

Dialogues of the Gods, by Lucian of Samosata, English translated by H. W. & F. G. Fowler

1 (21). ARES AND HERMES

ARES

Did you hear Zeus's threat, Hermes? most complimentary, wasn't it, and most practicable? 'If I choose,' says he, 'I could let down a cord from Heaven, and all of you might hang on to it and do your very best to pull me down; it would be waste labour; you would never move me. On the other hand, if I chose to haul up, I should have you all dangling in mid air, with earth and sea into the bargain and so on; you heard? Well, I dare say he is too much for any of us individually, but I will never believe he outweighs the whole of us in a body, or that, even with the makeweight of earth and sea, we should not get the better of him.

HERMES

Mind what you say, Ares; it is not safe to talk like that; we might get paid out for chattering.

ARES

You don't suppose I should say this to every one; I am not afraid of you; I know you can keep a quiet tongue. I must tell you what made me laugh most while he stormed: I remember not so long ago, when Posidon and Hera and Athene rebelled and made a plot for his capture and imprisonment, he was frightened out of his wits; well, there were only three of them, and if Thetis had not taken pity on him and called in the hundred-handed Briareus to the rescue, he would actually have been put in chains, with his thunder and his bolt beside him. When I worked out the sum, I could not help laughing.

HERMES

Oh, do be quiet; such things are too risky for you to say or me to listen to.

2 (22). PAN AND HERMES

3 (23). APOLLO AND DIONYSUS

4 (24). HERMES AND MAIA

HERMES

Mother, I am the most miserable god in Heaven.

MAIA

Don't say such things, child.

HERMES

Am I to do all the work of Heaven with my own hands, to be hurried from one piece of drudgery to another, and never say a word? I have to get up early, sweep the dining-room, lay the cushions and put all to rights; then I have to wait on Zeus, and take his messages, up and down, all day

long; and I am no sooner back again (no time for a wash) than I have to lay the table; and there was the nectar to pour out, too, till this new cup-bearer was bought. And it really is too bad, that when every one else is in bed, I should have to go off to Pluto with the Shades, and play the usher in Rhadamanthus's court. It is not enough that I must be busy all day in the wrestling-ground and the Assembly and the schools of rhetoric, the dead must have their share in me too. Leda's sons take turn and turn about betwixt Heaven and Hades--I have to be in both every day. And why should the sons of Alemena and Semele, paltry women, why should they feast at their ease, and I—the son of Maia, the grandson of Atlas—wait upon them? And now here am I only just back from Sidon, where he sent me to see after Europa, and before I am in breath again--off I must go to Argos, in quest of Danae, 'and you can take Boeotia on your way,' says father, 'and see Antiope.' I am half dead with it all. Mortal slaves are better off than I am: they have the chance of being sold to a new master; I wish I had the same!

MAIA

Come, come, child. You must do as your father bids you, like a good boy. Run along now to Argos and Boeotia; don't loiter, or you will get a whipping. Lovers are apt to be hasty.

5 (I). PROMETHEUS AND ZEUS

PROMETHEUS

Release me, Zeus; I have suffered enough.

ZEUS

Release you? you? Why, by rights your irons should be heavier, you should have the whole weight of Caucasus upon you, and instead of one, a dozen vultures, not just pecking at your liver, but scratching out your eyes. You made these abominable human creatures to vex us, you stole our fire, you invented women. I need not remind you how you overreached me about the meat-offerings; my portion, bones disguised in fat: yours, all the good.

PROMETHEUS

And have I not been punished enough—riveted to the Caucasus all these years, feeding your bird (on which all worst curses light!) with my liver?

ZEUS

'Tis not a tithe of your deserts.

PROMETHEUS

Consider, I do not ask you to release me for nothing. I offer you information which is invaluable.

ZEUS

Promethean wiles!

PROMETHEUS

Wiles? to what end? you can find the Caucasus another time; and there are chains to be had, if you catch me cheating.

ZEUS

Tell me first the nature of your 'invaluable' offer.

PROMETHEUS

If I tell you your present errand right, will that convince you that I can prophesy too?

ZEUS

Of course it will.

PROMETHEUS

You are bound on a little visit to Thetis.

ZEUS

Right so far. And the sequel? I trust you now.

PROMETHEUS

Have no dealings with her, Zeus. As sure as Nereus's daughter conceives by you, your child shall mete you the measure you meted to—

ZEUS

I shall lose my kingdom, you would say?

PROMETHEUS

Avert it, Fate! I say only, that union portends this issue.

ZEUS

Thetis, farewell! and for this Hephaestus shall set you free.

6 (2). EROS AND ZEUS

EROS

You might let me off, Zeus! I suppose it was rather too bad of me; but there!—I am but a child; a wayward child.

ZEUS

A child, and born before Iapetus was ever thought of? You bad old man! Just because you have no beard, and no white hairs, are you going to pass yourself off for a child?

EROS

Well, and what such mighty harm has the old man ever done you, that you should talk of chains?

ZEUS

Ask your own guilty conscience, what harm. The pranks you have played me! Satyr, bull, swan, eagle, shower of gold,—I have been everything in my time; and I have you to thank for it. You never by any chance make the women in love with me; no one is ever smitten with my charms, that I have noticed. No, there must be magic in it always; I must be kept well out of sight. They like the bull or the swan well enough: but once let them set eyes on me, and they are frightened out of their lives.

