regarded as symbols of man, the microcosm. They were **also called Apollo and Hercules**: Apollo, meaning the Ruler, the Sun God; and Hercules, "the one who comes to labour". They represent, therefore, the two aspects of man's nature, the soul and the personality, the spiritual man and the human being through which that spiritual entity is functioning: Christ incarnate in matter, God working through form.

Castor was regarded as mortal and Pollux as immortal. It is an interesting astronomical fact that the star, Castor, is waning in brilliancy and has not the light that it had several hundred years ago; whilst Pollux, the immortal brother, is waxing in brightness and eclipsing his brother, so reminding one of the words of John the Baptist, spoken as he looked at the Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease". (*St. John, III, 30*) Thus we have a most significant constellation, because it holds before the eyes of man the thought of the increasing potency of the spiritual life and the decreasing power of the personal self. The story of man's growth to maturity and the history of the soul's gradually increasing control are told for us in the constellation Gemini.

In the ancient zodiac of Denderah, this sign is called "the place of Him who cometh", and the thought of an emerging spiritual Being is held before us. It is represented by two figures, the one male, the other female; one, the positive, spirit aspect, and the other, the negative, matter aspect. The Coptic and the Hebrew names signify "united", and this is the status of Hercules, the aspirant. He is soul and body unified. This was the problem to be wrestled with in the sign Gemini. The at-one-ment of the lower with the higher self, of the mortal and the immortal aspects, is the objective. It was this problem that created the devious and prolonged search that Hercules undertook, for he was at length attentive to the voice of Nereus, the higher self, but sometimes under the illusion and glamor of the lower self.

The duality which is emphasized in Gemini rimes through a large number of the mythological stories. We meet the same brothers again in Romulus and Remus, for instance, and in Cain and Abel, one brother dying and the other living. We meet the astrological symbol for Gemini in the two pillars of Masonry, and many believe that the Masonic tradition could, if we had the power to do so, be traced back to that period, antedating the Taurian age, when the sun was in Gemini, and to that great cycle in which the Lemurian

race, the first strictly human race, came into being; where the mind aspect began to emerge, and the duality of mankind became a fact in nature.

The Lemurian race was the third race; and this labour that Hercules symbolically, undertook, is the third labour. The search upon which he was engaged was for the soul, and this has ever been the unrecognized search of the human being until the time comes when he knows himself to be Hercules and starts to concentrate upon the search for the golden apples of instruction and wisdom. So we have in the Masonic tradition the search of the human family typified, the search for light, the search for unity, the search for divinity. And so the two pillars, Boaz and Jachin, stand as the emblems of that duality.

In China, Castor and Pollux are spoken of as the two "gods of the door," showing the tremendous power that the god of matter can assume, and also the potency of divinity.

Gemini is predominantly the sign of the intellect and it has a peculiarly vital effect in our Aryan race. In this race the mind faculty and the intellect have been steadily developed. Gemini, therefore, has influence in three departments, which concern themselves with human relations. First, it governs all education. It deals with knowledge, with the sciences, and lays the foundation for wisdom. One educator has said that "the ultimate purpose of education is the acquiring of knowledge in order to receive the higher revelation. The unintelligent may receive it, but they cannot interpret it". In this labour, Hercules receives an outstanding revelation and in the five stages of his search his education is steadily carried forward.

The exoteric ruler of Gemini and of the first decanate is Mercury for, as Alan Leo tells us:

"Mercury in the outer world signifies schools, colleges, and all places where teaching and learning go on, scientific and literary institutions ... In consciousness, it signifies thought, understanding, reason, intelligence, intellect; the abstract kinds rather than the concrete, knowledge for its own sake ... Its highest application seems to be what is called 'pure reason' . In body, it governs the brain and nervous system, the tongue and organs of speech, the hands as instruments of intelligence."

