
Lysistrata



by Aristophanes
Trans. Norman Lindsay

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FOREWORD

Lysistrata is the greatest work by Aristophanes. This blank and rash statement is made that it may be rejected. But first let it be understood that I do not mean it is a better written work than the *Birds* or the *Frogs*, or that (to descend to the scale of values that will be naturally imputed to me) it has any more appeal to the collectors of "curious literature" than the *Ecclesiazusae* or the *Thesmophoriazusae*. On the mere grounds of taste I can see an at least equally good case made out for the *Birds*. That brightly plumaged fantasy has an aerial wit and colour all its own. But there are certain works in which a man finds himself at an angle of vision where there is an especially felicitous union of the aesthetic and emotional elements which constitute the basic qualities of his uniqueness. We recognize these works as being welded into a strange unity, as having a homogeneous texture of ecstasy over them that surpasses any aesthetic surface of harmonic colour, though that harmony also is understood by the deeper welling of imagery from the core of creative exaltation. And I think that this occurs in *Lysistrata*. The intellectual and spiritual tendrils of the poem are more truly interwoven, the operation of their centres more nearly unified; and so the work goes deeper into life. It is his greatest play because of this, because it holds an intimate perfume of femininity and gives the finest sense of the charm of a cluster of girls, the sweet sense of their chatter, and the con-

tact of their bodies, that is to be found before Shakespeare, because that mocking gaiety we call Aristophanies reaches here its most positive acclamation of life, vitalizing sex with a deep delight, a rare happiness of the spirit.

Indeed it is precisely for these reasons that it is *not* considered Aristophanes' greatest play.

To take a case which is sufficiently near to the point in question, to make clear what I mean: the supremacy of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Shakespearean aesthetic is yet jealously disputed, and it seems silly to the academic to put it up against a work like *Hamlet*. But it is the comparatively more obvious achievement of *Hamlet*, its surface intellectuality, which made it the favourite of actors and critics. It is much more difficult to realize the complex and delicately passionate edge of the former play's rhythm, its tides of hugely wandering emotion, the restless, proud, gay, and agonized reaction from life, of the blood, of the mind, of the heart, which is its unity, than to follow the relatively straightforward definition of Hamlet's nerves. Not that anything derogatory to *Hamlet* or the *Birds* is intended; but the value of such works is not enhanced by forcing them into contrast with other works which cover deeper and wider nexus of aesthetic and spiritual material. It is the very subtlety of the vitality of such works as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Lysistrata* that makes it so easy to undervalue them, to see only a phallic play and political pamphlet in one, only a chronicle play in a grandiose method in the other. For we have to be in a highly sensitized condition before we can get to that subtle point where life and the image mix, and so really perceive the work at all; whereas we can command the response to a lesser work which does not call so finely on the full breadth and depth of our spiritual resources.

I amuse myself at times with the fancy that Homer, Sappho, and Aristophanes are the inviolable Trinity of poetry, even to the extent of being reducible to One. For the fiery and lucid directness of Sappho, if her note of personal lyri-

cism is abstracted, is seen to be an element of Homer, as is the profoundly balanced humour of Aristophanes, at once tenderly human and cruelly hard, as of a god to whom all sympathies and tolerances are known, but who is invulnerable somewhere, who sees from a point in space where the pressure of earth's fear and pain, and so its pity, is lifted. It is here that the Shakespearean and Homeric worlds impinge and merge, not to be separated by any academic classifications. They meet in this sensitivity equally involved and aloof, sympathetic and arrogant, suffering and joyous; and in this relation we see Aristophanes as the forerunner of Shakespeare, his only one. We see also that the whole present aesthetic of earth is based in Homer. We live and grow in the world of consciousness bequeathed to us by him; and if we grow beyond it through deeper Shakespearean ardours, it is because those beyond are rooted in the broad basis of the Homeric imagination. To shift that basis is to find the marshes of primitive night and fear alone beneath the feet: Christianity.

And here we return to the question of the immorality of *Lysistrata*. First we may inquire: is it possible for a man whose work has so tremendous a significance in the spiritual development of mankind—and I do not think anyone nowadays doubts that a work of art is the sole stabilizing force that exists for life—is it possible for a man who stands so grandly at head of an immense stream of liberating effort to write an immoral work? Surely the only enduring moral virtue which can be claimed is for that which moves to more power, beauty and delight in the future? The plea that the question of changing customs arises is not valid, for customs ratified by Aristophanes, by Rabelais, by Shakespeare, have no right to change. If they have changed, let us try immediately to return from our disgraceful refinements to the nobler and more rarefied heights of lyric laughter, tragic intensity, and wit, for we cannot have the first two without the last. And anyhow, how can a social custom claim precedence over the undying material of the senses and the

emotions of man, over the very generating forces of life?

How could the humanistic emotions, such as pity, justice, sympathy, exist save as pacifistic quietings of the desire to slay, to hurt, to torment. Where the desire to hurt is gone pity ceases to be a significant, a central emotion. It must of course continue to exist, but it is displaced in the spiritual hierarchy; and all that moves courageously, desirously, and vitally into the action of life takes on a deeper and subtler intention. Lust, then, which on the lower plane was something to be very frightened of, becomes a symbol of the highest spirituality. It is right for Paul to be terrified of sex and so to hate it, because he has so freshly escaped a bestial condition of life that it threatens to plunge him back if he listens to one whisper. But it is also right for a Shakespeare to suck every drop of desire from life, for he is building into a higher condition, one self-willed, self-responsible, the discipline of which comes from joy, not fear.

Sex, therefore, is an animal function, one admits, one insists; it may be only that. But also in the bewildering and humorous and tragic duality of all life's energies, it is the bridge to every eternity which is not merely a spectral condition of earth disembowelled of its lusts. For sex holds the substance of the image. But we must remember with Heine that Aristophanes is the God of this ironic earth, and that all argument is apparently vitiated from the start by the simple fact that Wagner and a rooster are given an analogous method of making love. And therefore it seems impeccable logic to say that all that is most unlike the rooster is the most spiritual part of love. All will agree on that, schisms only arise when one tries to decide what does go farthest from the bird's automatic mechanism. Certainly not a Dante-Beatrice affair which is only the negation of the rooster in terms of the swooning bombast of adolescence, the first onslaught of a force which the sufferer cannot control or inhabit with all the potentialities of his body and soul. But the rooster is troubled by no dreams of a divine orgy, no carnival-loves like Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony*, no heroic

and shining lust gathering and swinging into a merry embrace like the third act of *Siegfried*. It is desire in this sense that goes farthest from the animal.