EROS

Well, of course. They are but mortals; the sight of Zeus is too much for them.

ZEUS

Then why are Branchus and Hyacinth so fond of Apollo?

EROS

Daphne ran away from him, anyhow; in spite of his beautiful hair and his smooth chin. Now, shall I tell you the way to win hearts? Keep that aegis of yours quiet, and leave the thunderbolt at home; make yourself as smart as you can; curl your hair and tie it up with a bit of ribbon, get a purple cloak, and gold-bespangled shoes, and march forth to the music of flute and drum;—and see if you don't get a finer following than Dionysus, for all his Maenads.

ZEUS

Pooh! I'll win no hearts on such terms.

EROS

Oh, in that case, don't fall in love. Nothing could be simpler.

ZEUS

I dare say; but I like being in love, only I don't like all this fuss. Now mind; if I let you off, it is on this understanding.

7 (3). ZEUS AND HERMES

ZEUS

Hermes, you know Inachus's beautiful daughter?

HERMES

I do. Io, you mean?

ZEUS

Yes; she is not a girl now, but a heifer.

HERMES

Magic at work! how did that come about?

ZEUS

Hera had a jealous fit, and transformed her. But that is not all; she has thought of a new punishment for the poor thing. She has put a cowherd in charge, who is all over eyes; this Argus, as he is called, pastures the heifer, and never goes to sleep.

HERMES

Well, what am I to do?

ZEUS

Fly down to Nemea, where the pasture is, kill Argus, take Io across the sea to Egypt, and convert her into Isis. She shall be henceforth an Egyptian Goddess, flood the Nile, regulate the winds, and rescue mariners.

8 (5). ZEUS AND HERA

9 (6). HERA AND ZEUS

HERA

Zeus! What is your opinion of this man Ixion?

ZEUS

Why, my dear, I think he is a very good sort of man; and the best of company. Indeed, if he were unworthy of our company, he would not be here.

HERA

He is unworthy! He is a villain! Discard him!

ZEUS

Eh? What has he been after? I must know about this.

HERA

Certainly you must; though I scarce know how to tell you. The wretch!

ZEUS

Oh, oh; if he is a 'wretch,' you must certainly tell me all about it. I know what 'wretch' means, on your discreet tongue. What, he has been making love?

HERA

And to me! to me of all people! It has been going on for a long time. At first, when he would keep looking at me, I had no idea—. And then he would sigh and groan; and when I handed my cup to Ganymede after drinking, he would insist on having it, and would stop drinking to kiss it, and lift it up to his eyes; and then he would look at me again. And then of course I knew. For a long time I didn't like to say anything to you; I thought his mad fit would pass. But when he actually dared to speak to me, I left him weeping and groveling about, and stopped my ears, so that I might not hear his impertinences, and came to tell you. It is for you to consider what steps you will take.

ZEUS

Whew! I have a rival, I find; and with my own lawful wife. Here is a rascal who has tippled nectar to some purpose. Well, we have no one but ourselves to blame for it: we make too much of these mortals, admitting them to our table like this. When they drink of our nectar, and behold the beauties of Heaven (so different from those of Earth!), 'tis no wonder if they fall in love, and form ambitious schemes! Yes, Love is all-powerful; and not with mortals only: we Gods have sometimes fallen beneath his sway.

HERA

He has made himself master of you; no doubt of that. He does what he likes with you;—leads you by the nose. You follow him whither he chooses, and assume every shape at his command; you are his chattel, his toy. I know how it will be: you are going to let Ixion off, because you have had relations with his wife; she is the mother of Pirithous.

ZEUS

Why, what a memory you have for these little outings of mine!—Now, my idea about Ixion is this. It would never do to punish him, or to exclude him from our table; that would not look well. No; as he is so fond of you, so hard hit—even to weeping point, you tell me,—

HERA

Zeus! What are you going to say?

ZEUS

Don't be alarmed. Let us make a cloud-phantom in your likeness, and after dinner, as he lies awake (which of course he will do, being in love), let us take it and lay it by his side. 'Twill put him out of his pain: he will fancy he has attained his desire.

HERA

Never! The presumptuous villain!

ZEUS

Yes, I know. But what harm can it do to you, if Ixion makes a conquest of a cloud?

HERA

But he will think that I am the cloud; he will be working his wicked will upon me for all he can tell.

ZEUS

Now you are talking nonsense. The cloud is not Hera, and Hera is not the cloud. Ixion will be deceived; that is all.

HERA

Yes, but these men are all alike—they have no delicacy. I suppose, when he goes home, he will boast to every one of how he has enjoyed the embraces of Hera, the wife of Zeus! Why, he may tell them that I am in love with him! And they will believe it; they will know nothing about the cloud.

ZEUS

If he says anything of the kind he shall soon find himself in Hades, spinning round on a wheel for all eternity. That will keep him busy! And serve him right; not for falling in love—I see no great harm in that—but for letting his tongue wag.

10 (4). ZEUS AND GANYMEDE

11 (7). HEPHAESTUS AND APOLLO

HEPHAESTUS

Have you seen Maia's baby, Apollo? such a pretty little thing, with a smile for everybody; you can see it is going to be a treasure.

