

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝ

THE ELEVEN

COMEDIES,

VOLUME 1

Аристофан Аристофан

The Eleven Comedies, Volume 1

«Public Domain»

Аристофан А.

The Eleven Comedies, Volume 1 / А. Аристофан — «Public Domain»,

© Аристофан А.

© Public Domain

Содержание

Translator's Foreword	5
THE KNIGHTS	13
INTRODUCTION	13
THE KNIGHTS	15
THE ACHARNIANS	42
INTRODUCTION	42
THE ACHARNIANS	43
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	46

Aristophanes

The Eleven Comedies, Volume 1

Translator's Foreword

Perhaps the first thing to strike us—paradoxical as it may sound to say so—about the Athenian 'Old Comedy' is its *modernness*. Of its very nature, satiric drama comes later than Epic and Lyric poetry, Tragedy or History; Aristophanes follows Homer and Simonides, Sophocles and Thucydides. Of its essence, it is free from many of the conventions and restraining influences of earlier forms of literature, and enjoys much of the liberty of choice of subject and licence of method that marks present-day conditions of literary production both on and off the stage. Its very existence presupposes a fuller and bolder intellectual life, a more advanced and complex city civilization, a keener taste and livelier faculty of comprehension in the people who appreciate it, than could anywhere be found at an earlier epoch. Speaking broadly and generally, the Aristophanic drama has more in common with modern ways of looking at things, more in common with the conditions of the modern stage, especially in certain directions—burlesque, extravaganza, musical farce, and even 'pantomime,' than with the earlier and graver products of the Greek mind.

The eleven plays, all that have come down to us out of a total of over forty staged by our author in the course of his long career, deal with the events of the day, the incidents and personages of contemporary Athenian city life, playing freely over the surface of things familiar to the audience and naturally provoking their interest and rousing their prejudices, dealing with contemporary local gossip, contemporary art and literature, and above all contemporary politics, domestic and foreign. All this *farrago* of miscellaneous subjects is treated in a frank, uncompromising spirit of criticism and satire, a spirit of broad fun, side-splitting laughter and reckless high spirits. Whatever lends itself to ridicule is instantly seized upon; odd, eccentric and degraded personalities are caricatured, social foibles and vices pilloried, pomposity and sententiousness in the verses of the poets, particularly the tragedians, and most particularly in Euripides—the pet aversion and constant butt of Aristophanes' satire—are parodied. All is fish that comes to the Comic dramatists net, anything that will raise a laugh is fair game.

"It is difficult to compare the Aristophanic Comedy to any one form of modern literature, dramatic or other. It perhaps most resembles what we now call burlesque; but it had also very much in it of broad farce and comic opera, and something also (in the hits at the fashions and follies of the day with which it abounded) of the modern pantomime. But it was something more, and more important to the Athenian public than any or all of these could have been. Almost always more or less political, and sometimes intensely personal, and always with some purpose more or less important underlying its wildest vagaries and coarsest buffooneries, it supplied the place of the political journal, the literary review, the popular caricature and the party pamphlet, of our own times. It combined the attractions and influence of all these; for its grotesque masks and elaborate 'spectacle' addressed the eye as strongly as the author's keenest witticisms did the ear of his audience."¹

Rollicking, reckless, uproarious fun is the key-note; though a more serious intention is always latent underneath. Aristophanes was a strong—sometimes an unscrupulous—partisan; he was an uncompromising Conservative of the old school, an ardent admirer of the vanishing aristocratic régime, an anti-Imperialist—'Imperialism' was a *democratic* craze at Athens—and never lost an opportunity of throwing scorn on Cleon the demagogue, his political *bête noire* and personal enemy, Cleon's henchmen of the popular faction, and the War party generally. Gravity, solemnity,

¹ Ancient Classics for English Readers: Aristophanes, by Lucas Collins, Introductory Chapter, p. 2.

seriousness, are conspicuous by their absence; even that 'restraint' which is the salient characteristic of Greek expression in literature no less than in Art, is largely relaxed in the rough-and-tumble, informal, miscellaneous *modern* phantasmagoria of these diverting extravaganzas.

At the same time we must not be misled by the word 'Comedy' to bring Aristophanes' work into comparison with what we call Comedy now. This is quite another thing—confined to a representation of incidents of private, generally polite life, and made up of the intrigues and entanglements of social and domestic situations. Such a Comedy the Greeks did produce, but at a date fifty or sixty years subsequent to Aristophanes' day, and recognized by themselves as belonging to an entirely different genre. Hence the distinction drawn between 'The Old Comedy,' of which Cratinus and his younger contemporaries, Eupolis and Aristophanes, were the leading representatives, and which was at high-water mark just before and during the course of the great struggle of the Peloponnesian War, and 'The New Comedy,' a comedy of manners, the two chief exponents of which were Philemon and Menander, writing after Athens had fallen under the Macedonian yoke, and politics were excluded altogether from the stage. Menander's plays in turn were the originals of those produced by Plautus and Terence at Rome, whose existing Comedies afford some faint idea of what the lost masterpieces of their Greek predecessor must have been. Unlike the 'Old,' the 'New Comedy' had no Chorus and no 'Parabasis.'

This remarkable and distinctive feature, by-the-bye, of the Old Comedy, the 'Parabasis' to wit, calls for a word of explanation. It was a direct address on the Author's part to the audience, delivered in verse of a special metre, generally towards the close of the representation, by the leader of the Chorus, but expressing the personal opinions and predilections of the poet, and embodying any remarks upon current topics and any urgent piece of advice which he was particularly anxious to insist on. Often it was made the vehicle for special appeal to the sympathetic consideration of the spectators for the play and its merits. These 'parabases,' so characteristic of the Aristophanic comedy, are conceived in the brightest and wittiest vein, and abound in topical allusions and personal hits that must have constituted them perhaps the most telling part of the whole performance.

Aristophanes deals with all questions; for him the domain of the Comic Poet has no limits, his mission is as wide as human nature. It is to Athens he addresses himself, to the city as a whole; his criticism embraces morals no less than politics, poetry no less than philosophy; he does not hesitate to assail the rites and dogmas of Paganism; whatever affords subject for laughter or vituperation lies within his province; there he is in his element, scourge in hand, his heart ablaze with indignation, pitiless, and utterly careless of all social distinctions.

In Politics Aristophanes belongs to the party of the Aristocracy. He could not do otherwise, seeing that the democratic principle was then triumphant; Comedy is never laudatory, it lives upon criticism, it must bite to the quick to win a hearing; its strength, its vital force is contradiction. Thus the abuses of democracy and demagogy were the most favourable element possible for the development of Aristophanes' genius, just because his merciless satire finds more abundant subject-matter there than under any other form of civil constitution. Then are we actually to believe that the necessity of his profession as a comic poet alone drove him into the faction of the malcontents? This would surely be to wilfully mistake the dignity of character and consistency of conviction which are to be found underlying all his productions. Throughout his long career as a dramatist his predilections always remain the same, as likewise his antipathies, and in many respects the party he champions so ardently had claims to be regarded as representing the best interests of the state. It is but just therefore to proclaim Aristophanes as having deserved well of his country, and to admit the genuine courage he displayed in attacking before the people the people's own favourites, assailing in word those who held the sword. To mock at the folly of a nation that lets itself be cajoled by vain and empty flatteries, to preach peace to fellow-citizens enamoured of war, was to fulfil a dangerous rôle, that would never have appealed, we may feel sure, to a mere vulgar ambition.

Moreover his genius, pre-eminently Greek as it is, has an instinctive horror of all excesses, and hits out at them wherever he marks their existence, whether amongst the great or the humble of the earth. Supposing the Aristocracy, having won the victory the Poet desired, had fallen in turn into oppression and misgovernment, doubtless Aristophanes would have lashed its members with his most biting sarcasms. It is just because Liberty is dear to his heart that he hates government by Demagogues; he would fain free the city from the despotism of a clique of wretched intriguers that oppressed her. But at the same time the Aristocracy favoured by our Author was not such as comes by birth and privilege, but such as is won and maintained by merit and high service to the state.

In matters of morality his satires have the same high aims. How should a corrupted population recover purity, if not by returning to the old unsullied sources from which earlier generations had drawn their inspiration? Accordingly we find Aristophanes constantly bringing on the stage the "men of Marathon," the vigorous generation to which Athens owed her freedom and her greatness. It is no mere childish commonplace with our poet, this laudation of a past age; the facts of History prove he was in the right, all the novelties he condemns were as a matter of fact so many causes that brought about Athenian decadence. Directly the citizen receives payment for attending the Assembly, he is no longer a perfectly free agent in the disposal of his vote; besides, the practice is equivalent to setting a premium on idleness, and so ruining all proper activity; a populace maintained by the state loses all energy, falls into a lethargy and dies. The life of the forum is a formidable solvent of virtue and vigour; by dint of speechifying, men forget how to act. Another thing was the introduction of 'the new education,' imported by 'the Sophists,' which substituted for serious studies, definitely limited and systematically pursued, a crowd of vague and subtle speculations; it was a mental gymnastic that gave suppleness to the wits, it is true, but only by corrupting and deteriorating the moral sense, a system that in the long run was merely destructive. Such, then, was the threefold poison that was destroying Athenian morality—the triobolus, the noisy assemblies in the Agora, the doctrines of the Sophists; the antidote was the recollection of former virtue and past prosperity, which the Poet systematically revives in contrast with the turpitudes and trivialities of the present day. There is no turning back the course of history; but if Aristophanes' efforts have remained abortive, they are not therefore inglorious. Is the moralist to despair and throw away his pen, because in so many cases his voice finds no echo?

Again we find Aristophanes' literary views embodying the same good sense which led him to see the truth in politics and morals. Here likewise it is not the individual he attacks; his criticism is general. His adversary is not the individual Euripides, but under his name depraved taste and the abandonment of that noble simplicity which had produced the masterpieces of the age of Pericles. Euripides was no ordinary writer, that is beyond question; but the very excellence of his qualities made his influence only the more dangerous.

Literary reform is closely connected with moral regeneration, the decadence of the one being both cause and effect of the deterioration of the other. The author who should succeed in purifying the public taste would come near restoring to repute healthy and honest views of life. Aristophanes essayed the task both by criticism and example—by criticism, directing the shafts of his ridicule at over-emphasis and over-subtlety, by example, writing himself in inimitable perfection the beautiful Attic dialect, which was being enervated and effeminated and spoiled in the hands of his opponents.

Even the Gods were not spared by the Aristophanic wit and badinage; in 'Plutus,' in 'The Birds,' in 'The Frogs,' we see them very roughly handled. To wonder at these profane drolleries, however, is to fail altogether to grasp the privileges of ancient comedy and the very nature of Athenian society. The Comic Poets exercised unlimited rights of making fun; we do not read in history of a single one of the class having ever been called to the bar of justice to answer for the audacity of his dramatic efforts. The same liberty extended to religious matters; the Athenian people, keen, delicately organized, quick to see a joke and loving laughter for its own sake, even when the point told against themselves, this people of mockers felt convinced the Gods appreciated raillery just as well as men

did. Moreover, the Greeks do not appear to have had any very strong attachment to Paganism as a matter of dogmatic belief. To say nothing of the enlightened classes, who saw in this vast hierarchy of divinities only an ingenious allegory, the populace even was mainly concerned with the processions and songs and dances, the banquets and spectacular shows and all the external pomp and splendour of a cult the magnificence and varied rites of which amused its curiosity. But serious faith, ardent devotion, dogmatic discussion, is there a trace of these things? A sensual and poetic type of religion, Paganism was accepted at Athens only by the imagination, not by the reason; its ceremonies were duly performed, without any real piety touching the heart. Thus the audience felt no call to champion the cause of their deities when held up to ribaldry on the open stage; they left them to defend themselves—if they could.

Thus Aristophanes, we see, covered the whole field of thought; he scoured whatever was vicious or ridiculous, whether before the altars of the Gods, in the schools of the Sophists, or on the Orators' platform. But the wider the duty he undertook, the harder it became to fulfil this duty adequately. How satisfy a public made up of so many and such diverse elements, so sharply contrasted by birth, fortune, education, opinion, interest? How hold sway over a body of spectators, who were at the same time judges? To succeed in the task he was bound to be master of all styles of diction—at one and the same time a dainty poet and a diverting buffoon. It is just this universality of genius, this combination of the most eminent and various qualities, that has won Aristophanes a place apart among satirists; and if it be true to say that well-written works never die, the style alone of his Comedies would have assured their immortality.

No writer, indeed, has been more pre-eminent in that simple, clear, precise, elegant diction that is the peculiar glory of Attic literature, the brilliant yet concise quality of which the authors of no other Greek city were quite able to attain. He shows, each in its due turn, vigour and suppleness of language, he exercises a sure and spontaneous choice of correct terms, the proper combination of harmonious phrases, he goes straight to his object, he aims well and hits hard, even when he seems to be merely grazing the surface. Under his apparent negligence lies concealed the high perfection of accomplished art. This applies to the dialogues. In the choruses, Aristophanes speaks the tongue of Pindar and Sophocles; he follows the footsteps of those two mighty masters of the choric hymn into the highest regions of poetry; his lyric style is bold, impetuous, abounding in verve and brilliance, yet without the high-flown inspiration ever involving a lapse from good taste.

One of the forms in which he is fondest of clothing his conceptions is allegory; it may truly be said that the stage of Aristophanes is a series of caricatures where every idea has taken on a corporeal presentment and is reproduced under human lineaments. To personify the abstract notion, to dress it up in the shape of an animated being for its better comprehension by the public, is in fact a proceeding altogether in harmony with the customs and conventions of Ancient Comedy. The Comic Poet never spares us a single detail of everyday life, no matter how commonplace or degrading; he pushes the materialistic delineation of the passions and vices to the extreme limit of obscene gesture and the most cynical shamelessness of word and act.

This scorn of propriety, this unchecked licence of speech, has often been made a subject of reproach against Aristophanes, and it appears to the best modern critics that the poet would have been not a whit less diverting or effective had he respected the dictates of common decency. But it is only fair, surely, before finally condemning our Author, to consider whether the times in which he lived, the origin itself of the Greek Comedy, and the constitution of the audience, do not entitle him at any rate to claim the benefit of extenuating circumstances. We must not forget that Comedy owes its birth to those festivals at which Priapus was adored side by side with Bacchus, and that 'Phallophoria' (carrying the symbols of generation in procession) still existed as a religious rite at the date when Aristophanes was composing his plays. Nor must we forget that theatrical performances were at Athens forbidden pleasures to women and children. Above all we should take full account of the code of social custom and morality then prevailing. The Ancients never understood modesty

quite in the same way as our refined modern civilization does; they spoke of everything without the smallest reticence, and expressions which would revolt the least squeamish amongst ourselves did not surprise or shock the most fastidious. We ought not, therefore, to blame too severely the Comic Poet, who after all was only following in this respect the habits of his age; and if his pictures are often repulsively bestial, let us lay most blame to the account of a state of society which deserved to be painted in such odiously black colours. Doubtless Aristophanes might have given less Prominence to these cynical representations, instead of revelling in them, as he really seems to have done; men of taste and refinement, and there must have been such even among his audience, would have thought all the better of him! But it was the populace filled the bulk of the benches, and the populace loved coarse laughter and filthy words. The Poet supplied what the majority demanded; he was not the man to sacrifice one of the easiest and surest means of winning applause and popularity.

