

*Florilegium of Lucian's
philosophical finesse
and irreverent wit.*



Abstract and train of thoughts

1. A dispute between two consonants heard by a jury of seven vowels.

Consonant Sigma sues consonant Tau for stealing words from him. I shall be almost dumb, lose my rank as a letter, and be degraded to a mere noise, exclaims Sigma. 7

Vowels are the natural guardians of our laws and jurors. 7

2. Lucian sings the praises of the valiant gauze-winged fly.

Her feathers are neither fledged, nor provided with quill-feathers like other birds, but resemble locusts, grasshoppers, and bees in being gauze-winged, much more delicate than Indian fabrics, lighter and softer than Greek. When spread out and moving in the sun they appear are peacock-hued. 11

Homer likens her valour and spirit not to a lion's, a panther's, or a boar's, but to her courage, to her unflinching and persistent assault. It is not mere audacity, but courage that he attributes to her. 12

If a little ashes be sprinkled on a dead fly, she gets up and starts life afresh, which is proof that her soul is immortal, inasmuch as after it has departed it returns, reanimates the body, and enables her to fly again. 12

She toils not, but lives profiting by the labours of others, finding everywhere a table spread for her. Like the Scythians, she leads a wandering life and, where night finds her, there is her hearth and chamber. 13

Her ancient name is Myia, Selene's rival for the love of Endymion. When the young man slept, she was for ever waking him with her gossip and tunes and merriment, till he lost patience and Selene in wrath turned Myia to what she now is. Since then, in memory of Endymion, the valiant fly grudges all sleepers their rest, and most of all the young and tender. 13

Her bite and thirst for blood tell not of savagery, but of love and human kindness; she is but enjoying mankind as she may, while sipping beauty. 13

As deep as to his heart fair Myia bit him athirst for blood. 13

3. Lucian on Dipsas, the sneaky thirst-snake of the Libyan desert.

On the borders of Southern Libya dwell the Garamantians, a lightly clad, agile tribe of tent-dwellers, subsisting mainly by the chase. 16

[Dear Reader, be patient! The point to this long-winded introduction will come at the very end of this story.] 16

Perils much worse than the heat, thirst, desolation, and the aridity of the Libyan desert are all sorts of reptiles, hideous and venomous beyond belief or cure. 16

The direst of all, bred in the sand, is the viper-like Dipsas or thirst-snake; his bite is sharp, and the venom acts at once, inducing agonies to which there is no relief. Dipsas has an unquenchable thirst: the more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes. 17

Dipsas conceals himself near the eggs, and when a man comes, crawls out and bites the unfortunate, sentencing him to quenchless thirst before a harrowing demise. 18

Gentlemen! My feelings towards you are the same as those of Dipsas' victim towards drink: the more I have of your company, the more of it I want; my thirst for it rages uncontrollably; I shall never have enough of this drink. Where else could one find such clear sparkling water to refresh the soul? 18

4. Lucian harangues an illiterate book-fancier in Syria.

Do you think that by buying up the best books you can lay your hands on, you will pass for a man of literary tastes? not a bit of it; you are merely exposing your ignorance of literature. 20

You may get together the works of Demosthenes, and his eight beautiful copies of Thucydides, all in the orator's own handwriting, and all the manuscripts that Sulla sent away from Athens to Italy — and you will be no nearer to culture at the end of it, even if you sleep with them under your pillow, or paste them together and wear them as a garment; an ape is still an ape, says the proverb, though his trappings be of gold. 21

Let me tell you the story of Evangelus who, upon entering the Pythian Games wearing gold-bespangled garments and a golden laurel-wreath, began assaulting his lyre (made out of solid gold and embellished with costly gems) with such needless violence that he broke three strings at the start; and when he began singing with his discordant pipe of a voice the whole audience was convulsed with laughter and the stewards, enraged at his presumption, scourged him out of the theatre. 23

Another story demonstrates that the charm lay not in Orpheu's lyre, but solely in those peculiar gifts of song and music that had been bestowed upon him by his mother; his lyre was just like any other lyre. 24

The fool who paid 120 pounds for the earthenware lamp of Epictetus thought he had only to read by the light of that lamp, and the wisdom of the Phrygian philosopher would be communicated to him in his dreams, and he himself assume the likeness of that venerable Stoic. My friend, you are in a bad way: a stick across the head is what you need. 24

What is your idea, now, in all this rolling and unrolling of scrolls? To what end the gluing and the trimming, the cedar oil and saffron, the leather cases and the bosses? You are as dumb as a fish but your life and your unmentionable vices, make every one hate the sight of you. If that is what books do, one cannot keep too clear of them. 25

You are dense and helpless; you pray for the earth to open and swallow you. You stand like Bellerophon with the warrant for your own execution in your hand. 25

Does the bald man buy a comb, the blind a mirror, the deaf a flute, the eunuch a concubine, the landsman an oar, the pilot a plough? Or are you merely seizing an opportunity of displaying your wealth? Is it just your way of showing the public that you can afford to spend money even on things that are of no use to you? Why, even a Syrian like myself knows that if you had not got your name foisted into that old man's will, you would have been starving by this time, and all your books must have been put up to sale. 26

After all, it was nothing for an illiterate fool like you to take such a fancy into his head, and walk about with his chin in the air, aping the gait and dress and expression of his

supposed model: even the Epirote king Pyrrhus, remarkable man that he was in other respects, had the same foible, and was persuaded by his flatterers that he looked like Alexander the Great. 26

Once Pyrrhus had got this fancy into his head, that he was the look-alike of Alexander, everyone else ran mad for company, till at last an old woman of Larissa, who did not know Pyrrhus, told him the plain truth, and cured his delusion. 26

Come to your senses then, while there is yet time: sell your library to some scholar and, while you are about it, sell your new house too, and wipe off part of your debt to the slave-dealers. 27

Books cannot mask the deficiencies of your education by throwing dust in our eyes. You are exactly like the quack doctors, who provide themselves with silver cupping-glasses, gold-handled lancets, and ivory cases for their instruments; they are quite incapable of using them when the time comes, and have to give place to some properly qualified surgeon, who produces a lancet with a keen edge and a rusty handle, and affords immediate relief to the sufferer. 29

Carry on buying books then, and reap the glory that comes of possessions: only, let that be enough; presume not to touch nor read; pollute not with that tongue the poetry and eloquence of the ancients; what harm have they ever done to you? 29

5. Lucian puts up various philosophers for sale by auction in a slave market.

Bring up the lots and put them in line, said Zeus. Give them a rub up first, though; we must have them looking their best, to attract bidders. 31

Pythagoras was sold for 40 pounds. 31

Diogenes was sold cheaply for just 3 pence. 33

No bids were placed for a Cyrenaic philosopher. 35

No bids were placed for Democritus and Heraclitus. 36

Socrates was sold to Dion of Syracuse for 500 pounds. 37

Epicureanism was sold for 8 pounds. 38

Chrysippus was sold to a pool of shareholders for 50 pounds. 38

A Peripatetic slave was sold for 80 pounds. 41

A sceptic slave kept wrangling with his new master. 42

6. Lucian's diatribe on true philosophy and her counterfeits.

An autobiographic sequel to the sale of philosophers where Lucian, who has taken upon him the name of rhetorician Parrhesiades, continues satirising the philosophers of the Hellenistic period. 45

7. Ignorance and assumption stretching out a hand to slander.

Lucian elucidates the origin, nature, and dreadful consequences of slander.

Ignorance is the source of endless human woes, spreading a mist over facts, obscuring truth, and casting a dark gloom everywhere. Whatever we do, we are perpetually slipping about. 62

Ptolemy IV Philopator, the fourth pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt, was not distinguished for sagacity: he had been brought up on a royal diet of adulation. The malicious slander of Apelles so inflamed his prejudice and carried him away, that the underwhelming strength of the case never struck him. 62

Slander is an undefended indictment, concealed from its object, and owing its success to one-sided half-informed procedure. 64

Listen not to a tale bearer for, as he discovers the secrets of others, so he will yours in turn, says Socrates. 64

Of all the ills that flesh is heir to, none is more grievous or more iniquitous than that a man should be condemned unjudged and unheard. 64

Slander would never do the harm it does, if it were not made plausible; it would never prevail against truth, that strongest of all things, if it were not dressed up into really attractive bait. 65

A man is a doctor; they make him out a poisoner; wealth figures as tyranny; the tyrant's ready tool is a ready traitor too. 66

The venom has entered the ear and inflamed the brain; the hearer does not wait for confirmation, but abandons his friend. 66

The slanderer finds out where the soul is weak or corrupt or accessible, there makes his assault, there applies his engines, and enters at a point where there are no defenders to mark his approach. Once in, he soon has all in flames. 67

We all delight in whisperings and insinuations. I know people whose ears are as agreeably titillated with slander as their skin with a feather.

The slanderer's tactics include deceit, falsehood, perjury, insinuation, presumption, and a thousand other hereditary evils and moral infirmities. But the chief of them all is flattery, sister of the calumniator and crafty machinator. 67

Supported by all these allies, the slanderer's attack prevails; there is no defence or resistance to the assault; the hearer surrenders without reluctance, and the slandered knows nothing of what is going on; as when a town is stormed by night, he has his throat cut in his sleep. 68

There are those who, if they subsequently learn that they have condemned a friend in error, are too much ashamed of their error and avoid looking at him in the face again; you might suppose the discovery of his innocence was a personal injury to them. 68

What then should we, men of sense and decency, do? 69

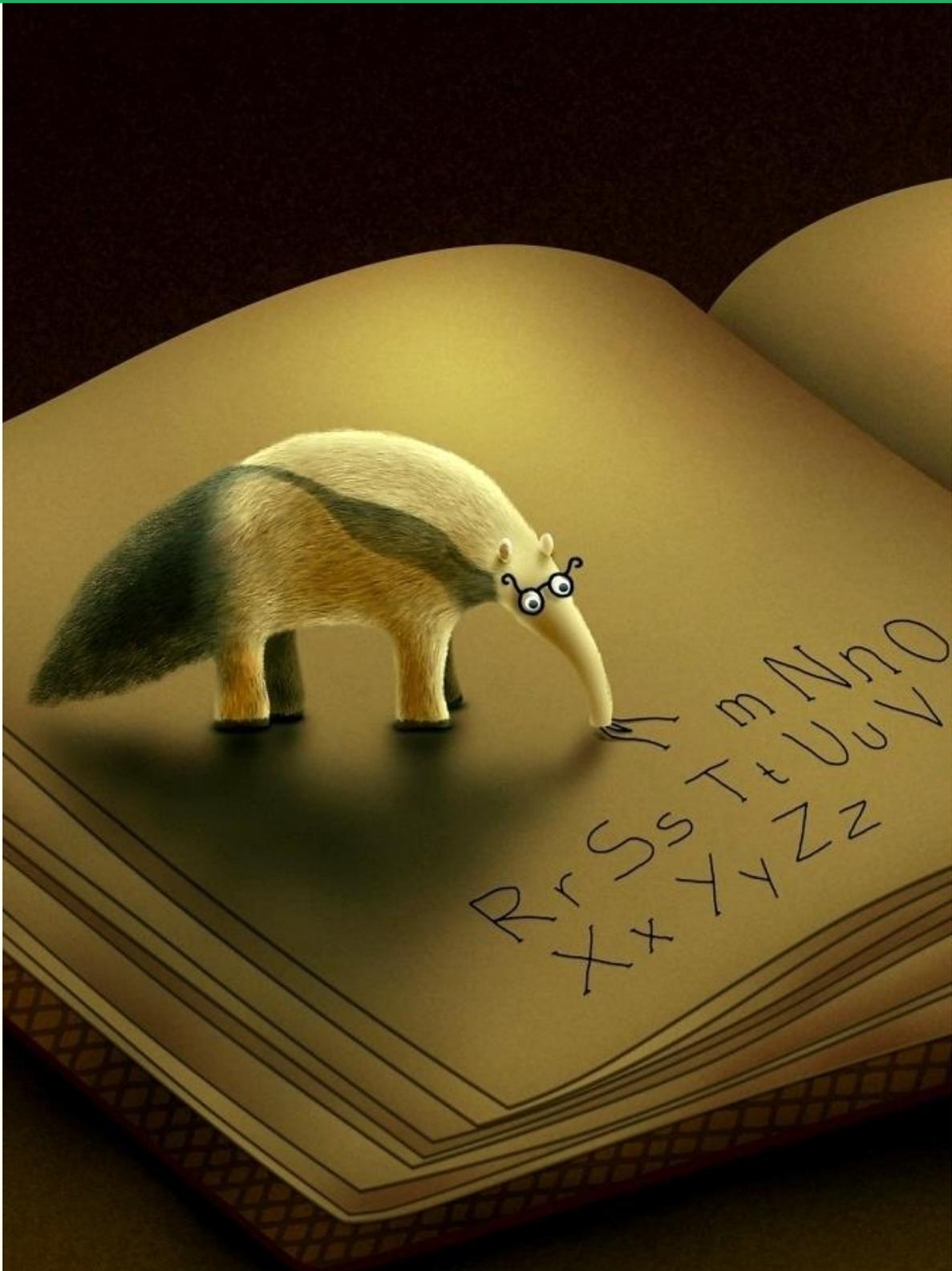
We should shut our ears to those siren voices that allure and ensnare the mind, and sail past the ear-charmers. Thus shielded from calumny and prejudice, we should practise proper discrimination and judgement, and above all charity to each other's faults. 69

Suggested reading for students.

From our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers Series. 71



1. A dispute between two consonants heard by a jury of seven vowels.



Δίκη Συμφώνων
Lis Consonantium, or Ludicium Vocalium
The Consonants at Law

Consonant Sigma sues consonant Tau for stealing words from him. I shall be almost dumb, lose my rank as a letter, and be degraded to a mere noise, exclaims Sigma.

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 1 of 4, pp. 26-30. Excerpt below translated from the Attic Greek by H.W. Fowler. *Frontispiece: Consonant-eater*, by Vlad Studio.

Archon, Aristarchus of Phalerum
Seventh Pyanepsion
Court of the Seven Vowels
Action for assault with robbery
Sigma *versus* Tau
Plaintiff's case — that the words in *-tt-* are wrongfully withheld from him.

Vowels of the jury. For some time this Mr. Tau's trespasses and encroachments on my property were of minor importance; I made no claim for damages, and affected unconsciousness of what I heard; my conciliatory temper both you and the other letters have reason to know. His covetousness and folly, however, have now so puffed him up, that he is no longer content with my habitual concessions, but insists on more; I accordingly find myself compelled to get the matter settled by you who know both sides of it. The fact is, I am in bodily fear, owing to the crushing to which I am subjected. This ever-growing aggression will end by ousting me completely from my own; I shall be almost dumb, lose my rank as a letter, and be degraded to a mere noise.

Justice requires then that not merely you, the jury in this case, but the other letters also, should be on your guard against such attempts. If anyone who chooses is to be licensed to leave his own place and usurp that of others, with no objection on your part (whose concurrence is an indispensable condition of all writing), I fail to see how combinations are to have their ancient constitutional rights secured to them. But my first reliance is upon you, who will surely never be guilty of the negligence and indifference which permits injustice; and even if you decline the contest, I have no intention of sitting down under that injustice myself.

It is much to be regretted that the assaults of other letters were not repelled when they first began their lawless practices; then we should not be watching the still pending dispute between Lambda and Rho for possession of *κεφαλαλγία* or *κεφαλαργία*, *κίσηλις* or *κίσηρις*: Gamma would not have had to defend its rights over *γνάφαλλα*, constantly almost at blows with Kappa in the debatable land, and *per contra* it would itself have dropped its campaign against Lambda (if indeed it is more dignified than petty larceny) for converting *μόλις* to *μόγις*: in fact lawless confusion generally would have been nipped in the bud. And it is well to abide by the established order; such trespasses betray a revolutionary spirit.

Vowels are the natural guardians of our laws and jurors.

Now our first legislators — Cadmus the islander, Palamedes, son of Nauplius, or Simonides, whom some authorities credit with the measure — were not satisfied with determining merely our order of precedence in the alphabet; they also had an eye to our individual qualities and faculties.

- You, Vowels of the jury, constitute the first Estate, because you can be uttered independently; the semi-vowels, requiring support before they can be distinctly heard, are the second;
- And the lowest Estate they declared to consist of those nine which cannot be sounded at all by themselves. The vowels are accordingly the natural guardians of our laws.

But this — this Tau¹ — I would give him a worse designation, but that is a manifest impossibility; for without the assistance of two good presentable members of your Estate, Alpha and Upsilon, he would be a mere nonentity — he it is that has dared to outdo all injuries that I have ever known, expelling me from the nouns and verbs of my inheritance, and hunting me out of my conjunctions and prepositions, till his rapacity has become quite unbearable. I am now to trace proceedings from the beginning.

I was once staying at Cybelus, a pleasant little town, said to be an Athenian colony; my travelling companion was the excellent Rho, best of neighbours. My host was a writer of comedies, called Lysimachus; he seems to have been a Bœotian by descent, though he represented himself as coming from the interior of Attica. It was while with him that I first detected Tau's depredations.² For some earlier occasional attempts³ I had explained as a trick and peculiarity of pronunciation; I had tolerated the sound without letting it annoy me seriously.

But impunity emboldened him; *κασσίτερος* became *καπίτερος*, *κάσσυμα* and *πίσσα* shared its fate; and then he cast off all shame and assaulted *βασίλισσα*. I found myself losing the society in which I had been born and bred; at such a time equanimity is out of place; I am tortured with apprehension; how long will it be before *σύκα* is *ύκα*? Bear with me, I beseech you; I despair and have none to help me; do I not well to be angry? It is no petty everyday peril, this threatened separation from my long-tried familiars. My *κίσσα*, my talking bird that nestled in my breast, he has torn away and named anew; my *φάσσα*, my *νήσσαι*, my *κόσσυφοι* — all gone; and I had Aristarchus' own word that they were mine; half my *μέλισσαι* he has lured to strange hives; Attica itself he has invaded, and wrongfully annexed its Hymettus (as he calls it); and you and the rest looked on at the seizure.

But why dwell on such trifles? I am driven from all Thessaly (Thettaly, forsooth!), *θάλασσα* is now *mare clausum* to me; he will not leave me a poor garden-herb like *σεύλιον*, I have never a *πάσσαλος* to hang myself upon. What a long-suffering letter I am myself, your own knowledge is witness enough. When Zeta stole my *σμάραγδος*, and robbed me of all Smyrna, I never took proceedings against him; Xi might break all *συνθήκαι*, and appeal to Thucydides (who ought to know) as sympathizing with

¹ [*Tau*, pronounced as taf.]

² [For the probably corrupt passage § 7 fin. — § 8 init. I accept Dindorf's rearrangement as follows:

μέχρι μιν γὰρ ὀλίγοις ἐπεχείρει, τετταράκοντα λέγειν ἀξιούν, ἐτι δε τήμερον καὶ τὰ ὅμοια ἐπισπόμενον, συνήθειαν ὡμην ἴδια ταυτὶ λέγειν, καὶ οἰσθὺν ἦν μοι τὸ ἀκουσμα καὶ οὐ πάνυ τι εδακνόμεν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς. 8. ὁπότε δ' ἐκ τούτων ἀρξάμενον εἰλόγησε καπίτερον ἐπειὶ καὶ κάτυμα καὶ πίταν, εἶτα ἀπερυθρίσαν καὶ βασιλιταν ονομάζειν, ἀποστεροῦν με τῶν συγγεγεννημένων μοι καὶ συντεθραμμένων γραμμάτων, οὐ μειρίως ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀνακτιῶ.]

