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THE FROGS
OF
ARISTOPHANES
THE FROGS

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SCENE: A country lane, with the house of Herakles on the stage right.

Enter, from the left, Dionysus, walking, and Xanthias, riding an ass and carrying a bundle on a stick over his shoulder.

Xanthias. Am I to make one of the common hits That always send the audience into fits?

Dionysus. Yes, anything you like but "Oh, this weight!"

For that's the kind of thing I've come to hate.

X. Or something else that's witty and expressive?

Di. Only don't mention that your load's oppressive!

X. Well, some real humour then, is that the trick?

Di. Please don't, unless I want to be made sick. 10

X. (Indignantly.)

What was the use of loading me up thus

If I am not to talk like Phrynichus? 1

1 The comic poet, not the politician. His play The Muses was exhibited the same day as The Frogs, and took the second place.
Missing Page
Missing Page
Why, Lykis and Ameipsias always
Have comic slaves, with bundles, in their plays!

Di. (Shaking his finger at him.)
Now don't you do it! When I'm in the stalls
And see that sort of gag, it simply galls;
I'm more than twelve months older when it's done.

X. (Ruefully.) Ay, but my neck's the real unlucky one,
It gets the galling, and mayn't have the fun!

Di. (Appealing to the audience.)
What insolence is this and monstrous 'side'!
_I toil on foot and let this fellow ride,
I, Dionysus, son of—Demijohn,
To save him being tired and put upon!

X. (Sulkily.) 'Tis put upon me.

Di. No, you're riding, you!

X. But I've got this (pointing to his bundle).

Di. How?

X. Pretty badly, too!

Di. But what you've got—doesn't the donkey bear it?

X. No, sir! I carry what I've got, I'll swear it!

Di. How can you bear what some one else is bearing?

X. I don't know, but my shoulder finds it wearing.

Di. Well, if the ass is useless, as you said,

Pick up the ass and carry him instead.

X. O Lord! why wasn't I in that sea fight!

I'd have been free, and bidden you good-night!

Di. (Noticing the house.)

Get off! I've got there walking, after all.
This is the first place where I was to call.

(XANTHIAS dismounts, and the donkey presently goes off. DI. hammers upon the door with his club.)

Hi, porter! slave, I say, slave, let me enter!

HERAKLES. (Opening the door and looking out.)

Who’s knocking there? I thought it was a centaur!

(Stepping back and bursting out laughing.)

Great heaven! what is that?

DI. (To XANTHIAS.) Did you see, my lad? 40

X. What?

DI. How I scared him.

X. Yes, lest you were mad!

HER. Laugh! Oh, by’r Lady, I am nearly split!

I bite my lips, but roar in spite of it.

DI. (Coming forward to the door.)

Here, my good friend, there’s something that I want.

HER. (Comes out, still choking with amusement.)

I’m trying to stop laughing, but I can’t.

What is this dress you’re masquerading in?

A lady’s yellow blouse, and lion’s skin!

That’s a queer combination—club and slipper!

What’s brought you out from home? are you turned tripper?

DI. Oh, I was serving on the—Kleisthenes.1

HER. Were you in action?

1 An Athenian of disreputable character.
THE FROGS

Di. Yes, and if you please
We sank a dozen of them, more or less. 50
Her. You two!
Di. Why not?
Her. "It was a dream," I guess.
Di. Why, yes, and as I sat upon the boat
And read Andromeda,¹ a passion smote
My heart, quite hard, you know, and by surprise.
Her. Passion? how big?
Di. Little, just Molon's² size!
Her. For a woman?
Di. No.
Her. A boy, then?
Di. None of these.
Her. A man, then?
Di. Sh!
Her. Weren't you with Kleisthenes?
Di. Don't mock, I'm really in a parlous way,
Such "melancholy marks me for its prey."
Her. What sort, my brother?
Di. Well, it's hard to state it: 60
A figure might perhaps elucidate it.
Have you ever suddenly begun to crave
For porridge?
Her. Rather! I should think I have!
Di. D'you understand, or shall I try again?

¹ A play of Euripides.
² A very tall actor in the plays of Euripides.
THE FROGS

Her. Porridge is clear enough, I see that plain.
Di. It's just that kind of love consumes me for Euripides.

Her. And him just dead, O lor!
Di. And no one shall persuade me not to go And fetch him.

Her. What, to Hades, down below?
Di. If there's a road still lower down, I'll go it.
Her. What do you want?
Di. A really clever poet;
For some are dead, only the bad survive.
Her. But Iophon, is he not still alive?
Di. That's the one good thing left,—if it does count too;
But I'm not sure how much it does amount to.
Her. Then why not Sophokles, who's far ahead,
If you feel bound to fetch one of the dead?
Di. No, not until I've tried what Iophon Can write without his father, all alone.
Euripides, too—such a knave as he Would gladly try to run away with me;
While He was always placid and at peace.
Her. Where's Agathon?
Di. He's gone; he's quitted Greece;
A proper poet and in great request.
Her. Poor man! where to?
Di. The Islands of the Bl— Macedonians!
Her. Pythangelus? and Xenokles?
THE FROGS

DI. Oh, damn!

X. (Who has been getting more and more impatient, aside.)

But I'm clean out of it, though here I am,
And my poor shoulder is as sore as sore!

HER. But aren't there budding poets by the score?
Besides, who in a talking handicap
Could easily give Euripides a lap?

DI. Leaves without fruit they are, mere chattering fools,
Murderers of Art, and swallows' chirping-schools;
They get their chorus, and are no more seen:
Only a dirty mark shows where they've been!
But for true Genius you may seek in vain,
One who can speak, I mean, in noble strain.

HER. How "Genius"?

DI. Thus—the true creative spark
That tosses off as a casual remark
"The foot of Time," "Jove's cottage in the sky,"
Or else, "A soul that does not mean to lie,
With a tongue that perjures itself separately."

HER. Does that suit you?

DI. It's simply my delight.

HER. Oh, come! It's wretched stuff now, honour bright!

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1 Get their play exhibited. The licensing magistrate granted the expenses of the play, of which the chorus was originally the principal part.
DI. Keep to your line of business, let me be!
HER. And yet, it does seem villainous to me.
DI. (Contemptuously.)
Dining's all you can teach!
   X. (Aside.) I'm out of it!
DI. But, for the job that's brought me with this kit
   Made up like you—I want to get a tip
   About your friends on that dog-stealing trip. 110
   Tell me the harbours and the bakeries,
   The lodgings, respectable and otherwise.
   Tell me the wayside inns, the springs, the roads,
   Towns, restaurants, and hostesses—abodes
   Of fewest bugs.
   X. (Aside.) And I'm out of it still.
HER. (Sarcastically.)
D'you mean to go? What recklessness!
   DI. (With offended dignity.) You will
   Be kind enough to drop all that, and tell
   The quickest way for me to get to Hell,
   And not too cold a one, mind, and not too hot.
HER. (Giving his information very slowly.)
   Let's see—what road shall I first tell him?—
   what?—
   There's one that starts you from "The Rope and
   Thwart"—
   By hanging.
   DI. Don't, that's such a stuffy sort!
HER. Well, there's a short cut, then, a beaten way,
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*Via* "The Pestle and Mortar."

DI. Hemlock, eh?

HER. Just so.

DI. Ugh! That's too stormy and too cold; Your calves get frozen at the start, I'm told.

HER. How would you like one downhill, and direct too?

DI. First rate! Long walks are what I most object to.

HER. Stroll round to Keramicus,

DI. After that—

HER. Climb the high tower.

DI. *(Impatiently.)* What next shall I be at?  

HER. And when you stand upon the very top,

Watch the fire-signal for the torch-race drop,
And when the people shout out "Let her go!"
Then let yourself go too.

DI. Where?

HER. Right below!

DI. But I should pound my brains to sausages:
That's not the way I'll go.

HER. Well, then, what is?

DI. The one *you* went.

HER. That's a long voyage to take,

For all at once you'll come upon a lake
That's simply fathomless and very wide.

DI. Well, then, how shall I reach the other side?

HER. An aged sailor-man will ferry you

For threepence in an infant-sized canoe.
Di. Whew!
The almighty threepence everywhere in force!
    Who brought it there?
    HER. Why, Theseus did, of course.
    Then you'll see snakes and every kind of beast—
    Awful! (Chuckles.)
Di. (In great alarm.)
    Don't, I'm not frightened in the least,
    You won't scare me.
    HER. And then you'll see a flood
    Of ever-flowing sewage, seas of mud,
    Where you will notice in the garbage floating
    Those who loved bogus company promoting,
    Who thrashed mamma, or blacked their father's
    eyes,
    Perjured themselves, or quoted A—- rhapsodies. 
Di. The right place for them; but you ought to add,
    "Or danced a 'pas de quatre,'" it's quite as bad.
HER. And after that you'll hear some music play,
    And see a light, as clear as any day
    On earth, and myrtle groves and happy bands,
    Women and men, and clapping of glad hands.
Di. They are—?
    HER. "The mysteries" are their profession,
X. (Aside.) And I'm the ass that walks in the pro-
    cession ;
    But not one second more will I hold these. 160
    [Throws down the bundle.

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HER. And they will tell you anything you please.
   It's close to Pluto's palace door they dwell,
   Hard by the road. So, brother, fare thee well.

[Exit.

DI. Good-bye!
   (Turning to Xanthias.)
   Take up again the bundle—you!

X. (Sulkily.) Before I've dropped it!
   DI. Yes, and quickly too.

X. Oh, master, don't, I beg you! hire instead
   One of these fellows who are really dead;
   It's just their business.
   DI. Ay, but if I should
   Not find one?
   X. Well then, I must.
   DI. Well and good.

Enter two Undertakers, carrying a Corpse on a stretcher.
   Why, here's a corpse just being carried by.
   Hullo! It's you I mean, you dead man, hi!
   My traps for Hades! Will you take the job?

CORPSE. How much?

DI. (Pointing to bundle.) This only.
   CORPSE. If you'll pay two bob.

DI. By Jove! that's sheer extortion, far too dear!

CORPSE. Move on, you undertakers; do you hear?

DI. My good man, wait a bit, let's compromise.

CORPSE. Don't waste your breath, two shillings is my price.
THE FROGS

DI. Take eighteenpence.

CORPSE. I'd come to life again first! [Exit.