Aristophanes enjoyed an ample share of glory in his lifetime, and posterity has ratified the verdict given by his contemporaries. The epitaph is well-known which Plato composed for him, after his death: "The Graces, seeking an imperishable sanctuary, found the soul of Aristophanes." Such eulogy may appear excessive to one who re-peruses after the lapse of twenty centuries these pictures of a vanished world. But if, despite the profound differences of custom, taste and opinion which separate our own age from that of the Greeks, despite the obscurity of a host of passages whose especial point lay in their reference to some topic of the moment, and which inevitably leave us cold at the present day—if, despite all this, we still feel ourselves carried away, charmed, diverted, dominated by this dazzling *verve*, these copious outpourings of imagination, wit and poesy, let us try to realize in thought what must have been the unbounded pleasure of an Athenian audience listening to one of our Author's satires. Then every detail was realized, every nuance of criticism appreciated; every allusion told, and the model was often actually sitting in the semicircle of the auditorium facing the copy at that time being presented on the stage. "What a passion of excitement! What transports of enthusiasm and angry protest! What bursts of uncontrollable merriment! What thunders of applause! How the Comic Poet must have felt himself a King, indeed, in presence of these popular storms which, like the god of the sea, he could arouse and allay at his good will and pleasure!"²

To return for a moment to the coarseness of language so often pointed to as a blot in Aristophanes. "The great comedian has been censured and apologized for on this ground, over and over again. His personal exculpation must always rest upon the fact, that the wildest licence in which he indulged was not only recognized as permissible, but actually enjoined as part of the ceremonial at these festivals of Bacchus; that it was not only in accordance with public taste, but was consecrated as a part of the national religion.... But the coarseness of Aristophanes is not corrupting. There is nothing immoral in his plots, nothing really dangerous in his broadest humour. Compared with some of our old English dramatists, he is morality itself. And when we remember the plots of some French and English plays which now attract fashionable audiences, and the character of some modern French and English novels not unfrequently found (at any rate in England) upon drawing-room tables, the least that can be said is, that we had better not cast stones at Aristophanes."³ Moreover, it should be borne in mind that Athenian custom did not sanction the presence of women—at least women of reputable character—at these performances.

The particular plays, though none are free from it, which most abound in this ribald fun—for fun it always is, never mere pruriency for its own sake, Aristophanes has a deal of the old 'esprit gaulois' about him—are the 'Peace' and, as might be expected from its theme, lending itself so readily to suggestive allusions and situations, above all the 'Lysistrata.' The 'Thesmophoriazusae' and 'Ecclesiazusae' also take ample toll in this sort of the 'risqué' situations incidental to their plots, the dressing up of men as women in the former, and of women as men in the latter. Needless to

² "Aristophane": Traduction Nouvelle, par C. Poyard (Paris, 1875): Introduction.

³ Ancient Classics for English Readers: "Aristophanes," by Lucas Collins. Introductory Chapter, p. 12.

say, no faithful translator will emasculate his author by expurgation, and the reader will here find Aristophanes' Comedies as Aristophanes wrote them, not as Mrs. Grundy might wish him to have written them.

These performances took place at the Festivals of Dionysus (Bacchus), either the Great Dionysia or the minor celebration of the Lenaea, and were in a sense religious ceremonials—at any rate under distinct religious sanction. The representations were held in the Great Theatre of Dionysus, under the slope of the Acropolis, extensive remains of which still exist; several plays were brought out at each festival in competition, and prizes, first and second, were awarded to the most successful productions—rewards which were the object of the most intense ambition.

Next to nothing is known of the private life of Aristophanes, and that little, beyond the two or three main facts given below, is highly dubious, not to say apocryphal. He was born about 444 B.C., probably at Athens. His father held property in Aegina, and the family may very likely have come originally from that island. At any rate, this much is certain, that the author's arch-enemy Cleon made more than one judicial attempt to prove him of alien birth and therefore not properly entitled to the rights of Athenian citizenship; but in this he entirely failed. The great Comedian had three sons, but of these and their career history says nothing whatever. Such incidents and anecdotes of our author's literary life as have come down to us are all connected with one or other of the several plays, and will be found alluded to in the special Introductions prefixed to these. He died about 380 B.C.—the best and central years of his life and work thus coinciding with the great national period of stress and struggle, the Peloponnesian War, 431-404 B.C. He continued to produce plays for the Athenian stage for the long period of thirty-seven years; though only eleven Comedies, out of a reputed total of forty, have survived.

A word or two as to existing translations of Aristophanes. These, the English ones at any rate, leave much to be desired; indeed it is not too much to say that there is no version of our Author in the language which gives the general reader anything like an adequate notion of these Plays. We speak of prose renderings. Aristophanes has been far more fortunate in his verse translators—Mitchell, who published four Comedies in this form in 1822, old-fashioned, but still helpful, Hookham Frere, five plays (1871), both scholarly and spirited, and last but not least, Mr. Bickley Rogers, whose excellent versions have appeared at intervals since 1867. But from their very nature these cannot afford anything like an exact idea of the 'ipsissima verba' of the Comedies, while all slur over or omit altogether passages in any way 'risqué.' There remains only our old friend 'Bohn' ("The Comedies of Aristophanes; a literal Translation by W. J. Hickie"), and what stuff 'Bohn' is! By very dint of downright literalness—though not, by-the-bye, always downright accuracy—any true notion of the Author's meaning is quite obscured. The letter kills the spirit.

The French prose versions are very good. That by C. Poyard (in the series of "Chefs-d'oeuvre des Littératures Anciennes") combines scholarly precision with an easy, racy, vernacular style in a way that seems impossible to any but a French scholar.

The order here adopted for the successive plays differs slightly from that observed in most editions; but as these latter do not agree amongst themselves, this small assumption of licence appears not unwarrantable. Chronologically 'The Acharnians' (426 B.C.) should come first; but it seems more convenient to group it with the two other "Comedies of the War," the whole trilogy dealing with the hardships involved by the struggle with the Lacedaemonians and the longings of the Athenian people for the blessings of peace. This leaves 'The Knights' to open the whole series—the most important politically of all Aristophanes' productions, embodying as it does his trenchant attack on the great demagogue Cleon and striking the keynote of the author's general attitude as advocate of old-fashioned conservatism against the new democracy, its reckless 'Imperialism' and the unscrupulous and self-seeking policy, so the aristocratic party deemed it, of its accredited leaders.

Order, as thus rearranged, approximate date, and *motif* (in brief) of each of the eleven Comedies are given below:

'The Knights': 424 B.C.—eighth year of the War. Attacks Cleon, the Progressives, and the War policy generally.

Comedies of the War:—

'The Acharnians': 426 B.C.—sixth year of the War. Insists on the miseries consequent on the War, especially affecting the rural population, as represented by the Acharnian Dicaeopolis and his fellow demesmen. Incidentally makes fun of the tragedian Euripides.

'Peace': 422 B.C.—tenth year of the War. Further insists on the same theme, and enlarges on the blessings of Peace. The hero Trygaeus flies to Olympus, mounted on a beetle, to bring back the goddess Peace to earth.

'Lysistrata': 411 B.C.—twenty-first year of the War. A burlesque conspiracy entered into by the confederated women of Hellas, led by Lysistrata the Athenian, to compel the men to conclude peace.

'The Clouds': 423 B.C.—satirizes Socrates, the 'Sophists,' and the 'New Education.'

'The Wasps': 422 B.C. Makes fun of the Athenian passion for litigation, and the unsatisfactory organization of the Courts. Contains the incident of the mock trial of the thievish house-dog.

'The Birds': 414 B.C. Euelpides and Pisthetaerus, disgusted with the state of things at Athens, build a new and improved city, Cloud-cuckoo-town, in the kingdom of the birds. Some see an allusion to the Sicilian expedition, and Alcibiades' Utopian schemes.

'The Frogs': 405 B.C. A satire on Euripides and the 'New Tragedy.' Dionysus, patron of the Drama, dissatisfied with the contemporary condition of the Art, goes down to Hades to bring back to earth a poet of the older and worthier school.

'The Thesmophoriazusae': 412 B.C. Another literary satire; Euripides, summoned as a notorious defamer of women to defend himself before the dames of Athens assembled in solemn conclave at the Thesmophoria, or festival of Demeter and Persephone, induces his father-in-law, Mnesilochus, to dress up in women's clothes, penetrate thus disguised into the assemblage, and plead the poet's cause, but with scant success.

'The Ecclesiazusae': 392 B.C. Pokes fun at the ideal Utopias, such as Plato's 'Republic,' based on sweeping social and economic changes, greatly in vogue with the Sophists of the day. The women of the city disguise themselves as men, slip into the Public Assembly and secure a majority of votes. They then pass a series of decrees providing for community of goods and community of women, which produce, particularly the latter, a number of embarrassing and diverting consequences.

'Plutus': 408 and 388 B.C. A whimsical allegory more than a regular comedy. Plutus, the god of wealth, has been blinded by Zeus; discovered in the guise of a ragged beggarman and succoured by Chremylus, an old man who has ruined himself by generosity to his friends, he is restored to sight by Aesculapius. He duly rewards Chremylus, and henceforth apportions this world's goods among mankind on juster principles—enriching the just, but condemning the unjust to poverty.

AUTHORITIES

List Of Editions, Commentaries, Etc., Used Or Consulted

Text: edit. Dindorf, Oxford

Text: edit. Blaydes. 1886.

Text, with Notes, etc.: edit. Immanuel Bekker. 5 vols. 1829.

Text, with Notes, etc.: Brunck.

Text, with (German) Notes, etc.: Separate Plays: edit. Kock.

Text, with Notes, etc.: Separate Plays: edit. Rev. W. W. Merry. 1887-1901.

Translation: English, by W. J. Hickie. (Bohn's Classical Library.)

Translation: English verse, 'Knights,' 'Acharnians,' 'Clouds,' 'Wasps,' by Mitchell. 1822.

Translation: English verse, 'Knights,' 'Acharnians,' 'Birds,' 'Frogs,' 'Peace,' by Hookham Frere. 1871.

Translation: English verse, Various Plays, by B. Bickley Rogers. 1867 onwards.

Translation: French, by C. Poyard. ("Chefs-d'oeuvre des Littératures Anciennes." Paris, Hachette. 1875.)

Translation: French, by Eugène Talbot, with Preface by Sully Prudhomme. 2 vols. Paris, Lemerre. 1897.

Translation: German, by Droysen.

"Aristophanes" (Ancient Classics for English Readers): edit. W. Lucas Collins. 1897.

"Aristophane et l'ancienne Comédie attique," par Auguste Couat. Paris. 1889.

"Aristophane et les Partis à Athens," par Maurice Croiset. Paris, Fontemoing. 1906.

"Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter des Pelopon. Krieges," G. Gilbert. Leipzig. 1877.

"Die attischen Politik seit Perikles," J. Beloch. Leipzig. 1884.

"Aristophanes und die historische Kritik," Müller-Strübing. Leipzig. 1873.

THE KNIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

This was the fourth play in order of time produced by Aristophanes on the Athenian stage; it was brought out at the Lenaean Festival, in January, 424 B.C. Of the author's previous efforts, two, 'The Revellers' and 'The Babylonians,' were apparently youthful essays, and are both lost. The other, 'The Acharnians,' forms the first of the three Comedies dealing directly with the War and its disastrous effects and urging the conclusion of Peace; for this reason it is better ranged along with its sequels, the 'Peace' and the 'Lysistrata,' and considered in conjunction with them.

In many respects 'The Knights' may be reckoned the great Comedian's masterpiece, the direct personal attack on the then all-powerful Cleon, with its scathing satire and tremendous invective, being one of the most vigorous and startling things in literature. Already in 'The Acharnians' he had threatened to "cut up Cleon the Tanner into shoe-leather for the Knights," and he now proceeds to carry his menace into execution, "concentrating the whole force of his wit in the most unscrupulous and merciless fashion against his personal enemy." In the first-mentioned play Aristophanes had attacked and satirized the whole general policy of the democratic party—and incidentally Cleon, its leading spirit and mouthpiece since the death of Pericles; he had painted the miseries of war and invasion arising from this mistaken and mischievous line of action, as he regarded it, and had dwelt on the urgent necessity of peace in the interests of an exhausted country and ruined agriculture. Now he turns upon Cleon personally, and pays him back a hundredfold for the attacks the demagogue had made in the Public Assembly on the daring critic, and the abortive charge which the same unscrupulous enemy had brought against him in the Courts of having "slandered the city in the presence of foreigners." "In this bitterness of spirit the play stands in strong contrast with the good-humoured burlesque of 'The Acharnians' and the 'Peace,' or, indeed, with any other of the author's productions which has reached us."

The characters are five only. First and foremost comes Demos, 'The People,' typifying the Athenian democracy, a rich householder—a self-indulgent, superstitious, weak creature. He has had several overseers or factors in succession, to look after his estate and manage his slaves. The present one is known as 'the Paphlagonian,' or sometimes as 'the Tanner,' an unprincipled, lying, cheating, pilfering scoundrel, fawning and obsequious to his master, insolent towards his subordinates. Two of these are Nicias and Demosthenes. Here we have real names. Nicias was High Admiral of the Athenian navy at the time, and Demosthenes one of his Vice-Admirals; both held still more important commands later in connection with the Sicilian Expedition of 415-413 B.C. Fear of consequences apparently prevented the poet from doing the same in the case of Cleon, who is, of course, intended under the names of 'the Paphlagonian' and 'the Tanner.' Indeed, so great was the terror inspired by the great man that no artist was found bold enough to risk his powerful vengeance by caricaturing his features, and no actor dared to represent him on the stage. Aristophanes is said to have played the part himself, with his face, in the absence of a mask, smeared with wine- lees, roughly mimicking the purple and bloated visage of the demagogue. The remaining character is 'the Sausage-seller,' who is egged on by Nicias and Demosthenes to oust 'the Paphlagonian' from Demos' favour by outvying him in his own arts of impudent flattery, noisy boasting and unscrupulous allurements. After a fierce and stubbornly contested trial of wits and interchange of 'Billingsgate,' 'the Sausage-seller' beats his rival at his own weapons and gains his object; he supplants the disgraced favourite, who is driven out of the house with ignominy.

The Comedy takes its title, as was often the case, from the Chorus, which is composed of Knights—the order of citizens next to the highest at Athens, and embodying many of the old aristocratic preferences and prejudices.

The drama was adjudged the first prize—the 'Satyrs' of Cratinus being placed second—by acclamation, as such a masterpiece of wit and intrepidity certainly deserved to be; but, as usual, the political result was nil. The piece was applauded in the most enthusiastic manner, the satire on the sovereign multitude was forgiven, and—Cleon remained in as much favour as ever.⁴

* * * * *

⁴ Mitchell's "Aristophanes." Preface to "The Knights."

THE KNIGHTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DEMOSTHENES.

NICIAS.

AGORACRITUS, a Sausage-seller.

CLEON.

DEMOS, an old man, typifying the Athenian people.

CHORUS OF KNIGHTS.

SCENE: In front of Demos' house at Athens.

* * * * *

THE KNIGHTS

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! alas! alas! Oh! woe! oh! woe! Miserable Paphlagonian!⁵ may the gods destroy both him and his cursed advice! Since that evil day when this new slave entered the house he has never ceased belabouring us with blows.

NICIAS. May the plague seize him, the arch-fiend—him and his lying tales!

DEMOSTHENES. Hah! my poor fellow, what is your condition?

NICIAS. Very wretched, just like your own.

DEMOSTHENES. Then come, let us sing a duet of groans in the style of Olympus.⁶

DEMOSTHENES AND NICIAS. Boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo!!

DEMOSTHENES. Bah! 'tis lost labour to weep! Enough of groaning! Let us consider how to save our pelts.

