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# THE KNIGHTS

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*Translated by Gilbert Murray*

## **AESCHYLUS**

AGAMEMNON (*17th Thousand*)  
THE CHOEPHOROE

## **ARISTOPHANES**

THE FROGS (*24th Thousand*)  
THE BIRDS

## **EURIPIDES**

ALCESTIS (*24th Thousand*)  
ELECTRA (*50th Thousand*)  
HIPPOLYTUS (*38th Thousand*)  
IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS (*32nd Thousand*)  
MEDEA (*33rd Thousand*)  
RHESUS  
BACCHÆ (*31st Thousand*)  
TROJAN WOMEN (*49th Thousand*)  
ION

## **MENANDER**

THE ARBITRATION

## **SOPHOCLES**

OEDIPUS, KING OF THEBES (*30th Thousand*)  
ANTIGONE

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THE ORESTEIA

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**ARISTOPHANES**  
**THE KNIGHTS**

Translated into English rhyming  
verse with Introduction  
and notes

by

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## INTRODUCTION

What Aristophanes himself felt about *The Knights* is shown by a famous passage in the *Wasps* (1080 ff., repeated in *Peace*, 795 ff.) where the Chorus explains that this poet made Comedy a more serious thing.

"At women and poor little private men he never raged nor cursed.  
An anger of Heracles deep in his heart went straight for the biggest and worst.  
Through a terrible stench of hides he strode, through threats of murder and mud,  
And faced in battle the Beast himself, the jag-toothed shedder of blood."

The Beast's frown was paralyzing, like that of the Gorgon, and instead of snakes "a hundred damned blackmailers' tongues came whistling out of his hair." The angry description is in part confirmed in more sober prose by Thucydides' description of Cleon as "The most violent of the citizens, and at this time most influential with the populace" (III, 37; IV, 21). The peak of "this time" was just about the time when *The Knights* was produced in the spring of 424 B.C. In the

previous summer a Lacedaemonian force, comprising some four hundred high-born Spartans with attendant troops, had been cut off in the island of Sphacteria in the Bay of Pylos by seventy Athenian ships under Demosthenes (*Thuc.* IV, 26-39). The island, being thickly wooded and pathless, could not be taken by assault, and the blockade was hindered by the daring of Helot volunteers, who, crossing in boats or simply swimming, brought food from the mainland. Time was spent in negotiations with Sparta, and Cleon lost patience. "*If the generals were men*" he declared, "*they would easily capture the island.*" "*If he were in command he would bring the Spartans in as prisoners within twenty days.*" Nicias, the senior general, thereupon offered to resign his office and proposed that Cleon should take his place. Conscious of his poor military record (ll. 443, 368), Cleon tried to refuse, but in a scene of mixed derision and enthusiasm was compelled to accept. Meantime a fire on the island, fanned by a gale, had swept most of the covering wood away, and Demosthenes was preparing an assault when Cleon arrived with fresh troops. The attack was made with complete success on the second night after Cleon's arrival. Thus, as Thucydides says, "*Cleon's lunatic promise was fulfilled,*" and his prestige with the people vastly increased.

This was the immediate situation at the time when *The Knights* was produced, but in order to understand the play we should try to realize the mechanism of Athenian democracy from the later years of Pericles onward. The first establishment of the democracy had been, as Herodotus tells us, an inspiration to Athens (V, 78). Under the tyrants the Athenians had been in war "No better than their neighbours." But now that they were free they became "far the first of all." Certainly in the world of thought and artistic creation Athens entered upon her period of supreme greatness, but politically she had adopted a constitution which in the strain of war led to strange results. The Demos itself, and not any selected class, must decide all questions of policy. No qualification was required. The whole citizen population, without any test or election, met to speak and to vote in the Assembly, and their vote was decisive. The actual Agenda had been prepared by the Council, or Boulé, a body of five hundred, fifty from each tribe, not elected but chosen by lot. Month by month in the Council Chamber at the edge of the Agora the Council settled minor issues and made proposals for the final decision of the Assembly. All legal cases were decided by the Jury Courts. These Jury Courts, six thousand men over thirty, forming ten juries of six hundred each, were chosen by lot equally from all the ten tribes. It will be seen that, while every possible precaution was taken to prevent corruption, there was none to ensure competency, nor to check the dangers of popular prejudice and passion. There was no experienced judge to advise the jury, no trained lawyers, no elected parliament, and no cabinet of responsible ministers. Only the generals and executive magistrates were appointed by real election and not by lot. In earlier times the Senate of the Areopagus, composed, like the Roman Senate, of ex-archons who had discharged their magistracy without blame, might have gone far to counteract these weaknesses, but in 460 it had been deprived of its political powers, and confined to jurisdiction in cases involving the danger of blood-pollution to the community. They still judged cases of murder or crimes involving the death penalty, and exercised a certain ill-defined censorship in cases of grave public need: but no more. Athens was left a "pure democracy," governed by the feelings of the Assembly at the moment and the personal influence of the leaders of public opinion.

The fundamental question at issue between the two main parties in Athens, the Moderates, like Nicias, and the extreme Democrats, was the policy towards Sparta. Against the Persian invader Athens and Sparta had been close partners, and both looked back with pride to the great battles of that time—Athens to Marathon and Salamis, Sparta to Thermopylae; both alike to their final victory side by side at Plataea. Could this partnership be maintained or must the underlying rivalry be allowed to grow into definite war? The more aristocratic Athenians were always attracted by Spartan "Virtue." The literary and intellectual classes also seem in general to have felt that peace and co-operation between the two leading cities was a necessity for the welfare of Hellas. However, the Spartan ultimatum in 432 had demanded that Athens should "set the Hellenes free," i.e. dissolve her Empire. Pericles saw that to obey such an order was to accept a position of "slavery," or definite subjection, to Sparta, and was convinced that Athens with her

command of the sea was in the long run the stronger power. It is not clear what policy, democrat as he was, he would have urged in 423. Cleon and the violent democrats were for war till Sparta was conquered; Nicias, with the moderates, for peace and friendship as soon as Athenian independence could be assured. When the Peace of Nicias was signed in 421, three years after this play, it seemed as if the hopes of the believers in co-operation were gained, and Aristophanes was able to write his *Peace*. But before the year was out fresh hostilities had already blocked the way.

Pericles' confidence in the power of Athens might well have been justified had Athens not been stricken at the very start of the war by a pestilence which destroyed, it is said, a third of her population. It originated in "Egypt and Ethiopia," but in Athens was made particularly severe by the overcrowding of the city with refugees from the open country, which was swept by hostile invasions. The city was filled with unemployed countrymen for whose support Pericles found it necessary to set up a system of payment for public service, notably two obols a day for attendance at the jury courts, perhaps a drachma a day for sitting on the Council, and some fee for even being present at the General Assembly. The fees were increased from time to time; by 425 the juror's fee was three obols, and later it was more. The Tribute of the Allies, originally a return for the effective defence provided by the Athenian fleet against piracy or Persian aggression, was doubled by Cleon in 425, and irregularly increased afterwards. There was also a source of public money in the confiscations of property and the fines imposed on prisoners found guilty by the jury courts—but, often, according to Aristophanes, guilty of no offence except wealth and lack of political influence. Taxes were heavy, and it is a serious threat to "get a man listed in a higher income group" (925). Athens was to an extreme degree a "welfare State," but Cleon seems to have had a very narrow conception of the Demos whose welfare he was bound to protect. Only true-born Athenians were qualified, for one thing; not people with any touch of foreign blood, and apparently, under Cleon's leadership, only the real voters. Soldiers serving abroad and sailors in the fleet could at a pinch be neglected. Their pay was hard to find. They could not show their resentment in the day by day voting, and after all, armed men can generally find food for themselves wherever they are! (1066-1077). It was the vote of the Demos day by day that determined policy and leadership, and Cleon, according to his critic, openly admits that if he can satisfy the Demos, he cares nothing about the wrongs or rights of individuals (776).

Brutal and unscrupulous as this policy was, it had about it something heroic. Life might be hard, almost intolerably hard; but there must be no weakening. The men in the prime of life were, during much of the time, nearly all away fighting (Ar. *Lysistrata*, 524). The city was crowded with women, children and old men camping in any empty space they could find, in temporary shacks, porches of temples, sentry boxes and "holes in the ground." Twenty thousand slaves had deserted (*Thuc.* VII, 27). Oil was scarce. Children were crying for food (Ar. *Wasps*, 297 ff.). A shoal of fish in the Piraeus was a miracle that could alter the whole aspect of life. To be granted a square meal in the Prytaneum was a serious practical help as well as a public honour (281 ff., 354 ff., 1293 ff.). To critics of the demagogues the lusty appetite of Cleon or Cleonymus seemed an additional offence. Meantime Athens might have her territory devastated, her slaves deserting, her food all imported and terribly scarce; but Cleon's Demos was not going to give in, nor yet, through any pedantic high principles or scruples of honour, fail to seize any advantage or to practise any act of intimidation that might make the difference between victory and defeat. Cleon died a poor man. His plea that he stole not for himself but only for the city (1226), seems to have been roughly true. He did from time to time unscrupulously fleece the subject allies; he did secure the conviction of rich offenders who could be profitably fined; he did fall behindhand in the pay of the troops. After all there are few nations in history, up to quite modern times, who could claim to be innocent of similar exactions and irregularities in times of sore need. What is remarkable about Athens is the persistence of enlightened public protest against such conduct. Grote makes an interesting attempt to defend Cleon's policy, but all our ancient witnesses, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, Isocrates, agree in condemnation of the extreme democracy. So, of course, do the comedians. Indeed the general plot of *The Knights*, the supersession of the leading demagogue by someone more utterly vulgar and unscrupulous than himself, was so

popular as to cause various mutual charges of plagiarism. Aristophanes says that Eupolis in the *Maricas* "turned my Knights inside out as badly as you would expect" (*Clouds*, 554) and "made out of my cloak three threadbare jerkins" (Fr., 189), while Eupolis goes so far as to say "I helped our bald friend in writing the Knights and made him a present of it" (*Baptae*, fr. 78). The scholiast on *Knights*, 1281, professes to show the place in the second parabasis at which "some people say" that Eupolis "began." If so, Eupolis was possibly responsible for the high-minded Agoracritus who "has boiled Demos and turned him from rotten to sweet," and for the grand scene (1316-1334), so different in tone from its surroundings, which reads like an alternative ending for the play. Aristophanes' explanation of the Offal-monger's new name, Agoracritus, is merely farcical. It was a regular well-known name, meaning "Agora-Chosen" or "the choice of the city." This looks as if Agoracritus was perhaps meant to be the true choice of the city, when in its right mind, and not doing politics on the Pnyx. Possibly this idea belonged to Eupolis' conception of the plot, and might help to explain the inconsistency between the final scenes and all the earlier part of the play.

However this may be, we must not forget the remarkable courage involved in the unqualified attack by a young man of no position on the great demagogue of the hour, who was also "*the most violent of the citizens.*" Aristophanes had already championed the subject allies against Athenian oppression in the *Babylonians*, and had even stated a good case for the Spartans against the fury of popular war fever in the *Acharnians*. No doubt he suffered for his rashness. He says he was "*almost killed with mud and dirt*" and put in serious danger of losing his citizenship (*Acharnians*, 375 ff.). But he survived, and never faltered in his outspoken championship both of peace and of honest politics. One must indeed marvel at the high degree of "parrhesia," or free speech that was allowed in Athens even in the height of an exhausting war.

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## CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

FIRST SLAVE (The General DEMOSTHENES)

SECOND SLAVE (The General NICIAS)

OFFAL-MONGER OR SAUSAGE-MONGER, afterwards named AGORACRITUS

PAPHLAGON, a Paphlagonian slave (The Demagogue CLEON)

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN KNIGHTS, a somewhat aristocratic class, who manned the cavalry regiments

THE DEMOS of Athens, a prejudiced and arbitrary old gentleman

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# THE KNIGHTS

*Scene: in front of the House or Palace of DEMOS. Sitting on the stage are two slaves who have just been whipped. They are never actually named, but their masks are likenesses of real people, in fact, of the two generals; the first speaker represents the daring DEMOSTHENES, the second the prudent and pious commander-in-chief NICIAS.*

DEMOSTHENES

Oh, gimminy, it hurts! Oh, gimminy-John!  
Deuce take that upstart sneak, that Paphlagon,  
The tanner. Ever since the day he crashed  
Our gates, he's always getting someone thrashed.

NICIAS

Deuce take him first and worst of all his clan!  
Him and his slanders!

DEMOSTHENES

Hallo, poor old man,  
How are you feeling?

NICIAS

Devilish bad, like you.

DEMOSTHENES

Then come along this way, and let us miew  
Together, as the old composers do.

BOTH

Miew! Miew! Miew! Miew! Miew!

DEMOSTHENES

Oh, why this whimpering? We must find some way  
To save our skins, not sit and moan all day.

NICIAS



To save our skins? Say how.

DEMOSTHENES

No, you tell me . . .  
Don't make me fight.

NICIAS

By Apollo, let me be!  
Speak, don't be afraid. And then I'll speak as well.

DEMOSTHENES

"Ah, would that thou couldst tell what I must tell."

NICIAS

It gives me cold feet. Oh, if I could say  
The word some dark Euripidean way!

DEMOSTHENES

Oh, lordy, lordy, no wild cabbages!  
Some chain-dance that unchains the dancer, please.  
Can you say *ertlets*, *ertlets*?

NICIAS

Yes, with ease.  
*Ertlets*. Is that right? *Ertlets*.

DEMOSTHENES

Now say *dees*.

NICIAS

*Dees*.

DEMOSTHENES

Very good. Now say it slow at first,  
*Ertlets*, then *dees*, then quickly till you burst,

Go.

