

THESPIS

or, The Gods Grown Old

A Entirely Original Grotesque Opera in Two Acts

Written by W.S. Gilbert

Composed by Arthur Sullivan

*First produced at the Gaiety Theatre, London on December 26th 1871
under the management of Mr. John Hollingshead.*

Dramatis Personæ

Immortals

JUPITER }

APOLLO }

MARS } Aged Olympians

DIANA }

VENUS }

MERCURY

Mortals

THESPIS, Manager of a travelling theatrical company

SILLIMON, his stage manager

TIMIDON

TIPSEION

PREPOSTEROUS

STUPIDAS

SPARKEION

NICEMIS

PRETTEIA

DAPHNE

CYMON

Chorus:- Stars, Gods, Goddesses, Thespians, etc.

Synopsis of Scenes

Act One:- Ruined Temple of the Gods on the Summit of Mount Olympus

Act Two:- The Same. One Year Later

Time:- Mythology

The libretto of THESPIS as sold at the Gaiety during the original production of the opera was notoriously incorrect. Sadly, Gilbert died before being able to correct the proof copies for inclusion in Series Four of his 'Original Plays' published by Chatto and Windus in 1911. Text presented in **blue** throughout this opera reflects additions made by Dr. Terence Rees as a result of research which revealed that certain passages of dialogue and musical numbers (mentioned in contemporary press reports) were missing. The result was a revival of the opera in 1962 by the University of London Opera Group using music from less performed Sullivan operas, arranged by Garth Morton. This version was performed by many amateur companies well into the early 1980's.

Act One

SCENE:- The ruins of the Temple of the Gods on summit of Mount Olympus. Picturesque shattered columns, overgrown with ivy, etc., R. and L., with entrances to temple (ruined) R. Fallen columns on the stage. Three broken pillars 2 R.E. At the back of stage is the approach from the summit of the mountain. This should be 'practicable' to enable large numbers of people to ascend and descend. In the distance are the summits of adjacent mountains. At first all this is concealed by a thick fog, which clears presently. Enter (through fog) Chorus of Stars coming off duty, as fatigued with their work.

No.1. - CHORUS OF STARS

Throughout the night
The constellations
Have given light
From various stations.
When midnight gloom
Falls on all nations,
We will resume
Our occupations.

Solo. Our light, it's true,
Is not worth mention;
What can we do
To gain attention,
When, night and noon,
With vulgar glaring,
A great big Moon
Is *always* flaring?

Chorus. Throughout the night
The constellations
Have given light
From various stations.
When midnight gloom
Falls on all nations,
We will resume
Our occupations.

During Chorus enter DIANA, an elderly Goddess. She is carefully wrapped up in Cloaks, Shawls, etc. A hood is over her head, a respirator in her mouth, and galoshes on her feet. During the chorus she takes these things off, and discovers herself dressed in the usual costume of the Lunar Diana, Goddess of the Moon.¹

Dia. (*shuddering.*) Ugh! How cold the nights are! I don't know how it is, but I seem to feel the night air a great deal more than I used to. But it is time for the sun to be rising.
(*Calls.*) Apollo.

Ap. (*within.*) Hollo!

¹Although there is no indication in the libretto, the Chorus exit at this point.

Dia. I've come off duty - it's time for you to be getting up.

Enter APOLLO. He is an elderly 'buck' with an air of assumed juvenility, and is dressed in dressing gown and smoking cap.

Ap. (*yawning.*) I shan't go out today. I was out yesterday and the day before and I want a little rest. I don't know how it is, but I seem to feel my work a great deal more than I used to.

Dia. I'm sure these short days can't hurt you. Why, you don't rise till six and you're in bed again by five: you should have a turn at *my* work and just see how you like that - out all night!

Ap. My dear sister, I don't envy you - though I remember when I did - but that was when I was a younger sun. I don't think I'm quite well. Perhaps a little change of air will do me good. I've a great mind to show myself in London this winter, they'll be very glad to see me. No! I shan't go out today. I shall send them this fine, thick, wholesome fog and they won't miss me. It's the best substitute for a blazing sun - and like most substitutes, nothing at all like the real thing. (*To fog.*) Be off with you.

Fog clears away and discovers the scene described.

No.1a. - ENTRANCE OF MERCURY

Hurried Music. MERCURY shoot up from behind precipice at back of stage. He carries several parcels afterwards described. He sits down, very much fatigued.

Mer Home at last! A nice time I've had of it.

Dia. You young scamp you've been down all night again. This is the third time you've been out this week.

Mer. Well *you're* a nice one to blow me up for that.

Dia. I can't help being out all night.

Mer. And I can't help being down all night. The nature of Mercury requires that he should go down when the sun sets, and rise again, when the sun rises.

Dia. And what have you been doing?

Mer. Stealing on commission. There's a set of false teeth and a box of Life Pills - that's for Jupiter - An invisible peruke and a bottle of hair dye - that's for Apollo - A respirator and a pair of galoshes - that's for Cupid - A full-bottomed chignon, some auricomous fluid, a box of pearl-powder, a pot of rouge, and a hare's foot - and that's for Venus.

Dia. Stealing! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Mer. Oh, as god of thieves I must do something to justify my position.

Dia. and Ap. (*contemptuously.*) Your position!

Mer. Oh I know it's nothing to boast of, even on earth. Up here, it's simply contemptible. Now that you gods are too old for your work - you've made me the miserable drudge of Olympus - groom, valet, postman, butler, commissionaire, maid of all work, parish beadle, and original dustman.

Ap. Your Christmas boxes ought to be considerable.

Mer. They ought to be but they're not. I'm treated abominably. I make everybody and I'm nobody - I go everywhere and I'm nowhere - I do everything and I'm nothing. I've made thunder for Jupiter, odes for Apollo, battles for Mars, and love for Venus. I've married couples for Hymen, and six weeks afterwards, I've divorced them for Cupid - and in return I get all the kicks while they pocket the halfpence. And in compensation for robbing me of the halfpence in question, what have they done for me?

Ap. Why they've - ha! ha! they've made you the god of thieves!

Mer. Very self-denying of them - there isn't one of them who hasn't a better claim to the distinction than I have.

No.2. - SONG - (Mercury with Diana and Apollo)

Oh, I'm the celestial drudge,
From morning to night I must stop at it,
On errands all day I must trudge,
And I stick to my work till I drop at it!
In summer I get up at one
(As a good natured donkey I'm ranked for it),
Then I go and I light up the Sun,
And Phoebus Apollo gets thanked for it!

Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

All. Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

Mer. I'm the slave of the Gods, neck and heels,
And I'm bound to obey, though I rate at 'em;
And I not only order their meals,
But I cook 'em, and serve 'em, and wait at 'em.
Then I make all their nectar - I do -
(Which a terrible liquor to rack us is)
And whenever I mix them a brew,
Why all the thanksgivings are Bacchus's!

Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

All. Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

Mer. Then reading and writing I teach,
And spelling books many I've edited!
And for bringing those arts within reach,
That donkey Minerva gets credited.
Then I scrape at the stars with a knife,
And plate-powder the Moon (on the days for it),
And I hear all the world and his wife
Awarding Diana the praise for it!

Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

All. Well, well, it's the way of the world,
And will be through all it's futurity;
Though noodles are baroned and earled,
There's nothing for clever obscurity!

No.2a. - ENTRANCE OF JUPITER

After song - very loud and majestic music is heard.

Dia. and Mer. (*looking off.*) Why, who's this? Jupiter, by Jove!

Enter JUPITER, an extremely old man, very decrepit, with thin stragglng white beard, he wears a long braided dressing-gown, handsomely trimmed, and a silk night-cap on his head. MERCURY falls back respectfully as he enters.

Jup. Good day, Diana - ah, Apollo - Well, well, well, what's the matter? What's the matter?

Dia. Why, that young scamp Mercury says that we do nothing, and leave all the duties of Olympus to him! Will you believe it, he actually says that our influence on earth is dropping down to *nil*.

Jup. Well, well - don't be hard on the lad - to tell you the truth, I'm not so sure that he's very far wrong. Don't let it go any further, but between ourselves, the sacrifices and votive offerings have fallen off terribly of late. Why, I can remember the time when people offered us human sacrifices - no mistake about it - human sacrifices! Think of that!

Dia. Ah! those good old days!

Jup. Then it fell of to oxen, pigs, and sheep.

Ap. Well, there are worse things than oxen, pigs, and sheep.

Jup. So I've found to my cost. My dear sir - between ourselves, it's dropped off from on thing to another until it has positively dwindled down to preserved Australian beef! What do you think of that?

Ap. I don't like it at all.

Jup. You won't mention it - it might go further -

Dia. It couldn't fare worse.

Jup. In short, matters have come to such a crisis that there's no mistake about it - something must be done to restore our influence, the only question is, *What?*

Enter MARS.

No.3. - QUINTETTE - (Mercury, Diana, Apollo, Jupiter, & Mars)

Mer. *(coming forward in great alarm.)*
 Oh incident unprecedented!
 I hardly can believe it's true!