Consciously, no one can achieve the act of love on earth as a completed thing of grace, with whatever delirium of delight, with whatever ingenious preciousness, we go through its process. Only as an image of beauty mated in some strange hermaphroditic ecstasy is that possible. I mean only as a dream projected into a hypothetical, a real heaven. But on earth we cannot complete the cycle in consciousness that would give us the freedom of an image in which two identities mysteriously realize their separate unities by the absorption of a third thing, the constructive rhythm of a work of art. It is thus that Tristan and Isolde become wholly distinct individuals, yet wholly submerged in the unity that is Wagner; and so reconcile life's duality by balancing its opposing laughers in a definite form—thereby sending out into life a profounder duality than existed before. A Platonic equipoise, Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence—the only real philosophic problem, therefore one of which these two philosophers alone are aware.

But though Wagner with Mathilde Wesendonck in his arms was Tristan in the arms of Isolde, he did not find a melody instead of a kiss on his lips; he did not find a progression of harmonies melting through the contours of a warm beauty with a blur of desperate ecstasies, semitones of desire, he found only the anxious happiness of any other lover. Nevertheless, he was gathering the substance of the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*. And it is this that Plato means when he says that fornication is something immortal in mortality. He does not mean that the act itself is a godlike thing, a claim which any bedroom mirror would quickly deride. He means that it is a symbol, an essential condition, and a part of something that goes deeper into life than any geometry of earth's absurd, passionate, futile, and very necessary antics would suggest.

It is a universal fallacy that because works like the come-

dies of Aristophanes discuss certain social or ethical problems, they are inspired by them. Aristophanes wrote to express his vision on life, his delight in life itself seen behind the warping screen of contemporary event; and for his purposes anything from Euripides to Cleon served as ground work. Not that he would think in those terms, naturally: but the rationalizing process that goes on in consciousness during the creation of a work of art, for all its appearance of directing matters, is the merest weathercock in the wind of the subconscious intention. As an example of how utterly it is possible to misunderstand the springs of inspiration in a poem, we may take the following remark of B. B. Rogers: *It is much to be regretted that the phallus element should be so conspicuous in this play.... (This) coarseness, so repulsive to ourselves, was introduced, it is impossible to doubt, for the express purpose of counter-balancing the extreme earnestness and gravity of the play.* It seems so logical, so irrefutable; and so completely misinterprets every creative force of Aristophanes' Psyche that it certainly deserves a little admiration. It is in the best academic tradition, and everyone respects a man for writing so mendaciously. The effort of these castrators is always to show that the parts considered offensive are not the natural expression of the poet, that they are dictated externally. They argue that Shakespeare's coarseness is the result of the age and not personal predilection, completely ignoring the work of men like Sir Philip Sidney and Spenser, indeed practically all the pre-Shakespearean writers, in whom none of this so-called grossness exists. Shakespeare wrote sculduddery because he liked it, and for no other reason; his sensuality is the measure of his vitality. These liars pretend similarly that because Rabelais had a humanistic reason for much of his work—the destructor Mediaevalism, and the Church, which purpose they construe of course as an effort to purify, etc.—therefore he only put the lewdery to make the rest palatable, when it should be obvious even to an academic how he glories in his wild humour.

What the academic cannot understand is that in such works, while attacking certain conditions, the creative power of the vigorous spirits is so great that it overflows and saturates the intellectual conception with their own passionate sense of life. It is for this reason that these works have an eternal significance. If Rabelais were merely a social reformer, then the value of his work would not have outlived his generation. If *Lysistrata* were but a wise political tract, it would have merely an historical interest, and it would have ceased spiritually at 404 B.C.

But Panurge is as fantastic and fascinating a character now as he was 300 years ago, *Lysistrata* and her girls as freshly bodied as any girl kissed to-day. Therefore the serious part of the play is that which deals with them, the frivolous part that in which Rogers detects gravity and earnestness.

Aristophanes is the lord of all who take life as a gay adventure, who defy all efforts to turn life into a social, economic, or moral abstraction. Is it therefore just that the critics who, by some dark instinct, unerringly pick out the exact opposite of any creator's real virtues as his chief characteristics, should praise him as an idealistic reformer? An "ideal" state of society was the last thing Aristophanes desired. He wished, certainly, to eliminate inhumanities and baseness; but only that there might be free play for laughter, for individual happiness.

Consequently the critics lay the emphasis on the effort to cleanse society, not the method of laughter. Aristophanes wished to destroy Cleon because that demagogue failed to realize the poet's conception of dignified government and tended to upset the stability of Hellas. But it was the stability of life, the vindication of all individual freedoms, in which he was ultimately interested.

JACK LINDSAY.

LYSISTRATA

The Persons of the drama.

LYSISTRATA

CALONICE

MYRRHINE

LAMPITO

Stratyllis, etc.

Chorus of Women.

MAGISTRATE

CINESIAS

SPARTAN HERALD

ENVOYS

ATHENIANS

Porter, Market Idlers, etc.

Chorus of old Men.

LYSISTRATA stands alone with the Propylaea at her back.

LYSISTRATA If they were trysting for a
Bacchanal,
A feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyllis,
The tambourines would block the rowdy
streets,
But now there's not a woman to be seen
Except—ah, yes—this neighbour of mine yonder.

Enter CALONICE.

Good day Calonice.

CALONICE Good day Lysistrata.

But what has vexed you so? Tell me, child.

What are these black looks for? It doesn't suit
you

To knit your eyebrows up glumly like that.

CALONICE And aren't they right?

LYSISTRATA Yet summoned on the most
tremendous business

For deliberation, still they snuggle in bed.

CALONICE My dear, they'll come.

It's hard for women, you know,

To get away. There's so much to do;

Husbands to be patted and put in good
tempers:

Servants to be poked out: children washed

Or soothed with lullays or fed with mouthfuls
of pap.

LYSISTRATA But I tell you, here's a far more
weighty object.

CALONICE What is it all about, dear Lysistrata,

That you've called the women hither in a troop?

What kind of an object is it?

LYSISTRATA A tremendous thing!

CALONICE And long?

LYSISTRATA Indeed, it may be very lengthy.

CALONICE Then why aren't they here?

LYSISTRATA No man's connected with it;

If that was the case, they'd soon come fluttering
along.

No, no. It concerns an object I've felt over
And turned this way and that for sleepless
nights.

CALONICE It must be fine to stand such long
attention.

LYSISTRATA So fine it comes to this—Greece
saved by Woman!

CALONICE By Woman? Wretched thing, I'm
sorry for it.

LYSISTRATA Our country's fate is henceforth in
our hands:

To destroy the Peloponnesians root and branch—

CALONICE What could be nobler!

LYSISTRATA Wipe out the Boeotians—

CALONICE

Not utterly. Have mercy on the eels!¹

LYSISTRATA

But with regard to Athens, note I'm careful
Not to say any of these nasty things;
Still, thought is free....
But if the women join us
From Peloponnesus and Boeotia, then
Hand in hand we'll rescue Greece.