NICIAS

*Ertlets, dees; ertLets; Dees, ert; Let's. . . . Oh!*

DEMOSTHENES

Well, what do you think?

NICIAS

But can we? . . . Oh, no, no,  
I'm frightened. . . . Better go and cling somewhere  
To a holy image.

DEMOSTHENES

Holy grandmother!  
You don't believe in the gods!

NICIAS

Of course I do.

DEMOSTHENES

What reason have you?

NICIAS

Reason? Why, I know  
I'm a God-help-us failure. . . . That enough?

DEMOSTHENES

It's a good point. But let us try the stuff  
A different way. Suppose I were to tell  
The audience the whole tale?

NICIAS

You might as well;  
But first we'll beg them to be so far kind

As show us by their faces if they find  
Some pleasure in our verses and our plot.

DEMOSTHENES

Here goes then. [*To the audience.*] We two have master, hot  
Of temper, ignorant, full as full can be  
Of votes and motions, fretful, elderly,  
And slightly deaf, Demos of Council Square.  
This Demos, on the first day of the year,  
Purchased a slave, a Paphlagonian tanner,  
An utterly wicked and malicious planner  
Of lies. This rascal in a moment took  
The old boy's measure; reads him like a book;  
Fawns, wheedles, flatters; feeds him from his yard  
With titbits: "My good man, why work so hard?  
One case done? Then you need a bath," he'll say.  
"Then meat, wine, sweets—and wages for the day.  
You'd like me to serve supper?" Round he looks  
To find some dish prepared by other cooks,  
And serves it as his gift. Why, not to boast,  
I had myself some Spartans, warm on toast,  
Last week, when round he trotted, did them brown,  
And served them up to Demos as his own.  
He drives us off and lets no other man  
Wait table; stands there with a cowhide fan  
To flap any competitor away.  
Then, oracles! The old man is a prey  
To wandering soothsayers, and Paphlagon  
Has made the thing a business of his own;  
Then he goes telling tales, not one word true,  
And we get whacked; and on he goes all through  
The house, with hints and threats, He'll have his tip  
Or else . . . "You saw young Hylas get the whip?  
My doing! And I fancy, though I might  
Still change, you're in for a bad time to-night."  
So we pay up; if not, the old man's stick  
Will bleed it out of us ten times as thick.  
Well, mate, we must be quick and think, we two,  
What road to take and who will save us, who.

NICIAS

*Ertlets* the only road, mate. There it lies.

DEMOSTHENES

It can't be done. The Paphlagonian's eyes  
Are everywhere. One leg holds Pylos down,  
The other is on the platform in this town.  
He straddles half the oceans in his stride

And squats on all the diggings, far and wide,  
And claims, I know, that every *mine* is *his*.

NICIAS

It's best for us to die.

DEMOSTHENES

Well, if it is,  
We'll do it? What would be the bravest way?

NICIAS

The bravest way? I wonder—I should say  
To drink bull's blood. The great Themistocles  
Did that. No death could suit us more than his.

DEMOSTHENES

Bull's blood? No! Wine unwatered! That will gain  
The Spirit of Luck, and stimulate the brain.

NICIAS

You and your wine unwatered! Always drink  
With you! How can a man be cool and think,  
When all confused and not himself with wine?

DEMOSTHENES

Confused and not himself? Is that your line,  
You mug of dull cold water? If you can,  
Just tell me of any better friend to man  
Than wine! When men are drinking don't they glow  
With happiness, win all their cases, grow  
Rich and successful, give all friends a part?  
Quick now, pop in and fetch me out a quart.  
I'll wash my brain and find some great idea.

NICIAS

Your drink will play the deuce with us.

DEMOSTHENES

No fear!

You fetch it out.

*[Exit NICIAS into the house.]*

Meanwhile I'll just lie down.

When once I'm drunk I'll do the whole place brown  
With plans and dodges and bright beams of thought.

*[He makes himself comfortable. Re-enter NICIAS with a wine flagon  
and cup.]*

NICIAS

Good Lord, how lucky that I wasn't caught  
Stealing the wine!

DEMOSTHENES

Doing? Yes, splendid! What's the brute

NICIAS

Why, he has just swallowed up for loot  
Some public fines, and now he's lying slack  
Among his raw hides, snoring on his back.

DEMOSTHENES

*[Holding out his cup]*  
Come, splash it in. No water. Let it flow  
In streams.

NICIAS

With prayer to the Good Spirit!

DEMOSTHENES

No,  
Drink to the Spirit of wine, good Pramnian! Drink!

*[Pause: then with a start.]*

O Spirit Pramnian! Only *you* could think  
Of such a plan: I couldn't.

NICIAS

For God's sake

Tell me. What is it?

DEMOSTHENES

Just go in and take—  
Now, quickly, while the Paphlagonian sleeps—  
That book of oracles he always keeps  
By him.

NICIAS

All right. Only I somehow think  
I smell some evil spirit in that drink. [NICIAS *goes*.

DEMOSTHENES

And I meantime. . . . Ah well, the jug's at hand  
To wash my brain and think out something grand.  
[*He drinks. Re-enter NICIAS with the Book.*

NICIAS

Lord, how that man does snort and snore! But look;  
He never saw me, and I've got his book  
Of oracles: his private stock, for sure.

DEMOSTHENES

Good man! Here, I can read them while you pour.  
Quick, let me see what's in them. Hurry up!  
(*Looking at the book.*) Yes, oracles. The cup! Give me the cup!

NICIAS

There! What does the book say?

DEMOSTHENES

Another please!

NICIAS

"Another please!" That's really what it says?

DEMOSTHENES

O Bakis!

NICIAS

Yes? He says . . .

DEMOSTHENES

The cup! Make haste!

NICIAS

The cup seems greatly to the prophet's taste.

DEMOSTHENES

You gory Paphlagonian, you did well  
To keep this close! You feared the oracle  
About yourself.

NICIAS

About himself? Eh, what?

DEMOSTHENES

It's written here, man, how he goes to pot.

NICIAS

How?

DEMOSTHENES

How? This book quite plainly prophesies  
How first an Oakum-monger must arise  
The fortunes of all Athens to control. . . .

NICIAS

Monger the first! What follows in the roll?

DEMOSTHENES

A Mutton-monger next our lord shall be. . . .

NICIAS

Monger the second. What's his destiny?

DEMOSTHENES

To reign in pride until some dirtier soul  
Rise than himself. That hour his knell shall toll.  
For close behind a Leather-monger reels,  
—Our Paphlagonian—lunging at his heels,  
Tornado-voiced, a roaring beast of prey.

NICIAS

The Mutton-monger runs, and fades away  
Before him?

DEMOSTHENES

Yes.

NICIAS

And that's the end? The store  
Is finished? . . . Oh for just one monger more!

DEMOSTHENES

There is one more, and one you'd never guess.

NICIAS

There is? What is he?

DEMOSTHENES

Shall I tell you?

NICIAS



Yes.

DEMOSTHENES

His fall is by an Offal-monger made.

NICIAS

An Offal-monger! Glory, what a trade! . . .

DEMOSTHENES

Up, and to work! That monger must be found!

NICIAS

We'll seek him out.

*[They proceed to go seeking, when enter OFFAL-MONGER: they see a man with a pieman's tray hanging round his neck, selling offal.]*

NICIAS

See, on this very ground  
By Providence!

DEMOSTHENES

O blessing without end!  
O Offal-monger, friend and more than friend!  
To us, to Athens, saviour evermore! . . .  
This way!

OFFAL-MONGER

What's up? What are you shouting for?

DEMOSTHENES

Come here; come forward, and be taught by me  
Your splendid fate, your rich felicity!

NICIAS

Here! Take his tray off! Pour into his head  
The blessed oracles and all they've said.  
I'll go and keep my eye on Paphlagon.

[*Exit* Nicias.]

DEMOSTHENES

Come, my good man, put all these gadgets down.  
"Kiss Earth thy Mother and the gods adore."

OFFAL-MONGER

There. What's it all about?

DEMOSTHENES

O blest and more!  
Now nothing, but to-morrow, Lord of All!  
O Prince of Athens, the majestical. . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Look here, gents, can't you let me wash my stuff  
And sell the puddings? . . . I've had mor'n enough.

DEMOSTHENES

Puddings, deluded being? Just look up.  
You see those rows and rows of people?

OFFAL-MONGER

Yup.

DEMOSTHENES

You are their Lord and Master! You, Heaven sent,  
To people, market, harbour, parliament,  
To kick the Council, break the High Command,  
Send men to gaol, get drunk in the Grand Stand. . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Not me?

DEMOSTHENES

Yes, and you don't yet see it—you!  
Get up on . . . here, your own old tray will do.  
[*He gets up on the table.*]  
See all the islands dotted round the scene?

OFFAL-MONGER

Yup.

DEMOSTHENES

The great ports, the mercantile marine?

OFFAL-MONGER

Yup.

DEMOSTHENES

Yup! And then he doesn't see he's blest!  
Now cast one eye towards Carthage in the west,  
One round to Caria—take the whole imprint.

OFFAL-MONGER

Shall I be any blesseder with a squint?

DEMOSTHENES

Tut tut, man! All you see is yours to sell.  
You shall become, so all the stars foretell,  
A great, great man.

[*OFFAL-MONGER gets down.*]

OFFAL-MONGER

But do explain; how can  
A poor little Offal-monger be a "man"?

DEMOSTHENES

That's just the reason why you're bound to grow,  
Because you're street-bred, brazen-faced and low.

OFFAL-MONGER

You see, I don't quite know as I deserve . . .

DEMOSTHENES

You don't quite know? . . . What means this shaken nerve?  
Some secret virtue? No? Don't say you came  
Of honest parents?

OFFAL-MONGER

Honest? Lord, not them!  
Both pretty queer.

DEMOSTHENES

Oh, happy man and wife  
To start your son so well for public life!

OFFAL-MONGER (*flustered*)

Just think of the eddication I ain't had—  
Bar letters; and I mostly learnt 'em bad!

DEMOSTHENES

The pity is you learnt such things at all.  
'Tis not for learning now that people call,  
Nor thoughtfulness, nor hearts of generous make.  
'Tis ignorance and no scruples. Come and take  
The prize that gods and prophets offer you.

OFFAL-MONGER

What are the actual words?

DEMOSTHENES

All good and true  
And wise. And yet like an enigma too.  
"Lo, when the crooked-of-claw tan-eagle shall fix full sore  
His clutch on a bumbleton Snake, a skin distended with gore,  
Then shall the garlic and brine on the proud Paphlagonian's breath  
Pass like a phantom away; and then, God promiseth,  
Then is the Tripe-monger's hour for kingdom and majesty ripe—

Unless, of course, he prefers to continue mongering tripe."

OFFAL-MONGER

What is all that to me? Please make it clear.

DEMOSTHENES

Tan-eagle; that's the Paphlagonian here.

OFFAL-MONGER

And crooked-of-claw; what is that?

DEMOSTHENES

Doesn't it say?

He grips and claws whatever comes his way.

OFFAL-MONGER

What does the snake mean?

DEMOSTHENES

It's all similes.

Snakes are long thin things, so are sausages;  
Then obviously, both sausages and snakes  
Are swoln with blood. That is the point he makes.  
The snake will beat the Tan-eagle with ease,  
Unless he is weakened by false flatteries.

OFFAL-MONGER

The oracles please me. But I don't see yet  
How ever I shall learn to rule a state.

DEMOSTHENES

Easy as lying! Do as now you do.  
Turn every question to a public stew.  
Hash things, and cook things. Win the common herd  
By strong sweet sauces in your every word.  
For other gifts, you have half the catalogue  
Already, for the perfect demagogue;  
A blood-shot voice, low breeding, huckster's tricks—

What more can man require for politics?  
The prophets and Apollo's word concur.  
Up! To the Bug of Hum libation pour,  
And crown your brow and fight him!

OFFAL-MONGER

Who will fight  
Beside me? All the rich are in a fright  
Before him, and the poor folk of the town  
Turn green and vomit if they see him frown.

DEMOSTHENES

A thousand Knights there are, men good and true.  
Who hate the creature and will champion you;  
Then, in the city, all of gentle breed;  
In the audience, any who can think and read;  
And I: and Phoebus for the cause will strike!  
Don't be afraid. The face will not be like.  
The mask-makers were all afraid. Not one  
Would do it. Never mind. He will be known  
All right. The audience knows its way about.

[NICIAS *from inside*.

O God! The Paphlagonian's coming out!

[*Enter PAPHLAGON, threateningly through the centre door.*

PAPHLAGON

By the Twelve Gods, it's coming for you two!  
Plotting against the People, both of you,

[*Looking round.*

For years. . . . That cup too! It's Chalcidian ware;  
And Chalcis full of treason! I could swear  
You are in it. . . . Yes, you pair of scoundrels; play  
No tricks. Your time is up. You'll die to-day.

[OFFAL-MONGER *begins to run away.*

DEMOSTHENES

Hi! Stop! Where are you off to? Face the call,  
Bold Offal-monger. Don't betray us all.

[*Calling aloud.*

Horsemen, horsemen, to the rescue! Now's the moment. Simon, you!  
You Panaetius! Wheeling boldly, close the right wing, and be true.

*[The CHORUS approach on both sides.*

Here they come. Now charge him home, and now recover; beat him back!  
See the cloud of dust that's rising? They're just closing to attack.  
Stop him, stop him, and then chase him. Put him utterly to flight.

*[Enter CHORUS, as if on horses, one division from Left and one from  
Right. They chase PAPHLAGON, who dodges them.*

#### CHORUS A

Beat the stick-at-nothing scoundrel whom our horses loathe at sight,  
Tax-extortor, bribe-extractor, pit and whirlpool of blackmail!  
Stick-at-nothing! Stick-at-nothing! Many times I tell the tale,  
For he always sticks at nothing, many times and every day!

