

# THERAS AND HIS TOWN

100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION



**CAROLINE DALE SNEDEKER**

**THERAS  
AND HIS TOWN**

**100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION**

TO THE  
TWO DEAREST CHILDREN  
CAROLINE DALE STILLWELL  
AND  
OWEN PARKE MAIER

Published by  
Purple House Press  
PO Box 787  
Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031

Classic Books for Kids and Young Adults  
[purplehousepress.com](http://purplehousepress.com)

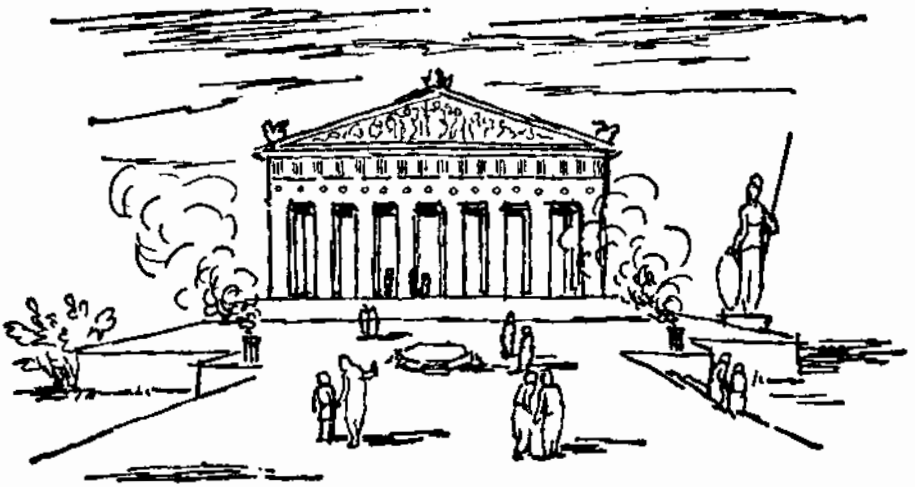
Unabridged, written in 1924 by Caroline Dale Snedeker  
Map on page iv drawn by Mary Whitson Waring in 1924  
Map of Athens drawn by Hayley Morgan-Sanders © 2024  
Drawings by Dimitri Davis  
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ISBN 9798888180587 Hardcover  
ISBN 9798888180570 Paperback

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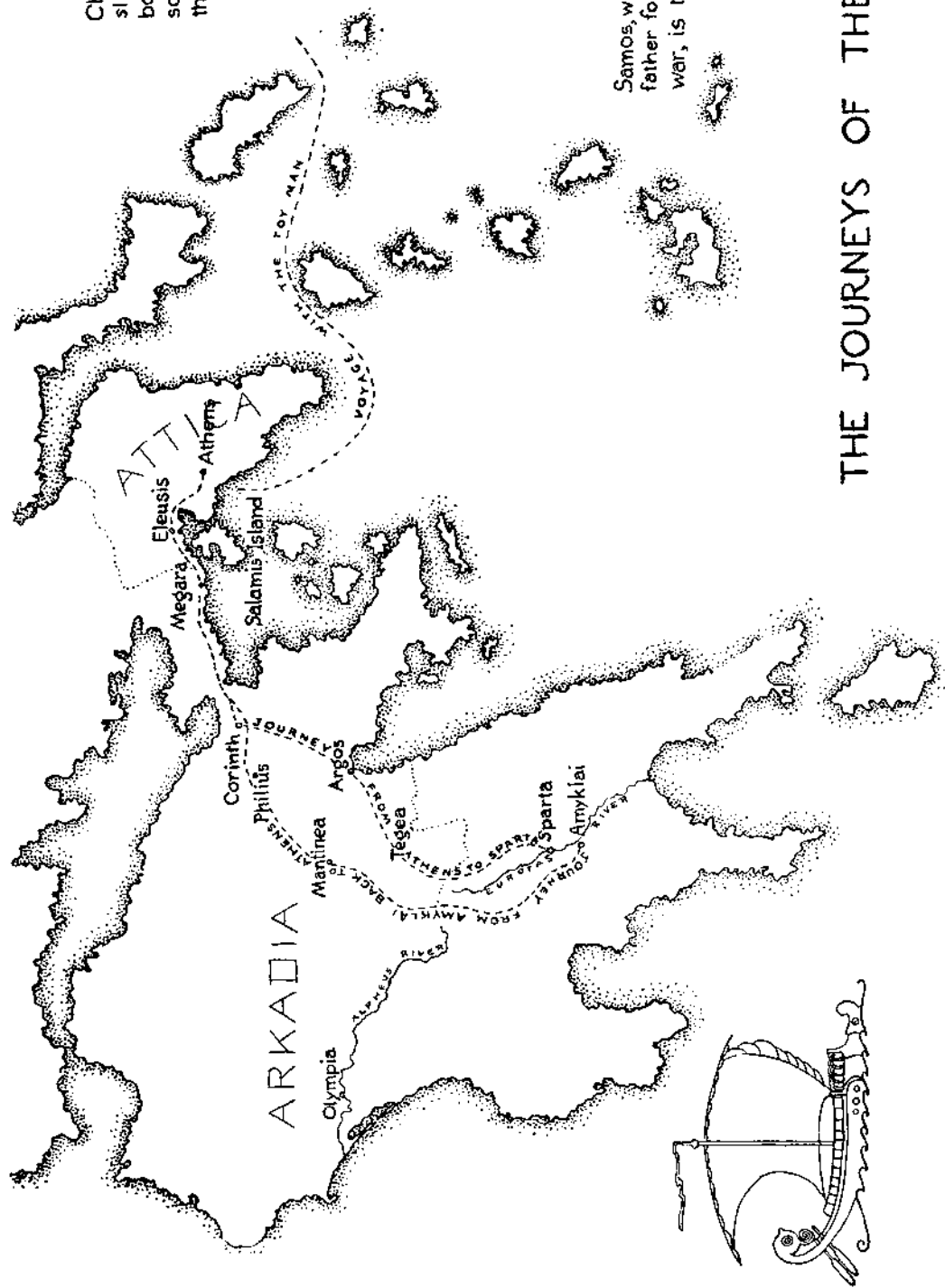