CALONICE How could we do
Such a big wise deed? We women who dwell
Quietly adorning ourselves in a back-room
With gowns of lucid gold and gawdy toilets
Of stately silk and dainty little slippers....

LYSISTRATA These are the very armaments of
the rescue.

¹The Boeotian eels were highly esteemed delicacies in Athens.

These crocus-gowns, this outlay of the best
 myrrh,
 Slippers, cosmetics dusting beauty, and robes
 With rippling creases of light.

CALONICE Yes, but how?

LYSISTRATA No man will lift a lance against
 another—

CALONICE I'll run to have my tunic dyed
 crocus.

LYSISTRATA Or take a shield—

CALONICE I'll get a stately gown.

LYSISTRATA Or unscabbard a sword—

CALONICE Let me buy a pair of slipper.

LYSISTRATA

Now, tell me, are the women right to lag?

CALONICE They should have turned birds,
 they should have grown wings and flown.

LYSISTRATA My friend, you'll see that they are
 true Athenians:

Always too late. Why, there's not a woman
 From the shoreward demes arrived, not one
 from Salamis.

CALONICE I know for certain they awoke at
 dawn,
 And got their husbands up if not their boat
 sails.

LYSISTRATA And I'd have staked my life the
 Acharnian dames
 Would be here first, yet they haven't come
 either!

CALONICE Well anyhow there is Theagenes' wife

We can expect—she consulted Hecate.
But look, here are some at last, and more
behind them.

See ... where are they from?

CALONICE From Anagyra they come.

LYSISTRATA Yes, they generally manage to
come first.

Enter MYRRHINE.

MYRRHINE Are we late, Lysistrata? ... What is
that?

Nothing to say?

LYSISTRATA I've not much to say for you,
Myrrhine, dawdling on so vast an affair.

MYRRHINE I couldn't find my girdle in the
dark.

But if the affair's so wonderful, tell us, what is
it?

LYSISTRATA No, let us stay a little longer till
The Peloponnesian girls and the girls of Bocotia
Are here to listen.

MYRRHINE That's the best advice.

Ah, there comes Lampito.

Enter LAMPITO.

LYSISTRATA Welcome Lampito!

Dear Spartan girl with a delightful face,
Washed with the rosy spring, how fresh you
look

In the easy stride of your sleek slenderness,
Why you could strangle a bull!

LAMPITO I think I could.

It's frae exercise and kicking high behind.²

LYSISTRATA What lovely breasts to own!

LAMPITO Oo ... your fingers

Assess them, ye tickler, wi' such tender chucks
I feel as if I were an altar-victim.

LYSISTRATA Who is this youngster?

LAMPITO A Boeotian lady.

LYSISTRATA There never was much

undergrowth in Boeotia,
Such a smooth place, and this girl takes after it.

CALONICE Yes, I never saw a skin so primly
kept.

LYSISTRATA This girl?

LAMPITO A sonsie open-looking jinker!

She's a Corinthian.

LAMPITO But who's garred this Council o'
Women to meet here?

LYSISTRATA I have.

LAMPITO Propound then what you want o' us.

MYRRHINE What is the amazing news you
have to tell?

LYSISTRATA I'll tell you, but first answer one
small question.

MYRRHINE As you like.

²The translator has put the speech of the Spartan characters in Scotch dialect which is related to English about as was the Spartan dialect to the speech of Athens. The Spartans, in their character, anticipated the shrewd, canny, uncouth Scotch highlander of modern times.

LYSISTRATA Are you not sad your children's
 fathers
 Go endlessly off soldiering afar
 In this plodding war? I am willing to wager
 There's not one here whose husband is at home.

CALONICE Mine's been in Thrace, keeping an
 eye on Eucrates
 For five months past.

MYRRHINE And mine left me for Pylos
 Seven months ago at least.

LAMPITO And as for mine
 No sooner has he slipped out frae the line
 He straps his shield and he's snickt off again.

LYSISTRATA And not the slightest glitter of a
 lover!
 And since the Milesians betrayed us, I've not
 seen
 The image of a single upright man
 To be a marble consolation to us.
 Now will you help me, if I find a means
 To stamp the war out.

MYRRHINE By the two Goddesses, Yes!
 I will though I've to pawn this very dress
 And drink the barter-money the same day.

CALONICE And I too though I'm split up like a
 turbot
 And half is hackt off as the price of peace.

LAMPITO And I too! Why, to get a peep at the
 shy thing
 I'd clamber up to the tip-top o' Taygetus.

LYSISTRATA Then I'll expose my mighty
 mystery.
 O women, if we would compel the men

To bow to Peace, we must refrain—

MYRRHINE From what?

O tell us!

LYSISTRATA Will you truly do it then?

MYRRHINE We will, we will, if we must die for it.

LYSISTRATA We must refrain from every depth of love....

Why do you turn your backs? Where are you going?

Why do you bite your lips and shake your heads?

Why are your faces blanched? Why do you weep?

Will you or won't you, or what do you mean?

MYRRHINE No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

CALONICE No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

LYSISTRATA You too, dear turbot, you that said just now
You didn't mind being split right up in the least?

LYSISTRATA And you?

MYRRHINE O please give me the fire instead.

LYSISTRATA Lewd to the least drop in the tiniest vein,
Our sex is fitly food for Tragic Poets,
Our whole life's but a pile of kisses and babies.
But, hardy Spartan, if you join with me
All may be righted yet. O help me, help me.

LAMPITO It's a sair, sair thing to ask of us, by
the Twa,
A lass to sleep her lane and never fill
Love's lack except wi' makeshifts.... But let it
be.
Peace maun be thought of first.

LYSISTRATA My friend, my friend!
The only one amid this herd of weaklings.

CALONICE But if—which heaven forbid—we
should refrain
As you would have us, how is Peace induced?

LYSISTRATA By the two Goddesses, now can't
you see
All we have to do is idly sit indoors
With smooth roses powdered on our cheeks,
Our bodies burning naked through the folds
Of shining Amorgos' silk, and meet the men
With our dear Venus-plats plucked trim and
neat.
Their stirring love will rise up furiously,
They'll beg our arms to open. That's our time!
We'll disregard their knocking, beat them off—
And they will soon be rabid for a Peace.
I'm sure of it.

LAMPITO Just as Menelaus, they say,
Seeing the bosom of his naked Helen
Flang down the sword.

CALONICE But we'll be tearful fools
If our husbands take us at our word and leave
us.

LYSISTRATA There's only left then, in
Pherecrates' phrase,
To flay a skinned dog—flay more our flayed
desires.

CALONICE Bah, proverbs will never warm a
celibate.

But what avail will your scheme be if the men
Drag us for all our kicking on to the couch?

LYSISTRATA Cling to the doorposts.

CALONICE But if they should force us?

LYSISTRATA Yield then, but with a sluggish,
cold indifference.