#### CHORUS B

Stop him, stop him, and then chase him! Muddle him and block his way!  
Show you hate him just as we do; fall upon him with a shout;  
Only mind he doesn't dodge you; well he knows the back way out,  
The way Eucrates absconded to the husks that set him free.

#### PAPHLAGON

*[to CHORUS A*

Ho, my Greybeards of the Assembly, Brethren of the Obols three,  
Whom I feed by shouting always, true or false, whatever suits,  
Bring me help here! I am assaulted by these vile seditious brutes.

#### CHORUS A

You who grab the public grants and never wait for the division,  
You who watch the officials' Records, carefully with due precision,  
Sorting out the ripe, the green, the nearly ripe, until you find  
Someone who will give no trouble, a good fig with gaping rind;

#### CHORUS B

Hook him with a lying charge; recall him from the Chersonese;  
Then, while letting loose the tough ones, masticate him at your ease.  
Just the same with private persons, anyone of lamblike mood,  
Rich, good-natured, shy of law-courts—nab him; he's your destined food.

#### PAPHLAGON

[to CHORUS B

Gentlemen, you mean to join them? For your sake I'm suffering this.  
I was going to move a motion, here on the Acropolis,  
To commemorate your valour by a monument on high.

CHORUS A

Humbug! Wiggler! Us his Greybeards? Soothe us so? He'd better try!  
This way round he may elude us. Well, we'll catch him that way round.  
If through arms and hands he dodges, legs can bring him to the ground.

PAPHLAGON

O Democracy! O Athens! What wild beasts besausage me!

CHORUS B

Shouting! That's the way he always deafens the democracy.  
If you beat our man in shouting, you can wear a crown of flowers;  
But if his cool cheek out-cheeks you, that's enough; the cake is ours.

PAPHLAGON

I inform against this person. I have known him to export  
Gadgets for the Spartan Navy, strong foods of a soupish sort.

OFFAL-MONGER

Him too; I inform against him! To his front-row banquet seat  
He goes running empty-bellied, and comes out again replete.

DEMOSTHENES

Yes, and with such food in war time! Beef and wheat bread, and a dish  
Even Pericles was never granted, slices of prime fish!

PAPHLAGON

Oh, death is coming to you two.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll thunder twice as loud as you.

PAPHLAGON



I'll outshout you, shout for shout.

OFFAL-MONGER

Yell for yell, I'll yell you out!

PAPHLAGON

As war leader I'll prove you slack.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll cut my dogsmeat from your back.

PAPHLAGON

I'll promise twice as much as you.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll hinder all you try to do.

PAPHLAGON

Dare to face me and not shrink.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'm market-born. I never blink.

PAPHLAGON

You're for the dustbin if you squeak!

OFFAL-MONGER

The dung-heap if you try to speak!

PAPHLAGON

You daren't confess you steal; I do.

OFFAL-MONGER

By Hermes of the Market Square,  
I openly, in public view,  
Steal, and deny I'm stealing. There!

PAPHLAGON

That's just a trick from me you got.  
I'll warn the Customs of that lot,  
By you imported,  
But unreported,  
Of Sacred Sausage, pot on pot!

CHORUS

Deeply stained, foul of smell,  
Screamer, with your cheek and jaw  
All this land's borders swell,  
Every council, every law,  
Every tax, every court.  
Mud you stir of every sort,  
You whose words perturbate  
And be-muddle all our state.

LEADER

You whose voice has made all Athens deaf while on the rocks you stand,  
Watching for the shoals of tribute, to harpoon them as they land.

PAPHLAGON

I know how this job was patched up out of old conspiracies.

OFFAL-MONGER

Patched up? If you don't know patching, then I don't know sausages.  
Well you patch your rotten cow-hides, slice them, set them out for sale  
To the back-bush folk, all doctored slyly to look stout and hale,  
And before two days of wearing they'll be larger by a span.

DEMOSTHENES

Yes, I know; that's just how I was cheated by this cobbler man.  
When I bought some, all the neighbours laughed to see me, and, by Zeus!  
Long before I reached my garden I was swimming in the shoes.

CHORUS

Brazen-face, how well you've worshipped, from your earliest tradition,  
Brass, the true protecting angel of the rising politician,  
While the son of Hippodamus, watching, is dissolved in tears.  
By Her help you've skinned the Allies, plucking every tree that bears,  
    But, oh, we've got a man at last,  
    Thank goodness, with a murkier past,  
He'll outstrip you, baulk you, trip you; so much anyone can see,  
With humbug and bamboozling tricks and multiplex rascality.

LEADER

Fruit of the mud that makes men "Men," the "Men" we're really needing,  
Come, show what nonsense it all is, this talk of decent breeding.

OFFAL-MONGER

Yes, that I will. I'll show you what he is. We'll have a showdown.

PAPHLAGON

Allow me!

OFFAL-MONGER

No, I claim that I'm your equal, just as low down  
As you.

LEADER

And if he questions that, explain so was your father.

PAPHLAGON

Allow me!

OFFAL-MONGER

No, by Zeus!

PAPHLAGON

By Zeus, allow me. . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

No, I'd rather  
Fight to a finish for the right to have the first audition;  
You shan't speak first.

PAPHLAGON

Oh, I shall burst!

OFFAL-MONGER

No, I refuse permission.

LEADER

Oh, no, no, if he wants to burst, by all means let him, let him!

PAPHLAGON

What moves the man? To face my frown what wild hope can have set him?

OFFAL-MONGER

I too can speak, and make strong sauce for multitudes to guzzle.

PAPHLAGON

To speak! I'd like to see you face some unexpected puzzle,  
Treat it straight off, just as it came, a mess uncooked and bloody.  
I'll tell you what's the great mistake, with you and everybody;  
You have a suit against some licensed alien; by much nursing  
And monologuing in the street, and all night long rehearsing,  
Drinking cold water, showing off, and plaguing all who know you,  
You win, and then think you can speak! How blinded! I could show you!

OFFAL-MONGER

And what have you been drinking, that you dare to keep the nation  
Silent, by you and none but you be-talked into stagnation?

PAPHLAGON

By none but me? Well, who could do as I do? Who could swallow  
Like me some pounds of tunny-steak, with quarts of wine to follow,

Unmixed, and then to Pylos turn and send the generals packing?

OFFAL-MONGER

I can! I'll guzzle beef and pork, a cow's paunch with a backing  
Of haggis, drink the broth of it, then, without washing, splutter  
Loud words at all the speakers, and put Nicias in a flutter.

DEMOSTHENES

There's one thing there I can't approve, though liking all the rest of it;  
You keep the state-soup to yourself and swallow all the best of it.

PAPHLAGON

You can't eat great sea-pike and then confound Milesian generals.

OFFAL-MONGER

No, I'll eat ribs of beef and then buy up the mines and minerals.

PAPHLAGON

I'll sweep the Council; I'll be quick behind you if you're first in.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll use your skin as a balloon and blow it up to bursting.

PAPHLAGON

I'll drag you out then by the tail—out backwards, bending double.

DEMOSTHENES

Poseidon, if you trouble him, from me too you'll have trouble. . . .

PAPHLAGON

I'll have you in the pillory tied.

OFFAL-MONGER

For cowardice first I'll run you in.

PAPHLAGON

I'll bind a footstool with your hide.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll make a thief's bag of your skin.

PAPHLAGON

I'll lay you down and pin you out.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll make good cats-meat of your snout.

PAPHLAGON

I'll tear the lashes from your eyes.

OFFAL-MONGER

Your gizzard I will surgeonize.

DEMOSTHENES

By Zeus, then, like a skilful cook  
Inside your mouth I'll fix a hook,  
And pull your tongue out from inside,  
And when I've got you opened wide  
I'll make a thorough search to look,  
Is your appendix scarified.

CHORUS

There can be, then, a fiercer flame  
Than fire; there can be yet a word  
More daring and more dead to shame  
Than even Athenian ears have heard.  
Hard war it is, what'er befall;  
Go at him, harass him and trip;  
Be satisfied with nothing small;  
At last you have him on the hip.  
Just smooth him out and use your art  
To work him softer in your hold;

You'll find that he's a coward at heart,  
Do I not know his ways of old?

OFFAL-MONGER

Still the same; he's never changed his pattern since his life began;  
Went and stole another's harvest, and so proved that he's a "Man,"  
And the wheat-ears he imported from that harvest in his bale  
He's still keeping parched in prison, and still offering them for sale.

PAPHLAGON

You can't hurt me while the Council listens to my words, and while  
Still the great blank face of Demos sits there with its booby smile.

CHORUS

Changing not, what'er betide,  
Changing never, cold or hot,  
Brazen-cheeked, un-blushing-eyed,  
Creature, if I hate you not,  
Make of me a floor-mat in Cratînus' bedroom, yes, or worse,  
Make me learn to sing a part in Morsimus's tragic verse!  
O percher on blossoms, O bird that can find  
Always and everywhere peckings of plunder,  
May you soon with the same easy absence of mind  
Vomit everything up as you smuggled it under;  
Oh, then we shall sing no song but one,  
"Drink, drink, for the deed is done!"  
And that old poet of the isles will eye his wheaten crackers,  
And dance a paean of delight and shout a double Bacchus.

PAPHLAGON

If ever your sheer shamelessness beats mine, you pair deluded,  
The Holies of the market-place may treat me as excluded!

OFFAL-MONGER

Now by the bruising and the clouts that formed my education  
From childhood on, with sundry stabs of knives for extra ration,  
With such a training can't I beat him? Certainly I'm able;  
So big I've grown, just fed on crumbs and leavings from the table.

PAPHLAGON

On table-leavings, like a dog? How then, for all your prattle,

You fool, can you expect to face the Dog-Baboon in battle?

OFFAL-MONGER

Oh, I have other dodges too. My tricks will never falter.  
I had one that would always cheat the cooks about the altar.  
"Look, lads! A swallow! Spring has come!" I'd say,  
    "It's well worth looking"  
And look they would, and I'd annex whatever meat was cooking.

DEMOSTHENES

A clever bit of flesh yourself! That was the line to follow.  
Like nettle-gatherers in the spring, you "Stole before the swallow."

OFFAL-MONGER

They noticed nothing; or at worst, if anyone did spot it,  
I squeezed the stuff between my hams, and swore I hadn't got it!  
    *[Showing his hands.*  
And one high politician said, who saw what I was doing,  
"This child is born for office in the high craft he's pursuing."

DEMOSTHENES

He saw the point at once. Indeed his own experience told it.  
You swear you haven't touched a thing, and teach your hams to hold it.

PAPHLAGON

I'll make you, yes, the two of you, by Zeus, repent your daring  
When once I rise like a strong wind, tempestuous and blaring,  
And fall upon you with a blast confounding earth and ocean.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll take a reef in; then I'll set my sausage-sails in motion,  
Out on the current, down the wind, away, and leave you wailing.

DEMOSTHENES

And if you spring a leak, I'm there, to look after the baling.

PAPHLAGON

That mass of public funds; . . .



DEMOSTHENES

Look out, the gale is getting warmer.

PAPHLAGON

I swear shall not remain unknown . . .

DEMOSTHENES

That smells of the informer.

PAPHLAGON

I know you got ten talents from that Potidaean riot.

OFFAL-MONGER

All right. Suppose I give you one? You'll take it and keep quiet?

DEMOSTHENES

He'll take it like a shot, I guess,  
So loose the sheets. The wind is less.

PAPHLAGON

You'll have to meet four separate lines  
Of fraud, with hundred-talent fines.

OFFAL-MONGER

And what of your court martials, twenty?  
And simple thefts—Oh, hundreds, plenty!

PAPHLAGON

I'll prove you, beyond doubt, to be  
Of that attainted family,  
Who wronged Athena's sanctuary,  
The outcast Alcmaeonidae.

OFFAL-MONGER

Your grandfather—I know, has been  
The confidential tanner to . . .

PAPHLAGON

Impossible! To what? To who?

OFFAL-MONGER

To Byrsinê! the tyrant's Queen.

PAPHLAGON

You rogue!

OFFAL-MONGER

You stick-at-nothing, you!

DEMOSTHENES

Have at him now!

PAPHLAGON

Good God! They mean  
To beat me, these intriguers do!

DEMOSTHENES

Have at him! Beat him to his knees  
With haggis-bags and sausages,  
Let his inside be well supplied  
With sound regrets and penances!

LEADER

All hail to you, O man of guts, and spirit past all prizing,  
A star to Athens and her sons amid our darkness rising.  
How well you meet him, word for word, exact in perfect measure,  
What thanks or praises can we find to pay you for this pleasure?

PAPHLAGON

O Mother Earth, I've long known, I'm not blind,  
You've had for years this web of plots outlined  
And fastened like a plan with glue and pin.

OFFAL-MONGER

Your goings-on in Argos! All to win  
Argive support? No, just a ruse, say I,  
For talks with enemy agents on the sly.

DEMOSTHENES

[To OFFAL-MONGER

God bless my soul, have you no similes,  
No breezy tradesman's metaphors like his?

OFFAL-MONGER

I know the anvil it's all tempered on,  
And hammered. It's those prisoners that he won.

DEMOSTHENES

Good! Good! Your hammer can defeat his glue.

OFFAL-MONGER

And men from the other side are hammering too.  
I warn you well, no gold or silver bright,  
Nor secret visits from your friends by night  
Shall muzzle me or win me to withhold  
This that I know. All Athens shall be told!

PAPHLAGON

No, that's my job. This moment I shall go  
Straight to the Council. There, I'll let them know  
Your work; the midnight gatherings you lead;  
Your parleys with the Persian and the Mede,  
Your projects curdling all Boeotia through. . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Boeotian cheese? What price a pound or two?