Mars. Why, bless the boy, he's quite demented!
 Why, what's the matter, sir, with you?

Ap. Speak quickly, or you'll get a warming!

Mer. Why, mortals up the mount are swarming,
 Our temple on Olympus storming,
 In hundreds - aye in thousands too!

All. Goodness gracious,
 How audacious;
 Earth is spacious,
 Why come here?
 Our impeding
 Their proceeding
 Were good breeding,
 That is clear.

Dia. Jupiter, hear my plea;
 Upon the mount if *they* light,
 There'll be an end of me,
 I won't be seen by daylight!

Ap. Tartarus is the place
 These scoundrels you should send to -
 Should they behold my face
 My influence there's an end to!

Jup. *(looking over precipice.)*
 What fools to give themselves so much exertion!

Dia. *(looking over precipice.)*
 A government survey I'll make assertion!

Ap. *(looking over precipice.)*
 Perhaps the Alpine Club at their diversion!

Mer. *(looking over precipice.)*
 They seem to be more like a 'Cook's Excursion.'

All. Goodness gracious,
 How audacious;
 Earth is spacious,
 Why come here?
 Our impeding
 Their proceeding
 Were good breeding,
 That is clear.

Ap. If, mighty Jove, you value your existence,
 Send them a thunderbolt with your regards!

Jup. My thunderbolts, though valid at a distance,
 Are not effective at a hundred yards.

Mer. Let the moon's rays, Diana, strike 'em flighty,
 Make 'em all lunatics in various styles!

Dia. My lunar rays unhappily are mighty
 Only at many hundred thousand miles.

All. Goodness gracious,
 How audacious;
 Earth is spacious,
 Why come here?
 Our impeding
 Their proceeding
 Were good breeding,
 That is clear.

Exeunt JUPITER, APOLLO, DIANA, MARS, and MERCURY into ruined temple.

Enter SPARKEION and NICEMIS climbing mountain at back.

Spark. Here we are at last on the very summit, and we've left the others ever so far behind! Why, what's this?

Nice. A ruined palace! A palace on the top of a mountain. I wonder who lives here? Some mighty king, I dare say, with wealth beyond all counting, who came to live up here -

Spark. To avoid his creditors! It's a lovely situation for a country house, though it's very much out of repair.

Nice. Very inconvenient situation.

Spark. Inconvenient?

Nice. Yes - how are you to get butter, milk, and eggs up here? No pigs - no poultry - no postman. Why, I should go mad.

Spark. What a dear little practical mind it is! What a wife you will make!

Nice. Don't be too sure - we are only partly married - the marriage ceremony lasts all day.

Spark. I've no doubt at all about it. We shall be as happy as a king and queen, though we are only a strolling actor and actress.

Nice. It's very kind of Thespis to celebrate our marriage day by giving the company a pic-nic on this lovely mountain.

Spark. And still more kind to allow us to get so much ahead of all the others - discreet Thespis! *(kissing her.)*

Nice. There now, get away, do! Remember the marriage ceremony is not yet completed.

Spark. But it would be ungrateful to Thespis's discretion not to take advantage of it by improving the opportunity.

Nice. Certainly not; get away.

Spark. On second thoughts the opportunity's so good it don't admit of improvement. There! *(kisses her.)*

Nice. How dare you kiss me before we are quite married?

Spark. Attribute it to the intoxicating influence of the mountain air.

Nice. Then we had better go down again. It is not right to expose ourselves to influence over which we have no control.

No.4. - DUET - (Sparkeion and Nicemis)

Spark. Here far away from all the world,
Dissension and derision,

With Nature's wonders all unfurled
To our delighted vision,
With no one here
(At least in sight)
To interfere
With our delight,
And two fond lovers sever,
Oh do not free
Thine hand from mine,
I swear to thee
My love is thine,
For ever and for ever!

Nicemis. On mountain to the air is keen,
And most exhilarating,
And we say things we do not mean
In moments less elating.
So please to wait,
For thoughts that crop,
En tête-à-tête,
On mountain top,
May not exactly tally
With those that you
May entertain,
Returning to
The sober plain
Of yon relaxing valley.

Spark. Very well - if you won't have anything to say to me, I know who will.

Nice. Who will?

Spark. Daphne will.

Nice. Daphne would flirt with anybody.

Spark. Anybody would flirt with Daphne. She is quite as good looking as you and has twice as much back-hair.

Nice. She has twice as much money, which may account for it.

Spark. At all events, *she* has appreciation. *She* likes good looks.

Nice. We all like what we haven't got.

Spark. *She* keeps her eyes open.

Nice. Yes - one of the.

Spark. Which one?

Nice. The one she doesn't wink with.

Spark. Well, I was engaged to her for six months and if she still makes eyes at me, you must attribute it to force of habit. Besides - remember - we are only half-married at present.

Nice. I suppose that means you are going to treat me as shamefully as you treated her. Very well, break it off if you like. *I* shall not offer any objection. Thespis used to be very attentive to me, and I'd just as soon be a manager's wife as a fifth-rate actor's!

Chorus heard, at first below, then enter DAPHNE, PRETTEIA, PREPOSTEROUS, STUPIDAS, TIPSEION, CYMON, and other members of THESPIS' company climbing over rocks at back. All carry small baskets.

No.5. - CHORUS with SOLOS - (Daphne & Nicemis)²

Climbing over rocky mountain,
Skipping rivulet and fountain,
Passing where the willows quiver,
By the ever rolling river,
Swollen with the summer rain, the summer rain;
Threading long and leafy mazes,
Dotted with unnumbered daisies,
Dotted, dotted with unnumbered daisies,
Scaling rough and rugged passes,
Climb the hard lads and lasses,
Till the mountain top they gain;
Scaling rough and rugged passes,
Climb the hard lads and lasses,
Till the mountain top they gain!

Daphne. Fill the cup and tread the measure,
Make the most of fleeting leisure,
Hail it as a true ally,
Though it perish bye and bye!

Chorus. Hail it as a true ally,
Though it perish bye and bye!

Daphne. Every moment brings a treasure
Of its own especial pleasure,
Though the moments quickly die,
Greet them gaily as they fly,
Greet them gaily as they fly.

²This is one of only three numbers from the original THESPIS score the music of which can positively be identified. This number was later used in THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE, adapted for the ladies chorus only. The words were also slightly altered to fit the changed situation. The first four pages of a copyist's manuscript full score are bound into Sullivan's autograph manuscript of the later work. Although the couplets here are assigned to Daphne and Nicemis, the original libretto divides them between four unnamed soloists.

Chorus. Though the moments quickly die,
 Greet them gaily as they fly.

Nicemis. Far away from grief and care,
 High up in the mountain air,
 Let us live and reign alone,
 In a world that's all our own.
 Here enthroned in the sky,
 Far away from mortal eye,
 We'll be gods and make decrees,
 Those may honour them who please.

Chorus. We'll be gods and make decrees,
 Those may honour them who please.
 Fill the cup and tread the measure,
 Make the most of fleeting leisure,
 Hail it as a true ally,
 Though it perish bye and bye,
 Hail it as a true ally,
 Though it perish bye and bye!
 Fill the cup and tread the measure,
 Make the most of fleeting leisure,
 Hail it as a true ally, a true ally.

After CHORUS AND COUPLETS, enter THESPIS climbing over rocks.

Thes. Bless you, my people, bless you. Let the revels commence. After all, for thorough, unconstrained unconventional enjoyment give me a pic-nic.

Prep. *(very gloomily.)* Give him a pic-nic somebody!

Thes. Be quiet Preposterous - don't interrupt.

Prep. Ha! ha! shut up again! But no matter.

STUPIDAS endeavours, in pantomime, to reconcile him. Throughout the scene PREPOSTEROUS shows symptoms of breaking out into a furious passion, and STUPIDAS does all he can to pacify and restrain him.

Thes. The best of a pic-nic is that everybody contributes what he pleases, and nobody knows what anybody else has brought till the last moment. Now, unpack everybody, and let's see what there is for everybody.

Nice. I have brought you - a bottle of soda water - for the claret-cup.

Daph. I have brought you - a lettuce for the lobster salad.

Spark. A piece of ice - for the claret-cup.

Prett. A bottle of vinegar - for the lobster salad.

Cymon. A bunch of burrage - for the claret-cup!

Tips. A hard-boiled egg - for the lobster salad!

Stup. One lump of sugar - for the claret-cup!

Prep. He has brought one lump of sugar for the claret-cup? Ha! ha! ha! (*laughing melodramatically.*)

Stup.³ Well, Preposterous, and what have *you* brought?

Prep. *I* have brought *two* lumps of the very best salt for the lobster salad.

Thes. Oh - is that all?

Prep. All! Ha! ha! He asks if that is all! (*STUPIDAS consoles him.*)

Thes. But, I say - this is capital so far as it goes - nothing could be better, but it doesn't go far enough. The claret, for instance! I don't insist on claret - or a lobster - I don't insist on lobster, but a lobster salad without a lobster, why, it isn't lobster salad. Here Tipseion!