X. Bad luck go with you for a most accurst
Conceited knave! I'll go then, I don't mind.

DI. You're a good fellow, Xanthias, and kind.

SCENE II.

SCENE: The Styx.

Enter Dionysus and Xanthias.

DI. Let's to the boat.

CHARON. (Within.) Ahoy!

X. What's this?

DI. The lake 180

He told us of.

[Charon brings his boat to the wharf.

And here's the boat to take.

[Charon comes ashore.

X. Yes, by Poseidon! and there's Charon too.

DI. How d'you do, Charon? Charon, how d'you do?

CH. (Bawling.)

Who's for the Rest from toil, the Land of Peace,
The plain of Lethe, or the Ass's fleece?
Who's for the Dogs, Crimea, or Hellgate?

DI. I.

CH. All aboard! Make haste!
THE FROGS

DI. (Waggishly.) Where did you state
You went to? To the dogs? Now is that true?
CH. Of course it is; I’m going there for you.
Get in now.
DI. (Getting into the boat.) Come on, Xanthias.
CH. Slaves not taken. 190
Unless he’s fought at sea and saved his bacon.
X. Jove, no! I couldn’t, for my eyes were sore.¹
CH. (Getting in.)
Then you must run all round by the lake shore.
X. And meet you, where?
CH. The stone of Withering,
Beside the seat.
DI. D’you see?
X. I’ll find the thing.
Oh dear! oh dear! whatever did I meet
This morning when I stepped into the street!
[Exit.
CH. (To DI.) Sit at the oar.
[DIONYSUS sits down upon the oar.
CH. (Shouting.) Whoever else is going
Must hurry up! (Turns round and sees DIONYSUS.)
Hullo! what are you doing?
DI. (Innocently.)
What am I doing? What else should I be
But sitting on it, as you said to me?
CH. Sit down here on the thwart, you great fat lout!

¹ Ophthalmia was a common excuse for malingering.
THE FROGS

DI. There, then! (Sits down.)

CH. Put out your hands now, and reach out.

DI. (Putting up his hands as if boxing.)

There, then!

CH. Stop all that foolery! You want
To feel your stretcher, and row hard.

DI. I can’t.

Untrained, unsalted, never in a skiff,
How can I row?

CH. Easy enough, for if
You dip your blade you’ll hear the loveliest chime
Of swan-frogs, wonderful!

DI. (Resignedly.) Well, set the time.

CH. (Chanting:) Ahoy, oh! Ahoy, oh!

[DIONYSUS begins rowing.

GHOSTS of FROGS from Attica.

(Below, with flute accompaniment.)

Brekekekex koax koax!
Brekekekex koax koax!
Children of spring and lake,
Raise together the choral strain,
Echoing back the flute again;
Sweet is the song we make.
This is the hymn we used to raise
In heavenborn Dionysus’ praise
At Limnae,¹ in the osier,

¹ Limnae, the name of a marshy spot at Athens, where an ancient temple of Dionysus stood.
When the good folk in a tipsy throng
Came with their sacred pitchers along,
Down to' my temple enclosure.

Di. *I'm* getting sore just where I sit,
    But you, I suppose, don't care a bit!

Frogs. Brekekekex koax koax!
       Brekekekex koax!

Di. Oh, curses upon you, koax and all!
    You're perfectly useless, except to bawl.

Frogs. Likely enough,
       You meddlesome muff!
    For I'm the darling of the Muses,
    And the goat-legged god that the pan-pipe uses;
    And I'm the object of desire
    To Phoebus Apollo who plays the lyre,
    Because of the reeds I keep
    For the bridge of his fiddle,
    That grow in the middle
    Of watery places deep.
       Brekekekex koax!

Di. My hands and my fingers are blistering,
    And the sweat's running down me like everything,
    And then you promptly pop up and sing—

Frogs. Brekekekex koax koax!
       Brekekekex koax!

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1 "The Pitchers" was the name given to the third day of the festival Anthesteria. The second day being "The Opening of the Casks" accounts for the condition of the populace on the third day.
THE FROGS

Di. Melodious people, be quiet, I pray.

Frogs. On the contrary, sir, we have plenty to say,
And haven't a notion of stopping,
If ever on earth when the sunshine was bright
In shrilling and diving we took our delight,
Through the sedges luxuriant hopping;
Or if we went down to get out of the thunder,
And sent up a quavering warble from under
The water, with bubbles a-popping.

Brekekekex koax koax!
Brekekekex koax!

Di. I feel that it's taking—this koaccination!
Frogs. If it does, it will cause us a little vexation.
Di. But it's many times worse for me, you know,
If I break into pieces with trying to row.
Frogs. Brekekekex koax koax!
Di. Shriek away! What do I mind your attacks!
Frogs. But, for all that, we'll yell and shout
All day, as long as our throats last out.

Brekekekex koax!

Di. (Triumphantly.)
I've got it now. Brekekekex koax!
You never shall beat me at this little game,
Frogs. But we'll be victorious all the same.
Di. Never! You'll find me still going strong
If I have to be yelling the whole day long—
(At the top of his voice.)

BREKEKEKEX KOAX KOAX!
THE FROGS

Until I compel you to cry out “pax.”
(\textit{The Frogs make no answer.})
I thought I should presently stop your quacks!

SCENE III.

\textbf{Scene:} The shore on the further side of the Styx.

\textbf{Ch.} (\textit{In the boat.})

Easy all! ship your oars! and pay your fare
After you’ve landed.

\begin{center}
[\textbf{Charon} and \textbf{Dionysus} come ashore.]
\end{center}

\textbf{Di.} Take your threepence, there! \textsuperscript{270}

\begin{center}
[\textbf{Exit Charon.}]
\end{center}

(\textit{Shouting.}) Where be you, Xanthias? Xanthias,
where be you?

\textbf{X.} (\textit{Within.}) Yoho!

\textbf{Di.} This way!

\begin{center}
\textit{Enter Xanthias.}
\end{center}

X. Master, I’m glad to see you.

\textbf{Di.} What’s yonder country like?

\begin{center}
X. It’s all quite dark
And full of mud.
\end{center}

\textbf{Di.} Did you by chance remark
The liars, and the people he malignèd
For jumping on their parents?
THE FROGS

X. (Turning him round and pointing to the audience.) Are you blind? 1

Di. I see them now! They're in the Pit, by Jove! Well, what comes next?

X. I think we'd better move;
This is the place that gentleman spoke about,
That's full of bogies.

Di. Won't I pay him out!
He piled it up to make me get a fright 280
Because he knew I was a man of might,
For fear his own achievements should be beat.
Nothing like Herakles for sheer conceit!
I'd like a small adventure with a devil
To raise the journey's rather prosy level.

X. (Pretending.)
By Jove, what's that! some sort of noise I hear.

Di. Wh—where?

X. Behind us.

Di. Go and guard the rear.

[XANTHIAS goes behind.

X. In front now.

Di. Get in front.

[DIONYSUS hangs back. XANTHIAS goes forward and peers into the darkness.

X. Lord, what a beast!

1 Ill treatment of aged parents seems to have been too common at Athens. "Stop," said the old man to his son, who had dragged him as far as the door, "I only dragged my father as far as that!"
THE FROGS

Di. (Hiding his face.) What?
   X. Awful! with a dozen shapes at least!
      It's turning to a cow—a mule—a maid,
      Comely at that.  
Di. (With alacrity.) Where is she? Who's afraid?
X. But she's gone now, turned to a dog instead.
Di. Ah, that's Empusa!
   X. Anyhow, her head
      Is all ablaze.
Di. Has she one brazen peg?
X. Of course, and cowdung for the other leg.
Di. Where shall I hide?
X. (Trying to conceal his amusement, to the audience.)
   I need it worse, I think.
Di. (Looking wildly round catches sight of the Priest
      of Dionysus sitting in the middle of the
      front row in the audience.)
   Priest, save me! and let's go and have our drink.
X. It's all up with us, Herakles, my lord.
Di. I beg and pray you not to breathe that word,
   Or call me by that name.
   X. Well, Dionysus.
Di. Why, that is still more like to compromise us.
X. (Contemptuously.) Go back the way you came!
   (He pretends to look forward again.)
   Here, master, here!
Di. What's up?
   X. It's all right now, you needn't fear,
For, as the actor said not long ago,
"The stormy winds now weaselly do blow." ¹
Empusa's vanished.

DI. Swear?

X. Yes, I declare it!

DI. Again!

X. By Jove, yes!

DI. Swear!

X. By Jove, I swear it!

DI. Dear, dear, a fearful sight! how pale I turned!

X. (Pointing to "the fat, red priest.")

But he there blushed for you, and simply burned.

DI. Oh dear! why are these horrid things annoying me?

I'm sure some god is bent upon destroying me;
Whom shall I call the author of the crime?
"The sky, Jove's cottage," or "the foot of Time"?

[XMusic within.]

X. Hi!

DI. What's the matter?

X. Don't you hear it?

DI. Well?

X. The sound of flutes.

DI. Yes, and the torches' smell
That's most suggestive of the Mysteries.
"Dissemble," and we'll listen. Quiet, please!

CHORUS. (Within.) Iacchus, O Iacchus!

Iacchus, O Iacchus!

¹ A mispronunciation made by an actor named Hegelochus.
X. Master, I've got it, that's the very party
He told us of; they're the Illuminati;
At least they keep on singing all the while
"Iacchus" in Diagoras's style.

Di. I think so too. But just you hold your tongue,
Or else we shan't hear what is being sung.

Enter the Chorus from the stage left.

CHORUS. Come forth, Iacchus, come!
And leave thy honoured home
To dance upon this lawn, and here to meet
The brotherhood
Of holy men and good,
Iacchus, O Iacchus!
And waving round thy brows
A wreath of myrtle boughs
That teems with leaf and berry,
With fearless feet
Strike up the measure, unrestrained and merry,
With grace that every sense can please,
The mystic dance of holy votaries.

X. Now, by our Lady, Great Persephone,
A heavenly whiff of roast pork\(^1\) reaches me!

Di. Hush! you may get a sausage presently.

CHORUS. Awake! our morning star
Comes brandishing afar
His torch of flame. The meadow gleams with light.