PAPHLAGON

By Heracles, this time I'll have you floored!

[PAPHLAGON *rushes out.*

DEMOSTHENES

Bring out whatever treasure you've got stored  
Of nerve or wit! Perhaps you've kept it hid  
Between your hams, the way you said you did?  
Now run like lightning to the Council-place.  
He's there already, and will heap disgrace  
On all of us and shout. . . . Oh, how he'll shout!

OFFAL-MONGER

Just as I am I'll go. Let me put out  
These haggises and knives, and leave them here.

[*He does so.*

DEMOSTHENES

Take some of this. Anoint your neck and ear,  
Make them too slippery for his lies to grip.

OFFAL-MONGER

Well said! Yes, that's a true professional tip.

DEMOSTHENES

Some garlick too. Quick, snap it up.

OFFAL-MONGER

What for?

DEMOSTHENES

Cocks fight their best when garlicked to the core.  
Be off now!

OFFAL-MONGER

Off I go.

DEMOSTHENES

Think well how best  
To bite him, trip him, throw him, peck his crest  
And eat his wattles—and come home to rest!

[*Exit OFFAL-MONGER accompanied by DEMOSTHENES.*

CHORUS

Goodwill go with you, and fortunes fair,  
On every side, to fulfil my prayer.  
The God of the Market be ever your guide  
    To battle abroad victorious,  
And then back home to return in pride  
    All crown-bespangled and glorious.

And you, our friends, who yourselves have wooed  
The changeful Muse in her every mood,  
Give to our song an attention shrewd  
    But friendly and uncensorious.

PARABASIS

If one of the comedy-writers of old  
    had tried to persuade us Knights  
To appear on these boards reciting his words  
    we'd have said he exceeded his rights.  
But our poet to-day has deserved our support  
    and we'll do what he asks us to do.  
He befriends us by hating the people we hate,  
    by daring to speak what is true,  
And boldly confronting the Dragon himself  
    and the hurricane rage in his eyes.  
Now he tells us that dozens of people have come  
    to see him, and asked in surprise  
Why he never makes claim in his own proper name  
    for a licence to put on a play;  
So he sends us to-day to explain to you here  
    why he does so. He wishes to say  
That this state of his mind doesn't mean that he's blind;  
    it is really because he insists  
That producing a comedy is on the whole  
    the most difficult art that exists;  
Such a multitude woos that particular Muse,  
    and her smiles are bestowed on so few.  
Then your taste has been always an annual plant  
    and quick-perishing; all this he knew.  
He remembered what happened to Magnes so soon  
    as the grey hairs started to show,  
Though he, above all competition, had won

first prizes in show after show.  
All colours he had, and all musical notes  
with his *harps* and his flutter of *wings*,  
His *Lydian* thrums and his *gad-fly* hums,  
and that *frog* that turns green as he sings.  
Yet it wasn't enough; there was one cloudy day  
in his age—in his prime there was none—  
When you hissed the old grey-headed man from the stage:  
because somehow he flagged in his fun.  
He remembered Cratinus in earlier times,  
with applause all round in a flood;  
How torrent-like over the level he poured  
and tore up the trees as they stood,  
Oaks, plane-trees and enemies, up with them all,  
and out, with a laugh and a thud.  
There was no song sung but "O magical 'touch,'  
O tip of a golden shoe,"  
And "Planters of delicate palms, well-oiled,"  
so wide his influence flew.  
But now, when you see him havoring round,  
you show him no pity or ruth,  
When the pegs of his lyre are all falling out  
and his tone has forgotten its truth,  
And the joints are all gaping apart, and, himself  
white-haired, he wanders about,  
Like poor old Connos, a faded crown  
on his head, and dying of drought.  
Why, he ought for the sake of his triumphs of old  
to drink deep at the Prytany feast,  
And not drone on the stage, but sit polished and brushed  
in the front row, beside the High Priest.  
And Crates again, what tempers of yours  
he endured, what explosions of bile,  
Whose exquisite luncheons, at little expense,  
sent everyone home with a smile,  
To enjoy the most choice of original points  
pronounced by the driest of lips;  
He alone held out to the end, if indeed  
he did, with occasional slips.  
It was this sort of thing made our poet hold back.  
And besides, he thought it was clear  
That a man must first learn how to row at his oar  
before ever attempting to steer;  
Then again, learn how to keep watch at the bow,  
and study the ways of the winds;  
And then at last captain a craft of his own.  
So, bearing all this in your minds,  
That our man is discreet, and not one of the sort  
that bursts in and fumbles and faddles,  
Come, churn up the surge and speed him ahead  
with a good baker's dozen of paddles.  
Let our festival gaiety gallantly run  
Till he feel in his heart that his purpose is won

And depart in grace  
With a smile on his face  
And a brow shining bright in the sun.

HYMN *to* POSEIDON, *patron of the Knights.*

Lord of the horse, Poseidon, sweet  
To thee is the noise of galloping feet,  
The neighing of steeds and the galleons fleet  
    Blue-prowed and tribute-bearing;  
And the chariot-strife of lads who race  
To win with triumph a glorious place  
    Or fail—with a burst of swearing.  
Come to our dances, O Dolphin-king,  
O Golden Trident, to whom we sing  
At Sunion, aye and Geraistos' crest,  
Thou Cronos-Born, by Athenians blest,  
    Rewarder of Phormio's daring.

Now we wish to speak the praises of our fathers; men they were  
Worthy of the land they lived in and the festal Robe we bear;  
Far and wide they fought their battles, on dry land and armèd hull,  
Victory after victory reaped and made our city's records full.  
None of them who on the waters saw an enemy's ensign fly  
Ever thought of counting numbers; "At them!" was the only cry.  
And on land too, if some rider from his charger chanced to fall,  
With bruised back he rubbed the place and, swearing he'd not fallen at all,  
Just fought on. Ah, then no soldier cried for public recognition  
And free food, or clustered round this man's papa with a petition.  
Now, unless they get free rations and high seats in the front row,  
They refuse to fight, these soldiers! Well, we Knights, we gladly go,  
Not for any pay but honour, Athens and her gods to save.  
That's enough. Ah yes, beyond it just one little thing we crave,  
Don't, if ever wars are finished, hate us in that peaceful scene  
Just because our hair is barbered and our bodies are scraped clean!

HYMN *to* ATHENA, *patron of all* ATHENS

Protectress Pallas, thine ear incline;  
List to a city for ever thine,  
For ever faithful in things divine,  
    Of cities the first and fairest  
In warfare, aye, and in poetry,  
And power to be more than now we see;  
    O thou that our peril sharest,  
Bring with thee Victory, her whose light  
Guides us ever in march or fight;  
Join with her in our dance's flow,  
With her be ours against every foe;  
Now, now, is the time to show  
    Thy power and the gift thou bearest.

Next about our friends, the horses, we must tell you  
what we know.  
Well do they deserve our praises. They have shared  
from long ago  
So much of our serious business, first the invasions, then  
the fights.  
But we're not so much astonished by their work on  
land; by rights  
It's the way they manned the transports, at a run; and  
duly brought  
"Dinner bowls, one; onions, many; heads of garlic,  
quite a lot."  
In they jumped and gripped the paddles just as we  
poor mortals do,  
Pulled their weight and neighed and snorted;  
"Hwynnh'm, who's for rowing, who?"  
"Grip there! What do you think you're doing? Pull  
your weight, you Sigma-brand!"  
Out they leapt again at Corinth, and the young ones  
in the sand  
Dug with hoofs rough beds to sleep in, and in search  
for forage good,  
Since there was no decent clover, took the little crabs  
for food.  
Some they'd dig for under water, some above the sand  
they'd nab,  
Till Theôrus heard a whimper from some poor  
Corinthian crab.  
"O Poseidon! This is awful! We can find no trick  
nor force,  
Dry as sand or wet as water, to shake off this Attic  
horse."

[*Re-enter* OFFAL-MONGER.

LEADER

All hail, O comrade! Hail, most dashing blade!  
How anxious we have been! But now you've made  
A safe return. How has the battle ended?

OFFAL-MONGER

Hail me as Council-King, surnamed The Splendid!

CHORUS

Then now hurrah, hurrah! We all can shout it with a will.  
Your words are lovely, but the deeds you do are lovelier still.  
Go over the whole thing again. I'd run a mile to hear you.



And never fear to speak your mind. We're all on fire to cheer you.

OFFAL-MONGER

Indeed it is a tale worth listening to.  
Close on the fellow's heels from here I flew,  
But ere I reached the chamber, there was he  
Like a volcano, raging thunderously  
Against the Knights; spoke of "Conspirators"  
And "Gulfs" and "Craggs," with such seductive force  
They sat amazed, their eyes mustard-and-fire,  
Their wild suspicions climbing high and higher,  
Like bean-stalks, and their brows all fiercely knit.  
So, when I saw that they were swallowing it  
Like milk and taking all his lies for true,  
I prayed: "O gods of Humbug, Bugaboo,  
O Blarney, Boozlebam and Horsemarines,  
O Market-place, sole teacher of my teens,  
Grant me a nimble tongue, a brazen cheek,  
A shameless voice!" I had just begun to speak  
That prayer when on my right a fat man sneezed!  
So I saluted. With one shove I eased  
The lintel door, pressed in and, opening wide  
My mouth and shouting, "Councillors!" I cried,  
"Good news! Good news! And I am the first man  
To bring it. Never since the war began  
Have I such sprats in the Piraeus seen;  
And cheap!" At that they smoothed their faces clean  
From troubles, and then voted me a crown  
As bringer of Good News, and I put down  
A motion—confidential, to be told  
Them only—to buy up all dishes sold  
In pottery shops and so bring down the price  
Of sprats. At that they cheered me to the skies,  
And hung upon my words. So Paphlagon,  
Well knowing how the Council's heart is won,  
Proposed a motion; "Gentlemen," he said,  
"For this good fortune let due thanks be paid,  
A hundred beeves to the Goddess." So that brought  
The Council round to him. Those beeves, I thought,  
Have got me beaten. So, before he knew,  
I trumped his hundred by proposing two,  
And after that a vow to Artemis,  
When once the price of sprats and anchovies  
Falls to one groat a hundred, to assign  
A thousand kids. At that all ears were mine.  
So then he lost his head, did Paphlagon,  
And tried to interrupt and was moved on  
By chairmen and police, and all the crowd  
Was standing up and arguing long and loud  
About the sprats. And he "One moment more,"  
Kept havoring, "just one moment, I implore;  
A herald's message I must introduce

From Sparta, with proposals for a truce."  
Then all the Council with one voice began  
Shouting "A truce? Of course! Yes, my good man,  
They know about our sprats. They've had the tip.  
We need no truces now. Let the war rip!"  
They shouted for the Chairman to declare  
The Council closed, and vaulted everywhere  
Over the rails. I knew what they would need,  
And bought up all the coriander seed  
And herbs in the market. Then as relishes  
I doled them out for sprats and anchovies,  
Free, gratis and for nothing. Wildly they  
Applauded and hurrahed me on my way.  
Thus with a pinch of coriander seed  
I have made the Council mine in word and deed.

#### CHORUS

Always in luck, by hit on hit,  
You show you're Fortune's favourite.  
Our schemer now has met a schemer  
With ways still trickier and extremer,  
More adept in rascalities,  
    More varied and more wide  
In pretexts and realities  
    Of cunning rarefied.  
But don't think all is over yet;  
Keep up the fight, and don't forget  
That, ever since the lists were set,  
    The Knights are on your side.

#### OFFAL-MONGER

Indeed, yes; but he is coming. Here he is,  
A great dull wave of storms and menaces  
Rolling before him. Will the ruffian try  
To drink my blood? Boo for his cheek, say I.

*[Enter PAPHLAGON.]*

#### PAPHLAGON

Unless my old tricks fail me, may I burst  
In pieces, but I vow I'll kill you first!

#### OFFAL-MONGER

I enjoy your threats, I mock your bugaboo,  
I dance a jolly jig and sing Cuckoo!

PAPHLAGON

By Earth! If I don't eat you raw and give  
This land good riddance—Oh, I cannot live!

OFFAL-MONGER

You'll eat me, will you? Well, I'll swallow you  
In big gulps, though it burst me so to do.

PAPHLAGON

Now, by my Seat of Honour, Pylos-won . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Your seat of Honour! It will be some fun  
To see you back to the last benches driven.

PAPHLAGON

I'll tie you in the stocks, I will by Heaven!

OFFAL-MONGER

What temper! Come now, what'll you have for sauce?  
And what for the main dish? I think a purse.

PAPHLAGON

I'll tear you open till your entrails spout.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll scoop your Prytanean banquets out.

PAPHLAGON

I'll charge you in Demos' court, and make you pay.

OFFAL-MONGER

No, I'll charge *you* and lie some bolder way.

PAPHLAGON

Rascal, he won't believe your calumnies,  
While I can fool him any way I please.

OFFAL-MONGER

You are very sure he just belongs to you!

PAPHLAGON

I know what food he is accustomed to.

OFFAL-MONGER

You do, and like a bad nurse, feed him wrong;  
Take all his food, and when you've chewed it long,  
Give him one bit and swallow twice as much.

PAPHLAGON

If so, my knowledge of the man is such,  
He shuts up or stays open, as I please.

OFFAL-MONGER

My mouth can do that, so astute it is.

PAPHLAGON

You think you beat me in the Council Hall;  
*He'll* never think so. Come now, let us call  
On Demos.

OFFAL-MONGER

No objection here. Proceed;  
Let nothing stop us.

PAPHLAGON

*[Turning to the House.*  
Demos, ho! We need

Your presence here.