Tips. (*a very drunken bloated fellow, dressed, however, with scrupulous accuracy and wearing a large medal round his neck.*) My master!

Falls on his knees to THESPIS and kisses his robe.

Thes. Get up - don't be a fool. Where's the claret? We arranged last week that you were to see to that?

Tips. True, dear master. But then I was a drunkard!

Thes. You were.

Tips. You engaged me to play convivial parts on the strength of my personal appearance.

Thes. I did.

Tips. You then found that my habits interfered with my duties as low comedian.

Thes. True -

Tips. You said yesterday that unless I took the pledge you would dismiss me from your company.

Thes. Quite so.

Tips. Good. I have taken it. It is all I have taken since yesterday. My preserver! (*embraces him.*)

Thes. Yes, but where's the wine?

³Terence Rees allocates this line to THESPIS, which does make more sense.

Tips. I left it behind that I might not be tempted to violate my pledge.

All.⁴ Oh!

PIC-NIC SCENE - (Ballet)

Prep. Minion!

Attempts to get at him, is restrained by STUPIDAS.

Thes. Now, Preposterous, what *is* the matter with you?

Prep. It is enough that I am down-trodden in my profession. I will not submit to imposition out of it. It is enough that as your heavy villain I get the worst of it every night in a combat of six. I will *not* submit to insult in the day time. I have come out, ha! ha! to enjoy myself!

Thes. But look here, you know - virtue only triumphs at night from seven to ten - vice gets the best of it during the other twenty-one hours. Won't that satisfy you?

STUPIDAS endeavours to pacify him.

Prep. *(irritated to STUPIDAS.)* Ye are odious to my sight! Get out of it!

Stup. *(in great terror.)* What have I done?

Thes. Now *what* is it Preposterous, *what* is it?

Prep. I a-hate him and would have his life!

Thes. *(to STUPIDAS.)* That's it - he hates you and would have your life. Now go and be merry.

Stup. Yes, but why does he hate me?

Thes. Oh - exactly. *(To PREPOSTEROUS.)* Why do you hate him?

Prep. Because he is a minion!

Thes. He hates you because you are a minion. It explains itself. Now go and enjoy yourselves. Ha! ha! It is well for those who *can* laugh - let them do so - there is no extra charge. The light-hearted cup and the convivial jest for the - but for me - what is there for me?

Sill. There is some claret cup and some lobster salad. *(handing some.)*

Thes. *(taking it.)* Thank you. *(resuming.)* What is there for me but anxiety - ceaseless gnawing anxiety that tears at my very vitals and rends my peace of mind asunder?

⁴At this point Rees/Morton added a Slapstick Pic-Nic Scene using the Drawing Room Music from UTOPIA, (LIMITED). Preposterous' next remark was therefore addressed to Stupidas who had just hit him in the face with a custard pie, and he was therefore restrained by another character or by a member of the chorus.

There is nothing whatever for me but anxiety of the nature I have just described. The charge of these thoughtless revellers is my unhappy lot. It is not a small charge, and it is rightly termed a lot, because there are many. Oh why did the gods make me a manager?

Sill. (*as guessing a riddle.*) Why did the gods make him a manager?

Spark. Why did the *gods* make him a manager?

Daph. Why did the gods make *him* a manager?

Prett. Why did the gods make him a *manager*?

Thes. No - no - what are you talking about? What do you mean?

Daph. I've got it - don't tell us -

All. No - no - because - because -

Thes. (*annoyed.*) It isn't a conundrum - it's a misanthropical question. Why cannot I join you?

THESPIS retires up centre.

Daph. (*who is sitting with SPARKEION to the annoyance of NICEMIS, who is crying alone.*) I'm sure I don't know. We do not want you. Don't distress yourself on our account - we are getting on very comfortably - aren't we, Sparkeion?

Spark. We are so happy that we don't miss the lobster or the claret. What are lobster and claret compared with the society of those we love? (*embracing DAPHNE.*)

Nice. (*spitefully.*) You are quite welcome to my share of *everything*. I intend to console myself with the society of my manager.

Takes THESPIS, arm affectionately.

Thes. Here I say - this won't do, you know - I can't allow it - at least before my company - besides, you are half married to Sparkeion. Sparkeion, here's your half-wife impairing my influence before my company. Don't you know the story of the gentleman who undermined his influence by associating with his inferiors?

All. Yes - yes - we know it.

Prep. (*furiously.*) I do not know it! It is ever thus! Doomed to disappointment from my earliest years -

STUPIDAS endeavours to console him.

Thes. There - that's enough. Preposterous - you *shall* hear it.

No.6. - SONG - (Thespis with Chorus)

I once knew a chap who discharged a function
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction,
He was conspicuous exceeding,
For his affable ways and his easy breeding.
Although a Chairman of Directors,
He was hand in glove with the ticket inspectors,
He tipped the guards with bran-new fivers,
And sang little songs to the engine drivers.

Chorus. 'Twas told to me/him, with great compunction,
By one who had discharged with unction,
A Chairman of Directors function,
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction.
Fol diddle, lol diddle, lol lol lay.

Thes. Each Christmas Day he gave each stoker
A silver shovel and a golden poker,
He's button-hole flowers for the ticket sorters,
And rich Bath-buns for the outside porters.
He'd mount his clerks on his first-class hunters,
And he built little villas for the roadside shunters,
And if any were fond of pigeon shooting,
He'd ask them down to his place at Tooting.

Chorus. 'Twas told to me/him, with great compunction,
By one who had discharged with unction,
A Chairman of Directors function,
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction.
Fol diddle, lol diddle, lol lol lay.

Thes. In course of time there spread a rumour
That he did all this from a sense of humour,
So instead of signalling and stoking,
They gave themselves up to a course of joking.
Whenever they knew that he was riding,
They shunted his train on lonely siding,
Or stopped all night in the middle of a tunnel,
On the plea that the boiler was a-coming through the funnel.

Chorus. 'Twas told to me/him, with great compunction,
By one who had discharged with unction,
A Chairman of Directors function,
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction.
Fol diddle, lol diddle, lol lol lay.

Thes. If he wished to go to Perth or Stirling,
His train through several counties whirling
Would set him down in a fit of larking,
At four a.m. in the wilds of Barking.
This pleased his whim and seemed to strike it,
But the general Public did not like it,
The receipts fell after a few repeatings,
And he got it hot at the annual meetings.

Chorus. 'Twas told to me/him, with great compunction,
By one who had discharged with unction,
A Chairman of Directors function,
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction.
Fol diddle, lol diddle, lol lol lay.

Thes. He followed out his whim with vigour,
The shares went down to a nominal figure,
These are the sad results proceeding
From his affable ways and easy breeding!
The line, with its rails and guards and peelers,
Was sold for a song to marine store dealers,
The shareholders are all in the work'us,
And he sells pipe-lights in the Regent Circus.

Chorus. 'Twas told to me/him, with great compunction,
By one who had discharged with unction,
A Chairman of Directors function,
On the North South East West Diddlesex junction.
Fol diddle, lol diddle, lol lol lay.

Thes. It's very hard. As a man I am naturally of an easy disposition. As a manager, I am compelled to hold myself aloof, that my influence may not be deteriorated. As a man, I am inclined to fraternise with the pauper - as a manager I am compelled to walk about like this: Don't know yah! Don't know yah! Don't know yah!

Strides haughtily about the stage. JUPITER, MARS, and APOLLO, in full Olympian costume appear on the three broken columns. Thespians scream.

Jup., Mars and Ap. *(in recit.)* Presumptuous mortal!

Thes. *(same business.)* Don't know yah! Don't know yah!

Jup., Mars and Ap. *(seated on three broken pillars. Still in recit.)* Presumptuous mortal!

Thes. I do not know you. I do not know you.

Jup., Mars and Ap. *(standing on ground, recit.)* Presumptuous mortal!

Thes. *(recit.)* Remove this person.

STUPIDAS and PREPOSTEROUS seize APOLLO and MARS.

Jup. (*speaking.*) Stop, you evidently *don't* know me. Allow me to offer you my card.

Throws flash paper.

Thes. Ah Yes, it's very pretty, but we don't want any at present. When we do our Christmas piece I'll let you know. (*changing his manner.*) Look here, you know, this is a private party and we haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance. There are a good many other mountains about, if you really must have a mountain all to yourself. Don't make me let myself down before my company. (*resuming.*) Don't know yah! Don't know yah!

Jup. I am Jupiter, the King of the Gods. This is Apollo. This is Mars.

All kneel to them except THESPIS.

Thes. Oh! Then as I'm a respectable man, and rather particular about the company I keep, I think I'll go ...

Mars. What do you mean by that?