³ As when he took to *τετταράκοντα* for *τεσσαράκοντα*, *τήμερον* for *σήμερον*, with little pilferings of that sort.

his system; I let them alone. My neighbour Rho I made no difficulty about pardoning as an invalid, when he transplanted my *μυρσίναι* into his garden, or, in a fit of the spleen, took liberties with my *κόρση*. So much for my temper.

Tau's, on the other hand, is naturally violent; its manifestations are not confined to me. In proof that he has not spared other letters, but assaulted Delta, Theta, Zeta, and almost the whole alphabet, I wish his various victims to be put in the box. Now, Vowels of the jury, mark the evidence of Delta:

He robbed me of *ενδελέχεια*,¹ which he claimed, quite illegally, as *εντελέχεια*.

Mark Theta beating his breast and plucking out his hair in grief for the loss of *κολοκύνθη*. And Zeta mourns for *συρίζειν* and *σαλπίζειν* — nay, cannot mourn, for lack of his *γρύζειν*. What tolerance is possible, what penalty adequate, for this criminal letter's iniquities?

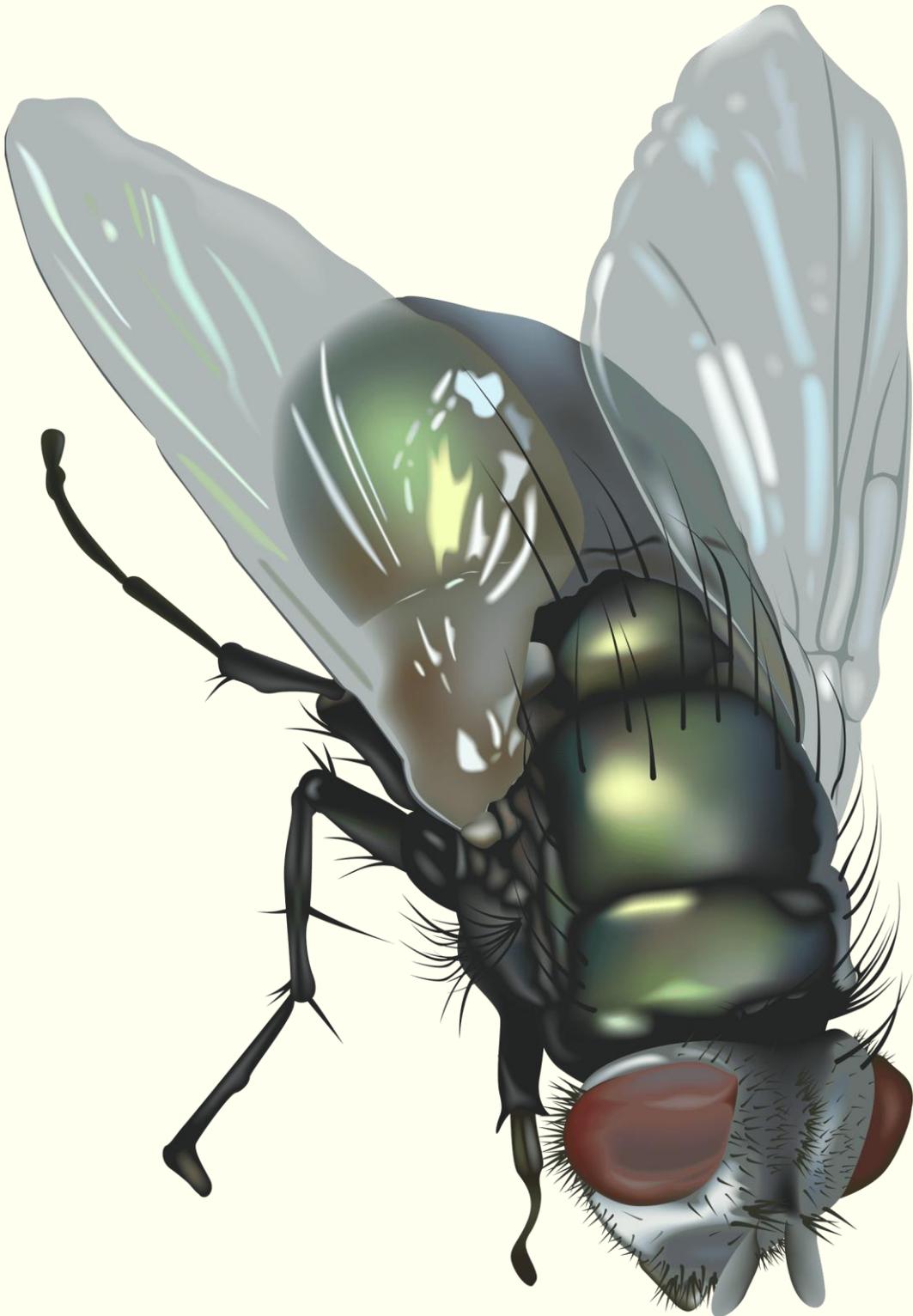
But his wrongs are not even limited to us, his own species; he has now extended his operations to mankind, as I shall show. He does not permit their tongues to work straight.² But I return from that digression, to plead the cause of mankind and its wrongs. The prisoner's designs include the constraint, racking, and mutilation of their utterance. A man sees a beautiful thing, and wishes to describe it as *καλόν*, but in comes Tau, and forces the man to say *ταλόν*; he must have precedence everywhere, of course. Another man has something to say about a vine, and lo, before it is out, it is metamorphosed by this miserable creature into misery; he has changed *κλήμα* to *τλήμα*, with a suggestive hint of *τλήμων*. And, not content with middle-class victims, he aims at the Persian king himself, the one for whom land and sea are said to have made way and changed their nature: Cyrus comes out at his bidding as Ty-rus.

Such are his verbal offences against man; his offences in deed remain. Men weep, and bewail their lot, and curse Cadmus with many curses for introducing Tau into the family of letters; they say it was his body that tyrants took for a model, his shape that they imitated, when they set up the erections on which men are crucified. *Σταυρός* the vile engine is called, and it derives its vile name from him. Now, with all these crimes upon him, does he not deserve death, nay, many deaths? For my part I know none bad enough but that supplied by his own shape — that shape which he gave to the gibbet named *σταυρός* after him by men.

¹ [assiduity, diligence]

² But that mention of mankind calls me back for a moment, reminding me how he turns *γλώσσα* into *γλώπα*, half robbing me of the tongue itself. Ay, you are a disease of the tongue in every sense, Tau.

2. Lucian sings the praises of the valiant gauze-winged fly.



Μυίας Εγκώμιον
Muscæ Encomium
The Fly, or Praising a Fly
The Fly, an Appreciation

Her feathers are neither fledged, nor provided with quill-feathers like other birds, but resemble locusts, grasshoppers, and bees in being gauze-winged, much more delicate than Indian fabrics, lighter and softer than Greek. When spread out and moving in the sun they appear are peacock-hued.

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 3 of 4, pp. 261-65. Excerpt below translated from the Attic Greek by H.W. Fowler.

THE FLY IS NOT THE SMALLEST OF WINGED THINGS, on a level with gnats, midges, and still tinier creatures; it is as much larger than they as smaller than the bee. It has not feathers of the usual sort, is not fledged all over like some, nor provided with quill-feathers like other birds, but resembles locusts, grasshoppers, and bees in being gauze-winged, this sort of wing being as much more delicate than the ordinary as Indian fabrics are lighter and softer than Greek. Moreover, close inspection of them when spread out and moving in the sun will show them to be peacock-hued.

Its flight is accompanied neither by the incessant wing-beat of the bat, the jump of the locust, nor the buzz of the wasp, but carries it easily in any direction. It has the further merit of a music neither sullen as with the gnat kind, deep as with the bee, nor grim and threatening as with the wasp; it is as much more tuneful than they as the flute is sweeter than trumpet or cymbals.

As for the rest of its person, the head is very slenderly attached by the neck, easily turned, and not all of one piece with the body as in the locust; the eyes are projecting and horny; the chest strong, with the legs springing freely from it instead of lying close like a wasp's. The belly also is well fortified, and looks like a breastplate, with its broad bands and scales. Its weapons are not in the tail as with wasp and bee, but in its mouth and proboscis; with the latter, in which it is like the elephant, it forages, takes hold of things, and by means of a sucker at its tip attaches itself firmly to them. This proboscis is also supplied with a projecting tooth, with which the fly makes a puncture, and so drinks blood. It does drink milk, but also likes blood, which it gets without hurting its prey much. Of its six legs, four only are for walking, and the front pair serves for hands; you may see it standing on four legs and holding up a morsel in these hands, which it consumes in very human fashion.

It does not come into being in its ultimate shape, but starts as a worm in the dead body of man or animal; then it gradually develops legs, puts forth wings and becomes a flying instead of a creeping thing, which generates in turn and produces a little worm, one day to be a fly. Living with man, sharing his food and his table, it tastes everything except his oil, to drink which is death to it. In any case it soon perishes, having but a short span of life allotted to it, but while it lives it loves the light, and is active only under its influence; at night it rests, neither flying nor buzzing, but retiring and keeping quiet.

Homer likens her valour and spirit not to a lion's, a panther's, or a boar's, but to her courage, to her unflinching and persistent assault. It is not mere audacity, but courage that he attributes to her.

I am able to record its considerable wisdom, shown in evading the plots of its enemy the spider. It is always on the look-out for his ambushes, and in the most circumspect way dodges about, that it may not be caught, netted, and entangled in his meshes. Its valour and spirit require no mention of mine; Homer, mightiest-voiced of poets, seeking a compliment for the greatest of heroes, likens his spirit not to a lion's, a panther's, a boar's, but to the courage of the fly, to its unshrinking and persistent assault; mark, it is not mere audacity, but courage, that he attributes to it. Though you drive it off, he says, it will not leave you; it will have its bite. He is so earnest an admirer of the fly that he alludes to it not once nor twice, but constantly; a mention of it is felt to be a poetic ornament. Now it is its multitudinous descent upon the milk that he celebrates; now he is in want of an illustration for Athene as she wards off a spear from the vitals of Menelaus; so he makes her a mother caring for her sleeping child, and in comes the fly again. Moreover he gives them that pretty epithet, "thick-clust'ring"; and "nations" is his dignified word for a swarm of them.

The fly's force is shown by the fact that its bite pierces not merely the human skin, but that of cattle and horses; it annoys the elephant by getting into the folds of its hide, and letting it know the efficiency of even a tiny trunk. There is much ease and freedom about their love affairs, which are not disposed of so expeditiously as by the domestic fowl; the act of union is prolonged, and is found quite compatible with flight. A fly will live and breathe for some time after its head is cut off.

If a little ashes be sprinkled on a dead fly, she gets up and starts life afresh, which is proof that her soul is immortal, inasmuch as after it has departed it returns, reanimates the body, and enables her to fly again.

The most remarkable point about its natural history is that which I am now to mention. It is the one fact that Plato seems to me to have overlooked in his discourse of the soul and its immortality. If a little ashes be sprinkled on a dead fly, it gets up, experiences a second birth, and starts life afresh, which is recognized as a convincing proof that its soul is immortal, inasmuch as after it has departed it returns, recognizes and reanimates the body, and enables it to fly; so is confirmed the tale about Hermotimus of Clazomenæ — how his soul frequently left him and went off on its own account, and afterwards returning occupied the body again and restored the man to life.

She toils not, but lives profiting by the labours of others, finding everywhere a table spread for her. Like the Scythians, she leads a wandering life and, where night finds her, there is her hearth and chamber.

It toils not, but lives at its case, profiting by the labours of others, and finding everywhere a table spread for it. For it the goats are milked, for its behoof¹ and man's the honey is stored, to its palate the *chef* adapts his sauces; it tastes before the king himself, walks upon his table, shares his meal, and has the use of all that is his.

Nest, home, local habitation, it has none; like the Scythians, it elects to lead a wandering life, and where night finds it, there is its hearth and its chamber. But as I said, it works no deeds of darkness; "live openly" is its motto; its principle is to do no villainy that, done in the face of day, would dishonour it.

Her ancient name is Myia, Selene's rival for the love of Endymion. When the young man slept, she was for ever waking him with her gossip and tunes and merriment, till he lost patience and Selene in wrath turned Myia to what she now is. Since then, in memory of Endymion, the valiant fly grudges all sleepers their rest, and most of all the young and tender.

Her bite and thirst for blood tell not of savagery, but of love and human kindness; she is but enjoying mankind as she may, while sipping beauty.

Legend tells how Myia (the fly's ancient name) was once a maiden, exceeding fair, but over-given to talk and chatter and song, Selene's rival for the love of Endymion. When the young man slept, she was for ever waking him with her gossip and tunes and merriment, till he lost patience, and Selene in wrath turned her to what she now is. And therefore it is that she still, in memory of Endymion, grudges all sleepers their rest, and most of all the young and tender. Her very bite and blood-thirst tell not of savagery, but of love and human kindness; she is but enjoying mankind as she may, and sipping beauty.

As deep as to his heart fair Myia bit him athirst for blood.

In ancient times there was a woman of her name,² a poetess wise and beautiful, and another a famous Attic courtesan, of whom the comic poet wrote:

As deep as to his heart fair Myia bit him.

The comic Muse, we see, disdained not the name, nor refused it the hospitality of the boards; and parents took no shame to give it to their daughters. Tragedy goes further and speaks of the fly in high terms of praise, as witness the following:

Foul shame the little fly, with might courageous,
Should leap upon men's limbs, athirst for blood,
But men-at-arms shrink from the foeman's steel!

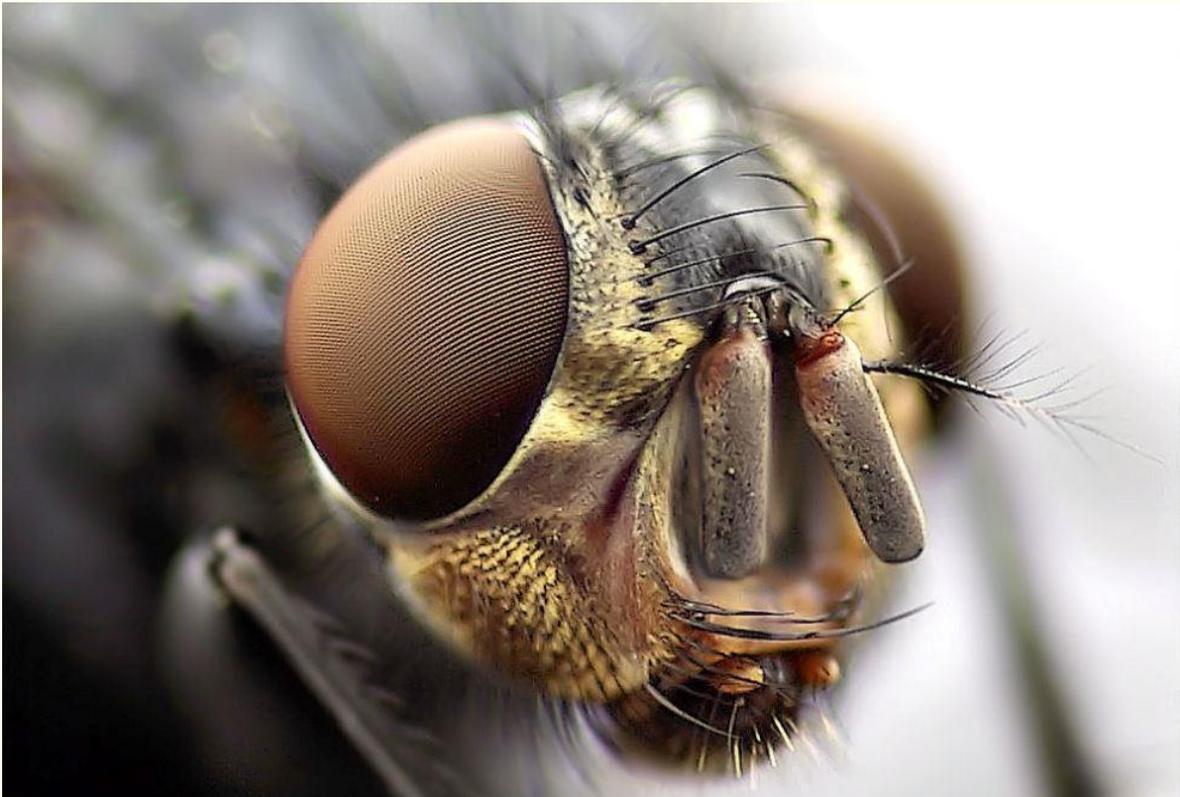
¹ [benefit]

² [Korinna, Greek lyric poet from Tanagra in Bœotia. Her works survived only in fragments: three substantial sections of poems are preserved on second century BCE papyri from Egypt; several shorter pieces survived in quotations by ancient grammarians. They focus on Bœotian legends and are distinctive for their mythological innovations.]

I might add many details about Pythagoras' daughter Myia, were not her story too well known.

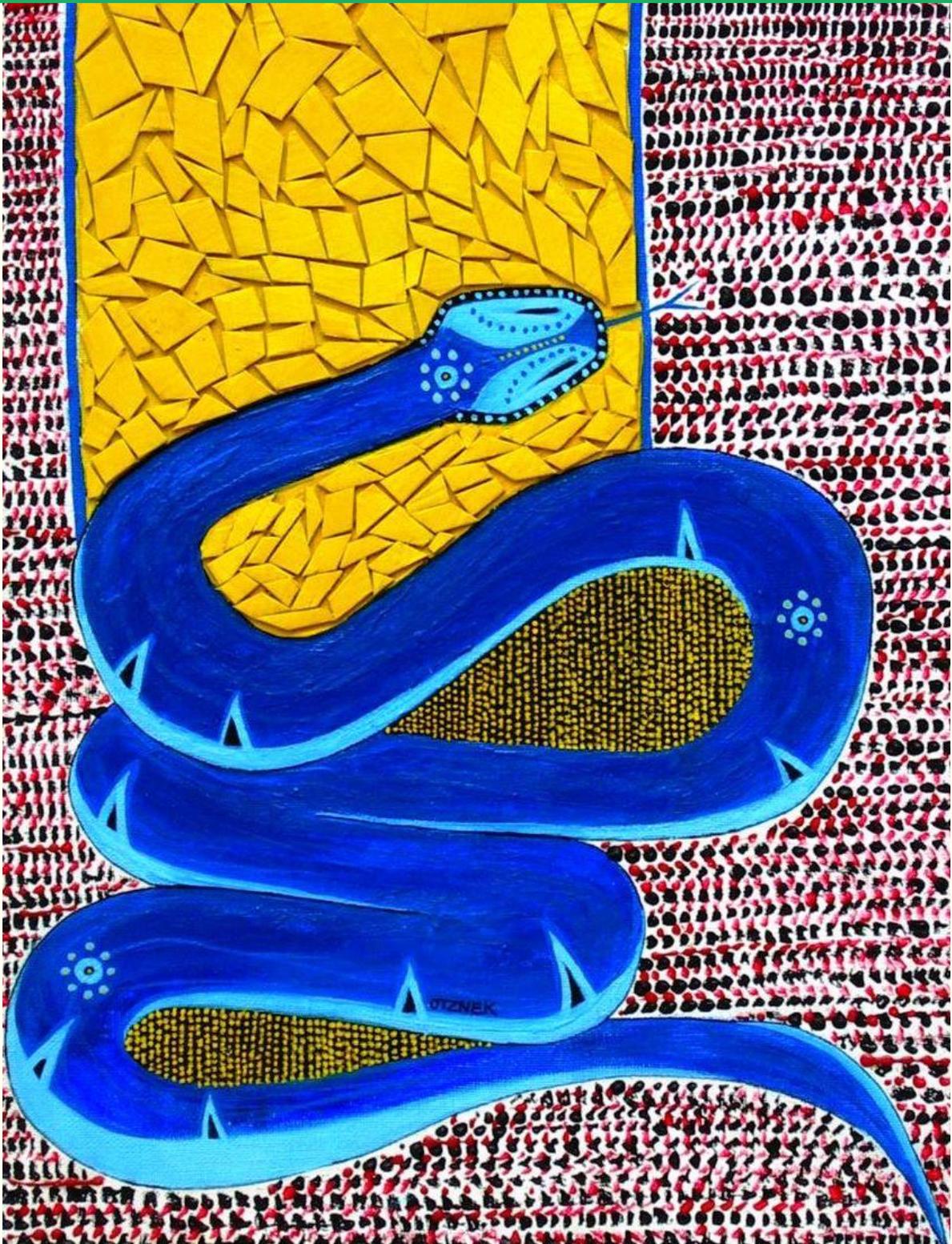
There are also flies of very large size, called generally soldier-flies, or dog-flies; these have a hoarse buzz, a very rapid flight, and quite long lives; they last the winter through without food, mostly in sheltered nooks below the roof; the most remarkable fact about these is that they are hermaphrodites.

