

THE REPOSITORY.

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THE CURSE OF NEPTUNE.

BY THEODORE S. FAY.

"WHAT, ho," cried Neptune, one calm night, "Death and Fire! Pluto! Jupiter! Amphitrite! what ho!"

Never was monarch in such a rage; never was rage so powerful. The blue sky began to be blackened with heavy clouds. The winds rose; the waves heaved; and distant thunder muttered along the horizon. The rivers and fountains poured their troubled waters more fitfully into the ocean; the dolphins and sea-horses which drew his chariot-shell, snorted and splashed, and pricked up their ears, the mountains and the forests trembled; whales and sea-serpents and other marine monsters tumbled up in haste and terror from their profound grottoes; and all the tritons, nereides and sea divinities which inhabit his watery kingdom, collected around the wrathful god to know what the duce was the matter. Even the great deep itself gave forth a low tone of fear at the sudden fury of its king.

"I have been robbed!" cried the monarch, stamping his foot, whereat three or four islands were raised from the bottom to the surface of the agitated waves. "Some daring land-lubber has stolen my trident; but, by the beard of my father Saturn, he shall feel what it is to trifle with old Neptune! What, ho! Jupiter, awake, and bear a hand with your thunder."

Even while he spoke, an earthquake shook three quarters of the globe, and disturbed the sleep of Jupiter himself, on the summit of Olympus. There was throughout the whole universe the very duce to pay. Jupiter in rising yawned so loud, that several temples were shaken down, and Juno screamed—"What on earth is the matter!" in such an angry and shrill tone, that the inferior gods and goddesses could not help covering their ears with their hands and making horrible faces at the discord.—Those supernaturals are none of them remarkable for moderation or self-control, but when Juno once gets her temper, she is the very old Satan.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed all at once.

After a moment's silence, a report was received that Neptune had raised all this clamor because he had lost his trident.

"Confound the fellow! He might at least have waited till morning," said Jupiter, with another yawn.

"He is an infernal old fool," said Juno.

"I will break his head with a sledge-hammer," said Vulcan.

"By heaven! he shall give me the satisfaction of a gentleman," muttered Mars, in a fury.

"Cupid, my love," said Venus, re-tying her nightcap, "we'll plague him well for this to-morrow."

"Where is my sceptre?" cried Jupiter, "I'll call a council this instant. To disturb us in this style—the whole assembly of the gods—for a loss merely private! Where the duce is my sceptre?"

But the sceptre was gone—Jupiter turned pale with rage.

"Why, gods!" cried he, "it is not possible!—Juno my dear, look about—curse that eagle—he's always in the way when he's not wanted—look behind the throne. By the Styx! Who has dared? All Tartary shall stir for this! Hand me those thunderbolts. What, ho! my sceptre!"

"Oh, ho!" said Venus, slyly smiling, "how much more severely do we feel our own losses than those of others."

"Mamma," said Cupid, "shall I plague Jupiter too?"

"Be quiet, my child," said Venus.

"I really thought Jupiter had more dignity," said Mars; "he is just as furious as old Neptune himself."

"I wish he would be a little careful how he handles those thunderbolts, though," whispered Venus in some alarm.

"Hang him!" said Mars, "he'll let them off at me next. Oh! if battle's the word, I'll not be behindhand; but, halloo—what the duce—where's my sword?—halloo—traitors—thunder—death—famine and fire—who has got my sword? Vulcan, you black rascal!"

"No jaw," said Vulcan.

"I demand my sword," cried Mars.

"Don't bully me," said Vulcan. "But heaven and earth!" and he turned white as a sheet through the soot, which begrimed his face; "some person has broken into my shop and made off with my best hammer,

two anvils, and a new pair of patent bellows." Venus laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Was ever such a scene!" cried she; "all heaven turned upside down by the loss of a few paltry trifles which will be found again, doubtless, in the morning."

"But, mamma, it's very curious who could have stolen them," cried Cupid.

"Very, my dear; and, now I think of it, I am glad I did not take off my girdle last night before I went to bed; let me see, it could scarcely be abstracted, I think, while clasped round my waist—ah!"

She uttered a terrible scream. The girdle was gone!

"Well," said Minerva, with great dignity, "here's a pretty kettle of fish." At the same she quietly retired to a respectful distance from Jupiter, his thunderbolts, and the rest of the highly excited assembly; "it's all very fine," continued the grave goddess, placing her fingers on her nose, "D. I. O."