APOLLO

That baby a treasure? well, in mischief, Iapetus is young beside it.

HEPHAESTUS

Why, what harm can it do, only just born?

APOLLO

Ask Posidon; it stole his trident. Ask Ares; he was surprised to find his sword gone out of the scabbard. Not to mention myself, disarmed of bow and arrows.

HEPHAESTUS

Never! that infant? he has hardly found his legs yet; he is not out of his baby-linen.

APOLLO

Ah, you will find out, Hephaestus, if he gets within reach of you.

HEPHAESTUS

He has been.

APOLLO

Well? all your tools safe? none missing?

HEPHAESTUS

Of course not.

APOLLO

I advise you to make sure.

HEPHAESTUS

Zeus! where are my pincers?

APOLLO

Ah, you will find them among the baby-linen.

HEPHAESTUS

So light-fingered? one would swear he had practised petty larceny in the womb.

APOLLO

Ah, and you don't know what a glib young chatterbox he is; and, if he has his way, he is to be our errand-boy! Yesterday he challenged Eros—tripped up his heels somehow, and had him on his back in a twinkling; before the applause was over, he had taken the opportunity of a congratulatory hug from Aphrodite to steal her girdle; Zeus had not done laughing before—the sceptre was gone. If the thunderbolt had not been too heavy, and very hot, he would have made away with that too.

HEPHAESTUS

The child has some spirit in him, by your account.

APOLLO

Spirit, yes—and some music, moreover, young as he is.

HEPHAESTUS

How can you tell that?

APOLLO

He picked up a dead tortoise somewhere or other, and contrived an instrument with it. He fitted horns to it, with a cross-bar, stuck in pegs, inserted a bridge, and played a sweet tuneful thing that made an old harper like me quite envious. Even at night, Maia was saying, he does not stay in Heaven; he goes down poking his nose into Hades—on a thieves' errand, no doubt. Then he has a pair of wings, and he has made himself a magic wand, which he uses for marshalling souls—convoying the dead to their place.

HEPHAESTUS

Ah, I gave him that, for a toy.

APOLLO

And by way of payment he stole—

HEPHAESTUS

Well thought on; I must go and get them; you may be right about the baby-linen.

12 (9). POSEIDON AND HERMES

13 (8). HEPHAESTUS AND ZEUS

HEPHAESTUS

What are your orders, Zeus? You sent for me, and here I am; with such an edge to my axe as would cleave a stone at one blow.

ZEUS

Ah; that's right, Hephaestus. Just split my head in half, will you?

HEPHAESTUS

You think I am mad, perhaps?—Seriously, now, what can I do for you?

ZEUS

What I say: crack my skull. Any insubordination, now, and you shall taste my resentment; it will not be the first time. Come, a good lusty stroke, and quick about it. I am in the pangs of travail; my brain is in a whirl.

HEPHAESTUS

Mind you, the consequences may be serious: the axe is sharp, and will prove but a rough midwife.

ZEUS

Hew away, and fear nothing. I know what I am about.

HEPHAESTUS

H'm. I don't like it: however, one must obey orders. . . . Why, what have we here? A maiden in full armour! This is no joke, Zeus. You might well be waspish, with this great girl growing up beneath your pia mater; in armour, too! You have been carrying a regular barracks on your shoulders all this time. So active too! See, she is dancing a war-dance, with shield and spear in full swing. She is like one inspired; and (what is more to the point) she is extremely pretty, and has come to marriageable years in these few minutes; those grey eyes, even, look well beneath a helmet. Zeus, I claim her as the fee for my midwifery.

ZEUS

Impossible! She is determined to remain a maid for ever. Not that I have any objection, personally.

HEPHAESTUS

That is all I want. You can leave the rest to me. I'll carry her off this moment.

ZEUS

Well, if you think it so easy. But I am sure it is a hopeless case.

14 (10). HERMES AND HELIUS

15 (13). ZEUS, ASCLEPIUS AND HERACLES

ZEUS

Now, Asclepius and Heracles, stop that quarrelling; you might as well be men; such behaviour is very improper and out of place at the table of the Gods.

HERACLES

Is this druggist fellow to have a place above me, Zeus?

ASCLEPIUS

Of course I am; I am your better.

HERACLES

Why, you numskull? because it was Zeus's bolt that cracked your skull, for your unholy doings, and now you have been allowed your immortality again out of sheer pity?

ASCLEPIUS

You twit me with my fiery end; you seem to have forgotten that you too were burnt to death, on Oeta.

HERACLES

Was there no difference between your life and mine, then? I am Zeus's son, and it is well known how I toiled, cleansing the earth, conquering monsters, and chastising men of violence. Whereas you are a root-grubber and a quack; I dare say you have your use for doctoring sick men, but you never did a bold deed in your life.

ASCLEPIUS

That comes well from you, whose burns I healed, when you came up all singed not so long ago; between the tunic and the flames, your body was half consumed. Anyhow, it would be enough to mention that I was never a slave like you, never combed wool in Lydia, masquerading in a purple shawl and being slippered by an Omphale, never killed my wife and children in a fit of the spleen.

HERACLES

If you don't stop being rude, I shall soon show you that immortality is not much good. I will take you up and pitch you head over heels out of Heaven, and Apollo himself shall never mend your broken crown.

