

Q. The story of the Fifth Labor: The Augean Stables. Analysis.

Answer---.The Twelve Labours of Heracles or Hercules are a series of episodes concerning a penance carried out by Heracles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, whose name was later romanised as Hercules. They were accomplished at the service of King Eurystheus. The episodes were later connected by a continuous narrative.

As the fifth labor, Heracles was asked to clean the stables of Augeias all by himself within a single day. They say that these stables had not been cleaned for over thirty years.

Augeas was a king of Elis, in southern Greece. His father, the Sun-god Helios, endowed him with many herds, but unfortunately there were too many herds in the cattle and the dung was threatening the city with diseases.

So Heracles went up to the king and offered to remove the waste if only he was given the tenth of his cattle. Augeas gave his word.

The hero completed the task very fast thanks to the following technique: he made a breach in the foundations of the wall that surrounded the yard. Then he diverted the courses of two rivers that flowed nearby, Alpheios and Peneios, channelizing the water into the yard.

But when Augeas found out that Heracles acted on behalf of Eurystheus, he refused to pay the reward, claiming that he had never made any promise. So the matter had to be taken to court, where Phyleus, the son of Augeas, testified against his father. Hearing this, Augeas got so angry that he chased both Heracles and his son away from his kingdom.

Later on, Heracles took revenge. He returned to the city with an army, conquered the city and finally killed Augeas and placed his son Phyleus on the throne.

However, back in Mycenae, Eurystheus decided not to take the labor into consideration, because Heracles was paid for doing the task.