Thes. Why, the scandalous behaviour of some of the gods is perfectly common knowledge. And if you think we don't know about those shocking affairs with Danae - and Leda - and Europa, you're mistaken. Goodbye! (*about to go.*)

Jup. No - no - stop a bit. We want to consult you on a matter of great importance.

Thes. I can give you five minutes.

Jup. No matter. It will suffice.

Thes. (*to Thespians.*) I have been invited to confer with a brother manager. As our discussion is not for the ears of the *oi polloi*, I should be very much obliged if you would withdraw to a respectable distance.

They are reluctant to go.

Jup. (*steps forward.*) Allow me -

Throws thunderbolt. Thespians scream and go out.

Jup. There! Now we are alone. Who are you?

Thes. I am Thespis of the Thessalian Theatres.

Jup. The very man we want. Now as a judge of what the public likes, are you impressed with my appearance as the father of the gods?

Thes. Well to be candid with you,, I am not. In fact, I'm disappointed.

Jup. Disappointed?

Thes. Yes, you see you're so much out of repair. No, you don't come up to my idea of the part. Bless you, I've played you often.

Jup. You have!

Thes. To be sure I have.

Jup. And how have you dressed the part?

Thes. Fine commanding party in the prime of life. Thunderbolt - full beard - dignified manner - a good deal of this sort of thing ' Don't know yah! Don't know yah! Don't know yah!'

Imitating crosses L.

Jup. (*much affected.*) I - I'm very much obliged to you. It's very good of you. I - I - I used to be like that. I can't tell you how much I feel it. And do you find I'm an impressive character to play?

Thes. Well no, I can't say you are. In fact we don't use you much out of burlesque.

Jup. Burlesque!

Offended, walks up.

Thes. Yes, it's a painful subject, drop it, drop it. The fact is, you are not the gods you were - you're behind your age.

Jup. Well, but what are we to do? We feel that we ought to do something, but we don't know what.

Enter VENUS and DIANA during the following speech.

Thes. Nothing could be clearer. If you really wish to know at first hand the public opinion of the gods - accept a starring engagement with my company and tour the Thessalian provinces. You'll soon find out what the public thinks. I can see it now - 'The Gods every evening' - what a heading for a six-sheet poster - 'Limelight effects by the original Moon', - 'Apollo to sing between the acts', - 'The original Venus in a burlesque -'

Jup. I'm sure that's a very good idea, but you see, we're all a little past it don't you think?

APOLLO offended.

Venus. I am not past it. I would *love* to appear in a burlesque.

Thes. I'm afraid I haven't had the pleasure. Introduce us somebody.

Ap. Venus, this is Mr. Thespis of Thessalian Theatres. Mr. Thespis, *this* is Venus.

RECIT & SONG - (Venus with Diana, Mercury, Apollo, Jupiter & Mars)

Yes, yes, I am that miserable Beauty,
Whose lot it is to wither hearts and homes;
Who, in the course of her unhappy duty,
Brings grief and misery where'er she roams -
Brings grief and misery where'er she roams;
Where'ere she roams!

SONG

The man who on me sets his eyes -
He is my prize!
He can't escape - he pines, he dies.
He pines, he dies.
This state of things goes on from bad to worse;
That people call me the Domestic Curse,
The Domestic Curse!
I am so fair,
So passing fair,
So dangerously fair,
This state of things goes on from bad to worse;
That people call me the Domestic Curse!

Gods. She is so fair,
So passing fair,
So dangerously fair,

All. This state of things goes on from bad to worse;
That people call me/her the Domestic Curse!

Gods. The Domestic Curse!
The Domestic Curse!

Venus. The Domestic Curse!
The Domestic Curse!

Thes. (*attempting to conceal laughter.*) Not - ha - ha - not the *Venus*. Why, you're not a bit
lie your - ha - ha - your statue.

Venus. It was taken from the life, I'll have you know. I appeared in a vision to Mr. Milo
every day for a month - and twice on Saturdays.

Thes. You should have been more careful. These magic lantern effects are all very well
but they are liable to go out of focus. Take advice from an old pro. - use a gauze
next time.

Venus. Oh dear! I was afraid you'd say that.

Thes. Why don't you all go down to Earth, incog., mingle with the world, hear and see
what people think of you, and judge for yourselves as to the best means to restore
your influence?

Jup. Ah, but what's to become of Olympus in the meantime?

Thes. Lor bless you, don't distress yourself about that. I've a very good company, used
to take long parts on the shortest notice. Invest us with your powers and we'll fill
your places till you return. I will be Jupiter, my leading juvenile shall be Apollo,
my leading lady Venus, my first low comedian Bacchus.

SONG - (Thespis with Gods)

Were I a king in very truth,
And had a son - a guileless youth -
In probable succession;
To teach him patience, teach him tact,
How promptly in a fix to act,
He should adopt, in point of fact,
A manager's profession.
Th that condition he should stoop
(Despite a too fond mother),
With eight or ten "stars" in his troupe,
All jealous of each other!
All jealous of each other!
Oh, the man who can rule a theatrical crew,
Each member a genius (and some of them two),
And manage to humour them, early and late,
Can govern this tuppenny State!

Gods. Oh, the man who can rule a theatrical crew,
Each member a genius (and some of them two),
And manage to humour them, early and late,
Can govern this State, govern this State! this poor State!

Thespis. Both A and B rehearsal slight -
They say they'll be "all right at night"
(They've both to go to school yet);
C in each act *must* change her dress,
D *will* attempt to "square the press";
E won't play Romeo unless
His grandmother plays Juliet;
F claims all hoydens as her rights
(She's played them thirty seasons);
And G must show herself in tights
For two convincing reasons -
Two very well-shaped reasons!
Oh, the man who can drive a theatrical team,
With wheelers and leaders in order supreme,
Can govern and rule, with a wave of his fin,
The whole of the World with Olympus thrown in!

Gods. Oh, the man who can drive a theatrical team,
With wheelers and leaders in order supreme,
Can govern and rule, with a wave of his fin,
The whole of the World with Olympus thrown in!

Jup. (*aside.*) The offer's tempting. But suppose you fail?

Thes. Fail? Oh, we never fail in our profession. We've nothing but great successes!

Jup. Very well. If you success, you may return to earth with such gifts as only the gods can bestow upon you. But if you fail - you will be constituted 'Father of the Drama' and held accountable for everything that every author may write in ages to come.

Thes. I say - that's a bit much when you think of some of the things the put on in London these days! (*thinks about it.*) Well then. Never let it be said that I refused to assist a brother manager in distress.

Jup. Then it's a bargain?

Thes. It's a bargain.

They shake hands on it.

Jup. And that you many not be entirely without assistance, we will leave you Mercury, and whenever you find yourself in a difficulty you can consult him.

Enter MERCURY (trap C.)

No.7. - FINALE - ACT I

QUARTETTE

Jup. So that's arranged - you take my place, my boy,
While we make trial of a new existence.
At length I shall be able to enjoy
The pleasures I have envied from a distance.

Mer. Compelled upon Olympus here to stop,
While other gods go down to play the hero,
Don't be surprised if on this mountain top
You find your Mercury is down at zero!

Ap. To earth away to join in mortal acts,
And gather fresh material to write on,
Investigate more closely several facts,
That I for centuries have thrown some light on!

Dia. I, as the modest moon with crescent bow,
Have always shown a light to nightly scandal,
I must say I should like to go below,
And find out if the game is worth the candle!

Enter all the Thespians, summoned by MERCURY.

Mer. Here come your people!

Thes. People better now!

AIR - (Thespis)

While mighty Jove goes down below
With all the other deities,
I fill his place and wear his 'clo,'
The very part for me it is.
To mother earth to make a track,
They all are spurred and booted, too,
And you will fill, till they come back,
The parts you best are suited to.

Chorus. Here's a pretty tale for future Iliads and Odysseys,
Mortals are about to personate the gods and goddesses.
Now to set the world in order, we will work in unity.
Jupiter's perplexity is Thespis's opportunity.

SOLO - (Sparkeion)

Phoebus am I, with golden ray,
The god of day, the god of day,
When shadowy night has held her sway,
I make the goddess fly.
'Tis mine the task to wake the world,
In slumber curled, in slumber curled,
By me her charms are all unfurled,
The god of day am I!

Chorus. The god of day, the god of day,
That part shall our Sparkeion play.
Ha! ha! ha! ha!
The rarest fun and rarest fare,
That ever fell to mortal share!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

SOLO - (Nicemis)

I am the moon, the lamp of night,
I show a light - I show a light.
With radiant sheen I put to flight
The shadows of the sky.
By my fair rays, as you're aware,
Gay lovers swear - gay lovers swear,
While greybeards sleep away their care,
The lamp of night am I!

Chorus. The lamp of night - the lamp of night,
Nicemis plays, to her delight.
Ha! ha! ha! ha!
The rarest fun and rarest fare,
That ever fell to mortal share!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

SOLO - (Timidon)

Mighty old Mars - the god of war,
I'm destined for - I'm destined for -
A terribly famous conqueror,
With sword upon his thigh.
When armies meet with eager shout,
And warlike rout, and warlike rout,
You'll find me there without a doubt.
The god of war am I!

