The Acharnians

by Aristophanes

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THE ACHARNIANS

By Aristophanes

[Translator uncredited. Footnotes have been retained because they provide the meanings of Greek names, terms and ceremonies and explain puns and references

otherwise lost in translation. Occasional Greek words in the footnotes have not been included. Footnote numbers, in brackets, start anew at (1) for each piece of dialogue, and each footnote follows immediately the dialogue to which it refers, labeled thus: f(1).]

INTRODUCTION

THE ACHARNIANS

INTRODUCTION

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

Its diatribes against the War and fierce criticism of the general policy of the War party so enraged Cleon that, as already mentioned, he endeavoured to ruin the author, who in 'The Knights' retorted by a direct and savage personal attack on the leader of the democracy.

The plot is of the simplest. Dicaeopolis, an Athenian citizen, but a native of Acharnae, one of the agricultural demes and one which had especially suffered in the Lacedaemonian invasions, sick and tired of the ill-success and miseries of the War, makes up his mind, if he fails to induce the people to adopt his policy of "peace at any price," to conclude a private and particular peace of his own to cover himself, his family, and his estate. The Athenians, momentarily elated by victory and over-persuaded by the demagogues of the day—Cleon and his henchmen, refuse

to hear of such a thing as coming to terms. Accordingly Dicaeopolis dispatches an envoy to Sparta on his own account, who comes back presently with a selection of specimen treaties in his pocket. The old man tastes and tries, special terms are arranged, and the play concludes with a riotous and uproarious rustic feast in honour of the blessings of Peace and Plenty.

Incidentally excellent fun is poked at Euripides and his dramatic methods, which supply matter for so much witty badinage in several others of our author's pieces.

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

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

THE ACHARNIANS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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

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

DICAEOPOLIS(1) (alone) What cares have not gnawed at my heart and how few have been the pleasures in my life! Four, to be exact, while my troubles have been as countless as the grains of sand on the shore! Let me see! of what value to me have been these few pleasures? Ah! I remember that I was delighted in soul when Cleon had to disgorge those five talents;(2) I was in ecstasy and I love the Knights for this deed; 'it is an honour to Greece.'(3) But the day when I was impatiently awaiting a piece by Aeschylus,(4) what tragic despair it caused me when the herald called, "Theognis,(5) introduce your Chorus!" Just imagine how this blow struck straight at my heart! On the other hand, what joy Dexitheus caused me at the musical competition, when he played a Boeotian melody on the lyre! But this year by contrast! Oh! what deadly torture to hear Chaeris(6) perform the prelude in the Orthian mode!(7) —Never, however, since I began to bathe, has the dust hurt my eyes as it does to-day. Still it is the day of assembly; all should be here at daybreak, and yet the Pnyx(8) is still deserted. They are gossiping in the marketplace, slipping hither and thither to avoid the vermilioned rope.(9) The Prytanes(10) even do not come; they will be late, but when they come they will push and fight each other for a seat in the front row. They will never trouble themselves with the question of peace. Oh! Athens! Athens! As for myself, I do not fail to come here before all the rest, and now, finding myself alone, I groan, yawn, stretch, break wind, and know not what to do; I make sketches in the dust, pull out my loose hairs, muse, think of my fields, long for peace, curse town life and regret my dear country home,(11) which never told me to 'buy fuel, vinegar or oil'; there the word 'buy,' which cuts me in two, was unknown; I harvested everything at will. Therefore I have come to the assembly fully prepared to bawl, interrupt and abuse the speakers, if they talk of anything but peace. But here come the Prytanes, and high time too, for it is midday! As I foretold, hah! is it not so? They are pushing and fighting for the front seats. f(1) A name invented by Aristophanes and signifying 'a just citizen.' f(2) Clean had received five talents from the islanders subject to Athens, on condition that he should get the

tribute payable by them reduced; when informed of this transaction, the knights compelled him to return the money. f(3) A hemistich borrowed from Euripides' 'Telephus.' f(4) The tragedies of Aeschylus continued to be played even after the poet's death, which occurred in 436 B.C., ten years before the production of 'The Acharnians.' f(5) A tragic poet, whose pieces were so devoid of warmth and life that he was nicknamed (the Greek for) 'snow.' f(6) A bad musician, frequently ridiculed by Aristophanes; he played both the lyre and the flute. f(7) A lively and elevated method. f(8) A hill near the Acropolis, where the Assemblies were held. f(9) Several means were used to force citizens to attend the assemblies; the shops were closed; circulation was only permitted in those streets which led to the Pnyx; finally, a rope covered with vermilion was drawn round those who dallied in the Agora (the market-place), and the late-comers, ear-marked by the imprint of the rope, were fined. f(10) Magistrates who, with the Archons and the Epistatae, shared the care of holding and directing the assemblies of the people; they were fifty in number. f(11) The Peloponnesian War had already, at the date of the representation of 'The Acharnians,' lasted five years, 431-426 B.C.; driven from their lands by the successive Lacedaemonian invasions, the people throughout the country had been compelled to seek shelter behind the walls of Athens. HERALD Move on up, move on, move on, to get within the consecrated area.(1) f(1) Shortly before the meeting of the Assembly, a number of young pigs were immolated and a few drops of their blood were sprinkled on the seats of the Prytanes; this sacrifice was in honour of Ceres. AMPHITHEUS Has anyone spoken yet? HERALD Who asks to speak? AMPHITHEUS I do. HERALD Your name? AMPHITHEUS Amphitheus. HERALD You are no man.(1) f(1) The name, Amphitheus, contains (the Greek) word (for) 'god.' AMPHITHEUS No! I am an immortal! Amphitheus was the son of Ceres and Triptolemus; of him was born Celeus. Celeus wedded Phaenerete, my grandmother, whose son was Lucinus, and, being born of him I am an immortal; it is to me alone that the gods have entrusted the duty of treating with the

Lacedaemonians. But, citizens, though I am immortal, I am dying of hunger; the Prytanes give me naught.(1) f(1) Amongst other duties, it was the office of the Prytanes to look after the wants of the poor. A PRYTANIS Guards! AMPHITHEUS Oh, Triptolemus and Ceres, do ye thus forsake your own blood? DICAEOPOLIS Prytanes, in expelling this citizen, you are offering an outrage to the Assembly. He only desired to secure peace for us and to sheathe the sword. PRYTANIS Sit down and keep silence! DICAEOPOLIS No, by Apollo, I will not, unless you are going to discuss the question of peace. HERALD The ambassadors, who are returned from the Court of the King! DICAEOPOLIS Of what King? I am sick of all those fine birds, the peacock ambassadors and their swagger. HERALD Silence! DICAEOPOLIS Oh! oh! by Ecbatana,(1) what a costume! f(1) The summer residence of the Great King. AN AMBASSADOR During the archonship of Euthymenes, you sent us to the Great King on a salary of two drachmae per diem. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! those poor drachmae! AMBASSADOR We suffered horribly on the plains of the Cayster, sleeping under a tent, stretched deliciously on fine chariots, half dead with weariness. DICAEOPOLIS And I was very much at ease, lying on the straw along the battlements!(1) f(1) Referring to the hardships he had endured garrisoning the walls of Athens during the Lacedaemonian invasions early in the War. AMBASSADOR Everywhere we were well received and forced to drink delicious wine out of golden or crystal flagons.... DICAEOPOLIS Oh, city of Cranaus,(1) thy ambassadors are laughing at thee! f(1) Cranaus, the second king of Athens, the successor of Cecrops. AMBASSADOR For great feeders and heavy drinkers are alone esteemed as men by the barbarians. DICAEOPOLIS Just as here in Athens, we only esteem the most drunken debauchees. AMBASSADOR At the end of the fourth year we reached the King's Court, but he had left with his whole army to ease himself, and for the space of eight months he was thus easing himself in the midst of the golden mountains.(1) f(1) Lucian, in his 'Hermotimus,' speaks of these golden mountains as an apocryphal land of wonders and prodigies.