But I must break off; not that my subject is exhausted; only that to exhaust such a subject is too like breaking a butterfly on the wheel.¹



¹ ["Breaking on the wheel" was a form of torturous execution in ancient Greece.]

3. Lucian on Dipsas, the sneaky thirst-snake of the Libyan desert.



Περι των Διψαδων
Dipsades
The Dipsads

On the borders of Southern Libya dwell the Garamantians, a lightly clad, agile tribe of tent-dwellers, subsisting mainly by the chase.

[Dear Reader, be patient! The point to this long-winded introduction will come at the very end of this story.]

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 4 of 4, pp. 26-30. Excerpt below translated from the Attic Greek by H.W. Fowler. *Frontispiece*: Blue snake, by Otzkeltal.

THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF LIBYA are all deep sand and parched soil, a desert of wide extent that produces nothing, one vast plain destitute of grass, herb, vegetation, and water; or if a remnant of the scanty rain stands here and there in a hollow place, it is turbid and evil-smelling, undrinkable even in the extremity of thirst. The land is consequently uninhabited; savage, dried up, barren, droughty, how should it support life? The mere temperature, an atmosphere that is rather fire than air, and a haze of burning sand, make the district quite inaccessible.

On its borders dwell the Garamantians,¹ a lightly clad, agile tribe of tent-dwellers subsisting mainly by the chase. These are the only people who occasionally penetrate the desert, in pursuit of game. They wait till rain falls, about the winter solstice, mitigating the excessive heat, moistening the sand, and making it just passable. Their quarry consists chiefly of wild asses, the giant ostrich that runs instead of flying, and monkeys, to which the elephant is sometimes added; these are the only creatures sufficiently proof against thirst and capable of bearing that incessant fiery sunshine. But the Garamantians, as soon as they have consumed the provisions they brought with them, instantly hurry back, in fear of the sand's recovering its heat and becoming difficult or impassable, in which case they would be trapped, and lose their lives as well as their game. For if the sun draws up the vapour, dries the ground rapidly, and has an access of heat, throwing into its rays the fresh vigour derived from that moisture which is its aliment, there is then no escape.

Perils much worse than the heat, thirst, desolation, and the aridity of the Libyan desert are all sorts of reptiles, hideous and venomous beyond belief or cure.

But all that I have yet mentioned, heat, thirst, desolation, barrenness, you will count less formidable than what I now come to, a sufficient reason in itself for avoiding that land. It is beset by all sorts of reptiles, of huge size, in enormous numbers, hideous and venomous beyond belief or cure. Some of them have burrows in the sand, others live on the surface — toads, asps, vipers, horned snakes and stinging beetles, lance-snakes, reversible snakes,² dragons, and two kinds of scorpion, one of great size and

¹ [Ancient civilisation based primarily in present-day Libya. They most likely descended from Iron Age Berber tribes from the Sahara, although the earliest known record of their existence dates to the fifth century BCE.]

² The amphibæna,* supposed to have a head at each end and move either way.

*[From Ancient Greek ἀμφισβανα, a mythological, ant-eating serpent with a head at each end. See 12c Miniature from the Aberdeen Bestiary, folio 68v, on page 18.]

many joints that runs on the ground, the other aerial, with gauzy wings like those of the locust, grasshopper, or bat. With the multitude of flying things like these, that part of Libya has no attraction for the traveller.

The direst of all, bred in the sand, is the viper-like Dipsas or thirst-snake; his bite is sharp, and the venom acts at once, inducing agonies to which there is no relief. Dipsas has an unquenchable thirst: the more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes.

But the direst of all the reptiles bred in the sand is the dipsas or thirst-snake; it is of no great size, and resembles the viper; its bite is sharp, and the venom acts at once, inducing agonies to which there is no relief. The flesh is burnt up and mortified, the victims feel as if on fire, and yell like men at the stake. But the most overpowering of their torments is that indicated by the creature's name. They have an intolerable thirst; and the remarkable thing is, the more they drink, the more they want to drink, the appetite growing with what it feeds on. You will never quench their thirst, though you give them all the water in Nile or Danube; water will be fuel, as much as if you tried to put out a fire with oil.

Doctors explain this by saying that the venom is originally thick, and gains in activity when diluted with the drink, becoming naturally more fluid and circulating more widely.

I have not seen a man in this condition, and I pray Heaven I never may behold such human sufferings; I am happy to say I have not set foot upon Libyan soil. But I have had an epitaph repeated to me, which a friend assured me he had read on the grave of a victim. My friend, going from Libya to Egypt, had taken the only practicable land route by the Great Syrtis. He there found a tomb on the beach at the sea's very edge, with a pillar setting forth the manner of death. On it a man was carved in the attitude familiar in pictures of Tantalus, standing by a lake's side scooping up water to drink; the dipsas was wound about his foot, in which its fangs were fastened, while a number of women with jars were pouring water over him. Hard by were lying eggs like those of the ostrich hunted, as I mentioned, by the Gararnantians. And then there was the epitaph, which it may be worthwhile to give you:

See the envenom'd cravings Tantalus
Could find no thirst-assuaging charm to still,
The cask that daughter-brood of Danaus,
For ever filling, might not ever fill.

There are four more lines about the eggs, and how he was bitten while taking them; but I forget how they go.

The neighbouring tribes, however, do collect and value these eggs, and not only for food; they use the empty shells for vessels and make cups of them; for, as there is nothing but sand for material, they have no pottery. A particularly large egg is a find; bisected, it furnishes two hats big enough for the human head.

Dipsas conceals himself near the eggs, and when a man comes, crawls out and bites the unfortunate, sentencing him to quenchless thirst before a harrowing demise.

Accordingly the dipsas conceals himself near the eggs, and when a man comes, crawls out and bites the unfortunate, who then goes through the experiences just described, drinking and increasing his thirst and getting no relief.

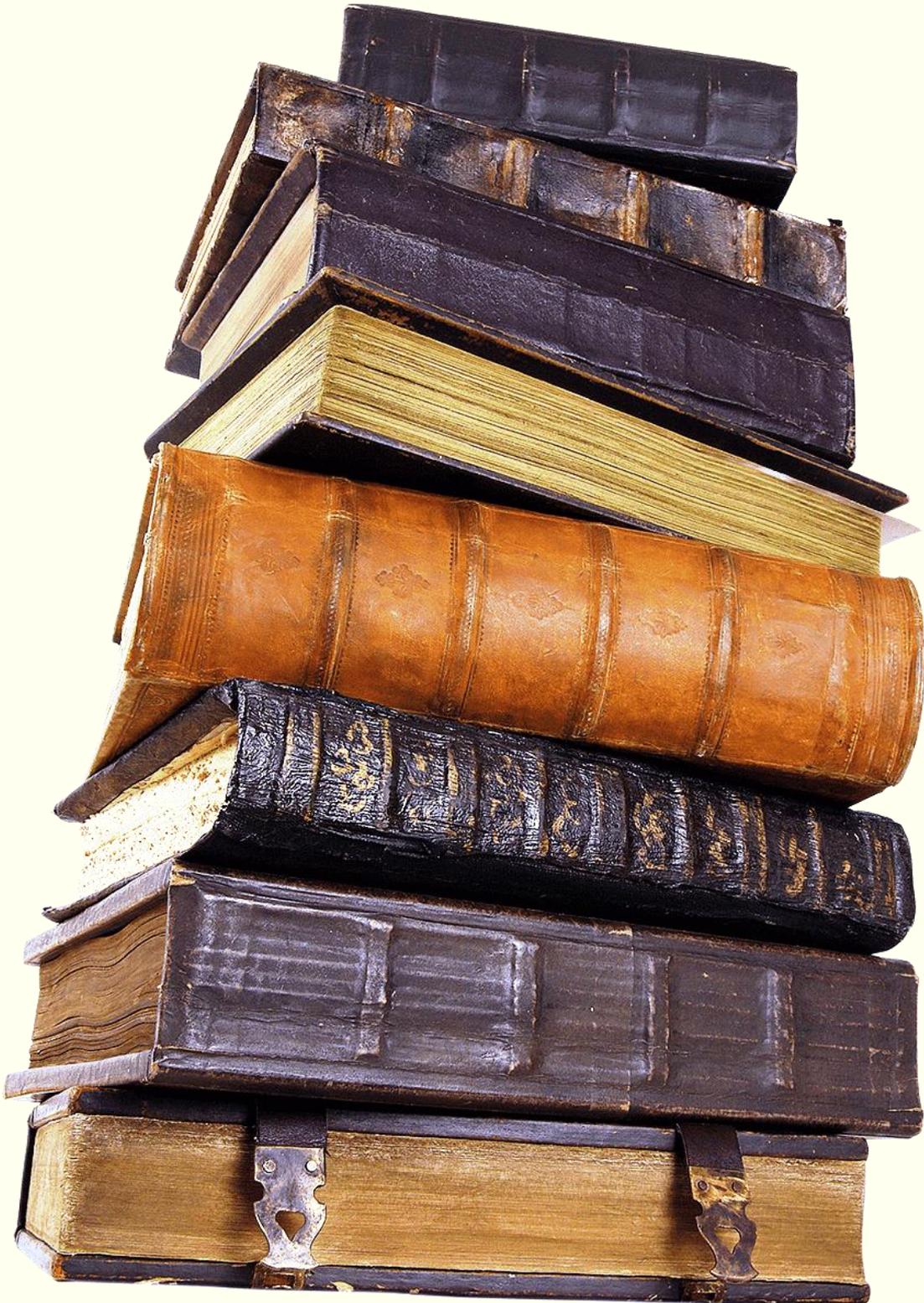
Gentlemen! My feelings towards you are the same as those of Dipsas' victim towards drink: the more I have of your company, the more of it I want; my thirst for it rages uncontrollably; I shall never have enough of this drink. Where else could one find such clear sparkling water to refresh the soul?

Now, gentlemen, I have not told you all this to show you I could do as well as the poet Nicander, nor yet by way of proof that I have taken some trouble with the natural history of Libyan reptiles; that would be more in the doctor's line, who must know about such things with a view to treatment. No, it is only that I am conscious¹ — I am conscious of the same feelings towards you as a dipsas victim has towards drink; the more I have of your company, the more of it I want; my thirst for it rages uncontrollably; I shall never have enough of this drink. And no wonder; where else could one find such clear sparkling water? You must pardon me, then, if, bitten to the soul (most agreeably and wholesomely bitten), I put my head under the fountain and gulp the liquor down. My only prayer is that the stream that flows from you may never fail; never may your willingness to listen run dry and leave me thirstily gaping! On my side there is no reason why drinking should not go on for ever; the wise Plato says that you cannot have too much of a good thing.



¹ And now pray do not be offended by my going to the reptiles for my illustration.

4. Lucian harangues an illiterate book-fancier in Syria.



Προς τον απαίδευτον και πολλα βιβλια ωνουμενον
Adversus Indoctum
The Ignorant Book-Collector

Do you think that by buying up the best books you can lay your hands on, you will pass for a man of literary tastes? not a bit of it; you are merely exposing your ignorance of literature.

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 3 of 4, pp. 265-77.

LET ME TELL YOU, that you are choosing the worst way to attain your object. You think that by buying up all the best books you can lay your hands on, you will pass for a man of literary tastes: not a bit of it; you are merely exposing thereby your own ignorance of literature. Why, you cannot even buy the right things: any casual recommendation is enough to guide your choice; you are as clay in the hands of the unscrupulous amateur, and as good as cash down to any dealer. How are you to know the difference between genuine old books that are worth money, and trash whose only merit is that it is falling to pieces? You are reduced to taking the worms and moths into your confidence; their activity is your sole clue to the value of a book; as to the accuracy and fidelity of the copyist, that is quite beyond you.

And supposing even that you had managed to pick out such veritable treasures as the exquisite editions of Callinus, or those of the far-famed Atticus, most conscientious of publishers — what does it profit you? Their beauty means nothing to you, my poor friend; you will get precisely as much enjoyment out of them as a blind lover would derive from the possession of a handsome mistress. Your eyes, to be sure, are open; you do see your books, goodness knows, see them till you must be sick of the sight; you even read a bit here and there, in a scrambling fashion, your lips still busy with one sentence while your eyes are on the next. But what is the use of that? You cannot tell good from bad: you miss the writer's general drift, you miss his subtle arrangements of words: the chaste elegance of a pure style, the false ring of the counterfeit — 'tis all one to you.

Are we to understand that you possess literary discernment without the assistance of any study? And how should that be? perhaps, like Hesiod, you received a laurel-branch from the Muses? As to that, I doubt whether you have so much as heard of Helicon, the reputed haunt of those Goddesses; your youthful pursuits were not those of a Hesiod; take not the Muses' names in vain. They might not have any scruples about appearing to a hardy, hairy, sunburnt shepherd: but as for coming near such a one as you¹ they would scorn the thought; instead of laurel, you would have tamarisk and mallow-leaves about your back; the waters of Olmeum and Hippocrene are for thirsty sheep and stainless shepherds, they must not be polluted by unclean lips. I grant you a very creditable stock of effrontery: but you will scarcely have the assurance to call yourself an educated man; you will scarcely pretend that your acquaintance with literature is more than skin-deep, or give us the names of your teacher and your fellow students?

¹ You will excuse my particularizing further just now, when I appeal to you in the name of the Goddess of Lebanon?

You may get together the works of Demosthenes, and his eight beautiful copies of Thucydides, all in the orator's own handwriting, and all the manuscripts that Sulla sent away from Athens to Italy — and you will be no nearer to culture at the end of it, even if you sleep with them under your pillow, or paste them together and wear them as a garment; an ape is still an ape, says the proverb, though his trappings be of gold.

No; you think you are going to work off all arrears by the simple expedient of buying a number of books. But there again: you may get together the works of Demosthenes, and his eight beautiful copies of Thucydides, all in the orator's own handwriting, and all the manuscripts that Sulla sent away from Athens to Italy — and you will be no nearer to culture at the end of it, though you should sleep with them under your pillow, or paste them together and wear them as a garment; an ape is still an ape, says the proverb, though his trappings be of gold. So it is with you: you have always a book in your hand, you are always reading; but what it is all about, you have not an idea; you do but prick up asinine ears at the lyre's sound. Books would be precious things indeed, if the mere possession of them guaranteed culture to their owner. You rich men would have it all your own way then; we paupers could not stand against you, if learning were a marketable commodity; and as for the dealers, no one would presume to contest the point of culture with men who have whole shopfuls of books at their disposal. However, you will find on examination that these privileged persons are scarcely less ignorant than yourself. They have just your vile accent, and are as deficient in intelligence as one would expect men to be who have never learnt to distinguish good from bad. Now you see, *you* have merely bought a few odd volumes from them: they are at the fountain-head, and are handling books day and night. Judge from this how much good your purchases are likely to do you; unless you think that your very bookcases acquire a tincture of learning, from the bare fact of their housing so many ancient manuscripts.

Oblige me by answering some questions; or rather, as circumstances will not admit of your answering, just nod or shake your head.

- If the flute of Timotheus, or that of Ismenias, which its owner sold in Corinth for a couple of thousand pounds, were to fall into the hands of a person who did not know how to play the instrument, would that make him a flute-player?
- Would his acquisition leave him any wiser than it found him?

You very properly shake your head. A man might possess the instrument of a Marsyas or an Olympus, and still he would not be able to play it if he had never learnt. Take another case:

- A man gets hold of Heracles' bow and arrows: but he is no Philoctetes; he has neither that marksman's strength nor his eye. What do you say? Will he acquit himself creditably?

Again you shake your head. The same will be the case with the ignorant pilot who is entrusted with a ship, or with the unpractised rider on horseback. Nothing is wanting to the beauty and efficiency of the vessel, and the horse may be a Median or a

Thessalian or a Koppa:¹ yet I take it that the incompetence of their respective owners will be made clear; am I right?

- And now let me ask your assent to one more proposition: if an illiterate person like yourself goes in for buying books, he is thereby laying himself open to ridicule. You hesitate?

Yet surely nothing could be clearer:

- Who could observe such a man at work, and abstain from the inevitable allusion to pearls and swine?²

There was a wealthy man in Asia, not many years ago, who was so unfortunate as to lose both his feet; I think he had been travelling through snow-drifts, and had got them frost-bitten. Well, of course, it was a very hard case; and in ordering a pair of wooden feet, by means of which he contrived to get along with the assistance of servants, he was no doubt only making the best of a bad job. But the absurd thing was, that he would always make a point of having the smartest and newest of shoes to set off his stumps — feet, I mean. Now are you any wiser than he, when for the adornment of that hobbling, wooden understanding of yours, you go to the expense of such golden shoes as would tax the agility of a sound-limbed intellect?

Among your other purchases are several copies of Homer. Get some one to turn up the second book of the Iliad, and read to you. There is only one part you need trouble about; the rest does not apply to your case. I refer to the harangue of a certain ludicrous, maimed, distorted creature called Thersites.

- Now imagine this Thersites, such as he is there depicted, to have clothed himself in the armour of Achilles. What will be the result?
- Will he be converted there and then into a stalwart, comely warrior, clearing the river at a bound, and staining its waters with Phrygian blood?
- Will he prove a slayer of Asteropæuses and Lycaons, and finally of Hectors, he who cannot so much as bear Achilles' spear upon his shoulders?

Of course not. He will simply be ridiculous: the weight of the shield will cause him to stagger, and will presently bring him on to his nose; beneath the helmet, as often as he looks up, will be seen that squint; the Achillean greaves will be a sad drag to his progress, and the rise and fall of the breast-plate will tell a tale of a humped-back; in short, neither the armourer nor the owner of the arms will have much to boast of. You are just like Thersites, if only you could see it. When you take in hand your fine volume, purple-cased, gilt-bossed, and begin reading with that accent of yours, maiming and murdering its contents, you make yourself ridiculous to all educated men: your own toadies commend you, but they generally get in a chuckle too, as they catch one another's eye.

¹ The brand of the obsolete letter Koppa is supposed to have denoted the Corinthian breed.

