

ancient of the Phœnician fables, that the great antagonist of the gods was a gigantic serpent, that had at one time been their subject, but revolted against them and became their enemy. It was a monstrous serpent that assailed and strove to destroy the *mother* of Apollo ere yet the birth of the god, but which, long after, *Apollo* in turn assaulted and slew. It was a great serpent that watched over the apples of the Hesperides, and that Hercules, ere he could possess himself of the fruit, had to combat and kill. It was a frightful serpent that guarded the golden fleece from Jason, and which the hero had to destroy in the first instance, and next to exterminate the strange brood of armed men that sprang up from its sown teeth. In short, the old mythologies are well-nigh as full of the serpent as those ancient Runic obelisks of our country whose endless knots and complicated fretwork are formed throughout of the interlacings of snakes. Let us, however, accept as representative of this innumerable class of legends, the classical story, rendered yet more classical by the profound and reverend comment given by Bacon in his "Wisdom of the Ancients." "Jupiter and the other gods," says the philosopher, in his simple version of the tradition, "conferred upon men a most acceptable and desirable boon, —the gift of perpetual youth. But men, foolishly overjoyed hereat, laid this present of the gods upon an ass, who, in returning back with it, being extremely thirsty, and coming to a fountain, the serpent who was guardian thereof would not suffer him to drink but upon condition of receiving the burden he carried, whatever it should be. The silly ass complied; and thus the perpetual renewal of youth was for a sup of water transferred from men to the race of serpents." "That this gift of perpetual youth should pass from men to serpents," continues Bacon, "seems added, by way of ornament and illustration, to the fable." And it certainly *has* much the appearance of an afterthought. But how very