NICIAS. But how to do it! Can you suggest anything?

DEMOSTHENES. Nay! you begin. I cede you the honour.

NICIAS. By Apollo! no, not I. Come, have courage! Speak, and then I will say what I think.

DEMOSTHENES. "Ah! would you but tell me what I should tell you!"⁷

NICIAS. I dare not. How could I express my thoughts with the pomp of Euripides?

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! prithee, spare me! Do not pelt me with those vegetables,⁸ but find some way of leaving our master.

NICIAS. Well, then! Say "Let-us-bolt," like this, in one breath.

DEMOSTHENES. I follow you—"Let-us-bolt."

NICIAS. Now after "Let-us-bolt" say "at-top-speed!"

DEMOSTHENES. "At-top-speed!"

⁵ A generic name, used to denote a slave, because great numbers came from Paphlagonia, a country in Asia Minor. Aristophanes also plays upon the word, [Greek: Paphlag_on], Paphlagonian, and the verb, [Greek: pathlazein], to boil noisily, thus alluding to Cleon's violence and bluster when speaking.

⁶ A musician, belonging to Phrygia, who had composed melodies intended to describe pain.

⁷ Line 323 of the 'Hyppolytus,' by Euripides.

⁸ Euripides' mother was said to have sold vegetables on the market.

NICIAS. Splendid! Just as if you were masturbating yourself; first slowly, "Let-us-bolt"; then quick and firmly, "at-top-speed!"

DEMOSTHENES. Let-us-bolt, let-us-bolt-at-top-speed!⁹

NICIAS. Hah! does that not please you?

DEMOSTHENES. I' faith, yes! yet I fear me your omen bodes no good to my hide.

NICIAS. How so?

DEMOSTHENES. Because hard rubbing abrades the skin when folk masturbate themselves.

NICIAS. The best thing we can do for the moment is to throw ourselves at the feet of the statue of some god.

DEMOSTHENES. Of which statue? Any statue? Do you then believe there are gods?

NICIAS. Certainly.

DEMOSTHENES. What proof have you?

NICIAS. The proof that they have taken a grudge against me. Is that not enough?

DEMOSTHENES. I'm convinced it is. But to pass on. Do you consent to my telling the spectators of our troubles?

NICIAS. 'Twould not be amiss, and we might ask them to show us by their manner, whether our facts and actions are to their liking.

DEMOSTHENES. I will begin then. We have a very brutal master, a perfect glutton for beans,¹⁰ and most bad-tempered; 'tis Demos of the Pnyx,¹¹ an intolerable old man and half deaf. The beginning of last month he bought a slave, a Paphlagonian tanner, an arrant rogue, the incarnation of calumny. This man of leather knows his old master thoroughly; he plays the fawning cur, flatters, cajoles; wheedles, and dupes him at will with little scraps of leavings, which he allows him to get. "Dear Demos," he will say, "try a single case and you will have done enough; then take your bath, eat, swallow and devour; here are three obols."¹² Then the Paphlagonian filches from one of us what we have prepared and makes a present of it to our old man. T'other day I had just kneaded a Spartan cake at Pylos;¹³ the cunning rogue came behind my back, sneaked it and offered the cake, which was my invention, in his own name. He keeps us at a distance and suffers none but himself to wait upon the master; when Demos is dining, he keeps close to his side with a thong in his hand and puts the orators to flight. He keeps singing oracles to him, so that the old man now thinks of nothing but the Sibyl. Then, when he sees him thoroughly obfuscated, he uses all his cunning and piles up lies and calumnies against the household; then we are scourged and the Paphlagonian runs about among the slaves to demand contributions with threats and gathers 'em in with both hands. He will say, "You see how I have had Hylas beaten! Either content me or die at once!" We are forced to give, for else the old man tramples on us and makes us spew forth all our body contains. There must be an end to it, friend. Let us see! what can be done? Who will get us out of this mess?

NICIAS. The best thing, chum, is our famous "Let-us-bolt!"

DEMOSTHENES. But none can escape the Paphlagonian, his eye is everywhere. And what a stride! He has one leg on Pylos and the other in the Assembly; his rump is exactly over the land of the Chaonians, his hands are with the Aetolians and his mind with the Clopidians.¹⁴

⁹ The whole of this passage seems a satire on the want of courage shown by these two generals. History, however, speaks of Nicias as a brave soldier.

¹⁰ i.e. living on his salary as a judge. The Athenians used beans for recording their votes.

¹¹ Place where the Public Assembly of Athens, the [Greek: ekklesia], was held.

¹² This was the salary paid to the Ecclesiasts, the jury of citizens who tried cases. It was one obol at first, but Cleon had raised it to three.

¹³ A town in Messina, opposite the little island of Sphacteria; Demosthenes had seized it, and the Spartans had vainly tried to retake it, having even been obliged to leave four hundred soldiers shut up in Sphacteria. Cleon, sent out with additional forces, had forced the Spartans to capitulate and had thus robbed Demosthenes of the glory of the capture. (*See* Introduction.)

¹⁴ Literally, his rump is among the Chaonians ([Greek: chain_o], to gape open), because his anus is distended by pederastic practices; his hands with the Aetolians ([Greek: aite_o], to ask, to beg); his mind with the Clopidians ([Greek: klept_o], to steal).

NICIAS. 'Tis best then to die; but let us seek the most heroic death.

DEMOSTHENES. Let me bethink me, what is the most heroic?

NICIAS. Let us drink the blood of a bull; 'tis the death which Themistocles chose.¹⁵

DEMOSTHENES. No, not that, but a bumper of good unmixed wine in honour of the Good Genius;¹⁶ perchance we may stumble on a happy thought.

NICIAS. Look at him! "Unmixed wine!" Your mind is on drink intent? Can a man strike out a brilliant thought when drunk?

DEMOSTHENES. Without question. Go, ninny, blow yourself out with water; do you dare to accuse wine of clouding the reason? Quote me more marvellous effects than those of wine. Look! when a man drinks, he is rich, everything he touches succeeds, he gains lawsuits, is happy and helps his friends. Come, bring hither quick a flagon of wine, that I may soak my brain and get an ingenious idea.

NICIAS. Eh, my god! What can your drinking do to help us?

DEMOSTHENES. Much. But bring it to me, while I take my seat. Once drunk, I shall strew little ideas, little phrases, little reasonings everywhere.

NICIAS (*returning with a flagon*). It is lucky I was not caught in the house stealing the wine.

DEMOSTHENES. Tell me, what is the Paphlagonian doing now?

NICIAS. The wretch has just gobbled up some confiscated cakes; he is drunk and lies at full-length a-snoring on his hides.

DEMOSTHENES. Very well, come along, pour me out wine and plenty of it.

NICIAS. Take it and offer a libation to your Good Genius; taste, taste the liquor of the genial soil of Pramniium.¹⁷

DEMOSTHENES. Oh, Good Genius! 'Tis thy will, not mine.

NICIAS. Prithee, tell me, what is it?

DEMOSTHENES. Run indoors quick and steal the oracles of the Paphlagonian, while he is asleep.¹⁸

NICIAS. Bless me! I fear this Good Genius will be but a very Bad Genius for me.

DEMOSTHENES. And set the flagon near me, that I may moisten my wit to invent some brilliant notion.

NICIAS (*enters the house and returns at once*). How the Paphlagonian grunts and snores! I was able to seize the sacred oracle, which he was guarding with the greatest care, without his seeing me.

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! clever fellow! Hand it here, that I may read. Come, pour me out some drink, bestir yourself! Let me see what there is in it. Oh! prophecy! Some drink! some drink! Quick!

NICIAS. Well! what says the oracle?

DEMOSTHENES. Pour again.

NICIAS. Is "pour again" in the oracle?

DEMOSTHENES. Oh, Bacis!¹⁹

NICIAS. But what is in it?

DEMOSTHENES. Quick! some drink!

NICIAS. Bacis is very dry!

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! miserable Paphlagonian! This then is why you have so long taken such precautions; your horoscope gave you qualms of terror.

¹⁵ The versions of his death vary. He is said to have taken poison in order to avoid fighting against Athens.

¹⁶ A minor god, supposed by the ancients to preside over the life of each man; each empire, each province, each town had its titular Genius. Everyone offered sacrifice to his Genius on each anniversary of his birth with wine, flowers and incense.

¹⁷ A hill in Asia Minor, near Smyrna. Homer mentions the wine of Pramniium.

¹⁸ The common people, who at Athens were as superstitious as everywhere else, took delight in oracles, especially when they were favourable, and Cleon served them up to suit their taste and to advance his own ambition.

¹⁹ Famous seer of Boeotia.

NICIAS. What does it say?

DEMOSTHENES. It says here how he must end.

NICIAS. And how?

DEMOSTHENES. How? the oracle announces clearly that a dealer in oakum must first govern the city.²⁰

NICIAS. First dealer. And after him, who?

DEMOSTHENES. After him, a sheep-dealer.²¹

NICIAS. Two dealers, eh? And what is this one's fate?

DEMOSTHENES. To reign until a greater scoundrel than he arises; then he perishes and in his place the leather-seller appears, the Paphlagonian robber, the bawler, who roars like a torrent.²²

NICIAS. And the leather-seller must destroy the sheep-seller?

DEMOSTHENES. Yes.

NICIAS. Oh! woe is me! Where can another seller be found, is there ever a one left?

DEMOSTHENES. There is yet one, who plies a firstrate trade.

NICIAS. Tell me, pray, what is that?

DEMOSTHENES. You really want to know?

NICIAS. Yes.

DEMOSTHENES. Well then! 'tis a sausage-seller who must overthrow him.

NICIAS. A sausage-seller! Ah! by Posidon! what a fine trade! But where can this man be found?

DEMOSTHENES. Let us seek him.

NICIAS. Lo! there he is, going towards the market-place; 'tis the gods, the gods who send him!

DEMOSTHENES. This way, this way, oh, lucky sausage-seller, come forward, dear friend, our saviour, the saviour of our city.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What is it? Why do you call me?

DEMOSTHENES. Come here, come and learn about your good luck, you who are Fortune's favourite!

NICIAS. Come! Relieve him of his basket-tray and tell him the oracle of the god; I will go and look after the Paphlagonian.

DEMOSTHENES. First put down all your gear, then worship the earth and the gods.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Tis done. What is the matter?

DEMOSTHENES. Happiness, riches, power; to-day you have nothing, to-morrow you will have all, oh! chief of happy Athens.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Why not leave me to wash my tripe and to sell my sausages instead of making game of me?

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! the fool! Your tripe! Do you see these tiers of people?²³

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Yes.

DEMOSTHENES. You shall be master to them all, governor of the market, of the harbours, of the Pnyx; you shall trample the Senate under foot, be able to cashier the generals, load them with fetters, throw them into gaol, and you will play the debauchee in the Prytaneum.²⁴

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What! I?

²⁰ Eucrates, who was the leading statesman at Athens after Pericles.

²¹ Lysicles, who married the courtesan Aspasia.

²² Literally, like Cycloborus, a torrent in Attica.

²³ He points to the spectators.

²⁴ The public meals were given in the Prytaneum; to these were admitted those whose services merited that they should be fed at the cost of the State. This distinction depended on the popular vote, and was very often bestowed on demagogues very unworthy of the privilege.

DEMOSTHENES. You, without a doubt. But you do not yet see all the glory awaiting you. Stand on your basket and look at all the islands that surround Athens.²⁵

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I see them. What then?

DEMOSTHENES. Look at the storehouses and the shipping.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Yes, I am looking.

DEMOSTHENES. Exists there a mortal more blest than you? Furthermore, turn your right eye towards Caria and your left towards Chalcedon.²⁶

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Tis then a blessing to squint!

DEMOSTHENES. No, but 'tis you who are going to trade away all this. According to the oracle you must become the greatest of men.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Just tell me how a sausage-seller can become a great man.

DEMOSTHENES. That is precisely why you will be great, because you are a sad rascal without shame, no better than a common market rogue.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I do not hold myself worthy of wielding power.

DEMOSTHENES. Oh! by the gods! Why do you not hold yourself worthy? Have you then such a good opinion of yourself? Come, are you of honest parentage?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. By the gods! No! of very bad indeed.

DEMOSTHENES. Spoilt child of fortune, everything fits together to ensure your greatness.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But I have not had the least education. I can only read, and that very badly.

DEMOSTHENES. That is what may stand in your way, almost knowing how to read. The demagogues will neither have an educated nor an honest man; they require an ignoramus and a rogue. But do not, do not let go this gift, which the oracle promises.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But what does the oracle say?

DEMOSTHENES. Faith! it is put together in very fine enigmatical style, as elegant as it is clear: "When the eagle-tanner with the hooked claws shall seize a stupid dragon, a blood-sucker, it will be an end to the hot Paphlagonian pickled garlic. The god grants great glory to the sausage-sellers unless they prefer to sell their wares."

SAUSAGE-SELLER. In what way does this concern me? Pray instruct my ignorance.

DEMOSTHENES. The eagle-tanner is the Paphlagonian.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What do the hooked claws mean?

DEMOSTHENES. It means to say, that he robs and pillages us with his claw-like hands.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And the dragon?

DEMOSTHENES. That is quite clear. The dragon is long and so also is the sausage; the sausage like the dragon is a drinker of blood. Therefore the oracle says, that the dragon will triumph over the eagle-tanner, if he does not let himself be cajoled with words.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The oracles of the gods summon me! Faith! I do not at all understand how I can be capable of governing the people.

DEMOSTHENES. Nothing simpler. Continue your trade. Mix and knead together all the state business as you do for your sausages. To win the people, always cook them some savoury that pleases them. Besides, you possess all the attributes of a demagogue; a screeching, horrible voice, a perverse, cross-grained nature and the language of the market-place. In you all is united which is needful for governing. The oracles are in your favour, even including that of Delphi. Come, take a chaplet, offer a libation to the god of Stupidity²⁷ and take care to fight vigorously.

²⁵ Islands of the Aegaeon, subject to Athens, which paid considerable tributes.

²⁶ Caria and Chalcedon were at the two extremities of Asia Minor; the former being at the southern, the latter at the northern end of that extensive coast.

²⁷ As though stupidity were an essential of good government.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Who will be my ally? for the rich fear the Paphlagonian and the poor shudder at the sight of him.

DEMOSTHENES. You will have a thousand brave Knights,²⁸ who detest him, on your side; also the honest citizens amongst the spectators, those who are men of brave hearts, and finally myself and the god. Fear not, you will not see his features, for none have dared to make a mask resembling him. But the public have wit enough to recognize him.²⁹

NICIAS. Oh! mercy! here is the Paphlagonian!

CLEON. By the twelve gods! Woe betide you, who have too long been conspiring against Demos. What means this Chalcidian cup? No doubt you are provoking the Chalcidians to revolt. You shall be killed, butchered, you brace of rogues.

DEMOSTHENES. What! are you for running away? Come, come, stand firm, bold Sausage-seller, do not betray us. To the rescue, oh! Knights. Now is the time. Simon, Panaetius,³⁰ get you to the right wing; they are coming on; hold tight and return to the charge. I can see the dust of their horses' hoofs; they are galloping to our aid. Courage! Repel, attack them, put them to flight.

CHORUS. Strike, strike the villain, who has spread confusion amongst the ranks of the Knights, this public robber, this yawning gulf of plunder, this devouring Charybdis,³¹ this villain, this villain, this villain! I cannot say the word too often, for he *is* a villain a thousand times a day. Come, strike, drive, hurl him over and crush him to pieces; hate him as we hate him; stun him with your blows and your shouts. And beware lest he escape you; he knows the way Eucrates³² took straight to a bran sack for concealment.