(Alan Leo, *Complete Dictionary of Astrology*, p. 163)

Gemini stands, secondly, for the relation between. It governs, therefore, language, intercourse or inter-communication and commerce. It is interesting to note that the United States and London are both governed by Gemini; that the English language is becoming predominantly the world tongue; that the greatest lines of ocean communication start from New York or London, and that both these cities have been world markets and world centers of distribution. Mercury, the ruling planet of the sign, is the interpreter, the messenger of the gods. It is worth noticing also in this connection how Hercules comes under the influence of two teachers: Nereus, the higher teacher, and Busiris, the lower or psychic teacher; and thus we again have emphasized both the duality of Gemini and its mental quality.

When this sign is in evidence as it is now, being a powerful mutable sign, it inaugurates many changes; new ideas flood the world; new impulses make their presence felt; new and undeveloped lines of approach to spiritual truth emerge, and many teachers will arise everywhere to help lead the race into a new state of spiritual awareness. Being an air sign, we find that the conquest of the air proceeds with speed, and also a constant effort is made to unify and coordinate the many and varied aspects of human endeavor.

Venus is the esoteric ruler of Gemini and governs the second decanate; for Venus makes at-one, and through its influence the law of attraction and the bringing together of the polar opposites takes place. But all these changes and unifications naturally inaugurate a new state of awareness, a new state of being, and bring in a new age and a new world. Consequently, new difficulties and problems arise and we find Saturn governing the last decanate, for Saturn is the planet of discipleship; the planet that brings about the difficulties, problems and tests that offer to the disciple immediate opportunity. It is Saturn that opens the door into incarnation, and Saturn that opens the door on to the path of initiation.

Mercury, the interpreter, and the illuminating intellect;

Venus, the principle of attraction and of at-one-ment;

and Saturn, the generator of opportunity: these three play their parts in the life of the aspirant as he unifies higher and lower, passes through the five stages in this test, and visions the goal which ultimately he must achieve.

### *The Three Symbolic Constellations*

The three constellations to be found in connection with the sign are **Lepus**, the Hare, **Canis Major** and **Canis Minor**, and in their interrelation and in their association with Hercules, the aspirant, the whole story of the human being is again most strikingly portrayed. In **Canis Major** we find **Sirius**, the Dog Star, called in many old books "the leader of the entire heavenly host", for it is ten or twelve times brighter than any other star of the first magnitude. Sirius has always been associated with great heat, hence we have the phrase of "the dog days" in the middle of the summer, when the heat is supposed to be greatest. From the standpoint of the occultist, Sirius is of profound significance. "Our God is a consuming fire", and **Sirius** is the symbol of the universal soul as well as of the individual soul. It is therefore, esoterically considered, the star of initiation. In the language of symbology we are told, there comes a moment when a star blazes forth before the initiate, signifying his realization of his identity with the universal soul, and thus he suddenly glimpses through the medium of his own soul, his own star.

Canis Major is the immortal Hound of Heaven, that chases forever the lesser Dog, the underdog, the man in physical incarnation. This chase has been immortalised for us by Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*.

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong feet that followed, followed after."

*In the zodiac of Denderah, this star is called Apes, the head. We are told (in the appendix, p. 1518, of the Companion Bible) that the brightest star in Canis Major is Sirius, the Prince, called in Persian, the Chieftain. There are three other stars in the same constellation: one is called "the announcer", another the "shining one," and the third, "the glorious", all of them phrases emphasizing the magnificence of Canis Major and, esoterically, the wonder and the glory of the higher self.*

In **Canis Minor**, the "underdog", the same writing tells us that the name of the brightest star signifies, "redeemer", that the next brightest is "the burden bearer" or "the one who bears for others". We have, therefore, in the significance of these two names, a portrayal of Hercules, as he works out his own salvation and as he bears the great burden of Atlas and learns the meaning of service.

**Lepus, the Hare**, associated with these two constellations, contains a star of the most intense crimson color, almost like a drop of blood. Red is ever the symbol of desire for material things. In the zodiac of Denderah, the name given is Bashtibeki, which means "falling confounded". Aratus, writing about 250 B.C., speaks of Lepus as being "chased eternally", and it is interesting to note that the Hebrew names of some of the stars found in this constellation signify "the enemy of the Coming One", which is the meaning of the name of the brightest star, Arneb; whilst three other stars have names meaning "the mad", "the bound", "the deceiver". All these words are characteristics of the lower self chased eternally by the higher self; the human soul pursued by the Hound of Heaven.