It is not easy to say exactly how this would have turned out, for Mars was stamping about like a raving madman; Venus had gone into violent hystericks; Vulcan, armed with a huge iron bar, was rushing to and fro in desperate wrath; and Jupiter had raised his thunderbolts high in the air, and was just going to let fly among the crowd promiscuously, when the cry arose that the thief was taken. A fierce-looking underdiety, the Jacob Hays of Olympus, walked into the assembly, having one hand on the throat of a young man, and on the other arm a parcel of things, which, upon being thrown down at the foot of Jupiter's ivory throne, proving to be the missing articles. Juno handed up the sceptre, which her royal consort received with a smile; Venus fastened on her girdle, sobbing all the while, Vulcan received his welcome property, and struck a tremendous blow on the ground, with his hammer, which came near mashing Juno's toes; and Mars unsheathed his blade with a savage grin, gave three or four flourishes in the air, and returned it to the scabbard with a violence which made the whole heavens ring again. Neptune's trident alone remained on the floor.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said Jupiter, with more than his usual composure, "you see the folly of getting into a passion. Take example by me, and be always calm and philosophical under every vicissitude."

The gods looked at each other in silence, and Cupid winked to his mother, and coughed slightly.

"Be silent, you impudent young scoundrel," said Jupiter; "and now let us see who is that audacious valet of a thief. Come here, sir, step up, who the duce are you?"

"My name is Mercury," said the handsome youth.

"And pray, Mr. Mercury, how dared you steal my sceptre?"

"And my girdle, monster," said Venus.

"And my sword, wretch," thundered Mars.

"And my new patent bellows, you rascal," added Vulcan.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the prisoner with a sweet smile, "keep cool; and you father of men and gods, hear my story. I was born of a very genteel family; my grandfather was Atlas, a great landholder; my mother was the beautiful Main—"

"And who was your father?" demanded Juno somewhat briskly.

"Shut your fly-trap," said Jupiter.

"My father is the honorable monarch of men and gods, before whom I have now the mortification to stand a captive."

"So, ho!" said Juno.

"I possessed myself of these articles," continued the prisoner, "not for any desire to retain them, but in order to recommend myself to your notice, oh gods! whom I had an ambition to serve."

"You are a charming fellow," said Jupiter; Juno, be quiet; I like you, and will employ you. You shall be my messenger, interpreter, and cup-bearer. I present you this winged cap and these wings for your feet. With them you may go wherever you please with the greatest celerity, and be invisible when you desire. You shall be ambassador and plenipotentiary, and your first duty shall be to seek Neptune, and return to him the trident with my compliments."

"But, sire, perhaps the old fellow will be no more indulgent than you for my jest."

"Fear not, he shall not harm you; make yourself scarce—tramp, begone!"

And Mercury, with a bound, disappeared.

Old Neptune was in a snorting rage. He had turned the ocean upside down; he had swept off villages and towns, and shattered

a score of rocky coast mountains to pieces. The sea-gods entreated his majesty to be calm, and intimated that he was only injuring his own subjects. He replied—

"Variety and vagabonds, bring me my trident!"

At length Mercury appeared, and with three bows, (for Mercury had travelled and was wonderfully polite,) returned the trident, and related the story.

"Why, you desperate thief!" cried the watery god, the brine dripping from his hoary beard, "you impudent valet, Jupiter's compliments? that for Jupiter, you his ambassador? you his confidant? you be hanged! by Olympus! you are a plebeian."

"I tell you what, old chap," said the ambassador, "you might as well keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Earthquakes and thunder! you rascal!" rejoined the enraged king, "if ever I catch you upon my realms again, I'll give you to my monsters; you shall make a *bonne bouche* for one of my whales; avant you ragamuffin."

"That for you!" said Mercury, snapping his thumb and finger under the very nose of the god, "that—that—that for you! your monsters and you may go to Pluto.—Oh, old chap, no bragging, no bullying with me, I'm none of your dolphins."

"Why, you unutterable son of a gun," cried Neptune, bursting with wrath, so help me Saturn, my father, if ever I catch you an inch on our domain again, I'll drown you like a blind kitten—you're a scaramouch. Curse me if ever I saw such a harlequin."

"Oh, you vulgar old fool," said Mercury, in the most tantalizing manner, lighting on the edge of the chariot, and sticking his chin defiantly in the face of his enemy, "you're a regular loafer, and so far from refraining to come myself upon your kingdom, I'll teach man to traverse it as a high-road; I'll have it overrun with boats, ships—whole fleets. By the Styx! I'll people it with steamboats."