Chorus. The god of war, the god of war.
Great Timidon is destined for!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!
The rarest fun and rarest fare,
That ever fell to mortal share!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

SOLO - (Daphne)

When, as the fruit of warlike deeds,
The soldier bleeds, the soldier bleeds,
Calliope crowns heroic deeds,
With immortality.
From mere oblivion I reclaim
The soldier's name, the soldier's name,
And write it on the roll of fame,
The muse of fame am I!

Chorus. The muse of fame, the muse of fame,
Calliope is Daphne's name,
Ha! ha! ha! ha!
The rarest fun and rarest fare,
That ever fell to mortal share!
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

All. Here's a pretty tale for future Iliads and Odysseys,
Mortals are about to personate the gods and goddesses.
Now to set the world in order, we will work in unity.
Jupiter's perplexity is Thespis's opportunity.

Enter procession of old gods, they come down very much astonished at all they see, then passing by, ascend the platform that leads to the descent at the back.

Gods. *(JUPITER, DIANA, and APOLLO in corner are together.)*
We will go,
Down below,
Revels rare,
We will share,
Ha! ha! ha!

With a gay
Holiday,
All unknown,
And alone.
Ha! ha! ha!

All. Here's a pretty tale for future Iliads and Odysseys,
Mortals are about to personate the gods and goddesses.
Now to set the world in order, we will work in unity.
Jupiter's perplexity is Thespis's opportunity.

The gods, including those who have lately entered in procession, group themselves on rising ground at back. The Thespians (kneeling) bid them farewell.

CURTAIN

End of Act I

Act Two

SCENE:- The same scene as in Act I, with the exception that in place of the ruins that filled the foreground of the stage, the interior of a magnificent temple is seen, showing the background of the scene of Act I, through the columns of the portico at the back. High throne L.U.E. Low seats below it.

All the substitute gods and goddesses (that is to say, Thespians) are discovered grouped in picturesque attitudes about the stage, eating, drinking, and smoking, and singing the following verses:-

No.8. - CHORUS

Of all symposia,
The best by half,
Upon Olympus, here, awaits us,
We eat Ambrosia,
And nectar quaff -
It cheers but don't inebriate us.
We know the fallacies
Of human food,
So please to pass Olympian rosy,
We built up palaces,
Where ruins stood,
And find them much more snug and cosy.

SOLO - (Sillimon)

To work and think, my dear,
Up here, would be,
The height of conscientious folly,
So eat and drink, my dear,
I like to see,
Young people gay - young people jolly.
Olympian food, my love,
I'll lay long odds,
Will please your lips - those rosy portals,
What is the good, my love,
Of being gods,
If we must work like common mortals?

Chorus. Of all symposia,
The best by half,
Upon Olympus, here, awaits us,
We eat Ambrosia,
And nectar quaff -
It cheers but don't inebriate us.
We know the fallacies
Of human food,
So please to pass Olympian rosy,

We built up palaces,
Where ruins stood,
And find them much more snug and cosy.

Exeunt all but NICEMIS, who is dressed as DIANA, and PRETTEIA, who is dressed as VENUS. They take SILLIMON's arm and bring him down.

- Sill. Bless their little hearts, I can refuse them nothing. As the Olympian stage-manager I ought to be strict with them and make them do their duty, but I can't. Bless their little hearts, when I see the pretty little craft come sailing up to me with a wheedling smile on their pretty little figure-heads, I can't turn my back on 'em. I'm all bow, though I'm sure I try to be stern!
- Prett. You certainly are a dear old thing.
- Sill. She says I'm a dear old thing! Deputy Venus says I'm a dear old thing!
- Nice. It's her affectionate habit to describe everybody in those terms. *I* am more particular, but still even *I* am bound to admit that you certainly are a very dear old thing.
- Sill. Deputy Venus says I'm a dear old thing, and deputy Diana, who is much more particular, endorses it! Who could be severe with such deputy divinities?
- Prett. Do you know, I'm going to ask you a favour!
- Sill. Venus is going to ask me a favour!
- Prett. You see, I am Venus.
- Sill. No one who saw your face would doubt it.
- Nice. *(aside.)* No one who knew her *character* would.
- Prett. Well Venus, you know, is married to Mars.
- Sill. To Vulcan, my dear, to Vulcan. The exact connubial relation of the different gods and goddesses is a point on which we must be extremely particular.
- Prett. I beg your pardon - Venus is married to Mars.
- Nice. If she isn't married to Mars, she ought to be.
- Sill. Then that decides it - call it married to Mars.
- Prett. Married to Vulcan or married to Mars, what does it signify?
- Sill. My dear, it's a matter on which I have no personal feelings whatever.
- Prett. So that she is married to some one!
- Sill. Exactly! So that she is married to some one. Call it married to Mars.

Prett. Now here's my difficulty. *Timidon* takes the place of Mars, and *Timidon* is my father!

Sill. Then why object to Vulcan?

Prett. Because Vulcan is my grandfather!

Sill. But, my dear, what an objection! You are playing a part until the real gods return. That's all! Whether you are supposed to married to your father - or your grandfather, what does it matter? This passion for realism is the curse of the stage!

Prett. That's all very well, but I can't throw myself into a part that has already lasted a twelvemonth, when I have to make love to my father. It interferes with my conception of the characters. It spoils the part.

Sill. Well, well, I'll see what can be done.

Exit PRETTEIA.

Sill. That's always the way with beginners, they've no imaginative powers. A true artist ought to be superior to such considerations.

NICEMIS comes down R.

Sill. Well, Nicemis - I should say Diana - what's wrong with you? Don't you like your part?

Nice. Oh, immensely! It's great fun.

Sill. Don't you find it lonely out by yourself all night?

Nice. Oh, but I'm *not* alone all night!

Sill. But - I don't want to ask any injudicious questions - but who accompanies you?

Nice. Who? Why Sparkeion, of course.

Sill. Sparkeion? Well, but Sparkeion is Phoebus Apollo. (*Enter SPARKEION.*) He's the Sun, you know.

Nice. Of course he is; I should catch my death of cold, in the night air, if he didn't accompany me.

MADRIGAL - (Sparkeion, Nicemis, Sillimon, & Preposterous)

Nice. Banish sorrow till tomorrow,
Let me not rejoice alone;
Rob from pleasure all its' treasure,
For my love is all my own.

Spark. Banish reason for a season,
Place King Folly on his throne.

- All. Fairest flowers deck the hours -
For my/her love is all my own.
- Banish sorrow till tomorrow,
Let me/her not rejoice alone;
Rob from pleasure all its' treasure,
For my/her love is all my own.
Fa la la la!
For my/her love is all my/her own!
- Spark. Men tell of vows that droop and perish,
'Ere yet spring of life is past;
Within my heart my love I'll cherish,
While it beats that love will last.
- Sill. Banish reason for a season,
Place King Folly on his throne.
- All. Fairest flowers deck the hours -
For my/her love is all my own.
- Men tell of vows that droop and perish,
'Ere yet spring of life is past;
Within my/thy heart my/thy love I'll /you'll cherish,
While it beats that love will last.
Fa la la la!
While it beats that love will last!
- Spark. My dear Sillimon, it would never do for a young lady to be out alone all night. It wouldn't be respectable.
- Sill. There's a good deal of truth in that. But still - the Sun - at night - I don't like the idea. The original Diana always went out alone.
- Nice. I hope the original Diana is no rule for *me*. After all, what *does* it matter?
- Sill. To be sure - what *does* it matter?
- Spark. The sun at night, or in the daytime!
- Sill. So that he shines. That's all that's necessary. (*Exit NICEMIS R.U.E.*) But poor Daphne, what will she say to this?
- Spark. Oh, Daphne can console herself; young ladies soon get over this sort of thing. Did you never hear of the young lady who was engaged to Cousin Robin?
- Sill. Never.
- Spark. Then I'll sing it to you.

No.9. - SONG - (Sparkeion)⁵

Little maid of Arcadee
Sat on Cousin Robin's knee,
Thought in face and form and limb,
Nobody could rival him.
He was brave and she was fair,
Truth, they maid a pretty pair.
Happy little maiden, she -
Happy maid of Arcadee!

Moments fled as moments will
Happily enough, until,
After, say, a month or two,
Robin did as Robins do.
Weary of his lovers play,
Jilted her and went away.
Wretched little maiden, she -
Wretched maid of Arcadee!

To her little home she crept,
There she sat her down and wept,
Maiden wept as maidens will -
Grew so thin and pale - until -
Cousin Richard came to woo!
Then again the roses grew!
Happy little maiden, she -
Happy maid of Arcadee!

Exit SPARKEION, enter MERCURY.

Sill. Well, Mercury, my boy, you've had a year's experience of us here. How do we do it? I think we're rather an improvement on the original gods - don't you?