DICAEOPOLIS And how long was he replacing his dress? AMBASSADOR The whole period of a full moon; after which he returned to his palace; then he entertained us and had us served with oxen roasted whole in an oven. DICAEOPOLIS Who ever saw an oxen baked in an oven? What a lie! AMBASSADOR On my honour, he also had us served with a bird three times as large as Cleonymus,(1) and called the Boaster. f(1) Cleonymus was an Athenian general of exceptionally tall stature; Aristophanes incessantly rallies him for his cowardice; he had cast away his buckler in a fight. DICAEOPOLIS And do we give you two drachmae, that you should treat us to all this humbug? AMBASSADOR We are bringing to you Pseudartabas(1), the King's Eye. f(1) A name borne by certain officials of the King of Persia. The actor of this part wore a mask, fitted with a single eye of great size. DICAEOPOLIS I would a crow might pluck out thine with his beak, you cursed ambassador! HERALD The King's Eye! DICAEOPOLIS Eh! Great Gods! Friend, with thy great eye, round like the hole through which the oarsman passes his sweep, you have the air of a galley doubling a cape to gain port. AMBASSADOR Come, Pseudartabas, give forth the message for the Athenians with which you were charged by the Great King. PSEUDARTABAS Jartaman exarx 'anapissonia satra.(1) f(1) Jargon, no doubt meaningless in all languages. AMBASSADOR Do you understand what he says? DICAEOPOLIS By Apollo, not I! AMBASSADOR (TO THE PRYTANES) He says that the Great King will send you gold. Come, utter the word 'gold' louder and more distinctly. PSEUDARTABAS Thou shalt not have gold, thou gaping-arsed Ionian.(1) f(1) The Persians styled all Greeks 'Ionians' without distinction; here the Athenians are intended. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! may the gods forgive me, but that is clear enough! AMBASSADOR What does he say? DICAEOPOLIS That the Ionians are debauchees and idiots, if they expect to receive gold from the barbarians. AMBASSADOR Not so, he speaks of medimni(1) of gold. f(1) A Greek measure, containing about six modii. DICAEOPOLIS What medimni? Thou are but a great

braggart; but get your way; I will find out the truth by myself. Come now, answer me clearly, if you do not wish me to dye your skin red. Will the Great King send us gold? (PSEUDARTABAS MAKES A NEGATIVE SIGN.) Then our ambassadors are seeking to deceive us? (PSEUDARTABAS SIGNS AFFIRMATIVELY.) These fellows make signs like any Greek; I am sure that they are nothing but Athenians. Oh! ho! I recognize one of these eunuchs; it is Clisthenes, the son of Sibyrtius.(1) Behold the effrontery of this shaven rump! How! great baboon, with such a beard do you seek to play the eunuch to us? And this other one? Is it not Straton? f(1) Noted for his extreme ugliness and his obscenity. Aristophanes frequently holds him to scorn in his comedies. HERALD Silence! Let all be seated. The Senate invites the King's Eye to the Prytaneum.(1) f(1) Ambassadors were entertained there at the public expense. DICAEOPOLIS Is this not sufficient to drive one to hang oneself? Here I stand chilled to the bone, whilst the doors of the Prytaneum fly wide open to lodge such rascals. But I will do something great and bold. Where is Amphitheus? Come and speak with me. AMPHITHEUS Here I am. DICAEOPOLIS Take these eight drachmae and go and conclude a truce with the Lacedaemonians for me, my wife and my children; I leave you free, my dear citizens, to send out embassies and to stand gaping in the air. HERALD Bring in Theorus, who has returned from the Court of Sitalces.(1) f(1) King of Thrace. THEORUS I am here. DICAEOPOLIS Another humbug! THEORUS We should not have remained long in Thrace... DICAEOPOLIS Forsooth, no, if you had not been well paid. THEORUS ...if the country had not been covered with snow; the rivers were ice-bound at the time that Theognis(1) brought out his tragedy here; during the whole of that time I was holding my own with Sitalces, cup in hand; and, in truth, he adored you to such a degree, that he wrote on the walls, "How beautiful are the Athenians!" His son, to whom we gave the freedom of the city, burned with desire to come here and eat chitterlings at the feast of the Apaturia;(2) he prayed his father to come to the aid of his new country and Sitalces swore on his goblet that he would succour us with such

a host that the Athenians would exclaim, "What a cloud of grasshoppers!" f(1) The tragic poet. f(2) A feast lasting three days and celebrated during the month Pyanepsion (November). The Greek word contains the suggestion of fraud. DICAEOPOLIS May I die if I believe a word of what you tell us! Excepting the grasshoppers, there is not a grain of truth in it all! THEORUS And he has sent you the most warlike soldiers of all Thrace. DICAEOPOLIS Now we shall begin to see clearly. HERALD Come hither, Thracians, whom Theorus brought. DICAEOPOLIS What plague have we here? THEORUS 'Tis the host of the Odomanti.(1) f(1) A Thracian tribe from the right bank of the Strymon. DICAEOPOLIS Of the Odomanti? Tell me what it means. Who has mutilated them like this? THEORUS If they are given a wage of two drachmae, they will put all Boeotia(1) to fire and sword. f(1) The Boeotians were the allies of Sparta. DICAEOPOLIS Two drachmae to those circumcised hounds! Groan aloud, ye people of rowers, bulwark of Athens! Ah! great gods! I am undone; these Odomanti are robbing me of my garlic!(1) Will you give me back my garlic? f(1) Dicaeopolis had brought a clove of garlic with him to eat during the Assembly. THEORUS Oh! wretched man! do not go near them; they have eaten garlic(1). f(1) Garlic was given to game-cocks, before setting them at each other, to give them pluck for the fight. DICAEOPOLIS Prytanes, will you let me be treated in this manner, in my own country and by barbarians? But I oppose the discussion of paying a wage to the Thracians; I announce an omen; I have just felt a drop of rain.(1) f(1) At the lest unfavourable omen, the sitting of the Assembly was declared at an end. HERALD Let the Thracians withdraw and return the day after tomorrow; the Prytanes declare the sitting at an end. DICAEOPOLIS Ye gods, what garlic I have lost! But here comes Amphitheus returned from Lacedaemon. Welcome, Amphitheus. AMPHITHEUS No, there is no welcome for me and I fly as fast as I can, for I am pursued by the Acharnians. DICAEOPOLIS Why, what has happened? AMPHITHEUS I was hurrying to bring your treaty of truce, but some old dotards from Acharnae(1) got scent of the thing; they are veterans of Marathon,

tough as oak or maple, of which they are made for sure—rough and ruthless. They all started a-crying: "Wretch! you are the bearer of a treaty, and the enemy has only just cut our vines!" Meanwhile they were gathering stones in their cloaks, so I fled and they ran after me shouting. f(1) The deme of Acharnae was largely inhabited by charcoal-burners, who supplied the city with fuel. DICAEOPOLIS Let 'em shout as much as they please! But HAVE you brought me a treaty? AMPHITHEUS Most certainly, here are three samples to select from,(1) this one is five years old; take it and taste. f(1) He presents them in the form of wines contained in three separate skins. DICAEOPOLIS Faugh! AMPHITHEUS Well? DICAEOPOLIS It does not please me; it smells of pitch and of the ships they are fitting out.(1) f(1) Meaning, preparations for war. AMPHITHEUS Here is another, ten years old; taste it. DICAEOPOLIS It smells strongly of the delegates, who go around the towns to chide the allies for their slowness.(1) f(1) Meaning, securing allies for the continuance of the war. AMPHITHEUS This last is a truce of thirty years, both on sea and land. DICAEOPOLIS Oh! by Bacchus! what a bouquet! It has the aroma of nectar and ambrosia; this does not say to us, "Provision yourselves for three days." But it lisps the gentle numbers, "Go whither you will."(1) I accept it, ratify it, drink it at one draught and consign the Acharnians to limbo. Freed from the war and its ills, I shall keep the Dionysia(2) in the country. f(1) When Athens sent forth an army, the soldiers were usually ordered to assemble at some particular spot with provisions for three days. f(2) These feasts were also called the Anthesteria or Lenaea; the Lenaem was a temple to Bacchus, erected outside the city. They took place during the month Anthesterion (February). AMPHITHEUS And I shall run away, for I'm mortally afraid of the Acharnians. CHORUS This way all! Let us follow our man; we will demand him of everyone we meet; the public weal makes his seizure imperative. Ho, there! tell me which way the bearer of the truce has gone; he has escaped us, he has disappeared. Curse old age! When I was young, in the days when I followed Phayllus,(1) running with a sack of coals on my back, this

wretch would not have eluded my pursuit, let him be as swift as he will; but now my limbs are stiff; old Lacratides(2) feels his legs are weighty and the traitor escapes me. No, no, let us follow him; old Acharnians like ourselves shall not be set at naught by a scoundrel, who has dared, great gods! to conclude a truce, when I wanted the war continued with double fury in order to avenge my ruined lands. No mercy for our foes until I have pierced their hearts like sharp reed, so that they dare never again ravage my vineyards. Come, let us seek the rascal; let us look everywhere, carrying our stones in our hands; let us hunt him from place to place until we trap him; I could never, never tire of the delight of stoning him. f(1) A celebrated athlete from Croton and a victor at Olympia; he was equally good as a runner and at the 'five exercises.' f(2) He had been Archon at the time of the battle of Marathon. DICAEOPOLIS Peace! profane men!(1) f(1) A sacred formula, pronounced by the priest before offering the sacrifice. CHORUS Silence all! Friends, do you hear the sacred formula? Here is he, whom we seek! This way, all! Get out of his way, surely he comes to offer an oblation. DICAEOPOLIS Peace, profane men! Let the basket-bearer(1) come forward, and thou Xanthias, hold the phallus well upright.(2) f(1) The maiden who carried the basket filled with fruits at the Dionysia in honour of Bacchus. f(2) The emblem of the fecundity of nature; it consisted of a representation, generally grotesquely exaggerated, of the male genital organs; the phallophori crowned with violets and ivy and their faces shaded with green foliage, sang improvised airs, call 'Phallics,' full of obscenity and suggestive 'double entendres.' WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS Daughter, set down the basket and let us begin the sacrifice. DAUGHTER OF DICAEOPOLIS Mother, hand me the ladle, that I may spread the sauce on the cake. DICAEOPOLIS It is well! Oh, mighty Bacchus, it is with joy that, freed from military duty, I and all mine perform this solemn rite and offer thee this sacrifice; grant that I may keep the rural Dionysia without hindrance and that this truce of thirty years may be propitious for me. WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS Come, my child, carry the basket gracefully and with a grave,