² [Cf. *Matthew* vii, 6.1]

Let me tell you the story of Evangelus who, upon entering the Pythian Games wearing gold-bespangled garments and a golden laurel-wreath, began assaulting his lyre (made out of solid gold and embellished with costly gems) with such needless violence that he broke three strings at the start; and when he began singing with his discordant pipe of a voice the whole audience was convulsed with laughter and the stewards, enraged at his presumption, scourged him out of the theatre.

Let me tell you a story of what happened once at Delphi. A native of Tarentum, Evangelus by name, a person of some note in his own city, conceived the ambition of winning a prize in the Pythian Games. Well, he saw at once that the athletic contests were quite out of the question; he had neither the strength nor the agility required. A musical victory, on the other hand, would be an easy matter; so at least he was persuaded by his vile parasites, who used to burst into a roar of applause the moment he touched the strings of his lyre. He arrived at Delphi in great style: among other things, he had provided himself with gold-bespangled garments, and a beautiful golden laurel-wreath, with full-size emerald berries. As for his lyre, that was a most gorgeous and costly affair — solid gold throughout, and ornamented with all kinds of gems, and with figures of Apollo and Orpheus and the Muses, a wonder to all beholders. The eventful day at length arrived. There were three competitors, of whom Evangelus was to come second. Thespis the Theban performed first, and acquitted himself creditably; and then Evangelus appeared, resplendent in gold and emeralds, beryls and jacinths, the effect being heightened by his purple robe, which made a background to the gold; the house was all excitement and wondering anticipation. As singing and playing were an essential part of the competition, Evangelus now struck up with a few meaningless, disconnected notes, assaulting his lyre with such needless violence that he broke three strings at the start; and when he began to sing with his discordant pipe of a voice the whole audience was convulsed with laughter, and the stewards, enraged at his presumption, scourged him out of the theatre. Our golden Evangelus now presented a very queer spectacle, as the floggers drove him across the stage, weeping and bloody-limbed, and stooping to pick up the gems that had fallen from the lyre; for that instrument had come in for its share of the castigation. His place was presently taken by one Eumelus of Elis: his lyre was an old one, with wooden pegs, and his clothes and crown would scarcely have fetched ten shillings between them. But for all that his well-managed voice and admirable execution caused him to be proclaimed the victor; and he was very merry over the unavailing splendours of his rival's gem-studded instrument. "Evangelus," he is reported to have said to him,

Yours is the golden laurel — you can afford it: I am a pauper, and must put up with the Delphian wreath. No one will be sorry for your defeat; your arrogance and incompetence have made you an object of detestation; that is all your equipment has done for you.

Here again the application is obvious; Evangelus differing from you only in his sensibility to public ridicule.

Another story demonstrates that the charm lay not in Orpheu's lyre, but solely in those peculiar gifts of song and music that had been bestowed upon him by his mother; his lyre was just like any other lyre.

I have also an old Lesbian story which is very much to the point. It is said that after Orpheus had been torn to pieces by the Thracian women, his head and his lyre were carried down the Hebrus into the sea; the head, it seems, floated down upon the lyre, singing Orpheus' dirge as it went, while the winds blew an accompaniment upon the strings. In this manner they reached the coast of Lesbos; the head was then taken up and buried on the site of the present temple of Bacchus, and the lyre was long preserved as a relic in the temple of Apollo. Later on, however, Neanthus, son of the tyrant Pittacus, hearing how the lyre had charmed beasts and trees and stones, and how after Orpheus' destruction it had played of its own accord, conceived a violent fancy for the instrument, and by means of a considerable bribe prevailed upon the priest to give him the genuine lyre, and replace it with one of similar appearance. Not thinking it advisable to display his acquisition in the city in broad daylight, he waited till night, and then, putting it under his cloak, walked off into the outskirts; and there this youth, who had not a note of music in him, produced his instrument and began jangling on the strings, expecting such divine strains to issue therefrom as would subdue all souls, and prove him the fortunate heir to Orpheus' power. He went on till a number of dogs collected at the sound and tore him limb from limb; thus far, at least, his fate resembled that of Orpheus, though his power of attraction extended only to hostile dogs. It was abundantly proved that the charm lay not in the lyre, but solely in those peculiar gifts of song and music that had been bestowed upon Orpheus by his mother; as to the lyre, it was just like other lyres.

The fool who paid 120 pounds for the earthenware lamp of Epictetus thought he had only to read by the light of that lamp, and the wisdom of the Phrygian philosopher would be communicated to him in his dreams, and he himself assume the likeness of that venerable Stoic. My friend, you are in a bad way: a stick across the head is what you need.

But there: what need to go back to Orpheus and Neanthus? We have instances in our own days: I believe the man is still alive who paid 120 pounds for the earthenware lamp of Epictetus the Stoic. I suppose he thought he had only to read by the light of that lamp, and the wisdom of Epictetus would be communicated to him in his dreams, and he himself assume the likeness of that venerable sage. And it was only a day or two ago that another enthusiast paid down 250 pounds for the staff dropped by the Cynic Proteus¹ when he leaped upon the pyre. He treasures this relic, and shows it off just as the people of Tegea do the hide of the Calydonian boar,² or the Thebans the bones of Geryon, or the Memphians Isis' hair. Now the original owner of this precious staff was one who for ignorance and vulgarity would have borne away the palm from yourself. — My friend, you are in a bad way: a stick across the head is what you want.

¹ [See *Peregrine* in Notes.]

² [See *Æneus* in Notes.]

They say that when Dionysius took to tragedy-writing he made such sad stuff of it that Philoxenus was more than once thrown into the quarries because he could not control his laughter. Finding that his efforts only made him ridiculous, Dionysius was at some pains to procure the tablets on which Æschylus had been wont¹ to write. He looked to draw divine inspiration from them: as it turned out, however, he now wrote considerably worse rubbish than before. Among the contents of the tablets I may quote:

'Twas Dionysius' wife, Doridion.

Here is another:

Most serviceable woman! thou art gone!

Genuine tablet that, and the next:

Men that are fools are their own folly's butt.

Taken with reference to yourself, by the way, nothing could be more to the point than this last line; Dionysius' tablets deserved gilding, if only for that.

What is your idea, now, in all this rolling and unrolling of scrolls? To what end the gluing and the trimming, the cedar oil and saffron, the leather cases and the bosses? You are as dumb as a fish but your life and your unmentionable vices, make every one hate the sight of you. If that is what books do, one cannot keep too clear of them.

What is your idea, now, in all this rolling and unrolling of scrolls? To what end the gluing and the trimming, the cedar-oil and saffron, the leather cases and the bosses? Much good your purchases have been to you; one sees that already: why, your language — no, I am wrong there, you are as dumb as a fish — but your life, your unmentionable vices, make every one hate the sight of you; if that is what books do, one cannot keep too clear of them. There are two ways in which a man may derive benefit from the study of the ancients: he may learn to express himself, or he may improve his morals by their example and warning; when it is clear that he has not profited in either of these respects, what are his books but a habitation for mice and vermin, and a source of castigation to negligent servants?

You are dense and helpless; you pray for the earth to open and swallow you. You stand like Bellerophon with the warrant for your own execution in your hand.

And how very foolish you must look when any one finds you with a book in your hand (and you are never to be seen without) and asks you who is your orator, your poet, or your historian: you have seen the title, of course, and can answer that question pat: but then one word brings up another, and some criticism, favourable or the reverse, is passed upon the contents of your volume: you are dumb and helpless; you

¹ [accustomed]

pray for the earth to open and swallow you; you stand like Bellerophon¹ with the warrant for your own execution in your hand.

Once in Corinth Demetrius the Cynic found some illiterate person reading aloud from a very handsome volume, the *Bacchæ* of Euripides, I think it was. He had got to the place where the messenger is relating the destruction of Pentheus by Agave, when Demetrius snatched the book from him and tore it in two: "Better," he exclaimed, "that Pentheus should suffer one rending at my hands than many at yours."

Does the bald man buy a comb, the blind a mirror, the deaf a flute, the eunuch a concubine, the landsman an oar, the pilot a plough? Or are you merely seizing an opportunity of displaying your wealth? Is it just your way of showing the public that you can afford to spend money even on things that are of no use to you? Why, even a Syrian like myself knows that if you had not got your name foisted into that old man's will, you would have been starving by this time, and all your books must have been put up to sale.

I have often wondered, though I have never been able to satisfy myself, what it is that makes you such an ardent buyer of books. The idea of your making any profitable use of them is one that nobody who has the slightest acquaintance with you would entertain for a moment: does the bald man buy a comb, the blind a mirror, the deaf a flute-player? the eunuch a concubine, the landsman an oar, the pilot a plough? Are you merely seizing an opportunity of displaying your wealth? Is it just your way of showing the public that you can afford to spend money even on things that are of no use to you? Why, even a Syrian like myself knows that if you had not got your name foisted into that old man's will, you would have been starving by this time, and all your books must have been put up to sale.

After all, it was nothing for an illiterate fool like you to take such a fancy into his head, and walk about with his chin in the air, aping the gait and dress and expression of his supposed model: even the Epirote king Pyrrhus, remarkable man that he was in other respects, had the same foible, and was persuaded by his flatterers that he looked like Alexander the Great.

Once Pyrrhus had got this fancy into his head, that he was the look-alike of Alexander, everyone else ran mad for company, till at last an old woman of Larissa, who did not know Pyrrhus, told him the plain truth, and cured his delusion.

Only one possible explanation remains: your toadies have made you believe that in addition to your charms of person you have an extraordinary gift for rhetoric, history, and philosophy; and you buy books merely to countenance their flatteries. It seems that you actually hold forth to them at table; and they, poor thirsty frogs, must croak dry-throated applause till they burst, or there is no drink for them. You are a most

¹ [As Bellerophon's fame grew, so did his arrogance. Bellerophon felt that because of his victory over the Chimera, he deserved to fly to Mount Olympus. That act of hubris angered Zeus and he sent a gadfly to sting Pegasus, causing Bellerophon to fall back to earth. Pegasus completed the flight to Olympus where Zeus used him as a pack horse for his thunderbolts. On the Plain of Aleion (Wandering) in Cilicia, Bellerophon, who had been blinded after falling into a thorn bush, lived out his life in misery, "devouring his own soul," until he died.]

curiously gullible person: you take in every word they say to you. You were made to believe at one time that your features resembled those of a certain Emperor. We had had a pseudo-Alexander, and a pseudo-Philip, the fuller, and there was a pseudo-Nero as recently as our own grandfathers' times: you were for adding one more to the noble army of pseudos. After all, it was nothing for an illiterate fool like you to take such a fancy into his head, and walk about with his chin in the air, aping the gait and dress and expression of his supposed model: even the Epirote king Pyrrhus, remarkable man that he was in other respects, had the same foible, and was persuaded by his flatterers that he was like Alexander, Alexander the Great, that is. In point of fact, I have seen Pyrrhus' portrait, and the two — to borrow a musical phrase — are about as much like one another as bass and treble; and yet he was convinced he was the image of Alexander. However, if that were all, it would be rather too bad of me to insult Pyrrhus¹ by the comparison: but I am justified by the sequel; it suits your case so exactly. When once Pyrrhus had got this fancy into his head, every one else ran mad for company, till at last an old woman of Larissa, who did not know Pyrrhus, told him the plain truth, and cured his delusion. After showing her portraits of Philip, Perdiccas, Alexander, Casander, and other kings, Pyrrhus finally asked her which of these he resembled, taking it as a matter of course that she would fix upon Alexander: however, she considered for some time, and at length informed him that he was most like Batrachion the cook, there being a cook of that name in Larissa who *was* very like Pyrrhus. What particular theatrical pander *you* most resemble I will not pretend to decide: all I can state with certainty is that to this day you pass for a raving madman on the strength of this fancy. After such an instance of your critical discernment, we need not be surprised to find that your flatterers have inspired you with the further ambition of being taken for a scholar.

Come to your senses then, while there is yet time: sell your library to some scholar and, while you are about it, sell your new house too, and wipe off part of your debt to the slave-dealers.

But I am talking nonsense. The cause of your bibliomania is clear enough; I must have been dozing, or I should have seen it long ago. This is your idea of strategy: you know the Emperor's scholarly tastes, and his respect for culture, and you think it will be worth something to you if he hears of your literary pursuits. Once let your name be mentioned to him as a great buyer and collector of books, and you reckon that your fortune is made. Vile creature! and is the Emperor drugged with mandragora that he should hear of this and never know the rest, your daylight iniquities, your tiplings, your monstrous nightly debauches? Know you not that an Emperor has many eyes and many ears? Yet *your* deeds are such as cannot be concealed from the blind or the deaf. I may tell you at once, as you seem not to know it, that a man's hopes of the Imperial favour depend not on his book-bills, but on his character and daily life. Are you counting upon Atticus and Callinus, the copyists, to put in a good word for you? Then you are deceived: those relentless gentlemen propose, with the Gods' good leave, to grind you down and reduce you to utter destitution. Come to your senses while there is yet time: sell your library to some scholar, and whilst you

¹ [Look up "What shall we do with our victory?" in our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers Series. — ED. PHIL.]

are about it sell your new house too, and wipe off part of your debt to the slave-dealers.

You see, you will ride both these hobbies at once; there is the trouble: besides your expensive books you must have your superannuated minions; you are insatiable in these pursuits, and you cannot follow both without money. Now observe how precious a thing is counsel. I recommend you to dispense with the superfluous, and confine your attention to your other foible; in other words, keep your money for the slave-dealers, or your private supplies will run short, and you will be reduced to calling in the services of freemen, who will want every penny you possess; otherwise there is nothing to prevent them from telling how your time is spent when you are in liquor. Only the other day I heard some very ugly stories about you — backed, too, by ocular evidence: the bystanders on that occasion are my witnesses how angry I was on your account; I was in two minds about giving the fellow a thrashing; and the annoying part of it was that he appealed to more than one witness who had had the same experience and told just the same tale. Let this be a warning to you to economize, so that you may be able to have your enjoyments at home in all security. I do not suggest that you should give up these practices: that is quite hopeless; the dog that has gnawed leather once will gnaw leather always.

On the other hand, you can easily do without books. Your education is complete; you have nothing more to learn; you have the ancients as it were on the tip of your tongue; all history is known to you; you are a master of the choice and management of words, you have got the true Attic vocabulary; the multitude of your books has made a ripe scholar of you.¹

But I am rather curious on one point: what are your favourite books among so many? Plato? Antisthenes? Archilochus? Hipponax? Or are they passed over in favour of the orators? Do you ever read the speech of Æschines against Timarchus? All that sort of thing I suppose you have by heart. And have you grappled with Aristophanes and Eupolis? Did you ever go through the *Baptæ*?² Well then, you must surely have come on some embarrassing home-truths in that play? It is difficult to imagine that mind of yours bent upon literary studies, and those hands turning over the pages. When do you do your reading? In the daytime, or at night? If the former, you must do it when no one is looking: and if the latter, is it done in the midst of more engrossing pursuits, or do you work it in before your rhetorical outpourings? As you reverence Cotytto, venture not again into the paths of literature; have done with books, and keep to your own peculiar business. If you had any sense of shame, to be sure, you would abandon that too: think of Phædra's indignant protest against her sex:

Darkness is their accomplice, yet they fear not,
Fear not the chamber-walls, their confidants.

¹ You love flattery, and there is no reason why I should not indulge you as well as another.

² [See *Cotytto* in Notes.]

Books cannot mask the deficiencies of your education by throwing dust in our eyes. You are exactly like the quack doctors, who provide themselves with silver cupping-glasses, gold-handled lancets, and ivory cases for their instruments; they are quite incapable of using them when the time comes, and have to give place to some properly qualified surgeon, who produces a lancet with a keen edge and a rusty handle, and affords immediate relief to the sufferer.

Carry on buying books then, and reap the glory that comes of possessions: only, let that be enough; presume not to touch nor read; pollute not with that tongue the poetry and eloquence of the ancients; what harm have they ever done to you?

But no: you are determined not to be cured. Very well: buy book upon book, shut them safely up, and reap the glory that comes of possession: only, let that be enough; presume not to touch nor read; pollute not with that tongue the poetry and eloquence of the ancients; what harm have they ever done to you?

All this advice is thrown away, I know that. Shall an Ethiopian change his skin? You will go on buying books that you cannot use — to the amusement of educated men, who derive profit not from the price of a book, nor from its handsome appearance, but from the sense and sound of its contents. You think by the multitude of books to supply the deficiencies of your education, and to throw dust in our eyes. Did you but know it, you are exactly like the quack doctors, who provide themselves with silver cupping-glasses, gold-handled lancets, and ivory cases for their instruments; they are quite incapable of using them when the time comes, and have to give place to some properly qualified surgeon, who produces a lancet with a keen edge and a rusty handle, and affords immediate relief to the sufferer. Or here is a better parallel: take the case of the barbers: you will find that the skilled practitioners have just the razor, scissors, and mirror that their work requires: the impostors' razors are numerous, and their mirrors magnificent. However, that does not serve to conceal their incompetence, and the result is most amusing: the average man gets his hair cut by one of their more capable neighbours, and then goes and arranges it before *their* glasses. That is just what your books are good for — to lend to other people; you are quite incapable of using them yourself. Not that you ever have lent any one a single volume; true to your dog-in-the-manger¹ principles, you neither eat the corn yourself, nor give the horse a chance.

There you have my candid opinion about your books: I shall find other opportunities of dealing with your disreputable conduct in general.

¹ [An old Greek fable, ascribed to Æsop, used now for one who spitefully prevents others from enjoying what one has no use for oneself.]

5. Lucian puts up various philosophers for sale by auction in a slave market.



Βίων Πρασις
Vitarum Auctio
Sale of Creeds¹ or Philosophies for Sale

Bring up the lots and put them in line, said Zeus. Give them a rub up first, though; we must have them looking their best, to attract bidders.

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 1 of 4, pp. 190-206. Excerpt below translated from the Attic Greek by F.G. Fowler. *Frontispiece: Slave Market in Ancient Rome (1844)* by Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Zeus Now get those benches straight there, and make the place fit to be seen. Bring up the lots, one of you, and put them in line. Give them a rub up first, though; we must have them looking their best, to attract bidders. Hermes, you can declare the sale-room open, and a welcome to all comers. — *For Sale! A varied assortment of Live Creeds. Tenets of every description. — Cash on delivery; or credit allowed on suitable security.*

Hermes Here they come, swarming in. No time to lose; we must not keep them waiting.

Zeus Well, let us begin.

Hermes What are we to put up first?

Pythagoras was sold for 40 pounds.

Zeus The Ionic fellow, with the long hair. He seems a showy piece of goods.

Hermes Step up, Pythagoreanism, and show yourself.

Zeus Go ahead.

Hermes Now here is a creed of the first water. Who bids for this handsome article? What gentleman says Superhumanity? Harmony of the Universe! Transmigration of souls! Who bids?

First dealer He looks all right. And what can he do?

Hermes Magic, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, jugglery. Prophecy in all its branches.

First dealer Can I ask him some questions?

Hermes Ask away, and welcome.

First dealer Where do you come from?

Pythagoras Samos.

First dealer Where did you get your schooling?

Pythagoras From the sophists in Egypt.

¹ The distinction between the personified creeds or philosophies here offered for sale, and their various founders or principal exponents, is but loosely kept up. Not only do most of the creeds bear the names of their founders, but some are even credited with their physical peculiarities and their personal experiences.

First dealer If I buy you, what will you teach me?

Pythagoras Nothing. I will remind you.

