

Oeneus' son takes over: 'Nay, most worthy scion of heaven, why not tell your right favouring comrades of your ways, the rudiments of earliest nature and what Chiron showed you as presently strong manhood came on; the seeds of glory, the path to valour, the arts to make your body grow and your mind. Let it be worth while that I have sought Scyros over the length of waves and been the first to show weapons to these arms of yours.'

Whom would it irk to tell of his own deeds? Yet he begins modestly, a little hesitant, rather as if constrained: 'They say that in my tender years, still crawling, when the old man of Thessaly received me on his stark mountain, I took no ordinary food nor satisfied hunger from nurturing breasts, but tore at the tough flesh of lions and offal of a she-wolf still half alive. This was my first bread, this the gift of happy Bacchus, thus that father of mine used to feed me. Presently he taught me to go with him through the trackless wilderness, drawing me on with his wider stride, and to laugh when I saw wild beasts and not to fear rocks shattered by rushing torrents and the silences of the vast forest. Even then arms were in my hand, even then a quiver at my neck, precocious love of steel, skin hardened by sun and frost in plenty, limbs not loosened by soft bedding, but a rock shared with my huge master. Scarce had my raw life turned twice six years when he had me run faster than the swift stags and Lapith horses and chase the darts I flung. Often would Chiron himself, while his age ran swift, pursue me at gallop all over the plains in headlong career, and when I was exhausted in my wanderings through the meads he would joyfully praise me and hoist me onto his back. Often too at the first freezing of the river he would bid me walk over it nor break the ice with lightsome foot. Such was my boyish glory. Why tell you of forest fights and glens now empty of savage growls? He would never let me chase unwarlike deer through Ossa's wilds or lay timid lynxes low with my spear; I must rouse grim bears from their dens and boars like thunderbolts or mayhap a mighty tigress' lair or a hidden cavern on the mountain that housed a lioness and her cubs. Himself would sit in his vast cave and wait for my exploits: would I return splashed with black blood? Nor did he admit me to his kiss until he had inspected my weapons. And now I was making ready for affrays of the sword with neighbour folk; no aspect of fierce Mavors passed me by. I learned how the Paeonians whirl their arms, how the Macetae speed their javelins, with what a spin the Sarmatian plies his stake, the Gete his falchion, the Gelonian his bow, how the Balearic driver of the twisted sling swings his missile aloft with balanced pull, marking out the air he comprises in its circle. I could scarce recall all I did, though I did it well. Anon he teaches me to span great ditches in a jump, to climb and grasp an airy mountain peak as if racing over the level; in mock battle to receive flying boulders on my curving shield boss, to enter burning huts and stop hurtling chariots on foot. I remember when Sperchios was flowing his fastest, fed on continual rains and melted snow, carrying live trees and rocks; Charon would tell me to get in where the torrent's current was fiercest and stand against it, repelling the swollen waves that he himself would hardly have withstood with so many feet. I stood, but the angry river and the mist of his broad rush took me back. He bore down on me with savage threats and scolded to shame me. I did not leave till ordered, so high glory urged me, and before so mighty a witness labours were light. For to hide Oebalian quoits far up in the sky and knot holds in the slippery wrestling match and scatter boxing gloves were my play and relaxation, and toil therein no greater than when I plucked the sounding strings with Apollo's quill and marvelled at the glories of the men of old. He even taught me of juices and grasses to aid in sickness, of medicine to stanch fast-flowing blood, what brings sleep, what closes gaping wounds, what plague should be checked by steel, what yields to herbs; and he fixed in my mind the precepts of sacred justice, whereby he used to give laws for Pelion's tribes to reverence and pacify his own twiforms. So far, comrades, I remember the training of my early years and joy in the memory. My mother knows the rest.' (*Ach.* 2.86-167)