

OUR LITTLE
ATHENIAN
COUSIN OF LONG AGO



JULIA DARROW COWLES

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CHAPTER I
THE GUEST-FRIEND

More than twenty-three hundred years ago two travellers, richly dressed, and mounted upon donkeys, made their way slowly along the narrow and irregular streets of Athens. They were followed on foot by a group of slaves, who carried huge bundles in which were blankets, clothing and cooking utensils, showing that they had journeyed from some distance.

The travellers were Phorion, a famous Grecian architect, and Duris, his son, a boy of twelve years.

Presently they stopped before a house in the Street of the Sculptors, and one of the slaves rapped loudly upon the door.

“I believe this is the house of Hermippos,” said Phorion.

“I do not see how you can tell,” replied Duris. “They all look exactly alike to me.” And he glanced up at the wall of the house, which was close to the street. There were windows in the upper story, but none in the lower. A single door relieved the bare face of the lower wall.

All the houses up and down the street were built in a similar way.

Before Phorion could answer there sounded a sharp rap upon the inner side of the door to warn them that it was about to be opened, and the slaves stepped quickly to one side so that, in swinging outward, the heavy door should not strike them.

A slave appeared in the opening, and Manes, one of the slaves of Phorion, approached him.

“My master, Phorion,” said Manes, “has come from a far distant island and is worn with the long journey. His family are guest-friends of your master’s family. In token of this, here is the broken ring which is the sign of their treaty. The other half of the ring is in the keeping of your master.”

The slave took the broken ring, bade the two guests enter, and went to seek Hermippos.

Duris looked about him at the furnishings of the court of the house in which they waited. There were chairs, couches and tables about, and all were of simple materials, but artistic in shape. The lamps, of which there were a large number, consisted of an open vessel for oil in which a wick was placed, and all were beautiful in form and in workmanship.

Several rooms opened from the court, and presently

from one of these stepped Hermippos, the sculptor. He was a tall man of fine appearance, and Duris liked him at once. But Duris was even more pleased at sight of a young boy of about his own age, who followed Hermippos.

“Ah,” he said to himself, “now I shall have a fine time during my stay in Athens. I did not know that Hermippos had a son.”

Greetings were exchanged between the two men, and Duris was introduced to Hiero, the son of Hermippos. Hiero was a fine specimen of an Athenian boy, and as Duris looked into his manly, attractive face, he felt that his own visit to Athens had taken on new interest.

The two artists were soon busily engaged in discussing the buildings and sculptures of Athens.

“Pericles is doing wonderful things for the city,” said Hermippos. “He is a successful general and a wise and unselfish ruler. But he is a lover of art and of beauty as well, and he has determined that Athens shall be made the most beautiful city in the world,”

“I am very anxious to see the Parthenon,” said Phorion, “for I understand that it is the most magnificent temple ever built.”

“It is,” replied Hermippos earnestly. “I shall be glad to take you to see it. I thought it an honor to make some of the statues which are upon its walls.”

“I, too, have been honored by Pericles,” said Phorion, “for he has sent for me to plan a great music hall, which he is about to build.”

“That is an honor, indeed,” replied Hermippos. “We must visit the Acropolis to-morrow, and you, of course, must pay your respects to our ruler, Pericles.”

In the meantime the boys, Hiero and Duris, were becoming acquainted also.

“I am glad you have come,” said Hiero frankly. “We will have some good times together.” And then he added: “I shall want to hear all about your journey from the Island. I never have travelled, but I have often wished that I might.”

“I like to travel,” replied Duris, “except when the sea is rough,” and at that he made such a wry face that they both burst into hearty laughter.

“I am glad we are guest-friends,” exclaimed Hiero. “I wonder when the treaty was made between our families.”

“I understand,” replied Duris, “that some of our ancestors fought together in battle a great many years ago and became much attached to each other. So they agreed that when any of my ancestor’s family visited Athens they should be your guests, and when any of your ancestor’s family visited our home they should be our guests. So they took a ring which one of them was wearing and

broke it in half. And the broken ring has been passed down from father to son, and is kept as a token of the family treaty.”

“That is very interesting,” said Hiero earnestly, as Duris finished his story.

The custom which Duris had described did not seem at all strange to Hiero, for in that far distant time inns were few and small, and were far from being comfortable. Neither did the fact that Duris and his father had come unexpectedly surprise him, even though their visit was likely to prove a long one, for railways, mail service, telephones and the telegraph had never been heard of, so there was usually no way of knowing when a guest was to arrive until he presented himself at the door. But the people of Greece were kindly and hospitable and often cared for strangers who were not guest-friends.