Mer. Well, you see, there's a good deal to be said on both sides of the question; you are certainly younger than the original gods, and, therefore, more active. On the other hand, they are certainly older than you, and have, therefore, more experience. On the whole I prefer *you*, because your mistakes amuse me.

No.10. - SONG - (Mercury)

Olympus is now in a terrible muddle,
The deputy deities all are at fault;
They splutter and splash like a pig in a puddle,
And dickens a one of 'em's earning his salt.

⁵The music for this number is also positively identifiable as it was published by Metzler & Co. in 1872 as a drawing room ballad. No connection with THESPIS was mentioned.

For Thespis as Jove is a terrible blunder,
Too nervous and timid - too easy and weak -
Whenever he's called on to lighten or thunder,
The thought of it keeps him awake for a week!

Then mighty Mars hasn't the pluck of a parrot,
When left in the dark he will quiver and quail;
And Vulcan has arms that would snap like a carrot,
Before he could drive in a tenpenny nail!
Then Venus's freckles are very repelling,
And Venus should not have a squint in her eyes;
The learned Minerva is weak in her spelling,
And scatters her h's all over the skies.

The Pluto, in kindhearted tenderness erring,
Can't make up his mind to let anyone die -
The Times has a paragraph ever recurring,
'Remarkable instance of longevity.'
On some it has come as a serious onus,
To others it's quite an advantage - in short,
While ev'ry Life Office declares a big bonus,
The poor undertakers are all in the court!

Then Cupid, the rascal, forgetting his trade is
To make men and women impartially smart,
Will only shoot arrows at pretty young ladies,
And never takes aim at a bachelor's heart.
The result of this freak - or whatever you term it,
Should cover the wicked young scamp with disgrace,
While ev'ry young man is as shy as a hermit,
Young ladies are popping all over the place!

This wouldn't much matter - for bashful and shy men,
When skilfully handled, are certain to fall,
But, alas, that determined young bachelor Hymen
Refuses to wed anybody at all!
He swears that Love's flame is the vilest of arsons,
And looks upon marriage as quite a mistake;
Now what in the world's to become of the parsons,
And what of the artist who sugars the cake?

In short, you will see from the facts that I'm showing,
The state of the case is exceedingly sad;
If Thespis's people go on as they're going,
Olympus will certainly go to the bad!
From Jupiter downwards there isn't a dab in it,
All of 'em quibble and shuffle and shirk;

A premier in Downing Street, forming his Cabinet,
Couldn't find people less fit for their work!

Enter THESPIS, L.U.E.

Thes. Sillimon, you can retire.

Sill. Sir, I -

Thes. Don't pretend you can't when I say you can. I've seen you do it - go! (*Exit SILLIMON bowing extravagantly, THESPIS imitates him.*) Well, Mercury, I've been in power one year today.

Mer. One year today. How do you like ruling the world?

Thes. Like it! Why, it's as straightforward as possible. Why there hasn't been a hitch of any kind since we came up here. Lor! The airs you gods and goddesses give yourselves are perfectly sickening. Why it's mere child's play!

Mer. Pretty simple, isn't it?

Thes. Simple? Why I could do it on my head!

Mer. Ah - I daresay you will do it on your head very soon.

Thes. What do you mean by *that* Mercury?

Mer. I mean that when you've turned the world *quite* topsy-turvy you won't know whether you're standing on your head or your heels.

Thes. Well, but, Mercury, it's all right at present.

Mer. Oh yes - as far as we know.

Thes. Well, but, you know, we know as much as anybody knows; you know; I believe, that the world's still going on.

Mer. Yes - as far as we can judge - much as usual.

Thes. Well, then, give the Father of the *Gods* his due, Mercury. Don't be envious of the Father of the *Gods*.

Mer. Well, but you see you leave so much to accident.

Thes. Well, Mercury, if I do, it's my principle. I am an easy man, and I like to make things as pleasant as possible. What did I do the day we took office? I called the company together and I said to them: 'Here we are, you know, gods and goddesses, no mistake about it, the real thing. Well, we have certain duties to discharge, let's discharge them intelligently. Don't let us be hampered by routine and red tape and precedent, let's set the original gods an example, and put a liberal interpretation on our duties. If it occurs to any one to try an experiment in his own department, let him try it, if he fails there's no harm done, if he succeeds it is a distinct gain to society. Take it easy,' I said, 'and at the same time, make

experiments. Don't hurry your work, do it slowly, and do it well.' And here we are after a twelvemonth, and not a single complaint or a single petition has reached me.

Mer. No - not yet.

Thes. What do you mean by, 'no, not yet'?

Mer. Well, you see, you don't understand these things. All petitions that are addressed by men to Jupiter pass through my hands, and it's my duty to collect them and present the once a year.

Thes. Oh, only once a year?

Mer. Only once a year.

Thes. And the year is up - ?

Mer. Today.

Thes. Oh, then I suppose there are *some* complaints?

Mer. Yes, there are *some*.

Thes. (*disturbed.*) Oh. Perhaps there are a good many?

Mer. There are a good many.

Thes. Oh. Perhaps there are a thundering lot?

Mer. There are a thundering lot.

Thes. (*very much disturbed.*) Oh!

Mer. You see you've been taking it so very easy - and so have most of your company.

Thes. Oh, who has been taking it easy?

Mer. Well, all except those who have been trying experiments.

Thes. Well but I suppose the experiments are ingenious?

Mer. Yes; they are ingenious, but on the whole ill-judged. But it's time to go and summon your court.

Thes. What for?

Mer. To hear the complaints. In five minutes they will be here.

Exit MERCURY.

Thes. (*very uneasy.*) I don't know how it is, but there is something in that young man's manner that suggests that the Father of the Gods has been taking it *too* easy. Perhaps it would have been better if I hadn't given my company so much scope. I wonder what they've been doing? I think I will curtail their discretion, though none of them appear to have much of the article. It seems a pity to deprive 'em of what little they have.

Enter DAPHNE, weeping.

Thes. Now then, Daphne, what's the matter with you?

Daph. Well, you know how disgracefully Sparkeion -

Thes. (*correcting her.*) Apollo -

Daph. Apollo, then - has treated me. He promised to marry me years ago, and now he's married to Nicemis.

Thes. Now look here. I can't go into that. You're in Olympus now and must behave accordingly. Drop your Daphne - assume your Calliope.

Daph. (*mysteriously.*) Quite so. That's it!

Thes. (*puzzled.*) Oh - that is it?

Daph. That is it, Thespis. I am Calliope, the Muse of Fame. Very good. This morning I was in the Olympian library, and I took down the only book there. Here it is.

Thes. (*taking it.*) Lemprière's Classical Dictionary. The Olympian Peerage.

Daph. Open it at Apollo.

Thes. (*opens it.*) It is done.

Daph. Read.

Thes. 'Apollo was several times married, among others to Issa, Bolina, Coronis, Chymene, Cyrene, Chione, Acacallis, and Calliope.'

Daph. *And* Calliope.

Thes. (*musings.*) Ha! I didn't know he was *married* to them.

Daph. (*severely.*) Sir! This is the Family Edition.

Thes. Quite so.

Daph. You couldn't expect a lady to read any other?

Thes. On no consideration. But in the original -

Daph. I go by the Family Edition.

Thes. Then by the Family Edition, Apollo is your husband.

Enter NICEMIS and SPARKEION.

Nice. Apollo your husband? He is my husband.

Daph. I beg your pardon. He is *my* husband.

Nice. Apollo is Sparkeion, and he's married to me.

Daph. Sparkeion is Apollo, and he's married to me.

Nice. He's my husband.

Daph. He's your brother.

Thes. Look here, Apollo, whose husband are you? Don't let's have any row about it; whose husband are you?

Spark. Upon my honour I don't know. I'm in a very delicate position, but I'll fall in with any arrangement Thespis may propose.

Daph. I've just found out that he's my husband, and yet he goes out every night with that 'thing'!

Thes. Perhaps he's trying an experiment.

Daph. I don't like my husband to make such experiments. The question is, who are we all and what is our relation to each other.

No.11. - QUARTETTE - (Daphne, Nicemis, Sparkeion, & Thespis)

Spark. You're Diana, I'm Apollo -
And Calliope is she.

Daph. He's your brother.

Nice. You're another.
He has fairly married me,

Daph. By the rules of this fair spot
I'm his wife and you are not -

Spar. & Daph. By the rules of this fair spot
She's/I'm my/his wife and you are not -

Nice. By this golden wedding ring,
I'm his wife, and you're a 'thing'.

Spar., Daph. & Nice.
By this golden wedding ring,
She's/I'm *my*/his wife, and you're/I'm a 'thing'.

All. Please will some one kindly tell us,
Who are our respective kin?
All of us/them are very jealous,
Neither of us/them will give in.

Nice. He's my husband I declare,
I espoused him properlee.

Spark. That is true, for I was there,
And I saw her marry me.

Daph. He's your brother - I'm his wife,
If we go by Lemprière,

Spark. So she is, upon my life,
Really that seems very fair.