There is no joy to them in sullen mating.
Besides we have other ways to madden them;
They cannot stand up long, and they've no
delight

Unless we fit their aim with merry succour.

CALONICE Well if you must have it so, we'll all
agree.

LAMPITO For us I ha' no doubt. We can
persuade

Our men to strike a fair an' decent Peace,
But how will ye pitch out the battle-frenzy
O' the Athenian populace?

LYSISTRATA I promise you
We'll wither up that curse.

LAMPITO I don't believe it.

Not while they own ane trireme oared an'
rigged,
Or a' those stacks an' stacks an' stacks O' siller.

LYSISTRATA I've thought the whole thing out
till there's no flaw.

We shall surprise the Acropolis today:
That is the duty set the older dames.
While we sit here talking, they are to go
And under pretence of sacrificing, seize it.

LAMPITO Certie, that's fine; all's working for the best.

LYSISTRATA Now quickly, Lampito, let us tie ourselves
To this high purpose as tightly as the hemp of words
Can knot together.

LAMPITO Set out the terms in detail
And we'll a' swear to them.

LYSISTRATA Of course.... Well then
Where is our Scythianess? Why are you staring?
First lay the shield, boss downward, on the floor
And bring the victim's inwards.

CAILONICE But, Lysistrata,
What is this oath that we're to swear?

LYSISTRATA What oath!
In Aeschylus they take a slaughtered sheep
And swear upon a buckler. Why not we?

CALONICE O Lysistrata, Peace sworn on a buckler!

LYSISTRATA What oath would suit us then?

CALONICE Something burden bearing
Would be our best insignia.... A white horse!
Let's swear upon its entrails.

LYSISTRATA A horse indeed!

CALONICE Then what will symbolise us?

LYSISTRATA This, as I tell you—
First set a great dark bowl upon the ground
And disembowel a skin of Thasian wine,
Then swear that we'll not add a drop of water.

LAMPITO Ah, what aith could clink pleasanter
than that!

LYSISTRATA Bring me a bowl then and a skin
of wine.

CALONICE My dears, see what a splendid bowl
it is;
I'd not say No if asked to sip it off.

LYSISTRATA Put down the bowl. Lay hands,
all, on the victim.
Skiey Queen who givest the last word in
arguments,
And thee, O Bowl, dear comrade, we beseech:
Accept our oblation and be propitious to us.

CALONICE What healthy blood, la, how it
gushes out!

LAMPITO An' what a leesome fragrance
through the air.

LYSISTRATA Now, dears, if you will let me, I'll
speak first.

CALONICE Only if you draw the lot, by
Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA SO, grasp the brim, you, Lampito,
and all.
You, Calonice, repeat for the rest
Each word I say. Then you must all take oath
And pledge your arms to the same stern
conditions—

LYSISTRATA To husband or lover I'll not open
arms

CALONICE *To husband or lover I'll not open arms*

LYSISTRATA Though love and denial may
enlarge his charms.

CALONICE *Though love and denial may enlarge his
charms.*

O, O, my knees are failing me, Lysistrata!

LYSISTRATA But still at home, ignoring him, I'll
stay,

CALONICE *But still at home, ignoring him, I'll
stay,*

LYSISTRATA Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all
day.

CALONICE *Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all day.*

LYSISTRATA If then he seizes me by dint of
force,

CALONICE *If then he seizes me by dint of force,*

LYSISTRATA I'll give him reason for a long
remorse.

CALONICE *I'll give him reason for a long remorse.*

LYSISTRATA I'll never lie and stare up at the
ceiling,

CALONICE *I'll never lie and stare up at the ceiling,*

LYSISTRATA Nor like a lion on all fours go
kneeling.

CALONICE *Nor like a lion on all fours go kneeling.*

LYSISTRATA If I keep faith, then bounteous
cups be mine.

LYSISTRATA If not, to nauseous water change
this wine.

CALONICE *If not, to nauseous water change this
wine.*

MYRRHINE !:We do, we do.

LYSISTRATA Then I shall immolate the victim
thus.

She drinks.

CALONICE Here now, share fair, haven't we
made a pact?
Let's all quaff down that friendship in our turn.

LAMPITO Hark, what caterwauling hubbub's
that?

LYSISTRATA As I told you,
The women have appropriated the citadel.
So, Lampito, dash off to your own land
And raise the rebels there. These will serve as
hostages,
While we ourselves take our places in the ranks
And drive the bolts right home.

CALONICE But won't the men
March straight against us?

LYSISTRATA And what if they do?
No threat shall creak our hinges wide, no torch
Shall light a fear in us; we will come out
To Peace alone.

CALONICE That's it, by Aphrodite!
As of old let us seem hard and obdurate.

*Lampito and some go off; the others go up into the
Acropolis.*

*Chorus of old men enter to attack the captured
Acropolis.*

Make room, Draces, move ahead; why your
shoulder's chafed, I see,
With lugging uphill these lopped branches of
the olive-tree.

How upside-down and wrong-way-round a
 long life sees things grow.
 Ah, Strymodorus, who'd have thought affairs
 could tangle so?

The women whom at home we fed,
 Like witless fools, with fostering bread,
 Have impiously come to this—
 They've stolen the Acropolis,
 With bolts and bars our orders flout
 And shut us out.

Come, Philurgus, bustle thither; lay our faggots
 on the ground,

In neat stacks beleaguering the insurgents all
 around;

And the vile conspiratresses, plotters of such
 mischief dire,

Pile and burn them all together in one vast and
 righteous pyre:

Fling with our own hands Lycon's wife to fry in
 the thickest fire.

By Demeter, they'll get no brag while I've a vein
 to beat!

Cleomenes himself was hurtled out in sore
 defeat.

His stiff-backed Spartan pride was bent.

Out, stripped of all his arms, he went:

A pigmy cloak that would not stretch

To hide his rump (the dragged wretch),

Six sprouting years of beard, the spilth

Of six years' filth.

That was a siege! Our men were ranged in lines
 of seventeen deep

Before the gates, and never left their posts there,
 even to sleep.

Shall I not smite the rash presumption then of
 foes like these,

Detested both of all the gods and of Euripides—

Else, may the Marathon-plain not boast my
trophied victories!

Ah, now, there's but a little space
To reach the place!

A deadly climb it is, a tricky road
With all this bumping load:

A pack-ass soon would tire....

How these logs bruise my shoulders! further
still

Jog up the hill,

And puff the fire inside,

Or just as we reach the top we'll find it's died.

Ough, phew!

I choke with the smoke.

Lord Heracles, how acrid-hot

Out of the pot

This mad-dog smoke leaps, worrying me

And biting angrily....

'Tis Lemnian fire that smokes,

Or else it would not sting my eyelids thus....

Haste, all of us;

Athene invokes our aid.

Laches, now or never the assault must be made!

Ough, phew!

