



"Ballgame Dances"

Author(s): Lillian B. Lawler

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tainly the correct normal translation of *quam mox* is (as it happens) "how soon." But in that phrase "soon" does not mean "after a brief interval"; it must not be thus separated from "how"; for the whole phrase is a unit meaning "what length will the interval have?" The speaker does not know whether it will be short or long; that is precisely why he asks. Often "how long" is quite as good idiom. Suppose we are to put into Latin: "I want to finish this letter; how long I shall be, I can't quite say." Should we not write: *Has litteras volo perficere; quam mox sim perfecturus, vix possum dicere?*

GILBERT NORWOOD

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

"BALLGAME DANCES"

An Associated Press dispatch from New Orleans, dated December 31, 1940, describes the latest in ballroom dancing, the "Sugar Bowl Stomp," as exhibited at the Louisiana Dancing Masters' convention:

The man waits as the girl kicks an imaginary ball. From there on the steps continue with gridiron pantomime, such as catching the ball, bucking the line, backfield in motion, touchdown. It ends with a big cheer in which the dancers silently go through cheer leader antics.

The ballplaying motif is a commonplace throughout the whole of the history of the Greek dance. In fact, the Greeks seem to have been a little uncertain themselves as to just when an actual ballgame was a game and when it was a dance. Since any rhythmic movement was to them a dance, and ballplaying was inherently rhythmic, the two seemed virtually inseparable. The *locus classicus* for a "ballgame dance," however, is *Odyssey* VIII, 370-384, where, as part of the entertainment after a feast,

Alcinous ordered Halius and Laodamas to dance alone, since no one was a match for them. And so, when they had received in their hands the handsome red ball which wise Polybus had made for them, the one, bending far backward, repeatedly threw it up toward the shadowy clouds, and the other, leaping high from the earth, repeatedly caught it with ease before he touched the ground again with his feet. But when they had "warmed up" by throwing the ball straight into the air, then they danced closer to the all-nourishing earth, tossing the ball to each other with great rapidity; and the other young men, standing around the dance floor, clapped their hands in time, and as a result

a great noise arose. Then high-born Odysseus addressed Alcinous: "Noble Alcinous, most renowned of all men, you did indeed boast that your dancers were the best, and truly your boasts have become realities; astonishment fills me as I look at them."

Once more has one of our newest ideas turned out to be not so sensationally new, after all!

LILLIAN B. LAWLER

HUNTER COLLEGE

A SUPPLEMENT TO "HERODOTUS CONFIRMED ONCE AGAIN"

In the CLASSICAL JOURNAL xxxvi (1940), 168 f. Professor Coleman H. Benedict has noted recent and other confirmation of the account in Herodotus III, 113 of sheep with tails so heavy as to require small carts to support them. Several years ago I read an account by Carveth Wells of the same variety of sheep and recalled that, unknown to himself, he too corroborated the statements of Herodotus. Wells describes the sheep in the neighborhood of Mount Ararat.¹ They were often as thin as a rail in other parts of the body but with tails weighing as much as fifty pounds. For reference Wells mentions Lydekker's *Natural History* II, 227. Professor H. J. Rose² has also observed that,

It is no longer the fashion to imagine Herodotus a liar when he tells marvellous stories, for some of his most extraordinary statements have long since been shown to contain at least a substantial measure of truth . . . on occasion he misleads his readers and himself by too much critical unbelief in his materials and consequent application of the crude methods of mythological investigation then current.

Most of us, however, would probably still prefer to be skeptical along with Herodotus in certain matters.

HENRY C. MONTGOMERY

MIAMI UNIVERSITY

OXFORD, OHIO

¹ Carveth Wells, *Kapoot*: New York, Robert M. McBride & Co. (1933), 217 f.

² "Some Herodotean Rationalisms," *Class. Quart.* xxxiv (1940), 78.