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## THE MIGHTY OAK, A TREE OF THE GODS

According to legend, the Romans dedicated the oak to their supreme god, the mighty Jupiter. At one time, every oak was consecrated to him and he was worshipped as the oak-god. At the temple of Jupiter, Roman victors were crowned with oak leaves, which were Jupiter's special emblem.

The Greek god, Zeus, occupied the same place as Jupiter did in the minds of the Romans. And he, too, was closely associated with trees, especially the oak, which was sacred to him.

The Greeks thought that the oak was the first tree. It was an oak that sheltered Zeus' cradle on Mount Lycaeus and he himself was believed to haunt the sacred oak at Dodona which stood near his temple in the Dodonian Forest. The temple finally was burned in 219 B.C. and the tree was felled in the third century A.D.

It was by the rustling of the leaves of this oak that Zeus announced his edicts to mankind. Usually these rustlings were interpreted by oracles, but it is also maintained by some that the oaks of the grove actually spoke. And more than that, this capacity for speech continued even after the trees were cut down.

Because of this, a piece of one of these marvelous trees was fashioned into the prow of the Argo, that famous ship in which Jason and the Argonauts sought the golden fleece. It is said that as occasion demanded, the prow spoke, directing the crew and warning Jason to purge himself of the murder of Absyrtus.

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