ZEUS

Cease, I say, and let us hear ourselves speak, or I will send you both away from table. Heracles, Asclepius died before you, and has the right to a better place.

16 (14). HERMES AND APOLLO

HERMES

Why so sad, Apollo?

APOLLO

Alas, Hermes,—my love!

HERMES

Oh; that's bad. What, are you still brooding over that affair of Daphne?

APOLLO

No. I grieve for my beloved; the Laconian, the son of Oebalus.

HERMES

Hyacinth? he is not dead?

APOLLO

Dead.

HERMES

Who killed him? Who could have the heart? That lovely boy!

APOLLO

It was the work of my own hand.

HERMES

You must have been mad!

APOLLO

Not mad; it was an accident.

HERMES

Oh? and how did it happen?

APOLLO

He was learning to throw the quoit, and I was throwing with him. I had just sent my quoit up into the air as usual, when jealous Zephyr (damned be he above all winds! he had long been in love with Hyacinth, though Hyacinth would have nothing to say to him)—Zephyr came blustering down from Taygetus, and dashed the quoit upon the child's head; blood flowed from the wound in streams, and in one moment all was over. My first thought was of revenge; I lodged an arrow in Zephyr, and pursued his flight to the mountain. As for the child, I buried him at Amyclae, on the fatal spot; and from his blood I have caused a flower to spring up, sweetest, fairest of flowers, inscribed with letters of woe.—Is my grief unreasonable?

HERMES

It is, Apollo. You knew that you had set your heart upon a mortal: grieve not then for his mortality.

17 (15). HERMES AND APOLLO

HERMES

To think that a cripple and a blacksmith like him should marry two such queens of beauty as Aphrodite and Charis!

APOLLO

Luck, Hermes—that is all. But I do wonder at their putting up with his company; they see him

running with sweat, bent over the forge, all sooty-faced; and yet they cuddle and kiss him, and sleep with him!

HERMES

Yes, it makes me angry too; how I envy him! Ah, Apollo, you may let your locks grow, and play your harp, and be proud of your looks; I am a healthy fellow, and can touch the lyre; but, when it comes to bedtime, we lie alone.

APOLLO

Well, my loves never prosper; Daphne and Hyacinth were my great passions; she so detested me that being turned to a tree was more attractive than I; and him I killed with a quoit. Nothing is left me of them but wreaths of their leaves and flowers.

HERMES

Ah, once, once, I and Aphrodite--but no; no boasting.

APOLLO

I know; that is how Hermaphroditus is accounted for. But perhaps you can tell me how it is that Aphrodite and Charis are not jealous of one another.

HERMES

Because one is his wife in Lemnus and the other in Heaven. Besides, Aphrodite cares most about Ares; he is her real love; so she does not trouble her head about the blacksmith.

APOLLO

Do you think Hephaestus sees?

HERMES

Oh, he sees, yes; but what can he do? he knows what a martial young fellow it is; so he holds his tongue. He talks of inventing a net, though, to take them in the act with.

APOLLO

Ah, all I know is, I would not mind being taken in that act.

18 (16). HERA AND LETO

HERA

I must congratulate you, madam, on the children with whom you have presented Zeus.

LETO

Ah, madam; we cannot all be the proud mothers of Hephaestuses.

HERA

My boy may be a cripple, but at least he is of some use. He is a wonderful smith, and has made Heaven look another place; and Aphrodite thought him worth marrying, and dotes on him still. But those two of yours!—that girl is wild and mannish to a degree; and now she has gone off to Scythia, and her doings there are no secret; she is as bad as any Scythian herself,—butchering strangers and eating them! Apollo, too, who pretends to be so clever, with his bow and his lyre and his medicine and his prophecies; those oracle-shops that he has opened at Delphi, and Clarus, and Dindyma, are a cheat; he takes good care to be on the safe side by giving ambiguous answers that no one can understand, and makes money out of it, for there are plenty of fools who like being imposed upon,—but sensible people know well enough that most of it is clap-trap. The prophet did not know that he was to kill his favourite with a quoit; he never foresaw that Daphne would run away from him, so handsome as he is, too, such beautiful hair! I am not sure, after all, that there is much to choose between your children and Niobe's.

LETO

Oh, of course; my children are butchers and impostors. I know how you hate the sight of them. You cannot bear to hear my girl complimented on her looks, or my boy's playing admired by the company.

HERA

His playing, madam!—excuse a smile;—why, if the Muses had not favoured him, his contest with Marsyas would have cost him his skin; poor Marsyas was shamefully used on that occasion; 'twas a judicial murder.—As for your charming daughter, when Actaeon once caught sight of her charms, she had to set the dogs upon him, for fear he should tell all he knew: I forbear to ask where the innocent child picked up her knowledge of obstetrics.

LETO

You set no small value on yourself, madam, because you are the wife of Zeus, and share his throne; you may insult whom you please. But there will be tears presently, when the next bull or swan sets out on his travels, and you are left neglected.

19 (11). APHRODITE AND SELENE

APHRODITE

What is this I hear about you, Selene? When your car is over Caria, you stop it to gaze at Endymion sleeping hunter-fashion in the open; sometimes, they tell me, you actually get out and go down to him.