OFFAL-MONGER

Yes, father. Please come out.

PAPHLAGON

Yes, old man; dear old man, come! Hear about  
The outrageous insults that I've had to bear.

*[The Central Door opens, and DEMOS comes out.]*

DEMOS

What's all that noise? Please leave my doorway clear.  
You've spoilt my olive-branch. (*Looking at it*) That's a clean break.  
Well, Paphlagon, who has wronged you?

PAPHLAGON

For your sake  
I am bruised by him and his young bloods.

DEMOS

What for?

PAPHLAGON

Demos, because I am your friend; nay, more,  
Your lover.

DEMOS

Yes. And (*to OFFAL-MONGER*) who on earth are you?

OFFAL-MONGER

A rival for your heart, a lover true.  
Long have I wished your happiness to plan,  
And with me many an honest gentleman,  
But we are all hindered by this man. For, like  
Some reigning beauty, you must always strike  
Away men of good breeding, and affix  
Your faith on spivs who sell you candlesticks,  
Shoes, leather, raw hides. . . .

PAPHLAGON

Yes, for good works done  
To state and Demos.

OFFAL-MONGER

Good works? Mention one.

PAPHLAGON

Pylos. I saw the generals were slack,  
Sailed there myself and brought the prisoners back.

OFFAL-MONGER

I found a pot cooked by another man,  
Full of good food, and off with it I ran.

PAPHLAGON

Please, Demos, call a meeting now, to test  
Which of us claimants really serves you best;  
Then you can choose your friend.

OFFAL-MONGER

Yes, do, and fix  
The thing past doubt. . . . But, please, not on the Pnyx!

DEMOS

There is no other place where I could sit.  
The meeting is there, and you'll both come to it.

OFFAL-MONGER

Plague take it, then I'm done! The old man here  
At home has brains exceptionally clear,  
But seat him once upon that rock, he sits  
Mouth-open, blind, like one who has lost his wits.

CHORUS

Ah, now, my friend, it's time to spread

All the sail you carry,  
And keep a fighting soldier's head  
And strokes that none can parry,  
If you're to get the best of him,  
For oh, the man is cunning;  
He'd slip through any prison cell;  
So up, my friend, and face him well,  
With shining sky and favouring swell,  
Attack and set him running!

LEADER

Be well on your guard; be ready in time, before he can  
close to attack,  
To run your longboat alongside and hang out your  
dolphins to drop on his back.

PAPHLAGON

Now to our Lady, Athena, the Blest, whose arm our  
city defends,  
I pray that if truly to Demos himself I have been the  
most faithful of friends,  
Then, next after Lysicles and his hareem, I be granted  
a seat in row one,  
Of the Prytany Banquet, the same as to-day, in return  
for the nothing I've done.  
If not, if I don't fight for no one but you, and protect  
you from any mishaps,  
Then may I be slaughtered and severed in two and cut  
into chariot straps!

OFFAL-MONGER

And I, if I don't give you help as a friend, and attend  
to you more like a son,  
Just mince me in trimmings! Is that not enough?  
Ought anything more to be done?  
Then grate me up here on this board, to be served in  
a salmagundi with cheese,  
And for burial, drag me away to the grave with a  
flesher's hook under my knees!

PAPHLAGON

And how, among all public men except me, could you  
find such an absolute friend?  
Didn't I, when I used in the Council to sit, hand out  
to you funds without end,

By the art of the squeeze and the twist and the rack,  
and blackmail in varieties, too?  
Not caring how mere private citizens squealed if I just  
gave pleasure to you?

OFFAL-MONGER

Good Demos, there's not much glory in that. It's a path  
I can easily tread.  
Light-heartedly picking up other men's loaves, I'll  
provide your table with bread.  
That creature your friend and true-hearted! I'll show  
that he's neither. His real desire  
Is simply to warm his own hands; that is why he goes  
piling the logs on your fire.  
It was you that at Marathon battled amain and played  
with the Persian at swords,  
And, conquering, gave all our speakers the chance to  
gargle with mountainous words;  
Yet here, without ever a thought, he has left you to sit  
on the cold, hard stone,  
While I—pray, rise!—for your comfort have brought  
a new cushion, skilfully sewn,  
That She who at Salamis rubbed on the bench may  
never have blisters again.

*[He places the cushion for DEMOS.]*

DEMOS

O man, who are you? A fruit, can it be, of the high  
Harmodian strain?  
My soul, it's the deed of a generous man and a friend  
to democracy true.

PAPHLAGON

Good God! Are such paltry attentions enough to win  
the man over to you?

OFFAL-MONGER

Well, weren't your baits still meaner than these when  
you caught him and made him your friend?

PAPHLAGON

I'll stake my head that there never has been a man so



strong to defend  
The Demos in battle against all odds as I, or to love  
him so dear.

#### OFFAL-MONGER

A queer sort of love, when you don't care a jot at  
compelling him year after year  
To keep on living in upturned casks and shacks and  
holes in the dust,  
Just prisoned like bees to be robbed at your ease. You  
rejected in utter disgust  
The peace that Archeptolemos brought; and when  
there's an embassy here  
Proposing a truce, you whisk it away straight off with  
a flea in its ear.

#### PAPHLAGON

Till over all Hellas our Demos is King! For doesn't  
the oracle say,  
"In Arcadia too he shall sit as a judge, with five good  
obols for pay?"  
If he'll only be patient whatever occurs, as his servant  
and friend I'll engage  
For ever in some sound blackguardly way, to provide  
his regular wage.

#### OFFAL-MONGER

To make Demos a king of Arcadia, pish! No such  
dream dazzles your eyes,  
But to see that your own extortions keep up and you  
"gifts" from the frightened Allies.  
While, what with the war and the mist all around,  
poor Demos can't see what you do,  
And poverty, need, and the thought of his pay, make  
him listen to no one but you.  
If he ever gets home to his farm and to peace, and has  
long, calm mornings to live,  
And with good wheat porridge his vigour restores and  
can take what the olive cakes give,  
When at last he has learnt what real good things your  
juryman juggle has lost him,  
He'll return a rude rustic intent on a vote to destroy  
you, whatever it cost him,  
You know it, and that's why you keep him deceived  
with your self-dreams and visions of power.

PAPHLAGON

It is really too bad that this man should go on and  
discredit me hour after hour  
In the eyes of all Athens and Demos himself, when the  
city from me has received  
More service, more wonders of service, I vow, than  
Themistocles ever achieved.

OFFAL-MONGER

"O city of Argos, just list to the man!" You make  
yourself rival to him  
Who found our city with glories half-full, and left  
her complete to the brim,  
And stuck on a new Piraeus as well, to serve as her  
breakfast-time toast,  
And added the fish of a new-found sea, while none of  
the old was lost!  
Whereas *you* make us men of a mean little town with  
your oracles bogus or true,  
And your "quarters walled in" and your "quarters  
walled off," a pretty Themistocles you!  
Yet you wipe your fingers on prime white bread, while  
he lies in banishment still.

PAPHLAGON

O Demos, it's monstrous to suffer this man to go  
trampling on me at his will  
Just because I'm your friend.

DEMOS

Stop there as you are! No more of this flinging of dirt!  
Why, even as it is, it's a mighty long time you've been  
hoodwinking me to my hurt.

OFFAL-MONGER

Yes, Demos, old friend, he's a rascal and more,  
Whenever you yawn he does mischief galore,  
When our Archons' accounts are put to the vote  
The juiciest bits go down this fellow's throat;  
While he plunges both hands in the national trusts,  
Which he uses as gravy to sop up his crusts.

PAPHLAGON

You'll suffer for this! I'll bring you to grief,  
You thirty-thousand-drachmae thief!

OFFAL-MONGER

Why splash and splutter and beat the sea?  
Your record's as dark as dark can be  
    On the books of Pallas Athene.  
And I'll soon make clear to the public eye—  
Yes, by Demeter, or let me die!—  
Those forty hundreds you had on the sly  
    As a "gift" from wrecked Mitylene!

CHORUS

O, aren't you come to all mankind a comfort and a blessing!  
I envy you that nimble tongue. Why, if you keep on pressing,  
You'll soon be the first man in Greece; you'll dictate every motion  
In Athens, and your Trident rule the Allies o'er the ocean.  
Well-managed crises and alarms will reap you harvests golden,  
But now he's given you such a hold, be sure you keep him holden.  
You'll easily outdo the man, your ribs have such a hide on.

PAPHLAGON

Oh, things are not at that pass yet, no, by your own Poseidon!  
I have one record that's enough to silence all complaining,  
While of the Shields at Pylos won there's still a plate remaining.

OFFAL-MONGER

Stop there! No more about the Shields. You've given me such a handle  
If you would pose as Demos' friend, I call it just a scandal  
Deliberately to leave those Shields with straps on, fit for battle.  
Demos, the thing's a plot; to keep you all like helpless cattle  
Unarmed. If ever need should come to examine and confound him,  
Think what a serried mass he's got of young bloods all around him.  
Tanners, cheese-dealers, bee-keepers, who all live near the tanners,  
So, if you once begin to growl and look like "playing banners,"  
At dead of night they'll seize the Shields, and arm and take their station  
At the entrance of the corn exchange, to quell you by starvation.

DEMOS

Those Shields have still their handles on? My stars! You politician!  
Your frauds upon the public have too long been our perdition.

PAPHLAGON

Good Heavens, man, don't be a prey to every new informer.  
I am here, your friend. You'll never find a truer heart or warmer.  
I mastered the conspirators. I watch for every gathering  
Of secret forces in the state and instantly . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Go blathering!  
Like eel-fishers; with water clear they know they'll have no catches  
But once they make it thick with mud, the eels come up in batches.  
So you make profits while you keep the land in troubled weather.  
Now, answer one small point; have you, with all your stocks of leather,  
Given to this Demos, whom you love so truly, have you ever  
Given one patch to mend his shoes?

DEMOS

No, by Poseidon, never!

OFFAL-MONGER

Does that not show you what he is? Now, I, I've brought a faring  
For you, and here it is; new shoes for your immediate wearing.  
(*Gives the shoes*)

DEMOS

By Zeus, of all the friends I've known I reckon you the surest,  
And toward the city and her toes your loyalty the purest!

PAPHLAGON

It's shocking that two shoes should have effects so deleterious,  
And make people forget my works, so helpful and so serious.  
I stopped the Sodomites, and swept away a Certain Person. . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Why do you want to poke your nose in dirt, and try to worsen  
What's bad? Why need you touch that scum? No doubt you'd feel much easier  
Without them. They so well might be your rivals in the Ecclesia.  
You've seen your Demos tunicless, at his age, exposed fully  
To winter winds, and never thought he needs one, warm and woolly,  
With two good sleeves (*wraps DEMOS in tunic*)  
like this I bring to wrap you; is it pleasant?

DEMOS

Why, not Themistocles himself gave Athens such a present.  
Of course, to build Piraeus was quite clever; that was his gift;  
Original, but hardly more original than this gift.

PAPHLAGON

Confound it, what vile monkey-tricks the fellow keeps devising!

OFFAL-MONGER

I use your own: I'm like a guest who, suddenly uprising  
At night to go outside the house may take his neighbour's slippers.

PAPHLAGON

In small attentions anyhow I'll suffer no outstrippers.  
I'll wrap him in this extra cloak; (*takes off his own cloak*)  
and you go hang, you sinner!

DEMOS

Ugh! Ugh! Get out! It smells! It's like the workshop of a skinner.

OFFAL-MONGER

He wrapped you round on purpose with that stuff to get you strangled.  
He has tried before. You know those stalks of silphium that he dangled  
Before all eyes so strangely cheap?

DEMOS

I know.

OFFAL-MONGER

You know the action  
Of silphium? Well, he hoped the crowd of judges on their benches  
Would murder one another by their massed and mutual stench.

PAPHLAGON

What low buffooneries you use to beat down my defences!

OFFAL-MONGER

The Goddess bids me beat you in your game of false pretences.

PAPHLAGON

Beat me you shan't!—Good Demos, here, well cooked in all its stages,  
I bring you, for no work at all, a soup-plate-full of wages.

OFFAL-MONGER

And, look, for your poor legs, I've brought this little alabaster  
To cover those sore places, with a soft emollient plaster.

PAPHLAGON

I'll pluck your grey hairs, one by one, and leave you young and blooming.

OFFAL-MONGER

A hare's foot, see, for your poor eyes, if ever they want grooming.

PAPHLAGON

Come, blow your nose, great Demos; there!  
Now wipe your fingers on my hair.

OFFAL-MONGER

No, mine!

PAPHLAGON

No, mine! Well I don't care.  
I tell you what I'll do to you.  
I'll get you nominated to  
Command a trireme at your own  
Expense. I'll find an ancient one,  
That never lets you rest from cost  
Of maintenance and fresh repairs,  
And make it first of all my cares  
To see you get a rotten mast!

OFFAL-MONGER

The Paphlagon's gone paffling; Stop!  
He's boiling over. Save him, pray.

Take all those burning logs away  
And skim the curses from on top!

PAPHLAGON

I'll make you bleed for words like these.  
When surtax gives the final squeeze,  
I'll have you registered, you dog;  
In the High Income catalogue.

OFFAL-MONGER

I make no threats of what I'll do.  
I merely make this prayer for you.  
I pray above your coals a dish  
May stand of hissing cuttle-fish,  
While you have got to make that day  
A speech about Miletus (pay  
One talent, if the cause is won)  
And you are hoping you can fill  
Your paunch with cuttle-fish and still  
Be there in time, when in they run  
To fetch you, and in fear to lose  
    The hope you cherish  
Of that dear talent, in a rush  
You swallow all that boiling mush  
    And choking, perish!

CHORUS

Well said, by Zeus, Apollo and Demeter!