I choke with the smoke. ..

Thanked be the gods! The fire peeps up and
crackles as it should.

Now why not first slide off our backs these
weary loads of wood

And dip a vine-branch in the brazier till it
glows, then straight

Hurl it at the battering-ram against the
stubborn gate?

If they refuse to draw the bolts in immediate
compliance,

We'll set fire to the wood, and smoke will
strangle their defiance.

Phew, what a spluttering drench of smoke!
 Come, now from off my back....
 Is there no Samos-general to help me to
 unpack?
 Ah there, that's over! For the last time now it's
 galled my shoulder.
 Flare up thine embers, brazier, and dutifully
 smoulder,
 To kindle a brand, that I the first may strike the
 citadel.
 Aid me, Lady Victory, that a triumph-trophy
 may tell
 How we did anciently this insane audacity
 quell!

Chorus of WOMEN.

What's that rising yonder? That ruddy glare,
 that smoky skurry?
 O is it something in a blaze? Quick, quick, my
 comrades, hurry!
 Nicodice, helter-skelter!
 Or poor Calyce's in flames
 And Cratylla's stifled in the welter.
 O these dreadful old men
 And their dark laws of hate!
 There, I'm all of a tremble lest I turn out to be
 too late.
 I could scarcely get near to the spring though I
 rose before dawn,
 What with tattling of tongues and rattling of
 pitchers in one jostling din
 With slaves pushing in!....
 Still here at last the water's drawn
 And with it eagerly I run
 To help those of my friends who stand
 In danger of being burned alive.
 For I am told a dribbling band
 Of greybeards hobble to the field,

Great faggots in each palsied hand,
 As if a hot bath to prepare,
 And threatening that out they'll drive
 These wicked women or soon leave them
 charring into ashes
 there.

O Goddess, suffer not, I pray, this harsh deed to
 be done,
 But show us Greece and Athens with their
 warlike acts repealed!
 For this alone, in this thy hold,
 Thou Goddess with the helm of gold,
 We laid hands on thy sanctuary,
 Athene.... Then our ally be
 And where they cast their fires of slaughter
 Direct our water!

STRATYLLIS (*caught*)

Let me go!

WOMEN You villainous old men, what's this
 you do?

No honest man, no pious man, could do such
 things as you.

MEN Ah ha, here's something most original, I
 have no doubt:

A swarm of women sentinels to man the walls
 without.

WOMEN So then we scare you, do we? Do we
 seem a fearful host?

You only see the smallest fraction mustered at
 this post.

MEN Ho, Phaedrias, shall we put a stop to all
 these chattering tricks?

Suppose that now upon their backs we
 splintered these our sticks?

WOMEN Let us lay down the pitchers, so our
bodies will be free,
In case these lumping fellows try to cause some
injury.

MEN O hit them hard and hit again and hit until
they run away,
And perhaps they'll learn, like Bupalus, not to
have too much to say.

WOMEN Come on, then—do it! I won't budge,
but like a dog I'll bite
At every little scrap of meat that dangles in my
sight.

MEN Be quiet, or I'll bash you out of any years
to come.

WOMEN Now you just touch Stratyllis with the
top-joint of your thumb.

MEN What vengeance can you take if with my
fists your face I beat?

WOMEN I'll rip you with my teeth and strew
your entrails at your feet.

MEN Now I appreciate Euripides' strange
subtlety:
Woman is the most shameless beast of all the
beasts that be.

WOMEN Rhodippe, come, and let's pick up our
water-jars once more.

MEN Ah cursed drab, what have you brought
this water for?

WOMEN What is your fire for then, you smelly
corpse? Yourself to burn?

MEN To build a pyre and make your comrades ready for the urn.

WOMEN And I've the water to put out your fire immediately.

MEN What, you put out my fire?

WOMEN Yes, sirrah, as you soon will see.

MEN I don't know why I hesitate to roast you with this flame.

WOMEN If you have any soap you'll go off cleaner than you came.

MEN Cleaner, you dirty slut?

WOMEN A nuptial-bath in which to lie!

MEN Did you hear that insolence?

WOMEN I'm a free woman, I.

MEN I'll make you hold your tongue.

WOMEN Henceforth you'll serve in no more juries.

MEN Burn off her hair for her.

WOMEN Now forward, water, quench their furies!

MEN O dear, O dear!

WOMEN So ... was it hot?

MEN Hot! ... Enough, O hold.

WOMEN Watered, perhaps you'll bloom again—why not?

MEN Brrr, I'm wrinkled up from shivering with cold.

WOMEN Next time you've fire you'll warm
yourself and leave us to our lot.

MAGISTRATE Have the luxurious rites of the
women glittered
Their libertine show, their drumming tapped
out crowds,
The Sabazian Mysteries summoned their mob,
Adonis been wept to death on the terraces,
As I could hear the last day in the Assembly?
For Demostratus—let bad luck befoul him—
Was roaring, "We must sail for Sicily,"
While a woman, throwing herself about in a
dance
Lopsided with drink, was shrilling out "Adonis,
Woe for Adonis." Then Demostratus shouted,
"We must levy hoplites at Zacynthus,"
And there the woman, up to the ears in wine,
Was screaming "Weep for Adonis" on the
house-top,
The scoundrelly politician, that lunatic ox,
Bellowing bad advice through tipsy shrieks:
Such are the follies wantoning in them.

MEN O if you knew their full effrontery!
All of the insults they've done, besides sousing
us
With water from their pots to our public
disgrace
For we stand here wringing our clothes like
grown-up infants.

MAGISTRATE By Poseidon, justly done! For in
part with us
The blame must lie for dissolute behaviour
And for the pampered appetites they learn.
Thus grows the seedling lust to blossoming:
We go into a shop and say, "Here, goldsmith,
You remember the necklace that you wrought

my wife;
 Well, the other night in fervour of a dance
 Her clasp broke open. Now I'm off for Salamis;
 If you've the leisure, would you go tonight
 And stick a bolt-pin into her opened clasp."
 Another goes to a cobbler; a soldierly fellow,
 Always standing up erect, and says to him,
 "Cobbler, a sandal-strap of my wife's pinches
 her,
 Hurts her little toe in a place where she's
 sensitive.
 Come at noon and see if you can stretch out
 wider
 This thing that troubles her, loosen its
 tightness."
 And so you view the result. Observe my case—
 I, a magistrate, come here to draw
 Money to buy oar-blades, and what happens?
 The women slam the door full in my face.
 But standing still's no use. Bring me a crowbar,
 And I'll chastise this their impertinence.
 What do you gape at, wretch, with dazzled
 eyes?
 Peering for a tavern, I suppose.
 Come, force the gates with crowbars, prise
 them apart!
 I'll prise away myself too.... (LYSISTRATA
 appears.)