SELENE

Ah, Aphrodite, ask that son of yours; it is he must answer for it all.

APHRODITE

Well now, what a naughty boy! he gets his own mother into all sorts of scrapes; I must go down, now to Ida for Anchises of Troy, now to Lebanon for my Assyrian stripling;—mine? no, he put Persephone in love with him too, and so robbed me of half my darling. I have told him many a time that if he would not behave himself I would break his artillery for him, and clip his wings; and before now I have smacked his little behind with my slipper. It is no use; he is frightened and cries for a minute or two, and then forgets all about it. But tell me, is Endymion handsome? That is always a comfort in our humiliation.

SELENE

Most handsome, I think, my dear; you should see him when he has spread out his cloak on the rock and is asleep; his javelins in his left hand, just slipping from his grasp, the right arm bent upwards, making a bright frame to the face, and he breathing softly in helpless slumber. Then I come noiselessly down, treading on tiptoe not to wake and startle him—but there, you know all about it; why tell you the rest? I am dying of love, that is all.

20 (12). APHRODITE AND EROS

APHRODITE

Child, child, you must think what you are doing. It is bad enough on earth,—you are always inciting men to do some mischief, to themselves or to one another;—but I am speaking of the Gods. You change Zeus into shape after shape as the fancy takes you; you make Selene come down from the sky; you keep Helios loitering about with Clymene, till he sometimes forgets to drive out at all. As for the naughty tricks you play on your own mother, you know you are safe there. But Rhea! how could you dare to set her on thinking of that young fellow in Phrygia, an old lady like her, the mother of so many Gods? Why, you have made her quite mad: she harnesses those lions of hers, and drives about all over Ida with the Corybantes, who are as mad as herself, shrieking high and low for Attis; and there they are, slashing their arms with swords, rushing about over the hills, like wild things, with dishevelled hair, blowing horns, beating drums, clashing cymbals; all Ida is one mad tumult. I am quite uneasy about it; yes, you wicked boy, your poor mother is quite uneasy: some day when Rhea is in one of her mad fits (or when she is in her senses, more likely), she will send the Corybantes after you, with orders to tear you to pieces, or throw you to the lions. You are so venturesome!

EROS

Be under no alarm, mother; I understand lions perfectly by this time. I get on to their backs every now and then, and take hold of their manes, and ride them about; and when I put my hand into their mouths, they only lick it, and let me take it out again. Besides, how is Rhea going to have time to attend to me? She is too busy with Attis. And I see no harm in just pointing out beautiful things to people; they can leave them alone;—it is nothing to do with me. And how

would you like it if Ares were not in love with you, or you with him?

APHRODITE

Masterful boy! always the last word! But you will remember this some day.

21 (17). APOLLO AND HERMES

22 (18). HERA AND ZEUS

HERA

Well, Zeus, I should be ashamed if I had such a son; so effeminate, and so given to drinking; tying up his hair in a ribbon, indeed! and spending most of his time among mad women, himself as much a woman as any of them; dancing to flute and drum and cymbal! He resembles any one rather than his father.

ZEUS

Anyhow, my dear, this wearer of ribbons, this woman among women, not content with conquering Lydia, subduing Thrace, and entralling the people of Tmolus, has been on an expedition all the way to India with his womanish host, captured elephants, taken possession of the country, and led their king captive after a brief resistance. And he never stopped dancing all the time, never relinquished the thyrsus and the ivy; always drunk (as you say) and always inspired! If any scoffer presumes to make light of his ceremonial, he does not go unpunished; he is bound with vine-twigs; or his own mother mistakes him for a fawn, and tears him limb from limb. Are not these manful doings, worthy of a son of Zeus? No doubt he is fond of his comforts, too, and his amusements; we need not complain of that: you may judge from his drunken achievements, what a handful the fellow would be if he were sober.

HERA

I suppose you will tell me next, that the invention of wine is very much to his credit; though you see for yourself how drunken men stagger about and misbehave themselves; one would think the liquor had made them mad. Look at Icarus, the first to whom he gave the vine: beaten to death with mattocks by his own boon companions!

ZEUS

Pooh, nonsense. That is not Dionysus's fault, nor the wine's fault; it comes of the immoderate use of it. Men will drink their wine neat, and drink too much of it. Taken in moderation, it engenders cheerfulness and benevolence. Dionysus is not likely to treat any of his guests as Icarus was treated.—No; I see what it is:—you are jealous, my love; you can't forget about Semele, and so you must disparage the noble achievements of her son.

23 (19). APHRODITE AND EROS

APHRODITE

Eros, dear, you have had your victories over most of the Gods—Zeus, Posidon, Rhea, Apollo, nay, your own mother; how is it you make an exception for Athene? against her your torch has no fire, your quiver no arrows, your right hand no cunning.

EROS

I am afraid of her, mother; those awful flashing eyes! she is like a man, only worse. When I go against her with my arrow on the string, a toss of her plume frightens me; my hand shakes so that it drops the bow.

APHRODITE

I should have thought Ares was more terrible still; but you disarmed and conquered him.

