Russell's Anthology of Greek Prose

Text 78: The sorcerer's apprentice (Lucian)

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a) Source:

Philopseudeis 33-36.

b) Background (synopsis quoted from Russell's book):

"Lucian's Philopseudeis ("Lovers of lies") is a collection of fantastic stories, strung together in a dialogue. Here Eucrates tells the story of the man who learned ony the first half of the spell and could not stop the inevitable disaster."

c) Language comment:

This is perhaps one of the easiest passages in the Russell Anthology, only some accumulation of words with the same meaning in the last line of the text may present some difficulty. Simple, lucid narrative style - unperiodic, often with participles.

d) Content:

Our main character, a young man (his name is not mentioned) who happens to be travelling through Egypt, knows Pancrates, a priest and magician, who has the power of swimming with crocodiles without being attacked and of performing other wonderful deeds. Pancrates persuades him to leave all he has and to accompany him. In the course of time, the young man realises that Pancrates has the power of making wooden sticks walk and serve them as their slaves; he tries to imitate his master one day when he is out of the house by repeating the spell and indeed he manages to turn the wooden sticks into servants, but, as expected, things get out of control.

e) Distribution of content:

(numbers refer to the lines in the printed edition)

1-8:   Visit to the talking statue.
8-15:   Description of Pancrates.
16-23: Pancrates' incredible deeds.
24-34: Life with Pancrates.
35-44: Discovery of the secret.
44-50: Things get out of control.
50-53: Pancrates leaves him.

f) Notes for help:

1) διῆγον: διάγω intrans. in sense 'spend one's life'.

2) ἀποσταλείς: aor. pass. pple. without θ ἀποστέλλω, 'send', w. ὑπό + gen. of the agent.

2) ἐπὶ … προφάσει: 'by way of excuse' (here with gen. defining the excuse).

2) ἐπεθύμησα: aor. ἐπιθυμέω, 'desire', w. infin.

3) two aorist participles depending on the same verb.

3) ἀναπλεύσας: aor. act. pple. ἀναπλέω, in sense sail upriver.

3) Story of echoing statue in 4: cf. Tac. Ann. 2. 61 and Juvenal 15. 5.

3-4) τὸ θαυμαστὸν ἐκεῖνο: internal acc., with ἠχοῦντα, 'making that amazing echo'.

4-6) ἤκουσα, with acc. of thing, φωνήν, and gen. of person, ἐκείνου.

4) ἀνίσχοντα: intrans. sense of ἀνίσχω, 'rise'.

5) μὲν οὖν: Denniston 470-3 for transitional use.

5) οὐ κατὰ τὸ κοινόν: negative closely with the phrase: "not in the common way".

5) τοῖς πολλοῖς: dat. with (and expanding on sense of) κατὰ τὸ κοινόν; reinforces the meaning: "to most of the people".

6) ἔχρησε: idiomatic active use of χράω = gave an oracle, cf. e.g. Hdt.

6) ἀνοίξας: aor. act. pple. ἀνοίγνυμι.

6, 7) force of the two γε's?

7-8) mixed unreal conditional, εἰ + impf. indic., main clause aor. indic.: if it were not

otiose, I would have told you the lines. Note emphatic placement of αὐτά, framing clause with τὰ ἔπη; and early placement of ἄν, as often.

8) ἔτυχε: aor. τυγχάνω, with pple.

9) τὴν σοφίαν: acc. of respect, cf. 15. Goodwin 1058, e.g. καλὸς τὸ εἶδος = beautiful in form.

10-11) acc. of extent of time, Goodwin 1062: for 23 years. Compare dat. of time in 37.

11) ᾠκηκέναι: perf. infin. οἰκέω, after ἐλέγετο; μαγεύειν, infin. with παιδευόμενος, 'trained to . . .'.

14) ἐξυρημένον: perf. pple. pass. ξυρέω.

15) τὰ σκέλη: accusative of relation.

17) ἠγνόουν: 1st sing. impf. act. indic. ἀγνοέω.

17) ὅστις ἦν: who he was: ind. qu. with past impf. indic. rather than opt. after past verb, Goodwin 1489. This is rare (except Homer): usually opt. or vivid sequence, i.e. present indicative tense of direct speech is retained.

17) ἑώρων: 1st sing. impf. act. indic. ὁράω.

17-20) εἴ ποτε ὁρμισαίμεν (1st pl. aor. opt. act. ὁρμίζω): indefinite clause
within indirect construction (acc. + partc.), so opt. of indirect speech after past verb, instead of ἐάν + subj. Construction of repeated action in the past ("every time that…").

18) ἄλλα τε καὶ δὴ καί: great emphasis on the καί part., cf. ἄλλα τε καὶ = and especially, καὶ δὴ καί = and moreover.