demure face. Happy he, who shall be your possessor and embrace you so firmly at dawn,(1) that you belch wind like a weasel. Go forward, and have a care they don't snatch your jewels in the crowd. f(1) The most propitious moment for Love's gambols, observes the scholiast. DICAEOPOLIS Xanthias, walk behind the basket-bearer and hold the phallus well erect; I will follow, singing the Phallic hymn; thou, wife, look on from the top of the terrace.(1) Forward! Oh, Phales,(2) companion of the orgies of Bacchus, night reveller, god of adultery, friend of young men, these past six(3) years I have not been able to invoke thee. With what joy I return to my farmstead, thanks to the truce I have concluded, freed from cares, from fighting and from Lamachuses!(4) How much sweeter, oh Phales, oh, Phales, is it to surprise Thratta, the pretty woodmaid, Strymodorus' slave, stealing wood from Mount Phelleus, to catch her under the arms, to throw her on the ground and possess her, Oh, Phales, Phales! If thou wilt drink and bemuse thyself with me, we shall to-morrow consume some good dish in honour of the peace, and I will hang up my buckler over the smoking hearth. f(1) Married women did not join in the processions. f(2) The god of generation, worshipped in the form of a phallus. f(3) A remark which fixes the date of the production of 'The Acharnians,' viz. the sixth year of the Peloponnesian War, 426 B.C. f(4) Lamachus was an Athenian general, who figures later in this comedy. CHORUS It is he, he himself. Stone him, stone him, stone him, strike the wretch. All, all of you, pelt him, pelt him! DICAEOPOLIS What is this? By Heracles, you will smash my pot.(1) f(1) At the rural Dionysia a pot of kitchen vegetables was borne in the procession along with other emblems. CHORUS It is you that we are stoning, you miserable scoundrel. DICAEOPOLIS And for what sin, Acharnian Elders, tell me that! CHORUS You ask that, you impudent rascal, traitor to your country; you alone amongst us all have concluded a truce, and you dare to look us in the face! DICAEOPOLIS But you do not know WHY I have treated for peace. Listen! CHORUS Listen to you? No, no, you are about to die, we will annihilate you with our stones. DICAEOPOLIS But first of all,

listen. Stop, my friends. CHORUS I will hear nothing; do not address me; I hate you more than I do Cleon,(1) whom one day I shall flay to make sandals for the Knights. Listen to your long speeches, after you have treated with the Laconians? No, I will punish you. f(1) Cleon the Demagogue was a currier originally by trade. He was the sworn foe and particular detestation of the Knights or aristocratic party generally. DICAEOPOLIS Friends, leave the Laconians out of debate and consider only whether I have not done well to conclude my truce. CHORUS Done well! when you have treated with a people who know neither gods, nor truth, nor faith. DICAEOPOLIS We attribute too much to the Laconians; as for myself, I know that they are not the cause of all our troubles. CHORUS Oh, indeed, rascal! You dare to use such language to me and then expect me to spare you! DICAEOPOLIS No, no, they are not the cause of all our troubles, and I who address you claim to be able to prove that they have much to complain of in us. CHORUS This passes endurance; my heart bounds with fury. Thus you dare to defend our enemies. DICAEOPOLIS Were my head on the block I would uphold what I say and rely on the approval of the people. CHORUS Comrades, let us hurl our stones and dye this fellow purple. DICAEOPOLIS What black fire-brand has inflamed your heart! You will not hear me? You really will not, Acharnians? CHORUS No, a thousand times, no. DICAEOPOLIS This is a hateful injustice. CHORUS May I die, if I listen. DICAEOPOLIS Nay, nay! have mercy, have mercy, Acharnians. CHORUS You shall die. DICAEOPOLIS Well, blood for blood! I will kill your dearest friend. I have here the hostages of Acharnae;(1) I shall disembowel them. f(1) That is, the baskets of charcoal. CHORUS Acharnians, what means this threat? Has he got one of our children in his house? What gives him such audacity? DICAEOPOLIS Stone me, if it please you; I shall avenge myself on this. (SHOWS A BASKET.) Let us see whether you have any love for your coals. CHORUS Great Gods! this basket is our fellow-citizen. Stop, stop, in heaven's name! DICAEOPOLIS I shall dismember it despite your cries; I will listen to nothing. CHORUS How! will you kill this

coal-basket, my beloved comrade? DICAEOPOLIS Just now, you would not listen to me. CHORUS Well, speak now, if you will; tell us, tell us you have a weakness for the Lacedaemonians. I consent to anything; never will I forsake this dear little basket. DICAEOPOLIS First, throw down your stones. CHORUS There! 'tis done. And you, do put away your sword. DICAEOPOLIS Let me see that no stones remain concealed in your cloaks. CHORUS They are all on the ground; see how we shake our garments. Come, no haggling, lay down your sword; we threw away everything while crossing from one side of the stage to the other.(1) f(1) The stage of the Greek theatre was much broader, and at the same time shallower, than in a modern playhouse. DICAEOPOLIS What cries of anguish you would have uttered had these coals of Parnes(1) been dismembered, and yet it came very near it; had they perished, their death would have been due to the folly of their fellow-citizens. The poor basket was so frightened, look, it has shed a thick black dust over me, the same as a cuttle-fish does. What an irritable temper! You shout and throw stones, you will not hear my arguments—not even when I propose to speak in favour of the Lacedaemonians with my head on the block; and yet I cling to life. f(1) A mountain in Attica, in the neighbourhood of Acharnae. CHORUS Well then, bring out a block before your door, scoundrel, and let us hear the good grounds you can give us; I am curious to know them. Now mind, as you proposed yourself, place your head on the block and speak. DICAEOPOLIS Here is the block; and, though I am but a very sorry speaker, I wish nevertheless to talk freely of the Lacedaemonians and without the protection of my buckler. Yet I have many reasons for fear. I know our rustics; they are delighted if some braggart comes, and rightly or wrongly, loads both them and their city with praise and flattery; they do not see that such toad-eaters(1) are traitors, who sell them for gain. As for the old men, I know their weakness; they only seek to overwhelm the accused with their votes.(2) Nor have I forgotten how Cleon treated me because of my comedy last year;(3) he dragged me before the Senate and there he uttered endless slanders against me; 'twas a tempest of abuse, a

deluge of lies. Through what a slough of mud he dragged me! I almost perished. Permit me, therefore, before I speak, to dress in the manner most likely to draw pity. f(1) Orators in the pay of the enemy. f(2) Satire on the Athenians' addiction to law-suits. f(3) 'The Babylonians.' Cleon had denounced Aristophanes to the Senate for having scoffed at Athens before strangers, many of whom were present at the performance. The play is now lost. CHORUS What evasions, subterfuges and delays! Hold! here is the sombre helmet of Pluto with its thick bristling plume; Hieronymus(1) lends it to you; then open Sisyphus'(2) bag of wiles; but hurry, hurry, pray, for discussion does not admit of delay. f(1) A tragic poet; we know next to nothing of him or his works. f(2) Son of Aeolus, renowned in fable for his robberies, and for the tortures to which he was put by Pluto. He was cunning enough to break loose out of hell, but Hermes brought him back again. DICAEOPOLIS The time has come for me to manifest my courage, so I will go and seek Euripides. Ho! slave, slave! SLAVE Who's there? DICAEOPOLIS Is Euripides at home? SLAVE He is and he isn't; understand that, if you have wit for't. DICAEOPOLIS How? He is and he isn't!(1) f(1) This whole scene is directed at Euripides; Aristophanes ridicules the subtleties of his poetry and the trickeries of his staging, which, according to him, he only used to attract the less refined among his audience. SLAVE Certainly, old man; busy gathering subtle fancies here and there, his mind is not in the house, but he himself is; perched aloft, he is composing a tragedy. DICAEOPOLIS Oh, Euripides, you are indeed happy to have a slave so quick at repartee! Now, fellow, call your master. SLAVE Impossible! DICAEOPOLIS So much the worse. But I will not go. Come, let us knock at the door. Euripides, my little Euripides, my darling Euripides, listen; never had man greater right to your pity. It is Dicaeopolis of the Chollidan Deme who calls you. Do you hear? EURIPIDES I have no time to waste. DICAEOPOLIS Very well, have yourself wheeled out here.(1) f(1) "Wheeled out"—that is, by means of a mechanical contrivance of the Greek stage, by which an interior was shown, the set scene with performers, etc., all complete, being in some