\(^1\) Pigs were sacrificed at the Mysteries.
The weight of years
And sorrow disappears,
Iacchus, O Iacchus!
And hoar decrepitude
Falls off from limbs renewed.
Thou blessed one advancing
Step out aright,
And lead thy youthful throng with torches glancing
To foot the dances as of yore
Upon the marsh's flower-spangled floor.

THE LEADER. Ho! clear the way for us, we pray,
and speak with breath abated,
Each one whose mind is unrefined and uninitiated,
Who has not glanced at, much less danced at,
true Artistic revelries,
And draws the line at old Cratinus' bully Bacchic devilries,
Who makes requests for dirty jests when wholly out of season,
Stalks with a frown about the town, and countenances treason,
And stirs the same, and fans the flame, to turn it to his profit,
And in a crisis, if he's high in power, makes money of it,
Or who betrays a ship or place, or smuggles to Epidaurus

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THE FROGS

Pitch, rowlock-flaps, and linen wraps, when paid to tax them for us,
Or by his arts from foreign parts gets for our foes remittances,
Or, though free speech is in his reach, would dock the poets' pittances
In sulky rage against the Stage's licensed criticism.
All such I scorn, and hereby warn with triple exorcism
To clear the way for our Mystic lay. And you, strike up the singing
For the holy rite that lasts all night, which this high feast is bringing.

CHORUS. (To slow music.)
Boldly lead and each one follow
To the flowery meadow's hollow;
Dancing, laughing, jesting, chaffing;
We have had our fill of eating.

Forward, then, your anthem raising,
Our protecting goddess praising;
This year and the next our land she Guards, in spite of gauger's cheating.

THE LEADER. Change the metre, rather fleeter, hail Demeter, harvest Queen;
You must greet her and entreat her with a sweeter tune, I ween.
THE FROGS

CHORUS. Goddess mysterious,
Grant me all day
Beneath thy protection
To dance and to play.

Merry and serious
Skilfully blend,
And by thy direction
Be crowned in the end.

THE LEADER. Stop, and now in due succession let another tune be sung,
Call the god to our procession who is ever fair and young.

CHORUS. Honoured of all men, Iacchus, who makest
The sweetest of hymns for a festival day,
Lead to thy mother,¹ and show how thou takest
The lightest of toil for the longest of way.
Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

Tattered my tunic is, soiled is my sandal,
Thine this invention to cheaply combine
Practical jokes with an absence of scandal,
Rending of raiment with dancing and wine.

¹ To Demeter at Eleusis; the Chorus speak as though they were making the annual procession there from Athens.

The horseplay here referred to, which took place at the crossing of a certain bridge, was supposed to have originated in a wish to amuse Demeter, and so comfort her for the loss of Persephone.
THE FROGS

Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

Just then I saw a companion in jollity,
Sweet little girl, with the tail of my eye,
Dancing along, looking, oh, so decolletée!
Torn is her tunic and pulled all awry.
Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

Di. I'm nothing if not sociable, with pretty girls in view.
I'd like to get a dance with her.
X. And that's what I should too.

CHORUS. Knife of satire now unsheathe,
Stick it into Archidame;
He's turned seven, and it's a shame
That he hasn't cut his—pedigree!

He's a leader none the less
Of the rabble overhead,
Whom we call the truly dead,
And their crowning wickedness.

Di. Pardon, gentlemen and ladies,
Would you kindly tell us where
Pluto's house is? We're a pair
Of strangers just arrived in Hades.
THE FROGS

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

Far afield you need not wander,
   Do not ask another question
   If I offer a suggestion
That you'll find it standing yonder.

DI. (To XANTHIAS.)

    Pick the bundle up, my man.

X. (Sulkily.) That's as stale a piece of news
   As the boast of "Father Zeus"
   Made by the Corinthian!¹

THE LEADER. Forward now to dancing-ring, forward
   to the flowery groves,
All you who join the game, and sing at the feast
    our goddess loves.
And I will go and join the show, join the pretty girls, I mean,
And give them light where all the night they keep it up before the Queen.

CHORUS. Away to the meadows
   Where roses abound,
   Where asphodel blossoms
    Grow thick on the ground;
We will dance our own measure,
    The loveliest sight,

¹ Corinthians seem to have been fond of boasting of descent from Zeus. There is also an allusion to vermin in the word "Corinthian," which is more easily kept in a bundle of rugs than in the English language.
THE FROGS

Where the spirits of music
And beauty unite.
For on us alone shineth
The sun in his mirth,
Who were holy and just
When we lived on the earth.

[The women of the Chorus march out.

SCENE IV.

SCENE: The door of Pluto's house.

Di. Look here now, ring or knock? I wish I knew;
I wonder what the folk about here do. 461
X. Don't waste your time, but hammer at the door.
What good's a lion's skin without a roar?
Di. (Knocking:) Ho! slave!
Aeacus. (Opening the door:) Who's there?
Di. (Pompously:) 'Tis Herakles the great.
Ae. O loathsome, shameless, and insatiate!
O doubly, triply, and quadruply vile!
Who carried off our Cerberus by guile,
Stole him away out of my guardianship
And choked him. Now I have you on the hip;
Such a black-hearted rock of Styx's flood 470
And crag of Acheron that drips with blood
Have got you in their keeping safe at last,
And ranging hounds of Hell shall hold you fast;
Echidna, too, the hundred-headed beast,
Shall devastate your bowels for a feast;
And then your lungs—don't fancy this a sham,
pray—
Shall be mishandled by a Tarshish lamprey;
Your kidneys, guts and all, in gory state,
Be rent by Gorgon hags from Billingsgate!
I'm off to fetch them at my utmost speed! [Exit.]

[DIONYSUS collapses on the ground.]

X. Hi! what's the matter?
   Di. (Feebly.) Oh, I'm ill indeed!
Call on some god.

   X. You idiot! get up quick. 480
Not before strangers!
   Di. But I'm very sick.
Just bring the sponge and put it to my heart.

X. There, take it.
   Di. Put it——

   X. Where? Is that the part
You keep your heart in?
   Di. Generally, no;
But in its fear it slipped a bit below.

X. Well, of all gods and men—you cowardly beast!
Di. Cowardly? I didn't throw it up, at least. [Gets up.
X. That's courage, by Poseidon! 491
   Di. 'Tis, by Zeus!
And weren't you terrified at his abuse
And threatening?
THE FROGS

X. By Jove! I didn’t care.

Di. Look here, then, since your courage is so rare, Let’s change our parts; you don the lion’s hide And take this club, as you’re so brave inside, And I’ll be baggage-mule for you in turn.

[Xanthias puts down his bundle and takes the lion-skin and club.

X. (Domineeringly.) Pick it up quick, then! There, you’ve got to learn; And see if I, Herakleoxanthias, Shall be like you a coward and an ass!

Di. By Jove! you look the real Athenian lag. Well, now, supposing I take up the bag.

Enter a Maidservant from the house.

Maidservant.

Come in at once, dear Herakles; don’t wait. When goddess heard that you were come, she straight Baked loaves, and cooked two or three porridge bowls Of rolled oats, popped in the oven cakes and rolls, And set a whole ox roasting on the coals. Come in, do!

X. (In some embarrassment.) Please excuse me.

M. Lackaday!

I’m not a-going to let you run away. There’s chicken being fricasseed, you know, And apple dumplings baking in a row,
And the best wine is being put to cool.
Come in with me.

X. Really no, thanks.

M. You fool!
You shan’t get off, though. There’s a lady there,
A Star of the Profession, if you care
To see her, and she’s well worth looking at,
And a few chorus girls besides.

X. What’s that?

M. And the cook says, “The veal cutlets,” says she,
“Will be served up almost immediately.”

X. My compliments to the ladies of the ballet,
I’m coming. (In a lordly tone.)
Bring the luggage—where’s my valet?

Dl. Hold on there, Xanthias! you don’t suppose
I meant it seriously—this changing clothes?
Drop this tomfoolery, it’s become a bore;
Pick up the traps and carry them once more.

X. What’s up? It surely wasn’t in your mind to
Rob me of what you gave?

Dl. I’m not inclined to,
I do it. Put the skin down!

X. I protest,
And call the gods to witness I’m oppressed!

Dl. The gods be blowed! why, here’s a fine suggestion!
It’s palpably absurd, out of the question,
For you who are a mere slave, son of none,
To think of posing as Alkmena’s son!
THE FROGS

X. Oh, well, all right then, if you must, you must.
   You'll need me soon, that's all, if heaven is just.
   [DIONYSUS changes back to HERAKLES.

CHORUS. Any man who's worth the name,
   Who has the wits to play the game,
   And has been in many a scrimmage,
   Stands not like a graven image,
   But when the weather looks untoward
   Promptly shifts his quarters leeward;
   But to get the softest place
   Is a special mark of grace;
   If one does it always, he's
   A regular Theramenes.

SCENE V.

SCENE: The same.

Enter a Landlady and PLATHANE her maid.

LANDLADY. Plathane! Plathane! here's the man of sin,
   The rogue who came that day into the inn
   And ate up sixteen loaves.
   PL. By Jove! that's he.

X. (Aside.) Trouble for someone!

   L. And the fricassee,
   'Twas twenty portions; lor, how he did snatch it,
   Penny a mouthful!

   X. (Aside.) Someone's going to catch it!
L. And all that garlic!

Di. Nonsense, my good woman,
You don’t know what you’re saying.
L. Are you assumin',
Because you’ve got those shoes, that I’d forget?
And all that pickle I’ve not mentioned yet!
PL. Good gracious, no! nor yet the cheese and puddin’!
He ate the very dishes that they stood in!
L. And when I brought him in my bill, the fellow
Looked thunder at me and began to bellow.
X. Just like him; it’s a way he always had.
L. And drew his sword, pretending to be mad.
PL. Drat him, he did.

L. And we two got the scares,
And made a bolt for it at once upstairs;
Then off he went, with the matting under his arm.
X. That’s like him. But you should have raised
the alarm.
L. Of course; do go and call my champion Cleon.¹
PL. And call for me Hyperbolus, if you see ‘un; 570
We’ll grind him down.

L. You gormandising hound,
Nothing would please me better than to pound
With a stone those teeth that gobbled up my
wares.
PL. I’d like to fling you down the bottomless stairs.

¹ These two famous demagogues were both available, since Cleon had died in 422, and Hyperbolus was murdered in 411.
L. I'd like to take a knife to your windpipe,
   The one with which you hooked down all my tripe.