So saying, and snapping his fingers again at his foe, now altogether speechless with rage, he leaped off into the air, and was off in the twinkling of an eye. Neptune ducked beneath the flood. My pen is mortal—it cannot paint his feelings.

In about three minutes Mercury alighted in Phoenicia on the banks of the river Eleutherus, which falls into the Mediterranean below the island Aradus. He there saw a shepherd standing on the shore contemplating some trees on the other side of the stream.

"What are you looking at?" cried Mercury.

"That fine fruit," answered the shepherd. "I have been here all my life tending flocks.—Every autumn that fruit ripens and falls, and is eaten by the birds; and though I behold it for ever, I can never reach it."

"Can't you swim?" asked the god.

"No," said the shepherd; and if I could it is too far a swimmer."

"Look here!" said Mercury; "just lend me your axe."

Straightway he went and cut down a tree, chopped off the branches, hewed out the trunk; constructed a pair of oars—and, behold, a boat!

"Jump in," said Mercury, "don't be afraid."

In five minutes the shepherd reached the long-desired spot, and had soon eaten as much as he wished.

"Now," said Mercury, "where are you going?"

"Back again to my sheep, to be sure," replied the shepherd.

"What! won't you take some fruit to your wife and children? You can carry it in the boat, you know."

"La!" said the shepherd, "do tell—"

"You can do more," rejoined Mercury; "you can take over not only enough for your own wife and children, but enough to sell to the other shepherds. You can make them barter it for their flocks and lambs, and you can supply the towns and villages of the surrounding country; you can make yourself a rich man."

"Now, only think of that!" said the shepherd. "Heaven bless your worship, there's *larning*."

"Good morning to you," cried Mercury.

"Good morning to your worship," cried the swain, who was so busily picking the fruit, that Mercury leaped up and was off, before he was aware of it.

"Heavens! he's gone!" said the shepherd. "That fellow's a screamer; wonder who he is; but no matter, for it."

By the time the sun set, he had a dozen

loads piled up safely on the other side of the stream.

In a short time the rivers were covered with boats. Mercury chuckled over the success of his plan. At length a rich Phoenician built a vessel, with which he determined to cross to a neighbouring country. All the gods watched the enterprise with interest, and Neptune with indignation. The vessel was built, launched, rigged, manned, and a party of the owner's friends came on board to put forth. It was the first time the sea had ever been profaned by mortal presence. A confused horror pervaded the deep. The nereides and tritons shook with fear; the sea monsters rose from their dark abysses to the surface of the water and tumbled about in agitation; while Neptune, calling around him all his force, whipped up his terrified dolphins and startled steeds, determined to execute vengeance on each one of the rash mortals who dared to intrude into his solemn dominion. The adventurers put forth. They were no sooner embarked than the tempest was loosened—the billows rolled in liquid mountains—the wind blew a hurricane—the frail boat was enveloped in foam, and half-buried beneath the briny deep. Neptune swore great guns. At length the clouds cleared away, the laughing, blue sky appeared, and the waves subsided.

"So, he!" said Neptune, nearly out of breath, taking off his tarpawling hat and hanging it on one of the corners of his chariot; "let them put that in their pipe and smoke it."

What was his astonishment on beholding the bark still floated safely on the bosom of the ocean, and that the mariners, having furled the sails during the gale, were now unfolding them to the gentle zephyrs which wafted them directly on their course.

"My eyes!" said the frowning god, "you don't say so! We'll try you another tack, then! Tritons, nereides, nymphs, attend! those detestable and audacious mortals come in spite of me; down with the intruders into my kingdom. Each become invisible, each select your victim, and strike, with your unseen power, every mother's son of them." The unsuspecting mortals advanced; the fatal spirits surrounded the vessel the crew and passengers were abandoning themselves to gaiety; when lo! the dreadful signal was given; the curse of the god descended; the strength forsook their limbs; the blood left their cheeks and lips; death was in their hearts! The deck was covered with the bodies of the expiring wretches, when Mercury, who had been on a distant expedition, suddenly perceived what was going on, darted to Jupiter with the velocity of light, knelt and prayed for the deliverance of his *proteges*.

"I cannot undo that which my royal brother has done in his own kingdom," said Jupiter.

"Then, oh! arrest his hand," cried Mercury; "at least spare their lives." His tears moved the omnipotent ruler of all things.

"Be it so," he said; "they shall not die; let them live!" And the next moment the winged messenger of heaven was in the chariot of the ocean god.

