

The Gods and The Giants

by R.E. Francillon

When Jupiter became god and king of the whole world, he made his two brothers, Neptune and Pluto, kings under him. He made Neptune god and king of the sea: Pluto he made god and king of Hades. Hades was a world underground, in the middle of the earth, where men and women go and live when they die.

The next thing that Jupiter did was to marry Juno. Their wedding was the grandest and most wonderful that ever was seen. Invitations were sent out to all the gods and nymphs. The nymphs were a sort of fairies—some of them waited upon the goddesses; some of them lived in rivers, brooks, and trees. All of them came to the wedding, except one nymph named Chelone.

She refused to come: and, besides that, she laughed at the whole thing. When they told her that Jupiter was going to marry Juno, she laughed so loud that Jupiter himself could hear her. I don't know why she thought it so ridiculous, but I can guess pretty well. I expect she knew Juno's bad temper better than Jupiter did, and how Jupiter was just the sort of husband to spoil any wife's temper. But Jupiter was very fond of Juno just then, and he did not like to be laughed at on his wedding-day. So he had Chelone turned into a tortoise, so that she might never be able to laugh again. Nobody ever heard a tortoise laugh, nor ever will.

Jupiter and Juno set up their palace in the sky, just over the top of Mount Olympus, a high mountain in the north of Greece. And very soon, I am sorry to say, his quarrels with Juno began—so that, after all, poor Chelone had been right in not thinking much of the grand wedding. He always kept her for his Queen; but he cared for a great many Titanesses and nymphs much more than he did for her, and married more of them than anybody can reckon, one after another. This made Juno very angry, and they used to quarrel terribly. But something was going to happen which was almost as bad as quarreling, and which must have made Jupiter envy the peace and comfort of old Saturn, who had become only an earthly king.

The Titans made another war. And this time they got the help of the Giants, who were more terrible even than the Titans. They were immense monsters, some almost as tall as the tallest mountain, fearfully strong, and horribly ugly, with hair miles long, and rough beards down to their middle. One of them had fifty heads and a hundred hands. Another had serpents instead of legs. Others, called Cyclopes, had only one eye, which was in the middle of their foreheads. But the most terrible of all was a giant named Typhon. He had a hundred heads, each like a dragon's, and darted flames from his mouth and eyes. A great battle was fought between the gods and the giants. The giants tried to get into the sky by piling up the mountains one upon another. They used oak-trees for clubs, and threw hills for stones. They set whole forests on fire, and tossed them up like torches to set fire to the sky. And at last Typhon's hundred fiery mouths set up a hundred different yells and roars all at once, so loud and horrible that Jupiter and all the gods ran away into Egypt and hid themselves there in the shapes of animals. Jupiter turned himself into a ram, and Juno became a cow.

But, when their fright was over, the gods came back into their own shapes, and fought another battle, greater and more terrible than before. And this time the gods won. Some of the giants were crushed under mountains or drowned in the sea. Some were taken prisoners: and of these some were beaten to death and others were skinned alive. Atlas, who was the tallest, was ordered to spend all his

days in holding up the sky on his shoulders,—how it was held up before, I do not know. Some of the Cyclopes were set to work in making thunderbolts for Jupiter. They became the blacksmiths of the gods, and Mount Ætna, which is a volcano, was one of their forges.

After this, the gods lived in peace: though Jupiter and Juno never left off quarreling a good deal. Jupiter made most of his children gods and goddesses, and they all lived together over Mount Olympus, ruling the earth and the sky, and the air, the sun, and the stars. You will read the stories of all of them. They used to eat a delicious food called Ambrosia, and their wine was a wonderful drink called Nectar. Hebe, the goddess of Youth, mixed and poured out the Nectar, and Ganymede was Jupiter's own page and cup-bearer. These gods and goddesses of the sky were a sort of large family, with Jupiter and Juno for father and mother. Of course Neptune with his gods of the sea, and Pluto with his gods of Hades, were like different families, and lived in their own places.

Whenever it thunders, that is the voice of Jupiter. One of the planets is named after him—it is a beautiful large white star. In pictures, he is a large, strong man, with a thick brown beard, looking like a king. He sits on a throne, with lightning in his hand, and an eagle by his side. Juno is a large, beautiful woman, tall and grand, looking like a queen, with a proud face and splendid eyes. The peacock is her favorite bird, just as Jupiter's is the eagle.

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