PL. I'm off for Kleon. In an hour or so
   He'll serve a writ and screw out all you know.

   [Exeunt Landlady and Plathane.

DI. (Very insinuatingly.)
   Xanthias, if I don't love you, I'll be shot.

X. (Angrily.)
   I know what you are up to. Stop that rot! I won't be Herakles!

   DI. Dear Xanthias, don't!

X. Alkmena's son I can't be, and I won't,
   Being a slave and mortal man beside.

   DI. I know you're angry, and you're justified:
   Even if you should beat me, I'll be dumb;
   But if again in all the time to come
   I take your things, then may the devil claim us,
   Self, wife, and child, and—bleary Archidamus!

X. That's a good oath to swear in your position.
   I take your bargain on that last condition.

   [Xanthias changes back to Herakles.

CHORUS. (To Xanthias.)
   Now you've got the dress you wore
   A short while in the scene before,
   You must just brace up and show
   Your ancient braggadocio.
   Mould your manners once again
   On the real "Ercles vein."
If you babble, if you flinch,
If courage fails you at a pinch,
Your inevitable doom
Is the bundle to resume.

X. Excellent advice, no doubt,
But I too have thought it out.
This is how it seems to me:
He's that cunning, should he see
Fortune smile, for all his oaths
He'll want again to change his clothes!
Still, I'll make a brave impression
With a truculent expression. [Noise within.
High time, too: d'you hear them shout?
Here comes someone rushing out.

Enter Aeacus with several Slaves at his back.

Ae. Seize the dog-stealer! quickly, I command,
To meet his due reward.

Dl. Trouble's at hand
For someone!

[Two Slaves advance to arrest Xanthias.

X. Go to blazes! Don't touch me!

Ae. Eh? fighting, my fine fellow? We'll soon see.
Ditylas! Skeblyas! Pardokas! go ahead,
Fight with him, capture him, alive or dead!

[They attack Xanthias, who swings his club effectively.]
THE FROGS

Di. (Confidentially to Aeacus.)
Ain't it too bad to see the blows he's dealing? As if the fellow hadn't just been stealing,
And someone else's things, to make it worse!

Ae. It's past belief!

X. (Sarcastically.) Oh yes, it's scandalous!
Look here, I never was here before to-day,
Or took the value of a hair away;
If not, I'm quite content to meet my fate.
And I will make an offer—fair and straight:
Torture my slave, and if you find a breath
Of evidence, then let me die the death.

Ae. Which tortures, please?¹

X. (Indifferently.) Oh, anything—the rack,
The "cat" and triangles, and flay his back,
Take him and hang him by the thumbs or toes,
And pour the vinegar into his nose,
Peine forte et dure—I'm not particular,
Don't beat him with young leeks, that's all I bar.

Ae. All right, and if I seriously maim
The fellow in the process, you can claim
The compensation to the full amount
Of the man's value.

X. Not on my account!

¹ Xanthias' challenge is in accordance with Athenian law, which only allowed slaves' evidence under torture, at the same time permitting the owner to stipulate that the slave should not be permanently damaged. Xanthias is generous.
He's wholly in your hands; so take him hence.

Ae. No, here; you ought to hear his evidence.

*(To Dionysus.)*

Now, you, put down your bundle, and take care, None of your lying here, sir!

Di. I declare I'm an immortal, touch me if you dare!

Ae. What's that?

Di. I'm Dionysus, son of Zeus, And that's my slave.

Ae. *(To Xanthias.)* Hear that?

X. A good excuse!

The better subject he for you to thrash, Being a god he'll never feel the lash.

Di. Why, then, since you too claim to be divine, You'd better get a blow for each of mine!

X. All right. *(To Ae.)* Whichever of us two you spy Caring one jot, or uttering a cry, Take him for the impostor.

Ae. Breeding tells!

You're the real gentleman, whatever else; Justice is what you like. Off with your coats!

X. How are you going to test us fairly?

Ae. Oh, 't's Easy, a blow in turn to each one.

X. Yes.

There, catch me flying signals of distress!

*[Aeacus hits Xanthias, who makes no sign.*
AE. Well, I've just hit you.

X. (Incredulously.) No you didn't, though!

AE. I don't believe he felt it. Let me go
And hit the other. [Hits Dionysus.

Di. Tell me just when, please.

AE. Why, I did hit you.

Di. Then, why didn't I sneeze?

AE. Don't know. Another try at this man's shirt.

X. Make haste! [AEacus hits him much harder.

Tut! tut!

AE. Why "Tut! tut!"? Are you hurt?

X. O lor, no! I just thought of an idea About my festival in Diomea.

AE. What piety! Now him again. Here goes!

[Hits Dionysus harder.

Di. Yow!

AE. What's the matter?

Di. Knights, in the front rows!

AE. Why are you crying, then?

Di. Because they stink so

Of onions.

AE. You're all right, then?

Di. I should think so!

AE. Then I must give this man another blow.

[Hits Xanthias.

X. Ah!

AE. What's the matter?

X. Splinter in my toe.
THE FROGS

Ae. T’other one now! It’s a hard case to try, though.

[Hits Dionysus.

Di. Apollo!—“Lord of Delos or of Pytho!”

X. He’s hurt! D’you hear him call out when you smote him?

Di. Not I! It was Hipponax I was quoting.

X. That’s nothing! dust him well upon the haunch.

Ae. Better than that! This time put out your paunch.

[Hits Dionysus.

Di. Poseidon!

X. Someone’s hurt!

Di. —“Who rulest o’er
The grey sea’s depths or the Aegean shore.”

Ae. No, by Demeter! I can not begin
To see which of you is a god. Go in;
The Master and Persephone will tell,
Because they both of them are gods as well.

Di. Quite true! I wish you’d thought of that before I got a beating, for I’m pretty sore.

[They all go into the house.

THE PARABASIS.

The Chorus now faces the audience and sings.

Patroness of choral dance,
Comic Muse, advance! advance!
Come and take delight in listening to my song.
See the multitude in session,
Each man top of his profession.

D
Oh! come hither and inspect the mighty throng;
They love advertising more than Kleophon,
From whose lips you can't expect
Pure Athenian dialect,
For a Thracian swallow roars there, very evil,
And she makes a dismal row,
Croaking on her foreign bough
Like a nightingale—"I'm going to the devil;
I'll be done for even if the voting's level."

THE LEADER.
'Tis the duty of the Chorus to administer advice;
So our first suggestion is that you should drop
all prejudice,
Give all citizens equality, and end the reign of terror.
And if anyone through Phrynichus's tricks has been in error,
You should have the power, I claim, to set up those who then were spilt
On their feet again, and freely cancel all their former guilt.
Then I say there should not be a single outlaw in the city;
For when men have fought in one engagement, isn't it a pity
To concede Plateans' rights, and make a master of a slave?
Not that I could find a word of blame for honouring the brave,
'Twas your only act of wisdom;—but, consistently, you ought
To forgive your kith and kin who ask for pardon, who have fought
On your decks, they and their fathers, valiantly in many a fray.
Therefore use your native wisdom, let your anger fade away,
Let us call them all our brothers, let us give them all their right;
Welcome all again, ungrudging, who will help us in the fight.
If we hold our heads so high, and make ourselves so hard to please
While the ship of state is straining in the trough of heavy seas,
Have a care, Athenian people, lest the day of reckoning
Bring us, all too late, conviction that we've done the foolish thing.

CHORUS.
If I'm sharp enough of vision
To remark with some precision
The tricks of one who'll surely come to grief,
The next subject of my song
Will not trouble us for long,
And his name is Kleigenes—the little thief!
He will soon be gone, and that's a great relief!
He’s the worst of bath-attendants,
Who maintain their independence
   By using soap that’s much adulterated.
So his temper’s bad enough
To make any pirate luff,
   Though he met him going home at night,
belated,
   Without his stick and quite intoxicated.

THE LEADER.
Often we have thought the city makes the same discrimination
'Twixt her men of worth and honour and the refuse of the nation,
As between our ancient drachmae and this brand-new gold alloy;
For the genuine old silver coins that now we don’t employ
Were the handsomest of pieces, by consent of everyone;
Struck so neatly—none were better, ringing with the soundest tone,
Counted sterling everywhere, in foreign countries and in Greece;
Now they’re superseded, and we use this nasty copper piece,
With a shocking bad impression, hammered out but yesterday.
Even so, with contumely we insult and turn away
Men of birth and self-respect, of honesty and noble parts,
Educated in athletics, music, and the gentler arts;
Then we use for every purpose new arrivals in the state,
Scoundrels and the sons of scoundrels, brazen forehead, copper pate!
Such as would have been rejected as too villainous to die,
When a scapegoat was selected by the town in days gone by.
Come, then, change your foolish customs even now, and make redress;
Once again employ your good men. If you do, and have success,
There'll be credit in succeeding; and in failing, being hanged'll
Give you thus much consolation, that the game was worth the candle.

SCENE VI.

Enter from the house AEACUS and XANTHIAS.

AE. Your master's a real gentleman, he is!
X. Yes, wine and women are his only biz.
AE. Fancy, when all came out, you missed your beating
In spite of all the lies you kept repeating!
THE FROGS

X. Hang him, though!
    AE. Oh, that's just the thing slaves do
    You do so, and I love to do it too!

X. You like it, then?
    AE. It's simply heaven to me
    When I can curse my master secretly!

X. What about muttering, when you're out of sight,
    After your thrashing?
    AE. That is my delight!

X. And meddling in his business?
    AE. Nothing's near it!

X. And when they're talking, and you overhear it?
    AE. Why, then I'm in an ecstasy of joy.

X. And when you tell them all outside, my boy?
    AE. I can't contain myself; it's simply grand!

X. Phoebus Apollo! Let me shake your hand!
    Let us embrace! [They do so.
    And kindly tell me now,
    By Zeus, the slave's own patron: what's this row?
    Who's calling out and making such a fuss
    Inside?
    AE. Euripides and Aeschylus.

X. Ah!
    AE. There's a fine to do among the dead,
    An insurrection coming to a head.

X. What's that from?
AE. There's a custom in these parts
Among Professionals—I mean of the Fine
Arts—:
The chief of each Profession has his food
In the townhall, and a seat next Pluto.

X. Good.

AE. And keeps it till another shall appear
Still cleverer, and then he has to clear.