As we look at the starry heavens at night and locate Sirius, the Dog Star, the story of our past, present and future is dramatically pictured.

We have the story of our *past* in **Lepus**, the Hare, fleet of foot, deceived, mad, bound to the wheel of life, identified with the matter aspect, and ever the enemy of "The Coming Prince".

In **Canis Minor**, we have the story of the aspirant, of our *present* lot. Dwelling within us is the inner ruler, the hidden divinity, the redeemer. We go forth conquering and to conquer, but we have to do it as the burdened disciple, bearing for others and serving.

In **Canis Major** we have portrayed our *future* and a consummation, glorious beyond all present realization. Were all religions and all scriptures of the world to be lost, and were there nothing left to us except the starry heavens, the story of the zodiac and the significance of the names of the various stars

found in the different constellations, we should be able to retrace the history of man, recover the knowledge of our goal and learn the mode of its achievement.

### *The Lesson of the Labour*

The whole of this story really signifies the lesson which is the first that all aspirants have to master, and one which it is impossible to learn until the tests in Aries and in Taurus have been undergone. Then, on the physical plane, in the field of the brain and in his walking consciousness, the disciple has to register contact with the soul and to recognize its qualities. **He must no longer be the visionary mystic, but must add to the mystical achievement the occult knowledge of reality.** This is often forgotten by aspirants. They rest content with aspiration and with the vision of the heavenly goal. They have wrought out in the crucible of life an equipment that is characterized by sincerity, good desire, fine character, and they are conscious of purity of motive, a willingness to fulfill the requirements, and the satisfaction that they have reached a certain status of development which entitles them to go on. But one thing still lacks: they have not what might be called "the technique of the presence"; they have not privilege and prerogative to possess. They believe in the fact of the soul, in the possibility of perfection, in the path which must be trodden; but belief has not yet been transmuted into knowledge of the spiritual realm and they know not how to make their goal! So they, as Hercules did start on the fivefold search.

The first stage of that search is full of encouragement for them, had they been able to recognize the happening. Like Hercules, they meet Nereus, the symbol of the higher self, and, later on in the history of the disciple, he is the symbol of the teaching Master. When contacted, especially in the early stages of the search, the higher self will manifest as a flash of illumination, and lo! it is gone; as a sudden realization of truth, so elusive, so fleeting, that at first the disciple cannot grasp it; as a hint dropped into the consciousness in moments of one-pointed attention, when the mind is held steady and the emotions temporarily cease to control.

In the case of a more advanced disciple who has established contact with his soul and who, therefore, may be supposed to be ready for instruction from one of the great Teachers of the Race, it will be found that the Master works just as Nereus did. He cannot always be contacted, and only occasionally does the disciple come into touch with him. When he does, he need not expect congratulations upon his wonderful progress, nor will he find a careful elucidation of his problem, nor a lengthy outline of the work that he should do. The Master will give a hint and disappear. He will make a suggestion and will say no more. It is for the disciple to act upon the hint as best he may and to follow up the suggestion should he deem it wise.

Many well-meaning occultists would lead one to believe that the Masters of the Wisdom take a personal interest in them, that the overburdened Guides of the Race have no better occupation than to tell them personally how to live, how to solve their problems and how, in detail, to guide their undertakings. I would like here to go on record as protesting against any such belittling of the work of the Great Ones.

The reasons that Nereus, the Master, is elusive and gives but a flash of thought or of momentary attention to the aspirant, are two:

First, the individual aspirant is of no personal interest to the Master until he has achieved the point in his evolution where he is so closely in touch with his soul that he becomes a magnetic server in the world. Then, and then only, will it profit the Master to throw him a thought, and to give him a hint. Then, as those hints are followed, he may give him more, but, and this is the point that must be emphasized, ***only in connection with the work that he has to do in the field of world service.*** Aspirants need to remember that they become masters only by mastering, and that we are taught to be masters and are brought to the position of membership in the band of world servers through the efforts of our own soul. That soul is a divine son of God, omniscient and omnipotent. As the immortal twin increases in power and brilliance, that of the mortal brother decreases.