EROS

Ah, he is only too glad to have me; he calls me to him. Athene always eyes me so! once when I flew close past her, quite by accident, with my torch, 'If you come near me,' she called out, 'I swear by my father, I will run you through with my spear, or take you by the foot and drop you into Tartarus, or tear you in pieces with my own hands'—and more such dreadful things. And she has such a sour look; and then on her breast she wears that horrid face with the snaky hair; that frightens me worst of all; the nasty bogy—I run away directly I see it.

APHRODITE

Well, well, you are afraid of Athene and the Gorgon; at least so you say, though you do not mind Zeus's thunderbolt a bit. But why do you let the Muses go scot free? do they toss their plumes and hold out Gorgons' heads?

EROS

Ah, mother, they make me bashful; they are so grand, always studying and composing; I love to stand there listening to their music.

APHRODITE

Let them pass too, because they are grand. And why do you never take a shot at Artemis?

EROS

Why, the great thing is that I cannot catch her; she is always over the hills and far away. But besides that, her heart is engaged already.

APHRODITE

Where, child?

EROS

In hunting stags and fawns; she is so fleet, she catches them up, or else shoots them; she can

think of nothing else. Her brother, now, though he is an archer too, and draws a good arrow—

APHRODITE

I know, child, you have hit him often enough.

24 (25). ZEUS AND HELIUS

ZEUS

What have you been about, you villainous Titan? You have utterly done for the earth, trusting your car to a silly boy like that; he has got too near and scorched it in one place, and in another killed everything with frost by withdrawing the heat too far; there is not a single thing he has not turned upside down; if I had not seen what was happening and upset him with the thunderbolt, there would not have been a remnant of mankind left. A pretty deputy driver!

HELIUS

I was wrong, Zeus; but do not be angry with me; my boy pressed me so; how could I tell it would turn out so badly?

ZEUS

Oh, of course you didn't know what a delicate business it is, and how the slightest divergence ruins everything! it never occurred to you that the horses are spirited, and want a tight hand! oh no! why, give them their heads a moment, and they are out of control; just what happened: they carried him now left, now right, now clean round backwards, and up or down, just at their own sweet will; he was utterly helpless.

HELIUS

I knew it all; I held out for a long time and told him he mustn't drive. But he wept and entreated, and his mother Clymene joined in, and at last I put him up. I showed him how to stand, and how far he was to mount upwards, and where to begin descending, and how to hold the reins, and keep the spirited beasts under control; and I told him how dangerous it was, if he did not keep the track. But, poor boy, when he found himself in charge of all that fire, and looking down into yawning space, he was frightened, and no wonder; and the horses soon knew I was not behind them, took the child's measure, left the track, and wrought all this havoc; he let go the reins—I suppose he was afraid of being thrown out--and held on to the rail. But he has suffered for it, and my grief is punishment enough for me, Zeus.

ZEUS

Punishment enough, indeed! after daring to do such a thing as that!—Well, I forgive you this time. But if ever you transgress again, or send another substitute like him, I will show you how much hotter the thunderbolt is than your fire. Let his sisters bury him by the Eridanus, where he was upset. They shall weep amber tears and be changed by their grief into poplars. As for you,

repair the car—the pole is broken, and one of the wheels crushed—, put the horses to and drive yourself. And let this be a lesson to you.

25 (26). APOLLO AND HERMES

APOLLO

Hermes, have you any idea which of those two is Castor, and which is Pollux? I never can make out.

HERMES

It was Castor yesterday, and Pollux to-day.

APOLLO

How do you tell? They are exactly alike.

HERMES

Why, Pollux's face is scarred with the wounds he got in boxing; those that Amycus, the Bebrycian, gave him, when he was on that expedition with Jason, are particularly noticeable. Castor has no marks; his face is all right.

APOLLO

Good; I am glad I know that. Everything else is the same for both. Each has his half egg-shell, with the star on top, each his javelin and his white horse. I am always calling Pollux Castor, and Castor Pollux. And, by the way, why are they never both here together? Why should they be alternately gods and shades?

HERMES

That is their brotherly way. You see, it was decreed that one of the sons of Leda must die, and the other be immortal; and by this arrangement they split the immortality between them.

APOLLO

Rather a stupid way of doing it: if one of them is to be in Heaven, whilst the other is underground, they will never see one another at all; and I suppose that is just what they wanted to do. Then again: all the other gods practise some useful profession, either here or on earth; for instance, I am a prophet, Asclepius is a doctor, you are a first-rate gymnast and trainer, Artemis ushers children into the world; now what are these two going to do? surely two such great fellows are not to have a lazy time of it?

HERMES

Oh no. Their business is to wait upon Posidon, and ride the waves; and if they see a ship in distress, they go aboard of her, and save the crew.

APOLLO

A most humane profession.

THE END.

THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

ZEUS

Hermes, take this apple, and go with it to Phrygia; on the Gargaran peak of Ida you will find Priam's son, the herdsman. Give him this message: `Paris, because you are handsome, and wise in the things of love, Zeus commands you to judge between the Goddesses, and say which is the most beautiful. And the prize shall be this apple.'—Now, you three, there is no time to be lost: away with you to your judge. I will have nothing to do with the matter: I love you all exactly alike, and I only wish you could all three win. If I were to give the prize to one of you, the other two would hate me, of course. In these circumstances, I am ill qualified to be your judge. But this young Phrygian to whom you are going is of the royal blood—a relation of Ganymede's,—and at the same time a simple countryman; so that we need have no hesitation in trusting his eyes.