CAROLINE DALE SNEDEKER

DRAWINGS BY DIMITRIS DAVIS

Chios, where slaves are bought and sold, lies in this direction

Samos, where Therasis's father fought in the war, is to the east of this.



## THE JOURNEYS OF THERAS

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HIPPIAS

METION

THE TOY  
MAN



ABAS

KAIROS THERAS

PHEIDON

ARETHUSA



# ATHENS

PART ONE





## SEVEN YEARS OLD

### CHAPTER I

**T**HERAS WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD and because he was seven he was to go to school. For that was the custom in the city in which he lived. It was an exciting day for everybody in the house, most of all for Theras. For until this time he had had to stay at home with his mother and the servants, and was allowed to play only in the house or in the street close by the front door. Now he was to go out to school with the other boys. Now he would often be with his father and would go to and fro in the city. He already felt grown up.



To go to and fro in the city was what Theras prized. For he lived in the most beautiful city in the world.

It was not such a big city. Everybody knew everybody else, and who were his father and mother and cousins. Nor was it so very rich. Theras's father lived in a plain, simple house and all his family and cousins lived simply, too. But in this city were the wisest and most famous men that the world has ever known, and the most beautiful buildings.

It was called Athens. And though it flourished many years ago, no people since then have been able to make so lovely a city.

No wonder Theras was excited and danced up and down.

"Isn't it time to go?" he said. "Isn't it time to go?"

His mother looked at him wistfully. Glad as she was to have him go she knew she would miss him sorely. For in Athens when once a boy went to school he began to be part of the city life. He was no longer of the house.

"Yes, it is time," she said.

Now into the room came Pheidon, Theras's father, bringing with him a tall man named Lampon.

"Lampon is to be your pedagogue," said Pheidon, and Theras ran to the man, who laughed proudly and took the boy's hand.

"Mind, Lampon, you mustn't be too easy with the boy," said Pheidon. "You are pedagogue now."

By that he meant that Lampon was to take Theras to school, carry his wax tablet which was his writing pad, his stylus (or pencil), and his lyre which was his harp. Lampon

was to see that no harm came to Theras, and if necessary he must punish him. Even a boy of fourteen or fifteen in Athens would have his pedagogue.

