

GREEK FICTIONAL LETTERS

AELIAN

5

Βαίτων Ἀνθεμίωνι

- Τὰ σμήνη μοι τῶν μελιττῶν κενά, καὶ ἀπεφοίτησαν τῆς ἐστίας οὐκ οὔσαι τέως δραπέτιδες, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ πισταὶ διέμενον καὶ ᾤκουν ὡς οἴκους τοὺς αὐτῶν σίμβλους, καὶ εἶχον λειμῶνα εὐδροσον καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀνθῶν εὐφορον, καὶ εἰστιῶμεν αὐτὰς πανδαισία· αἱ δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς φι-
 5 *εργίας τῆς ἄγαν ἀνθιστίων ἡμᾶς πολλῶ καὶ καλῶ τῶ μέλιτι, κουδέποτε τῆσδε τῆς ὠδίνος τῆς γλυκείας ἦσαν ἄγονοι. νῦν δὲ ᾤχοντο ἀπιούσαι λυπηθείσαι πρὸς ἡμῶν οὐδέν, οὐ μὰ τὸν Ἀρισταῖον καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω αὐτόν. καὶ αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυγάδες, ὁ δὲ οἶκος αὐτῶν χήρὸς ἐστι, καὶ τὰ ἄνθη τὰ ἐν τῶ λειμῶνι περὶ αὐτὰ γηρᾶ.*
- 10 *Ἐγὼ δὲ αὐτῶν ὅταν ὑπομνησθῶ τῆς πτήσεως καὶ τῆς εὐχαρίστου χορείας, οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ νομίζω θυγατέρας ἀφηρηθῆσαι. ὀργίζομαι μὲν οὖν αὐταῖς· τί γὰρ ἀπέλιπον τροφέα αὐτῶν καὶ ἀτεχνῶς πατέρα καὶ φρουρὸν καὶ μελεδωνὸν οὐκ ἀχάριστον; δεῖ δέ με ἀνιχνεύσαι τὴν πλάνην αὐτῶν καὶ ὅποι ποτὲ ἀποδράσαι κθήνται*
- 15 *καὶ τίς αὐτὰς ὑπεδέξατο καὶ τοῦτο· ἔχει γὰρ τοι τὰς μηδὲν προσηκούσας. εἶτα εὐρῶν ὄνειδιῶ πολλὰ τὰς ἀγνώμονας καὶ ἀπίστους.*

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Καλλιπίδης Κνήμωνι

- Ἄγροίκου βίου τά τε ἄλλα ἐστὶ καλὰ καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ ἡμερον τοῦ τρόπου· ἢ γὰρ ἡσυχία καὶ τὸ ἄγειν σχολὴν τοῖς^a τῆς γῆς καλὴν πραότητα ἐνεργάζεται. σὺ δὲ οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἄγριος εἰ καὶ γείτοσιν οὐκ ἀγαθὸς πάροικος. βάλλεις οὖν ἡμᾶς ταῖς βώλοισι καὶ ταῖς
 5 *ἀχράσι καὶ μέγα κέκραγας ἰδὼν ἄνθρωπον ὡς διώκων λύκον καὶ ἀργαλέος εἰ καὶ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον ἀλμυρὸν γειτόνημα. ἐγὼ δὲ εἰ*

AELIAN

5

BAITON TO ANTHEMION

My hives are deserted by the bees: they have left hearth and home, though they weren't runaways before. In fact they used to remain loyal and lived in their hives as their very own homes. They had a dewy meadow too, one that was rich in flowers, and we used to feast them on the richest of banquets. They, in turn, with excessive industry would feed us on lots of lovely honey, and never failed to produce this sweet fruit of their labours. But now they have gone off and away, though we did nothing to annoy them: I swear it by Aristaeus and by Apollo himself. So they have fled, and their home is bereft, and the meadow flowers are deserted and wasting away.

As for me, whenever I think of their flights and their graceful dancing I can only consider that I have lost my daughters. I am indeed angry with them (why did they desert their foster-father—quite simply their father, their guardian, and their keeper, who was not unwelcome to them?), but I must track down their wanderings, and find out where the fugitives have settled, and who has taken them over—that too must be found out. For he is keeping bees that don't belong to him. Then, when I've found them, I shall scold them mightily for being ungrateful and disloyal.