APHRODITE

As far as I am concerned, Zeus, Momus himself might be our judge; I should not be afraid to show myself. What fault could he find with me? But the others must agree too.

HERA

Oh, we are under no alarm, thank you,—though your admirer Ares should be appointed. But Paris will do; whoever Paris is.

ZEUS

And my little Athene; have we her approval? Nay, never blush, nor hide your face. Well, well, maidens will be coy; 'tis a delicate subject. But there, she nods consent. Now, off with you; and mind, the beaten ones must not be cross with the judge; I will not have the poor lad harmed. The prize of beauty can be but one.

HERMES

Now for Phrygia. I will show the way; keep close behind me, ladies, and don't be nervous. I know Paris well: he is a charming young man; a great gallant, and an admirable judge of beauty. Depend on it, he will make a good award.

APHRODITE

I am glad to hear that; I ask for nothing better than a just judge.—Has he a wife, Hermes, or is he a bachelor?

HERMES

Not exactly a bachelor.

APHRODITE

What do you mean?

HERMES

I believe there is a wife, as it were; a good enough sort of girl—a native of those parts—but sadly countrified! I fancy he does not care very much about her.—Why do you ask?

APHRODITE

I just wanted to know.

ATHENA

Now, Hermes, that is not fair. No whispering with Aphrodite.

HERMES

It was nothing, Athene; nothing about you. She only asked me whether Paris was a bachelor.

ATHENA

What business is that of hers?

HERMES

None that I know of. She meant nothing by the question; she just wanted to know.

ATHENA

Well, and is he?

HERMES

Why, no.

ATHENA

And does he care for military glory? has he ambition? Or is he a mere neatherd?

HERMES

I couldn't say for certain. But he is a young man, so it is to be presumed that distinction on the field of battle is among his desires.

APHRODITE

There, you see; I don't complain; I say nothing when you whisper with her. Aphrodite is not so particular as some people.

HERMES

Athene asked me almost exactly the same as you did; so don't be cross. It will do you no harm, my answering a plain question.—Meanwhile, we have left the stars far behind us, and are almost over Phrygia. There is Ida: I can make out the peak of Gargarum quite plainly; and if I am not mistaken, there is Paris himself.

HERA

Where is he? I don't see him.

HERMES

Look over there to the left, Hera: not on the top, but down the side, by that cave where you see the herd.

HERA

But I don't see the herd.

HERMES

What, don't you see them coming out from between the rocks,—where I am pointing, look—and the man running down from the crag, and keeping them together with his staff?

HERA

I see him now; if he it is.

HERMES

Oh, that is Paris. But we are getting near; it is time to alight and walk. He might be frightened, if we were to descend upon him so suddenly.

HERA

Yes; very well. And now that we are on the earth, you might go on ahead, Aphrodite, and show us the way. You know the country, of course, having been here so often to see Anchises; or so I have heard.

APHRODITE

Your sneers are thrown away on me, Hera.

HERMES

Come; I'll lead the way myself. I spent some time on Ida, while Zeus was courting Ganymede. Many is the time that I have been sent here to keep watch over the boy; and when at last the eagle came, I flew by his side, and helped him with his lovely burden. This is the very rock, if I remember; yes, Ganymede was piping to his sheep, when down swooped the eagle behind him, and tenderly, oh, so tenderly, caught him up in those talons, and with the turban in his beak bore

him off, the frightened boy straining his neck the while to see his captor. I picked up his pipes—he had dropped them in his fright and—ah! here is our umpire, close at hand. Let us accost him.—Good-morrow, herdsman!

PARIS

Good-morrow, youngster. And who may you be, who come thus far afield? And these dames? They are over comely, to be wandering on the mountain-side.

HERMES

‘These dames,’ good Paris, are Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite; and I am Hermes, with a message from Zeus. Why so pale and tremulous? Compose yourself; there is nothing the matter. Zeus appoints you the judge of their beauty. ‘Because you are handsome, and wise in the things of love’ (so runs the message), ‘I leave the decision to you; and for the prize,—read the inscription on the apple.’

PARIS

Let me see what it is about. FOR THE FAIR, it says. But, my lord Hermes, how shall a mortal and a rustic like myself be judge of such unparalleled beauty? This is no sight for a herdsman's eyes; let the fine city folk decide on such matters. As for me, I can tell you which of two goats is the fairer beast; or I can judge betwixt heifer and heifer;—’tis my trade. But here, where all are beautiful alike, I know not how a man may leave looking at one, to look upon another. Where my eyes fall, there they fasten,—for there is beauty: I move them, and what do I find? more loveliness! I am fixed again, yet distracted by neighbouring charms. I bathe in beauty: I am enthralled: ah, why am I not all eyes like Argus? Methinks it were a fair award, to give the apple to all three. Then again: one is the wife and sister of Zeus; the others are his daughters. Take it where you will, ’tis a hard matter to judge.

HERMES

So it is, Paris. At the same time—Zeus's orders! There is no way out of it.

PARIS

Well, please point out to them, Hermes, that the losers must not be angry with me; the fault will be in my eyes only.

HERMES

That is quite understood. And now to work.

PARIS

I must do what I can; there is no help for it. But first let me ask,—am I just to look at them as they are, or must I go into the matter thoroughly?