First dealer Remind me?

Pythagoras But first I shall have to cleanse your soul of its filth.

First dealer Well, suppose the cleansing process complete. How is the reminding done?

Pythagoras We shall begin with a long course of silent contemplation. Not a word to be spoken for five years.

First dealer You would have been just the creed for Cræsus' son! But *I* have a tongue in my head; I have no ambition to be a statue. And after the five years' silence?

Pythagoras You will study music and geometry.

First dealer A charming recipe! The way to be wise: learn the guitar.

Pythagoras Next you will learn to count.

First dealer I can do that already.

Pythagoras Let me hear you.

First dealer One, two, three, four —

Pythagoras There you are, you see. *Four* (as you call it) is *ten*. Four the perfect triangle. Four, the oath of our school.

First dealer Now by Four, most potent Four! — higher and holier mysteries than these I never heard.

Pythagoras Then you will learn of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water; their action, their movement, their shapes.

First dealer Have Fire and Air and Water *shapes*?

Pythagoras Clearly. That cannot move which lacks shape and form. You will also find that God is a number; an intelligence; a harmony.

First dealer You surprise me.

Pythagoras More than this, you have to learn that you yourself are not the person you appear to be.

First dealer What, I am some one else, not the I who am speaking to you?

Pythagoras You are that you now: but you have formerly inhabited another body, and borne another name. And in course of time you will change once more.

First dealer Why then I shall be immortal, and take one shape after another? But enough of this. And now what is your diet?

Pythagoras Of living things I eat none. All else I eat, except beans.¹

¹ [Look up "Pythagoras' ban of beans," in our Down to Earth Series. — ED. PHIL.]

First dealer And why no beans? Do you dislike them?

Pythagoras No. But they are sacred things. Their nature is a mystery. Consider them first in their generative aspect; take a green one and peel it, and you will see what I mean. Again, boil one and expose it to moonlight for a proper number of nights, and you have — blood. What is more, the Athenians use beans to vote with.

First dealer Admirable! A very feast of reason. Now just strip, and let me see what you are like. Bless me, here is a creed with a golden thigh! He is no mortal, he is a God. I must have him at any price. What do you start him at?

Hermes Forty pounds.

First dealer He is mine for forty pounds.

Zeus Take the gentleman's name and address.

Hermes He must come from Italy, I should think; Croton or Tarentum, or one of the Greek towns in those parts. But he is not the only buyer. Some three hundred of them have clubbed together.

Zeus They are welcome to him. Now up with the next.

Diogenes was sold cheaply for just 3 pence.

Hermes What about yonder grubby Pontian?¹

Zeus Yes, he will do.

Hermes You there with the wallet and cloak; come along, walk round the room. Lot No. 2. A most sturdy and valiant creed, free-born. What offers?

Second dealer Hullo, Mr. Auctioneer, are you going to sell a free man?

Hermes That was the idea.

Second dealer Take care, he may have you up for kidnapping. This might be matter for the Areopagus.

Hermes Oh, he would as soon be sold as not. He feels just as free as ever.

Second dealer But what is one to do with such a dirty fellow? He is a pitiable sight. One might put him to dig perhaps, or to carry water.

Hermes That he can do and more. Set him to guard your house, and you will find him better than any watch-dog. — They call him Dog for short.

Second dealer Where does he come from? and what is his method?

Hermes He can best tell you that himself.

Second dealer I don't like his looks. He will probably snarl if I go near him, or take a snap at me, for all I know. See how he lifts his stick, and scowls; an awkward-looking customer!

¹ [See *Diogenes* in Notes.]

Hermes Don't be afraid. He is quite tame.

Second dealer Tell me, good fellow, where do you come from?

Diogenes Everywhere.

Second dealer What does that mean?

Diogenes It means that I am a citizen of the world.

Second dealer And your model?

Diogenes Heracles.

Second dealer Then why no lion's-skin? You have the orthodox club.

Diogenes My cloak is my lion's-skin. Like Heracles, I live in a state of warfare, and my enemy is Pleasure; but unlike him I am a volunteer. My purpose is to purify humanity.

Second dealer A noble purpose. Now what do I understand to be your strong subject? What is your profession?

Diogenes The liberation of humanity, and the treatment of the passions. In short, I am the prophet of Truth and Candour.

Second dealer Well, prophet; and if I buy you, how shall you handle my case?

Diogenes I shall commence operations by stripping off yours superfluities, putting you into fustian, and leaving you closeted with Necessity. Then I shall give you a course of hard labour. You will sleep on the ground, drink water, and fill your belly as best you can. Have you money? Take my advice and throw it into the sea. With wife and children and country you will not concern yourself; there will be no more of that nonsense. You will exchange your present home for a sepulchre, a ruin, or a tub. What with lupines and close-written tomes, your knapsack will never be empty; and you will vote yourself happier than any king. Nor will you esteem it any inconvenience, if a flogging or a turn of the rack should fall to your lot.

Second dealer How! Am I a tortoise, a lobster, that I should be flogged and feel it not?

Diogenes You will take your cue from Hippolytus; *mutates mutandis*.

Second dealer How so?

Diogenes "The heart may burn, the tongue knows nought thereof."¹ Above all, be bold, be impudent; distribute your abuse impartially to king and commoner. They will admire your spirit. You will talk the Cynic jargon with the true Cynic snarl, scowling as you walk, and walking as one should who scowls; an epitome of brutality. Away with modesty, good-nature, and forbearance. Wipe the blush from your cheek for ever. Your hunting-ground will be the crowded city. You will live alone in its midst, holding communion with none, admitting neither friend nor guest; for such would undermine your power. Scruple not to perform the deeds of darkness in broad

¹ [Hippolytus (in Euripides' play of that name) is reproached with having broken an oath, and thus defends himself: "The tongue hath sworn: the heart knew nought thereof."]

daylight: select your love-adventures with a view to the public entertainment: and finally, when the fancy takes you, swallow a raw cuttle-fish, and die. Such are the delights of Cynicism.

Second dealer Oh, vile creed! Monstrous creed! Avaunt!¹

Diogenes But look you, it is all so easy; it is within every man's reach. No education is necessary, no nonsensical argumentation. I offer you a shortcut to Glory. You may be the merest clown — cobbler, fishmonger, carpenter, money-changer; yet there is nothing to prevent your becoming famous. Given brass and boldness, you have only to learn to wag your tongue with dexterity.

Second dealer All this is of no use to me. But I might make a sailor or a gardener of you at a pinch; that is, if you are to be had cheap. Three-pence is the most I can give.

Hermes He is yours, to have and to hold. And good riddance to the brawling foul-mouthed bully. He is a slanderer by wholesale.

No bids were placed for a Cyrenaic philosopher.

Zeus Now for the Cyrenaic, the crowned and purple-robed.

Hermes Attend please, gentlemen all. A most valuable article, this, and calls for a long purse. Look at him. A sweet thing in creeds. A creed for a king. Has any gentleman a use for the Lap of Luxury? Who bids?

Third dealer Come and tell me what you know. If you are a practical creed, I will have you.

Hermes Please not to worry him with questions, sir. He is drunk, and cannot answer; his tongue plays him tricks, as you see.

Third dealer And who in his senses would buy such an abandoned reprobate? How he smells of scent! And how he slips and staggers about! Well, you must speak for him, Hermes. What can he do? What is his line?

Hermes Well, for any gentleman who is not strait-laced, who loves a pretty girl, a bottle, and a jolly companion, he is the very thing. He is also a past master in gastronomy, and a connoisseur in voluptuousness generally. He was educated at Athens, and has served royalty in Sicily,² where he had a very good character. Here are his principles in a nutshell: think the worst of things: make the most of things: get all possible pleasure out of things.

Third dealer You must look for wealthier purchasers. My purse is not equal to such a festive creed.

Hermes Zeus, this lot seems likely to remain on our hands.

¹ [Go away!]

² [See *Aristippus* in Notes.]

No bids were placed for Democritus and Heraclitus.

Zeus Put it aside, and up with another. Stay, take the pair from Abdera and Ephesus; the creeds of Smiles and Tears. They shall make one lot.

Hermes Come forward, you two. Lot No. 4. A superlative pair. The smartest brace of creeds on our catalogue.

Fourth dealer Zeus! What a difference is here! One of them does nothing but laugh, and the other might be at a funeral; he is all tears. — You there! what is the joke?

Democritus You ask? You and your affairs are all one vast joke.

Fourth dealer So! You laugh at us? Our business is a toy?

Democritus It is. There is no taking it seriously. All is vanity. Mere interchange of atoms in an infinite void.

Fourth dealer *Your* vanity is infinite, if you like. Stop that laughing, you rascal. — And you, my poor fellow, what are you crying for? I must see what I can make of you.

Heraclitus I am thinking, friend, upon human affairs; and well may I weep and lament, for the doom of all is sealed. Hence my compassion and my sorrow. For the present, I think not of it; but the future! — the future is all bitterness. Conflagration and destruction of the world. I weep to think that nothing abides. All things are whirled together in confusion. Pleasure and pain, knowledge and ignorance, great and small; up and down they go, the playthings of Time.

Fourth dealer And what is Time?

Heraclitus A child; and plays at draughts and blindman's-bluff.

Fourth dealer And men?

Heraclitus Are mortal Gods.

Fourth dealer And Gods?

Heraclitus Immortal men.

Fourth dealer So! Conundrums, fellow? Nuts to crack? You are a very oracle for obscurity.

Heraclitus Your affairs do not interest me.

Fourth dealer No one will be fool enough to bid for you at that rate.

Heraclitus Young and old, him that bids and him that bids not, a murrain seize you all!

Fourth dealer A sad case. He will be melancholy mad before long. Neither of these is the creed for my money.

Hermes No one bids.

Socrates was sold to Dion of Syracuse for 500 pounds.

Zeus Next lot.

Hermes The Athenian there? Old Chatterbox?

Zeus By all means.

Hermes Come forward! — A good sensible creed this. Who buys Holiness?

Fifth dealer Let me see. What are you good for?

Socrates I teach the art of love.

Fifth dealer A likely bargain for me! I want a tutor for my young Adonis.

Socrates And could he have a better? The love I teach is of, the spirit, not of the flesh. Under my roof, be sure, a boy will come to no harm.

Fifth dealer Very unconvincing that. A teacher of the art of love, and never meddle with anything but the spirit? Never use the opportunities your office gives you?

Socrates Now by Dog and Plane-tree, it is as I say!

Fifth dealer Heracles! What strange Gods are these?

Socrates Why, the Dog is a God, I suppose? Is not Anubis made much of in Egypt? Is there not a Dog-star in Heaven, and a Cerberus in the lower world?

Fifth dealer Quite so. My mistake. Now what is your manner of life?

Socrates I live in a city of my own building; I make my own laws, and have a novel constitution of my own.

Fifth dealer I should like to hear some of your statutes.

Socrates You shall hear the greatest of them all. No woman shall be restricted to one husband. Every man who likes [her] is her husband.

Fifth dealer What! Then the laws of adultery are clean swept away?

Socrates I should think they were! and a world of hair-splitting with them.

Fifth dealer And what do you do with the handsome boys?

Socrates Their kisses are the reward of merit, of noble and spirited actions.

Fifth dealer Unparalleled generosity! — And now, what are the main features of your philosophy?

Socrates Ideas and types of things. All things that you see, the earth and all that is upon it, the sea, the sky — each has its counterpart in the invisible world.

Fifth dealer And where are they?

Socrates Nowhere. Were they anywhere, they were not what they are.

Fifth dealer I see no signs of these “types” of yours.

Socrates Of course not; because you are spiritually blind. *I* see the counterparts of all things; an invisible you, an invisible me; everything is in duplicate.

Fifth dealer Come, such a shrewd and lynx-eyed creed is worth a bid. Let me see. What do you want for him?

Hermes Five hundred.

Fifth dealer Done with you. Only I must settle the bill another day.

Hermes What name?

Fifth dealer Dion; of Syracuse.

Epicureanism was sold for 8 pounds.

Hermes Take him, and much good may he do you. Now I want Epicureanism. Who offers for Epicureanism? He is a disciple of the laughing creed and the drunken creed, whom we were offering just now. But he has one extra accomplishment — impiety. For the rest, a dainty, lickerish creed.

Sixth dealer What price?

Hermes Eight pounds.

Sixth dealer Here you are. By the way, you might let me know what he likes to eat.

Hermes Anything sweet. Anything with honey in it. Dried figs are his favourite dish.

Sixth dealer That is all right. We will get in a supply of Carian fig-cakes.

Chrysippus was sold to a pool of shareholders for 50 pounds.

Zeus Call the next lot. Stoicism; the creed of the sorrowful countenance, the close-cropped creed.

Hermes Ah yes, several customers, I fancy, are on the look-out for him. Virtue incarnate! The very quintessence of creeds! Who is for universal monopoly?

Seventh dealer How are we to understand that?

Hermes Why, here is monopoly of wisdom, monopoly of beauty, monopoly of courage, monopoly of justice. Sole king, sole orator, sole legislator, sole millionaire.

Seventh dealer And I suppose sole cook, sole tanner, sole carpenter, and all that?

Hermes Presumably.

Seventh dealer Regard me as your purchaser, good fellow, and tell me all about yourself. I dare say you think it rather hard to be sold for a slave?

Chrysippus Not at all. These things are beyond our control. And what is beyond our control is indifferent [to me].

Seventh dealer I don't see how you make that out.

Chrysippus What! Have you yet to learn that of *indifferentia* some are *præposita* and others *rejecta*?

Seventh dealer Still I don't quite see.

Chrysippus No; how should you? You are not familiar with our terms. You lack the *comprehensio visi*. The earnest student of logic knows this and more than this. He understands the nature of subject, predicate, and contingent, and the distinctions between them.

Seventh dealer Now in Wisdom's name, tell me, pray, what is a predicate? what is a contingent? There is a ring about those words that takes my fancy.

Chrysippus With all my heart. A man lame in one foot knocks that foot accidentally against a stone, and gets a cut. Now the man is *subject* to lameness; which is the *predicate*. And the cut is a *contingency*.

Seventh dealer Oh, subtle! What else can you tell me?

Chrysippus I have verbal involutions, for the better hampering, crippling, and muzzling of my antagonists. This is performed by the use of the far-famed syllogism.

Seventh dealer Syllogism! I warrant him a tough customer.

Chrysippus Take a case. You have a child?

Seventh dealer Well, and what if I have?

Chrysippus A crocodile catches him as he wanders along the bank of a river, and promises to restore him to you, if you will first guess correctly whether he means to restore him or not. Which are you going to say?

Seventh dealer A difficult question. I don't know which way I should get him back soonest. In Heaven's name, answer for me, and save the child before he is eaten up.

Chrysippus Ha, ha. I will teach you far other things than that.

Seventh dealer For instance?

Chrysippus There is the "Reaper." There is the "Rightful Owner." Better still, there is the "Electra" and the "Man in the Hood."

Seventh dealer Who was he? and who was Electra?

Chrysippus She was *the* Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon, to whom the same thing was known and unknown at the same time. She knew that Orestes was her brother: yet when he stood before her she did not know (until he revealed himself) that her brother was Orestes. As to the Man in the Hood, he will surprise you considerably. Answer me now: do you know your own father?

Seventh dealer Yes.

Chrysippus Well now, if I present to you a man in a hood, shall you know him? eh?

Seventh dealer Of course not.

Chrysippus Well, but the Man in the Hood is your father. You don't know the Man in the Hood. Therefore you don't know your own father.

Seventh dealer Why, no. But if I take his hood off, I shall get at the facts. Now tell me, what is the end of your philosophy? What happens when you reach the goal of virtue?

Chrysippus In regard to things external, health, wealth, and the like, I am then all that Nature intended me to be. But there is much previous toil to be undergone. You will first sharpen your eyes on minute manuscripts, amass commentaries, and get your bellyful of outlandish terms. Last but not least, it is forbidden to be wise without repeated doses of hellebore.

Seventh dealer All this is exalted and magnanimous to a degree. But what am I to think when I find that you are also the creed of cent-per-cent,¹ the creed of the usurer? Has *he* swallowed his hellebore? is *he* made perfect in virtue?

Chrysippus Assuredly. On none but the wise man does usury sit well. Consider. His is the art of putting two and two together, and usury is the art of putting interest together. The two are evidently connected, and one as much as the other is the prerogative of the true believer; who, not content, like common men, with simple interest, will also take interest *upon* interest. For interest, as you are probably aware, is of two kinds. There is simple interest, and there is its offspring, compound interest. Hear Syllogism on the subject. "If I take simple interest, I shall also take compound. But I *shall* take simple interest: therefore I shall take compound."

Seventh dealer And the same applies to the fees you take from your youthful pupils? None but the true believer sells virtue for a fee?

Chrysippus Quite right. I take the fee in my pupil's interest, not because I want it. The world is made up of diffusion and accumulation. I accordingly practise my pupil in the former, and myself in the latter.

Seventh dealer But it ought to be the other way. The pupil ought to accumulate, and you, "sole millionaire," ought to diffuse.

Chrysippus Ha! you jest with me? Beware of the shaft of insoluble syllogism.

Seventh dealer What harm can that do?

Chrysippus It cripples; it ties the tongue, and turns the brain. Nay, I have but to will it, and you are stone this instant.

Seventh dealer Stone! You are no Perseus, friend?

Chrysippus See here. A stone is a body?

Seventh dealer Yes.

Chrysippus Well, and an animal is a body?

Seventh dealer Yes.

Chrysippus And you are an animal?

Seventh dealer I suppose I am.

Chrysippus Therefore you are a body. Therefore a stone.

¹ [An usurer]

Seventh dealer Mercy, in Heaven's name! Unstone me, and let me be flesh as heretofore.

Chrysippus That is soon done. Back with you into flesh! Thus: Is every body animate?

Seventh dealer No.

Chrysippus Is a stone animate?

Seventh dealer No.

Chrysippus Now, you are a body?

Seventh dealer Yes.

Chrysippus And an animate body?

Seventh dealer Yes.

Chrysippus Then being animate, you cannot be a stone.

Seventh dealer Ah! thank you, thank you. I was beginning to feel my limbs growing numb and solidifying like Niobe's. Oh, I must have you. What's to pay?

Hermes Fifty pounds.

Seventh dealer Here it is.

Hermes Are you sole purchaser?

Seventh dealer Not I. All these gentlemen here are going shares.

Hermes A fine strapping lot of fellows, and will do the "Reaper" credit.

A Peripatetic slave was sold for 80 pounds.

Zeus Don't waste time. Next lot — the Peripatetic!

Hermes Now, my beauty, now, Affluence! Gentlemen, if you want Wisdom for your money, here is a creed that comprises all knowledge.

Eighth dealer What is he like?

Hermes He is temperate, good-natured, easy to get on with; and his strong point is, that he is twins.

Eighth dealer How can that be?

Hermes Why, he is one creed outside, and another inside. So remember, if you buy him, one of him is called Esoteric, and the other Exoteric.

Eighth dealer And what has he to say for himself?

Hermes He has to say that there are three kinds of good: spiritual, corporeal, circumstantial.

Eighth dealer *There's* something a man can understand. How much is he?

Hermes Eighty pounds.

Eighth dealer Eighty pounds is a long price.

Hermes Not at all, my dear sir, not at all. You see, there is some money with him, to all appearance. Snap him up before it is too late. Why, from him you will find out in no time how long a gnat lives, to how many fathoms' depth the sunlight penetrates the sea, and what an oyster's soul is like.