13

CALLIPIDES TO CNEMON

Among the many pleasant aspects of living in the country is the civilized behaviour: for peace and quiet and devoting one's leisure to the land create a fine sort of gentleness. But for some reason you are fierce and not a good neighbour to those living near you. You throw lumps of earth and wild pears at us, and you let out a tremendous yell at sight of anyone, as if you were chasing a wolf; you just cause trouble and embody the proverbial 'salty neighbourhood'. If it wasn't my father's

μη πατρῶον τὸν^b ἀργὸν ἐγεώργουν, ἄσμενος ἂν αὐτὸν ἀπεδόμην
φυγῇ φοβεροῦ γείτονος. ἀλλ', ὦ βέλτιστε Κνήμων, τὸ σκαιὸν τοῦ
τρόπου κατάλυσον, μηδέ σε ὁ θυμὸς εἰς λύτταν^c προαγέτω, μη καὶ
10 μανεῖς σεαυτὸν λάθης. ταῦτά σοι φίλα παρά φίλου παραγγέλματα
ἔστω καὶ ἴαμα τοῦ τρόπου.

^b τὸν *add.* Wilamowitz ^c λύτταν *L. A. Post:* λύπην *A:* λήθην *M Ald.*

14

Κνήμων Καλλιπίδῃ

Ἔδει μὲν μηδὲν ἀποκρίνασθαι· ἐπεὶ δὲ εἶ περίεργος καὶ βιάζῃ με
ἄκοντά σοι προσδιαλέγεσθαι, τοῦτο γοῦν κεκέρδαγκα τὸ δι'
ἀγγέλων σοι λαλεῖν ἀλλὰ μὴ πρὸς αὐτὸν σέ. ἔστω σοι τοῖνυν ἢ ἀπὸ
Σκυθῶν λεγομένη ἀπόκρισις αὕτη. ἐγὼ μαίνομαι καὶ φονῶ καὶ
5 μισῶ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος. ἔνθεν τοι βάλλω τοὺς εἰσφοιτῶντας
εἰς τὸ χωρίον καὶ βώλοισι καὶ λίθοις. μακάριον δὲ ἦγῃμαι τὸν
Περσέα κατὰ δύο τρόπους ἐκείνον, ὅτι τε πτηνὸς ἦν καὶ οὐδενὶ
συνήντα, ὑπεράνω τε ἦν τοῦ προσαγορεύειν τινὰ καὶ ἀσπάζεσθαι.
ζηλῶ δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ τοῦ κτήματος ἐκείνου εὐ μάλα ᾧ τοὺς συναντῶν-
10 τας ἐποίει λίθους· οὐπερ οὖν εἴ μοι τις εὐμοιρία κατατυχεῖν ἐγένετο,
οὐδὲν ἂν ἦν ἀφθονώτερον λιθίνων ἀνδριάντων, καὶ σέ γ' ἂν
εἰργασάμην τοῦτο πρῶτον. τί γὰρ μαθὼν ῥυθμίζεις με καὶ πρᾶον
ἀποφῆναι γλίχῃ οὕτως ἐχθρὰ πάσι νοοῦντα; ἔνθεν τοι καὶ τοῦ
χωρίου τὸ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἀργὸν εἶασα καὶ τοῦτό μοι τῆς γῆς χῆρόν
15 ἔστι καρπῶν. σὺ δὲ ἕνα σεαυτὸν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἀποφανεῖς, καὶ
σπεύδεις με φίλον ἔχειν μηδὲ ἑμαυτῷ φίλον ὄντα. τί γὰρ καὶ μαθὼν
εἰμι ἄνθρωπος;

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Μορμίας Χρέμητι

Ἐγὼ μὲν ἔθνον γάμους ὁ χρυσοῦς μάτην καὶ περιήγειν
ἔστεφανωμένους οὐδὲν δέον καὶ τοὺς τε ἔνδον καὶ τοὺς ἔξω θεοὺς
ἐκολάκευον, ὁ δὲ παῖς κατήγαγε μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ ζεῦγος ἐκ τῶν

property that I was farming, I would gladly have got rid of it to escape such a frightful neighbour. Come, my dear Cnemon, stop this stupid behaviour and don't let your anger lead you into a frenzy, in case you actually go mad without knowing it. Treat this as friendly advice from a friend and a remedy for your behaviour.

14

CNEMON TO CALLIPIDES

I didn't have to reply, but since you are being a busybody and forcing me to start a discussion with you against my will, at least I have the advantage that I can talk to you through messengers and not face to face. So here is my Scythian reply, as they say. I am feeling mad and murderous and I loathe the human race. That is why I throw clods and stones at intruders on my land. And I consider that famed Perseus lucky in two ways: he had wings and met nobody, being too high up to greet and talk politely to anyone; and I envy him also for that truly famous gift he had of turning those he met into stone. If I had the good fortune to possess that gift there would be nothing more plentiful than stone statues of men—and you would have been the first I made. What do you mean by trying to run my life, and why so keen to tame me, when my mind is so hostile to everyone? Of course that is the reason I've let my roadside bit of land go wild, and that part of my property doesn't bear crops. But you'll be proclaiming yourself a relation of mine, and you're eager to make a friend of me even though I'm not even a friend to myself. Why on earth am I a human being?