CLEON. Oh! veteran Heliasts,³³ brotherhood of the three obols,³⁴ whom I fostered by bawling at random, help me; I am being beaten to death by rebels.

CHORUS. And 'tis justice; you devour the public funds that all should share in; you treat the officers answerable for the revenue like the fruit of the fig tree, squeezing them to find which are still green or more or less ripe; and, when you find one simple and timid, you force him to come from the Chersonese,³⁵ then you seize him by the middle, throttle him by the neck, while you twist his shoulder back; he falls and you devour him.³⁶ Besides, you know very well how to select from among the citizens those who are as meek as lambs, rich, without guile and loathers of lawsuits.

CLEON. Eh! what! Knights, are you helping them? But, if I am beaten, 'tis in your cause, for I was going to propose to erect you a statue in the city in memory of your bravery.

CHORUS. Oh! the impostor! the dull varlet! See! he treats us like old dotards and crawls at our feet to deceive us; but the cunning wherein lies his power shall this time recoil on himself; he trips up himself by resorting to such artifices.

CLEON. Oh Citizens! oh people! see how these brutes are bursting my belly.

CHORUS. What shouts! but 'tis this very bawling that incessantly upsets the city!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I can shout too—and so loud that you will flee with fear.

²⁸ The Athenian citizens were divided into four classes—the Pentacosiomedimni, who possessed five hundred minae; the Knights, who had three hundred and were obliged to maintain a charger (hence their name); the Zeugitae and the Thetes. In Athens, the Knights never had the high consideration and the share in the magistracy which they enjoyed at Rome.

²⁹ It is said that Aristophanes played the part of Cleon himself, as no one dared to assume the role. (*See* Introduction.)

³⁰ They were two leaders of the knightly order.

³¹ The famous whirlpool, near Sicily.

³² Eucrates, the oakum-seller, already mentioned, when the object of a riot, took refuge in a mill and there hid himself in a sack of bran.

³³ The chief Athenian tribunal only next in dignity to the Areopagus; it generally consisted of two hundred members; it tried civil cases of the greatest importance and some crimes beyond the competence of other courts, e.g. rape, adultery, extortion. The sittings were in the open air, hence the name ([Greek: _Elios], the sun).

³⁴ The Heliasts' salary. (*See* above.)

³⁵ Tributary to Athens; Olynthus and Potidaea were the chief towns of this important Peninsula.

³⁶ Meaning he frightens him with the menace of judicial prosecution forces him to purchase silence.

CHORUS. If you shout louder than he does, I will strike up the triumphal hymn; if you surpass him in impudence, the cake is ours.

CLEON. I denounce this fellow; he has had tasty stews exported from Athens for the Spartan fleet.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I denounce him, who runs into the Prytaneum with empty belly and comes out with it full.

DEMOSTHENES. And by Zeus! he carries off bread, meat, and fish, which is forbidden. Pericles himself never had this right.

CLEON. You are travelling the right road to get killed.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I'll bawl three times as loud as you.

CLEON. I will deafen you with my yells.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I you with my bellowing.

CLEON. I shall calumniate you, if you become a Strategus.³⁷

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Dog, I will lay your back open with the lash.

CLEON. I will make you drop your arrogance.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will baffle your machinations.

CLEON. Dare to look me in the face!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I too was brought up in the market-place.

CLEON. I will cut you to shreds if you whisper a word.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will daub you with dung if you open your mouth.

CLEON. I own I am a thief; do you admit yourself another.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. By our Hermes of the market-place, if caught in the act, why, I perjure myself before those who saw me.

CLEON. These are my own special tricks. I will denounce you to the Prytanes³⁸ as the owner of sacred tripe, that has not paid tithe.

CHORUS. Oh! you scoundrel! you impudent bawler! everything is filled with your daring, all Attica, the Assembly, the Treasury, the decrees, the tribunals. As a furious torrent you have overthrown our city; your outcries have deafened Athens and, posted upon a high rock, you have lain in wait for the tribute moneys as the fisherman does for the tunny-fish.

CLEON. I know your tricks; 'tis an old plot resoled.³⁹

SAUSAGE-SELLER. If you know naught of soling, I understand nothing of sausages; you, who cut bad leather on the slant to make it look stout and deceive the country yokels. They had not worn it a day before it had stretched some two spans.

DEMOSTHENES 'Tis the very trick he served me; both my neighbours and my friends laughed heartily at me, and before I reached Pergasae⁴⁰ I was swimming in my shoes.

CHORUS. Have you not always shown that blatant impudence, which is the sole strength of our orators? You push it so far, that you, the head of the State, dare to milk the purses of the opulent aliens and, at sight of you, the son of Hippodamus⁴¹ melts into tears. But here is another man, who gives me pleasure, for he is a much greater rascal than you; he will overthrow you; 'tis easy to see, that he will beat you in roguery, in brazenness and in clever turns. Come, you, who have been brought up among the class which to-day gives us all our great men, show us that a liberal education is mere tomfoolery.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Just hear what sort of fellow that fine citizen is.

CLEON. Will you not let me speak?

³⁷ The strategi were the heads of the military forces.

³⁸ They presided at the Public Assemblies; they were also empowered to try the most important cases.

³⁹ An allusion to Cleon's former calling.

⁴⁰ A country deme of Attica.

⁴¹ Archeptolemus, a resident alien, who lived in Piraeus. He had loaded Athens with gifts and was nevertheless maltreated by Cleon.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Assuredly not, for I also am a sad rascal.

CHORUS. If he does not give in at that, tell him your parents were sad rascals too.

CLEON. Once more, will you not let me speak?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, by Zeus!

CLEON. Yes, by Zeus, but you shall!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, by Posidon! We will fight first to see who shall speak first.

CLEON. I will die sooner.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will not let you. . . .

CHORUS. Let him, in the name of the gods, let him die.

CLEON. What makes you so bold as to dare to speak to my face?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Tis that I know both how to speak and how to cook.

CLEON. Hah! the fine speaker! Truly, if some business matter fell your way, you would know thoroughly well how to attack it, to carve it up alive! Shall I tell you what has happened to you? Like so many others, you have gained some petty lawsuit against some alien.⁴² Did you drink enough water to inspire you? Did you mutter over the thing sufficiently through the night, spout it along the street, recite it to all you met? Have you bored your friends enough with it? 'Tis then for this you deem yourself an orator. Ah! poor fool!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And what do you drink yourself then, to be able all alone by yourself to dumbfound and stupefy the city so with your clamour?

CLEON. Can you match me with a rival? Me! When I have devoured a good hot tunny-fish and drunk on top of it a great jar of unmixed wine, I hold up the Generals of Pylos to public scorn.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I, when I have bolted the tripe of an ox together with a sow's belly and swallowed the broth as well, I am fit, though slobbering with grease, to bellow louder than all orators and to terrify Nicias.

CHORUS. I admire your language so much; the only thing I do not approve is that you swallow all the broth yourself.

CLEON. E'en though you gorged yourself on sea-dogs, you would not beat the Milesians.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Give me a bullock's breast to devour, and I am a man to traffic in mines.⁴³

CLEON. I will rush into the Senate and set them all by the ears.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I will lug out your gut to stuff like a sausage.

CLEON. As for me, I will seize you by the rump and hurl you head foremost through the door.

CHORUS. In any case, by Posidon, 'twill only be when you have thrown *me* there first.⁴⁴

CLEON. Beware of the carcan!⁴⁵

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I denounce you for cowardice.

CLEON. I will tan your hide.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will flay you and make a thief's pouch with the skin.

CLEON. I will peg you out on the ground.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will slice you into mince-meat.

CLEON. I will tear out your eyelashes.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will slit your gullet.

⁴² This was easier than against a citizen because of the inferiority, in which the pride of the Athenian held those born on other soil.

⁴³ When drunk he conceives himself rich and the man to buy up the rich silver mines of Laurium, in south-east Attica.

⁴⁴ The Chorus throws itself between Cleon and Agoracritus to protect the latter.

⁴⁵ An iron collar, an instrument of torture and of punishment.

DEMOSTHENES. We will set his mouth open with a wooden stick as the cooks do with pigs; we will tear out his tongue, and, looking down his gaping throat, will see whether his inside has any pimples.⁴⁶

CHORUS. Thus then at Athens we have something more fiery than fire, more impudent than impudence itself! 'Tis a grave matter; come, we will push and jostle him without mercy. There, you grip him tightly under the arms; if he gives way at the onset, you will find him nothing but a craven; I know my man.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. That he has been all his life and he has only made himself a name by reaping another's harvest; and now he has tied up the ears he gathered over there, he lets them dry and seeks to sell them.⁴⁷

CLEON. I do not fear you as long as there is a Senate and a people which stands like a fool, gaping in the air.

CHORUS. What unparalleled impudence! 'Tis ever the same brazen front. If I don't hate you, why, I'm ready to take the place of the one blanket Cratinus wets;⁴⁸ I'll offer to play a tragedy by Morsimus.⁴⁹ Oh! you cheat! who turn all into money, who flutter from one extortion to another; may you disgorge as quickly as you have crammed yourself! Then only would I sing, "Let us drink, let us drink to this happy event!"⁵⁰ Then even the son of Iulius,⁵¹ the old niggard, would empty his cup with transports of joy, crying, "Io, Paean! Io, Bacchus!"

CLEON. By Posidon! You! would you beat me in impudence! If you succeed, may I no longer have my share of the victims offered to Zeus on the city altar.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I, I swear by the blows that have so oft rained upon my shoulders since infancy, and by the knives that have cut me, that I will show more effrontery than you; as sure as I have rounded this fine stomach by feeding on the pieces of bread that had cleansed other folk's greasy fingers.⁵²

CLEON. On pieces of bread, like a dog! Ah! wretch! you have the nature of a dog and you dare to fight a cynecephalus?⁵³

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I have many another trick in my sack, memories of my childhood's days. I used to linger around the cooks and say to them, "Look, friends, don't you see a swallow? 'tis the herald of springtime." And while they stood, their noses in the air, I made off with a piece of meat.

CHORUS. Oh! most clever man! How well thought out! You did as the eaters of artichokes, you gathered them before the return of the swallows.⁵⁴

SAUSAGE-SELLER. They could make nothing of it; or, if they suspected a trick, I hid the meat in my breeches and denied the thing by all the gods; so that an orator, seeing me at the game, cried, "This child will get on; he has the mettle that makes a statesman."

CHORUS. He argued rightly; to steal, perjure yourself and make a receiver of your rump⁵⁵ are three essentials for climbing high.

CLEON. I will stop your insolence, or rather the insolence of both of you. I will throw myself upon you like a terrible hurricane ravaging both land and sea at the will of its fury.

⁴⁶ A disease among swine.

⁴⁷ Cleon wanted the Spartans to purchase the prisoners of Sphacteria from him.

⁴⁸ With piss—the result of his drunken habits.

⁴⁹ A tragic poet, apparently proverbial for feebleness of style.

⁵⁰ Beginning of a song of Simonides.

⁵¹ A miser.

⁵² Guests used pieces of bread to wipe their fingers at table.

⁵³ 'Dog's head,' a vicious species of ape.

⁵⁴ They were allowed to remain in the ground throughout the winter so that they might grow tender.

⁵⁵ An allusion to the pederastic habits ascribed to some of the orators by popular rumour.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Then I will gather up my sausages and entrust myself to the kindly waves of fortune so as to make you all the more enraged.

DEMOSTHENES. And I will watch in the bilges in case the boat should make water.

CLEON. No, by Demeter! I swear, 'twill not be with impunity that you have thieved so many talents from the Athenians.⁵⁶

CHORUS (*to the Sausage-seller*). Oh! oh! reef your sail a bit! Here is Boreas blowing calumniously.

CLEON. I know that you got ten talents out of Potidaea.⁵⁷

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Hold! I will give you one; but keep it dark!

CHORUS. Hah! that will please him mightily; now you can travel under full sail.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Yes, the wind has lost its violence.

CLEON. I will bring four suits against you, each of one hundred talents.⁵⁸

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I twenty against you for shirking duty and more than a thousand for robbery.

CLEON. I maintain that your parents were guilty of sacrilege against the goddess.⁵⁹

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I, that one of your grandfathers was a satellite....

CLEON. To whom? Explain!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. To Byrsina, the mother of Hippias.⁶⁰

CLEON. You are an impostor.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And you are a rogue.

CHORUS. Hit him hard.

CLEON. Oh, oh, dear! The conspirators are murdering me!

CHORUS. Strike, strike with all your might; bruise his belly, lashing him with your guts and your tripe; punish him with both arms! Oh! vigorous assailant and intrepid heart! Have you not routed him totally in this duel of abuse? how shall I give tongue to my joy and sufficiently praise you?

CLEON. Ah! by Demeter! I was not ignorant of this plot against me; I knew it was forming, that the chariot of war was being put together.⁶¹

CHORUS (*to Sausage-seller*). Look out, look out! Come, outfence him with some wheelwright slang?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. His tricks at Argos do not escape me. Under pretence of forming an alliance with the Argives, he is hatching a plot with the Lacedaemonians there; and I know why the bellows are blowing and the metal that is on the anvil; 'tis the question of the prisoners.

CHORUS. Well done! Forge on, if he be a wheelwright.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And there are men at Sparta⁶² who are hammering the iron with you; but neither gold nor silver nor prayers nor anything else shall impede my denouncing your trickery to the Athenians.

CLEON. As for me, I hasten to the Senate to reveal your plotting, your nightly gatherings in the city, your trafficking with the Medes and with the Great King, and all you are foraging for in Boeotia.⁶³

⁵⁶ He imputes the crime to Agoracritus of which he is guilty himself.

⁵⁷ A town in Thrace and subject to Athens. It therefore paid tribute to the latter. It often happened that the demagogues extracted considerable sums from the tributaries by threats or promises.

⁵⁸ It was customary in Athens for the plaintiff himself to fix the fine to be paid by the defendant.

⁵⁹ Athené, the tutelary divinity of Athens.

⁶⁰ And wife of Pisistratus. Anything belonging to the ancient tyrants was hateful to the Athenians.

⁶¹ An allusion to the language used by the democratic orators, who, to be better understood by the people, constantly affected the use of terms belonging to the different trades.

⁶² He accuses Cleon of collusion with the enemy.

⁶³ Cleon retorts upon his adversary the charge brought against himself. The Boeotians were the allies of Sparta.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What price then is paid for forage by Boeotians?

CLEON. Oh! by Heracles! I will tan your hide.

CHORUS. Come, if you have both wit and heart, now is the time to show it, as on the day when you hid the meat in your breeches, as you say. Hasten to the Senate, for he will rush there like a tornado to calumniate us all and give vent to his fearful bellowings.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I am going, but first I must rid myself of my tripe and my knives; I will leave them here.

CHORUS. Stay! rub your neck with lard; in this way you will slip between the fingers of calumny.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Spoken like a finished master of fence.

CHORUS. Now, bolt down these cloves of garlic.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Pray, what for?

CHORUS. Well primed with garlic, you will have greater mettle for the fight. But hurry, hurry, bestir yourself!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. That's just what I am doing.

