

“Two Great Painters” by James Baldwin

There was once a painter whose name was Zeuxis. He could paint pictures so life-like that they were mistaken for the real things which they represented.

At one time he painted the picture of some fruit which was so real that the birds flew down and pecked at it. This made him very proud. “I am the only man in the world who can paint a picture so true to life,” he said.

There was another famous artist whose name was Parrhasius. When he heard of the boast which Zeuxis had

made, he said to himself, “I will see what I can do.”

So he painted a beautiful picture which seemed to be covered with a curtain. Then he invited Zeuxis to come and see it.

Zeuxis looked at it closely. “Draw the curtain aside and show us the picture,” he said.

Parrhasius laughed and answered, “The curtain is the picture.”

“Well,” said Zeuxis, “you have beaten me this time, and I shall boast no more. I deceived only the birds, but you have deceived me, a painter.”

Some time after this, Zeuxis painted another wonderful picture. It was that of a boy carrying a basket of ripe red cherries. When he hung this painting outside of his door, some birds flew down and tried to carry the cherries away.

“Ah! This picture is a failure,” he said. “For if the boy had been as well painted as the cherries, the birds would have been afraid to come near him.”