way, which cannot be clearly made out from the descriptions, swung out or wheeled out on to the main stage. EURIPIDES Impossible. DICAEOPOLIS Nevertheless... EURIPIDES Well, let them roll me out; as to coming down, I have not the time. DICAEOPOLIS Euripides.... EURIPIDES What words strike my ear? DICAEOPOLIS You perch aloft to compose tragedies, when you might just as well do them on the ground. I am not astonished at your introducing cripples on the stage.(1) And why dress in these miserable tragic rags? I do not wonder that your heroes are beggars. But, Euripides, on my knees I beseech you, give me the tatters of some old piece; for I have to treat the Chorus to a long speech, and if I do it ill it is all over with me. f(1) Having been lamed, it is of course implied, by tumbling from the lofty apparatus on which the Author sat perched to write his tragedies. EURIPIDES What rags do you prefer? Those in which I rigged out Aeneus(1) on the stage, that unhappy, miserable old man? f(1) Euripides delighted, or was supposed by his critic Aristophanes to delight, in the representation of misery and wretchedness on the stage. 'Aeneus,' 'Phoenix,' 'Philoctetes,' 'Bellerophon,' 'Telephus,' Ino' are titles of six tragedies of his in this genre of which fragments are extant. DICAEOPOLIS No, I want those of some hero still more unfortunate. EURIPIDES Of Phoenix, the blind man? DICAEOPOLIS No, not of Phoenix, you have another hero more unfortunate than him. EURIPIDES Now, what tatters DOES he want? Do you mean those of the beggar Philoctetes? DICAEOPOLIS No, of another far more the mendicant. EURIPIDES Is it the filthy dress of the lame fellow, Bellerophon? DICAEOPOLIS No, 'tis not Bellerophon; he, whom I mean, was not only lame and a beggar, but boastful and a fine speaker. EURIPIDES Ah! I know, it is Telephus, the Mysian. DICAEOPOLIS Yes, Telephus. Give me his rags, I beg of you. EURIPIDES Slave! give him Telephus' tatters; they are on top of the rags of Thyestes and mixed with those of Ino. SLAVE Catch hold! here they are. DICAEOPOLIS Oh! Zeus, whose eye pierces everywhere and embraces all, permit me to assume the most wretched dress on earth. Euripides, cap your kindness by

giving me the little Mysian hat, that goes so well with these tatters. I must to-day have the look of a beggar; "be what I am, but not appear to be";(1) the audience will know well who I am, but the Chorus will be fools enough not to, and I shall dupe 'em with my subtle phrases. f(1) Line borrowed from Euripides. A great number of verses are similarly parodied in this scene. EURIPIDES I will give you the hat; I love the clever tricks of an ingenious brain like yours. DICAEOPOLIS Rest happy, and may it befall Telephus as I wish. Ah! I already feel myself filled with quibbles. But I must have a beggar's staff. EURIPIDES Here you are, and now get you gone from this porch. DICAEOPOLIS Oh, my soul! You see how you are driven from this house, when I still need so many accessories. But let us be pressing, obstinate, importunate. Euripides, give me a little basket with a lamp alight inside. EURIPIDES Whatever do you want such a thing as that for? DICAEOPOLIS I do not need it, but I want it all the same. EURIPIDES You importune me; get you gone! DICAEOPOLIS Alas! may the gods grant you a destiny as brilliant as your mother's.(1) f(1) Report said that Euripides' mother had sold vegetables on the market. EURIPIDES Leave me in peace. DICAEOPOLIS Oh, just a little broken cup. EURIPIDES Take it and go and hang yourself. What a tiresome fellow! DICAEOPOLIS Ah! you do not know all the pain you cause me. Dear, good Euripides, nothing beyond a small pipkin stoppered with a sponge. EURIPIDES Miserable man! You are robbing me of an entire tragedy.(1) Here, take it and be off. f(1) Aristophanes means, of course, to imply that the whole talent of Euripides lay in these petty details of stage property. DICAEOPOLIS I am going, but, great gods! I need one thing more; unless I have it, I am a dead man. Hearken, my little Euripides, only give me this and I go, never to return. For pity's sake, do give me a few small herbs for my basket. EURIPIDES You wish to ruin me then. Here, take what you want; but it is all over with my pieces! DICAEOPOLIS I won't ask another thing; I'm going. I am too importunate and forget that I rouse against me the hate of kings.—Ah! wretch that I am! I am lost! I have forgotten one thing, without which

all the rest is as nothing. Euripides, my excellent Euripides, my dear little Euripides, may I die if I ask you again for the smallest present; only one, the last, absolutely the last; give me some of the chervil your mother left you in her will. EURIPIDES Insolent hound! Slave, lock the door! DICAEOPOLIS Oh, my soul! I must go away without the chervil. Art thou sensible of the dangerous battle we are about to engage upon in defending the Lacedaemonians? Courage, my soul, we must plunge into the midst of it. Dost thou hesitate and art thou fully steeped in Euripides? That's right! do not falter, my poor heart, and let us risk our head to say what we hold for truth. Courage and boldly to the front. I wonder I am so brave. CHORUS What do you purport doing? what are you going to say? What an impudent fellow! what a brazen heart! to dare to stake his head and uphold an opinion contrary to that of us all! And he does not tremble to face this peril. Come, it is you who desired it, speak! DICAEOPOLIS Spectators, be not angered if, although I am a beggar, I dare in a Comedy to speak before the people of Athens of the public weal; Comedy too can sometimes discern what is right. I shall not please, but I shall say what is true. Besides, Cleon shall not be able to accuse me of attacking Athens before strangers;(1) we are by ourselves at the festival of the Lenaea; the period when our allies send us their tribute and their soldiers is not yet. Here is only the pure wheat without chaff; as to the resident strangers settled among us, they and the citizens are one, like the straw and the ear. I detest the Lacedaemonians with all my heart, and may Posidon, the god of Taenarus,(2) cause an earthquake and overturn their dwellings! My vines also have been cut. But come (there are only friends who hear me), why accuse the Laconians of all our woes? Some men (I do not say the city, note particularly that I do not say the city), some wretches, lost in vices, bereft of honour, who were not even citizens of good stamp, but strangers, have accused the Megarians of introducing their produce fraudulently, and not a cucumber, a leveret, a suck(l)ing pig, a clove of garlic, a lump of salt was seen without its being said, "Halloa! these come from Megara," and their being instantly confiscated. Thus far

the evil was not serious and we were the only sufferers. But now some young drunkards go to Megara and carry off the courtesan Simaetha; the Megarians, hurt to the quick, run off in turn with two harlots of the house of Aspasia; and so for three gay women Greece is set ablaze. Then Pericles, aflame with ire on his Olympian height, let loose the lightning, caused the thunder to roll, upset Greece and passed an edict, which ran like the song, "That the Megarians be banished both from our land and from our markets and from the sea and from the continent."(3) Meanwhile the Megarians, who were beginning to die of hunger, begged the Lacedaemonians to bring about the abolition of the decree, of which those harlots were the cause; several times we refused their demand; and from that time there was horrible clatter of arms everywhere. You will say that Sparta was wrong, but what should she have done? Answer that. Suppose that a Lacedaemonian had seized a little Seriphian(4) dog on any pretext and had sold it, would you have endured it quietly? Far from it, you would at once have sent three hundred vessels to sea, and what an uproar there would have been through all the city! there 'tis a band of noisy soldiery, here a brawl about the election of a Trierarch; elsewhere pay is being distributed, the Pallas figure-heads are being regilded, crowds are surging under the market porticos, encumbered with wheat that is being measured, wine-skins, oar-leathers, garlic, olives, onions in nets; everywhere are chaplets, sprats, flute-girls, black eyes; in the arsenal bolts are being noisily driven home, sweeps are being made and fitted with leathers; we hear nothing but the sound of whistles, of flutes and fifes to encourage the work-folk. That is what you assuredly would have done, and would not Telephus have done the same? So I come to my general conclusion; we have no common sense. f(1) 'The Babylonians' had been produced at a time of year when Athens was crowded with strangers; 'The Acharnians,' on the contrary, was played in December. f(2) Sparta had been menaced with an earthquake in 427 B.C. Posidon was 'The Earthshaker,' god of earthquakes, as well as of the sea. f(3) A song by Timocreon the Rhodian, the words of which were practically identical with Pericles' decree. f(4) A