X. Why should that trouble Aeschylus's rest?

AE. He held the throne of Tragedy, as best
In that department.

X. Well, who has it now? 770

AE. Then came Euripides, and gave a show:
Spouted to all the burglars, footpads, thieves,
And all the crowd of rogues that Hell receives.
And when they heard his captious special-
pleading,
His twists and turns, so charmingly misleading,
They simply lost their heads, and thought they
never
Had seen a poet so extremely clever.
He got conceited, claimed to be enthroned
Instead of Aeschylus.

X. Wasn't he stoned?

AE. Lor, no! The mob got yelling to try the case,
And find out which of them deserved the place.

X. The mob of knaves did? 781

AE. Yes, they yelled sky-high.
X. But Aeschylus, could he find no ally?

Ae. Virtue is scarce, as 'tis in yonder rows.

[Pointing to the audience.]

X. Well, then, what scheme has Pluto to propose?

Ae. A competition on the spot to try
And test their skill in poetry.

X. Then why
Did Sophokles, too, not put in a claim?

Ae. By Jove! not he, though! Sophokles, when he came,
Shook hands with Aeschylus, and kissed him fair,
While he made room for him upon his chair. 790
And now he means—this is his actor's tale—
To take the bye, and, should his friend prevail,
To keep his place; if not, he will contend
Against Euripides to the bitter end.

X. Will it come off, d'you think?

Ae. Yes, in a minute;
And then their cunning tricks will all be in it.
Why, they will weigh the verses in the scales!

X. What? like a sheep, to see if the weight fails? 2

Ae. Compasses, measures, two-foot rules they'll take,
And hods—

X. Why, is it bricks they want to make?

1 Kleidemides by name.

2 The lambs offered at the Festival of Apaturia had to be of a particular weight, and, as each was brought, it was the fashion for the bystanders to cry out, "Too small!"
THE FROGS

Ae. And wedges; for Euripides avers
    He'll have the plays examined verse by verse.
X. I expect that Aeschylus was pretty cross!
Ae. He looked just like a bull that's going to toss!
X. And who's to be the judge?
Ae. That was the fix,
    For with the Athenians Aeschylus didn't mix,
    So men of taste were rather hard to find.
X. He thought them all burglariously inclined!
Ae. And none but an Athenian could be judge
    Of poet's brains; the rest he called mere fudge.
Your master came; they put it in his hands
    Because it is the craft he understands.
But let's go in, for when our masters wax
    In earnest, there is trouble for our backs.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS. (In Aeschylean metre.)
    Dire is the wrath that the depth of the thunderer's heart is preparing.
    Glancing aside at his foe as he sharpens his teeth for the tearing,
        Wily-at word-play; in frenzy his eye will roll
            To match the madness of his soul.
    Battles of words will be fought with crests waving and morions glinting,
    Catherine-wheeling of splinters, and chips of the battle-field's dinting;
THE FROGS

Woe to the wretch, when the lord of the mighty phrase
His cavalry of speech arrays!
Then the one rearing the crest of his shaggy mane, bristling, horrid,
Knitting together the brows of his terrible leonine forehead,
Volleying riveted words with their planks up-torn,
Will roar a Titan blast of scorn.
But the glib tongue of the other, well skilled in the testing of verses,
Loosing the reins of a spirit that recks not of justice or mercies,
Splitting of hairs and of words, into dust will grind
The mighty labours of his mind.
ACT II.

SCENE I.

Scene: The Court-house of Hades, arranged like an Athenian Lawcourt, with a ballot-box and voting pebbles upon the table. Pluto and Dionysus are on the Bench.

Euripides. I'll not withdraw! Press your advice no longer.

In poetry I claim to be the stronger.

Di. Why silent, Aeschylus? hear what he says?

Eur. Aloof and scornful at first! So in all his plays He works in the portentous grandiose!

Di. Dear man! not such big words, or else you'll lose.

Eur. I know him; I have seen through him of old, A maker of savage heroes, bad and bold, A mouth without a bridle, curb or door, Uncrushable, talking bombast by the score!

Aeschylus. Really, you kitchen-garden goddess' brat?

This from you, gatherer of twaddly chat, You beggar's playwright, tatterdemallion's bard? Shall you get off scot-free for this?

1 Euripides' mother is supposed to have been a seller of herbs.
Di. Hold hard!

"Nor vex his soul to choler with thy spite."

Aesch. Not I! until I prove what slender right
The cripple maker has for talking grand.

Di. Boys, a black lamb! a hurricane's at hand!¹

Aesch. O writer of _pas seuls_ in Cretan fashion!
O introducer of incestuous passion!

Di. Respected Aeschylus, I prithee, cease!
Away with you, you scamp Euripides!
Take shelter from the hailstones, if you're wise,
Or some enormous phrase, your head's own size,
Will crack your skull and spill the—_Telephus!_²

And you, sir, do not lose your temper thus;
In gentler fashion be discussed, discuss.
For gentlemen and poets 'tis not meet
To wrangle like two fishwives in the street.
Now _you_ start roaring like a log in the fire.

Eur. For my part I don't shirk it, but desire
To peck and be pecked; if you choose, begin. You
Shall cut my plays up, speeches, songs, and
sinews,—

S'help me! my _Peleus_, and my _Aeolus_,
My _Meleager,—_ay, and _Telephus._

Di. Well, Aeschylus, and what advice have you?

¹ Black sheep were offered to the storms in sacrifice.
² The _Telephus_ is the play of Euripides which was most criticised.
Naturally, it has not been preserved. Aristophanes suggests that
Euripides' head was full of it.
Aesch. I should have liked a different venue. Here we are not on equal terms, you see.

Di. Why not?

Aesch. My writings didn’t die with me: His did, so he will have them to refer to. But still, what you decide I must defer to.

Di. A brazier, someone, please, and some incense For prayer before the strife of eloquence.

(To the Chorus.)

Sing to the Muses a short hymn meanwhile, To guide our verdict in artistic style.

Chorus.

Daughters of Zeus, ye Muses nine, Holy maidens, who watch the souls Of men whose hearts are a golden mine Of words and the wisdom of all the schools, When they enter the lists all agog for the trick Of the logical “hank” and poetical “click,” Come and behold the mighty pair; Two such champions never were seen— Tongues with words enough and to spare, And planks of poetry sawn off clean. ’Tis the struggle tremendous where Genius wins; The bell has been rung, the performance begins. [While the Chorus are singing the brazier and incense have been brought in.

Di. Both make a prayer before you speak your line.
Aesch. Demeter, guardian of this soul of mine,
May I prove worthy of thy holy choir!

[puts on incense.]

Di. (To Euripides.)
Now your turn; put some incense on the fire.

Eur. No thanks; they're different gods to whom I pray.

Di. Some private lot? a brand-new coinage?

Eur. Ay. 890

Di. H'm, amateur gods! [Shrugs his shoulders.
Offer up your prayer.

Eur. Hinge of the Tongue, and soul-sustaining Air,
Cunning, and Nostrils keen with critic's scent,
May I refute each hostile argument!

Chorus.
Now we long to hear from you,
Gentlemen of light and leading,
What will be your first proceeding
With the enemy in view.

Fury is upon their tongue,
Both have got their manes erect,
And their nerves are highly strung;
This is what we may expect:

He will speak with polished phrasing,
Smoothed and sharpened with a file;
He with Titan volleys blazing
Scatter all his shifts and guile.
THE LEADER. Begin at once; let each of you take care that what he says is
Quite smart, unspoilt by metaphors or any commonplaces.

EUR. My own just claim to the poet's name I keep for later mention,
But now to his delinquencies I wish to draw attention.
A fraud and charlatan was he, deceiving, over-reaching
The audience, poor simple fools of Phrynichus's teaching.

For first he set upon the stage one heavily-veiled creature,
Achilles, perhaps, or Niobe—you couldn't see a feature;
They didn't even grunt—a mere gallanty exhibition.

DI. No more they did.

EUR. The choir, meanwhile, without an intermission,
Was struggling through four strings of tunes;
they never spoke or heard it.

DI. I liked the silence, though; in fact, I very much preferred it
To the talking of the present day!

¹ The Tragic poet. He began to exhibit plays about ten years before Aeschylus.
EUR. You must have been a flat, then!
DI. I think I was. But tell me, why did What's-'is-name do that, then?
EUR. Imposture, that the audience might sit there in distraction
Waiting for Niobe's remark, and miss the drama's action.
DI. The utter villain! Just to think he wasn't all I thought him!
(To AESCHYLUS, who is showing signs of impatience.)
Why do you yawn and look so cross?
EUR. Because I've fairly caught him.
And when the play was halfway through, atop of all this drivel
He'd speak a dozen words or so, and them the very devil,
With scowling brows and nodding plumes, and perfectly unbillable
In any programme,—
AESCH. Woe is me!
DI. Sh! not another syllable!
EUR. But not a thing to understand.—
DI. (To AESCH.) Don't grind your teeth so fretfully.
EUR. But streams of Troy and counterscarps and griffin-vultures dreadfully
Emblazoned upon shields, and words with war-horse heads and trapping,
THE FROGS 65

Whose meaning you could hardly guess.

Dl. By Jove, instead of napping

I've lain awake myself, ere now, long hours of night to ponder

On yellow horse-cocks—what a kind of fowl are they, I wonder.

Aesch. A painted figurehead upon a ship, of course, you dunce!

Dl. Oh, I thought it meant Eryxis, he's a beak I noticed once.

Eur. Even a cock without the horse one hardly could defend

In Tragedy.

Aesch. But think what things your godless hand has penned!

Eur. At all events not horse-cocks or goat-stags, or suchlike travesties,

Like you, the kind of thing one sees in Oriental tapestries.

You left the stage all verbiage, a mass of swollen tumours

And hulking words. I starved it first, and so reduced its humours,

With scraps of verse and wise discourse, and vegetable messes,

Adding a flavour of small talk strained out of critics' essays;
Then fed it up on monodies—Kephisophon's ingredients,¹
Avoiding complicated thoughts and commonplace expedients.
The first man on explained the antecedents of the story—
Aesch. Better than yours, and better than your parents had before ye!
Eur. Then to each character I gave employment from the start,
The women and the slaves as well each had to say their part,
The masters, maidens, and old women, every rank and station.
Aesch. I think that he deserves to die for such an innovation.
Eur. 'Twas democratic!