Eighth dealer Heracles! Nothing escapes him.

Hermes Ah, these are trifles. You should hear some of his more abstruse speculations, concerning generation and birth and the development of the embryo; and his distinction between man, the laughing creature, and the ass, which is neither a laughing nor a carpentering nor a shipping creature.

Eighth dealer Such knowledge is as useful as it is ornamental. Eighty pounds be it, then.

Hermes He is yours.

A sceptic slave kept wrangling with his new master.

Zeus What have we left?

Hermes There is Scepticism. Come along, Pyrrhias, and be put up. Quick's the word. The attendance is dwindling; there will be small competition. Well, who buys Lot 9?

Ninth dealer Tell me first, though, what do you know?

Socrates Nothing.

Ninth dealer But how's that?

Socrates There does not appear to me to *be* anything.

Ninth dealer Are not *we* something?

Socrates How do I know that?

Ninth dealer And you yourself?

Socrates Of that I am still more doubtful.

Ninth dealer Well, you *are* in a fix! And what have you got those scales for?

Socrates I use them to weigh arguments in, and get them evenly balanced, They must be absolutely equal — not a feather-weight to choose between them; then, and not till then, can I make uncertain which is right.

Ninth dealer What else can you turn your hand to?

Socrates Anything; except catching a runaway.

Ninth dealer And why not that?

Socrates Because, friend, everything eludes my grasp.

Ninth dealer I believe you. A slow, lumpish fellow you seem to be. And what is the end of your knowledge?

Socrates Ignorance. Deafness. Blindness.

Ninth dealer What! sight and hearing both gone?

Socrates And with them judgement and perception, and all, in short, that distinguishes man from a worm.

Ninth dealer You are worth money! — What shall we say for him?

Hermes Four pounds.

Ninth dealer Here it is. Well, fellow; so you are mine?

Socrates I doubt it.

Ninth dealer Nay, doubt it not! You are bought and paid for.

Socrates It is a difficult case. . . . I reserve my decision.

Ninth dealer Now, come along with me, like a good slave.

Socrates But how am I to know whether what you say is true?

Ninth dealer Ask the auctioneer. Ask my money. Ask the spectators.

Socrates Spectators? But can we be sure there are any?

Ninth dealer Oh, I'll send you to the treadmill. That will convince you with a vengeance that I am your master.

Socrates Reserve your decision.

Ninth dealer Too late. It is given.

Hermes Stop that wrangling and go with your purchaser. Gentlemen, we hope to see you here again tomorrow, when we shall be offering some lots suitable for plain men, artisans, and shopkeepers.

6. Lucian's diatribe on true philosophy and her counterfeits.



Αναβιουντες, η Αλιεύς
Revivescentes, sive Piscator
The Dead Come to Life, or The Fisherman

An autobiographic sequel to the sale of philosophers where Lucian, who has taken upon him the name of rhetorician Parrhesiades,¹ continues satirising the philosophers of the Hellenistic period.

From Fowler H.W. & Fowler F.G. (tr.) *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Vol. 1 of 4, pp. 206-30. Excerpt below translated from the Attic Greek by H.W. Fowler. Students to consult "Great genius and counterfeits," in our Secret Doctrine's Third Proposition Series. *Frontispiece: Truth coming out of the well* (1896) by Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Socrates Stone the miscreant; stone him with many stones; clod him with clods; pot him with pots; let the culprit feel your sticks; leave him no way out. At him, Plato! come, Chrysippus, let him have it! Shoulder to shoulder, close the ranks;

Let wallet succour wallet, staff aid staff!

We are all parties in this war; not one of us but he has assailed. You, Diogenes, now if ever is the time for that stick of yours; stand firm, all of you. Let him reap the fruits of his revelling. What, Epicurus, Aristippus, tired already? 'tis too soon; ye sages,

Be men; relume² that erstwhile furious wrath!

Aristotle, one more sprint. There! the brute is caught; we have you, villain. You shall soon know a little more about the characters you have assailed. Now, what shall we do with him? it must be rather an elaborate execution, to meet all our claims upon him; he owes a separate death to every one of us.

First Philosopher Impale him, say I.

Second Philosopher Yes, but scourge him first.

Third Philosopher Tear out his eyes.

Fourth Philosopher Ah, but first out with the offending tongue.

Socrates What say you, Empedocles?

Empedocles Oh, fling him into a crater; that will teach him to vilify his betters.

Plato 'Twere best for him, Orpheus or Pentheus like, to

Find death, dashed all to pieces on the rock;

so each might have taken a piece home with him.

Lucian Forbear; spare me; I appeal to the God of suppliants.

Socrates Too late; no loophole is left you now. And you know your Homer:

'Twixt men and lions, covenants are null.

Lucian Why, it is in Homer's name that I ask my boon. You will perhaps pay reverence to his lines, and listen to a selection from him:

¹ [One who speaks the truth]

² [rekindle]

Slay not; no churl is he; a ransom take
Of bronze and gold, whereof wise hearts are fain.

Plato Why, two can play at that game; *exempli gratia*,

Reviler, babble not of gold, nor nurse
Hope of escape from these our hands that hold thee.

Lucian Ah me, ah me! my best hopes dashed, with Homer! Let me fly to Euripides;
it may be he will protect me:

Leave him his life; the suppliant's life is sacred.

Plato Does this happen to be Euripides too —

Evil men evil treated is no evil?

Lucian And will you slay me now for nought but words?

Plato Most certainly; our author has something on that point too:

Unbridled lips
And folly's slips
Invite Fate's whips.

Lucian Oh, very well; as you are all set on murdering me, and escape is impossible, do at least tell me who you are, and what harm I have done you; it must be something irreparable, to judge by your relentless murderous pursuit.

Plato What harm you have done us, vile fellow? your own conscience and your fine dialogues will tell you; you have called Philosophy herself bad names, and as for us, you have subjected us to the indignity of a public auction, and put up wise men — ay, and free men, which is more — for sale. We have reason to be angry; we have got a short leave of absence from Hades, and come up against you — Chrysippus here, Epicurus and myself, Aristotle yonder, the taciturn Pythagoras, Diogenes and all of us that your dialogues have made so free with.

Lucian Ah, I breathe again. Once hear the truth about my conduct to you, and you will never put me to death. You can throw away those stones. Or, no, keep them; you shall have a better mark for them presently.

Plato This is trifling. This day thou diest; nay, even now,

A suit of stones shalt don, thy livery due.

Lucian Believe me, good gentlemen, I have been at much pains on your behalf to slay me is to slay one who should rather be selected for commendation a kindred spirit, a well-wisher, a man after your own heart, a promoter, if I may be bold to say it, of your pursuits. See to it that you catch not the tone of our latter-day philosophers, and be thankless, petulant, and hard of heart, to him that deserves better of you.

Plato Talk of a brazen front! So to abuse us is to oblige us. I believe you are under the delusion that you are really talking to slaves; after the insolent excesses of your tongue, do you propose to chop gratitude with us?

Lucian How or when was I ever insolent to you? I have always been an admirer of philosophy, your panegyrist, and a student of the writings you left. All that comes from my pen is but what you give me; I deflower you, like a bee, for the behoof of mankind; and then there is praise and recognition; they know the flowers, whence and whose the honey was, and the manner of my gathering; their surface feeling is for my selective art, but deeper down it is for you and your meadow, where you put forth such bright blooms and myriad dyes, if one knows but how to sort and mix and match, that one be not in discord with another. Could he that had found you such have the heart to abuse those benefactors to whom his little fame was due? then he must be a Thamyris or Eurytus, defying the Muses who gave his gift of song, or challenging Apollo with the bow, forgetful from whom he had his marksmanship.

Plato All this, good sir, is quite according to the principles of rhetoric; that is to say, it is clean contrary to the facts; your unscrupulousness is only emphasized by this adding of insult to injury; you confess that your arrows are from our quiver, and you use them against us; your one aim is to abuse us. This is our reward for showing you that meadow, letting you pluck freely, fill your bosom, and depart. For this alone you richly deserve death.

Lucian There; your ears are partial; they are deaf to the right. Why, I would never have believed that personal feeling could affect a Plato, a Chrysippus, an Aristotle; with you, of all men, I thought there was dry light. But, dear sirs, do not condemn me unheard; give me trial first. Was not the principle of your establishing — that the law of the stronger was not the law of the State, and that differences should be settled in court after due hearing of both sides? Appoint a judge, then; be you my accusers, by your own mouths or by your chosen representative; and let me defend my own case; then if I be convicted of wrong, and that be the court's decision, I shall get my deserts, and you will have no violence upon your consciences. But if examination shows me spotless and irreproachable, the court will acquit me, and then turn you your wrath upon the deceivers who have excited you against me.

Plato Ah, every cock to his own dunghill! You think you will hoodwink the jury and get off. I hear you are a lawyer, an advocate, an old hand at a speech. Have you any judge to suggest who will be proof against such an experienced corrupter as you?

Lucian Oh, be reassured. The official I think of proposing is no suspicious, dubious character likely to sell a verdict. What say you to forming the court yourselves, with Philosophy for your President?

Plato Who is to prosecute, if we are the jury?

Lucian Oh, you can do both; I am not in the least afraid; so much stronger is my case; the defence wins, hands down.

Plato Pythagoras, Socrates, what do you think? perhaps the man's appeal to law is not unreasonable.

Socrates No; come along, form the court, fetch Philosophy, and see what he has to say for himself. To condemn unheard is a sadly crude proceeding, not for us; leave that to the hasty people with whom might is right. We shall give occasion to the en-

emy to blaspheme if we stone a man without a hearing, professed lovers of justice as we are. We shall have to keep quiet about Anytus and Meletus, my accusers, and the jury on that occasion, if we cannot spare an hour to hear this fellow before he suffers.

Plato Very true, Socrates. We will go and fetch Philosophy. The decision shall be hers, and we will accept it, whatever it is.

Lucian Why, now, my masters, you are in a better and more law-abiding mood. However, keep those stones, as I said; you will need them in court. But where is Philosophy to be found? I do not know where she lives, myself. I once spent a long time wandering about in search of her house, wishing to make her acquaintance. Several times I met some long-bearded people in threadbare cloaks who professed to be fresh from her presence; I took their word for it, and asked them the way; but they knew considerably less about it than I, and either declined to answer, by way of concealing their ignorance, or else pointed to one door after another. I have never been able to find the right one to this day.

Many a time, upon some inward prompting or external offer of guidance, I have come to a door with the confident hope that this time I really was right; there was such a crowd flowing in and out, all of solemn persons decently habited and thoughtful-faced; I would insinuate myself into the press and go in too. What I found would be a woman who was not really natural, however skilfully she played at beauty undorned; I could see at once that the apparent *négligé* of her hair was studied for effect, and the folds of her dress not so careless as they looked. One could tell that nature was a scheme of decoration with her, and artlessness an artistic device. The white lead and the rouge did not absolutely defy detection, and her talk betrayed her real vocation; she liked her lovers to appreciate her beauty, had a ready hand for presents, made room by her side for the rich, and hardly vouchsafed her poorer lovers a distant glance. Now and then, when her dress came a little open by accident, I saw that she had on a massive gold necklace heavier than a penal collar. That was enough for me; I would retrace my steps, sincerely pitying the unfortunates whom she led by the — beard, and their Ixion embracings of a phantom.

Plato You are right there; the door is not conspicuous, nor generally known. However, we need not go to her house; we will wait for her here in the Ceramicus. I should think it is near her hour for coming back from the Academy, and taking her walk in the Pœcile; she is very regular; to be sure, here she comes. Do you see the orderly, rather prim lady there, with the kindly look in her eyes, and the slow meditative walk?

Lucian I see several answering the description so far as looks and walk and clothes go. Yet among them all the real lady Philosophy can be but one.

Plato True; but as soon as she opens her lips you will know.

Philosophy Dear me, what are Plato and Chrysippus and Aristotle doing up here, and the rest of them — a living dictionary of my teachings? Alive again? how is this? have things been going wrong down there? you look angry. And who is your prisoner? a rifler of tombs? a murderer? a temple-robber?

Plato Worse yet, Philosophy. He has dared to slander your most sacred self, and all of us who have been privileged to impart anything from you to posterity.

Philosophy And did you lose your tempers over abusive words? Did you forget how Comedy handled me at the Dionysia, and how I yet counted her a friend? Did I ever sue her, or go and remonstrate? Or did I let her enjoy her holidays in the harmless old-fashioned way? I know very well that a jest spoils no real beauty, but rather improves it; so gold is polished by hard rubs, and shines all the brighter for it. But you seem to have grown passionate and censorious. Come, why are you strangling him like that?

Plato We have got this one day's leave, and come after him to give him his deserts. Rumours had reached us of the things he used to say about us in his lectures.

Philosophy And are you going to kill him without a trial or a hearing? I can see he wishes to say something.

Plato No; we decided to refer it all to you. If you will accept the task, the decision shall be yours.

Philosophy Sir, what is your wish?

Lucian The same, dear Mistress; for none but you can find the truth. It cost me much entreaty to get the case reserved for you.

Plato You call her Mistress now, scoundrel; the other day you were making out Philosophy the meanest of things, when before that great audience you let her several doctrines go for a pitiful threepence apiece.

Philosophy It may be that it was not Ourselves he then reviled, but some impostors who practised vile arts in our name.

Plato The truth will soon come to light, if you will hear his defence.

Philosophy Come we to the Areopagus — or better, to the Acropolis, where the panorama of Athens will be before us.

Ladies, will you stroll in the Pœcile meanwhile? I will join you when I have given judgement.

Lucian Who are these, Philosophy? methinks their appearance is seemly as your own.

Philosophy This with the masculine features is Virtue; then there is Temperance, and Justice by her side. In front is Culture; and this shadowy creature with the indefinite complexion is Truth.

Lucian I do not see which you mean.

Philosophy Not see her? over there, all naked and unadorned, shrinking from observation, and always slipping out of sight.

Lucian Now I just discern her. But why not bring them all with you? there would be a fullness and completeness about that commission. Ah yes, and I should like to brief Truth on my behalf.

Philosophy Well thought of; come, all of you; you will not mind sitting through a single case — in which we have a personal interest, too?

Truth Go on, the rest of you; it is superfluous for me to hear what I know all about before.

Philosophy But, Truth dear, your presence will be useful to us; you will show us what to think.

Truth May I bring my two favourite maids, then?

Philosophy And as many more as you like.

Truth Come with me, Freedom and Frankness; this poor little adorer of ours is in trouble without any real reason; we shall be able to get him out of it. Exposure, my man, we shall not want you.

Lucian Ah yes, Mistress, let us have him, of all others; my opponents are no ordinary ruffians; they are people who make a fine show and are hard to expose; they have always some back way out of a difficulty; we must have Exposure.

Philosophy Yes, we must, indeed; and you had better bring Demonstration too.

Truth Come all of you, as you are such important legal persons.

Aristotle What is this? Philosophy, he is employing Truth against us!

Philosophy And are Plato and Chrysippus and Aristotle afraid of her lying on his behalf, being who she is?

Plato Oh, well, no; only he is a sad plausible rogue; he will take her in.

Philosophy Never fear; no wrong will be done, with madam Justice on the bench by us. Let us go up.

Prisoner, your name?

Lucian Parrhesiades, son of Alethion, son of Elanxicles.¹

Philosophy And your country?

Lucian I am a Syrian from the Euphrates, my lady. But is the question relevant? Some of my accusers I know to be as much barbarians by blood as myself; but character and culture do not vary as a man comes from Soli or Cyprus, Babylon or Stagira. However, even one who could not talk Greek would be none the worse in your eyes, so long as his sentiments were right and just.

Philosophy True, the question was unnecessary.

But what is your profession? that at least is essential.

Lucian I profess hatred of pretension and imposture, lying, and pride; the whole loathsome tribe of them I hate; and you know how numerous they are.

Philosophy Upon my word, you must have your hands full at this profession!

¹ [*i.e.*, a Free-speaker, son of Truthful, son of Exposure.]

Lucian I have; you see what general dislike and danger it brings upon me. However, I do not neglect the complementary branch, in which love takes the place of hate; it includes love of truth and beauty and simplicity and all that is akin to love. But the subjects for this branch of the profession are sadly few; those of the other, for whom hatred is the right treatment, are reckoned by the thousand. Indeed there is some danger of the one feeling being atrophied, while the other is over-developed.

Philosophy That should not be; they run in couples, you know. Do not separate your two branches; they should have unity in diversity.

Lucian You know better than I, Philosophy. My way is just to hate a villain, and love and praise the good.

Philosophy Well, well. Here we are at the appointed place. We will hold the trial in the forecourt of Athene Polias. Priestess, arrange our seats, while we salute the Goddess.

Lucian Polias, come to my aid against these pretenders, mindful of the daily perjuries thou hearest from them. Their deeds too are revealed to thee alone, in virtue of thy charge. Thou hast now thine hour of vengeance. If thou see me in evil case, if blacks be more than whites, then cast thou thy vote and save me!

Philosophy So. Now we are seated, ready to hear your words. Choose one of your number, the best accuser you may, make your charge, and bring your proofs. Were all to speak, there would be no end. And you, Parrhesiades, shall afterwards make your defence.

Chrysippus Plato, none of us will conduct the prosecution better than you. Your thoughts are heaven-high, your style the perfect Attic; grace and persuasion, insight and subtlety, the cogency of well-ordered proof — all these are gathered in you. Take the spokesman's office and say what is fitting on our behalf. Call to memory and roll in one all that ever you said against Gorgias, Polus, Hippias, Prodicus; you have now to do with a worse than them. Let him taste your irony; ply him with your keen incessant questions; and if you will, perorate with the mighty Zeus charioting his winged car through Heaven, and grudging if this fellow get not his deserts.

Plato Nay, nay; choose one of more strenuous temper — Diogenes, Antisthenes, Crates, or yourself, Chrysippus. It is no time now for beauty or literary skill; controversial and forensic resource is what we want. This Parrhesiades is an orator.

Diogenes Let me be accuser; no need for long speeches here. Moreover, I was the worst treated of all; threepence was my price the other day.

Plato Philosophy, Diogenes will speak for us. But mind, friend, you are not to represent yourself alone, but think of us all. If we have any private differences of doctrine, do not go into that; never mind now which of us is right, but keep your indignation for Philosophy's wrongs and the names he has called her. Leave alone the principles we differ about, and maintain what is common to us all. Now mark, you stand for us all; on you our whole fame depends; shall it come out majestic, or in the semblance he has given it?

Diogenes Never fear; nothing shall be omitted; I speak for all. Philosophy may be softened by his words — she was ever gentle and forgiving — *she* may be minded to acquit him; but the fault shall not be mine; I will show him that our staves are more than ornaments.

Philosophy Nay, take not that way; words, not bludgeons; 'tis better so. But no delay now; your time-allowance has begun; and the court is all attention.

Lucian Philosophy, let the rest take their seats and vote with you, leaving Diogenes as sole accuser.

Philosophy Have you no fears of their condemning you?

Lucian None whatever; I wish to increase my majority, that is all.

Philosophy I commend your spirit. Gentlemen, take your seats. Now, Diogenes.