DEMOS

Yes, so say I. This fellow is no mean  
Statesman. Why, not for ages has there been  
One more exactly suited to the mind  
Of patriots of the penny-a-dozen kind.  
You with your shows of friendship, Paphlagon,  
Have angered me. Give back that signet-stone.  
You are no more my steward. (PAPHLAGON *gives back the ring.*)

PAPHLAGON

    There! But mind,  
If you don't stick to me, you'll only find  
Another much the same but not so nice.

DEMOS

This ring here can't be mine. The whole device  
Looks to me different. I don't clearly see . . .

OFFAL-MONGER

Here, let me look. What ought the sign to be?

DEMOS

A beefy roll of proletarian fat.

OFFAL-MONGER

That isn't on it.

DEMOS

Not the roll? Then what?

OFFAL-MONGER

A stuffed gull making speeches on a rock.

DEMOS

Ugh! Ugh!

OFFAL-MONGER

What's up?

DEMOS

It gave me quite a shock.  
Take it away! That ring was never mine.  
The stuffed gull is Cléonymus's sign.

[*To the* OFFAL-MONGER.  
Take my true ring. Be you my minister!

PAPHLAGON



O Demos, please not yet! Not till you hear  
My private oracles!

OFFAL-MONGER

All right, mine too!

PAPHLAGON

His, Demos? But by his you are only due  
To be a "Hollow skin."

OFFAL-MONGER

By yours, without  
A skin at all.

PAPHLAGON

No, you're completely out.  
My oracles by fate declare you bound  
To reign over all Greece, with roses crowned.

OFFAL-MONGER

And mine, that robed in purple, fold on fold,  
Spangled and crowned and charioted in gold,  
You'll rise to prosecute Miss Smikythê.

LEADER

Well, fetch your oracles. I'd like to see  
Him hear them.

OFFAL-MONGER

Very good.

DEMOS

And fetch yours too.

PAPHLAGON

Agreed!

OFFAL-MONGER

Agreed, by Zeus!

DEMOS

Well, that will do.

[*Exeunt* PAPHLAGON *and* OFFAL-MONGER.]

CHORUS

To all who at home in our city stay  
And all who seek us from far away,  
How passing sweetly will dawn the day,  
Which shines on Cleon's confounding;

And yet there are people, so I am told,  
Stiff-grained oddities, cross and old,  
From the talking-shop where the laws are sold,  
A different music sounding.

Who say if there hadn't a Paphlagon been  
Two useful objects we never had seen,  
A ladle for stirring a muddy tureen  
And a pestle for braying and pounding.

This point also may cause surprise,  
At the swinish style of his ears and eyes;  
That the other boys at his music school  
Report that he made it a regular rule,  
By touching only the *tips* of a thing  
To tune his lyre to a tipsy ring,  
Till the teacher in wrath said "Take him away;  
There's nothing this boy can learn to play  
Unless there are tips abounding."

[*Re-enter* PAPHLAGON *and* OFFAL-MONGER *heavily laden with bundles.*]

PAPHLAGON

There, look at mine. And I've not brought them all.

OFFAL-MONGER

They'll break my back. And that's not nearly all.

DEMOS

What's all this?

PAPHLAGON

Oracles.

DEMOS

Not all?

PAPHLAGON

You find  
This much? I have a chestful left behind.

OFFAL-MONGER

I have an attic and two flats quite full  
At home.

DEMOS

What prophet gave your oracle?

PAPHLAGON

Bakis himself gave mine.

DEMOS

And yours some other?

OFFAL-MONGER

Glanis was mine, Bakis's elder brother.

DEMOS

What do they deal with?

PAPHLAGON [*Looking over his oracles*]

Athens, Pylos, you,  
And me and . . . Oh, all other subjects too.

DEMOS

And what are yours?

OFFAL-MONGER

Athens, fresh mackerel,  
Sparta, pease porridge, profiteers who sell  
Corn in false measure, you, me . . . and he said  
That Paphlagon may go and boil his head.

DEMOS

Come, then, suppose you read them out aloud,  
Especially that one about the cloud  
I like so much; the one which says that I  
Shall be an eagle in the cloud on high.

PAPHLAGON

"Mark, O Erechtheus' son, the deep oracular tones  
That call to thee out of the shrine by the line of immaculate thrones,  
Bidding thee ever preserve thy watch-dog, faithful and true,  
Keen-toothed, ever agape and agrowl, who with love ever new  
Standeth providing thy fees. Though his path be with jealousy crossed  
By a thousand croaking daws, preserve him or all shall be lost."

DEMOS

Daws . . . dogs. . . . By Earth, I don't make sense of it;  
Both unclean things, the Goddess won't admit . . .  
Then, daws, dogs, and Erechtheus! They don't fit.

PAPHLAGON

I am your dog. In your defence I bay.  
The god bids you preserve me night and day.

OFFAL-MONGER

No; this dog twists his text; gnaws it about,  
As he might gnaw his kennel to get out.  
I've got the dog-text here, the genuine one.

DEMOS

Then read it. Meantime I'll pick up a stone;  
That oracle dog might bite one to the bone!

OFFAL-MONGER

"Mark, O Erechtheus' child, that slave-trapping Cerberus hound!  
Well with his tail he can fawn, but at dinner he loiters around  
Watching, until some time, when he catches you looking away,  
He snatches a bit from your plate. And besides that, day after day,  
Off to the kitchen he goes, and there unseen and in silence  
Privily gobbles away at dishes and cities and islands."

DEMOS

That's better, Glanis. Yes, that's something like.

PAPHLAGON

Listen, old mate! Hear all before you strike!  
"A woman in Athens the Blest gives birth to a Lion, with eyes  
Keen for the Demos to fight against armies of poisonous flies.  
Well he bestrideth his cubs; see therefore thou guard him for good,  
Building about him towers that are iron and a wall that is wood."  
You understand that?

DEMOS

By Apollo, no  
I don't.

PAPHLAGON

He bids you never let me go,  
Your one and only lion!

OFFAL-MONGER

I see for sure  
One thing which this man's trying to obscure,  
The only place that is both iron and wood,  
In which he bids you keep the lion for good.

DEMOS

What does it mean, then?

OFFAL-MONGER

Why, the pillory,  
Wood with five iron holes. There, obviously,  
He bids you keep this man.

DEMOS

I think, don't you,  
That oracle may very soon come true?

PAPHLAGON

Listen not thou. That voice is a raven's envious caw;  
True to thy falcon abide, who bore thee as prey in his claw  
One unforgettable prize, those Lacedaemonian chicks.

OFFAL-MONGER

That was a mere chance shot of a Paphlagon up to his tricks.  
"Cecropides ill-counselled, is that so worthy of honour?  
Burdens a woman can bear if a man just puts them upon her.  
Fighting is what she can't do. A fight gives a woman a fit."

PAPHLAGON

"There is Pylos and Pylos awash." You know that oracular bit?  
"And a yet third Pylos as well. . . ."

DEMOS

A wet third? I don't understand.  
A wet, and a wash and a swell?

OFFAL-MONGER

He'll need all the tubs in the land.

DEMOS

What, all the tubs? No bath for me to-day?

OFFAL-MONGER

No hope, the man has taken them all away.  
Then, here again! Here is an oracle,  
About the ships, which you must ponder well.

DEMOS

Well, read it out. I am pondering night and day  
Where I can find them their arrears of pay.

OFFAL-MONGER

"Aligiades, beware of the dog-fox, quick to deceive,  
Reynard the silent biter, the swift and clever to thieve."  
You see the meaning?

DEMOS

Well, Philostratus  
Is a dog-fox.

OFFAL-MONGER

No, no. He is warning us  
How this man's always sending ships to sue  
The Allies for money. Don't allow him to.

DEMOS

How does "dog-fox" mean ships?

OFFAL-MONGER

Why, ships in flocks  
Win races; so do dogs.

DEMOS

But why the fox?

OFFAL-MONGER

The foxes are our hungry men at arms  
Who nibble the green grapes on all the farms.

DEMOS

Poor foxes! Where am I to get them food?

OFFAL-MONGER

Food and "Three days' provisions" I'll make good.  
"Hear yet again and be warned; thus speaketh Phoebus Apollo  
Lest ye be further deceived, beware of the Hand that is Hollow."

DEMOS

What's all this about Hollow Hands?

OFFAL-MONGER

It is Paphlagon's hand that is meant.  
It is held out begging for more, "hollow" always and never content.

PAPHLAGON

No, no he explains it all wrong. It's a thing we can all understand.  
Diopethes the prophet alone has the true "hollow" beggarman's hand.  
But here is a word about you, an oracle mighty of wing;  
An eagle, it says, you shall be and govern the earth as a king.

OFFAL-MONGER

Mine too says a King; yes, of course, of the earth and the Red Sea too,  
And sit in Ecbatana judging, with biscuits and honey to chew.

PAPHLAGON

But I, I have dreamed a dream, where the Goddess herself with a spoon  
Poured upon Demos's head health, riches and every boon.

OFFAL-MONGER

Why, so did I have a dream, where the Goddess herself in state  
Down from the Citadel came, and her owl on her shoulder sate,  
Ready to pour on our heads by the bucket, in happy combine,  
Ambrosial balsam on you and on him mixed garlic and brine.

DEMOS



Hurrah!  
There's no one to touch Glanis for good sense!  
[To OFFAL-MONGER  
I give myself to you in confidence  
To guide my old feet and re-educate.

PAPHLAGON

Not yet, not yet, I implore you! Only wait.  
I'll keep you in barley, full rate for the day.

DEMOS

Barley, I hate the name of it!—The way  
You two have deceived me, you and Theuphanes!

PAPHLAGON

Pearl-barley, all prepared and sure to please!

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll give you cakes, baked to a turn and sweet,  
With seasoning cooked. Nothing to do but eat!

DEMOS

Be quick then, both; do what you've got to do.  
I promise that whichever of you two  
Shall treat me best shall hold the reins of state.

PAPHLAGON

I'll get there first!

OFFAL-MONGER

Get out! Absquatulate!  
[*Exeunt quarrelling.*]

CHORUS

O Demos, a reign austere  
At which all men quake and fear,  
Is yours; you are grown a sheer

Totalitarian;  
But, oh, you are easily led,  
Flattered and fancy-fed;  
You believe what the last man said,  
And your wisdom, if not quite fled,  
Is a bad absentarian.

DEMOS

There is no very plenteous share  
Of brains under your long hair,  
If you think I am not aware  
    How I founder and flop;  
I like to doze in the blare  
Of talk, but am quite all there;  
I keep one rogue, to care  
For me and my daily fare,  
I puff him full up with air;  
    And then make him go pop!

CHORUS

Well, that you can safely do,  
If indeed to your plan you're true;  
While giving each rogue his due  
    You may carefully feed them  
Like sheep with the end in view,  
Till fatted enough to stew,  
If the food for the day falls through  
    And you happen to need them.

DEMOS

Just watch me, how warily  
I twist that whole company  
Who think to bamboozle me  
    As a fool with no gumption,  
I watch them, and fee by fee  
How much they have stolen see;  
Then tickle them inwardly,  
By the ballot-vote's surgery  
Till up comes the whole débris  
    Of their previous consumption.

*[The two re-enter with large bags, jostling.]*

PAPHLAGON

Get out. You block the way.

OFFAL-MONGER

No, you, you pest!

PAPHLAGON

Demos, thrice long ago I have stood here, dressed  
And ready, to promote your happiness.

OFFAL-MONGER

Thrice? I've been ten or twelve times, more or less.  
Long, long ago, and hundreds of agoes.

DEMOS (*Aside.*)

And I some thirty thousand of agoes  
Have sat here thinking how I loathe these two.

OFFAL-MONGER

You know, then, how to act?

DEMOS

No, tell me you.

OFFAL-MONGER

Set us both racing, starting fair from scratch  
To make you happy.

DEMOS

Take places. Good. Yes. That's a match.

PAPHLAGON

Good.

DEMOS

Now, off!

PAPHLAGON

You're fouling me!

*[The two go off, and presently return, suiting the action to the word.]*

DEMOS

*(Aside.)* I'm like a beauty dosed with flattery  
By two young swains. . . . I must assume an air!

PAPHLAGON

There, Demos, I am first. Here is a chair.

OFFAL-MONGER

But not a table. That I am first to bring.

PAPHLAGON

And here's a barley cake, a delicate thing  
Made of whole meal, part of the Pylos prize.

OFFAL-MONGER

I've brought some special bread-crusts, the right size  
For soup, shaped by the Goddess' ivory hand.

DEMOS

What a vast finger, Goddess! That is grand.

PAPHLAGON

Here's some pea-soup, well coloured; quite first rate.  
'Twas stirred by Pallas, Pillar of the Gate.

OFFAL-MONGER

Her love for Demos she is revealing now,  
Wielding her soup-plate high above your brow.

DEMOS

Well said; where would this sorry land have been  
Had she not veiled it with her soup tureen?

PAPHLAGON

The Dread of Armies sends this slice of fish.

OFFAL-MONGER

The Daughter of Power sends this boiled meat, this swish  
Of haggis, paunch and chitterlings, with her love.

DEMOS

Fair payment for the Robe that Demos wove.

PAPHLAGON

She of the Gorgon Crest commands you eat  
This manna-cake; 'twill help to man the fleet.

OFFAL-MONGER

All these too!

DEMOS

What am I to do with these  
Mixed entrails?

OFFAL-MONGER

Belly-timber; this, she sees,  
Is just what's wanted for your ships of war,  
She always watches o'er them from afar.  
Some wine now; (*mixing water into the wine*) two to three goes prettily.

DEMOS                    [*Drinking.*

What lovely wine! How well it bears its three!

OFFAL-MONGER

Tritonis three-to-twoed it just like that.