DI. Tut! my friend, don't put it quite in that form;
You're hardly suited to adopt the democratic platform.
Eur. And then I taught the citizens the way to talk—
Aesch. Thou didst!
I would, ere that, that thou hadst burst asunder in the midst.

¹ Euripides’ principal actor, supposed to have had something to do with the composition of his plays, and also to have carried on an intrigue with the poet’s wife.
Eur. To speak and write by subtle rules, and make their verses trim; To use their wits and eyes and mind; to quibble, love, and scheme, Suspect all motives, and to leave no stone unturned.

Aesch. That's true, 'tis!

Eur. I brought in things of common life—our simple needs and duties; And upon this I take my stand—for they know all about it; They would have criticised the least mistake,—I never spouted Big words to cheat their common sense, or court sensation, bringing Cygnus or Memnon on the stage with bells on bridles ringing. Our followers may be told apart—there's lots of both in hell, sure!—For his are like Phormisius and Megaenetus the Welsher, With trumpets, spears, and bristling beards, and grins to split you asunder; While mine are such as Kleitophon and Theramenes the wonder.

Di. Theramenes? He's clever; he's a fox at politics, sir, Who, if he plays to beat the ace, and finds he's in a fix, sir,
Consults his sleeve without your leave, and always wins the trick, sir.

EUR. Such is the wisdom I have taught, And improved their powers of thought, So that now they can distinguish anything from anything. Specially they know much more Of keeping house than e’er before, Asking, “How does this thing go?” “Who’s got that?” “Where’s so-and-so?”

DI. Yes, every man in Athens now, When he comes in, begins to blow His household up, and ask a lot Of questions, this way: “Where’s the pot?” “Who’s bitten off the minnow’s head?” “The dish I got last year is dead!” “Where’s the leek from yesterday?” And “Who has nibbled the olive, pray?” But hitherto their greatest sin is That they used to sit like ninnies— Gapy, gawky, piccaninnies.

CHORUS.

“Bright Achilles, mark’st thou these?” Have you got your answer ready? Curb your passion and ride steady, Or ’twill sweep you past the trees.¹

¹ i.e. out of the course. Olive trees were planted round the racecourse.
Terribly he does accuse,
   Yet contain yourself, most valiant,
Shorten sail, and only use,
   To begin with, your topgallant;
Next increase it by degrees,
   Wait until the gods afford,
What you want, a steady breeze,
   Then, close action, out and board!

THE LEADER. But, O thou first of all the Greeks to
   build high rime in towers
And dignify the Stage, fling wide the floodgates
   of thy powers.

AESC. The occasion moves my anger, ay, my
   inmost soul is vexed
To have to answer him; yet, lest he fancy me
   perplexed—
Come, make reply, upon what grounds do poets
   win their laurels?

EUR. For cleverness and counsel, and because we
   raise men's morals.

AESC. But if instead you take away their virtue
   and their bravery,
And make the town a sink of all unmitigated
   knavery,
What is your due?

DI. Why, death of course; you
   won't get him to answer.

AESC. Look at the men you got from me,—what
   better could you want, sir?
THE FROGS

Men large of soul as large of limb, no civic duty-shirkers,
Not loafing impudently round, as now, no mischief-workers;
But breathing naught but lances, spears, and helmets plumed and burnished,
And casques, and greaves, and courage, with seven-oxhide armour furnished.

EUR. At it again! He'll drive me crazy with his helmet factory!

DI. What did you do to turn them out so very satisfactory?

Oh, speak, and do not wither us with hauteur so enormous.

AESCH. I wrote a drama full of war.

DI. Which of them? pray inform us.

AESCH. Seven against Thebes. And all who saw it fell in love with fighting.

DI. A great mistake; you've painted Thebes too much in war delighting.

Consider yourself censured for it.

AESCH. Ay, sir, but the fact is These are the very things you ought, but do not choose, to practise.

And then I brought The Persians out, to celebrate a glorious Engagement, and to inculcate the wish to be victorious.
Di. Yes, when they said "Darius is dead," I own I jumped for jo-øy,
And all the Chorus smote their hands together, crying "yau-oi!"

Aesch. This is the poet's proper work. Now see from the beginning
What benefits for all mankind our noblest have been winning.
Orpheus preached Vegetarianism and Initiation,
Musaeus taught us Medicine and the rules of Divination,
Hesiod Agriculture, while immortal Homer's charm is
That he can speak in words unique of marshalling of armies
And valiant deeds.

Di. Well, Pantokles could not have got the drop of it;
He put his helmet on and tried to tie the crest atop of it.

Aesch. But many other heroes did, and Lamachus among them,

1 Dionysus evidently does not remember the play accurately. Darius was dead long before, and his ghost appears in the play.
2 This queer exclamation, which impressed him so much, does not occur in our editions of The Persians.
3 The crest was fastened on with a nut inside the helmet.
4 One of the commanders in the Syracusan expedition. While he was alive Aristophanes had abused him; now that he is dead he speaks well of him, as he does of everyone except Euripides.
From whom I too have copied many gallant feats and sung them:

Of Patrokles, and them of Troy, a lion-hearted nation,
To stir a man at bugle-call to deeds of emulation.
But Phaedras—no, nor Sthenobees of reputations shady;
And none can say I e’er portrayed the amours of a lady.

EUR. (Scornfully.) You never dealt with Aphrodite!

AESCH. Nor, God help me, shall I!
But over you and yours, you know, she ruled tyrannically,
So that she laid you low yourself.\(^1\)

DI. A hit, by Jove! it’s true, sir;
You marred the lives of others’ wives, and that’s come back on you, sir!

EUR. What damage yet doth Athens get from all my Sthenoboeas?

AESCH. The noble wives of noble men you’ve filled with vile ideas,

From shame at your Bellerophons, the hemlock-habit’s taking.

EUR. D’you mean to say the Phaedra story’s one of my own making?

AESCH. Oh no; but if there’s wickedness, the poet should conceal it,

\(^1\) Referring to his troubles with his wife and Kephisophon the actor.
And not parade it on the stage or openly reveal it. When we are boys the schoolmaster can give us all our teaching, But when we come to man's estate the Poets do the preaching; Therefore our lessons must be good.

Eur. But spouting your tremendous Parnassus-Lycabettus stuff will never save or mend us; You ought to speak in human style.

Aesch. But, villain, if you try to Use lofty thought and sentiment, your diction must be high too, And you'd expect that demi-gods would have their phrases bigger Just as they wear the finer clothes, and cut the finer figure. And when I put this on the stage correct in forms and matters, You spoilt it.

Eur. How?

Aesch. By bringing kings in all in rags and tatters To gain compassion.

Eur. What's the harm?

Aesch. Things are at such a pitch, man, That no one will fit out a ship, although he's quite a rich man,
But whines about his "poverty," and wears a ragged garment.

Di. Yes, with a good thick worsted coat beneath, deceitful varmint!
And turns up at the Fish-market when his appeal is granted.

Aesch. And then you taught the talky-talky nonsense that's supplanted
Athletic sports, and made the seamen mutiny—a high time.
They had debating matters with their officers!
In my time

They only understood, I think, what "rations" and "ahoy" meant!

Di. But that's all over; arguing is now their sole employment.

Aesch. Any punishment invented
He deserves who represented
Women wantonness contriving,
In the very temples bearing
Children; others
Even marrying their brothers,
Or declaring
That the living are not living!

Things like this have made our city—
More's the pity—
Overrun of late with ribald
Men who scribbled;
Demagogues with monkey tricks
Getting people in a fix.
So that now you scarcely can
   Find a man
With wind enough to go the pace
And carry his torch all through the race.

Di. Indeed you can't; I nearly died
Of laughing last Athenastide,
When a slow short-winded man
Far behind the others ran,
Grey-haired, fat, and in great trouble,
Bending himself almost double.

And the Keramicus gentry
Fell upon him in the entry:
As he passed, you saw them spank
   Back and belly, rib and flank,
Till, such heaviness of hand
Being more than he could stand,
He dropped his torch, and in dismay
Puffed it out and ran away.

CHORUS.
Great the day, and great the fray! Now comes
   the climax of the fight.
'Twixt them it is hard to settle:
One can charge, with heavy metal;
One can rally, shilly-shally, sharply face about
   and smite.
THE FROGS

Rest not though on one position,
But deliver from your quiver many a different
shaft of censure;
All your armoury unfold;
Oh! with subtle inquisition
Asking questions new and old.
Were you ever counted clever, now or never
make a venture!
Do you fear the audience here are not up to
your display?
Do you think their skulls are hollow?
That they'll need a crib to follow?
Never mind it, you will find it very much the
other way.
They've been out on foreign service:
Book in hand you see them stand, they can tell
you what is what;
They were always fairly smart,
And to-day their brain and nerve is
Razor-edged, so pluck up heart;
Beyond their depth you cannot step, they're
such a literary lot.

SCENE II.

The testing of the Prologues and Lyrics.

EUR. Well, then, I take his Prologues first to test,
For that comes naturally earliest.
The statement of his subjects is obscure.
THE FROGS

DI. Which will you test?

Eur. Why, lots of them, to be sure. First from the Oresteia kindly read.

DI. Silence in court! Now, Aeschylus, proceed.

Aesch. "Nether-world Hermes, thou beneath whose eye
The Father's powers are placed, oh! grant my prayer,
Be my preserver and ally in fight,
For to this land I come and do return."
Find any faults in that?

Eur. Yes, twelve or more.

DI. Why, all the lines together are but four!

Eur. But each has twenty errors for its share.

Aesch. You know that's nonsense.

Eur. Do you think I care?

DI. Stop, Aeschylus, don't read another line:
It's clear you'll only get an extra fine
For every fresh quotation, and the score
Is running up against you for those four.

Aesch. I stop for him!

DI. That's the advice I've given.

Eur. He starts with a mistake as high as heaven.
Aesch. What's my mistake? I'll thank you to explain.

Eur. Why, certainly! Just say the lines again.