CHORUS. And, above all, bite your foe, rend him to atoms, tear off his comb⁶⁴ and do not return until you have devoured his wattles. Go! make your attack with a light heart, avenge me and may Zeus guard you! I burn to see you return the victor and laden with chaplets of glory. And you, spectators, enlightened critics of all kinds of poetry, lend an ear to my anapaests.⁶⁵

CHORUS. Had one of the old authors asked to mount this stage to recite his verses, he would not have found it hard to persuade me. But our poet of to-day is likewise worthy of this favour; he shares our hatred, he dares to tell the truth, he boldly braves both waterspouts and hurricanes. Many among you, he tells us, have expressed wonder, that he has not long since had a piece presented in his own name, and have asked the reason why.⁶⁶ This is what he bids us say in reply to your questions; 'tis not without grounds that he has courted the shade, for, in his opinion, nothing is more difficult than to cultivate the comic Muse; many court her, but very few secure her favours. Moreover, he knows that you are fickle by nature and betray your poets when they grow old. What fate befell Magnes,⁶⁷ when his hair went white? Often enough has he triumphed over his rivals; he has sung in all keys, played the lyre and fluttered wings; he turned into a Lydian and even into a gnat, daubed himself with green to become a frog.⁶⁸ All in vain! When young, you applauded him; in his old age you hooted and mocked him, because his genius for raillery had gone. Cratinus⁶⁹ again was like a torrent of glory rushing across the plain, uprooting oak, plane tree and rivals and bearing them pell-mell in its wake. The only songs at the banquet were, 'Doro, shod with lying tales' and 'Adepts of the Lyric Muse';⁷⁰ so great was his renown. Look at him now! he drivels, his lyre has neither strings nor keys, his voice quivers, but you have no pity for him, and you let him wander about as he can, like Connas,⁷¹ his temples circled with a withered chaplet; the poor old fellow is dying of thirst; he who, in honour of his glorious past, should be in the Prytaneum drinking at his ease, and instead of trudging the country should be sitting amongst the first row of the spectators, close to the statue of Dionysus⁷² and loaded with perfumes. Crates,⁷³ again, have you done hounding him with your rage and your hisses? True, 'twas but meagre

⁶⁴ Allusion to cock-fighting.

⁶⁵ The tripping metre usually employed in the *parabasis*.

⁶⁶ Hitherto Aristophanes had presented his pieces under an assumed name.

⁶⁷ A comic poet, who had carried off the prize eleven times; not a fragment of his works remains to us.

⁶⁸ An allusion to the titles of some of his pieces, viz. "the Flute Players, the Birds, the Lydians, the Gnats, the Frogs."

⁶⁹ The Comic Poet, rival of Aristophanes, several times referred to above.

⁷⁰ These were the opening lines of poems by Cratinus, often sung at festivities.

⁷¹ A poet, successful at the Olympic games, and in old age reduced to extreme misery.

⁷² The place of honour in the Dionysiac Theatre, reserved for distinguished citizens.

⁷³ A Comic Poet, who was elegant but cold; he had at first played as an actor in the pieces of Cratinus.

fare that his sterile Muse could offer you; a few ingenious fancies formed the sole ingredients, but nevertheless he knew how to stand firm and to recover from his falls. 'Tis such examples that frighten our poet; in addition, he would tell himself, that before being a pilot, he must first know how to row, then to keep watch at the prow, after that how to gauge the winds, and that only then would he be able to command his vessel.⁷⁴ If then you approve this wise caution and his resolve that he would not bore you with foolish nonsense, raise loud waves of applause in his favour this day, so that, at this Lenaean feast, the breath of your favour may swell the sails of his triumphant galley and the poet may withdraw proud of his success, with head erect and his face beaming with delight.

Posidon, god of the racing steed, I salute you, you who delight in their neighing and in the resounding clatter of their brass-shod hoofs, god of the swift galleys, which, loaded with mercenaries, cleave the seas with their azure beaks, god of the equestrian contests, in which young rivals, eager for glory, ruin themselves for the sake of distinction with their chariots in the arena, come and direct our chorus; Posidon with the trident of gold, you, who reign over the dolphins, who are worshipped at Sunium and at Geraestus⁷⁵ beloved of Phormio,⁷⁶ and dear to the whole city above all the immortals, I salute you!

Let us sing the glory of our forefathers; ever victors, both on land and sea, they merit that Athens, rendered famous by these, her worthy sons, should write their deeds upon the sacred peplus.⁷⁷ As soon as they saw the enemy, they at once sprang at him without ever counting his strength. Should one of them fall in the conflict, he would shake off the dust, deny his mishap and begin the struggle anew. Not one of these Generals of old time would have asked Cleaenetus⁷⁸ to be fed at the cost of the state; but our present men refuse to fight, unless they get the honours of the Prytaneum and precedence in their seats. As for us, we place our valour gratuitously at the service of Athens and of her gods; our only hope is, that, should peace ever put a term to our toils, you will not grudge us our long, scented hair nor our delicate care for our toilet.

Oh! Pallas, guardian of Athens, you, who reign over the most pious city, the most powerful, the richest in warriors and in poets, hasten to my call, bringing in your train our faithful ally in all our expeditions and combats, Victory, who smiles on our choruses and fights with us against our rivals. Oh! goddess! manifest yourself to our sight; this day more than ever we deserve that you should ensure our triumph.

We will sing likewise the exploits of our steeds! they are worthy of our praises;⁷⁹ in what invasions, what fights have I not seen them helping us! But especially admirable were they, when they bravely leapt upon the galleys, taking nothing with them but a coarse wine, some cloves of garlic and onions; despite this, they nevertheless seized the sweeps just like men, curved their backs over the thwarts and shouted, "Hippopopoh! Give way! Come, all pull together! Come, come! How! Samphoras!⁸⁰ Are you not rowing?" They rushed down upon the coast of Corinth, and the youngest hollowed out beds in the sand with their hoofs or went to fetch coverings; instead of luzern, they had no food but crabs, which they caught on the strand and even in the sea; so that Theorus causes

⁷⁴ Besides the oarsmen and the pilot, there was on the Grecian vessels a sailor, who stood at the prow to look out for rocks, and another, who observed the direction of the wind.

⁷⁵ Two promontories, one in Attica, the other in Euboea, on which temples to Posidon were erected.

⁷⁶ An Athenian general, who had gained several naval victories. He had contributed to the success of the expedition to Samos (Thucydides, Book I), and had recently beaten a Peloponnesian fleet (Thucydides, Book II).

⁷⁷ At the Panathenaea, a festival held every fourth year, a peplus, or sail, was carried with pomp to the Acropolis. On this various mythological scenes, having reference to Athené, were embroidered—her exploits against the giants, her fight with Posidon concerning the name to be given to Athens, etc. It had also become customary to add the names and the deeds of such citizens as had deserved well of their country.

⁷⁸ Cleaenetus had passed a law to limit the number of citizens to be fed at the Prytaneum; it may be supposed, that those, who aspired to this distinction, sought to conciliate Cleaenetus in their favour.

⁷⁹ The Chorus of Knights, not being able to sing their own praises, feign to divert these to their chargers.

⁸⁰ A horse branded with the obsolete letter [Greek: sán]—[Symbol: Letter 'san'], as a mark of breed or high quality.

a Corinthian⁸¹ crab to say, "'Tis a cruel fate, oh Posidon! neither my deep hiding-places, whether on land or at sea, can help me to escape the Knights."

Welcome, oh, dearest and bravest of men! How distracted I have been during your absence! But here you are back, safe and sound. Tell us about the fight you have had.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The important thing is that I have beaten the Senate.⁸²

CHORUS. All glory to you! Let us burst into shouts of joy! You speak well, but your deeds are even better. Come, tell me everything in detail; what a long journey would I not be ready to take to hear your tale! Come, dear friend, speak with full confidence to your admirers.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The story is worth hearing. Listen! From here I rushed straight to the Senate, right in the track of this man; he was already letting loose the storm, unchaining the lightning, crushing the Knights beneath huge mountains of calumnies heaped together and having all the air of truth; he called you conspirators and his lies caught root like weeds in every mind; dark were the looks on every side and brows were knitted. When I saw that the Senate listened to him favourably and was being tricked by his imposture, I said to myself, "Come, gods of rascals and braggarts, gods of all fools, toad-eaters and braggarts and thou, market-place, where I was bred from my earliest days, give me unbridled audacity, an untiring chatter and a shameless voice." No sooner had I ended this prayer than a lewd man broke wind on my right. "Hah! 'tis a good omen," said I, and prostrated myself; then I burst open the door by a vigorous push with my back, and, opening my mouth to the utmost, shouted, "Senators, I wanted you to be the first to hear the good news; since the War broke out, I have never seen anchovies at a lower price!" All faces brightened at once and I was voted a chaplet for my good tidings; and I added, "With a couple of words I will reveal to you, how you can have quantities of anchovies for an obol; 'tis to seize on all the dishes the merchants have." With mouths gaping with admiration, they applauded me. However, the Paphlagonian winded the matter and, well knowing the sort of language which pleases the Senate best, said, "Friends, I am resolved to offer one hundred oxen to the goddess in recognition of this happy event." The Senate at once veered to his side. So when I saw myself defeated by this ox filth, I outbade the fellow, crying, "Two hundred!" And beyond this I moved, that a vow be made to Diana of a thousand goats if the next day anchovies should only be worth an obol a hundred. And the Senate looked towards me again. The other, stunned with the blow, grew delirious in his speech, and at last the Prytanes and the guards dragged him out. The Senators then stood talking noisily about the anchovies. Cleon, however, begged them to listen to the Lacedaemonian envoy, who had come to make proposals of peace; but all with one accord, cried, "'Tis certainly not the moment to think of peace now! If anchovies are so cheap, what need have we of peace? Let the war take its course!" And with loud shouts they demanded that the Prytanes should close the sitting and then leapt over the rails in all directions. As for me, I slipped away to buy all the coriander seed and leeks there were on the market and gave it to them gratis as seasoning for their anchovies. 'Twas marvellous! They loaded me with praises and caresses; thus I conquered the Senate with an obol's worth of leeks, and here I am.

CHORUS. Bravo! you are the spoilt child of Fortune. Ah! our knave has found his match in another, who has far better tricks in his sack, a thousand kinds of knaveries and of wily words. But the fight begins afresh; take care not to weaken; you know that I have long been your most faithful ally.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! ah! here comes the Paphlagonian! One would say, 'twas a hurricane lashing the sea and rolling the waves before it in its fury. He looks as if he wanted to swallow me up alive! Ye gods! what an impudent knave!

CLEON. To my aid, my beloved lies! I am going to destroy you, or my name is lost.

⁸¹ Crab was no doubt a nickname given to the Corinthians on account of the position of their city on an isthmus between two seas. In the 'Acharnians' Theorus is mentioned as an ambassador, who had returned from the King of Persia.

⁸² The Senate was a body composed of five hundred members, elected annually like the magistrates from the three first classes to the exclusion of the fourth, the Thetes, which was composed of the poorest citizens.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh! how he diverts me with his threats! His bluster makes me laugh!
And I dance the *mothon* for joy,⁸³ and sing at the top of my voice, cuckoo!

CLEON. Ah! by Demeter! if I do not kill and devour you, may I die!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. If you do not devour me? and I, if I do not drink your blood to the last drop, and then burst with indigestion.

CLEON. I, I will strangle you, I swear it by the precedence which Pylos gained me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. By the precedence! Ah! might I see you fall from your precedence into the hindmost seat!

CLEON. By heaven! I will put you to the torture.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What a lively wit! Come, what's the best to give you to eat? What do you prefer? A purse?

CLEON. I will tear out your inside with my nails.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I will cut off your victuals at the Prytaneum.

CLEON. I will haul you before Demos, who will mete out justice to you.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I too will drag you before him and belch forth more calumnies than you.

CLEON. Why, poor fool, he does not believe you, whereas I play with him at will.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. So that Demos is your property, your contemptible creature.

CLEON. 'Tis because I know the dishes that please him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And these are little mouthfuls, which you serve to him like a clever nurse. You chew the pieces and place some in small quantities in his mouth, while you swallow three parts yourself.

CLEON. Thanks to my skill, I know exactly how to enlarge or contract this gullet.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I can do as much with my rump.

CLEON. Hah! my friend, you tricked me at the Senate, but have a care! Let us go before Demos.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. That's easily done; come, let's along without delay.

CLEON. Oh, Demos! Come, I adjure you to help me, my father!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Come, oh, my dear little Demos; come and see how I am insulted.

DEMOS. What a hubbub! To the Devil with you, bawlers! alas! my olive branch, which they have torn down!⁸⁴ Ah! 'tis you, Paphlagonian. And who, pray, has been maltreating you?

CLEON. You are the cause of this man and these young people having covered me with blows.

DEMOS. And why?

CLEON. Because you love me passionately, Demos.

DEMOS. And you, who are you?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. His rival. For many a long year have I loved you, have I wished to do you honour, I and a crowd of other men of means. But this rascal here has prevented us. You resemble those young men who do not know where to choose their lovers; you repulse honest folk; to earn your favours, one has to be a lamp-seller, a cobbler, a tanner or a currier.

CLEON. I am the benefactor of the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. In what way, an it please you?

CLEON. In what way? I supplanted the Generals at Pylos, I hurried thither and I brought back the Laconian captives.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I, whilst simply loitering, cleared off with a pot from a shop, which another fellow had been boiling.

⁸³ The [Greek: moth_on], a rough, boisterous, obscene dance.

⁸⁴ At the festival of the Pyanepsia, held in honour of Athené as the protectress of Theseus in his fight with the Minotaur, the children carried olive branches in procession, round which strips of linen were wound; they were then fastened up over the entrances of each house.

CLEON. Demos, convene the assembly at once to decide which of us two loves you best and most merits your favour.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Yes, yes, provided it be not at the Pnyx.

DEMOS. I could not sit elsewhere; 'tis at the Pnyx, that you must appear before me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! great gods! I am undone! At home this old fellow is the most sensible of men, but the instant he is seated on those cursed stone seats,⁸⁵ he is there with mouth agape as if he were hanging up figs by their stems to dry.

CHORUS. Come, loose all sail. Be bold, skilful in attack and entangle him in arguments which admit of no reply. It is difficult to beat him, for he is full of craft and pulls himself out of the worst corners. Collect all your forces to come forth from this fight covered with glory, but take care! Let him not assume the attack, get ready your grapples and advance with your vessel to board him!

CLEON. Oh! guardian goddess of our city! oh! Athené! if it be true that next to Lysicles, Cynna and Salabaccha⁸⁶ none have done so much good for the Athenian people as I, suffer me to continue to be fed at the Prytaneum without working; but if I hate you, if I am not ready to fight in your defence alone and against all, may I perish, be sawn to bits alive and my skin be cut up into thongs.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I, Demos, if it be not true, that I love and cherish you, may I be cooked in a stew; and if that is not saying enough, may I be grated on this table with some cheese and then hashed, may a hook be passed through my testicles and let me be dragged thus to the Ceramicus!⁸⁷

CLEON. Is it possible, Demos, to love you more than I do? And firstly, as long as you have governed with my consent, have I not filled your treasury, putting pressure on some, torturing others or begging of them, indifferent to the opinion of private individuals, and solely anxious to please you?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. There is nothing so wonderful in all that, Demos; I will do as much; I will thieve the bread of others to serve up to you. No, he has neither love for you nor kindly feeling; his only care is to warm himself with your wood, and I will prove it. You, who, sword in hand, saved Attica from the Median yoke at Marathon; you, whose glorious triumphs we love to extol unceasingly, look, he cares little whether he sees you seated uncomfortably upon a stone; whereas I, I bring you this cushion, which I have sewn with my own hands. Rise and try this nice soft seat. Did you not put enough strain on your breeches at Salamis?⁸⁸

DEMOS. Who are you then? Can you be of the race of Harmodius?⁸⁹ Upon my faith, 'tis nobly done and like a true friend of Demos.

