

ARATUS—"Phenomena," (4)

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プリンス散文譯——アラートの天象詩

Argo, stern forward, is driven against the tail of the great Dog, for not after this manner is its usual course, but like as sailors upon entering a harbour, turn the ship's rudder in such a manner as suddenly to reverse the vessel and, backing, run it around. Thus from the stern, Jason's Argo is drawn. At certain parts are few and faint stars, even from the prow to the main mast, while in other parts the stars are very splendid. Its rudder is propped up by the hinder feet of the foremost Dog. The great Whale now advancing worries the flying Andromeda although as yet far off; moreover she is making way towards the Thracian coast under the influence of the northerly wind; but the south wind brings on the dreaded Whale, lying somewhat below the Ram and the Fishes, upon the star-lit stream, for wonderful to say there are some of the remnants of the River whose many tears are carried beneath the feet of the Gods and the left foot of Orion. There, too, are the chains which bind the fishes' tails where both unite and are suspended. Behind the back of the monster the two combine as one star situated upon the first joint of the Whale's neck. It is, however, of moderate magnitude, lying between Argo's rudder and the Whale, while some indistinct stars lie beneath the sides of the Hare; they are few in number and unlike the form of any known creature, but proceed in order along the same path year by year. Thoughtful men have observed them and have decided to give them some name, which may be determined upon, for it was not possible to learn, and call not name, each one separately.

Many stars there are, and many too, of equal size and color, while the whole are distributed around; wherefor it was fit to arrange them into groups, and in due order, to portray their form; thus they are quickly named so that as each star rises it is recognized and called by its appointed name. Those however beneath the hunted Hare are very obscure and nameless.

Beneath the Goat, and to the southward, swims another fish against the Whale, besides two former ones, which is called the Southern Fish. Likewise others stars are scattered beneath the Water-bearer between the Whale and this other fish, but they are dim and nameless. Near them and to the right of the brilliant Water-bearer are other stars scattered here and there, like a stream of water, and although revolving with feeble light are pleasant to behold. Between them, and at a moderate distance, are two other fixed stars. Another star, beautiful and brilliant, may be seen below the feet of the Water-bearer and one, less bright, beneath the Whale's tail. All these are called the Stream (Eridanus). Other small stars just beyond the Archer, and beneath his fore-feet, revolve, arranged in circular fashion,

Beneath the painful sting of the great Scorpion, to the south, hangs the Altar, which you may perceive, does not remain long above the horizon, for it rises far from Arcturus with whom, although it rises, yet quickly sets below the western horizon. With respect to this Altar, the primeval Night, sorrowing for distressed sailors, made this constellation a sure sign to the mariner of a coming storm; for foundering ships cause her much sorrow. In other ways also having pity upon storm-tossed men, she teaches them other warnings. Therefore, when at sea, many clouds surrounding, she would not wish that you should see this star (Arcturus), shining brightly in a cloudless sky, but especially if, higher up, partly obscured by a thick cloud, as frequently happens, the autumnal northern blast arises; often also Night herself gives a sign from the south—a timely warning to unhappy sailors, who, if they duly observe the warning and prepare immediately for what may happen, their toil is so much the lighter. But if a gale of wind from on high strikes the ship wholly unprepared, and all the sails unfurled, it sometimes happens that they are almost at once immersed. At such a time, having sought the assistance of Zeus, the strength of the northern blast has been overcome and after much suffering they are again enabled to see each other upon their ship. But when that sign is present fear the south wind, until you perceive the lighting up of the northern horizon. The Centaur's shoulder should stand as far from the Western as from the Eastern Sea, a mist partially obscuring him. Above all, when Night still shows those signs, and the Altar shines brightly, you have little to fear from the South wind, but strictly observe the Eastern, you would find the Centaur underlying two other constellations. The human part of him lies beneath the Scorpion, the hinder horse part beneath the claws; but his right hand has the appearance of continuously stretching against the exterior of the Altar. Also another beast is taken firmly hold of by him as old men used to say; besides another star revolves not far distant called the Water-snake which is lively and of great length, while its head reaches as far as the center of the Crab; but the greater part of its body lies below the Lion. Above, the Centaur hangs its tail, a considerable portion of which lies in the center of the Crab and its end assumes the form of a Crow biting, as it were, the Serpent's fold.

Here beneath the Twins, brightly shines Procyon. These you may see in after years returning in order and in due time. All these, firmly placed, are wisely fixed in the sky to be seen as night proceeds. But there are five other stars, by no means fixed, which wander everywhere throughout the twelve signs. You cannot gain any information where they may be found, for all are wanderers, and their orbital years are long. Likewise the time may be far distant when they shall be found in one sign. Of these I am not able to speak with confidence, as of the fixed stars, or to state what may be their orbits among the constellations. Moreover, four of these wind around, one of which is more especially marked by him who himself takes notice of the completed seasons of the year. But the signs, well ordered at every point, are many and lie around but everywhere in unison. Those which are fixed in relation to each other all correspond in magnitude each to each. When the night is clear and shows the stars splendidly, especially when not rendered dim by the light of a new moon, they all shine conspicuously in the darkness.