Aesch. "Nether-world Hermes, thou beneath whose eye
The Father's powers are placed, oh! grant my prayer——"

1130
EUR. Does not Orestes say this at the tomb
Of his dead father?

AESCH. So you may presume. 1140

EUR. What does he say there is 'neath Hermes' eye?
His father's murder and wife's treachery?
AESCH. No; 'tis a title of the "Luck-god," rather,
Meaning he holds his office from the Father.
EUR. Then it's a worse fault than I meant to show,
That Zeus above should give him rank below.
DI. He'd be his father's grave-robber at that!
AESCH. (To DI.) Your wine lacks bouquet, and your joke is flat.

DI. Aeschylus, read out what comes next; and you,
With eagle eye, keep the mistakes in view.
AESCH. "Be my preserver and ally in fight,
For to this land I come and do return."
EUR. How he repeats himself, the clever fellow!
AESCH. Repeat myself! How?

EUR. Look at the phrase, I'll tell you:
He says that he "returned" and that he "came,"
Now, "coming" and "returning" are the same.
DI. By Jove! it's just as if the navvy said,
"Lend me a shovel, Bill, or else a spade."
AESCH. Far from it. Your incessant chattering 1160
Has warped your sense: my lines are just the thing.
DI. On what grounds, tell me.

AESCH. He who has a home,
When he gets back there can be said to "come."
THE FROGS

He simply comes, and nothing else is meant; Both words apply to one in banishment.  
Di. Good! Now, Euripides, for your attack.  
Eur. Legally, I say, he never did come back,  
For he stole in without the Government's leave.  
Di. Good too! But what you mean I can't conceive.  
Eur. Next line, please.  
Di. Yes, make haste, for goodness' sake  
Go on; and you—look out for the mistake!  
Aesch. "And at this barrow on my sire I call  
To hear and listen."  
Eur. There he goes again!  
"Listen" and "hear" are just the same, that's plain.  
Aesch. You idiot! he was talking to the dead,  
And they can't hear a thing, though three times said.  
But how d'you write your Prologues?  
Eur. You shall see;  
And if you notice a tautology,  
Any extraneous matter, or a trace  
Of padding, then—conspuez in my face!  
Di. Do say one; I am dying for a sight  
Of the correctness of the lines you write.  
Eur. "A happy man was Oedipus at first—"1  
Aesch. Not he, by Jove! but utterly accurst:  

1 From the Antigone of Euripides.
Doomed ere his birth the oracle to fulfil,
And, yet unborn, I say, his sire to kill,
How was he, then, a happy man at first?
EUR. "Then fell at last into the very worst
Misfortune."

AESCH. No, not he! he never rose
Out of it. First, an infant, they expose
Him in a bit of crockery in a storm,
Not to grow up and do his father harm;
And after that, with both his ankles swelling,
He drifts away to Polybus’s dwelling;
Then marries an old woman in his prime—
And she was his own mother all the time—
Then blinds himself.

DI. He was happy after all,
Compared with an Athenian admiral!¹
EUR. Nonsense! I think my Prologues very fine.
AESCH. Well, I won’t nibble at them line by line,
But, with the help of Heaven for the task,
I’ll overthrow them with a pocket flask.

EUR. A pocket flask! you! mine!

AESCH. Yes, one will do ’t;
For any trisyllabic word will suit
With your constructions, as—a counterpane,
A pocket book or flask; I’ll make it plain
Directly.

¹ Erasinides and the others who were executed after the victory of Arginusae.
THE FROGS

EUR. Eh? you will?

AESCH. Most certainly.

DI. Recite the lines at once and let us see.

EUR. "Egyptus, as the ancient story goes,
    Bringing his fifty sons across the wave
    And reaching Argos——" \(^1\)

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

EUR. Was that your pocket flask? Confound it, then!

DI. Recite another and let’s try again.

EUR. "Dionysus, who adown Parnassus’ slopes, \(1210\)
    With wand and fawnskins ‘mid the torches’ gleam,
    Leaps in the dances——" \(^2\)

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. Oh dear! the flask again! we’re badly hit.

EUR. But I assure you ’twill not matter a bit;
    Here’s one in which he cannot make it fit—
    “No mortal man there is in all things blest:
    Either with noble birth he lives in want,
    Or being base-born——" \(^3\)

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. Euripides!

EUR. What is it?

DI. Shorten sail. \(1220\)

This pocket flask is like to blow a gale.

EUR. I should not heed it—no, by mother earth!
    I’ll show him now how little it is worth.

\(^1\) From the Archelaus. \(^2\) From the Hypsipyle.
\(^3\) From the Stenoboea.
THE FROGS

DI. Well, try again, and give it a wide berth.
EUR. “Kadmus, when leaving the Sidonian town,
    Son of Agenor——”¹
    AESCH. “Lost his pocket flask.”
DI. That flask, my friend, I think you’d better buy,
    Or it will ruin all our Prologues.
     EUR. Why?
    I buy it from him?
    DI. Good counsel.
       EUR. I refuse it.
    I’ve lots of Prologues where he cannot use it. 1230
    “The son of Tantalus to Pisa coming
    With his swift horses——”²
    AESCH. “Lost his pocket flask.”
DI. He’s made it fit again, you must allow.
    (To AESCH.) Good sir, restore it to him, anyhow;
    You’ll get another beauty for a penny!
EUR. Not yet, by Jove! I’ve still got a good many.
    “Oeneus in harvest——”³
    AESCH. “Lost his pocket flask.”
EUR. Do let me say the whole line, if you please.
    “Oeneus in harvest gathering plenteous store 1240
    While sacrificing——”
    AESCH. “Lost his pocket flask.”
DI. While he was at it? Where were the police?
EUR. Never mind them. Answer this once again—
    “Zeus, as the words of all true men maintain——”⁴

¹ From the Phrixus.  ² From the Iphigeneia in Tauris.
³ From the Meleager.  ⁴ From the Melanippe.
THE FROGS

Di. Oh, stop! He'll say "he lost his flask" and do you.
That wretched flask sticks just as closely to you,
As any styre sticks on an eyelid. Take
The Lyrics for a change, for goodness' sake!
EUR. Well, I can prove that here too he's a slattern,
And writes them all upon a single pattern. 1250
CHORUS. (In surprise.)
What will come next?
Here's a perplexed
Question for us to debate,—
What Euripides
Fancies that he's
Able to depreciate
In the Lyrics of one
Who is second to none,
Unique, unapproachable, great.
What mud will he fling
At Tragedy's king?
I tremble to think of his fate. 1260
EUR. Mighty fine songs, indeed! I'll show you soon;
I'll cut them all down to a single tune.
Di. Look here, I'll keep the score, if I am able,
With a few counters borrowed from the table.
EUR. "Hear'st thou, Achilles, the clamour of fight and the trumpet?
Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to defend us?
Hermes our sire we revere who dwell by the shores of Avernus.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to defend us?"

Di. Aeschylus, there are two "blows" to your score.


Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to defend us?"

Di. Aeschylus, there is another "blow" more.

Eur. "Speak not aloud! The bee-priestesses open the portals of Artemis' temple.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to defend us?

Lord of my song, I can tell of the omens that fell on the journey.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to defend us?"

Di. Great Zeus! a sheer extravagance of "blow"!

I've quite lost count. I've got a strain, I know;
A bath and massage is the thing I want. 1281

[Makes as if he was going away.

Eur. No! wait and listen to the "standing chant"

As well, worked up with string accompaniment.

Di. All right; but, mind you, no more punishment.

Eur. "How the two-throned might of Achaea, of Hellas's offspring,

Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!
Sendeth the Sphinx as a shameless ordainer of evil,
    Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!
Furious bird with the spear and the hand of avengers,
    Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!  
Giving a meal to the ravening hounds of the heavens,
    Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!
And the host that is siding with Ajax.
    Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!"

Di. What's "Tiddle-diddle"? Is it Persian talk,
Or did you pick it up at some rope-walk?

Aesch. Scoff as you please! I brought the lyric rhyme
    From noble sources to a noble prime,
Nor wished to trespass on the holy ground
    Where Phrynichus his music erst had found;  
Euripides, however, is not nice,
He gets his repertoire from haunts of vice,
    Meletus' drinking-songs, the trills and shakes
Of Carian flutes, from Music Halls and wakes.
I'll soon expose him. Let me have a zither—
And yet, for him the castanets were fitter!
Hither, Euripidean muse, and see
How well these songs will suit your company.

[An ill-favoured person with large feet
    comes forward with the castanets.

Di. She never played the wanton, no, not she!
She's just about as ugly as can be.
Aesch. "Halcyon dickies that twitter and sing\(^1\)

On the waves of the restless blue,

(Castanets.)  (Tuk-a-tuk !)

Drenching your skins with sprinkling wing
And wetting them through and through.

(Tuk-a-tuk !)

Ye spi-i-i-iders that under the roof

(Tuk-a-tuk ! tuk-a-tuk !) in the gloom

Of the corners are spi-i-i-inning your woof,

The work of the musical loom;

Where the porpoise comes round at the bo'sun's

shrill sound

To the dingy black bows, and in fun

(Tuk-a-tuk !)

Flings up to the ship a prophetical tip\(^2\)

On the number of miles of the run.

(Tuk-a-tuk !)

Oh, the flower of the vine and the tendril fine
That eases our cares and alarms!

(Tuk-a-tuk !)

Oh, the bloom and the shape of the glorious grape!

Throw round me, childie, your arms——"

\(^1\) These Lyrics are not selections from Euripides, as the former were from Aeschylus, but pure inventions, by way of parody, with an occasional line or reminiscence of a line from some play, with faults of all kinds in them.

\(^2\) This mention of "racecourses and prophecies" in combination, which most commentators consider sheer intentional nonsense, may be taken as the only allusion to sporting prophecies in the classics, if it is not only prophetical itself. To anyone who has been on an ocean liner the convenience of such behaviour on the part of the porpoise is obvious.
D'you see that foot?
   Dr. Yes; it's an awful sight.
   Aesch. I don't mean hers, but in the verse.
   Dr. All right.
Aesch. So much for Choral Lyrics. Now to show
The way one of his Monodies would go. 1330
O murky night, shrouded in gloom,
Say why didst thou send to my room
   Out of the dark a nightmare dread,
   Clad in black garments like the dead—
      A minister of death
   With breathless breath,
   Child of black night,
   A shuddering sight
   With bloody, bloody looks
   And talons long as hooks?
Maidens, light a lamp, I pray;
   From the river where you've brought a
   Pitcher full, go, warm the water,
And I'll wash the dream away.
   By the God of storm and thunder!
      That's it, I see.
   Neighbours come and see the wonder—
      Gone is Glyce!
   And my cock she did "convey"!
   Mountain Nymphs, to you I pray!
O Mania,\(^1\) catch her! And I, to my pain,
   Was closely attending to business instead;

\(^1\) A common name for a female slave.
THE FROGS

My fingers were twirling a spindle of thread
And making a be-e-e-eautiful skein
   To sell in the mark-
et when it got dark.
But he flew up, up, up, in the air
   With the fairy-like tip of his wing,
And left me below with care, yea, care,
   And tears I shed, I
   Shed tears from my eye,
   Shed tears from my eye, poor thing!