CLEON. Petty flattery to prove him your goodwill!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But you have caught him with even smaller baits!

CLEON. Never had Demos a defender or a friend more devoted than myself; on my head, on my life, I swear it!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. You pretend to love him and for eight years you have seen him housed in casks, in crevices and dovecots,⁹⁰ where he is blinded with the smoke, and you lock him in without pity; Archeptolemus brought peace and you tore it to ribbons; the envoys who come to propose a truce you drive from the city with kicks in their backsides.

⁸⁵ On which the citizens sat in the Public Assembly in the Pnyx to hear the orators. In the centre of the semicircular space the tribune stood, a square block of stone, [Greek: B_ema], and from this the people were addressed.

⁸⁶ Lysicles was a dealer in sheep, who had wielded great power in Athens after the death of Pericles. Cynna and Salabaccha were two celebrated courtesans.

⁸⁷ Place of interment for those who died for the country.

⁸⁸ Seated on the banks for the rowers.

⁸⁹ Assassin of the tyrant Hippias, the son of Pisistratus. His memory was held in great honour at Athens.

⁹⁰ Driven out by the invasions of the Peloponnesians, the people of the outlying districts had been obliged to seek refuge within the walls of Athens, where they were lodged wherever they could find room.

CLEON. This is that Demos may rule over all the Greeks; for the oracles predict that, if he is patient, he must one day sit as judge in Arcadia at five obols per day. Meanwhile, I will nourish him, look after him and, above all, I will ensure to him his three obols.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, little you care for his reigning in Arcadia, 'tis to pillage and impose on the allies at will that you reckon; you wish the War to conceal your rogueries as in a mist, that Demos may see nothing of them, and harassed by cares, may only depend on yourself for his bread. But if ever peace is restored to him, if ever he returns to his lands to comfort himself once more with good cakes, to greet his cherished olives, he will know the blessings you have kept him out of, even though paying him a salary; and, filled with hatred and rage, he will rise, burning with desire to vote against you. You know this only too well; 'tis for this you rock him to sleep with your lies.

CLEON. Is it not shameful, that you should dare thus to calumniate me before Demos, me, to whom Athens, I swear it by Demeter, already owes more than it ever did to Themistocles?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh! citizens of Argos, do you hear what he says?⁹¹ You dare to compare yourself to Themistocles, who found our city half empty and left it full to overflowing, who one day gave us the Piraeus for dinner,⁹² and added fresh fish to all our usual meals.⁹³ You, on the contrary, you, who compare yourself with Themistocles, have only sought to reduce our city in size, to shut it within its walls, to chant oracles to us. And Themistocles goes into exile, while you gorge yourself on the most excellent fare.

CLEON. Oh! Demos! Am I compelled to hear myself thus abused, and merely because I love you?

DEMOS. Silence! stop your abuse! All too long have I been your tool.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! my dear little Demos, he is a rogue, who has played you many a scurvy trick; when your back is turned, he taps at the root the lawsuits initiated by the speculators, swallows the proceeds wholesale and helps himself with both hands from the public funds.

CLEON. Tremble, knave; I will convict you of having stolen thirty thousand drachmae.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. For a rascal of your kidney, you shout rarely! Well! I am ready to die if I do not prove that you have accepted more than forty minae from the Mitylenaeans.⁹⁴

CHORUS. This indeed may be termed talking. Oh, benefactor of the human race, proceed and you will be the most illustrious of the Greeks. You alone shall have sway in Athens, the allies will obey you, and, trident in hand, you will go about shaking and overturning everything to enrich yourself. But, stick to your man, let him not go; with lungs like yours you will soon have him finished.

CLEON. No, my brave friends, no, you are running too fast; I have done a sufficiently brilliant deed to shut the mouth of all enemies, so long as one of the bucklers of Pylos remains.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Of the bucklers! Hold! I stop you there and I hold you fast. For if it be true, that you love the people, you would not allow these to be hung up with their rings;⁹⁵ but 'tis with an intent you have done this. Demos, take knowledge of his guilty purpose; in this way you no longer can punish him at your pleasure. Note the swarm of young tanners, who really surround him, and close to them the sellers of honey and cheese; all these are at one with him. Very well! you have but to frown, to speak of ostracism and they will rush at night to these bucklers, take them down and seize our granaries.

⁹¹ A verse borrowed from Euripides' lost play of 'Telephus.'

⁹² Themistocles joined the Piraeus to Athens by the construction of the Long Walls.

⁹³ Which were caught off the Piraeus.

⁹⁴ Mitylené, chief city of the Island of Lesbos, rebelled against the Athenians and was retaken by Chares. By a popular decree the whole manhood of the town was to suffer death, but this decree was withdrawn the next day. Aristophanes insinuates that Cleon, bought over with Mitylenaeen gold, brought about this change of opinion. On the contrary, Thucydides says that the decree was revoked in spite of Cleon's opposition.

⁹⁵ When bucklers were hung up as trophies, it was usual to detach the ring or brace, so as to render them useless for warlike purposes.

DEMOS. Great gods! what! the bucklers retain their rings! Scoundrel! ah! too long have you had me for your tool, cheated and played with me!

CLEON. But, dear sir, never you believe all he tells you. Oh! never will you find a more devoted friend than me; unaided, I have known how to put down the conspiracies; nothing that is a-hatching in the city escapes me, and I hasten to proclaim it loudly.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. You are like the fishers for eels; in still waters they catch nothing, but if they thoroughly stir up the slime, their fishing is good; in the same way 'tis only in troublous times that you line your pockets. But come, tell me, you, who sell so many skins, have you ever made him a present of a pair of soles for his slippers? and you pretend to love him!

DEMOS. No, he has never given me any.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. That alone shows up the man; but I, I have bought you this pair of shoes; accept them.

DEMOS. None ever, to my knowledge, has merited so much from the people; you are the most zealous of all men for your country and for my toes.

CLEON. Can a wretched pair of slippers make you forget all that you owe me? Is it not I who curbed Gryttus,⁹⁶ the filthiest of the lewd, by depriving him of his citizen rights?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! noble inspector of back passages, let me congratulate you. Moreover, if you set yourself against this form of lewdness, this pederasty, 'twas for sheer jealousy, knowing it to be the school for orators.⁹⁷ But you see this poor Demos without a cloak and that at his age too! so little do you care for him, that in mid-winter you have not given him a garment with sleeves. Here, Demos, here is one, take it!

DEMOS. This even Themistocles never thought of; the Piraeus was no doubt a happy idea, but meseems this tunic is quite as fine an invention.

CLEON. Must you have recourse to such jackanapes' tricks to supplant me?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, 'tis your own tricks that I am borrowing, just as a guest, driven by urgent need, seizes some other man's shoes.⁹⁸

CLEON. Oh! you shall not outdo me in flattery! I am going to hand Demos this garment; all that remains to you, you rogue, is to go and hang yourself.

DEMOS. Faugh! may the plague seize you! You stink of leather horribly.⁹⁹

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Why, 'tis to smother you that he has thrown this cloak around you on top of the other; and it is not the first plot he has planned against you. Do you remember the time when silphium¹⁰⁰ was so cheap?

DEMOS. Aye, to be sure I do!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Very well! it was Cleon who had caused the price to fall so low so that all could eat it and the jurymen in the Courts were almost poisoned with farting in each others' faces.

DEMOS. Hah! why, indeed, a scavenger told me the same thing.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Were you not yourself in those days quite red in the gills with farting?

DEMOS. Why, 'twas a trick worthy of Pyrrandrus!¹⁰¹

CLEON. With what other idle trash will you seek to ruin me, you wretch!

⁹⁶ An orator of debauched habits.

⁹⁷ An accusation frequently hurled at the orators.

⁹⁸ Guests took off their shoes before entering the festal hall.

⁹⁹ An allusion to Cleon's former calling of a tanner.

¹⁰⁰ A plant from Cyrenadca, which was imported into Athens in large quantities after the conclusion of a treaty of navigation, which Cleon made with this country. It was a very highly valued flavouring for sauces.

¹⁰¹ The name of a supposed informer. The adjective, [Greek: pyrrhos], yellow, the colour of ordure, is contained in the construction of this name; thus a most disgusting piece of word-play is intended.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh! I shall be more brazen than you, for 'tis the goddess who has commanded me.¹⁰²

CLEON. No, on my honour, you will not! Here, Demos, feast on this dish; it is your salary as a dicast, which you gain through me for doing naught.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Hold! here is a little box of ointment to rub into the sores on your legs.

CLEON. I will pluck out your white hairs and make you young again.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Take this hare's scut to wipe the rheum from your eyes.

CLEON. When you wipe your nose, clean your fingers on my head.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, on mine.

CLEON. On mine. (*To the Sausage-seller.*) I will have you made a trierarch¹⁰³ and you will get ruined through it; I will arrange that you are given an old vessel with rotten sails, which you will have to repair constantly and at great cost.

CHORUS. Our man is on the boil; enough, enough, he is boiling over; remove some of the embers from under him and skim off his threats.

CLEON. I will punish your self-importance; I will crush you with imposts; I will have you inscribed on the list of the rich.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. For me no threats—only one simple wish. That you may be having some cuttle-fish fried on the stove just as you are going to set forth to plead the cause of the Milesians,¹⁰⁴ which, if you gain, means a talent in your pocket; that you hurry over devouring the fish to rush off to the Assembly; suddenly you are called and run off with your mouth full so as not to lose the talent and choke yourself. There! that is my wish.

CHORUS. Splendid! by Zeus, Apollo and Demeter!

DEMOS. Faith! here is an excellent citizen indeed, such as has not been seen for a long time. 'Tis truly a man of the lowest scum! As for you, Paphlagonian, who pretend to love me, you only feed me on garlic. Return me my ring, for you cease to be my steward.

CLEON. Here it is, but be assured, that if you bereave me of my power, my successor will be worse than I am.

DEMOS. This cannot be my ring; I see another device, unless I am going purblind.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What was your device?

DEMOS. A fig-leaf, stuffed with bullock's fat.¹⁰⁵

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, that is not it.

DEMOS. What is it then?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Tis a gull with beak wide open, haranguing from the top of a stone.¹⁰⁶

DEMOS. Ah! great gods!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What is the matter?

DEMOS. Away! away out of my sight! 'Tis not my ring he had, 'twas that of Cleonymus. (*To the Sausage-seller.*) Hold, I give you this one; you shall be my steward.

CLEON. Master, I adjure you, decide nothing till you have heard my oracles.¹⁰⁷

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And mine.

¹⁰² The orators were for ever claiming the protection of Athené.

¹⁰³ A very expensive burden, which was imposed upon the rich citizen. The trierarchs had to furnish both the equipment of the triremes or war-galleys and their upkeep. They varied considerably in number and ended in reaching a total of 1200; the most opulent found the money, and were later repaid partly and little by little by those not so well circumstanced. Later it was permissible for anyone, appointed as a trierarch, to point out someone richer than himself and to ask to have him take his place with the condition that if the other preferred, he should exchange fortunes with him and continue his office of trierarch.

¹⁰⁴ This is an allusion to some extortion of Cleon's.

¹⁰⁵ The Greek word [Greek: d_emos] means both "The People" and fat, grease. The pun cannot well be kept in English.

¹⁰⁶ A voracious bird—in allusion to Cleon's rapacity and to his loquacity in the Assembly.

¹⁰⁷ The orators were fond of supporting their arguments with imaginary oracles—and Cleon was an especial adept at this dodge.

CLEON. If you believe him, you will have to suck his tool for him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. If you listen to him, you'll have to let him skin your penis to the very stump.

CLEON. My oracles say that you are to reign over the whole earth, crowned with chaplets.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And mine say that, clothed in an embroidered purple robe, you shall pursue Smicythes and her spouse,¹⁰⁸ standing in a chariot of gold and with a crown on your head.

DEMOS. Go, fetch me your oracles, that the Paphlagonian may hear them.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Willingly.

DEMOS. And you yours.

CLEON. I run.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I run too; nothing could suit me better!

CHORUS. Oh! happy day for us and for our children, if Cleon perish. Yet just now I heard some old cross-grained pleaders on the market-place who hold not this opinion discoursing together. Said they, "If Cleon had not had the power we should have lacked two most useful tools, the pestle and the soup-ladle."¹⁰⁹ You also know what a pig's education he has had; his school-fellows can recall that he only liked the Dorian style and would study no other; his music-master in displeasure sent him away, saying: "This youth in matters of harmony, will only learn the Dorian style because 'tis akin to bribery."¹¹⁰

CLEON. There, behold and look at this heap; and yet I do not bring all.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ugh! I pant and puff under the weight and yet I do not bring all.

DEMOS. What are these?

CLEON. Oracles.

DEMOS. All these?

CLEON. Does that astonish you? Why, I have another whole boxful of them.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I the whole of my attics and two rooms besides.

DEMOS. Come, let us see, whose are these oracles?

CLEON. Mine are those of Bacis.¹¹¹

DEMOS (*to the Sausage-seller*). And whose are yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Glanis's, the elder brother of Bacis.¹¹²

DEMOS. And of what do they speak?

CLEON. Of Athens, of Pylos, of you, of me, of all.

DEMOS. And yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Of Athens, of lentils, of Lacedaemonians, of fresh mackerel, of scoundrelly flour-sellers, of you, of me. Ah! ha! now let him gnaw his own penis with chagrin!

DEMOS. Come, read them out to me and especially that one I like so much, which says that I shall become an eagle and soar among the clouds.

CLEON. Then listen and be attentive! "Son of Erectheus,¹¹³ understand the meaning of the words, which the sacred tripods set resounding in the sanctuary of Apollo. Preserve the sacred dog with the jagged teeth, that barks and howls in your defence; he will ensure you a salary and, if he fails, will perish as the victim of the swarms of jays that hunt him down with their screams."

¹⁰⁸ Smicythes, King of Thrace, spoken of in the oracle as a woman, doubtless on account of his cowardice. The word pursue is here used in a double sense, viz. in battle and in law. It is on account of this latter meaning, that Aristophanes adds "and her spouse," because in cases in which women were sued at law, their husbands were summoned as conjointly liable.

¹⁰⁹ Because he had smashed up and turned upside down the fortunes of Athens.

¹¹⁰ The pun—rather a far-fetched one—is between the words [Greek: D_orh_osti] (in the Dorian mode) and [Greek: d_orhon] (a bribe).

¹¹¹ A Boeotian soothsayer.

¹¹² A name invented by the Sausage-seller on the spur of the moment, to cap Cleon's boast.

¹¹³ That is, Athenian; Erectheus was an ancient mythical King of Athens.

DEMOS. By Demeter! I do not understand a word of it. What connection is there between Erectheus, the jays and the dog?

CLEON. 'Tis I who am the dog, since I bark in your defence. Well! Phoebus commands you to keep and cherish your dog.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Tis not so spoken by the god; this dog seems to me to gnaw at the oracles as others gnaw at doorposts. Here is exactly what Apollo says of the dog.

DEMOS. Let us hear, but I must first pick up a stone; an oracle which speaks of a dog might bite me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. "Son of Erectheus, beware of this Cerberus that enslaves freemen; he fawns upon you with his tail, when you are dining, but he is lying in wait to devour your dishes, should you turn your head an instant; at night he sneaks into the kitchen and, true dog that he is, licks up with one lap of his tongue both your dishes and . . . the islands."¹¹⁴

DEMOS. Faith, Glanis, you speak better than your brother.