Second, the physical bodies of the aspirants are in no condition to stand the greatly heightened vibration of One who has achieved. The body would be shattered and the brain overstrained if one of the Masters made constant contact with a disciple before he had even learned to know Nereus as the symbol of his own higher self. When by our own efforts we are beginning to live as souls, and when by our own



self-initiated endeavor we are learning to serve and be channels of spiritual energy, then we shall know Nereus more intimately; and then, almost inevitably, our knowledge of the work that the Great Ones have to do will be so vital and so real that we will forego our own desire for contact and seek only to lift the burden that They carry.

At the beginning of his search, Hercules met Nereus; but he was not impressed and so wandered elsewhere, furiously seeking the satisfaction of his aspiration. At the close of his search he meets Atlas, bearing the burden of the world, and so impressed is he with the weight of that responsibility and the load that Atlas, the great Master, is carrying, that he forgets all about the goal and his search for the golden apples and endeavors to lift the burden off the shoulders of Atlas. When aspirants in the religious field and in the Church, in the Theosophical field, in the Rosicrucian field, and in the many groups to which they gravitate, **have learned to forget themselves in service and to lose sight of their spiritual selfishness by helping humanity**, there will be a much more rapid gathering in of initiates through the portal on to the Path that leads from darkness to the Light, and from the unreal to the Real. One of the Great Ones has said that "there are persons, who, without ever having any external sign of selfishness, are intensely selfish in their inner spiritual aspiration." (p. 360, *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*). And later he holds out before us a stupendous ideal which cuts at the root of spiritual selfishness: "In our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of desire for self-benefit ...".

Hercules, the disciple, has known the touch of the higher self, but he did not know enough to stay with Nereus. So he turns south, or back into the world. He has had his high moment, when he transcended his brain consciousness and held converse with his soul. But this does not last, and he drops back into the brain consciousness and enters upon another experience. He has to wrestle with Antaeus, the serpent (or giant). But, this time, it is the serpent of astral glamor and not primarily the serpent of desire. It is with the glamors of lower psychism that he has to wrestle, and these seem, in the early stages, inevitably to attract the interest of aspirants. Any teacher who has worked with those who are seeking the Way knows the glamor under which they can so easily fall. According to the temperament of the aspirant so will be the glamor. Some get sidetracked by spiritualistic phenomena. In the endeavor to penetrate within the veil, they become engrossed with the lower side of spiritualism and pass much time in the seance room studying over and over again the same old phenomena of materialization, spirit communication and manifestations. I make here no reference to the truly scientific investigations of those who go deeply into this research, and who are equipped so to do. I refer to the ignorant participation in certain types of seance room work. This intrigues the average man or woman and puts them at the mercy of the equally ignorant medium or the charlatan, for they are unequipped to verify in any way that which they see and hear.

The serpent may take the form of the more common aspect of psychic phenomena. The aspirant becomes interested in automatic writing, or he learns to sit and listen to "voices", he becomes astrally clairvoyant or clairaudient, and adds to the confusion of the physical plane and his own particular environment, the still greater confusion of the psychic plane, and so falls into the snares and pitfalls of astralism. He becomes negative, because he is all the time trying to hear or see that which is not physical. Because we share with cats and dogs the capacity to be clairvoyant and clairaudient, in due time we shall surely see or hear, if not in truth, yet through the power of that creative faculty which we all possess, a creative imagination. But in some form or another, the aspirant who has left Nereus will meet the serpent and will have to wrestle with him. As the myth states, for a long time Hercules could not conquer, but when he lifted the serpent high up into the air, he prevailed.