"Oh ho! you have come, old Beeswax, have you? but you are a little late in the day," cried Neptune, with a grim smile.

"Belay your jaw," replied Mercury, "know that there is a limit even to your power; they shall not die. It is the decree of Jupiter."

"I am satisfied," said Neptune, who had been regarding the agonies of his victims; "I am satisfied; let them live; much good may it do them. When they first appeared on my free and untrodden billows, I thought death was their only doom; but I see there is a worse penalty. Fool! these wretches are praying for death to release them from sufferings more than infernal. Let them live, then. They shall never find that sweet repose under my hand; but, mark me, they shall not, in after ages, intrude with impunity into my empire. I command you, spirits of the deep, to hover ever over the borders of my realm; watch the appearance of these hardy adventurers; strike them with horrors that shall make death a vain hope—a fruitless prayer. Bend their proud souls to acknowledge our power. Let them feel the presence of an insulted god. Laugh at their livid lips, their blanched cheeks, their glassy and upturned eyes, their trembling and sickening groans. Mock their groans, and add to their despair. Let that which has been their delight become their horror."

Transmute the most savory food into worse than poison; and let the beverage which generally inspires them with rapture, now make them faint to think of it. Let them experience all the anguish and agony of death, without its relief, and suffer the tortures of Tartarus, even surrounded by the luxuries of earth. Let their anguish be without sympathy among each other; but let cruel laughter ring in their ears, till the scoffer, in his return, falls beneath my power.—The fates decree that I cannot exclude them from the sea; but I can punish their unhallowed boldness. I curse them with SEA-SICKNESS! and so be they cursed."

Mercury was about to reply, when he heard Jupiter roaring for a goblet of nectar. Knowing his royal master to be somewhat impatient in disposition, and not feeling disposed to take a good licking, he was obliged to hasten back to heaven as fast as possible.

Rationale of Seduction.—Much of our morality (prudent and right upon system) with respect to the first false step of women leads us, as we all know, into barbarous errors as to individual exception. When from pure and confiding love that first false step has been taken, many a woman has been saved, in after life, from a thousand temptations. The poor unfortunates who crowd our streets and theatres, have rarely, in the first instance, been corrupted by love, but by the poverty and the contagion of circumstance and example. It is a miserable cant phrase to call them the victims of seduction; they have been the victims of hunger, of vanity, of curiosity, of evil female counsels; but the seductress to a life of vice. If a woman has once really loved, the beloved object makes an impenetrable barrier between her and other men; their advances terrify and revolt; she would rather die than be unfaithful even to memory. Though man loves the sex, woman loves only the individual; and the more she loves him, the more cold she is to the species. For the passion of woman is in the sentiment, the fancy, the heart. It rarely has much to do with the coarse image with which boys and old men—the experienced and the worn out—connect it.—*Bulwer's Ernst Maltravers.*

One of the neatest marriage epigrams we have seen, is the following written on the occasion of a marriage between Charles Headache and Mary Woffman of Philadelphia.

"Nay smile not, simper not ye fair,
For mocking's catching—so beware
In time take warning—
Not the first WOFFMAN'S she, sweet sylph!
Who went well pleased to rest poor elf
And with a HEADACHE found herself
In bed next morning."

Love and Law.—A young lawyer, who had long paid his court to a lady without much advancing his suit, accused her, one day, of "being insensible to the power of love." "It does not follow," she archly replied, "that I am so, because I am not to be won by the power of attorney."

"Forgive me," replied the suitor, "but you should remember that all the votaries of Cupid are *solicitors*."

A Slattern.—She is all grease, and I know not what use to put her to, but to make a lamp of her, and run from her by her own light. I warrant her rags and the tallow in them, will burn a Poland winter. If she lives till Dooms-day, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world.

Bravery.—Greene, of the Boston Morning Post, says that one day while he was absent, a party of brave fellows went to his dwelling house and saluted the females within it with three groans, but when his youngest boy opened the door to ask them to walk in, they all run away. They needn't have been frightened, for the lad says he didn't intend to hurt 'em.

Choosing a Wife.—A father being asked by a sober young man, how he should choose a wife, he answered him thus: "When you see a flock of maids together, run blindfold among them, and whomever you catch, let her be your wife. The young man told him that if he did so he might be deceived. So you may, cried the old man, if your eyes were open, for in the choice of a wife you must not trust your own eyes."

A down-east paper says, "an ass is an ass still, though you label him 'horse' from the snout to the end of his tail." Can this be contradicted?