PAPHLAGON

Take now this slice of fish-cake, rich and fat.

OFFAL-MONGER

A slice? I give you my whole cake.—So there!

PAPHLAGON

Ah, see what I've got; here! . . . You can't get hare!

OFFAL-MONGER

Confound it, no! Where is there hare for me? . . .  
My soul, devise me some profundity!

PAPHLAGON [*With his dish of hare.*]

You see this, you poor devil?

OFFAL-MONGER

Much I care.  
You see those people coming to me?

PAPHLAGON

Where?

OFFAL-MONGER

Envoys with money bags.

PAPHLAGON

Where? I must rush.

OFFAL-MONGER

What's that to you? They are visitors: don't push.

[*While PAPHLAGON is looking for the Envoy's the OFFAL-MONGER grabs his dish.*

See, Demos, dear; I bring you sumptuous fare.

PAPHLAGON

Oh damn! You cheat! You've stolen my jugged hare!

OFFAL-MONGER

Like you at Pylos. That was just my wish.

PAPHLAGON

I faced a battle.

OFFAL-MONGER

And I a burning dish!

DEMOS

"How did thy thought to this bold deed incline?"

OFFAL-MONGER

"The thought the goddess gave; the grab was mine."

DEMOS

The prize is his who served the food; that's flat.

PAPHLAGON

Am I to be outbrazened? . . . Oh, not that!

OFFAL-MONGER

Now, Demos, make your choice, which of us two  
Gives better service to your paunch and you.

DEMOS

Well, how am I to judge? I want a test  
That everyone will recognize as best.

OFFAL-MONGER

I'll tell you. Take my bag and look inside  
Then have a look at his, and so decide.

DEMOS

Well, I'll look first at yours.—It's empty! What?

OFFAL-MONGER

Yes, grandfather, I gave you all I'd got.

DEMOS

There's genuine love of Demos in this sack.

OFFAL-MONGER

Across now to the Paphlagonian's pack!  
You see!

DEMOS      [*Examining it.*

God bless me, bursting with good cheer!  
That fish cake too! Why, most of it's still here.  
For me he cut a little slice, no more.

OFFAL-MONGER

That's just the way he treated you before.  
He doled you out small bits of what he got  
And kept the big things for his private pot.

DEMOS

Rogue, with your thieving how you did me down,  
"Me, who bestowed thy riches and thy crown."

PAPHLAGON

[*Almost breaking down.*



I only stole things for my country's good.

DEMOS

Quick, put that crown away. It's understood  
This man shall have it.—Quick, rogue; drop that crown.

PAPHLAGON

No, no; (*keeping hold of the crown*) the Prophet has set clearly down  
What sort of man my conqueror must be.

OFFAL-MONGER

Quoting my name? Or just describing me?

PAPHLAGON

At least before I yield I mean to try  
If in the least you'd suit the prophecy.  
How were you trained? To what school did you go?

OFFAL-MONGER

My head was clouted in the knacker's row.

PAPHLAGON

Ah me, what memory clutches at my heart!  
Howbeit. . . .  
Your tutor then taught you—what further art?

OFFAL-MONGER

To steal, and lie and look men in the face.

PAPHLAGON

"Apollo, Lycian, spare me of thy grace!"  
And what was your career, as man full made?

OFFAL-MONGER

Dog's meat, and odd jobs in the brothel trade.

PAPHLAGON

Me miserable! My life hath reached its stop. . . .  
Yet, one faint hope: you sold things in a shop  
In the market . . . not just peddling at the gates?

OFFAL-MONGER

The gates; where salt fish sells at special rates.

PAPHLAGON

So to its end the word of God must roll.  
Wheel back to silence this afflicted soul.  
And thou, my crown, though sore it hurteth me,  
"Farewell, some other head shall balance thee,  
More knavish? No. More blest, it well may be."  
*[Exit PAPHLAGON carried off by attendants.]*

DEMOS

Zeus of united Hellas! Thine the prize!

CHORUS

*[To OFFAL-MONGER.]*  
And hail to thee, in thy great victories!  
Remember you were made a man by me;  
Make me your specialized horse-secretary.

DEMOS

What is your true name?

OFFAL-MONGER

Agoracritus;  
An argufy-er most notorious  
I have always been, and the Agora my field.

DEMOS

So be it. To Agoracritus I yield  
My self, you, and that Paphlagonian too.

I in return, Demos, will care for you.  
 Nay, all considered, you may set me down  
 As best friend to the great Hath-beenians town.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SECOND PARABASIS

### CHORUS

If you doubt what the suitable course is  
 For opening or closing a lay,  
 Just praise our swift Knights and their horses;  
 Don't drearily day after day  
 Make Lysistratus wince and throw curses  
 At Thumantis, that homeless old seer,  
 Who, in spite of his optimist verses  
 Is hungry and haunted with fear.  
 He clings to thy knees, O Apollo,  
 At Delphi, imploring with tears  
 That his paunch may not always be hollow;  
 It is that that he fears.

To revile a thorough rascal can't be called an act of spite.  
 It's a tribute to the honest, if you choose to view it right.  
 Now there is a certain person about whom I have to strike  
 Ugly notes; but no one knows him; I must name a man I like  
 To explain him. Arignôtus to all hearers gives delight  
 Who have any music in them and can tell black tunes from white.  
 But he has a brother no wise like himself, Ariphrades,  
 Who's a rascal; yes, that's simply what he wants to be and is.  
 Nor, if he were just a rascal would I let that make me sore;  
 "Rascal," "utter rascal," even; that is what one bargains for;  
 But he's found out something extra; fouls his mouth with crapulous  
 Tunes of Polymêstus, and goes singing with Oiônichus.  
 He who loathes not such proceedings never shall be counted free  
 As a guest to share my board or drink of the same cup with me.

How oft in the dark meditations  
 Of midnight I wished that I knew  
 How Cleônymus gets at his rations,  
 And, whence, and so easily too!  
 For he browses on every stranger,  
 They say, who owns anything good,  
 And sinks himself deep in the manger,  
 And won't lift his head from his food,  
 Till they cry with one voice round the stable,  
 "Great master, we pray by thy knees,  
 Have mercy at least for the table!

Abstain and release it; oh, please!"

When our ships of war decided a great conference to invoke  
First among them rose a matron of maturer years and spoke:  
"Sisters, have you ever heard what things are being said in town?  
Who's to take a hundred of us off to Carthage on his own?  
Who d'you think? That undeserving drink-gone-sour, Hyperbolus!"  
All agreed it was too bad, too shocking, to be treated thus.  
And one maiden who knew nothing of man's ways cried feelingly  
"Phoebus the Preserver, never shall that man be lord of me!  
Rather, if I must, with wood-worms and old age I'll waste away."  
"Nay, nor handle me," responded Ocean Bride and Flying Spray!  
"Sure as out of pine and timbers we were built from mast to keel!  
If the Athenians really mean it, we will sail indoors and kneel  
Suppliant at the shrine of Theseus or the great Eumenides;  
Never shall that man as captain turn us all to mockeries;  
Let him launch out to perdition all alone, and sail away,  
Like the lamps he used to deal in, floating on an oily tray!"

*[Enter by Central Door AGORACRITUS, transformed in dress and manner.]*

AGORACRITUS

Now peace, and be still! A seal on your lips! Let the  
witness-box echo no voices!  
And shut be the gates of the Jurymen's courts, wherein  
this people rejoices.  
Let the theatre sing for the news that I bring and  
welcome the wonderful tale!

CHORUS

O star in the night to Athens the Blest, O help of the  
Islands, hail!  
Say what glad thought is this you have brought, and  
our altars shall smoke in the street.

AGORACRITUS

I have boiled your Demos in magical herbs and turned  
him from rotten to sweet.

CHORUS

O worker of wonders, where standeth he now, or  
where hath he laid him down?

AGORACRITUS

He dwells in the Athens of ancient days, in Her of the  
Violet Crown.

CHORUS

How can we look on him? How is he changed? What  
like in carriage and dress?

AGORACRITUS

As he was when he sate at Miltiadés' side, and with  
great Aristeidês at mess.  
But soon ye shall see him. There, hearken, above us  
the Gates of the Rock unfold.

*[To the audience, bidding them turn to the Acropolis.]*

Uplift your voices and open your eyes on Athens, the  
Athens of old;  
The wonderful city, the City of Song, true home of our  
Demos, behold!

CHORUS

O shining Athens, O violet-crowned, O blest all cities  
above,  
Unveil to our eyes the Lord of the Greeks, the Lord  
of the land we love!

*[Enter DEMOS through the central door, in his new raiment.]*

AGORACRITUS

It is he, in the clean grave garment of old, with the  
grasshopper bright in his hair;  
No longer he smells of balloting shells, but of Peace  
and balm in the air.

CHORUS

All hail, O king over Hellas the Great, we rejoice in  
thy joy; for again  
Thy life is worthy of Athens and true to the trophy  
on Marathon plain.

DEMOS

O Agoracritus, my best friend for sure,

What good you have done me by your boiling cure!

AGORACRITUS

Have I? Ah, what you did and what you were  
You know not, or you'd be my worshipper.

DEMOS

What was I, then, and what things did I do?

AGORACRITUS

When someone in the Ecclesia said to you  
"Demos, I am your lover and your friend,  
I, I alone, protect you and defend,"  
Soon as you heard that opening, up you'd fly,  
Wings flapping, horns uplifted.

DEMOS

No! Not I?

AGORACRITUS

So when he had soundly fleeced you, off he went.

DEMOS

Treat me like that? and I sit there content?

AGORACRITUS

Why, friend, your ears, according to the call,  
Went shut or open like a parasol.

DEMOS

Had I grown such a dotard, such a dunce!

AGORACRITUS

Why, if two speakers pled with you at once,  
One for the warships, one to use the whole  
Fund to provide the jurors with their dole,

The dole would leave the triremes dry on shore.  
Don't crouch so. Try to be your true self: try!  
Why hang your head? Be your true self once more.

DEMOS

I am crushed with shame in thinking of the past.

AGORACRITUS

It was not all your fault. Don't be downcast.  
'Twas your deceivers. But henceforth let's see;  
Suppose some low speech-monger makes a plea,  
"Unless you can condemn this prisoner too,  
Jurors, there won't be bread enough for you."  
What will you do to one who talks like this?

DEMOS

Lift the brute up and fling him to the abyss,  
With fat Hyperbolus tied about his throat!

AGORACRITUS

Ah, yes, that strikes a new and wholesome note.  
Then tell me of your policies at large.

DEMOS

First to the trireme rowers I'll discharge,  
As they touch port, their full arrears of pay.

AGORACRITUS

Ah, many a blistered rump will bless that day!

DEMOS

Then, no man entered in the infantry  
Shall be transferred by private jobbery;  
The name, where once writ, shall continue writ.

AGORACRITUS

That gives Cleônymus's shield a hit.

DEMOS

Then, no smooth cheeks shall loll in the mart at ease.

AGORACRITUS

Where will poor Strato rest, or Cleisthenes?

DEMOS

I mean those youngsters in the myrrh-market,  
Who gabble in the language of their set,  
"Smart fellow, Phaeax; dodged ingeniously  
That death sentence; a caustic critic he;  
Gnomic; conclusive; lucid; pertinent;  
Quick to confound the obstructive element."

AGORACRITUS

Who will the jabbering element confound?

DEMOS

I'll make them all go hunt with horse and hound,  
Programmes and resolutions clean forgot.

AGORACRITUS

That being agreed, an easy chair I've brought,  
A page, too, young and strong, to carry it.  
Sit on him too, if ever he calls for it.

DEMOS            *[Taking the chair.]*

With joy I settle to my ancient state.

AGORACRITUS

The more so when I bring, however late,  
Libations, and present a life-long truce.  
*[Presenting PEACE, a beautiful maiden.]*

DEMOS

Ye gods, how lovely! In the name of Zeus,



Can I embrace her, take her for my own?  
Where did you find her?

AGORACRITUS

Where the Paphlagon  
Had kept her cloistered, hidden from your eyes.  
Now she is yours. Here, take her as your prize  
Home to the fields and farms.

DEMOS

And he whose sway  
Wrecked Athens, what atonement shall he pay?

AGORACRITUS

Oh, nothing much; he'll have my old estate,  
Dealing in offal at the city gate;  
Dog's flesh and ass's mixed shall be his ware;  
With tipsy harlots he can curse and swear,  
And when he's thirsty, drink the bath-water.

DEMOS

You've hit it. That just suits his character,  
'Gainst washermen and whores his lungs to test.

And thou, come to the Prytanean feast;  
Take the High Seat where once that reptile reigned  
And don this robe of the green spring unstained.

*[To attendants.]*

Him lift to his due trade, to meet the eyes  
Of those he wronged most deeply, our Allies.

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## NOTES

L. 2. A slave was often called simply by the name of his nation, Syrus, Lydus, Getas; so here Paphlagon. The Paphlagonians were a tribe in Northern Anatolia. The name carries a suggestion of "Wop" or "Dago" and perhaps also suggests spluttering. Cf. 919.

L. 9. *Mi-ew*: an imitation of flute-music without words, as practised by Olympus and "the old

composers."

L. 16. "Would that thou couldst tell": from Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 345, where Phaedra shrinks from confessing her love.

L. 19. Wild cabbages: a stock joke at Euripides. His mother owned land and apparently sold the produce.

L. 26. "Lets-Dees-Ert." More than twenty thousand slaves did take advantage of the war to desert (*Thuc.* VII, 27).

L. 42. Council Square: literally "the Pnyx," the hill with seats for 20,000 where the Assembly met. Cf. 749.

L. 50. One case: the fee was for "a day's work."

L. 61. Oracles: Thucydides mentions (II. 8, XXI. 2) the interest in oracles and omens caused by the war; often ridiculed by Aristophanes. Cf. the "Angels of Mons" in 1914.