Diogenes With our lives on earth, Philosophy, you are acquainted; I need not dwell long upon them. Of myself I say nothing; but Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Chrysippus, and the rest — who knows not the benefits that they conferred on mankind? I will come at once, then, to the insults to which we have been subjected by the thrice accursed Parrhesiades. He was, by his own account, an advocate; but he has left the courts and the fame there to be won, and has availed himself of all the verbal skill and proficiency so acquired for a campaign of abuse against us. We are impostors and deceivers; his audiences must ridicule and scorn us for nobodies. Did I say “nobodies”? he has made us an abomination, rather, in the eyes of the vulgar, and yourself with us, Philosophy. Your teachings are balderdash and rubbish; the noblest of your precepts to us he parodies, winning for himself applause and approval, and for us humiliation. For so it is with the great public; it loves a master of flouts and jeers, and loves him in proportion to the grandeur of what he assails; you know how it delighted long ago in Aristophanes and Eupolis, when they caricatured our Socrates on the stage, and wove farcical comedies around him. But they at least confined themselves to a single victim, and they had the charter of Dionysus; a jest might pass at holiday time, and the laughing God might be well pleased.

But this fellow gets together an upper-class audience, gives long thought to his preparations, writes down his slanders in a thick notebook, and uplifts his voice in vituperation of Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Chrysippus, and in short all of us; *he* cannot plead holiday time, nor yet any private grievance; he might perhaps be forgiven if he had done it in self-defence; but it was he that opened hostilities. Worst of all, Philosophy, he shelters himself under your name, entices Dialogue from our company to be his ally and mouthpiece, and induces our good comrade Menippus to collaborate constantly with him; Menippus, more by token, is the one deserter and absentee on this occasion.

Does he not then abundantly deserve his fate? What conceivable defence is open to him, after his public defamation of all that is noblest? On the public which listened to him, too, the spectacle of his condign punishment will have a healthy effect; we shall see no more ridicule of Philosophy. Tame submission to insult would naturally enough be taken, not for moderation, but for insensibility and want of spirit. Who could be expected to put up with his last performance? He brought us to market like

a gang of slaves, and handed us over to the auctioneer. Some, I believe, fetched high prices; but others went for four or five pounds, and as for me — confound his impudence, threepence! And fine fun the audience had out of it! We did well to be angry; we have come from Hades; and we ask you to give us satisfaction for this abominable outrage.

Resurgents Hear, hear! well spoken, Diogenes; well and loyally.

Philosophy Silence in court! Time the defence. Parrhesiades, it is now your turn; they are timing you; so proceed.

Parrhesiades Philosophy, Diogenes has been far indeed from exhausting his material; the greater part of it, and the more strongly expressed, he has passed by, for reasons best known to himself. I refer to statements of mine which I am as far from denying that I made as from having provided myself with any elaborate defence of them. Any of these that have been omitted by him, and not previously emphasized by myself, I propose now to quote; this will be the best way to show you who were the persons that I sold by auction and inveighed against as pretenders and impostors; please to concentrate your vigilance on the truth or falsehood of my descriptions. If what I say is injurious or severe, your censure will be more fairly directed at the perpetrators than at the discoverer of such iniquities. I had no sooner realized the odious practices which his profession imposes on an advocate — the deceit, falsehood, bluster, clamour, pushing, and all the long hateful list, than I fled as a matter of course from these, betook myself to your dear service, Philosophy, and pleased myself with the thought of a remainder of life spent far from the tossing waves in a calm haven beneath your shadow.

At my first peep into your realm, how could I but admire yourself and all these, your disciples? there they were, legislating for the perfect life, holding out hands of help to those that would reach it, commending all that was fairest and best; fairest and best — but a man must keep straight on for it and never slip, must set his eyes unwaveringly on the laws that you have laid down, must tune and test his life thereby; and that, Zeus be my witness, there are few enough in these days of ours to do.

So I saw how many were in love, not with Philosophy, but with the credit it brings; in the vulgar externals, so easy for any one to ape, they showed a striking resemblance to the real article, perfect in beard and walk and attire; but in life and conduct they belied their looks, read your lessons backwards, and degraded their profession. Then I was wroth; methought it was as though some soft womanish actor on the tragic stage should give us Achilles or Theseus or Heracles himself; he cannot stride nor speak out as a Hero should, but minces along under his enormous mask; Helen or Polyxena would find him too realistically feminine to pass for them; and what shall an invincible Heracles say? Will he not swiftly pound man and mask together into nothingness with his club, for womanizing and disgracing him?

Well, these people were about as fit to represent you, and the degradation of it all was too much for me. Apes daring to masquerade as heroes! emulators of the ass at Cyme! The Cymeans, you know, had never seen ass or lion; so the ass came the lion over them, with the aid of a borrowed skin and his most awe-inspiring bray; however, a stranger who had often seen both brought the truth to light with a stick. But what

most distressed me, Philosophy, was this: when one of these people was detected in rascality, impropriety, or immorality, every one put it down to philosophy, and to the particular philosopher whose name the delinquent took in vain without ever acting on his principles; the living rascal disgraced you, the long dead; for you were not there in the flesh to point the contrast; so, as it was clear enough that *his* life was vile and disgusting, your case was given away by association with his, and you had to share his disgrace.

This spectacle, I say, was too much for me; I began exposing them, and distinguishing between them and you; and for this good work you now arraign me. So then, if I find one of the Initiated betraying and parodying the Mysteries of the two Goddesses, and if I protest and denounce him, the transgression will be mine? There is something wrong there; why, at the Games, if an actor who has to present Athene or Poseidon or Zeus plays his part badly, derogating from the divine dignity, the stewards have him whipped; well, the Gods are not angry with them for having the officers whip the man who wears their mask and their attire; I imagine they approve of the punishment. To play a slave or a messenger badly is a trifling offence, but to represent Zeus or Heracles to the spectators in an unworthy manner — that is a crime and a sacrilege.

I can indeed conceive nothing more extraordinary than that so many of them should get themselves absolutely perfect in your words, and then live precisely as if the sole object of reading and studying them had been to reverse them in practice. All their professions of despising wealth and appearances, of admiring nothing but what is noble, of superiority to passion, of being proof against splendour, and associating with its owners only on equal terms — how fair and wise and laudable they all are! But they take pay for imparting them, they are abashed in presence of the rich, their lips water at sight of coin; they are dogs for temper, hares for cowardice, apes for imitativeness, asses for lust, cats for thievery, cocks for jealousy. They are a perfect laughing-stock with their strivings after vile ends, their jostling of each other at rich men's doors, their attendance at crowded dinners, and their vulgar obsequiousness at table. They swill more than they should and would like to swill more than they do, they spoil the wine with unwelcome and untimely disquisitions, and they cannot carry their liquor. The ordinary people who are present naturally flout them, and are revolted by the philosophy which breeds such brutes.

What is so monstrous is that every man of them says he has no needs, proclaims aloud that wisdom is the only wealth, and directly afterwards comes begging and makes a fuss if he is refused; it would hardly be stranger to see one in kingly attire, with tall tiara, crown, and all the attributes of royalty, asking his inferiors for a little something more. When they want to get something, we hear a great deal, to be sure, about community of goods — how wealth is a thing indifferent — and what is gold and silver? — neither more nor less worth than pebbles on the beach. But when an old comrade and tried friend needs help and comes to them with his modest requirements, ah, then there is silence and searchings of heart, unlearning of tenets and flat renunciation of doctrines. All their fine talk of friendship, with *Virtue* and *The Good*, have vanished and flown, who knows whither? they were winged words in sad truth, empty phantoms, only meant for daily conversational use.

These men are excellent friends so long as there is no gold or silver for them to dispute the possession of; exhibit but a copper or two, and peace is broken, truce void, armistice ended; their books are blank, their Virtue fled, and they so many dogs; some one has flung a bone into the pack, and up they spring to bite each other and snarl at the one which has pounced successfully. There is a story of an Egyptian king who taught some apes the sword-dance; the imitative creatures very soon picked it up, and used to perform in purple robes and masks; for some time the show was a great success, till at last an ingenious spectator brought some nuts in with him and threw them down. The apes forgot their dancing at the sight, dropped their humanity, resumed their apehood, and, smashing masks and tearing dresses, had a free fight for the provender. Alas for the *corps de ballet* and the gravity of the audience!

These people are just those apes; it is they that I reviled; and I shall never cease exposing and ridiculing them; but about you and your like — for there *are*, in spite of all, some true lovers of philosophy and keepers of your laws — about you or them may I never be mad enough to utter an injurious or rude word! Why, what could I find to say? what is there in your lives that lends itself to such treatment? but those pretenders deserve my detestation, as they have that of heaven. Why, tell me, all of you, what have such creatures to do with you? Is there a trace in their lives of kindred and affinity? Does oil mix with water? If they grow their beards and call themselves philosophers and look solemn, do these things make them like you? I could have contained myself if there had been any touch of plausibility in their acting; but the vulture is more like the nightingale than they like philosophers. And now I have pleaded my cause to the best of my ability. Truth, I rely upon you to confirm my words.

Philosophy Parrhesiades, retire to a further distance. Well, and our verdict? How think you the man has spoken?

Truth Ah, Philosophy, while he was speaking I was ready to sink through the ground; it was all so true. As I listened, I could identify every offender, and I was fitting caps all the time — this is so-and-so, that is the other man, all over. I tell you they were all as plain as in a picture — speaking likenesses not of their bodies only, but of their very souls.

Temperance Yes, Truth, I could not help blushing at it.

Philosophy What say you, gentlemen?

Resurgents Why, of course, that he is acquitted of the charge, and stands recorded as our friend and benefactor. Our case is just that of the Trojans, who entertained the tragic actor only to find him reciting their own calamities. Well, recite away, our tragedian, with these pests of ours for *dramatis personæ*.

Diogenes I too, Philosophy, give him my need of praise; I withdraw my charges, and count him a worthy friend.

Philosophy I congratulate you, Parrhesiades; you are unanimously acquitted, and are henceforth one of us.

Parrhesiades Your humble servant. Or no, I must find more tragic words to fit the solemnity of the occasion:

Victorious might
My life's path light,
And ever strew with garlands bright!

Virtue Well, now we come to our second course; let us have in the other people and try them for their insults. Parrhesiades shall accuse them each in turn.

Parrhesiades Well said, Virtue. Syllogism, my boy, put your head out over the city and summon the philosophers.

Syllogism Oyez, oyez! All philosophers to the Acropolis to make their defence before Virtue, Philosophy, and Justice.

Parrhesiades The proclamation does not bring them in flocks, does it? They have their reasons for keeping clear of Justice. And a good many of them are too busy with their rich friends. If you want them all to come, Syllogism, I will tell you what to say.

Philosophy No, no; call them yourself, Parrhesiades, in your own way.

Parrhesiades Quite a simple matter. Oyez, oyez! All who profess philosophy and hold themselves entitled to the name of philosopher shall appear on the Acropolis for largesse; eight pounds, with a sesame cake,¹ to each. A long beard shall qualify for a square of compressed figs, in addition. Every applicant to have with him, of temperance, justice, and self-control, any that he is in possession of, it being clearly understood that these are not indispensable, and, of syllogisms, a complete set of five, these being the condition precedent of wisdom.

Two golden talents in the midst are set,
His prize who wrangles best amongst his peers.

Just look! the ascent packed with a pushing crowd, at the very first sound of my eight pounds. More of them along the Pelasgicum, more by the temple of Asclepius, a bigger crowd still over the Areopagus. Why, positively there are a few at the tomb of Talos; and see those putting ladders against the temple of Castor and Pollux; up they climb, buzzing and clustering like a swarm of bees. In Homeric phrase, on this side are exceeding many, and on that:

Ten thousand, thick as leaves and flowers in spring.

Noisily they settle, the Acropolis is covered with them in a trice; everywhere wallet and beard, flattery and effrontery, staves and greed, logic and avarice. The little company which came up at the first proclamation is swamped beyond recovery, swallowed up in these later crowds; it is hopeless to find them, because of the external resemblance. That is the worst of it, Philosophy; you are really open to censure for not marking and labelling them; these impostors are often more convincing than the true philosophers.

Philosophy It shall be done before long; at present let us receive them.

¹ [Perhaps it was this particular passage that inspired John Ruskin to name the first of two lectures delivered to Mancunians in December 1864. See "Ruskin's Sesame and Lilies," in our Down to Earth Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Platonists Platonists first!

Pythagoreans No, no; Pythagoreans first; our master is senior.

Stoics Rubbish! the Porch is the best.

Peripatetics Now, now, this is a question of money; Peripatetics first there!

Epicureans Hand over those cakes and fig-squares; as to the money, Epicureans will not mind waiting till the last.

Academicians Where are the two talents? none can touch the Academy at a wrangle; we will soon show you that.

Stoics Not if we know it.

Philosophy Cease your strife. Cynics there, no more pushing! And keep those sticks quiet. You have mistaken the nature of this summons. We three, Philosophy, Virtue, and Truth, are about to decide which are the true philosophers; that done, those whose lives are found to be in accord with our pleasure will be made happy by our award; but the impostors who are not truly of our kin we shall crush as they deserve, that they may no more make vain claims to what is too high for them. Ha! you fly? In good truth they do, jumping down the crags, most of them. Why, the Acropolis is deserted, except for — yes, a few have stood their ground and are not afraid of the judgement.

Attendants, pick up the wallet which yonder flying Cynic has dropped. Let us see what it contains — beans? a book? some coarse crust?

Parrhesiades Oh dear no. Here is gold; some scent; a mirror; dice.

Philosophy Ah, good honest man! such were his little necessaries for the philosophic life, such his title to indulge in general abuse and instruct his neighbours.

Parrhesiades There you have them. The problem before you is, how the general ignorance is to be dispersed, and other people enabled to discriminate between the genuine and the other sort. Find the solution, Truth; for indeed it concerns you; Falsehood must not prevail; shall Ignorance shield the base while they counterfeit the good, and you never know it?

Truth I think we had better give Parrhesiades this commission; he has been shown an honest man, our friend and your true admirer, Philosophy. Let him take Exposure with him and have interviews with all who profess philosophy; any genuine scion that he finds let him crown with olive and entertain in the Banqueting Hall; and for the rascals — ah, how many! — who are only costume philosophers, let him pull their cloaks off them, clip their beards short with a pair of common goatshears, and mark their foreheads or brand them between the eyebrows; the design on the branding iron to be a fox or an ape.

Philosophy Well planned, Truth. And, Parrhesiades, here is a test for you; you know how young eagles are supposed to be tested by the sun; well, our candidates have not got to satisfy us that they can look at light, of course; but put gold, fame, and pleasure before their eyes; when you see one remain unconscious and unattracted, there is your man for the olive; but when one looks hard that way, with a

motion of his hand in the direction of the gold, first off with his beard, and then off with him to the brander.

Parrhesiades I will follow your instructions, Philosophy; you will soon find a large majority ornamented with fox or ape, and very few with olive. If you like, though, I will get some of them up here for you to see.

Philosophy What do you mean? bring them back after that stampede?

Parrhesiades Oh yes, if the priestess will lend me the line I see there, and the Piræan fisherman's votive hook; I will not keep them long.

Priestess of Athene You can have them; and the rod to complete the equipment.

Parrhesiades Thanks; now quickly, please, a few dried figs and a handful of gold.

Priestess of Athene There!

Philosophy What *is* all this about?

Priestess of Athene He has baited his hook with the figs and gold, and is sitting on the parapet dangling it over the city.

Philosophy What *are* you doing, Parrhesiades? do you think you are going to fish up stones from the Pelasgicum?

Parrhesiades Hush! I wait till I get a bite. Poseidon, the fisherman's friend, and you, dear Amphitrite, send me good fishing!

Ah, a fine bass; no, it is not; it is a gilthead.¹

Exposure A shark, you mean; there, see, he is getting near the hook, open-mouthed too. He scents the gold; now he is close — touching — he has it; up with him!

Parrhesiades Give me a hand with the line, Exposure; here he is. Now, my best of fishes, what do we make of you? *Salmo Cynicus*,² that is what *you* are. Good gracious, what teeth! Aha, my brave fish, caught snapping up trifles in the rocks, where you thought you could lurk unobserved? But now you shall hang by the gills for every one to look at you. Pull out hook and bait. Why, the hook is bare; he has not been long assimilating the figs, eh? and the gold has gone down too.

Diogenes Make him disgorge; we want the bait for some more.

Parrhesiades There, then. Now, Diogenes, do you know who it is? has the fellow anything to do with you?

Diogenes Nothing whatever.

Parrhesiades Well, what do you put him at? threepence was the price fixed the other day.

¹ [Any of several marine fishes, such as *Sparus auratus*, common in the Mediterranean.]

² [*Kύων*, or dogfish.]

Diogenes Too much. His flavour and his looks are intolerable — a coarse worthless brute. Drop him head first over the rock, and catch another. But take care your rod does not bend to breaking point.

Parrhesiades No fear; they are quite light — about the weight of a gudgeon.

Diogenes About the weight and about the wit. However, up with them.

Parrhesiades Look; what is this one? a sole? flat as a plate, thin as one of his own fillets; he gapes for the hook; down it goes; we have him; up he comes.

Diogenes What is he?

Exposure His *Plateship*¹ would be a Platonist.

Plato You too after the gold, villain?

Parrhesiades Well, Plato? what shall we do with him?

Plato Off with him from the same rock.

Diogenes Try again.

Parrhesiades Ah, here is a lovely one coming, as far as one can judge in deep water, all the colours of the rainbow, with gold bars across the back. Do you see, Exposure? this is the sham Aristotle. There he is; no, he has shied. He is having a good look round; here he comes again; his jaws open; caught! haul up.

Aristotle You need not apply to me; I do not know him.

Parrhesiades Very well, Aristotle; over he goes.

Hullo! I see a whole school of them together, all one colour, and covered with spines and horny scales, as tempting to handle as a hedgehog. We want a net for these; but we have not got one. Well, it will do if we pull up one out of the lot. The boldest of them will no doubt try the hook.

Exposure You had better sheathe a good bit of the line before you let it down; else he will gorge the gold and then saw the line through.

Parrhesiades There it goes. Poseidon grant me a quick catch! There now! they are fighting for the bait, a lot of them together nibbling at the figs, and others with their teeth well in the gold. That is right; one soundly hooked. Now let me see, what do *you* call yourself? And yet how absurd to try and make a fish speak; they are dumb. Exposure, tell us who is his master,

Exposure Chrysippus.

Parrhesiades Ah, he must have a master with gold in his name, must he? Chrysippus, tell me seriously, do you know these men? are you responsible for the way they live?

Chrysippus My dear Parrhesiades, I take it ill that you should suggest any connexion between me and such creatures.

¹ [*Flat Sole Plateship*]

Parrhesiades Quite right, and like you. Over he goes head first like the others; if one tried to eat him, those spines might stick in one's throat.

Philosophy You have fished long enough, Parrhesiades; there are so many of them, one might get away with gold, hook and all, and you have the priestess to pay. Let us go for our usual stroll; and for all you it is time to be getting back to your place, if you are not to outstay your leave. Parrhesiades, you and Exposure can go the rounds now, and crown or brand as I told you.

Parrhesiades Good, Philosophy. Farewell, ye best of men. Come, Exposure, to our commission. Where shall we go first? the Academy, do you think, or the Porch?

Exposure We will begin with the Lyceum.

Parrhesiades Well, it makes no difference. I know well enough that wherever we go there will be few crowns wanted, and a good deal of branding.



7. Ignorance and assumption stretching out a hand to slander.



Lucian elucidates the origin, nature, and dreadful consequences of slander.

Ignorance is the source of endless human woes, spreading a mist over facts, obscuring truth, and casting a dark gloom everywhere. Whatever we do, we are perpetually slipping about.