There is a great truth underlying this symbolism. The air has always been regarded as the symbol or the element related to the Christ plane, called in the Theosophical terminology and in the east, the buddhic plane. The astral plane is the distorted reflection of the buddhic plane, and it is only when we carry glamor up into the clear light of the Christ soul that we shall see truth as it is, and become invincible. Most solemnly, I would urge upon all aspirants to forego all interest in psychic phenomena, and to shut out as steadily as they can the astral plane until they have developed the power to be intuitive and to interpret their intuitions through the medium of a well-developed, well-stocked, well-trained mind.

The next stage of the search of Hercules is equally applicable to humanity as a whole. He fell into the clutches of Busiris, who claimed to be a great teacher. For a long period of time Hercules was kept in bondage. The world today is full of teachers, and like Busiris, they base their teaching upon portentous claims; they claim to be initiates, to be the custodians of truth, and to have a sure and certain way of development which must inevitably enable the aspirant to achieve. They bolster up their position by promises; they build up a strong personality relationship, and by utilizing the sincerity and the aspiration of the seeker after truth, they gather around themselves groups of men and women who innocently and sincerely believe the truth of the claims that they make, and bind them to the altar of sacrifice for a longer or a shorter period of time. **The true initiate is known by his life and acts, he is too busy serving the race to find the time to interest people in himself**, and he cannot make promises beyond saying to every aspirant: "These are the ancient rules, this is the way that all the saints and Masters of the Wisdom have trod, this is the discipline to which you must subject yourself; and if you will but try and have endurance and patience, the goal will surely be yours."

But Hercules freed himself, as do all sincere seekers; and having escaped from the world of psychic and pseudo-spiritual glamor, **he began to serve**. First he freed himself under the symbol of Prometheus, who signifies God incarnate, releasing him from the torture of the vultures of old. The **solar plexus**, the stomach and the liver are externalizations, if I might so express it, of the desire nature, and Hercules freed himself from the vultures of desire that had for so long tortured him. **He gave up being selfish, and gave up satisfying himself**. He had had two bitter lessons in this sign and *for this particular cycle* was relatively free. Prometheus, the God within, could go forward to the service of the world and to lifting the burden of Atlas.

After the sacrifice comes the reward, and Hercules received his great surprise after freeing both Prometheus and Atlas. Having, given up his search in order to help the world, Atlas went for him to the garden and handed to him the golden apples, bringing him in touch with the three beautiful maidens, the three aspects of the soul.

At the beginning of this labour he contacts his soul as Nereus; at the close of this labour, having overcome much glamor, he achieves a greatly increased vision of his soul and sees it in its three aspects, each one holding in it the potency of the three principles of divinity.

**Aegle** symbolizes the glory of the life and the splendor of the setting sun; the magnificence of manifestation on the physical plane. She gives an apple to Hercules, saying, "The way to us is ever through deeds of love".

**Erytheia** keeps the gate, the soul, which is ever opened by Love-Wisdom, and she gives to Hercules an apple marked with the golden word *Service*.

**Hesperis**, the evening star, the star of initiation, typifies the Will. She says to Hercules, "Tread the Way". Body, soul and spirit; Intelligence, Love and Will, visioned and contacted by the selfless aspirant through *Service*.

- *The Labours of Hercules* An Astrological Interpretation, Alice A. Bailey p. 54-76

<b>Gemini:</b>	<b>the Twins</b>
Element:	Air sign (as are Libra and Aquarius)
Quality:	Duality. Love-Wisdom. Fluidity. Control of every pair of opposites. The underlying love of Deity reaches our solar system through Gemini.
Polar Opposite:	Sagittarius, a fire sign (one-pointedness; preparation for initiation).
Rulers:	Exoteric, Mercury; Esoteric, Venus
<b>Keywords:</b>	
From the form angle:	Let instability do its work.
From the soul angle:	I recognize my other self, and in the waning of that self I grow and glow.
<b>The Lesson:</b>	Hercules's, or the Disciple's progress, hitherto subjective and characterized by thought and desire, works out into expression on the physical plane. In this sign he arrives at knowledge of himself as a personality and gathers the golden apples of knowledge, subordinating to his enterprise the three

	aspects of the personal lower self, the physical body, the desire-feeling nature, and the mind.
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