Ll. 78, 79. "*Mine*" is "*his*": puns on proper names in the original.

L. 107. Pramunian wine: often mentioned. It was harsh and strong; the meaning of the adjective is not known.

L. 123. Bakis: often mentioned together with Sibylla; sometimes in the plural *Bakides* like *Sibyllæ*. Cf. 1003.

Ll. 128-136. After the death of Pericles very inferior men took his place. The "Oakum-monger" or Rope-dealer was Eucrates, general in 432-1 B.C. Cf. 254. The "Sheep-monger," Lysicles, general in 428-7, said to have married Aspasia. Cf. 765.

L. 178. "Be a man": cf. Cleon's "If the generals were men. . . ." Introd. p. 6.

L. 221. The Bug of Hum: cf. the imaginary spirits of deceit or stupidity in 634 ff., and Canning's lines: "With a Bug Bug Bug and a Hum Hum Hum, See the great philosophers come."

L. 232. The mask-makers: in the Old Comedy masks were often made into likenesses or caricatures of particular persons. The New Comedy carefully avoided such likenesses as it avoided personal attacks.

L. 234. The Paphlagon's coming out: given in the MSS. to Nicias, evidently speaking from inside. Most editors give it to the Offal-monger.

L. 242. The change of metre marks the inrush of the Chorus. They come in two divisions, from right and left. The Knights were probably represented on horseback, either with hobby-horses or perhaps riding on men with horses' heads and tails. See the vase picture in Pickard-Cambridge, *Dith. Trag. and Com.*, p. 244.

Panaetius is not known, but Simon's book on Horsemanship is mentioned by Xenophon (*Hippike*, 1).

L. 254. Eucrates: cf. 129. The allusion is not known.

L. 256. Whom I feed: the Jurymen look to him for their regular fee.

L. 262. Recall him from the Chersonese: allusion not known.

L. 313. Tunnies came in shoals, so a watcher was placed on a cliff to look out for them. They were then driven into nets or narrow inlets.

L. 322. "Brass": *anaideia*, lack of all *aidôs*, a word covering the ideas of "shame," "ruth" and

"honour."

L. 326. Hippodamus: cf. 794, described by Aristotle as an able but eccentric man (*Pol.* II, 31). His son, Archeptolemus, advocated peace in 425. His continuous work for peace led to dealings with Sparta which were thought treasonable, and he was executed with Antiphon in 411.

L. 392. "A man": cf. 178.

L. 400. Cratinus: the Comedian. Cf. 526.

L. 401. Morsimus: a great-nephew of Aeschylus, was a tragedian. One of the crimes for which men are sunk in the mud of Hades (*Frogs*, 151) is copying out a speech of Morsimus.

L. 402. O percher on blossoms, etc.: apparently a parody of a song of "the old poet of the isles," Simonides of Ceos, from whom v. 406 is certainly taken. He will dance with delight at getting at last some real wheaten bread. Cf. 819.

L. 412. The Offal-monger's education had consisted in getting his head clouted by the authorities and sometimes being stabbed in street fights. Cf. 1236.

L. 440. Attainted family: the Alcmaeonidae, some of whom two hundred years before had violated an altar of refuge while pursuing followers of the would-be tyrant Cylon. This old far-fetched charge was sometimes revived against Pericles and Alcibiades.

L. 449. The tyrant's Queen: her name, Myrsine, is changed to *Byrsine* to suggest *byrsa*, a hide.

L. 490. Take some of this: oil from the Offal-monger's tray, or wine from Demosthenes' flagon?

Ll. 507-550. Parabasis. The Old Comedy has regularly in the middle of a play a "parabasis" or "coming forward" of the poet in person or his representative, to defend or explain himself. Aristophanes here had had two of his early plays produced by, and in the name of, the actor Callisthenes, and another under that of Philonides. He explains here why; he could write but he was shy of trying to produce.

The criticism of his fellow comedians which follows is pleasantly intimate and appreciative. Magnes had written plays with choruses of *Harpers*, *Birds*, *Lydians*, *Gadflies*, *Wasps*. Crates is charmingly described. Eupolis is not mentioned; probably he was not on very good terms with "our bald friend" just now. Cratinus, it is suggested, was in his time the best of them all but had taken to drink and gone to pieces. The sequel is curious. Apparently the old man retorted by writing a comedy about himself called *Putinê*, *The Wineflask*, in which the poet's true wife, Comedia, is about to divorce him because he has deserted her and taken up with the disreputable girl, Methê (Drink). His friends succeed in redeeming him. This abundant confession, it would seem, so moved the audience that they gave the old sinner the first prize over Aristophanes' *Clouds*. See *Clouds*, 520 ff., where, in a second edition of the play, Aristophanes protests against the judgment. The *Putinê* was Cratinus' last effort.

L. 534. Comus: a great musician, teacher of Socrates, who fell into poverty and neglect. Eupolis describes him as "crowned but dying of thirst."

L. 550. Shining bright in the sun: a joke on his own baldness. Cf. the claim of Eupolis, "I helped our bald friend with his Knights." See Introduction, p. 12.

L. 561. Phormio: the Athenian admiral, who had won brilliant victories in 429.

L. 566. The Robe: The famous robe carried in the Panathenaic procession and presented to the Goddess. It was newly woven for each festival by girls of noble family.

L. 574. This man's papa; our fathers did not run to Cleon's father for favours.

L. 605. Leapt out at Corinth: Nicias had just had a successful campaign there in which the

cavalry won the battle of Solygeia. Corinthians were "crabs" as Frenchmen might be called "Frogs" and Germans "Boches."

L. 608. Theôrus said: a certain Theôrus brought false news from Thrace (*Ach.*, 134), but the point is obscure.

L. 639. Sneezed: an encouraging omen.

Ll. 645-680. The main point of this speech is to show what a state of general hunger Cleon's policy had produced. A shoal of fish would be food for thousands, a big sacrifice of cattle and goats would be a gorgeous feast. The small aromatic coriander seeds were a relish almost like salt. As for peace, it was not as important as sprats.

L. 773. In the Council: i.e. merely a member of Boulé: now he is Stratêgus.

L. 775. The art of squeeze, etc.: cf. Lysias (30, 22): "When the Council has resources enough it does no great wrong, but when in difficulties it accepts impeachments, confiscates the property of citizens, and obeys the most unscrupulous advisers." The "money-collecting ships," sent to collect arrears of tribute, probably did some "squeezing." Cf. 776 and the last line of the play.

L. 786. Harmodian strain: like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who killed the tyrant Hipparchus, 514 B.C.

L. 793. Living in upturned casks: cf. *Thuc.* II, 17 and 52. The overcrowded people settled in any unoccupied place they could find, porches of temples, sentry towers, rough shacks, etc.

L. 794. Archeptolemus: cf. 327. There were several overtures from the Spartans after the Pylos affair.

L. 835. Gift from wrecked Mitylene: a bitter jest. Cleon had proposed, and for the moment carried, a proposal for a wholesale death sentence on the Mitylenaeans. It was immediately revoked.

L. 855. Playing "banners"; playing *ostrakinda*, a game of banning or exiling someone.

L. 941. Well said, by Zeus, etc.: a line of plain prose in the original.

L. 959. Cleonymus: A favourite butt of comedy, a fat flatterer of Cleon's who on some memorable occasion had thrown away his shield and run. In the *Wasps* he is "the big flatteronymus shield-dropper"; elsewhere, a plant that regularly drops its shields in the autumn.

L. 962. A hollow skin: a well-known oracle said that Athens could never sink but would float like a wineskin.

L. 967. Robed in purple: outlandish pomp. Democracy in Athens had established a habit of simple dress (*Thuc.* I, 6) as the French and American revolutions did in Europe.

L. 968. Smikythê: the man Smikythus is made into a woman and therefore needs a guardian. Probably he shaved. Cf. 1373.

L. 1004. Glanis, elder brother of the prophet Bakis, seems to be an invention. Glanis was a kind of fish, wheat-fish or Silurus; which suggests that Bakis also was a fish of some kind.

L. 1014. Erechtheides: cf. 1054, 1067. Erechtheus, Cecrops and Aigeus were legendary kings of Athens. Note how under the influence of all these oracles the ordinary dialogue runs into epic hexameters.

L. 1044. I have ignored this line, "Why did I never know you were Antileon (Pro-lion)?" Nothing is known of Antileon.

- L. 1056. Burdens a woman can bear: an epic line from the Contest between Ajax and Odysseus. Ajax had carried off the body of Patroclus from the thick of the battle but, after all . . .
- L. 1059. There were at least three towns called Pylos (*Gate*) in the Peloponnese. Demos is made to mis-hear the word Pylos and take it for *pyelos*, a tub. I make him also mishear "yet" and "as well."
- L. 1069. Dog-fox: the Laconian breed of hounds was said to be a hybrid of dog and fox. The line looks like a quotation from some anti-Spartan oracle, like the warnings against "*mating with wolves*" and "*trusting fiery-eyed apes*" in the *Peace* (1065, 1076).
- L. 1076. Foxes: the soldiers in the fleet are like foxes because, not having their pay, they rob gardens.
- L. 1090. The Goddess herself: here she is seen in a dream, but later, 1167 ff., she does things for Demos in person, and her epithets grow more and more martial and ceremonial.
- L. 1102. Theophanes: unknown.
- L. 1121. A change in Demos. He is no longer a mere stupid victim to flattery. He sees through his flatterers and means to confound them. It seems to go with the much greater transformation of the Offal-monger. See on l. 1257.
- L. 1170. How vast a finger: if it had to reach all the way down from the ivory hand of the great statue on the Acropolis.
- L. 1188. As if Tritonis or Tritogenia was derived from *tritos*—"third."
- L. 1192. Hares: almost unprocurable in Attica; plentiful in Boeotia and the Megarid. *Ach.*, 878, 520.
- L. 1203. "The thought, etc.," parody of Euripides?
- L. 1225. "Me who bestowed, etc.": a line in a broad Peloponnesian dialect (more like: "An' me wha gi'ed ye gifties an' a croon!") said to come from a play, *The Helots*, by Eupolis, in which a Helot reproaches Poseidon for his ingratitude.
- L. 1226. Stole for my country's good: cf. *Intro.*, p. 11.
- Ll. 1248-9, 52. So to its end, etc.: tragic lines; cf. *Eur. Fr.*, 322, and the famous words of Alcestis (*Alc.*, 177): "Some woman shall lie here instead of me, More loving—no; happy she well may be."
- L. 1256. A puzzling line; literally "I will be your Phanos, drafter of briefs," but nothing is known of Phanos nor is "drafter of briefs" at all certain.
- L. 1257. Agoracritus: a real name, like Democritus, Theocritus. The interpretation here given is farcical. But if this new name is connected with the change of character it is possible that "the Choice of the Agora" is meant to be a true choice as against a mere deceiver of the Agora. See *Introduction*.
- L. 1268. Thumantis: a prophet belonging to Cleon's party, would prophesy good cheer for everyone, while really himself afraid of starvation. Cf. Cleonymus in the antistrophe, 1292.
- L. 1263. "Hath-been-ian": the word is "Kekhênaiôn"—"open-mouthed," i.e. hungry, or perhaps gullible, made to sound like "Athênaiôn." It is suggested later that the true Athens is a "*Has-been*." Cf. 1323-5.
- L. 1281. Ariphrades, though a pupil of the great Anaxagoras, is much attacked for alleged bad habits. Polymnestus greatly developed flute music and even applied it to the *orthios nomos*,

which was meant for the lyre. Nothing is known of Oiônichus.

L. 1304. Hyberbolus: the successor to Cleon, like a Cleon gone sour. He was ostracized in 417, probably by an agreement between the real rival parties, as he was hardly important enough for ostracism. He advocated the Sicilian expedition and thought it would lead to the conquest of Carthage. Cf. *Thuc.* VI, 15, 90.

L. 1329. Pinder's line, "O Athens the shining, the violet-crowned, and full of song," was treasured in the Athenians' memory. The brightness of the air and abundance of wild flowers in Attica are often noted, but the central and sacred "Athens of old" is of course the Acropolis. The Propylaea were not visible from the Theatre of Dionysus, but the great rock of the Acropolis faced it and in this magnificent appeal the Acropolis as a whole, though not seen, is imagined.

L. 1331. Grasshopper: in the old pre-democratic days noble Athenians had gold grasshoppers as brooches in their hair (*Thuc.* I, 63) and sometimes were accompanied by a page carrying a light chair (*Athenaeus* XII, p. 512). Demos must evidently be made to look transformed.

L. 1374. Cleisthenes and Strato evidently followed the new fashion of shaving the face, originated by imitation of Macedonian kings.

L. 1377. Phaiax: apparently the idol of a clever "Bloomsbury Set." He "ingeniously escaped death," probably by an ingenious defence when accused of treason. Eupolis says he was a clever talker but no speaker.

L. 1389. Thirty Years Truce: there had been such a Treaty in 445 B.C. and to restore it was the great hope of the peace party. The word for "truce" is plural in form, "libations" because both sides poured, but of course the figure of Peace is one divine woman.

L. 1405. Our Allies: literally "the strangers," which was the regular term for the non-Athenian members of the empire (*Ach.*, 505, *Peace*, 644). The allied "cities and islands" were of course specially exposed to Cleon's extortions; perhaps also they had a claim on Aristophanes' sympathy as representing old-fashioned Ionian culture.

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**Transcriber's Notes:-**

The line numbers refer to the lines in the original Greek text, not the lines as translated.

Minor punctuation errors corrected.

[End of *The Knights*, by Aristophanes, translated by Gilbert Murray]