Nice. You're my husband and no other,

Spark. That is true enough I swear,

Daph. I'm his wife, and you're *her* brother,

Spark. If we go by Lemprière.

Nice. *(crying.)* It will surely be unfair,
To decide by Lemprière.

Daphne. It will surely be quite fair,
To decide by Lemprière.

Spark. & Thes. How you settle I don't care,
Leave it all to Lemprière.

Thes. *(spoken.)* The verdict.
As Sparkeion is Apollo
Up in this Olympian clime,
Why, Nicemis, it will follow,
He's *her* husband, for the time - *(indicating DAPHNE.)*
When Sparkeion turns to mortal,
Joins once more the sons of men,
He may take *you* to his portal *(indicating NICEMIS)*
He will be your husband then.
That oh that is my decision,
'Cording to my mental vision,
Put an end to all collision,
That oh that is my decision.
My decision - my decision.

All. That oh that is his/my decision,
'Cording to his/my mental vision,
Put an and to all collision,
That oh that is his/my decision.
His/My decision - his/my decision.

*Exeunt THESPIS, NICEMIS, SPARKEION and DAPHNE. SPARKEION with
DAPHNE, NICEMIS weeping with THESPIS.*

*Mysterious Music. Enter JUPITER, APOLLO and MARS, from below, at the back of the
stage. All wear cloaks as disguise and all are masked.*

No.12. - RECIT. - (Jupiter, Apollo, & Mars)

Oh rage and fury! Oh shame and sorrow!
We'll be resuming our ranks tomorrow,
Since from Olympus we have departed,
We've been distracted and brokenhearted,
Oh wicked Thespis! Oh villain scurvy;
Through him Olympus is topsy turvy!
Compelled to silence to grin and bear it!
He's caused our sorrow, and he must share it.
Where is the monster! Avenge his blunders,
He has awakened Olympian thunders.

Enter MERCURY.

Jup. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

Ap. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

Mars. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

Mer. *(in great terror.)* Please sir, what have I done sir?

Jup. What did we leave you behind for?

Mer. Please sir, that's the question I asked when you went away.

Jup. Was it not that Thespis might consult you whenever he was in a difficulty?

Mer. Well, here I've been, ready to be consulted, chockfull of reliable information -
running over with celestial maxims - advice gratis ten to four - after twelve ring the
night bell in cases of emergency.

Jup. And hasn't he consulted you?

Mer. Not he - he disagrees with me about everything.

Jup. He must have misunderstood me. I told him to consult you whenever he was in a
fix.

Mer. He must have thought you said *insult*. Why whenever I open my mouth he jumps down my throat. It isn't pleasant to have a fellow constantly jumping down your throat - especially when he always disagrees with you. It's the sort of thing I can't digest.

Jup. *(in a rage.)* Send him here I'll talk to him.

Enter THESPIS. He is much terrified.

Jup. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

Ap. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

Mars. *(recit.)* Oh Monster!

THESPIS sings in great terror, which he endeavours to conceal.

Jup. Well Sir, the year is up today.

Ap. And a nice mess you've made of it.

Mars. You've deranged the whole scheme of society.

Thes. *(aside.)* There's going to be a row! *(aloud and very familiarly.)* My dear boy - I do assure you -

Jup. *(recit.)* Be respectful!

Ap. *(recit.)* Be respectful!

Mars. *(recit.)* Be respectful!

Thes. I don't know what you allude to. With the exception of getting our scene-painter to 'run up' this temple, because we found the ruins draughty, we haven't touched a thing. *Why, with the exception of the Tichborne trial which has got another fortnight, everything is absolutely normal.*⁶

Jup. *(recit.)* Oh story teller!

Ap. *(recit.)* Oh story teller!

Mars. *(recit.)* Oh story teller!

Thes. My dear fellows, you're distressing yourselves unnecessarily. The court of Olympus is about to assemble to listen to the complaints of the year, if any. But there are none, or next to none. Let the Olympians assemble!

Enter Thespians

⁶This is a topical allusion to a long running trial, in progress at the time of the original production.

CHORUS

- Men. As before you we defile,
Eloia! Eloia!
Pray you, gentles, do not smile
If we shout in classic style,
Eloia!
We've been gods a year it's true,
Wedded now each other too,
So we sing for all of you,
Eloia! Eloia!
- Women. Opoponax! Opoponax! Opoponax! Eloia!
Opoponax! Opoponax! Opoponax! Eloia! Eloia!
- All. Wreaths of bay and ivy twine,
Eloia! Eloia!
Fill the bowl with Lesbian wine,
And to revelry incline -
Eloia!
For as gaily we pass on
Probably we shall, anon,
Sing a Diergeticon -
Eloia! Eloia! Eloia! Eloia!
- | | |
|---|---|
| Women. | Men. |
| Opoponax, opoponax, opoponax,
Eloia! | Opoponax, opoponax, opoponax,
Eloia! |
| Opoponax, opoponax, opoponax,
Eloia! | Eloia! |
| Eloia! | Eloia! |
| Eloia! | Eloia! |

THESPIS takes chair. JUPITER, APOLLO, and MARS sit below him.

- Thes. Ladies and gentlemen. It seems that it is usual for the gods to assemble once a year to listen to mortal petitions. It doesn't seem to me to be a good plan, as work is liable to accumulate; but as I'm particularly anxious not to interfere with Olympian precedent, but to allow everything to go on as it has always been accustomed to - why, we'll say no more about it. *(aside.)* But how shall I account for your presence?
- Jup. Say we are gentlemen of the press.

Thes. That all our proceedings may be open and above-board I have communicated with the most influential members of the Athenian press, and I beg to introduce to your notice three of it's most distinguished members. They bear marks emblematic of the anonymous character of modern journalism. (*business of introduction. THESPIS very uneasy.*) Now then, if you're all ready we will begin.

SONG - (Thespis) with Chorus

At the outset I may mention it's my sovereign intention
To revive the classic memories of Athens at it's best,
For the company possesses all the necessary dresses
And a course of quiet cramming will supply us with the rest.
We've a choir hyporchematic (that is, ballet operatic)
Who respond to the *choreutae* of that cultivated age,
And our clever chorus-master, all but captious criticaster,
Would accept as the *choregus* of the early Attic stage.
This return to classic ages is considered in their wages,
Which are always calculated by the day or by the week -
And I'll pay 'em (if they'll back me) all in *oboloi* and *drachmae*,
Which they'll get (if they prefer it) at the Kalends that are Greek!

Confidentially to audience.

At this juncture I may mention
That this erudition sham
Is but classical pretension,
The result of steady "cram"!
Periphrastic methods spurning,
To this audience discerning
I admit this show of learning
Is the fruit of steady "cram"!

Chorus. Periphrastic methods spurning,
To this audience discerning
I admit this show of learning
Is the fruit of steady "cram"!

Thes. In the period Socratic every dining-room was Attic
(Which suggests an architecture of a topsy-turvy kind),
There they'd satisfy their thirst on a *recherché* cold **αριστον**,
Which is what they called their lunch - and so may you , if you're inclined
As they gradually got on, they'd **τραπεσθαι προς τον ποτον**
(Which is Attic for a steady and a conscientious drink).
But they mixed their wine with water - which I'm sure they didn't oughter -
And we modern Grecians know a trick worth two of that I think!
Then came rather risky dances (under certain circumstances)
Which would shock that worthy gentleman, the Licensor of Plays,
Corybantian *maniac* kick - Dionysiac or Bacchic -
And the Dithyrambic revels of those undecorus days.

Confidentially to audience.

And perhaps I'd better mention,
Lest alarming you I am,
That it isn't our intention
To perform a Dithyamb -
It displays a lot of stocking,
Which is always very shocking,
And of course I'm only mocking
At the prevalence of "cram"!

Chorus. It displays a lot of stocking,
Which is always very shocking,
And of course I'm only mocking
At the prevalence of "cram"!

Thes. Yes, on reconsideration, there are customs of that nation
Which are not in strict accordance with the habits of our day,
And when I come to codify, their rules I mean to modify,
Or Mrs. Grundy, p'r'aps, may have a word or two to say.
For they hadn't macintoshes or umbrellas or goloshes -
And a shower with their dresses must have played the very deuce,
And it must have been unpleasing when they caught a fit of sneezing,
For, it seems, of pocket-handkerchiefs they didn't know the use.
They wore little underclothing - scarcely anything - or no-thing -
And their dress of Coan silk was quite transparent in design -
Well, in fact, in summer weather, something like the "altogether,"
And it's *there*, I rather fancy, I shall have to draw the line!

Confidentially to audience.

And again I wish to mention
That this erudition sham
Is but classical pretension,
The result of steady "cram."
Yet my classic lore aggressive
(If you'll pardon the possessive)
Is exceedingly impressive
When you're passing an exam.