CLEON. Condescend again to hear me and then judge: "A woman in sacred Athens will be delivered of a lion, who shall fight for the people against clouds of gnats with the same ferocity as if he were defending his whelps; care ye for him, erect wooden walls around him and towers of brass." Do you understand that?

DEMOS. Not the least bit in the world.

CLEON. The god tells you here to look after me, for, 'tis I who am your lion.

DEMOS. How! You have become a lion and I never knew a thing about it?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. There is only one thing which he purposely keeps from you; he does not say what this wall of wood and brass is in which Apollo warns you to keep and guard him.

DEMOS. What does the god mean, then?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. He advises you to fit him into a five-holed wooden collar.

DEMOS. Hah! I think that oracle is about to be fulfilled.

CLEON. Do not believe it; these are but jealous crows, that caw against me; but never cease to cherish your good hawk; never forget that he brought you those Lacedaemonian fish, loaded with chains.¹¹⁵

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! if the Paphlagonian ran any risk that day, 'twas because he was drunk. Oh, too credulous son of Cecrops,¹¹⁶ do you accept that as a glorious exploit? A woman would carry a heavy burden if only a man had put it on her shoulders. But to fight! Go to! he would shit himself, if ever it came to a tussle.

CLEON. Note this Pylos in front of Pylos, of which the oracle speaks, "Pylos is before Pylos."¹¹⁷

DEMOS. How "in front of Pylos"? What does he mean by that?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. He says he will seize upon your bath-tubs.¹¹⁸

DEMOS. Then I shall not bathe to-day.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, as he has stolen our baths. But here is an oracle about the fleet, to which I beg your best attention.

DEMOS. Read on! I am listening; let us first see how we are to pay our sailors.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ That is, the tributes paid to Athens by the Aegaeon Islands, whether allies or subjects.

¹¹⁵ The Lacedaemonian prisoners from Sphacteria, so often referred to.

¹¹⁶ That is, Athenian; Cecrops was the first King of Athens, according to the legends.

¹¹⁷ There were three towns of this name in different parts of Greece.

¹¹⁸ There is a pun here which it is impossible to render in English; the Greek [Greek: Pylos](Pylos) differs by only one letter from the word meaning a bath-tub ([Greek: Pyelos]).

¹¹⁹ Cleon was reproached by his enemies with paying small attention to the regular payment of the sailors.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. "Son of Aegeus,¹²⁰ beware of the tricks of the dog-fox,¹²¹ he bites from the rear and rushes off at full speed; he is nothing but cunning and perfidy." Do you know what the oracle intends to say?

DEMOS. The dog-fox is Philostratus.¹²²

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, no, 'tis Cleon; he is incessantly asking you for light vessels to go and collect the tributes, and Apollo advises you not to grant them.

DEMOS. What connection is there between a galley and a dog-fox?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. What connection? Why, 'tis quite plain—a galley travels as fast as a dog.

DEMOS. Why, then, does the oracle not say dog instead of dog-fox?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Because he compares the soldiers to young foxes, who, like them, eat the grapes in the fields.

DEMOS. Good! Well then! how am I to pay the wages of my young foxes?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will undertake that, and in three days too! But listen to this further oracle, by which Apollo puts you on your guard against the snares of the greedy fist.

DEMOS. Of what greedy fist?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The god in this oracle very clearly points to the hand of Cleon, who incessantly holds his out, saying, "Fill it."

CLEON. 'Tis false! Phoebus means the hand of Diopithes.¹²³ But here I have a winged oracle, which promises you shall become an eagle and rule over all the earth.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I have one, which says that you shall be King of the Earth and of the Sea, and that you shall administer justice in Ecbatana, eating fine rich stews the while.

CLEON. I have seen Athené¹²⁴ in a dream, pouring out full vials of riches and health over the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I too have seen the goddess, descending from the Acropolis with an owl perched upon her helmet; on your head she was pouring out ambrosia, on that of Cleon garlic pickle.

DEMOS. Truly Glanis is the wisest of men. I shall yield myself to you; guide me in my old age and educate me anew.

CLEON. Ah! I adjure you! not yet; wait a little; I will promise to distribute barley every day.

DEMOS. Ah! I will not hear another word about barley; you have cheated me too often already, both you and Theophanes.¹²⁵

CLEON. Well then! you shall have flour-cakes all piping hot.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will give you cakes too, and nice cooked fish; you will only have to eat.

DEMOS. Very well, mind you keep your promises. To whichever of you twain shall treat me best I hand over the reins of state.

CLEON. I will be first.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. No, no, *I* will.

CHORUS. Demos, you are our all-powerful sovereign lord; all tremble before you, yet you are led by the nose. You love to be flattered and fooled; you listen to the orators with gaping mouth and your mind is led astray.

DEMOS. 'Tis rather you who have no brains, if you think me so foolish as all that; it is with a purpose that I play this idiot's role, for I love to drink the lifelong day, and so it pleases me to keep a thief for my minister. When he has thoroughly gorged himself, then I overthrow and crush him.

¹²⁰ Another poetical term to signify Athenian; Aegeus, an ancient mythical King of Athens, father of Theseus.

¹²¹ Impudent as a dog and cunning as a fox.

¹²² An orator and statesman of the day; practically nothing is known about him.

¹²³ Another orator and statesman, accused apparently of taking bribes.

¹²⁴ As pointed out before, the orators were fond of dragging Athené continually into their speeches.

¹²⁵ One of Cleon's protégés and flatterers. The scholiasts say he was his secretary.

CHORUS. What profound wisdom! If it be really so, why! all is for the best. Your ministers, then, are your victims, whom you nourish and feed up expressly in the Pnyx, so that, the day your dinner is ready, you may immolate the fattest and eat him.

DEMOS. Look, see how I play with them, while all the time they think themselves such adepts at cheating me. I have my eye on them when they thieve, but I do not appear to be seeing them; then I thrust a judgment down their throat as it were a feather, and force them to vomit up all they have robbed from me.

CLEON. Oh! the rascal!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh! the scoundrel!

CLEON. Demos, all is ready these three hours; I await your orders and I burn with desire to load you with benefits.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I ten, twelve, a thousand hours, a long, long while, an infinitely long while.

DEMOS. As for me, 'tis thirty thousand hours that I have been impatient; very long, infinitely long that I have cursed you.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Do you know what you had best do?

DEMOS. If I do not, tell me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Declare the lists open¹²⁶ and we will contend abreast to determine who shall treat you the best.

DEMOS. Splendid! Draw back in line!¹²⁷

CLEON. I am ready.

DEMOS. Off you go!

SAUSAGE-SELLER (*to Cleon*). I shall not let you get to the tape.

DEMOS. What fervent lovers! If I am not to-day the happiest of men, 'tis because I shall be the most disgusted.

CLEON. Look! 'tis I who am the first to bring you a seat.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And I a table.

CLEON. Hold, here is a cake kneaded of Pylos barley.¹²⁸

SAUSAGE—SELLER. Here are crusts, which the ivory hand of the goddess has hallowed.¹²⁹

DEMOS. Oh! Mighty Athené! How large are your fingers!

CLEON. This is pea-soup, as exquisite as it is fine; 'tis Pallas the victorious goddess at Pylos who crushed the peas herself.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh, Demos! the goddess watches over you; she is stretching forth over your head ... a stew-pan full of broth.

DEMOS. And should we still be dwelling in this city without this protecting stew-pan?

CLEON. Here are some fish, given to you by her who is the terror of our foes.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The daughter of the mightiest of the gods sends you this meat cooked in its own gravy, along with this dish of tripe and some paunch.

DEMOS. 'Tis to thank me for the Peplos I offered to her; 'tis well.

CLEON. The goddess with the terrible plume invites you to eat this long cake; you will row the harder on it.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Take this also.

DEMOS. And what shall I do with this tripe?

¹²⁶ Terms borrowed from the circus races.

¹²⁷ Terms borrowed from the circus races.

¹²⁸ That is, at the expense of other folk.

¹²⁹ Pieces of bread, hollowed out, which were filled with mincemeat or soup.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. She sends it you to belly out your galleys, for she is always showing her kindly anxiety for our fleet. Now drink this beverage composed of three parts of water to two of wine.

DEMOS. Ah! what delicious wine, and how well it stands the water.¹³⁰

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Twas the goddess who came from the head of Zeus that mixed this liquor with her own hands.

CLEON. Hold, here is a piece of good rich cake.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But I offer you an entire cake.

CLEON. But you cannot offer him stewed hare as I do.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Ah! great gods! stewed hare! where shall I find it? Oh! brain of mine, devise some trick!

CLEON. Do you see this, poor fellow?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. A fig for that! Here are folk coming to seek me.

CLEON. Who are they?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Envoys, bearing sacks bulging with money.

CLEON. (*Hearing money mentioned Clean turns his head, and Agoracritus seizes the opportunity to snatch away the stewed hare.*) Where, where, I say?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Bah! What's that to you? Will you not even now let the strangers alone? Demos, do you see this stewed hare which I bring you?

CLEON. Ah! rascal! you have shamelessly robbed me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. You have robbed too, you robbed the Laconians at Pylos.

DEMOS. An you pity me, tell me, how did you get the idea to filch it from him?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. The idea comes from the goddess; the theft is all my own.

CLEON. And I had taken such trouble to catch this hare.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But 'twas I who had it cooked.

DEMOS (*to Cleon*). Get you gone! My thanks are only for him who served it.

CLEON. Ah! wretch! have you beaten me in impudence!

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Well then, Demos, say now, who has treated you best, you and your stomach? Decide!

DEMOS. How shall I act here so that the spectators shall approve my judgment?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I will tell you. Without saying anything, go and rummage through my basket, and then through the Paphlagonian's, and see what is in them; that's the best way to judge.

DEMOS. Let us see then, what is there in yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Why, 'tis empty, dear little father; I have brought everything to you.

DEMOS. This is a basket devoted to the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Now hunt through the Paphlagonian's. Well?

DEMOS. Oh! what a lot of good things! Why! 'tis quite full! Oh! what a huge great part of this cake he kept for himself! He had only cut off the least little tiny piece for me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. But this is what he has always done. Of everything he took, he only gave you the crumbs, and kept the bulk.

DEMOS. Oh! rascal! was this the way you robbed me? And I was loading you with chaplets and gifts!

CLEON. 'Twas for the public weal I robbed.

DEMOS (*to Cleon*). Give me back that crown;¹³¹ I will give it to him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Return it quick, quick, you gallows-bird.

CLEON. No, for the Pythian oracle has revealed to me the name of him who shall overthrow me.

¹³⁰ Both Greeks and Romans drank their wine mixed with water.

¹³¹ After his success in the Sphacteria affair Cleon induced the people to vote him a chaplet of gold.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. And that name was mine, nothing can be clearer.

CLEON. Reply and I shall soon see whether you are indeed the man whom the god intended. Firstly, what school did you attend when a child?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. 'Twas in the kitchens I was taught with cuffs and blows.

CLEON. What's that you say? Ah! this is truly what the oracle said. And what did you learn from the master of exercises?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I learnt to take a false oath without a smile, when I had stolen something.

CLEON. Oh! Phoebus Apollo, god of Lycia! I am undone! And when you had become a man, what trade did you follow?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. I sold sausages and did a bit of fornication.

CLEON. Oh! my god! I am a lost man! Ah! still one slender hope remains. Tell me, was it on the market-place or near the gates that you sold your sausages?

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Near the gates, in the market for salted goods.

CLEON Alas! I see the prophecy of the god is verily come true. Alas! roll me home.¹³² I am a miserable, ruined man. Farewell, my chaplet! 'Tis death to me to part with you. So you are to belong to another; 'tis certain he cannot be a greater thief, but perhaps he may be a luckier one.¹³³

SAUSAGE-SELLER. Oh! Zeus, the protector of Greece! 'tis to you I owe this victory!

DEMOSTHENES. Hail! illustrious conqueror, but forget not, that if you have become a great man, 'tis thanks to me; I ask but a little thing; appoint me secretary of the law-court in the room of Phanus.

DEMOS (*to the Sausage-seller*). But what is your name then? Tell me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER. My name is Agoracritus, because I have always lived on the market-place in the midst of lawsuits.¹³⁴

DEMOS. Well then, Agoracritus, I stand by you; as for the Paphlagonian, I hand him over to your mercy.

AGORACRITUS. Demos, I will care for you to the best of my power, and all shall admit that no citizen is more devoted than I to this city of simpletons.

CHORUS. What fitter theme for our Muse, at the close as at the beginning of his work, than this, to sing the hero who drives his swift steeds down the arena? Why afflict Lysistratus with our satires on his poverty,¹³⁵ and Thumantis,¹³⁶ who has not so much as a lodging? He is dying of hunger and can be seen at Delphi, his face bathed in tears, clinging to your quiver, oh, Apollo! and supplicating you to take him out of his misery.

An insult directed at the wicked is not to be censured; on the contrary, the honest man, if he has sense, can only applaud. Him, whom I wish to brand with infamy, is little known himself; 'tis the brother of Arignotus.¹³⁷ I regret to quote this name which is so dear to me, but whoever can distinguish black from white, or the Orthian mode of music from others, knows the virtues of Arignotus, whom his brother, Ariphrades,¹³⁸ in no way resembles. He gloats in vice, is not merely a dissolute man and utterly debauched—but he has actually invented a new form of vice; for he pollutes his tongue with abominable pleasures in brothels licking up that nauseous moisture and befouling his beard as he tickles the lips of lewd women's private parts.¹³⁹ Whoever is not horrified at such a monster shall never drink from the same cup with me.

¹³² That is, by means of the mechanical device of the Greek stage known as the [Greek: ekkukl_ema].

¹³³ Parody of a well-known verse from Euripides' 'Alcestis.'

¹³⁴ The name Agoracritus is compounded: cf. [Greek: agora], a market-place, and [Greek: krinein], to judge.

¹³⁵ This grandiloquent opening is borrowed from Pindar.

¹³⁶ Mentioned in the 'Acharnians.'

¹³⁷ A soothsayer.

¹³⁸ A flute-player.

¹³⁹ An allusion to the vice of the 'cunnilingue,' apparently a novel form of naughtiness at Athens in Aristophanes' day.

At times a thought weighs on me at night; I wonder whence comes this fearful voracity of Cleonymus.¹⁴⁰ 'Tis said, that when dining with a rich host, he springs at the dishes with the gluttony of a wild beast and never leaves the bread-bin until his host seizes him round the knees, exclaiming, "Go, go, good gentleman, in mercy go, and spare my poor table!"

'Tis said that the triremes assembled in council and that the oldest spoke in these terms, "Are you ignorant, my sisters, of what is plotting in Athens? They say, that a certain Hyperbolus,¹⁴¹ a bad citizen and an infamous scoundrel, asks for a hundred of us to take them to sea against Chalcedon."¹⁴² All were indignant, and one of them, as yet a virgin, cried, "May god forbid that I should ever obey him! I would prefer to grow old in the harbour and be gnawed by worms. No! by the gods I swear it, Nauphanté, daughter of Nauson, shall never bend to his law; 'tis as true as I am made of wood and pitch. If the Athenians vote for the proposal of Hyperbolus, let them! we will hoist full sail and seek refuge by the temple of Theseus or the shrine of the Euminides.¹⁴³ No! he shall not command us! No! he shall not play with the city to this extent! Let him sail by himself for Tartarus, if such please him, launching the boats in which he used to sell his lamps."

AGORACRITUS. Maintain a holy silence! Keep your mouths from utterance! call no more witnesses; close these tribunals, which are the delight of this city, and gather at the theatre to chant the Paean of thanksgiving to the gods for a fresh favour.

