

MAN'S DESCENT FROM THE GODS

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ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

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OR, THE COMPLETE CASE AGAINST
PROHIBITION

BY

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

AUTHOR OF

"A DEFENCE OF ARISTOCRACY," ETC.



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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN. 1921.

TO
MR. AND MRS. EDMOND HUNT
WITH THE
AUTHOR'S AFFECTIONATE REGARD

PREFACE

THIS book has a strange history. The last event in the chain which brought it into existence was a debate on the question of Total Prohibition held at the Sesame Club in London on November 3rd, 1919, to which I was invited by the Committee in order to oppose the Bishop of Willesden, who was to advocate Total Prohibition for these islands. I mention this most recent event first, because it was on the occasion of this debate that various thoughts and conjectures relating to problems apparently as far apart as Greek mythology and modern diet, with which my imagination had been occupied for some considerable time, first crystallised into the theory which I have thought worthy of the serious treatment given to it in this essay.

Among the other events connected with this book, I may mention: (1) The last great war and the enforced leisure, with its opportunities for meditation, which it frequently provided in the firing-line and out of it to a field-gunner like myself; (2) the writing of my *Defence of Aristocracy* in the years 1912, 1913, 1914, and the attention which I was compelled to pay, in the preparation of this book, to such questions as the drink and food of the people of England from the seventeenth century onwards; (3) the perusal of a friend's book in MS. on Dietetics, which first awakened my curiosity about accessory food factors; (4) the publication by the Medical Research Committee of their Report on the

Present State of our Knowledge concerning Accessory Food Factors; and finally (5) the first account I received, as a child, of the myth of Prometheus.

The ancient Greek story of the Fire-stealer had always fascinated me. I did not, like Byron, ever make it the subject of a youthful literary essay, but it was not the less prominent in my thoughts on that account. Certain features connected with it always puzzled me, and as I grew older I became less and less satisfied with the various learned explanations of the myth and its principal figure, with which I became acquainted. The mystery surrounding it seemed to increase rather than to disperse beneath these scholarly dissertations, until latterly I even sympathised with the late Mr. Andrew Lang in his reluctance to accept the most learned, the most ingenious, and certainly the most daring of all these explanations,—the exceedingly erudite and exhaustive work of Dr. Kuhn.

It struck me then, and it strikes me still, that in any case Dr. Kuhn's interpretation must be rejected at all costs, even at the risk of doing violence to etymology, though this last extreme measure I do not believe to be in the least necessary, seeing that it fails to elucidate some of the most vital and therefore most interesting features of the myth. For many years, moreover, and despite repeated failures, I have been unable to repress a strong feeling that it must be possible to discover an explanation of the Fire-stealer legend, which would not only give a logical place to every important element in the myth, but also perhaps shed a little valuable light on the early history of mankind. A child can see that the stealing of fire from the gods must have been not only a vital, but perhaps *the* most vital