small and insignificant island, one of the Cyclades, allied with the Athenians, like months of these islands previous to and during the first part of the Peloponnesian War. FIRST SEMI-CHORUS Oh! wretch! oh! infamous man! You are naught but a beggar and yet you dare to talk to us like this! you insult their worships the informers! SECOND SEMI-CHORUS By Posidon! he speaks the truth; he has not lied in a single detail. FIRST SEMI-CHORUS But though it be true, need he say it? But you'll have no great cause to be proud of your insolence! SECOND SEMI-CHORUS Where are you running to? Don't you move; if you strike this man, I shall be at you. FIRST SEMI-CHORUS Lamachus, whose glance flashes lightning, whose plume petrifies thy foes, help! Oh! Lamachus, my friend, the hero of my tribe and all of you, both officers and soldiers, defenders of our walls, come to my aid; else is it all over with me! LAMACHUS Whence comes this cry of battle? where must I bring my aid? where must I sow dread? who wants me to uncase my dreadful Gorgon's head?(1) f(1) A figure of Medusa's head, forming the centre of Lamachus' shield. DICAEOPOLIS Oh, Lamachus, great hero! Your plumes and your cohorts terrify me. CHORUS This man, Lamachus, incessantly abuses Athens. LAMACHUS You are but a mendicant and you dare to use language of this sort? DICAEOPOLIS Oh, brave Lamachus, forgive a beggar who speaks at hazard. LAMACHUS But what have you said? Let us hear. DICAEOPOLIS I know nothing about it; the sight of weapons makes me dizzy. Oh! I adjure you, take that fearful Gorgon somewhat farther away. LAMACHUS There. DICAEOPOLIS Now place it face downwards on the ground. LAMACHUS It is done. DICAEOPOLIS Give me a plume out of your helmet. LAMACHUS Here is a feather. DICAEOPOLIS And hold my head while I vomit; the plumes have turned my stomach. LAMACHUS Hah! what are you proposing to do? do you want to make yourself vomit with this feather? DICAEOPOLIS Is it a feather? what bird's? a braggart's? LAMACHUS Ah! ah! I will rip you open. DICAEOPOLIS No, no, Lamachus! Violence is out of place here! But as you are so strong, why did you not circumcise me? You have all the

tools you want for the operation there. LAMACHUS A beggar dares thus address a general! DICAEOPOLIS How? Am I a beggar? LAMACHUS What are you then? DICAEOPOLIS Who am I? A good citizen, not ambitious; a soldier, who has fought well since the outbreak of the war, whereas you are but a vile mercenary. LAMACHUS They elected me... DICAEOPOLIS Yes, three cuckoos did!(1) If I have concluded peace, 'twas disgust that drove me; for I see men with hoary heads in the ranks and young fellows of your age shirking service. Some are in Thrace getting an allowance of three drachmae, such fellows as Tisamenophoenippus and Panurgipparchides. The others are with Chares or in Chaonia, men like Geretotheodorus and Diomialazon; there are some of the same kidney, too, at Camarina and at Gela,(2) the laughing-stock of all and sundry. f(1) Indicates the character of his election, which was arranged, so Aristophanes implies, by his partisans. f(2) Town in Sicily. There is a pun on the name Gela and 'ridiculous' which it is impossible to keep in English. Apparently the Athenians had sent embassies to all parts of the Greek world to arrange treaties of alliance in view of the struggle with the Lacedaemonians; but only young debauchees of aristocratic connections had been chosen as envoys. LAMACHUS They were elected. DICAEOPOLIS And why do you always receive your pay, when none of these others ever gets any? Speak, Marilades, you have grey hair; well then, have you ever been entrusted with a mission? See! he shakes his head. Yet he is an active as well as a prudent man. And you, Dracyllus, Euphorides or Prinides, have you knowledge of Ecbatana or Chaonia? You say no, do you not? Such offices are good for the son of Caesyra(1) and Lamachus, who, but yesterday ruined with debt, never pay their shot, and whom all their friends avoid as foot passengers dodge the folks who empty their slops out of window. f(1) A contemporary orator apparently, otherwise unknown. LAMACHUS Oh! in freedom's name! are such exaggerations to be borne? DICAEOPOLIS Lamachus is well content; no doubt he is well paid, you know. LAMACHUS But I propose always to war with the Peloponnesians, both at

sea, on land and everywhere to make them tremble, and trounce them soundly. DICAEOPOLIS For my own part, I make proclamation to all Peloponnesians, Megarians and Boeotians, that to them my markets are open; but I debar Lamachus from entering them. CHORUS Convinced by this man's speech, the folk have changed their view and approve him for having concluded peace. But let us prepare for the recital of the parabasis.(1) Never since our poet presented Comedies, has he praised himself upon the stage; but, having been slandered by his enemies amongst the volatile Athenians, accused of scoffing at his country and of insulting the people, to-day he wishes to reply and regain for himself the inconstant Athenians. He maintains that he has done much that is good for you; if you no longer allow yourselves to be too much hoodwinked by strangers or seduced by flattery, if in politics you are no longer the ninnies you once were, it is thanks to him. Formerly, when delegates from other cities wanted to deceive you, they had but to style you, "the people crowned with violets," and at the word "violets" you at once sat erect on the tips of your bums. Or if, to tickle your vanity, someone spoke of "rich and sleek Athens," in return for that "sleekness" he would get all, because he spoke of you as he would have of anchovies in oil. In cautioning you against such wiles, the poet has done you great service as well as in forcing you to understand what is really the democratic principle. Thus, the strangers, who came to pay their tributes, wanted to see this great poet, who had dared to speak the truth to Athens. And so far has the fame of his boldness reached that one day the Great King, when questioning the Lacedaemonian delegates, first asked them which of the two rival cities was the superior at sea, and then immediately demanded at which it was that the comic poet directed his biting satire. "Happy that city," he added, "if it listens to his counsel; it will grow in power, and its victory is assured." This is why the Lacedaemonians offer you peace, if you will cede them Aegina; not that they care for the isle, but they wish to rob you of your poet.(2) As for you, never lose him, who will always fight for the cause of justice in his Comedies; he promises you that his precepts will

lead you to happiness, though he uses neither flattery, nor bribery, nor intrigue, nor deceit; instead of loading you with praise, he will point you to the better way. I scoff at Cleon's tricks and plotting; honesty and justice shall fight my cause; never will you find me a political poltroon, a prostitute to the highest bidder. I invoke thee, Acharnian Muse, fierce and fell as the devouring fire; sudden as the spark that bursts from the crackling oaken coal when roused by the quickening fan to fry little fishes, while others knead the dough or whip the sharp Thasian pickle with rapid hand, so break forth, my Muse, and inspire thy tribesmen with rough, vigorous, stirring strains. We others, now old men and heavy with years, we reproach the city; so many are the victories we have gained for the Athenian fleets that we well deserve to be cared for in our declining life; yet far from this, we are ill-used, harassed with law-suits, delivered over to the scorn of stripling orators. Our minds and bodies being ravaged with age, Posidon should protect us, yet we have no other support than a staff. When standing before the judge, we can scarcely stammer forth the fewest words, and of justice we see but its barest shadow, whereas the accuser, desirous of conciliating the younger men, overwhelms us with his ready rhetoric; he drags us before the judge, presses us with questions, lays traps for us; the onslaught troubles, upsets and ruins poor old Tithonus, who, crushed with age, stands tongue-tied; sentenced to a fine,(3) he weeps, he sobs and says to his friend, "This fine robs me of the last trifle that was to have bought my coffin." Is this not a scandal? What! the clepsydra(4) is to kill the white-haired veteran, who, in fierce fighting, has so oft covered himself with glorious sweat, whose valour at Marathon saved the country! 'Twas we who pursued on the field of Marathon, whereas now 'tis wretches who pursue us to the death and crush us! What would Marpsias reply to this?(5) What an injustice that a man, bent with age like Thucydides, should be brow-beaten by this braggart advocate, Cephisodemus,(6) who is as savage as the Scythian desert he was born in! Is it not to convict him from the outset? I wept tears of pity when I saw an Archer(7) maltreat this old man, who, by Ceres, when he was

young and the true Thucydides, would not have permitted an insult from Ceres herself! At that date he would have floored ten orators, he would have terrified three thousand Archers with his shouts; he would have pierced the whole line of the enemy with his shafts. Ah! but if you will not leave the aged in peace, decree that the advocates be matched; thus the old man will only be confronted with a toothless greybeard, the young will fight with the braggart, the ignoble with the son of Clinias;(8) make a law that in the future, the old man can only be summoned and convicted at the courts by the aged and the young man by the youth. f(1) The 'parabasis' in the Old Comedy was a sort of address or topical harangue addressed directly by the poet, speaking by the Chorus, to the audience. It was nearly always political in bearing, and the subject of the particular piece was for the time being set aside altogether. f(2) It will be remembered that Aristophanes owned land in Aegina. f(3) Everything was made the object of a law-suit in Athens. The old soldiers, inexpert at speaking, often lost the day. f(4) A water-clock used to limit the length of speeches in the courts. f(5) A braggart speaker, fiery and pugnacious. f(6) Cephisodemus was an Athenian, but through his mother possessed Scythian blood. f(7) The city of Athens was policed by Scythian archers. f(8) Alcibiades. DICAEOPOLIS These are the confines of my market-place. All Peloponnesians, Megarians, Boeotians, have the right to come and trade here, provided they sell their wares to me and not to Lamachus. As market-inspectors I appoint these three whips of Leprean(1) leather, chosen by lot. Warned away are all informers and all men of Phasis.(2) They are bringing me the pillar on which the treaty is inscribed(3) and I shall erect it in the centre of the market, well in sight of all. f(1) The leather market was held in Lepros, outside the city. f(2) Mean an informer ((from the Greek) 'to denounce'). f(3) According to the Athenian custom. A MEGARIAN Hail! market of Athens, beloved of Megarians. Let Zeus, the patron of friendship, witness, I regretted you as a mother mourns her son. Come, poor little daughters of an unfortunate father, try to find something to eat; listen to me with the full heed of an

