PHILOSTRATUS
IMAGINES

CALLISTRATUS
DESCRIPTIONS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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mishap changed their nature and became trees, and that they shed tears. The painting recognizes the story, for it puts roots at the extremities of their toes, while some, over here, are trees to the waist, and branches have supplanted the arms of others. Behold the hair, it is nothing but poplar leaves! Behold the tears, they are golden! While the welling tide of tears in their eyes gleams in the bright pupils and seems to attract rays of light, and the tears on the cheeks glisten amid the cheek's ruddy glow, yet the drops trickling down their breasts have already turned into gold. The river also laments, emerging from its eddying stream, and offers its bosom to receive Phaëthon—for the attitude is of one ready to receive—and soon it will harvest the tears of the daughters of Helius;[1] for the breezes and the chills which it exhales will turn into stone the droppings of the poplar trees, and it will catch them as they fall and conduct them through its bright waters to the barbarians by Oceanus.

12. BOSPHOROS

[The women on the bank] are shouting, and they seem to urge the horses not to throw their young riders nor yet to spurn the bit, but to catch the game and trample it underfoot; and these, I think, hear and do as they are bidden. And when the youths have finished the hunt and have eaten

stream in the far west near the end of the world, where lived the daughters of Helius. Geographers later connected it with the Po or the Rhone, which lay on the routes by which amber came to the Greeks from the North Sea and the Baltic, where lived "the barbarians by Oceanus."

their meal, a boat carries them across from Europe to Asia, about four stades—for this space intervenes between the countries—and they row themselves across.

See, they throw out a rope, and a house is receiving them, a charming house just showing chambers and halls for men and indications of windows, and it is surrounded by a wall with parapets for defence. The most beautiful feature of it is a semi-circular stoa following the curve of the sea, of yellowish colour by reason of the stone of which it is built. The stone is formed in springs; for a warm stream flowing out below the mountains of Lower Phrygia and entering the quarries submerges some of the rocks and makes the outcroppings of the stone full of water so that it assumes various colours.[1] For the stream is foul where it is sluggish and produces a yellowish colour; but where the water is pure a stone of crystal clearness is formed, and it gives to the rock various colours as it is absorbed in the many seams.

The lofty promontory gives a suggestion of the following tale: A boy and girl, both beautiful and under the tutelage of the same teacher, burned with love[2] for each other; and since they were not free to embrace each other, they determined to die at this very rock, and leaped from it into the sea in their first and last embrace. Eros on the rock stretches out his hand toward the sea, the painter's symbolic suggestion of the tale.

In the house close by a woman lives alone;

λεῖα ἐκείνῳ . . . προσεκαύθη. "This hot flame of his was kindled when they used to go to school together." Trans. Todd, L.C.L.

she has been driven out of the city by the importunity of her suitors; for they meant to carry her off, and pursued her unsparingly with their attentions and tempted her with gifts. But she, I think, by her haughty bearing spurred them on, and coming hither in secret she inhabits this secure house. For see how secure it is: a cliff juts out into the sea, its receding base bathed by the waves, and, projecting overhead, it bears this house out in the sea, a house beneath which the sea seems darker blue as the eyes are turned down toward it, and the land has all the characteristics of a ship except that it is motionless. Even though she has reached this fortified spot her lovers do not give her up, but they come sailing, one in a dark-prowed boat, one in a golden-prowed, others in all sorts of variegated craft, a revel band pursuing her, all beautiful and crowned with garlands. And one plays the flute, another evidently applauds, another seems to be singing; and they throw her crowns and kisses. And they are not rowing any longer, but they check their motion and come to rest at the promontory. The woman gazes at the scene from her house as from a look-out tower and laughs down at the revelling crowd, vaunting herself that she is compelling her lovers not merely to sail but also to swim to her.

As you go on to other parts of the painting, you will meet with flocks, and hear herds of cattle lowing, and the music of the shepherds' pipes will echo in your ears; and you will meet with hunters and farmers and rivers and pools and springs—for the painting gives the very image of things that are, of things that are taking place, and in some cases of the way in which they take place, not slighting

the truth by reason of the number of objects shown, but defining the real nature of each thing just as if the painter were representing some one thing alone —till we come to a shrine. You see the temple yonder, I am sure, the columns that surround it, and the beacon light at the entrance which is hung up to warn from danger the ships that sail out from the Euxine Sea.

(13)

"Why do you not go on to another painting? This one of the Bosphorus has been studied enough for me." What do you mean? I have yet to speak of the fishermen, as I promised when I began. Not to dilate on small matters, but only on points worth discussing, let us omit any account of those who fish with a rod or use a basket cunningly or perchance draw up a net or thrust a trident—for you will hear little about such, and they will seem to you mere embellishments of the painting—but let us look at the men who are trying to capture tunny-fish, for these are worth discussing because the hunt is on so large a scale. For tunny-fish come to the outer sea[1] from the Euxine, where they are born and where they feed on fish and sediment and vegetable matter which the Ister and Maeotis bring to it, rivers which make the water of the Euxine sweeter and more drinkable than that of any other sea. And they swim like a phalanx of soldiers, eight rows deep and sixteen and twice sixteen, and they drop down in the water, one swimming over another so that the depth of the school equals

[1] *i.e.* the Mediterranean.

the width. Now the ways of catching them are countless; sharp iron spears may be used on them or drugs may be sprinkled over them, or a small net is enough for a fisherman who is satisfied with some small portion of the school. But the best means of taking them is this : a look-out is stationed on a high tree, a man quick at counting and keen of vision. For it is his task to fix his eyes on the sea and to look as far as he can; and if perchance he sees the fish approaching, then he must shout as loud as he can to those in the boats and must tell the number of the fish, how many thousands there are; and the boatmen compassing them about with a deep-laid net that can be drawn together make a splendid catch, enough to enrich the captain of the hunt.