Chorus. Yet his classic lore aggressive
(If you'll pardon the possessive)
Is exceedingly impressive
When you're passing an exam.
Wreaths of bay and ivy twine,
Eloia! Eloia!
Fill the bowl with Lesbian wine,
And to revelry incline -
Eloia!

MERCURY brings tremendous bundle of petitions.

Mer. Here is the agenda.

Thes. What's that? The petitions?

Mer. Some of them. *(opens one and reads.)* Ah, I thought there'd be a row about it.

Thes. Why, what's wrong now?

Mer. Why, it's been a foggy Friday in November for the last six months and the Athenians are tired of it.

Thes. There's no pleasing some people. This craving for perpetual change is the curse of the country. Friday's a very nice day.

Mer. So it is, but Friday six months long! - it gets monotonous.

Jup., Ap., & Mars. *(in recit., rising.)* It's perfectly ridiculous.

Thes. *(calling them.)* It shall be arranged. Cymon!

Cymon. *(as Time with the usual attributes.)* Sir!

Thes. *(introducing him to the three gods.)* Allow me - Father Time - rather young at present but even Time must have a beginning. In course of Time, Time will grow older. Now then, Father Time, what's this about a wet Friday in November for the last six months?

Cym. Well, the fact is, I've been trying an experiment. Seven days in the week is an awkward number. It can't be halved. Two's into seven won't go.

Thes. *(tries it on his fingers.)* Quite so - quite so.

Cym. So I abolished Saturday.

Jup., Ap., & Mars. *(rising.)* Oh but -

Thes. Do be quiet. He's a very intelligent young man and knows what he is about. So you abolished Saturday. And how did you find it answer?

Cym. Admirably.

Thes. You hear? He found it answer admirably.

Cym. Yes, only Sunday refused to take its place.

Thes. Sunday refused to take its place?

Cym. Sunday comes after Saturday - Sunday won't go on duty after Friday, Sunday's principles are very strict. That's where my experiment sticks.

Thes. Well, but why November? Come, why November?

Cym. December can't begin till November has finished. November can't finish because I've abolished Saturday. There again my experiment sticks.

Thes. Well, but why wet? Come now, why wet?

Cym. Ah, that's your fault. You turned the rain on six months ago, and you forgot to turn it off again.

Jup., Ap., & Mars. *(rising - recitative.)* Oh this is monstrous!

All. Order, order.

Thes. Gentlemen, pray be seated. *(to the others.)* The liberty of the press, one can't help it. *(to the three gods.)* It is easily settled. Athens has had a wet Friday in November for the last six months. Let them have a blazing Tuesday in July for the next twelve.

Jup., Ap., & Mars. But -

All. Order, order.

Thes. Now then, the next article.

Mer. Here's a petition from the Peace Society. They complain that there are no more battles.

Mars. *(springing up.)* What!

Thes. Quiet there! Good dog - soho; Timidon!

Tim. *(as MARS.)* Here.

Thes. What's this about there being no battles?

Tim. I've abolished battles; it's an experiment.

Mars. *(springing up.)* Oh come, I say -

Thes. Quiet then! *(to TIMIDON.)* Abolished battles?

Tim. Yes, you told us on taking office to remember two things, to try experiments and to take it easy. I found I couldn't take it easy while there were any battles to attend to, so I tried the experiment and abolished battles. And then I took it easy. The Peace Society ought to be very much obliged to me.

Thes.⁷ *Obliged to you! Why, confound it! Since battles have been abolished war is universal.*

Tim. War universal?

⁷In recent performances this and the first part of Thespi's next speech, typed in green, were allocated to Mercury which makes more sense as Thespi is obviously unaware of the results of Timidon's experiment.

Thes. To be sure it is! Now that nations can't fight, no two of 'em are on speaking terms. The dread of fighting was the only thing that kept them civil to each other. Let battles be restored and peace reign supreme.

Mer. (*reads.*) Here's a petition from the associated wine merchants of Mytilene.

Thes. Well, what's wrong with the associated wine merchants of Mytilene? Are there no grapes this year?

Mer. Plenty of grapes; more than usual.

Thes. (*to the gods.*) You observe, there is no deception; there are more than usual.

Mer. There are plenty of grapes, only they are full of ginger beer.

Jup., Ap., & Mars. Oh, come I say.

Rising. They are put down by THESPIS.

Thes. Eh? What. (*much alarmed.*) Bacchus?

Tips. (*as BACCHUS.*) Here!

Thes. There seems to be something unusual with the grapes of Mytilene; they only grow ginger beer.

Tips. And a very good thing too.

Thes. It's all very well in its way, but it is not what one looks for from grapes.

Tips. Beloved master, a week before we came up here you insisted on my taking the pledge. By so doing you rescued me from my otherwise inevitable misery. I cannot express my thanks. Embrace me!

Attempts to embrace him.

Thes. Get out, don't be a fool. Look here, you know you're the god of wine.

Tips. I am.

Thes. (*very angry.*) Well, do you consider it consistent with your duty as the god of wine to make the grapes yield nothing but ginger beer?

Tips. Do you consider it consistent with my duty as a total abstainer, to grow anything stronger than ginger beer?

Thes. But your duty as the god of wine -

Tips. In every respect in which my duty as the god of wine can be discharged consistently with my duty as a total abstainer, I will discharge it. But when the functions clash, everything must give way to the pledge. My preserver!

Attempts to embrace him.

Thes. Don't be a confounded fool! This can be arranged. We can't give over the wine this year, but at least we can improve the ginger beer. ⁸Let all the ginger beer be extracted from it immediately.

Mer. I'm afraid that that is going to be rather difficult as the harvest will take some time. You see, Deputy Ceres has caused all the crops to grow topsy-turvy and the grapes will have to be dug out like potatoes.

Thes. (*collapses into chair.*) Oh no!

Mer. Do you want any more? (*THESPIS waves him on.*) Here's the next article. Deputy Venus has caused all the babies to be born grown up. (*consternation.*) This wouldn't be so bad, but think of what it's doing to the birth rate!

Prett. (*steps forward. timidly.*) - er - it was an experiment -

No.13. - FINALE

Jup., Mars., and Ap. (*aside.*)
We can't stand this,
We can't stand this,
It's much too strong,
We can't stand this.
It would be wrong,
Extremely wrong,
If we stood this,
If we stand this,
If we stand this,
We can't stand this.

Daph., Spark., Nice.
Great Jove, this interference,
Is more than we can stand;
Of them make a clearance,
With your majestic hand.

Jup. This cool audacity, it beats us hollow.
(*removing mask.*) I'm Jupiter!

Mars. (*removing mask.*) I'm Mars!

Ap. (*removing mask.*) I'm Apollo!

Enter DIANA and all the other gods and goddesses.

⁸This is probably a misprint. The line should probably read, "Let all the ginger be extracted from it immediately."

All. (*kneeling with their foreheads to the ground.*)

Jupiter, Mars and Apollo
Have quitted their dwellings of men;
The other gods quickly will follow,
And what will become of us then.
Oh, pardon us, Jove and Apollo,
Pardon us, Jupiter, Mars;
Oh, see us in misery wallow,
Cursing our terrible stars.

CHORUS and BALLET

All the Thespians.

Let us remain, we beg of you pleadingly!

Three gods. Let them remain, they beg of us pleadingly!

Thes. Life on Olympus suits us exceedingly.

Gods. Life on Olympus suits them exceedingly.

Thes. Let us remain, we pray in humility!

Gods. Let them remain, they pray in humility!

Thes. If we have shown some little ability.

Gods. If they have shown some little ability.
Let us remain, etc.

BALLET⁹

No.1. Introduction - Allegro moderato

No.2. Pas de Châles - Andante

No.3. Valse

No.4. St. George and the Dragon

No.5. Galop

Jupiter. Enough, your reign is ended;
Upon this sacred hill
Let him be apprehended,
And learn our awful will.

⁹THESPIS was advertised at various stages, as having a 'Grand Ballet' in both acts, in the first act, or in the second act. This is the most likely position of the second act divertissement. The music for this was recently discovered filed away with the orchestral parts for Sullivan's 1867 ballet L'ILE ENCHANTÉE.

Away to earth, contemptible comedian,
And hear our curse, before we set you free;
You shall all be eminent tragedians,
Whom no one ever goes to see!

Sill. Whom no one -

Spark. Whom no one -

Thes. Whom no one -

All. Ever, ever goes to see.

Thes. Now, here you see the arrant folly
Of doing your best to make things jolly.
I've ruled the world like a chap in his senses,
Observe the terrible consequences.
Great Jupiter, whom nothing pleases,
Splutters and swears, and kicks up breezes,
And sends us home in a mood avengin',
In double quick time, like a railroad engine.
And this he does without compunction,
Because I have discharged with unction
A highly complicated function,
Complying with his own injunction.
Fol, lol, lay.

Chorus. And this he does without compunction,
Because he has discharged with unction
A highly complicated function,
Complying with his own injunction.
Fol, lol, lay.

The gods drive the Thespians away. The Thespians prepare to descend the mountain as

THE CURTAIN FALLS