Translated from the Attic Greek by H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler. *Frontispiece*: Ptolemy I Soter flanked by Ignorance and Assumption, and stretching out a hand to Slander (detail) c. 1494, by Sandro Botticelli, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

A TERRIBLE THING IS IGNORANCE, the source of endless human woes, spreading a mist over facts, obscuring truth, and casting a gloom upon the individual life. We are all walkers in darkness — or say, our experience is that of blind men, knocking helplessly against the real, and stepping high to clear the imaginary, failing to see what is close at their feet, and in terror of being hurt by something that is leagues away. Whatever we do, we are perpetually slipping about. This it is that has found the tragic poets a thousand themes, Labdacids, Pelopids, and all their kind. Inquiry would show that most of the calamities put upon the boards are arranged by ignorance as by some supernatural stage-manager. This is true enough as a generality; but I refer more particularly to the false reports about intimates and friends that have ruined families, razed cities, driven fathers into frenzy against their offspring, embroiled brother with brother, children with parents, and lover with beloved. Many are the friendships that have been cut short, many the households set by the ears, because slander has found ready credence.

By way of precaution against it, then, it is my design to sketch the nature, the origin, and effects of slander, though indeed the picture is already in existence, by the hand of Apelles. He had been traduced in the ears of Ptolemy as an accomplice of Theodotas in the Tyrian conspiracy. As a matter of fact he had never seen Tyre, and knew nothing of Theodotas beyond the information that he was an officer of Ptolemy's in charge of Phoenicia. However, that did not prevent another painter called Antiphilus, who was jealous of his court influence and professional skill, from reporting his supposed complicity to Ptolemy: he had seen him at Theodotas' table in Phoenicia, whispering in his ear all through dinner; he finally got as far as making Apelles out prime instigator of the Tyrian revolt and the capture of Pelusium.

Ptolemy IV Philopator, the fourth pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt, was not distinguished for sagacity: he had been brought up on a royal diet of adulation. The malicious slander of Apelles so inflamed his prejudice and carried him away, that the underwhelming strength of the case never struck him.

Ptolemy was not distinguished for sagacity; he had been brought up on the royal diet of adulation; and the incredible tale so inflamed and carried him away that the probabilities of the case never struck him: the traducer was a professional rival; a painter's insignificance was hardly equal to the part; and this particular painter had had nothing but good at his hands, having been exalted by him above his fellows. But no, he did not even find out whether Apelles had ever made a voyage to Tyre; it pleased him to fall into a passion and make the palace ring with denunciations of the ingrate,

the plotter, the conspirator. Luckily one of the prisoners, between disgust at Antiphilus' effrontery and compassion for Apelles, stated that the poor man had never been told a word of their designs; but for this, he would have paid with his head for his non-complicity in the Tyrian troubles.

Ptolemy was sufficiently ashamed of himself, we learn, to make Apelles a present of £25,000, besides handing Antiphilus over to him as a slave. The painter was impressed by his experience, and took his revenge upon Slander in a picture.



The Calumny of Apelles by Sandro Botticelli, 1494-95, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

On the right sits a man with long ears almost of the Midas pattern, stretching out a hand to Slander, who is still some way off, but coming. About him are two females whom I take for Ignorance and Assumption. Slander, approaching from the left, is an extraordinarily beautiful woman, but with a heated, excitable air that suggests delusion and impulsiveness; in her left hand is a lighted torch, and with her right she is haling a youth by the hair; he holds up hands to heaven and calls the Gods to witness his innocence. Showing Slander the way is a man with piercing eyes, but pale, deformed, and shrunken as from long illness; one may easily guess him to be Envy. Two female attendants encourage Slander, acting as tire-women,¹ and adding touches to her beauty; according to the cicerone, one of these is Malice, and the other Deceit. Following behind in mourning guise, black-robed and with torn hair, comes (I think he named her) Repentance. She looks tearfully behind her, awaiting shame-faced the approach of Truth. That was how Apelles translated his peril into paint.

¹ [A lady's maid]

Slander is an undefended indictment, concealed from its object, and owing its success to one-sided half-informed procedure.

I propose that we too execute in his spirit a portrait of Slander and her surroundings; and to avoid vagueness let us start with a definition or outline. Slander, we will say, is an undefended indictment, concealed from its object, and owing its success to one-sided half-informed procedure. Now we have something to go upon. Further, our actors, as in comedy,¹ are three — the slanderer, the slandered, and the recipient of the slander; let us take each in turn and see how his case works out.

Listen not to a tale bearer for, as he discovers the secrets of others, so he will yours in turn, says Socrates.

And first for our chief character, the manufacturer of the slander. That he is not a good man needs no proof; no good man will injure his neighbour; good men's reputation, and their credit for kindness, is based on the benefits they confer upon their friends, not on unfounded disparagement of others and the ousting of them from their friends' affections.

Secondly, it is easy to realize that such a person offends against justice, law, and piety, and is a pest to all who associate with him. Equality in everything, and contentment with your proper share, are the essentials of justice; inequality and overreaching, of injustice; that everyone will admit. It is not less clear that the man who secretly slanders the absent is guilty of over-reaching; he is insisting on entire possession of his hearer, appropriating and enclosing his ears, guarding them against impartiality by blocking them with prejudice. Such procedure is unjust to the last degree; we have the testimony of the best law-givers for that; Solon and Draco made every juror swear that he would hear indifferently, and view both parties with equal benevolence, till the defence should have been compared with the prosecution and proved better or worse than it. Before such balancing of the speeches, they considered that the forming of a conclusion must be impious and unholy. We may indeed literally suppose Heaven to be offended, if we license the accuser to say what he will, and then, closing our own ears or the defendant's mouth, allow our judgement to be dictated by the first speech. No one can say, then, that the uttering of slander is reconcilable with the requirements of justice, of law, or of the juror's oath. If it is objected that the lawgivers are no sufficient authority for such extreme justice and impartiality, I fall back on the prince of poets, who has expressed a sound opinion, or let me say, laid down a sound law on the subject,

Or give thy judgement, till both sides are heard.

Of all the ills that flesh is heir to, none is more grievous or more iniquitous than that a man should be condemned unjudged and unheard.

He too was doubtless very well aware that, of all the ills that flesh is heir to, none is more grievous or more iniquitous than that a man should be condemned unjudged and unheard. That is precisely what the slanderer tries to effect by exposing the

¹ "Cratinus was the first to limit the number of actors to three. . . . There were no further innovations, and the number of the actors in comedy was permanently fixed at three." Haigh's *Attic Theatre*.

slandered without trial to his hearer's wrath, and precluding defence by the secrecy of his denunciation.

Every such person is a skulker and a coward; he will not come into the open; he is an ambuscader shooting from a lurking-place, whose opponent cannot meet him nor have it out with him, but must be shot down helplessly before he knows that war is afoot; there could be no clearer proof that his allegations are baseless. Of course a man who knows he is bringing true charges does the exposure in public, challenges inquiry, and faces examination; just so no one who can win a pitched battle will resort to ambush and deceit.

It is in kings' courts that these creatures are mostly found; they thrive in the atmosphere of dominion and power, where envy is rife, suspicions innumerable, and the opportunities for flattery and back-biting endless. Where hopes are higher, there envy is more intense, hatred more reckless, and jealousy more unscrupulous. They all keep close watch upon one another, spying like duellists for a weak spot. Everyone would be first, and to that end shoves and elbows his neighbour aside, and does his best to pull back or trip the man in front of him. One whose equipment is limited to goodness is very soon thrown down, dragged about, and finally thrust forth with ignominy; while he who is prepared to flatter, and can make servility plausible, is high in credit, gets first to his end, and triumphs. These people bear out the words of Homer:

Th' impartial War-God slayeth him that slew.

Convinced that the prize is great, they elaborate their mutual stratagems, among which slander is at once the speediest and the most uncertain; high are the hopes with which this child of envy or hatred is born; pitiful, gloomy and disastrous the end to which it comes.

Slander would never do the harm it does, if it were not made plausible; it would never prevail against truth, that strongest of all things, if it were not dressed up into really attractive bait.

Success is by no means the easy simple matter it may be supposed; it demands much skill and tact, with the most concentrated attention. Slander would never do the harm it does, if it were not made plausible; it would never prevail against truth, that strongest of all things, if it were not dressed up into really attractive bait.

The chief mark for it is the man who is in favour, and therefore enviable in the eyes of his distanced competitors; they all regard him as standing in their light, and let fly at him; everyone thinks he will be first if he can only dispose of this conspicuous person and spoil him of his favour. You, may see the same thing among runners at the games. The good runner, from the moment the barrier falls, simply makes the best of his way; his thoughts are on the winning-post, his hopes of victory in his feet; he leaves his neighbour alone and does not concern himself at all with his competitors. It is the ill qualified, with no prospect of winning by his speed, who resorts to foul play; his one preoccupation is how he may stop, impede, curb the real runner, because failing that his own victory is out of the question. The persons we are concerned with race in like manner for the favour of the great. The one who forges ahead is at once the object of plots, is taken at a disadvantage by his enemies when his

thoughts are elsewhere, and got rid of, while they get credit for devotion by the harm they do to others.

A man is a doctor; they make him out a poisoner; wealth figures as tyranny; the tyrant's ready tool is a ready traitor too.

The credibility of the slander is by no means left to take care of itself; it is the chief object of their solicitude; they are extremely cautious against inconsistencies or contradictions. The usual method is to seize upon real characteristics of a victim, and only paint these in darker colours, which allows verisimilitude. A man is a doctor; they make him out a poisoner; wealth figures as tyranny; the tyrant's ready tool is a ready traitor too.

The venom has entered the ear and inflamed the brain; the hearer does not wait for confirmation, but abandons his friend.

Sometimes, however, the hint is taken from the hearer's own nature; the villains succeed by using a bait that will tempt him. They know he is jealous, and they tell him:

“He beckoned to your wife at dinner, and sighed as he gazed at her; and Stratonice — well, did not seem offended.”

Or he writes poetry, and piques himself upon it; then,

“Philoxenus had great sport pulling your poem to pieces — said the metre was faulty and the composition vile.”

A devout religious person is told that his friend is an atheist and a blasphemer, rejects belief and denies Providence. That is quite enough; the venom has entered at the ear and inflamed the brain; the man does not wait for confirmation, but abandons his friend.

In a word, they invent and say the kind of thing that they know will be most irritating to their hearer, and having a full knowledge of his vulnerable point, concentrate their fire upon it; he is to be too much flustered by rage to have time for investigation; the very surprise of what he is told is to be so convincing to him that he will not hear, even if his friend is willing to plead.

That slander, indeed, is especially effective which is unwelcome; Demetrius the Platonic was reported to Ptolemy Dionysus for a water drinker, and for the only man who had declined to put on female attire at the Dionysia. He was summoned next morning, and had to drink in public, dress up in gauze, clash and dance to the cymbals, or he would have been put to death for disapproving the King's life, and setting up for a critic of his luxurious ways.

At Alexander's court there was no more fatal imputation than that of refusing worship and adoration to Hephæstion. Alexander had been so fond of him that to appoint him a God after his death was, for such a worker of marvels, nothing out of the way. The various cities at once built temples to him, holy ground was consecrated, altars, offerings and festivals instituted to this new divinity; if a man would be believed, he must swear by Hephæstion. For smiling at these proceedings, or showing the slightest lack of reverence, the penalty was death. The flatterers cherished,

fanned, and put the bellows to this childish fancy of Alexander's; they had visions and manifestations of Hephæstion to relate; they invented cures and attributed oracles to him; they did not stop short of doing sacrifice to this God of Help and Protection. Alexander was delighted, and ended by believing in it all; it gratified his vanity to think that he was now not only a God's son, but a God-maker. It would be interesting to know how many of his friends in those days found that what the new divinity did for them was to supply a charge of irreverence on which they might be dismissed and deprived of the King's favour.

Agathocles of Samos was a valued officer of his, who very narrowly escaped being thrown into a lion's cage; the offence reported against him was shedding tears as he passed Hephæstion's tomb. The tale goes that he was saved by Perdiccas, who swore, by all the Gods and Hephæstion, that the God had appeared plainly to him as he was hunting, and charged him to bid Alexander spare Agathocles: his tears had meant neither scepticism nor mourning, but been merely a tribute to the friendship that was gone.

The slanderer finds out where the soul is weak or corrupt or accessible, there makes his assault, there applies his engines, and enters at a point where there are no defenders to mark his approach. Once in, he soon has all in flames.

Flattery and slander had just then their opportunity in Alexander's emotional condition. In a siege, the assailants do not attempt a part of the defences that is high, precipitous, or solid; they direct all their force at some rotten, low, or neglected point, expecting to get in and effect the capture most easily so. Similarly the slanderer finds out where the soul is weak or corrupt or accessible, there makes his assault, there applies his engines, or effects an entry at a point where there are no defenders to mark his approach. Once in, he soon has all in flames; fire and sword and devastation clear out the previous occupants; how else should it be when a soul is captured and enslaved?

We all delight in whisperings and insinuations. I know people whose ears are as agreeably titillated with slander as their skin with a feather.

The slanderer's tactics include deceit, falsehood, perjury, insinuation, presumption, and a thousand other hereditary evils and moral infirmities. But the chief of them all is flattery, sister of the calumniator and crafty machinator.

His siege-train includes deceit, falsehood, perjury, insinuation, effrontery, and a thousand other moral laxities. But the chief of them all is Flattery, the blood relation, the sister indeed, of Slander. No heart so high, so fenced with adamant, but Flattery will master it, with the aid of Slander undermining and sapping its foundations.

That is what goes on outside. But within there are traitorous parties working to the same end, stretching hands of help to the attack, opening the gates, and doing their utmost to bring the capture about. There are those ever-present human frailties, fickleness and satiety; there is the appetite for the surprising. We all delight, I cannot

tell why, in whisperings and insinuations. I know people whose ears are as agreeably titillated with slander as their skin with a feather.

Supported by all these allies, the slanderer's attack prevails; there is no defence or resistance to the assault; the hearer surrenders without reluctance, and the slandered knows nothing of what is going on; as when a town is stormed by night, he has his throat cut in his sleep.

Supported by all these allies, the attack prevails; victory is hardly in doubt for a moment; there is no defence or resistance to the assault; the hearer surrenders without reluctance, and the slandered knows nothing of what is going on; as when a town is stormed by night, he has his throat cut in his sleep.

The most pitiful thing is when, all unconscious of how matters stand, he comes to his friend with a cheerful countenance, having nothing to be ashamed of, and talks and behaves as usual, just as if the toils were not all round him. Then if the other has any nobility or generous spirit of fair play in him, he gives vent to his anger and pours out his soul; after which he allows him to answer, and so finds out how he has been abused.

But if he is mean and ignoble, he receives him with a lip smile, while he is gnashing his teeth in covert rage, wrathfully brooding in the soul's dark depth, as the poet describes it. I know nothing so characteristic of a warped slavish nature as to bite the lip while you nurse your spite and cultivate your secret hatred, one thing in your heart and another on your tongue, playing with the gay looks of comedy a lamentable sinister tragedy. This is especially apt to occur, when the slander comes from one who is known for an old friend of the slandered. When that is the case, a man pays no attention to anything the victim or his apologists may say; that old friendship affords a sufficient presumption of truth; he forgets that estrangements, unknown to outsiders, constantly part the greatest friends; and sometimes a man will try to escape the consequences of his own faults by attributing similar ones to his neighbour and getting his denunciation in first. It may be taken, indeed, that no one will venture to slander an enemy; that is too unconvincing; the motive is so obvious. It is the supposed friend that is the most promising object, the idea being to give your hearer absolute proof of your devotion to him by sacrificing your dearest to his interests.

There are those who, if they subsequently learn that they have condemned a friend in error, are too much ashamed of their error and avoid looking at him in the face again; you might suppose the discovery of his innocence was a personal injury to them.

It must be added that there are persons who, if they subsequently learn that they have condemned a friend in error, are too much ashamed of that error to receive or look him in the face again; you might suppose the discovery of his innocence was a personal injury to them.

It is not, then, too much to say that life is made miserable by these lightly and incuriously credited slanders. Antea said to Prætus, after she had solicited and been scorned by Bellerophon;

Die thou the death, if thou slay not the man
That so would have enforc'd my chastity!

By the machinations of this lascivious woman, the young man came near perishing in his combat with the Chimera, as the penalty for continence and loyalty to his host. And Phædra, who made a similar charge against her stepson, succeeded in bringing down upon Hippolytus a father's curse, though God knows how innocent he was.

"Ah, yes," I fancy someone objecting; "but the traducer sometimes deserves credit, being known for a just and a wise man; then he ought to be listened to, as one incapable of villainy." What? was there ever a juster man than Aristides? yet he led the opposition to Themistocles and incited the people against him, pricked by the same political ambition as he. Aristides was a just man in all other relations; but he was human, he had a gall, he was open to likes and dislikes.

And if the story of Palamedes is true, the wisest of the Greeks, a great man in other respects too, stands convicted of hatching that insidious plot;¹ the ties that bind kinsmen, friends, and comrades in danger, had to yield to jealousy. To be a man is to be subject to this temptation.

It is superfluous to refer to Socrates, misrepresented to the Athenians as an impious plotter, to Themistocles or Miltiades, suspected after all their victories of betraying Greece; such examples are innumerable, and most of them familiar.

What then should we, men of sense and decency, do?

We should shut our ears to those siren voices that allure and ensnare the mind, and sail past the ear-charmers. Thus shielded from calumny and prejudice, we should practise proper discrimination and judgement, and above all charity to each other's faults.²

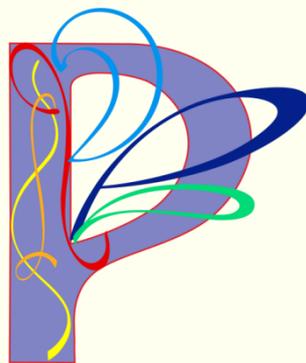
What, then, should a man of sense do, when he finds one friend's virtue pitted against another's truth? Why, surely, learn from Homer's parable of the Sirens; he advises sailing past these ear-charmers; we should stuff up our ears; we should not open them freely to the prejudiced, but station there a competent hall-porter in the shape of Judgement, who shall inspect every vocal visitor, and take it on himself to admit the worthy, but shut the door in the face of others. How absurd to have such an official at our house door, and leave our ears and understandings open to intrusion!

So, when any one comes to you with a tale, examine it on its merits, regardless of the informant's age, general conduct, or skill in speech. The more plausible he is, the greater need of care. Never trust another's judgement — it may be in reality only his dislike — but reserve the inquiry to yourself; let envy, if such it was, recoil upon the backbiter, your trial of the two men's characters be an open one, and your award of contempt and approval deliberate. To award them earlier, carried away by the first word of slander — why, God bless me, how puerile and mean and iniquitous it all is!

¹ Odysseus

² [Consult "Denunciation is not a duty," in our Living the Life Series. — ED. PHIL.]

And the cause of it, as we started with saying, is ignorance, and the mystery that conceals men's characters. Would some God unveil all lives to us, Slander would retire discomfited to the bottomless pit; for the illumination of truth would be over all.



Suggested reading for students.



From our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers Series.

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- BLAVATSKY ON GREEK PHILOSOPHY
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- TAYLOR ON THE HYMNS OF ORPHEUS
- TAYLOR ON THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES
- THE ELECTRA OF SOPHOCLES AND EURIPIDES
- THE VALUE OF GREECE TO THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD
- WAS WRITING KNOWN BEFORE PANINI?
- WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR VICTORY?
- ZEUS TRIOPHTHALMOS