“Tell me about your journey here,” urged Hiero, for by this time the boys had begun to feel like real comrades.

“We journeyed first on foot,” began Duris, “for it was some distance from our home to the seaport. The slaves, of course, carried our blankets and food, for we were two days on the way.”

“It must have been like a long picnic!” exclaimed Hiero.

“Yes,” said Duris, “it was fun, though by the end of

the second day the walking grew tiresome. We had travelling shoes studded with nails. I liked eating out of doors, and it was pleasant to sleep under the stars.

“But to me,” Duris continued, “the most interesting part was the sea voyage. The ship we were on was a trireme.”

“I do not know much about ships,” said Hiero. “What is a trireme like?”

“It is called a trireme because it has three banks of oars,” replied Duris. “The slaves who row the ship sit in banks on each side, and there are three banks at different heights. There was a captain of the slaves who played upon a flute to mark the time, so that all the oars struck the water at the same instant.

“It was very rough one day, and I felt pretty bad, for the motion of the boat made me ill, but I managed to get out in order to watch the oars. I was not too ill to wonder whether the slaves could keep their even stroke, for the wind was churning the water into great waves.”

“Well, did they?” asked Hiero.

“No,” replied Duris, “for once the slaves had a rest. But I was well repaid by the sight I saw, for the master of the ship had had two great sails hoisted, and the ship was being carried forward by the force of the wind.”

“My!” exclaimed Hiero, “I should like to take a trip like that!”

“We left the ship, of course, when it reached the Piraeus, which is the seaport of Athens, as you, of course, know. There my father hired donkeys on which we rode to your city.”

“How did you like the Piraeus?” inquired Hiero.

“It is a fine place,” said Duris. “The streets are straight and quite broad; not at all like the streets here in Athens. I should think a person would get lost here, unless he knew the city well.”

“I suppose he might,” said Hiero with a laugh, “but I am so used to the city that I never had thought of that.”

“The walls which extend from the Piraeus to Athens are wonderfully big and strong,” added Duris.

“Yes,” said Hiero. “They are sixty feet high, and broad enough for two chariots to be driven side by side upon their top. No army can ever break through those walls, and so Athens can never be cut off from the sea.

“There is to be a great festival this year in honor of the goddess Athene,” continued Hiero, “and I hope that we may visit the Piraeus together, for the festival ends with a regatta upon the water.”

“That ought to be a fine sight,” exclaimed Duris. “I hope we may be here for the festival.”

CHAPTER II
IN THE MARKET-PLACE

“Come, Duris,” called Hiero after breakfast the next morning, “Father says that we may go with him to the market. Later,” he added, “we are going to the Acropolis. That, you know, is the hill that you must have noticed as you passed through the city yesterday. On it is the Parthenon, which Pericles, our ruler, has built. It is the most magnificent temple in the world. Near the Parthenon is a statue of Athene, which is forty feet high and is made of ivory and gold.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Duris, “I caught sight of the statue, I think, as we came into Athens. Father told me that it was made by the sculptor, Phidias, and that he is the finest sculptor that has ever lived.”

“That is true,” replied Hiero, “and there are many of his statues and carvings in the Parthenon also. But, oh, the Parthenon itself! I can’t tell you about it, but, somehow, when I look at it, I just seem to feel how beautiful it is. All the artists and architects and sculptors say that it is perfect.”

“But now,” Hiero added, with a little laugh at his own enthusiasm, “we are going to the market. That is not so beautiful as the Acropolis, but I think you will find it interesting.”

Hermippos and Phorion were now ready. With them were quite a company of slaves who were to attend them upon the street. Among these were Philo and Theron, pedagogues of Hiero and Duris, for every Greek boy of good family had his slave, who was called a pedagogue. This slave attended him wherever he went and was responsible for his good behavior.

Slaves also attended the men of Greece, not only to wait upon them and to carry for them any articles that might be needed, but also to show the standing and the wealth of their owners. So it was quite an imposing little company that left the home of Hermippos.

The streets of the city were narrow and ran in all sorts of irregular directions, as Duris had said. They were not graded, and in many places there were steps leading to higher or lower portions of the city. There were no sidewalks at all. People walked in the streets, and were careful not to keep too close to the houses lest a door should be hurriedly opened and strike them.

“We will go first and buy provisions for the home,” said Hermippos, as they drew near to the market-place.

“And we are just in time,” exclaimed Hiero, “for the bell of the fish market is ringing.” People were now hurrying in the direction of the fish stalls, for fish was a favorite food of the Athenians.