19) τὰ δέ, sc. θηρία.

19) be careful with the 4 verbs νέω: go / swim / spin (wool) / accumulate. These are not different meanings of the same verb, they are four different verbs.

20) these participles depend still on ἑώρων.

20-1) ἔγνων: with acc. and pple.

21-2) ex. of λανθάνω + partc. (cf. 53): I unobtrusively became his companion.

22) ὥστε after a point, in a main sentence, may mean "and therefore".

22) note typo. in first ed. of Russell (γενόμενμος for γενόμενος).

22-3) ἐκοινώνει with gen. of thing shared and dat. of person it is shared with (typo: accent missing in first ed. of Russell).

24) πείθει: historic present, cf. 48.

25) contrast aor. infin. καταλιπεῖν for single action, pres. infin. ἀκολουθεῖν for

continuous action.

26) μὴ γὰρ ἀπορήσειν...: indirect speech continues with acc. and inf. (he said that ...). See Goodwin 1496 for exceptions to οὐ as the regular negative for infinitive in indirect speech (after verbs of hoping/ swearing/ promising). But Russell rightly adds increasing use of μή in subordinate clauses in later Greek.

26) ἀπορήσειν, with gen. τῶν διακονησομένων.

26-7) τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο: adv. acc. = after this, cf. 24 τέλος = finally. Goodwin 1060.

27-8) ex. of past indefinite construction, ἐπειδὴ ἔλθομεν, ἄν ... ἐποίει (ἄν creeps to second position of its clause). cf. 32-4 (ἄν with verb at end). The same construction of repeated action in the past. 28-29) three aorist participles depending on the same verb.

29) περιβαλών with accus. of person and dat. of thing thrown around.

30) βαδίζειν, infin. after ἐποίει, 'would make (to) walk'.

30) δοκοῦντα: it refers to all of the former mentioned objects, and it is in neuter plural.

30) τὸ δὲ ἀπελθόν: in neuter, only that now in singular.

32) διηκονεῖτο, middle use διακονέω with dat., 'ministered to our needs'.

32) ἅλις w. gen., 'enough of'.

34) the final ἄν is absolutely unnecessary.

35) ἐσπουδακώς: perf. pple. σπουδάζω.

35) ἔχω ὅπως = "manage how to".

35) "I was not able to learn", literally "I did not have the wherewithal how I might learn". Goodwin 1490, indirect (here deliberative) question in past sequence with opt.

36) καίτοι + partc.: later Greek usage (on analogy of καίπερ + partc.).

37) λαθών: aor. pple. λανθάνω.

38) σχεδόν = near.

38) ὑποστάς: intrans. strong aor. pple. ὑφίστημι.

39) ἐντειλάμενος: aor. middle pple. ἐντέλλω (mostly used in middle), w. dat., 'command'.

40) εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν: the next day; Goodwin 1207, εἰς + acc. of time, e.g. Hom. ἐς ἠῶ, until dawn. cf. ἐς ὅ until (eg. Hdt., No.5.63).

40-1) ex. of gen. absolute.

41-42) three juxtaposed aorist participles, all of them depending on the same verb.

42-3) ἐμπλησάμενον: aor. midd. pple. ἐμπίμπλημι, fill; cf. 45 ἐνέπλησεν, aor. act. indic., with acc. object and gen., 'fill with'.

43) πέπαυσο: stop! Goodwin 1274 perf. imperative passive for sth. permanent, eg. ταῦτα εἰρήσθω. cf. e.g. Thuc. No. 15. 44, Long. No. 63. 56. Active pf. imp. only with verbs where perfect has present meaning like οἶδα, Goodwin 1263.

43-4) μηκέτι ὑδροφόρει: stop carrying water, WS 1841 (prohibition with pres. imperative: in aor., generally subjunctive).

44) ἴσθι: be (Goodwin 806 gives all forms of εἰμί).

45) ἄχρι: until, cf. μέχρι, w. aor. indic. (strengthened by δή, cf. quite common πρὶν δή).

45) ἡμῖν: dative in relation to the rest of sentence - 'filled for us the house with water'.

47) μή + subj. after verb of fearing (ἐδεδίειν: plupf.of δεδία, δέδοικα in imperfect meaning, I was afraid).

47) ὅπερ: parenthetical relative clause, 'a thing which . . .'; relative pronoun, as often, strengthened by περ.

48-9) "and they, namely each of the two parts".

50) μοι: possessive force of dative.

50) ἐγεγένητο: pluperfect of γίγνομαι.

51) ἐφίσταται: "turns up".

51) συνείς: remember that συνίημι may mean "to understand".

52) πρό: w. gen., 'before'.

53) οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅποι: parenthetic, "I do not know whither", "somewhere or other".