empty belly. Which would you prefer? To be sold or to cry with hunger? DAUGHTERS To be sold, to be sold! MEGARIAN That is my opinion too. But who would make so sorry a deal as to buy you? Ah! I recall me a Megarian trick; I am going to disguise you as little porkers, that I am offering for sale. Fit your hands with these hoofs and take care to appear the issue of a sow of good breed, for, if I am forced to take you back to the house, by Hermes! you will suffer cruelly of hunger! Then fix on these snouts and cram yourselves into this sack. Forget not to grunt and to say wee-wee like the little pigs that are sacrificed in the Mysteries. I must summon Dicaeopolis. Where is be? Dicaeopolis, do you want to buy some nice little porkers? DICAEOPOLIS Who are you? a Megarian? MEGARIAN I have come to your market. DICAEOPOLIS Well, how are things at Megara?(1) f(1) Megara was allied to Sparta and suffered during the war more than any other city because of its proximity to Athens. MEGARIAN We are crying with hunger at our firesides. DICAEOPOLIS The fireside is jolly enough with a piper. But what else is doing at Megara, eh? MEGARIAN What else? When I left for the market, the authorities were taking steps to let us die in the quickest manner. DICAEOPOLIS That is the best way to get you out of all your troubles. MEGARIAN True. DICAEOPOLIS What other news of Megara? What is wheat selling at? MEGARIAN With us it is valued as highly as the very gods in heaven! DICAEOPOLIS Is it salt that you are bringing? MEGARIAN Are you not holding back the salt? DICAEOPOLIS 'Tis garlic then? MEGARIAN What! garlic! do you not at every raid grub up the ground with your pikes to pull out every single head? DICAEOPOLIS What DO you bring then? MEGARIAN Little sows, like those they immolate at the Mysteries. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! very well, show me them. MEGARIAN They are very fine; feel their weight. See! how fat and fine. DICAEOPOLIS But what is this? MEGARIAN A SOW, for a certainty.(1) f(1) Throughout this whole scene there is an obscene play upon (a) word which means in Greek both 'sow' and 'a woman's organs of generation.' DICAEOPOLIS You say a

sow! Of what country, then? MEGARIAN From Megara. What! is it not a sow then? DICAEOPOLIS No, I don't believe it is. MEGARIAN This is too much! what an incredulous man! He says 'tis not a sow; but we will stake, an you will, a measure of salt ground up with thyme, that in good Greek this is called a sow and nothing else. DICAEOPOLIS But a sow of the human kind. MEGARIAN Without question, by Diocles! of my own breed! Well! What think you? will you hear them squeal? DICAEOPOLIS Well, yes, I' faith, I will. MEGARIAN Cry quickly, wee sowlet; squeak up, hussy, or by Hermes! I take you back to the house. GIRL Wee-wee, wee-wee! MEGARIAN Is that a little sow, or not? DICAEOPOLIS Yes, it seems so; but let it grow up, and it will be a fine fat bitch. MEGARIAN In five years it will be just like its mother. DICAEOPOLIS But it cannot be sacrificed. MEGARIAN And why not? DICAEOPOLIS It has no tail.(1) f(1) Sacrificial victims were bound to be perfect in every part; an animal, therefore, without a tail could not be offered. MEGARIAN Because it is quite young, but in good time it will have a big one, thick and red. DICAEOPOLIS The two are as like as two peas. MEGARIAN They are born of the same father and mother; let them be fattened, let them grow their bristles, and they will be the finest sows you can offer to Aphrodite. DICAEOPOLIS But sows are not immolated to Aphrodite. MEGARIAN Not sows to Aphrodite! Why, 'tis the only goddess to whom they are offered! the flesh of my sows will be excellent on the spit. DICAEOPOLIS Can they eat alone? They no longer need their mother! MEGARIAN Certainly not, nor their father. DICAEOPOLIS What do they like most? MEGARIAN Whatever is given them; but ask for yourself. DICAEOPOLIS Speak! little sow. DAUGHTER Wee-wee, wee-wee! DICAEOPOLIS Can you eat chick-pease? DAUGHTER Wee-wee, wee-wee, wee-wee! DICAEOPOLIS And Attic figs? DAUGHTER Wee-wee, wee-wee! DICAEOPOLIS What sharp squeaks at the name of figs. Come, let some figs be brought for these little pigs. Will they eat them? Goodness! how they munch them, what a grinding of teeth, mighty Heracles! I believe those pigs hail from the land of

the Voracians. But surely 'tis impossible they have bolted all the figs! MEGARIAN Yes, certainly, bar this one that I took from them. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! what funny creatures! For what sum will you sell them? MEGARIAN I will give you one for a bunch of garlic, and the other, if you like, for a quart measure of salt. DICAEOPOLIS I buy them of you. Wait for me here. MEGARIAN The deal is done. Hermes, god of good traders, grant I may sell both my wife and my mother in the same way! AN INFORMER Hi! fellow, what countryman are you? MEGARIAN I am a pig-merchant from Megara. INFORMER I shall denounce both your pigs and yourself as public enemies. MEGARIAN Ah! here our troubles begin afresh! INFORMER Let go that sack. I will punish your Megarian lingo!(1) f(1) The Megarians used the Doric dialect. MEGARIAN Dicaeopolis, Dicaeopolis, they want to denounce me. DICAEOPOLIS Who dares do this thing? Inspectors, drive out the informers. Ah! you offer to enlighten us without a lamp!(1) f(1) A play upon (a) word which both means 'to light' and 'to denounce.' INFORMER What! I may not denounce our enemies? DICAEOPOLIS Have a care for yourself, if you don't go off pretty quick to denounce elsewhere. MEGARIAN What a plague to Athens! DICAEOPOLIS Be reassured, Megarian. Here is the price for your two swine, the garlic and the salt. Farewell and much happiness! MEGARIAN Ah! we never have that amongst us. DICAEOPOLIS Well! may the inopportune wish apply to myself. MEGARIAN Farewell, dear little sows, and seek, far from your father, to munch your bread with salt, if they give you any. CHORUS Here is a man truly happy. See how everything succeeds to his wish. Peacefully seated in his market, he will earn his living; woe to Ctesias,(1) and all other informers who dare to enter there! You will not be cheated as to the value of wares, you will not again see Prepis(2) wiping his foul rump, nor will Cleonymus(3) jostle you; you will take your walks, clothed in a fine tunic, without meeting Hyperbolus(4) and his unceasing quibblings, without being accosted on the public place by any importunate fellow, neither by Cratinus,(5) shaven in the fashion of the debauchees, nor by this musician, who

plagues us with his silly improvisations, Artemo, with his arm-pits stinking as foul as a goat, like his father before him. You will not be the butt of the villainous Pauson's(6) jeers, nor of Lysistratus,(7) the disgrace of the Cholargian deme, who is the incarnation of all the vices, and endures cold and hunger more than thirty days in the month. f(1) An informer (sycophant), otherwise unknown. f(2) A debauchee of vile habits; a pathic. f(3) Mentioned above; he was as proud as he was cowardly. f(4) An Athenian general, quarrelsome and litigious, and an Informer into the bargain. f(5) A comic poet of vile habits. f(6) A painter. f(7) A debauchee, a gambler, and always in extreme poverty. A BOEOTIAN By Heracles! my shoulder is quite black and blue. Ismenias, put the penny-royal down there very gently, and all of you, musicians from Thebes, pipe with your bone flutes into a dog's rump.(1) f(1) This kind of flute had a bellows, made of dog-skin, much like the bagpipes of to-day. DICAEOPOLIS Enough, enough, get you gone. Rascally hornets, away with you! Whence has sprung this accursed swarm of Charis(1) fellows which comes assailing my door? f(1) A flute-player, mentioned above. BOEOTIAN Ah! by Iolas!(1) Drive them off, my dear host, you will please me immensely; all the way from Thebes, they were there piping behind me and have completely stripped my penny-royal of its blossom. But will you buy anything of me, some chickens or some locusts? f(1) A hero, much honoured in Thebes; nephew of Heracles. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! good day, Boeotian, eater of good round loaves.(1) What do you bring? f(1) A form of bread peculiar to Boeotia. BOEOTIAN All that is good in Boeotia, marjoram, penny-royal, rush-mats, lamp-wicks, ducks, jays, woodcocks, water-fowl, wrens, divers. DICAEOPOLIS 'Tis a very hail of birds that beats down on my market. BOEOTIAN I also bring geese, hares, foxes, moles, hedgehogs, cats, lyres, martins, otters and eels from the Copaic lake.(1) f(1) A lake in Boeotia. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! my friend, you, who bring me the most delicious of fish, let me salute your eels. BOEOTIAN Come, thou, the eldest of my fifty Copaic virgins, come and complete the joy of our host. DICAEOPOLIS Oh! my well-beloved, thou