All about the market-place were booths and shops where articles of many sorts were sold. There were also altars and statues, and marble seats, for the market was a general gathering place. Here the men of the city met to visit; here travellers came, to bring news from a distance; here business was carried on; and here the public affairs of Greece were discussed.

“Look!” exclaimed Hiero to Duris, and he pointed to one of the fish stalls.

“There is a fight!” said Duris.

“It is only a pretence,” laughed Hiero. “See, in a moment one of the fellows will fall. Then the owner of the stall will throw water upon him to revive him—but the fish will be better drenched than the slave. That will make the fish look fresher, and they will sell better. But,” added Hiero, with a comically solemn expression, “it is against the law to water the fish—except, of course, in case of accident.”

“Oh, I see,” laughed Duris. And a moment later he added, “There, it has happened exactly as you said!”

“Look this way,” said Hiero, suddenly pointing in another direction, “here comes a procession of soldiers.

It is the bodyguard of Pericles, the ruler of Athens. You will see him soon.”

Duris jumped up on the marble seat, that he might see over the heads of the men about him.

The citizens saluted their ruler, and shouted as he passed, for he was a favorite with all the people. No other ruler had done so much for the good of the citizens or for the beauty of their city, and the Greeks loved beauty as no other nation ever has done.

“Hurrah!” exclaimed Duris, as he jumped down from the seat. “I am glad that I saw him! I am proud to think that he sent for my father to build one of the new temples.”

As the boys reached a part of the market between two columns Hiero pointed toward the Acropolis. “See,” he said, “what a good view of Pallas Athene we get from here. But the statue can be seen, of course, from all parts of the city, so the goddess guards us well.”

The Greeks, like the Romans, worshipped many gods. They believed that the home of the gods was in Mount Olympus, a great mountain far to the north of Greece. Zeus was the ruler of Mount Olympus, and dwelt in a magnificent temple. Here he summoned the other gods into council whenever the affairs of men were to be considered.

The gods often quarrelled among themselves, and acted very much as the Greeks themselves did, but still

they were supposed to have power over the earth and the sea; over the crops of the farmer and the battles of the general; to guard the homes and lives of citizens; and to rejoice in the many festivals and games of the people.

Every occurrence in nature was traced to the action of some god. Zeus was said to drive the chariot of the sun in its daily course through the heavens; Vulcan to forge the thunderbolts; while Demeter watched over the fields of grain. Iris was the rainbow, and Neptune the god to whom the sailors prayed, for he had power to grant them a quiet voyage.

The Greeks did not worship their gods because they were better than themselves, but because they were more powerful.

The many stories of the gods, which we call myths, but which formed the religion of the Greeks, were so full of poetry and of imaginative beauty that people of every nation love to hear them, even though they do not believe in them in the same way that the Greeks did.

But we must remember that Hiero and Duris believed these stories of gods and goddesses to be literally true, and so the great statue of Pallas Athene on the Acropolis represented to them a living goddess who protected Athens, and for whom the city was named.

CHAPTER III

THE ACROPOLIS

“**W**here are the boys?” asked Hermippos of Phorion, as they were about to leave the market-place.

“I think we will find them in yonder crowd,” replied Phorion. “I see Philo and Theron near by.”

As they stepped to the booth where the crowd had gathered Hermippos listened for a moment and then laughed.

“We will have to wait,” he said. “Lysias, the merchant, who has just returned to Athens with a ship-load of goods from the Island of Rhodes, is telling of an encounter he had with pirates who tried to seize his vessel and rob him of his cargo. We cannot expect the boys to be interested in the Acropolis till that tale is finished.”

“Surely not,” replied Phorion with a smile.

“But fortunately,” they heard Lysias saying in a shrill voice, “a ship from the Island of Melos came to our rescue, and the pirates were driven off. And now, my friends,” he continued, “I am here to show you the beautiful goods—”

“Come, boys,” said Hermippos, touching Hiero upon

the shoulder, "I think you have heard all of Lysias' story that you would be interested in."

The boys turned quickly and made their way through the crowd. "Did you hear Lysias tell of his fight with the pirates?" asked Hiero, with sparkling eyes, as he joined his father.

"I heard a part," replied Hermippos. "There are pirates enough on our seas, to be sure," he added, "but I think Lysias is not above inventing the story in order to draw a crowd about his booth. It is an excellent way to sell his goods."

The boys looked rather foolish for a moment, and then Hiero exclaimed with a laugh: "Well, I don't care. It was a good story, anyway!" And to this Duris heartily agreed.