LYSISTRATA Stop this banging.
 I'm coming of my own accord.... Why bars?
 It is not bars we need but common sense.

MAGISTRATE Indeed, you slut! Where is the
 archer now?
 Arrest this woman, tie her hands behind.

LYSISTRATA If he brushes me with a finger, by
 Artemis,

The public menial, he'll be sorry for it.

MAGISTRATE Are you afraid? Grab her about
the middle.

Two of you then, lay hands on her and end it.

CALONICE By Pandrosos I if your hand touches
her

I'll spread you out and trample on your guts.

MAGISTRATE My guts! Where is the other
archer gone?

Bind that minx there who talks so prettily.

MYRRHINE By Phosphor, if your hand moves
out her way

You'd better have a surgeon somewhere handy.

MAGISTRATE You too! Where is that archer?
Take that woman.

I'll put a stop to these surprise-parties.

STRATYLLIS By the Tauric Artemis, one inch
nearer

My fingers, and it's a bald man that'll be
yelling.

MAGISTRATE Tut tut, what's here? Deserted
by my archers....

But surely women never can defeat us;

Close up your ranks, my Scythians. Forward at
them.

LYSISTRATA By the Goddesses, you'll find that
here await you

Four companies of most pugnacious women

Armed cap-a-pie from the topmost luring curl

To the lowest angry dimple.

MAGISTRATE On, Scythians, bind them.

LYSISTRATA On, gallant allies of our high
 design,
 Vendors of grain-eggs-pulse-and-vegetables,
 Ye garlic-tavern-keepers of bakeries,
 Strike, batter, knock, hit, slap, and scratch our
 foes,
 Be finely imprudent, say what you think of
 them....
 Enough! retire and do not rob the dead.

MAGISTRATE How basely did my archer-force
 come off.

MAGISTRATE By Apollo, I know well the thirst
 that heats you—
 Especially when a wine-skin's close.

MEN You waste your breath, dear magistrate, I
 fear, in answering back.
 What's the good of argument with such a
 rampageous pack?
 Remember how they washed us down (these
 very clothes I wore)
 With water that looked nasty and that smelt so
 even more.

WOMEN What else to do, since you advanced
 too dangerously nigh.
 If you should do the same again, I'll punch you
 in the eye.
 Though I'm a stay-at-home and most a quiet
 life enjoy,
 Polite to all and every (for I'm naturally coy),
 Still if you wake a wasps' nest then of wasps
 you must beware.

MEN How may this ferocity be tamed? It grows
 too great to bear.
 Let us question them and find if they'll
 perchance declare

The reason why they strangely dare
 To seize on Cranaos' citadel,
 This eyrie inaccessible,
 This shrine above the precipice,
 The Acropolis.
 Probe them and find what they mean with this
 idle talk; listen,
 but watch they don't try to deceive.
 You'd be neglecting your duty most certainly if
 now this mystery
 unplumbed you leave.

MAGISTRATE Women there! Tell what I ask
 you, directly....
 Come, without rambling, I wish you to state
 What's your rebellious intention in barring up
 thus on our noses
 our own temple-gate.

LYSISTRATA To take first the treasury out of
 your management, and so stop the war
 through the absence of gold.

MAGISTRATE Is gold then the cause of the
 war?

LYSISTRATA Yes, gold caused it and miseries
 more, too many to be told.
 'Twas for money, and money alone, that
 Pisander with all of the army of
 mob-agitators.
 Raised up revolutions. But, as for the future, it
 won't be worth while
 to set up to be traitors.
 Not an obol they'll get as their loot, not an obol!
 while we have the
 treasure-chest in our command.

MAGISTRATE What then is that you propose?

LYSISTRATA Just this—merely to take the
exchequer henceforth in hand.

MAGISTRATE The exchequer!

MAGISTRATE But this matter's different.

LYSISTRATA How is it different?

MAGISTRATE Why, it deals chiefly with
war-time supplies.

LYSISTRATA But we abolish war straight by our
policy.

MAGISTRATE What will you do if emergencies
arise?

LYSISTRATA Face them our own way.

MAGISTRATE What *you* will?

LYSISTRATA Yes *we* will!

MAGISTRATE Then there's no help for it; we're
all destroyed.

LYSISTRATA No, willy-nilly you must be
safeguarded.

MAGISTRATE What madness is this?

MAGISTRATE Such awful oppression never,
O never in the past yet I bore.

LYSISTRATA You must be saved, sirrah—that's
all there is to it.

MAGISTRATE If we don't want to be saved?

LYSISTRATA All the more.

MAGISTRATE Why do you women come
prying and meddling in matters of state
touching

war-time and peace?

LYSISTRATA That I will tell you.

MAGISTRATE O tell me or quickly I'll—

LYSISTRATA Hearken awhile and from
threatening cease.

MAGISTRATE I cannot, I cannot; it's growing
too insolent.

WOMEN Come on; you've far more than we
have to dread.

MAGISTRATE Stop from your croaking, old
carrion-crow there....
Continue.

LYSISTRATA Be calm then and I'll go ahead.
All the long years when the hopeless war
dragged along we, unassuming,
forgotten in quiet,
Endured without question, endured in our
loneliness all your incessant
child's antics and riot.
Our lips we kept tied, though aching with
silence, though well all the
while in our silence we knew
How wretchedly everything still was
progressing by listening dumbly the
day long to you.
For always at home you continued discussing
the war and its politics
loudly, and we
Sometimes would ask you, our hearts deep
with sorrowing though we spoke
lightly, though happy to see,
"What's to be inscribed on the side of the
Treaty-stone

What, dear, was said in the Assembly today?"
 "Mind your own business," he'd answer me
 growlingly
 "hold your tongue, woman, or else go away."
 And so I would hold it.

WOMEN I'd not be silent for any man living on
 earth, no, not I!

MAGISTRATE Not for a staff?

LYSISTRATA Well, so I did nothing but sit in the
 house, feeling dreary, and sigh,
 While ever arrived some fresh tale of decisions
 more foolish by far and presaging disaster.
 Then I would say to him, "O my dear husband,
 why still do they rush on destruction the
 faster?"
 At which he would look at me sideways,
 exclaiming, "Keep for your web and your
 shuttle your care,
 Or for some hours hence your cheeks will be
 sore and hot; leave this alone, war is Man's
 sole affair!"

MAGISTRATE By Zeus, but a man of fine sense,
 he.

LYSISTRATA How sensible?
 You dotard, because he at no time had lent
 His intractable ears to absorb from our counsel
 one temperate word of advice, kindly
 meant?
 But when at the last in the streets we heard
 shouted (everywhere ringing the ominous
 cry)
 "Is there no one to help us, no saviour in
 Athens?" and, "No, there is no one," come
 back in reply.

At once a convention of all wives through
 Hellas here for a serious purpose was held,
 To determine how husbands might yet back to
 wisdom despite their reluctance in time be
 compelled.