object of my long regrets, thou art here at last then, thou, after whom the comic poets sigh, thou, who art dear to Morychus.(1) Slaves, hither with the stove and the bellows. Look at this charming eel, that returns to us after six long years of absence.(2) Salute it, my children; as for myself, I will supply coal to do honour to the stranger. Take it into my house; death itself could not separate me from her, if cooked with beet leaves. f(1) He was the Lucullus of Athens. f(2) This again fixes the date of the presentation of 'The Acharnians' to 436 B.C., the sixth year of the War, since the beginning of which Boeotia had been closed to the Athenians. BOEOTIAN And what will you give me in return? DICAEOPOLIS It will pay for your market dues. And as to the rest, what do you wish to sell me? BOEOTIAN Why, everything. DICAEOPOLIS On what terms? For ready-money or in wares from these parts? BOEOTIAN I would take some Athenian produce, that we have not got in Boeotia. DICAEOPOLIS Phaleric anchovies, pottery? BOEOTIAN Anchovies, pottery? But these we have. I want produce that is wanting with us and that is plentiful here. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! I have the very thing; take away an Informer, packed up carefully as crockery-ware. BOEOTIAN By the twin gods! I should earn big money, if I took one; I would exhibit him as an ape full of spite. DICAEOPOLIS Hah! here we have Nicarchus,(1) who comes to denounce you. f(1) An informer. BOEOTIAN How small he is! DICAEOPOLIS But in his case the whole is one mass of ill-nature. NICARCHUS Whose are these goods? DICAEOPOLIS Mine; they come from Boeotia, I call Zeus to witness. NICARCHUS I denounce them as coming from an enemy's country. BOEOTIAN What! you declare war against birds? NICARCHUS And I am going to denounce you too. BOEOTIAN What harm have I done you? NICARCHUS I will say it for the benefit of those that listen; you introduce lamp-wicks from an enemy's country. DICAEOPOLIS Then you go as far as denouncing a wick. NICARCHUS It needs but one to set an arsenal afire. DICAEOPOLIS A wick set an arsenal ablaze! But how, great gods? NICARCHUS Should a Boeotian attach it to an insect's wing, and,

taking advantage of a violent north wind, throw it by means of a tube into the arsenal and the fire once get hold of the vessels, everything would soon be devoured by the flames. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! wretch! an insect and a wick devour everything! (HE STRIKES HIM.) NICARCHUS (TO THE CHORUS) You will bear witness, that he mishandles me. DICAEOPOLIS Shut his mouth. Give me some hay; I am going to pack him up like a vase, that he may not get broken on the road. CHORUS Pack up your goods carefully, friend; that the stranger may not break it when taking it away. DICAEOPOLIS I shall take great care with it, for one would say he is cracked already; he rings with a false note, which the gods abhor. CHORUS But what will be done with him? DICAEOPOLIS This is a vase good for all purposes; it will be used as a vessel for holding all foul things, a mortar for pounding together law-suits, a lamp for spying upon accounts, and as a cup for the mixing up and poisoning of everything. CHORUS None could ever trust a vessel for domestic use that has such a ring about it. DICAEOPOLIS Oh! it is strong, my friend, and will never get broken, if care is taken to hang it head downwards. CHORUS There! it is well packed now! BOEOTIAN Marry, I will proceed to carry off my bundle. CHORUS Farewell, worthiest of strangers, take this informer, good for anything, and fling him where you like. DICAEOPOLIS Bah! this rogue has given me enough trouble to pack! Here! Boeotian, pick up your pottery. BOEOTIAN Stoop, Ismenias, that I may put it on your shoulder, and be very careful with it. DICAEOPOLIS You carry nothing worth having; however, take it, for you will profit by your bargain; the Informers will bring you luck. A SERVANT OF LAMACHUS Dicaeopolis! DICAEOPOLIS What do you want crying this gait? SERVANT Lamachus wants to keep the Feast of Cups,(1) and I come by his order to bid you one drachma for some thrushes and three more for a Copaic eel. f(1) The second day of the Dionysia or feasts of Bacchus, kept in the month Anthesterion (February), and called the Anthesteria. They lasted three days; the second being the Feast of Cups, the third the Feast of Pans. Vases, filled with grain of all kinds, were borne in procession and

dedicated to Hermes. DICAEOPOLIS And who is this Lamachus, who demands an eel? SERVANT 'Tis the terrible, indefatigable Lamachus, who is always brandishing his fearful Gorgon's head and the three plumes which o'ershadow his helmet. DICAEOPOLIS No, no, he will get nothing, even though he gave me his buckler. Let him eat salt fish, while he shakes his plumes, and, if he comes here making any din, I shall call the inspectors. As for myself, I shall take away all these goods; I go home on thrushes' wings and black-birds' pinions.(1) f(1) A parody on some verses from a lost poet. CHORUS You see, citizens, you see the good fortune which this man owes to his prudence, to his profound wisdom. You see how, since he has concluded peace, he buys what is useful in the household and good to eat hot. All good things flow towards him unsought. Never will I welcome the god of war in my house; never shall he chant the "Harmodius" at my table;(1) he is a sot, who comes feasting with those who are overflowing with good things and brings all manner of mischief at his heels. He overthrows, ruins, rips open; 'tis vain to make him a thousand offers, "be seated, pray, drink this cup, proffered in all friendship," he burns our vine-stocks and brutally pours out the wine from our vineyards on the ground. This man, on the other hand, covers his table with a thousand dishes; proud of his good fortunes, he has had these feathers cast before his door to show us how he lives. f(1) A feasting song in honour of Harmodius, the assassin of Hipparchus the Tyrant, son of Pisistratus. DICAEOPOLIS Oh, Peace! companion of fair Aphrodite and of the sweet Graces, how charming are thy features and yet I never knew it! Would that Eros might join me to thee, Eros, crowned with roses as Zeuxis(1) shows him to us! Perhaps I seem somewhat old to you, but I am yet able to make you a threefold offering; despite my age I could plant a long row of vines for you; then beside these some tender cuttings from the fig; finally a young vine-stock, loaded with fruit and all around the field olive trees, which would furnish us with oil, wherewith to anoint us both at the New Moons. f(1) The celebrated painter, born in Heraclea, a contemporary of Aristophanes. HERALD

List, ye people! As was the custom of your forebears, empty a full pitcher of wine at the call of the trumpet; he, who first sees the bottom, shall get a wine-skin as round and plump as Ctesiphon's belly. DICAEOPOLIS Women, children, have you not heard? Faith! do you not heed the herald? Quick! let the hares boil and roast merrily; keep them a-turning; withdraw them from the flame; prepare the chaplets; reach me the skewers that I may spit the thrushes. CHORUS I envy you your wisdom and even more your good cheer. DICAEOPOLIS What then will you say when you see the thrushes roasting? CHORUS Ah! true indeed! DICAEOPOLIS Slave! stir up the fire. CHORUS See, how he knows his business, what a perfect cook! How well he understands the way to prepare a good dinner! A HUSBANDMAN Ah! woe is me! DICAEOPOLIS Heracles! What have we here? HUSBANDMAN A most miserable man. DICAEOPOLIS Keep your misery for yourself. HUSBANDMAN Ah! friend! since you alone are enjoying peace, grant me a part of your truce, were it but five years. DICAEOPOLIS What has happened to you? HUSBANDMAN I am ruined; I have lost a pair of steers. DICAEOPOLIS How? HUSBANDMAN The Boeotians seized them at Phyle.(1) f(1) A deme and frontier fortress of Attica, near the Boeotian border. DICAEOPOLIS Ah! poor wretch! and yet you have not left off white? HUSBANDMAN Their dung made my wealth. DICAEOPOLIS What can I do in the matter? HUSBANDMAN Crying for my beasts has lost me my eyesight. Ah! if you care for poor Dercetes of Phyle, anoint mine eyes quickly with your balm of peace. DICAEOPOLIS But, my poor fellow, I do not practise medicine. HUSBANDMAN Come, I adjure you; perhaps I shall recover my steers. DICAEOPOLIS 'Tis impossible; away, go and whine to the disciples of Pittalus.(1) f(1) An Athenian physician of the day. HUSBANDMAN Grant me but one drop of peace; pour it into this reedlet. DICAEOPOLIS No, not a particle; go a-weeping elsewhere. HUSBANDMAN Oh! oh! oh! my poor beasts! CHORUS This man has discovered the sweetest enjoyment in peace; he will share it with none. DICAEOPOLIS Pour honey over this tripe; set it before the fire to dry. CHORUS