But even pirates were forgotten when the boys reached the top of the broad marble steps that led to the Acropolis. Duris was eager to see the temples and statues of which he had heard so much, and Hiero was quite as eager to point them out to him.

A love of beauty was part of the Greek nature. It was to them like the fragrance of flowers or the warmth of the sunlight. Perhaps Hiero and Duris thought even more than most Greek boys of their age about the beauty of carvings, and statues, and temples. Both their fathers had taught them of these things all their lives.

The Parthenon was all of pure white marble. It was surrounded by fluted columns, which were simple, strong, and perfect in outline. All about the building were beautiful carvings showing a procession in honor of Athene, such as took place in Athens every four years. This was the festival of which Hiero had spoken to Duris. The Parthenon was built in honor of this goddess, who was called by the Romans Minerva. She was the Goddess of Wisdom.

Inside the temple there were many other carvings and statues, and Hiero pointed out with pride those which his father had made.

“Let us sit down for a time,” said Phorion, “and look carefully at some of these groups of statuary. See,” he said, turning to Hiero and Duris, “here, over the front of the Parthenon, is a group which tells us of the origin of Pallas Athene. Duris, can you tell us the story which it represents?”

Duris flushed a little, but he did not hesitate, for every Greek boy was supposed to know the stories of the gods and goddesses. These were among the first stories which their mothers told them as little children.

“Pallas Athene,” began Duris simply, “was the daughter of Zeus. She sprang from his head, fully grown, and clad all in armor. The gods were astonished at the sight, and

the earth and sea were shaken. Athene is the Goddess of Wisdom. She inspires men to defend their homes and their cities. She teaches women the arts of spinning and weaving.”

“That is very well told,” said Hermippos, as Duris finished. And then he added: “At the farther end of the temple we noticed another group of figures showing the conflict between Athene and Neptune. Hiero, can you tell us of that?”

“I think so,” replied Hiero. “It was when Athens was first built, and had not yet been named. Both Athene and Neptune wanted the honor of naming the city, so the gods decided that the one who should create the most valuable gift for the people should give the city its name and guard it.

“Neptune struck the earth, and there sprang forth the horse. Then Neptune explained how powerful and strong the horse was, and how swiftly it could carry their men into battle.

“The people applauded Neptune, and declared that nothing more useful or more wonderful could be given them. But when they had ceased praising Neptune, Athene touched the ground, and an olive tree sprang up, with leaves and fruit.

“Then Athene explained to them that the fruit would

yield them food and oil; the trunk would supply them with material to build their homes, and with fuel to keep them warm; the leaves would give them grateful shade; and the tree itself was a symbol of peace and prosperity, while war would cause bloodshed and sorrow.

“Athene’s gift was seen to be more wonderful and more valuable than Neptune’s, and she was chosen to rule over the city, and to give it her name.”

“That is good!” exclaimed Phorion. “I am glad to see that you boys understand the old Greek stories and can tell them so well. Now,” he added, “I think we will all enjoy better seeing the great statue of Athene for having heard these stories told again.”

Duris gazed in wonder as he stood before the image of the goddess, while Hiero called his attention to its details.

“You see,” he said, “all the flesh is made from ivory, and the drapery is of pure gold. And look at the eyes. See! the pupils are of jewels.”

“What does the smaller statue, which she holds in her hand, represent?” asked Duris.

“That is the statue of Victory. Athene’s shield and spear are in her other hand. Notice, too, the serpent coiled at her feet. The serpent, you know, is a symbol of wisdom.”

“It is a wonderful statue,” said Duris. “I hope that I may sometime see Phidias, the sculptor.”



22 DURIS GAZED IN WONDER AS HE STOOD BEFORE THE IMAGE OF THE GODDESS.

“You are quite likely to,” answered Hiero, “for he visits the Acropolis often.”

“You are fortunate to be in Athens this year,” said Hiero, as the little procession at last turned toward home. “The festival of Athene occurs only once in four years. The frieze in the Parthenon shows you what the procession will be like. I am glad we can see it together.”

“So am I,” responded Duris heartily.

As they turned into the Street of the Sculptors he asked: “When does your school begin?”

“In two days,” replied Hiero. “I hope that your father is planning to send you, too.”

“What sort of master have you?” inquired Duris.

“Oh, he is good to the small boys,” said Hiero, “but the rest of us have to mind our ways, for he is rather fond of using the cane.”

“Well,” said Duris, with a laugh, “I’ll risk the cane, for I, too, hope that I am to go to school in Athens.”