Sons of Ida, men of Crete,
Take your arrows, I entreat,
With limber stride patrol the grounds;
   And may Artemis the fair
Come and bring her pack of hounds
   And search the house through everywhere.
And thou too, brandishing in thy nimble hands,
Hekate, daughter of Zeus, two burning brands,
   Give me light on the road
To Glyce's abode,
That I may enter in and see
If she has got my stolen property.

DI. Enough of Lyrics!
AESCH. (With disgust.) I should say it is!
   I want to take him to the balances,
Which is the only way to bring conviction,
By proving our respective weight of diction.
DI. Come here, then, if I really must try these
   Two poets like a man that's selling cheese.
CHORUS. Geniuses do take such pains!
   No one else would have the brains
   'To invent a fresh commodity
   Full of such new-fangled oddity.
   By the ——! if a casual man
   Had informed me of this plan,
   I'd not have believed him, I'd
   Have taken for granted that he lied!

SCENE III.

SCENE: The weighing. A large pair of scales is brought into court; DIONYSUS is standing beside them.

DI. Now then, you two stand by the scales!
   EUR. All right.

DI. Take hold of them, and each in turn recite,
   And don't let go till I say "Tck, tck!"
   EUR. Yes.

   [They each take hold of their scale.

DI. Now speak your line into the balances.
   EUR. "Oh that the good ship Argo ne'er had flown!"¹
   AESCH. "Spercheius river, where the oxen stray."²

   [AESCHYLUS' scale drops.

DI. Tck, tck! let go! Yes, this one certainly
   Has gone right down.
   EUR. But why? I cannot see.

DI. Because he, like a man that deals in wool,
   Put in a river; rivers make it full

¹ From Medea. ² From Philoktetes (?).
Of water; that, you know, gives weight to things.
The line you put was light with feathery wings.

**EUR.** Let’s speak another and match weight for weight.

**DI.** Catch hold again, then.

**EUR.** Ready all.

**DI.** Now say it. 1390

**EUR.** “Persuasion hath no temple save the tongue.”¹

**AESCH.** “Of all the gods Death only loves not gifts.”²

[AESCHYLUS’ scale drops.]

**DI.** Let go, let go! Yes, down again his goes:
He put in Death, the heaviest of woes.

**EUR.** Persuasion I; what better could you find?

**DI.** Oh, that’s a flimsy thing without a mind!
But look another of your heavy weights out
To pull your scale down, something large and stout.

**EUR.** *(Rather nervously to Dionysus.)*

What sort of thing had I best say? Won’t you
Make a suggestion?

*(DI. Sarcastically.)* Oh yes, this will do—
“Achilles threw two singles and a four.”³ 1400

Speak, for the third time, your last chance to score.

**EUR.** “The iron-sheathed log in his right hand he took.”⁴

**AESCH.** “For chariot heaped on chariot, corpse on
corpse.”⁵  

[AESCHYLUS’ scale drops.

¹ From Antigone. Next line: “Her altar is within the soul of man.”
² From Niobe. Next line: “Before him only is Persuasion dumb.”
³ From Telephus.
⁴ From Meleager.
⁵ From Glaucus Potniesus.
Di. This time as well he’s fooled you.

Eur. How d’you mean?

Di. He put two chariots and two corpses in—
   Too heavy for a hundred Fellaheen.
Aesch. Let’s have no more of single lines, but put
   Him in, child, wife—Kephisophon to boot—
   And let him take his books down from the shelf
   And pile them in, and sit on top himself!
   And I’ll put just two verses by their side.

Di. (To himself.)
   The men are friends of mine. I’ll not decide.
   When you’re impartial it is hard to judge,¹
   And against neither will I feel a grudge,
   For one I like, and one I think is clever.

Pluto. So, after all, you’ll fail in your endeavour!

Di. (To Pluto.) If I decide?

Pl. You shall take one of these,
   Not to be disappointed, which you please.

Di. Thanks. (To the poets.) Listen now, think over
   your reply;
   I came down here to fetch a poet.

Eur. Why?

Di. That Athens and the Drama both may thrive.
   Now all depends on what advice you give; ¹
   Whichever gives the best I mean to take.
   First about Alkibiades—state your views,

¹ Cases in law at Athens were decided mostly by sentiment, the
   evidence being of quite secondary importance.
For Athens is in hard labour what to say.

PL. What is her own opinion of him, pray?

DI. She loves, and hates, and cannot do without him. Now, both of you, say what you think about him.

EUR. "I hate a citizen by nature slow
    To help his country, swift to work her woe,
    Keen to his own, to her best interests blind."

DI. Good. (To AESCH.) Now, sir, what suggestion can you find?

AESCH. "Rear not a lion's whelp within the state;
    But if you do, knock under and obey it!"

DI. By Zeus! I can't make up my mind, not nearly:
    This one\(^1\) speaks cleverly, the other\(^2\) clearly.
    So I'll put one more question. Answer me!
    What chance has Athens of prosperity?

EUR. I know, and I should like to tell you.  

DI. Speak!

EUR. When present faithlessness for faith we take,
    And faith for faithlessness.

DI. What can you mean?
    Talk far less learnedly and far more plain.

EUR. Our safety lies in this: to take away
    Our confidence from those we trust to-day,
    And use the men we have not used of late.
    Our present plans not being fortunate,
    Their opposite are bound to bring success.

DI. A Palamedes! Oh, what cleverness!

(To AESCH.) What's your advice?

\(^1\) Euripides. \(^2\) Aeschylus.
THE FROGS

Aesch. What is the city's mood? First tell me this. Whom does she use? The good?
Di. Hates them like poison.
Aesch. Does she like the ill?
Di. Not she, but uses them against her will.
Aesch. Nothing can stop her going to the bad, If neither party suits her—shawl nor plaid!
Di. Discover something, that is, if you want To reappear there; otherwise you shan't. 1460
Aesch. I'd tell it there, but do not care to here.
Di. Please don't. Send up to them some word of cheer.
Aesch. Count they the enemy's land their own to be, And give their own up to the enemy, Count ships their income, and their income waste.
Di. Good. Yet the jurymen secure a taste. 1
Pl. Decide.

Di. I have decided. Have you guessed? I will select—"the one my soul likes best." 2
Eur. Remember what a solemn oath you swore To take me back. I was your friend before. 1470
Di. "My tongue hath sworn, but 3 I'll choose—" Aeschylus.
Eur. What have you done, you villain! Scandalous!
Di. (Innocently.) I've only given Aeschylus first place.
Eur. And then you dare to look me in the face!

1 i.e. The jurymen won't think it waste. They will swallow up all that is available in fees. 2 Quoting a children's game.
3 Quoting from Hippolytus: "My tongue hath sworn it, but my soul is free" (cf. line 101).
THE FROGS

DI. (Blandly.) "What's villainy, if the audience think it well?"*1

EUR. Wretch, will you leave me dead down here in Hell?

DI. (Sarcastically.)

"Who knows if living is not being dead,"*2
A breath your dinner,*3 sleep a feather-bed?

PL. Go inside, Dionysus.

DI. Wherefore, pray?

PL. That I may feast you ere you sail away.

DI. Thanks, that is quite a good idea, you know. 1480

(To the audience.)

I'm not displeased the matter's ended so. [Exeunt.

CHORUS. Happy is the man who plies

Natural abilities

Until a measure of perfection they attain.

Many things will go to show it:

He has proved himself the Poet,

So that now he's off to see his home again;

He himself and all his nation,

Every friend and each relation,

Reap the profit of his cultivated brain. 1490

What a blessed thing that he's

Not a friend of Socrates,

To be sitting by him, chattering all day,

*1 Quoting from Aëolus: "What's villainy, if the doers think it well?"

*2 Quoting from the Polyidas:—

"Who knows if living is not being dead,
While death is reckoned life by those below?"

The sentiment is alluded to in lines 1080 and 420.

*3 There is a pun in the original which is lost in the English; but the reference is to Euripides' invocation to "soul sustaining air" in line 1092.
THE FROGS

And in execrable taste
Passing over as misplaced
What is really most important in the play!
But composing useless essays
On fine words and quibbling messes
Is a lunatic's performance I should say.

SCENE IV.

SCENE: PLUTO enthroned. DIONYSUS, AESCHYLUS, and XANTHIAS prepared to depart.

PL. Aeschylus, good luck, farewell!
Keep our city 'neath the spell
Of sound advice, and educate
The foolish ones—they're half the state.
And take these with you: give this knife
To Kleophon to end his life.
Here's a rope, which may afford
Entertainment to the Board,
Where, to get both ends to meet,
Nikomachus and Myrmex cheat.
Here is hemlock, which I think
Archenomus will like to drink.
Tell them to get under weigh
And come to me without delay.
If they stay or look behind them,
Loitering when I command them,
By Apollo! I will bind them
And like runaways will brand them;
With Adeimantus the white feather
I'll send them all to Hell together.
Aesch. I will do so. Will you please
Give my chair to Sophokles
To keep, in case the Fates ordain
I ever come down here again.
Sophokles—for him I reckoned
Certainly to be my second.
But remember, I entreat,
That that dirty, lying cheat
Chair of mine must never fill,
No, not even against his will!

Pl. Let the sacred torches blaze,
    Be his escort on the road,
    To his own great music raise
    Echoes of a choral ode.

[Chorus comes forward waving torches
    as the actors go off.]

Chorus. First may all happiness shine on the path
    of the poet returning,
Rising again to the Sunlight, O grant it ye spirits of Earth!
Then to our city the key to the glory for which she is yearning,
Stilling the clashing of armour and banishing hardship and dearth.
Let Kleophon and the others who with him for battle are burning
Fight, if they please, far away in the barbarous land of his birth.

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