Why then delay any longer? It's settled. For the
 future you'll take up our old occupation.

Now in turn you're to hold tongue, as we did,
 and listen while we show the way to recover
 the nation.

MAGISTRATE *You talk to us!* Why, you're mad.
 I'll not stand it.

LYSISTRATA Cease babbling, you fool; till I end,
 hold your tongue.

MAGISTRATE If I should take orders from one
 who wears veils, may my
 neck straightaway be deservedly wrung.

LYSISTRATA O if that keeps pestering you,
 I've a veil here for your hair,
 I'll fit you out in everything
 As is only fair.

CALONICE Here's a spindle that will do.

MYRRHINE I'll add a wool-basket too.

LYSISTRATA Girdled now sit humbly at home,
 Munching beans, while you card wool and
 comb. For war from now on is the Women's
 affair.

WOMEN. Come then, down pitchers, all,
 And on, courageous of heart,
 In our comradely venture
 Each taking her due part.

I could dance, dance, dance, and be fresher
 after,

I could dance away numberless suns,
 To no weariness let my knees bend.
 Earth I could brave with laughter,
 Having such wonderful girls here to friend.
 O the daring, the gracious, the beautiful ones!
 Their courage unswerving and witty
 Will rescue our city.

O sprung from the seed of most
 valiant-wombed grand-mothers,
 scions of savage and dangerous nettles!
 Prepare for the battle, all. Gird up your angers.
 Our way
 the wind of sweet victory settles.

LYSISTRATA O tender Eros and Lady of
 Cyprus, some flush of beauty I pray you
 devise
 To flash on our bosoms and, O Aphrodite,
 rosily gleam on our valorous thighs!
 Joy will raise up its head through the legions
 warring and all of the far-serried ranks of
 mad-love
 Bristle the earth to the pillared horizon,
 pointing in vain to the heavens above.
 I think that perhaps then they'll give us our
 title—
 Peace-makers.

MAGISTRATE What do you mean? Please
 explain.

LYSISTRATA First, we'll not see you now
 flourishing arms about into the
 Marketing-place clang again.

WOMEN No, by the Paphian.

LYSISTRATA Still I can conjure them as past
 were the herbs stand or crockery's sold

Like Corybants jingling (poor sots) fully
armoured, they noisily round on their
promenade strolled.

MAGISTRATE And rightly; that's discipline,
they—

LYSISTRATA But what's sillier than to go on an
errand of buying a fish

Carrying along an immense Gorgon-buckler
instead the usual platter or dish?

A phylarch I lately saw, mounted on
horse-back, dressed for the part with long
ringlets and all,

Stow in his helmet the omelet bought steaming
from an old woman who kept a food-stall.

Nearby a soldier, a Thracian, was shaking
wildly his spear like Tereus in the play,

To frighten a fig-girl while unseen the ruffian
filched from her fruit-trays the ripest away.

MAGISTRATE How, may I ask, will your rule
re-establish order and justice in lands so
tormented?

LYSISTRATA Nothing is easier.

MAGISTRATE Out with it speedily—what is this
plan that you boast you've invented?

LYSISTRATA If, when yarn we are winding, It
chances to tangle, then, as perchance you
may know, through the skein

This way and that still the spool we keep
passing till it is finally clear all again:

So to untangle the War and its errors,
ambassadors out on all sides we will send

This way and that, here, there and round
about—soon you will find that the War has
an end.

MAGISTRATE So with these trivial tricks of the household, domestic analogies of threads, skeins and spools,
 You think that you'll solve such a bitter complexity, unwind such political problems, you fools!

LYSISTRATA Well, first as we wash dirty wool so's to cleanse it, so with a pitiless zeal we will scrub
 Through the whole city for all greasy fellows; burrs too, the parasites, off we will rub.
 That verminous plague of insensate place-seekers soon between thumb and forefinger we'll crack.
 All who inside Athens' walls have their dwelling into one great common basket we'll pack.
 Disenfranchised or citizens, allies or aliens, pell-mell the lot of them in we will squeeze.
 Till they discover humanity's meaning.... As for disjointed and far colonies,
 Them you must never from this time imagine as scattered about just like lost hanks of wool.
 Each portion we'll take and wind in to this centre, inward to Athens each loyalty pull,
 Till from the vast heap where all's piled together at last can be woven a strong Cloak of State.

MAGISTRATE How terrible is it to stand here and watch them carding and winding at will with our fate,
 Witless in war as they are.

LYSISTRATA What of us then, who ever in vain for our children must weep
 Borne but to perish afar and in vain?

MAGISTRATE Not that, O let that one memory
sleep!

LYSISTRATA Then while we should be
 companioned still merrily, happy as brides
 may, the livelong night,
Kissing youth by, we are forced to lie single....
 But leave for a moment our pitiful plight,
It hurts even more to behold the poor maidens
 helpless wrinkling in staler virginity.

MAGISTRATE Does not a man age?
Not in the same way. Not as a woman grows
 withered, grows he.
He, when returned from the war, though
 grey-headed, yet if he wishes can choose out
 a wife.
But she has no solace save peering for omens,
 wretched and lonely the rest of her life.

MAGISTRATE But the old man will often
 select—

LYSISTRATA O why not finish and die?
 A bier is easy to buy,
 A honey-cake I'll knead you with joy,
 This garland will see you are decked.

CALONICE I've a wreath for you too.

MYRRHINE I also will fillet you.

LYSISTRATA What more is lacking? Step
 aboard the boat.
See, Charon shouts ahoy.
You're keeping him, he wants to shove afloat.

MAGISTRATE Outrageous insults! Thus my
 place to flout!
Now to my fellow-magistrates I'll go

And what you've perpetrated on me show.

LYSISTRATA Why are you blaming us for
laying you out?

Assure yourself we'll not forget to make
The third day offering early for your sake.

*MAGISTRATE retires, LYSISTRATA returns
within.*

OLD MEN. All men who call your loins your
own, awake at last, arise
And strip to stand in readiness. For as it seems
to me

Some more perilous offensive in their heads
they now devise.

I'm sure a Tyranny
Like that of Hippias
In this I detect....

They mean to put us under
Themselves I suspect,
And that Laconians assembling
At Cleisthenes' house have played
A trick-of-war and provoked them
Madly to raid
The Treasury, in which term I include
The Pay for my food.

For is it not preposterous
They should talk this way to us
On a subject such as battle!

And, women as they are, about bronze bucklers
dare prattle—

Make alliance with the Spartans—people I for
one

Like very hungry wolves would always most
sincere shun....

Some dirty game is up their sleeve,
I believe.