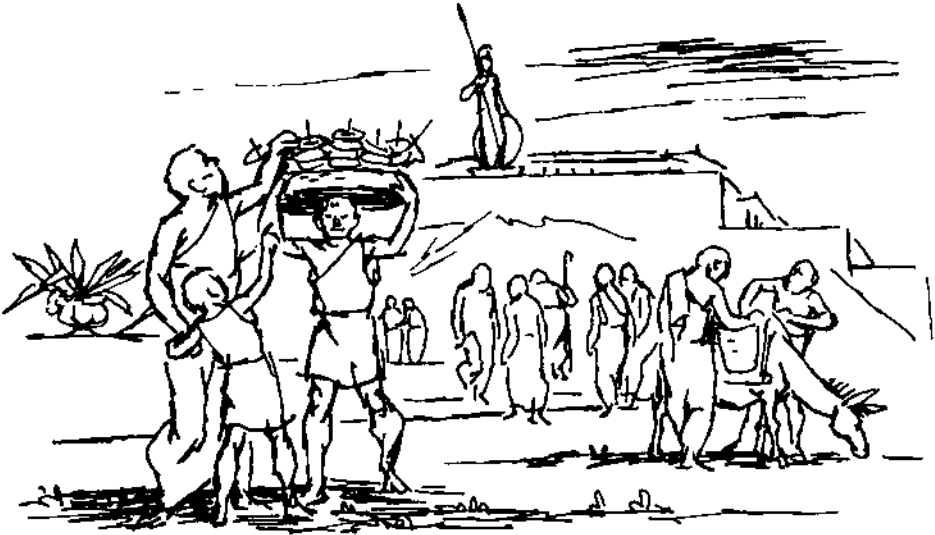
Lampon was a slave. That means, of course, that Pheidon had bought him in the market just as you would buy a horse or a cow. Lampon was a white man not unlike the Greeks themselves. All people in the whole world bought slaves in those days. The only difference was that the Athenians were kinder to their slaves than were other people. Lampon had been in the house before Theras was born. He loved his master, Pheidon, and his mistress; but his "little master," Theras, he adored, and indeed he was most likely to spoil him.

"Look, Theras, here is your lyre," said his father, and handed him the beautiful little Greek harp. It had bright strings and under the strings was a picture of the god Apollo playing. Every boy must have a new lyre the day he went to school.

"Is it mine?" cried Theras unbelievably. "My very own?"

He held it out to his little sisters standing near, and when Opis plucked the strings with her baby fingers the harp gave forth a thin sweet sound.





## A WALK IN THE CITY

### CHAPTER II

**B**UT NOW THEY MUST START. Theras's mother put on him his long outdoor cloak; for in the house he wore only one garment, like a shirt, reaching to his knees. She also put on his sandals, for he was barefoot. Then Aglaia and Opis, his two little sisters, kissed him. His mother kissed him. You might have thought he was going miles away.

Now his father took his hand, for this being the first day he wanted to take the boy to the schoolmaster himself. Out they went into the bright sunshine, Lampon, the pedagogue, following them. The streets were very narrow

in Athens and the houses had no windows, so they seemed to be walking between two high walls with doors in them. The Athenians did not build stately houses for themselves, but only for their gods. The streets were crooked and turned this way and that. It would be easy to get lost.

But high over the city they could see the rocky hill called the Akropolis with the marble temples which Athens had instead of churches. These temples were painted red, blue, and gold and had winged, dragon-like creatures on the roof corners. They looked wonderfully bright up there in the sunshine.

“Father,” said Theras, “take me to the Akropolis. I am plenty old enough to go to the Akropolis.”

“I’ll take you, never fear,” said his father, “but to-day you are going to school.”

Suddenly they came into the bright open space of the market, noisy, bustling, full of life and color. “Buy my flowers,” the flower girls were calling. And all that part of the market bloomed with their pretty wares. “Buy my himations,” bawled a great fellow who had white and purple cloaks for sale. “Buy my toys,” yelled another who had balls and tiny carts and gilded nuts on his booth. It was the noisiest place Theras had ever seen; and how he loved the noise! Over on one side was a long colonnade, a row of marble pillars roofed like a porch, and with a wall on its farther side. On this wall were painted pictures of warriors taking the city of Troy. Also woman warriors on horseback charging upon men who were fighting them with spears.

Theras had never seen a picture book and these were the most wonderful pictures he had ever seen. Indeed men journeyed for days over rough roads and rough seas to behold these paintings by Polygnotus.

“Father, stop! Oh, do wait a moment,” pleaded Theras. But his father only paused to buy two dolls of baked clay for the small sisters at home, and then they hurried on.

“The market is no place for boys,” he said.

“Hail, Pheidon,” called a friend, “where are you going so fast?”

“I’m taking my son to school,” answered Pheidon proudly.

As they came out again among the narrow streets another friend, Epikides, greeted them.

“Come up to the Pnyx, Pheidon. Phidias is going to speak to us all about buying new ships.”

“I will certainly come,” said Pheidon, “but first I must take my son to school.”

“Your son! How fine!” exclaimed Epikides who had only daughters in his house.

Theras felt his father clasp his hand more tightly.

What a lovable, bright world it was!

### *At School*

They reached the school. It was a little place with only about thirty boys in it; for there were many different schools in Athens, and all were small. They usually consisted of one large room, but this one was a wide porch

open to the sunshine with a room to one side where the pedagogues sat waiting for their charges.

The Athenians had everything in the open air—schools, law courts, theatres, everything. The sun shone almost every day of the year. Their sunshine and open-air life made them very healthy and happy people.