HERMES

That is for you to decide, in virtue of your office. You have only to give your orders; it is as you think best.

PARIS

As I think best? Then I will be thorough.

HERMES

Get ready, ladies. Now, Mr. Umpire.—I will look the other way.

HERA

I approve your decision, Paris. I will be the first to submit myself to your inspection. You shall see that I have more to boast of than white arms and large eyes: nought of me but is beautiful.

PARIS

Aphrodite, will you also prepare?

ATHENA

Oh, Paris,—make her take off that girdle, first; there is magic in it; she will bewitch you. For that matter, she has no right to come thus tricked out and painted,—just like a courtesan! She ought to show herself unadorned.

PARIS

They are right about the girdle, madam; it must go.

APHRODITE

Oh, very well, Athene: then take off that helmet, and show your head bare, instead of trying to intimidate the judge with that waving plume. I suppose you are afraid the colour of your eyes may be noticed, without their formidable surroundings.

ATHENA

Oh, here is my helmet.

APHRODITE

And here is my girdle.

HERA

Now then.

PARIS

God of wonders! What loveliness is here! Oh, rapture! How exquisite these maiden charms!

How dazzling the majesty of Heaven's true queen! And oh, how sweet, how enthralling is Aphrodite's smile! 'Tis too much, too much of happiness.—But perhaps it would be well for me to view each in detail; for as yet I doubt, and know not where to look; my eyes are drawn all ways at once.

APHRODITE

Yes, that will be best.

PARIS

Withdraw then, you and Athene; and let Hera remain.

HERA

So be it; and when you have finished your scrutiny, you have next to consider, how you would like the present which I offer you. Paris, give me the prize of beauty, and you shall be lord of all Asia.

PARIS

I will take no presents. Withdraw. I shall judge as I think right. Approach, Athene.

ATHENA

Behold. And, Paris, if you will say that I am the fairest, I will make you a great warrior and conqueror, and you shall always win, in every one of your battles.

PARIS

But I have nothing to do with fighting, Athene. As you see, there is peace throughout all Lydia and Phrygia, and my father's dominion is uncontested. But never mind; I am not going to take your present, but you shall have fair play. You can robe again and put on your helmet; I have seen. And now for Aphrodite.

APHRODITE

Here I am; take your time, and examine carefully; let nothing escape your vigilance. And I have something else to say to you, handsome Paris. Yes, you handsome boy, I have long had an eye on you; I think you must be the handsomest young fellow in all Phrygia. But it is such a pity that you don't leave these rocks and crags, and live in a town; you will lose all your beauty in this desert. What have you to do with mountains? What satisfaction can your beauty give to a lot of cows? You ought to have been married long ago; not to any of these dowdy women hereabouts, but to some Greek girl; an Argive, perhaps, or a Corinthian, or a Spartan; Helen, now, is a Spartan, and such a pretty girl—quite as pretty as I am—and so susceptible! Why, if she once caught sight of you, she would give up everything, I am sure, to go with you, and a most devoted wife she would be. But you have heard of Helen, of course?

PARIS

No, ma'am; but I should like to hear all about her now.

APHRODITE

Well, she is the daughter of Leda, the beautiful woman, you know, whom Zeus visited in the disguise of a swan.

PARIS

And what is she like?

APHRODITE

She is fair, as might be expected from the swan, soft as down (she was hatched from an egg, you know), and such a lithe, graceful figure; and only think, she is so much admired, that there was a war because Theseus ran away with her; and she was a mere child then. And when she grew up, the very first men in Greece were suitors for her hand, and she was given to Menelaus, who is descended from Pelops.—Now, if you like, she shall be your wife.

PARIS

What, when she is married already?

APHRODITE

Tut, child, you are a simpleton: I understand these things.

PARIS

I should like to understand them too.

APHRODITE

You will set out for Greece on a tour of inspection: and when you get to Sparta, Helen will see you; and for the rest—her falling in love, and going back with you—that will be my affair.

PARIS

But that is what I cannot believe,—that she will forsake her husband to cross the seas with a stranger, a barbarian.

APHRODITE

Trust me for that. I have two beautiful children, Love and Desire. They shall be your guides. Love will assail her in all his might, and compel her to love you: Desire will encompass you about, and make you desirable and lovely as himself; and I will be there to help. I can get the Graces to come too, and between us we shall prevail.

PARIS

How this will end, I know not. All I do know is, that I am in love with Helen already. I see her before me—I sail for Greece I am in Sparta—I am on my homeward journey, with her at my side! Ah, why is none of it true?

APHRODITE

Wait. Do not fall in love yet. You have first to secure my interest with the bride, by your award. The union must be graced with my victorious presence: your marriage-feast shall be my feast of victory. Love, beauty, wedlock; all these you may purchase at the price of yonder apple.

PARIS

But perhaps after the award you will forget all about me?

APHRODITE

Shall I swear?

PARIS

No; but promise once more.

APHRODITE

I promise that you shall have Helen to wife; that she shall follow you, and make Troy her home; and I will be present with you, and help you in all.

PARIS

And bring Love, and Desire, and the Graces?

APHRODITE

Assuredly; and Passion and Hymen as well.

PARIS

Take the apple: it is yours.

THE END