

# Truth and Her Companions

By Richard Garnett

*Jupiter.* Daughter Truth, is this a befitting manner of presenting yourself before your divine father? You are positively dripping; the floor of my celestial mansion would be a swamp but for your praiseworthy economy in wearing apparel. Whence, in the name of the Naiads, do you come?

*Truth.* From the bottom of a well, father.

*Jupiter.* I thought, my daughter, that you had descended upon earth in the capacity of a benefactress of men rather than of frogs.

*Truth.* Such, indeed, was my purpose, father, and I accordingly repaired to the great city.

*Jupiter.* The city of the Emperor Apollyon?

*Truth.* The same; and I there obtained an audience of the monarch.

*Jupiter.* What passed?

*Truth.* I took the liberty of observing to him, father, that, having obtained his throne by perjury, and cemented it by blood, and maintained it by hypocrisy, he could entertain no hope of preserving it unless the collective baseness of his subjects should be found to exceed his own, which was not probable.

*Jupiter.* What reply did he vouchsafe to these admonitions?

*Truth.* He threatened to cut out my tongue. Perceiving that this would interfere with my utility to mankind, I retired somewhat precipitately from the Imperial presence, marvelling that I should ever have been admitted, and resolved never to be found there for the future. I then proceeded to the Nobles.

*Jupiter.* What said you to them?

*Truth.* I represented to them that they were, as a class, both arrogant and luxurious, and would, indeed, have long ago become insupportable, only that the fabric which their rapacity was for ever striving to erect, their extravagance as perpetually undermined. I further commented upon the insecurity of any institution dependent solely upon prescription. Finding these suggestions unpalatable, I next addressed myself to the priesthood.

*Jupiter.* Those holy men, my daughter, must have rejoiced at the opportunity of learning from you which portion of their traditions was impure or fabricated, and which authentic and sublime.

*Truth.* The value they placed upon my instructions was such that they wished to reserve them exclusively for themselves, and proposed that they should be delivered within the precincts of a certain subterranean apartment termed a dungeon, the key of which should be kept by one of their order. Whereupon I betook myself to the philosophers.

*Jupiter.* Your reception from these professed lovers of wisdom, my daughter, was, no doubt, all that could be expected.

*Truth.* It was all that could be expected, my father, from learned and virtuous men, who had already framed their own systems of the universe without consulting me.

*Jupiter.* You probably next addressed yourself to the middling orders of society?

*Truth.* I can scarcely say that I did, father; for although I had much to remark concerning their want of culture, and their servility, and their greed, and the absurdity of many of their customs, and the rottenness of most of their beliefs, and the thousand ways in which they spoiled lives that might have been beautiful and harmonious, I soon discovered that they were so absolutely

swayed by the example of the higher orders that it was useless to expostulate with them until I should have persuaded the latter.

*Jupiter.* You returned, then, to the latter with this design?

*Truth.* On the contrary, I hastened to the poor and needy, whom I fully acquainted with the various wrongs and oppressions which they underwent at the hands of the powerful and the rich. And here, for the first time, I found myself welcome. All listened with gratitude and assent, and none made any endeavour to stone me or imprison me, as those other unprincipled persons had done.

*Jupiter.* That was indeed satisfactory, daughter. But when you proceeded to point out to these plebeians how much of their misery arose from their own idleness, and ignorance, and dissoluteness, and abasement before those higher in station, and jealousy of the best among themselves—what said they to that?

*Truth.* They expressed themselves desirous of killing me, and indeed would have done so if my capital enemies, the priests, had not been beforehand with them.

*Jupiter.* What did they?

*Truth.* Burned me.

*Jupiter.* Burned you?

*Truth.* Burned me in the market-place. And, but for my peculiar property of reviving from my ashes, I should not be here now. Upon reconsolidating myself, I felt in such a heat that I was fain to repair to the bottom of the nearest well. Finding myself more comfortable there than I had ever yet been on earth, I have come to ask permission to remain.

*Jupiter.* It does not appear to me, daughter, that the mission you have undertaken on behalf of mankind can be efficiently discharged at the bottom of a well.

*Truth.* No, father, nor in the middle of a fire either.

*Jupiter.* I fear you are too plain and downright in your dealings with men, and deter where you ought to allure.

*Truth.* I were not Truth, else, but Flattery. My nature is a mirror's—to exhibit reality with plainness and faithfulness.

*Jupiter.* It is no less the nature of man to shatter every mirror that does not exhibit to him what he wishes to behold.

*Truth.* Let me, therefore, return to my well, and let him who wishes to behold me, if such there be, repair to the brink and look down.

*Jupiter.* No, daughter, you shall not return to your well. I have already perceived that you are not of yourself sufficient for the office I have assigned to you, and I am about to provide you with two auxiliaries. You are Truth. Tell me how this one appears to you.

*Truth.* Oh, father, the beautiful nymph! how mature, and yet how comely! how good-humoured, yet how gentle and grave! Her robe is closely zoned; her upraised finger approaches her lip; her foot falls soft as snow. What is her name?

*Jupiter.* Discretion. And this other?

*Truth.* Oh, father! the cordial look, the blooming cheek, the bright smile that is almost a laugh, the buoyant step, and the expansive bosom! What name bears she?

*Jupiter.* Good Nature. Return, my daughter, to earth; continue to enlighten man's ignorance and to reprove his folly; but let Discretion suggest the occasion, and Good Nature inspire the wording of your admonitions. I cannot engage that you may not, even with these precautions, sometimes pay a visit to the stake; and if, when an adventure of this sort appears imminent,

Discretion should counsel a temporary retirement to your well, I am sure Good Nature will urge nothing to the contrary.