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MORMIAS TO CHREMES

Like a fine fool, there I was offering wedding sacrifices pointlessly, and going around wearing a garland without any need for it, and trying to appease both the household gods and those outside it. Meanwhile, my son had himself brought in a

ἀγρῶν ὡς τὴν νύμφην ἐξ ἄστεος εἰς τὸ πατρῶον χωρίον ἐπανάξων,
 5 αὐλητρίδα δὲ λυσάμενος, ἧς ἔτυχεν ἑρῶν, νύμφης στολὴν αὐτῇ
 περιβαλὼν ἐπανήγαγέ μοι φάτταν ἀντὶ περιστερᾶς, φασίν, ἑταίραν
 ἀντὶ νύμφης. καὶ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα αἰδουμένη κορικῶς εὖ μάλα καὶ
 κατὰ^a τὸν [τῶν παιδῶν]^a τῶν γαμουμένων νόμον ἀπέκρυπτε τὴν
 10 μηχαναί. οὐ μὴν εἰς τὸ παντελές μου καταφρονήσουσιν ὥσπερ οὖν
 πλωθίνου, ἐπεὶ τοι τὸν μὲν καλὸν νυμφίον ἐς κόρακας ἀποκηρύξω
 ἐὰν μὴ τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης τρυφῆς παυσάμενος σὺν ἐμοὶ ταφρεύῃ καὶ
 βωλοκοπῇ· τὴν δὲ νύμφην ἀποδώσομαι κάκείνῃ ἐπ' ἐξαγωγῇ ἐὰν
 15 συναπολαμβάνῃ.

Benner and Fobes

^{a-a} τὸν τῶν παιδῶν om. M, τῶν παιδῶν om. Ald.

20

Φαιδρίας Σθένωνι

Φύεται μὲν ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς καλὰ πάντα, κεκόσμηταί τε ἡ γῆ τούτοις
 καὶ τρέφει πάντας· καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔστιν τῶν καρπῶν διετήσια, τὰ δὲ
 καὶ πρὸς ὀλίγον ἀντέχοντά ἔστιν τρωκτὰ ὠραία· πάντων δὲ τούτων
 θεοὶ μὲν ποιηταί, ἡ γῆ δὲ μήτηρ ἅμα καὶ τροφὸς αὕτη· φύεται δὲ
 5 καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ ταῦτα ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς, δένδρων τὰ
 κάλλιστα, καρπῶν τὰ χρησιμώτατα. μὴ τοίνυν γεωργῶν καταφρόνει·
 ἔστι γάρ τις καὶ ἐνταῦθα σοφία, γλώττη μὲν οὐ πεποικιλμένη οὐδὲ
 καλλωπιζομένη λόγων δυνάμει, σιγῶσα δὲ εὖ μάλα καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ
 τοῦ βίου τὴν ἀρετὴν ὁμολογοῦσα. εἰ δὲ σοφώτερα ταῦτα ἐπέσταλται
 10 σοι ἢ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγρῶν χορηγίαν, μὴ θαυμάσης· οὐ γὰρ ἐσμὲν
 οὔτε Λίβυες οὔτε Λυδοὶ ἀλλ' Ἀθηναῖοι γεωργοί.

yoke of oxen from the farm to bring his bride from the town to his family property. He'd happened to fall in love with a pipe-playing music girl, bought her freedom, put a bride's robe on her and brought her home to me—a wild pigeon for a tame one, as they say, a courtesan instead of a bride. At first she was very modest and maidenly and, behaving as newly wed brides do, she kept the trick a secret; but eventually their cunning device and their schemes against me were suddenly revealed. However, they are not going to treat me with utter contempt, as if I were clay in their hands; for I'll renounce with curses that fine bridegroom, unless he gives up his outrageous wantonness and helps me with digging ditches and breaking up the earth. As for that bride of his, I'll sell her for export, unless she too does her share of the work along with the Phrygian and the Thracian maidservants.

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PHAEDRIAS TO STHENON

All that is lovely grows in the country: thereby the earth is adorned and gives nourishment to everyone. Some of its products last through the year; others keep for a short time and are eaten in season. The gods create all these things, but the earth is their mother and also their nurse. As for justice and temperance, these too grow in the country—the most beautiful of trees and the most useful of fruits. So don't despise farmers; for they too have a kind of wisdom, not embellished in speech or displaying itself in powerful oratory, but remarkably silent and proclaiming its virtue through its own life. If this letter to you looks too clever for the country to offer, don't marvel at it: we aren't Libyan or Lydian but Athenian farmers.