CHORUS. Oh! torch of sacred Athens, saviour of the Islands, what good tidings are we to celebrate by letting the blood of the victims flow in our market-places?

AGORACRITUS. I have freshened Demos up somewhat on the stove and have turned his ugliness into beauty.

CHORUS. I admire your inventive genius; but, where is he?

AGORACRITUS. He is living in ancient Athens, the city of the garlands of violets.

CHORUS. How I should like to see him! What is his dress like, what his manner?

AGORACRITUS. He has once more become as he was in the days when he lived with Aristides and Miltiades. But you will judge for yourselves, for I hear the vestibule doors opening. Hail with your shouts of gladness the Athens of old, which now doth reappear to your gaze, admirable, worthy of the songs of the poets and the home of the illustrious Demos.

CHORUS. Oh! noble, brilliant Athens, whose brow is wreathed with violets, show us the sovereign master of this land and of all Greece.

AGORACRITUS. Lo! here he is coming with his hair held in place with a golden band and in all the glory of his old-world dress; perfumed with myrrh, he spreads around him not the odour of lawsuits, but of peace.

CHORUS. Hail! King of Greece, we congratulate you upon the happiness you enjoy; it is worthy of this city, worthy of the glory of Marathon.

DEMOS. Come, Agoracritus, come, my best friend; see the service you have done me by freshening me up on your stove.

AGORACRITUS. Ah! if you but remembered what you were formerly and what you did, you would for a certainty believe me to be a god.

DEMOS. But what did I? and how was I then?

AGORACRITUS. Firstly, so soon as ever an orator declared in the assembly "Demos, I love you ardently; 'tis I alone, who dream of you and watch over your interests"; at such an exordium you would look like a cock flapping his wings or a bull tossing his horns.

DEMOS. What, I?

¹⁴⁰ As well known for his gluttony as for his cowardice.

¹⁴¹ One of the most noisy demagogues of Cleon's party; he succeeded him, but was later condemned to ostracism.

¹⁴² A town in Bithynia, situated at the entrance of the Bosphorus and nearly opposite Byzantium. It was one of the most important towns in Asia Minor. Doubtless Hyperbolus only demanded so large a fleet to terrorize the towns and oppress them at will.

¹⁴³ These temples were inviolable places of refuge, where even slaves were secure.

AGORACRITUS. Then, after he had fooled you to the hilt, he would go.

DEMOS. What! they would treat me so, and I never saw it!

AGORACRITUS. You knew only how to open and close your ears like a sunshade.

DEMOS. Was I then so stupid and such a dotard?

AGORACRITUS. Worse than that; if one of two orators proposed to equip a fleet for war and the other suggested the use of the same sum for paying out to the citizens, 'twas the latter who always carried the day. Well! you droop your head! you turn away your face?

DEMOS. I redden at my past errors.

AGORACRITUS. Think no more of them; 'tis not you who are to blame, but those who cheated you in this sorry fashion. But, come, if some impudent lawyer dared to say, "Dicasts, you shall have no wheat unless you convict this accused man!" what would you do? Tell me.

DEMOS. I would have him removed from the bar, I would bind Hyperbolus about his neck like a stone and would fling him into the Barathrum.¹⁴⁴

AGORACRITUS. Well spoken! but what other measures do you wish to take?

DEMOS. First, as soon as ever a fleet returns to the harbour, I shall pay up the rowers in full.

AGORACRITUS. That will soothe many a worn and chafed bottom.

DEMOS. Further, the hoplite enrolled for military service shall not get transferred to another service through favour, but shall stick to that given him at the outset.

AGORACRITUS. This will strike the buckler of Cleonymus full in the centre.

DEMOS. None shall ascend the rostrum, unless their chins are bearded.

AGORACRITUS. What then will become of Clisthenes and of Strato?¹⁴⁵

DEMOS. I wish only to refer to those youths, who loll about the perfume shops, babbling at random, "What a clever fellow is Pheax!¹⁴⁶ How cleverly he escaped death! how concise and convincing is his style! what phrases! how clear and to the point! how well he knows how to quell an interruption!"

AGORACRITUS. I thought you were the lover of those pathic minions.

DEMOS. The gods forefend it! and I will force all such fellows to go a-hunting instead of proposing decrees.

AGORACRITUS. In that case, accept this folding-stool, and to carry it this well-grown, big-testicled slave lad. Besides, you may put him to any other purpose you please.

DEMOS. Oh! I am happy indeed to find myself as I was of old!

AGORACRITUS. Aye, you deem yourself happy, when I shall have handed you the truces of thirty years. Truces! step forward!¹⁴⁷

DEMOS. Great gods! how charming they are! Can I do with them as I wish? where did you discover them, pray?

AGORACRITUS. 'Twas that Paphlagonian who kept them locked up in his house, so that you might not enjoy them. As for myself, I give them to you; take them with you into the country.

DEMOS. And what punishment will you inflict upon this Paphlagonian, the cause of all my troubles?

AGORACRITUS. 'Twill not be over-terrible. I condemn him to follow my old trade; posted near the gates, he must sell sausages of asses' and dogs'-meat; perpetually drunk, he will exchange foul language with prostitutes and will drink nothing but the dirty water from the baths.

DEMOS. Well conceived! he is indeed fit to wrangle with harlots and bathmen; as for you, in return for so many blessings, I invite you to take the place at the Prytaneum which this rogue once

¹⁴⁴ A rocky cleft at the back of the Acropolis into which criminals were hurled.

¹⁴⁵ Young and effeminate orators of licentious habits.

¹⁴⁶ By *adroit* special pleading he had contrived to get his acquittal, when charged with a capital offence.

¹⁴⁷ They were personified on the stage as pretty little *filles de joie*.

occupied. Put on this frog-green mantle and follow me. As for the other, let 'em take him away; let him go sell his sausages in full view of the foreigners, whom he used formerly so wantonly to insult.

* * * * *

FINIS OF "THE KNIGHTS"

* * * * *

THE ACHARNIANS

INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the series of three Comedies—'The Acharnians,' 'Peace' and 'Lysistrata'—produced at intervals of years, the sixth, tenth and twenty-first of the Peloponnesian War, and impressing on the Athenian people the miseries and disasters due to it and to the scoundrels who by their selfish and reckless policy had provoked it, the consequent ruin of industry and, above all, agriculture, and the urgency of asking Peace. In date it is the earliest play brought out by the author in his own name and his first work of serious importance. It was acted at the Lenaeon Festival, in January, 426 B.C., and gained the first prize, Cratinus being second.

Its diatribes against the War and fierce criticism of the general policy of the War party so enraged Cleon that, as already mentioned, he endeavoured to ruin the author, who in 'The Knights' retorted by a direct and savage personal attack on the leader of the democracy. The plot is of the simplest. Dicaeopolis, an Athenian citizen, but a native of Acharnae, one of the agricultural *demes* and one which had especially suffered in the Lacedaemonian invasions, sick and tired of the ill-success and miseries of the War, makes up his mind, if he fails to induce the people to adopt his policy of "peace at any price," to conclude a private and particular peace of his own to cover himself, his family, and his estate. The Athenians, momentarily elated by victory and over-persuaded by the demagogues of the day—Cleon and his henchmen, refuse to hear of such a thing as coming to terms. Accordingly Dicaeopolis dispatches an envoy to Sparta on his own account, who comes back presently with a selection of specimen treaties in his pocket. The old man tastes and tries, special terms are arranged, and the play concludes with a riotous and uproarious rustic feast in honour of the blessings of Peace and Plenty. Incidentally excellent fun is poked at Euripides and his dramatic methods, which supply matter for so much witty badinage in several others of our author's pieces.

Other specially comic incidents are: the scene where the two young daughters of the famished Megarian are sold in the market at Athens as sucking-pigs—a scene in which the convenient similarity of the Greek words signifying a pig and the 'pudendum muliebre' respectively is utilized in a whole string of ingenious and suggestive 'double entendres' and ludicrous jokes; another where the Informer, or Market-Spy, is packed up in a crate as crockery and carried off home by the Boeotian buyer.

The drama takes its title from the Chorus, composed of old men of Acharnae.

* * * * *

THE ACHARNIANS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DICAEOPOLIS.
HERALD.
AMPHITHEUS.
AMBASSADORS.
PSEUDARTABAS.
THEORUS.
WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS.
DAUGHTER OF DICAEOPOLIS.
EURIPIDES.
CEPHISOPHON, servant of Euripides.
LAMACHUS.
ATTENDANT OF LAMACHUS.
A MEGARIAN.
MAIDENS, daughters of the Megarian.
A BOEOTIAN.
NICARCHUS.
A HUSBANDMAN.
A BRIDESMAID.
AN INFORMER.
MESSENGERS.
CHORUS OF ACHARNIAN ELDERS.

SCENE: The Athenian Ecclesia on the Pnyx; afterwards Dicaeopolis' house in the country.

* * * * *

THE ACHARNIANS

DICAEOPOLIS¹⁴⁸ (*alone*). What cares have not gnawed at my heart and how few have been the pleasures in my life! Four, to be exact, while my troubles have been as countless as the grains of sand on the shore! Let me see of what value to me have been these few pleasures? Ah! I remember that I was delighted in soul when Cleon had to disgorge those five talents;¹⁴⁹ I was in ecstasy and I love the Knights for this deed; 'it is an honour to Greece.'¹⁵⁰ But the day when I was impatiently awaiting a piece by Aeschylus,¹⁵¹ what tragic despair it caused me when the herald called, "Theognis,¹⁵² introduce

¹⁴⁸ A name invented by Aristophanes and signifying 'a just citizen.'

¹⁴⁹ Cleon had received five talents from the islanders subject to Athens, on condition that he should get the tribute payable by them reduced; when informed of this transaction, the Knights compelled him to return the money.

¹⁵⁰ A hemistich borrowed from Euripides' 'Telephus.'

¹⁵¹ The tragedies of Aeschylus continued to be played even after the poet's death, which occurred in 436 B.C., ten years before the production of the Acharnians.

¹⁵² A tragic poet, whose pieces were so devoid of warmth and life that he was nicknamed [Greek: chi_on], i.e. *snow*.

your Chorus!" Just imagine how this blow struck straight at my heart! On the other hand, what joy Dexitheus caused me at the musical competition, when he played a Boeotian melody on the lyre! But this year by contrast! Oh! what deadly torture to hear Chaeris¹⁵³ perform the prelude in the Orthian mode!¹⁵⁴—Never, however, since I began to bathe, has the dust hurt my eyes as it does to-day. Still it is the day of assembly; all should be here at daybreak, and yet the Pnyx¹⁵⁵ is still deserted. They are gossiping in the market-place, slipping hither and thither to avoid the vermilioned rope.¹⁵⁶ The Prytanes¹⁵⁷ even do not come; they will be late, but when they come they will push and fight each other for a seat in the front row. They will never trouble themselves with the question of peace. Oh! Athens! Athens! As for myself, I do not fail to come here before all the rest, and now, finding myself alone, I groan, yawn, stretch, break wind, and know not what to do; I make sketches in the dust, pull out my loose hairs, muse, think of my fields, long for peace, curse town life and regret my dear country home,¹⁵⁸ which never told me to 'buy fuel, vinegar or oil'; there the word 'buy,' which cuts me in two, was unknown; I harvested everything at will. Therefore I have come to the assembly fully prepared to bawl, interrupt and abuse the speakers, if they talk of aught but peace. But here come the Prytanes, and high time too, for it is midday! As I foretold, hah! is it not so? They are pushing and fighting for the front seats.

HERALD. Move on up, move on, move on, to get within the consecrated area.¹⁵⁹

AMPHITHEUS. Has anyone spoken yet?

HERALD. Who asks to speak?

AMPHITHEUS. I do.

HERALD. Your name?

AMPHITHEUS. Amphitheus.

HERALD. You are no man.¹⁶⁰

AMPHITHEUS. No! I am an immortal! Amphitheus was the son of Ceres and Triptolemus; of him was born Celeus. Celeus wedded Phaencreté, my grandmother, whose son was Lucinus, and, being born of him, I am an immortal; it is to me alone that the gods have entrusted the duty of treating with the Lacedaemonians. But, citizens, though I am immortal, I am dying of hunger; the Prytanes give me naught.¹⁶¹

A PRYTANIS. Guards!

AMPHITHEUS. Oh, Triptolemus and Ceres, do ye thus forsake your own blood?

DICAEOPOLIS. Prytanes, in expelling this citizen, you are offering an outrage to the Assembly. He only desired to secure peace for us and to sheathe the sword.

PRYTANIS. Sit down and keep silence!

DICAEOPOLIS. No, by Apollo, will I not, unless you are going to discuss the question of peace.

¹⁵³ A bad musician, frequently ridiculed by Aristophanes; he played both the lyre and the flute.

¹⁵⁴ A lively and elevated method.

¹⁵⁵ A hill near the Acropolis, where the Assemblies were held.

¹⁵⁶ Several means were used to force citizens to attend the assemblies; the shops were closed; circulation was only permitted in those streets which led to the Pnyx; finally, a rope covered with vermilion was drawn round those who dallied in the Agora (the market-place), and the late-comers, ear-marked by the imprint of the rope, were fined.

¹⁵⁷ Magistrates who, with the Archons and the Epistatae, shared the care of holding and directing the assemblies of the people; they were fifty in number.

¹⁵⁸ The Peloponnesian War had already, at the date of the representation of the 'Acharnians,' lasted five years, 431-426 B.C.; driven from their lands by the successive Lacedaemonian invasions, the people throughout the country had been compelled to seek shelter behind the walls of Athens.

¹⁵⁹ Shortly before the meeting of the Assembly, a number of young pigs were immolated and a few drops of their blood were sprinkled on the seats of the Prytanes; this sacrifice was in honour of Ceres.

¹⁶⁰ The name, Amphitheus, contains the word, [Greek: Theos], *god*.

¹⁶¹ Amongst other duties, it was the office of the Prytanes to look after the wants of the poor.

HERALD. The ambassadors, who are returned from the Court of the King!

DICAEOPOLIS. Of what King? I am sick of all those fine birds, the peacock ambassadors and their swagger.

HERALD. Silence!

DICAEOPOLIS. Oh! oh! by Ecbatana,¹⁶² what assumption!

AN AMBASSADOR. During the archonship of Euthymenes, you sent us to the Great King on a salary of two drachmae per diem.

DICAEOPOLIS. Ah! those poor drachmae!

AMBASSADOR. We suffered horribly on the plains of the Caister, sleeping under a tent, stretched deliciously on fine chariots, half dead with weariness.

DICAEOPOLIS. And I was very much at ease, lying on the straw along the battlements!¹⁶³

AMBASSADOR. Everywhere we were well received and forced to drink delicious wine out of golden or crystal flagons....

DICAEOPOLIS. Oh, city of Cranaus,¹⁶⁴ thy ambassadors are laughing at thee!

AMBASSADOR. For great feeders and heavy drinkers are alone esteemed as men by the barbarians.

DICAEOPOLIS. Just as here in Athens, we only esteem the most drunken debauchees.

AMBASSADOR. At the end of the fourth year we reached the King's Court, but he had left with his whole army to ease himself, and for the space of eight months he was thus easing himself in midst of the golden mountains.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² The summer residence of the Great King.

¹⁶³ Referring to the hardships he had endured garrisoning the walls of Athens during the Lacedaemonian invasions early in the War.

¹⁶⁴ Cranaus, the second king of Athens, the successor of Cecrops.

¹⁶⁵ Lucian, in his 'Hermetimus,' speaks of these golden mountains as an apocryphal land of wonders and prodigies.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.