On the wall of the school hung the lyres of the boys, the tablets, and the cloaks. The boys sat on benches and the teacher faced them. He was a grim-looking man. Theras was sure he could give a whipping when it was deserved, and perhaps when it was not.

The teacher frowned down on Theras.

“Can your boy sing?” he asked Pheidon.

“Well, I taught him the skolion of Harmodios and Aristogeiton,” answered Pheidon. “That was a year ago. He’s just a boy. He loves to romp and play.”

Now it was very important in Athens for a boy to sing. For if he could sing he could get into one of the boy choruses. That meant he would march in the processions on holiday festivals, and the father of such a boy would say, “Yes, my boy is in the chorus of Dionysos” or “the chorus of Apollo.”

Perhaps the chorus would win the prize for the best singing. Then all the family would be proud. Even Athens itself considered that the boys had done honor to the city.

Therefore the master asked first of all, “Can he sing?”

“But I *can* sing, Father,” said Theras in his high, distinct voice. “I know the whole story of Telemachus going to sea.”

The boys all nudged each other and giggled. How silly the new boy was, to be sure!

“Silence!” thundered the master. “Theras, if you can sing, sing it. Klinias, you play the lyre.”

And Theras, only thinking that he must do the best he could, began at once.

He sang the story—quite a long one, too—of the boy Telemachus in far-away Ithaca whose father, Odysseus, had been wandering the sea for many years. Wicked men thinking his father was dead came into the house and took everything they wanted, ate up all the food, and frightened the boy’s mother, Penelope. This troubled Telemachus greatly. What could he do—a boy—among a company of wicked men?

Then the dear goddess Athena came to Telemachus in the likeness of a tall man and talked to the boy about his father. Telemachus, encouraged by her words, went down to the shore and got a ship. He persuaded many honest young men to go with him, and when the sun was set and all the ways were darkened, they slipped away secretly in the ship. Telemachus was going over the sea to find Odysseus, his father.

Theras sang all this in his high, clear voice, sometimes not fitting the words properly to the notes but singing in time and very earnestly. As he finished he leaped toward his father, crying out:

“And oh, Father, if you were lost on the sea, I’d take a boat and come out to find you, no matter if it took me years and years.”

“Theras, Theras,” said Pheidon, “how did you learn that song?”

“I heard you sing it,” said the boy.

“But I never sang it for you.”

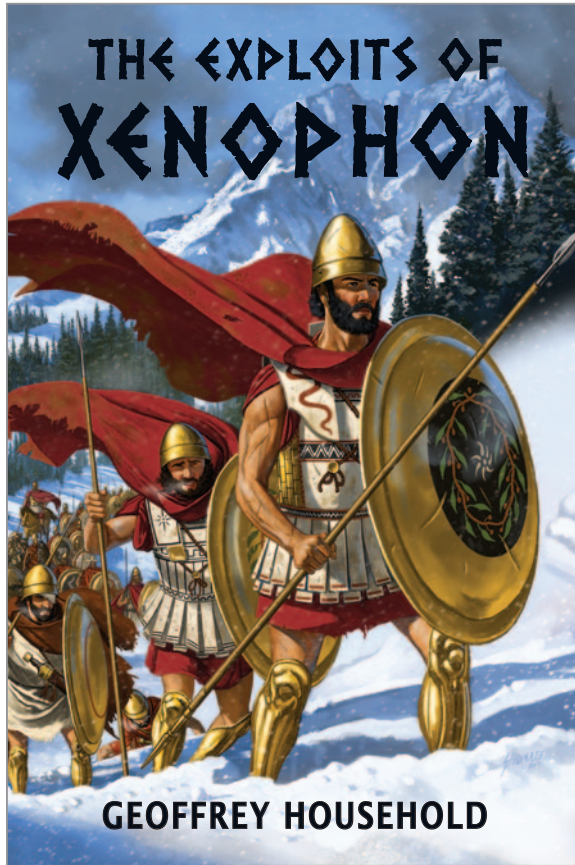
“No, but when you have a feast in the aula I come down and listen at the door. That is how I learn.”

“But you are in bed.”

“I jump out of bed,” said Theras, laughing.

Now, of course, it was disobedient of Theras to come down to his father’s feasts when he was supposed to be fast asleep, but Pheidon was so pleased with what the boy had learned that he could not scold him.

However, the master noted it and determined to watch Theras sharply and punish him if he did not obey.



During the same time period as *Theras*, more than 2,400 years ago, one of the most thrilling war stories in history was being read and discussed in Greece. It was called the *Anabasis* and was written by a Greek noble named Xenophon, who described at first hand what he did, what he suffered, and what he saw during a campaign against the Persians.

This previous World Landmark Book was adapted by Geoffrey Household in 1955 and made available again by Purple House Press in 2023!