What lofty tones he uses! Did you hear him? DICAEOPOLIS Get the eels on the gridiron! CHORUS You are killing me with hunger; your smoke is choking your neighbours, and you split our ears with your bawling. DICAEOPOLIS Have this fried and let it be nicely browned. A BRIDESMAID Dicaeopolis! Dicaeopolis! DICAEOPOLIS Who are you? BRIDESMAID A young bridegroom sends you these viands from the marriage feast. DICAEOPOLIS Whoever he be, I thank him. BRIDESMAID And in return, he prays you to pour a glass of peace into this vase, that he may not have to go to the front and may stay at home to do his duty to his young wife. DICAEOPOLIS Take back, take back your viands; for a thousand drachmae I would not give a drop of peace; but who are you, pray? BRIDESMAID I am the bridesmaid; she wants to say something to you from the bride privately. DICAEOPOLIS Come, what do you wish to say? (THE BRIDESMAID WHISPERS IN HIS EAR.) Ah! what a ridiculous demand! The bride burns with longing to keep by her her husband's weapon. Come! \bring hither my truce; to her alone will I give some of it, for she is a woman, and, as such, should not suffer under the war. Here, friend, reach hither your vial. And as to the manner of applying this balm, tell the bride, when a levy of soldiers is made to rub some in bed on her husband, where most needed. There, slave, take away my truce! Now, quick, bring me the wine-flagon, that I may fill up the drinking bowls! CHORUS I see a man, striding along apace, with knitted brows; he seems to us the bearer of terrible tidings. HERALD Oh! toils and battles, 'tis Lamachus! LAMACHUS What noise resounds around my dwelling, where shines the glint of arms. HERALD The Generals order you forthwith to take your battalions and your plumes, and, despite the snow, to go and guard our borders. They have learnt that a band of Boeotians intend taking advantage of the Feast of Cups to invade our country. LAMACHUS Ah! the Generals! they are numerous, but not good for much! It's cruel, not to be able to enjoy the feast! DICAEOPOLIS Oh! warlike host of Lamachus! LAMACHUS Wretch! do you dare to jeer me? DICAEOPOLIS Do you want to

fight this four-winged Geryon? LAMACHUS Oh! oh! what fearful tidings! DICAEOPOLIS Ah! ah! I see another herald running up; what news does he bring me? HERALD Dicaeopolis! DICAEOPOLIS What is the matter? HERALD Come quickly to the feast and bring your basket and your cup; 'tis the priest of Bacchus who invites you. But hasten, the guests have been waiting for you a long while. All is ready—couches, tables, cushions, chaplets, perfumes, dainties and courtesans to boot; biscuits, cakes, sesame-bread, tarts, lovely dancing women, the sweetest charm of the festivity. But come with all haste. LAMACHUS Oh! hostile gods! DICAEOPOLIS This is not astounding; you have chosen this huge, great ugly Gorgon's head for your patron. You, shut the door, and let someone get ready the meal. LAMACHUS Slave! slave! my knapsack! DICAEOPOLIS Slave! slave! a basket! LAMACHUS Take salt and thyme, slave, and don't forget the onions. DICAEOPOLIS Get some fish for me; I cannot bear onions. LAMACHUS Slave, wrap me up a little stale salt meat in a fig-leaf. DICAEOPOLIS And for me some good greasy tripe in a fig-leaf; I will have it cooked here. LAMACHUS Bring me the plumes for my helmet. DICAEOPOLIS Bring me wild pigeons and thrushes. LAMACHUS How white and beautiful are these ostrich feathers! DICAEOPOLIS How fat and well browned is the flesh of this wood-pigeon! LAMACHUS Bring me the case for my triple plume. DICAEOPOLIS Pass me over that dish of hare. LAMACHUS OH! the moths have eaten the hair of my crest. DICAEOPOLIS I shall always eat hare before dinner. LAMACHUS Hi! friend! try not to scoff at my armor? DICAEOPOLIS Hi! friend! will you kindly not stare at my thrushes. LAMACHUS Hi! friend! will you kindly not address me. DICAEOPOLIS I do not address you; I am scolding my slave. Shall we wager and submit the matter to Lamachus, which of the two is the best to eat, a locust or a thrush? LAMACHUS Insolent hound! DICAEOPOLIS He much prefers the locusts. LAMACHUS Slave, unhook my spear and bring it to me. DICAEOPOLIS Slave, slave, take the sausage from the fire and bring it to me. LAMACHUS Come, let me draw my spear from its

sheath. Hold it, slave, hold it tight. DICAEOPOLIS And you, slave, grip, grip well hold of the skewer. LAMACHUS Slave, the bracings for my shield. DICAEOPOLIS Pull the loaves out of the oven and bring me these bracings of my stomach. LAMACHUS My round buckler with the Gorgon's head. DICAEOPOLIS My round cheese-cake. LAMACHUS What clumsy wit! DICAEOPOLIS What delicious cheese-cake! LAMACHUS Pour oil on the buckler. Hah! hah! I can see reflected there an old man who will be accused of cowardice. DICAEOPOLIS Pour honey on the cake. Hah! hah! I can see an old man who makes Lamachus of the Gorgon's head weep with rage. LAMACHUS Slave, full war armour. DICAEOPOLIS Slave, my beaker; that is MY armour. LAMACHUS With this I hold my ground with any foe. DICAEOPOLIS And I with this with any tosspot. LAMACHUS Fasten the strappings to the buckler; personally I shall carry the knapsack DICAEOPOLIS Pack the dinner well into the basket; personally I shall carry the cloak. LAMACHUS Slave, take up the buckler and let's be off. It is snowing! Ah! 'tis a question of facing the winter. DICAEOPOLIS Take up the basket, 'tis a question of getting to the feast.

CHORUS We wish you both joy on your journeys, which differ so much. One goes to mount guard and freeze, while the other will drink, crowned with flowers, and then sleep with a young beauty, who will excite him readily. I say it freely; may Zeus confound Antimachus, the poet-historian, the son of Psacas! When Choregus at the Lenaea, alas! alas! he dismissed me dinnerless. May I see him devouring with his eyes a cuttle-fish, just served, well cooked, hot and properly salted; and the moment that he stretches his hand to help himself, may a dog seize it and run off with it. Such is my first wish. I also hope for him a misfortune at night. That returning all-fevered from horse practice, he may meet an Orestes,(1) mad with drink, who breaks open his head; that wishing to seize a stone, he, in the dark, may pick up a fresh stool, hurl his missile, miss aim and hit Cratinus.(2) f(1) An allusion to the paroxysms of rage, as represented in many tragedies familiar to an Athenian audience, of Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, after he had killed his mother. f(2) No

doubt the comic poet, rival of Aristophanes. SLAVE OF LAMACHUS Slaves of Lamachus! Water, water in a little pot! Make it warm, get ready cloths, cerate greasy wool and bandages for his ankle. In leaping a ditch, the master has hurt himself against a stake; he has dislocated and twisted his ankle, broken his head by falling on a stone, while his Gorgon shot far away from his buckler. His mighty braggadocio plume rolled on the ground; at this sight he uttered these doleful words, "Radiant star, I gaze on thee for the last time; my eyes close to all light, I die." Having said this, he falls into the water, gets out again, meets some runaways and pursues the robbers with his spear at their backsides.(1) But here he comes, himself. Get the door open. f(1) Unexpected wind-up of the story. Aristophanes intends to deride the boasting of Lamachus, who was always ascribing to himself most unlikely exploits. LAMACHUS Oh! heavens! oh! heavens! What cruel pain! I faint, I tremble! Alas! I die! the foe's lance has struck me! But what would hurt me most would be for Dicaeopolis to see me wounded thus and laugh at my ill-fortune. DICAEOPOLIS (ENTERS WITH TWO COURTESANS) Oh! my gods! what bosoms! Hard as a quince! Come, my treasures, give me voluptuous kisses! Glue your lips to mine. Haha! I was the first to empty my cup. LAMACHUS Oh! cruel fate! how I suffer! accursed wounds! DICAEOPOLIS Hah! hah! hail! Knight Lamachus! (EMBRACES LAMACHUS.) LAMACHUS By the hostile gods! (BITES DICAEOPOLIS.) DICAEOPOLIS Ah! Great gods! LAMACHUS Why do you embrace me? DICAEOPOLIS And why do you bite me? LAMACHUS 'Twas a cruel score I was paying back! DICAEOPOLIS Scores are not evened at the Feast of Cups! LAMACHUS Oh! Paean, Paean! DICAEOPOLIS But to-day is not the feast of Paean. LAMACHUS Oh! support my leg, do; ah! hold it tenderly, my friends! DICAEOPOLIS And you, my darlings, take hold of this, both of you! LAMACHUS This blow with the stone makes me dizzy; my sight grows dim. DICAEOPOLIS For myself, I want to get to bed; I am bursting with lustfulness, I want to be bundling in the dark. LAMACHUS Carry me to the surgeon Pittalus. DICAEOPOLIS Take me

to the judges. Where is the king of the feast? The wine-skin is mine! LAMACHUS That spear has pierced my bones; what torture I endure! DICAEOPOLIS You see this empty cup! I triumph! I triumph! CHORUS Old man, I come at your bidding! You triumph! you triumph! DICAEOPOLIS Again I have brimmed my cup with unmixed wine and drained it at a draught! CHORUS You triumph then, brave champion; thine is the wine-skin! DICAEOPOLIS Follow me, singing "Triumph! Triumph!" CHORUS Aye! we will sing of thee, thee and thy sacred wine-skin, and we all, as we follow thee, will repeat in thine honour, "Triumph, Triumph!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ACHARNIANS ***

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