Now look at the painting and you will see just this going on. The look-out gazes at the sea and turns his eyes in one direction and another to get the number; and in the bright gleam of the sea the colours of the fish vary, those near the surface seem to be black, those just below are not so black, those lower still begin to elude the sense of sight, then they seem shadowy, and finally they look just like the water; for as the vision penetrates deeper and deeper its power of discerning objects in the water is blunted. The group of fishermen is charming, and they are brown of complexion from exposure to the sun. One binds his oar in its place, another rows with swelling muscle, another cheers his neighbour on, another strikes a man who is not rowing. A shout rises from the fishermen now that the fish are already in the net. Some they have caught, some they are catching. And at a loss what to do

with so many they even open the net and let some of the fish swim away and escape: so proud are they of their catch.

14. SEMELE

Brontè stern of face, and Astrapè[1] flashing light from her eyes, and raging fire from heaven that has laid hold of a king's house, suggest the following tale, if it is one you know. A cloud of fire encompassing Thebes breaks into the dwelling of Cadmus as Zeus comes wooing Semele; and Semele apparently is destroyed, but Dionysus is born, by Zeus, so I believe, in the presence of the fire. And the form of Semele is dimly seen as she goes to the heavens, where the Muses will hymn her praises: but Dionysus leaps forth as his mother's womb is rent apart and he makes the flame look dim, so brilliantly does he shine like a radiant star.[2] The flame, dividing, dimly outlines a cave for Dionysus more charming than any in Assyria and Lydia; for sprays of ivy grow luxuriantly about it and clusters of ivy berries and now grape-vines and stalks of thyrsus[3] which spring up from the willing earth, so that some grow in the very fire. We must not be surprised if in honour of Dionysus the Fire is crowned by the Earth, for the Earth will take part with the Fire in the Bacchic revel and will make it possible for the revel-

tonitrua, fulgura, quae Bronten, Astrapen, Ceraunobolian appellant.

[2] On the birth of Dionysus, see Overbeck, *Kunstmythologie, Zeus*, p. 416 f.

[3] The wand carried by followers of Dionysus, properly a wand wreathed with ivy and with a pine-cone at the top.

26. XENIA[1]

This hare in his cage is the prey of the net, and he sits on his haunches moving his forelegs a little and slowly lifting his ears, but he also keeps looking with all his eyes and tries to see behind him as well, so suspicious is he and always cowering with fear; the second hare that hangs on the withered oak tree,[2] his belly laid wide open and his skin stripped off over the hind feet, bears witness to the swiftness of the dog which sits beneath the tree, resting and showing that he alone has caught the prey. As for the ducks near the hare (count them, ten), and the geese of the same number as the ducks, it is not necessary to test them by pinching them, for their breasts, where the fat gathers in abundance on water-birds, have been plucked all over. If you care for raised bread or "eight-piece loaves,"[3] they are here near by in the deep basket. And if you want any relish, you have the loaves themselves—for they have been seasoned with fennel and parsley and also with poppy-seed, the spice that brings sleep—but if you desire a second course, put that off till you have cooks, and partake of the food that needs no fire. Why, then, do you not take the ripe fruit,

it passes over into an address to the owner of the farm in which the painting itself is the speaker, and only in the last sentence does the writer speak in his own name. Cf. *supra*, p. 123.

[2] In early Greek art it was customary to represent trees without leaves.

[3] Quoted from Hesiod, *Op. et Dies*, 442, "a loaf of four quarters and eight slices for his dinner." In Hesiod the loaf is marked with two intersecting lines which divide it into four quarters; the scholiast explains the word here quoted as "giving eight mouthfuls," but Philostratus uses it as in contrast to leavened bread.

of which there is a pile here in the other basket? Do you not know that in a little while you will no longer find it so fresh, but already the dew will be gone from it? And do not overlook the dessert, if you care at all for medlar fruit and Zeus' acorns,[1] which the smoothest of trees bears in a prickly husk that is horrid to peel off. Away with even the honey, since we have here this *palathè*,[2] or whatever you like to call it, so sweet a dainty it is! And it is wrapped in its own leaves, which lend beauty[3] to the *palathè*.

I think the painting offers these gifts of hospitality to the master of the farm, and he is taking a bath, having perhaps the look in his eyes of Pramnian or Thasian wines, although he might, if he would, drink the sweet new wine at the table here, and then on his return to the city might smell of pressed grapes and of leisure[4] and might belch in the faces of the city-dwellers.

27. THE BIRTH OF ATHENA

These wonder-struck beings are gods and goddesses, for the decree has gone forth that not even the Nymphs may leave the heavens, but that they, as well as the rivers from which they are sprung,[5]

right word. Its meaning is given by Hesychius as "a layer of figs set close together."

[3] *i.e.*, attractiveness and freshness.

[4] For similar expressions cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 50,1008.

[5] *Il.* 20. 7 f. To the council summoned by Zeus "there was no river that came not, save only Oceanus, nor any nymph of all that haunt the fair copses, the springs that feed the rivers, and the grassy meadows." Trans. Murray, L.C.L.