A Tyranny, no doubt... but they won't catch me,
 that know.
 Henceforth on my guard I'll go,
 A sword with myrtle-branches wreathed for
 ever in my hand,
 And under arms in the Public Place I'll take my
 watchful stand,
 Shoulder to shoulder with Aristogeiton. Now
 my staff I'll draw
 And start at once by knocking
 that shocking
 Hag upon the jaw.

WOMEN. Your own mother will not know you
 when you get back to the town.
 But first, my friends and allies, let us lay these
 garments down,
 And all ye fellow-citizens, hark to me while I
 tell
 What will aid Athens well.
 Just as is right, for I
 Have been a sharer
 In all the lavish splendour
 Of the proud city.
 I bore the holy vessels
 At seven, then
 I pounded barley
 At the age of ten,
 And clad in yellow robes,
 Soon after this,
 I was Little Bear to
 Brauronian Artemis;
 Then neckletted with figs,
 Grown tall and pretty,
 I was a Basket-bearer,
 And so it's obvious I should
 Give you advice that I think good,
 The very best I can.

It should not prejudice my voice that I'm not
 born a man,
 If I say something advantageous to the present
 situation.
 For I'm taxed too, and as a toll provide men for
 the nation
 While, miserable greybeards, you,
 It is true,
 Contribute nothing of any importance
 whatever to our needs;
 But the treasure raised against the Medes
 You've squandered, and do nothing in return,
 save that you make
 Our lives and persons hazardous by some
 imbecile mistakes
 What can you answer? Now be careful, don't
 arouse my spite,
 Or with my slipper I'll take you napping,
 faces slapping
 Left and right.

MEN. What villainies they contrive!
 Come, let vengeance fall,
 You that below the waist are still alive,
 Off with your tunics at my call—
 Naked, all.
 For a man must strip to battle like a man.
 No quaking, brave steps taking, careless what's
 ahead, white shoed,
 in the nude, onward bold,
 All ye who garrisoned Leipsidrion of old....
 Let each one wag
 As youthfully as he can,
 And if he has the cause at heart
 Rise at least a span.
 We must take a stand and keep to it,
 For if we yield the smallest bit
 To their importunity.

Then nowhere from their inroads will be left to
 us immunity.
 But they'll be building ships and soon their
 navies will attack us,
 As Artemisia did, and seek to fight us and to
 sack us.
 And if they mount, the Knights they'll rob
 Of a job,
 For everyone knows how talented they all are
 in the saddle,
 Having long practised how to straddle;
 No matter how they're jogged there up and
 down, they're never thrown.
 Then think of Myron's painting, and each
 horse-backed Amazon
 In combat hand-to-hand with men.... Come, on
 these women fall,
 And in pierced wood-collars let's stick
 quick
 The necks of one and all.

WOMEN. Don't cross me or I'll loose
 The Beast that's kennelled here....
 And soon you will be howling for a truce,
 Howling out with fear.
 But my dear,
 Strip also, that women may battle
 unhindered....
 But you, you'll be too sore to eat garlic more, or
 one black bean,
 I really mean, so great's my spleen, to kick you
 black and blue
 With these my dangerous legs.
 I'll hatch the lot of you,
 If my rage you dash on,
 The way the relentless Beetle
 Hatched the Eagle's eggs.
 Scornfully aside I set

Every silly old-man threat
 While Lampito's with me.
 Or dear Ismenia, the noble Theban girl. Then
 let decree
 Be hotly piled upon decree; in vain will be your
 labours,
 You futile rogue abominated by your suffering
 neighbour
 To Hecate's feast I yesterday went—
 Off I sent
 To our neighbours in Boeotia, asking as a gift to
 me
 For them to pack immediately
 That darling dainty thing ... a good fat eel³ I
 meant of course;
 But they refused because some idiotic old
 decree's in force.
 O this strange passion for decrees nothing on
 earth can check,
 Till someone puts a foot out tripping you,
 and slipping you
 Break your neck.

LYSISTRATA enters in dismay.

WOMEN Dear Mistress of our martial
 enterprise,
 Why do you come with sorrow in your eyes?

LYSISTRATA O 'tis our naughty femininity,
 So weak in one spot, that hath saddened me.

WOMEN What's this? Please speak.

LYSISTRATA Poor women, O so weak!

WOMEN What can it be? Surely your friends
 may know.

³Vide supra

LYSISTRATA Yea, I must speak it though it hurt me so.

WOMEN Speak; can we help? Don't stand there mute in need.

LYSISTRATA I'll blurt it out then—our women's army's mutinied.

WOMEN O Zeus!

LYSISTRATA What use is Zeus to our anatomy?
 Here is the gaping calamity I meant:
 I cannot shut their ravenous appetites
 A moment more now. They are all deserting.
 The first I caught was sidling through the
 postern
 Close by the Cave of Pan: the next hoisting
 herself
 With rope and pulley down: a third on the point
 Of slipping past: while a fourth malcontent,
 seated
 For instant flight to visit Orsilochus
 On bird-back, I dragged off by the hair in
 time....
 They are all snatching excuses to sneak home.
 Look, there goes one.... Hey, what's the hurry?

1ST WOMAN I must get home. I've some
 Milesian wool
 Packed wasting away, and moths are pushing
 through it.

LYSISTRATA Fine moths indeed, I know. Get
 back within.

1ST WOMAN By the Goddesses, I'll return
 instantly.
 I only want to stretch it on my bed.

LYSISTRATA You shall stretch nothing and go nowhere either.

1ST WOMAN Must I never use my wool then?

LYSISTRATA If needs be.

2ND WOMAN How unfortunate I am! O my poor flax!
It's left at home unstript.

LYSISTRATA So here's another
That wishes to go home and strip her flax.
Inside again!

2ND WOMAN No, by the Goddess of Light,
I'll be back as soon as I have flayed it properly.

LYSISTRATA You'll not flay anything. For if you begin
There'll not be one here but has a patch to be flayed.

3RD WOMAN O holy Eilithyia, stay this birth
Till I have left the precincts of the place!

LYSISTRATA What nonsense is this?

3RD WOMAN I'll drop it any minute.

LYSISTRATA Yesterday you weren't with child.

3RD WOMAN But I am today.
O let me find a midwife, Lysistrata.
O quickly!

LYSISTRATA Now what story is this you tell?
What is this hard lump here?

3RD WOMAN It's a male child.

LYSISTRATA By Aphrodite, it isn't. Your belly's hollow,

And it has the feel of metal.... Well, I soon can see.

You hussy, it's Athene's sacred helm,
And you said you were with child.

3RD WOMAN And so I am.

LYSISTRATA Then why the helm?

3RD WOMAN So if the throes should take me
Still in these grounds I could use it like a dove
As a laying-nest in which to drop the child.

LYSISTRATA More pretexts! You can't hide
your clear intent,
And anyway why not wait till the tenth day
Meditating a brazen name for your brass brat?

WOMAN And I can't sleep a wink. My nerve is
gone
Since I saw that snake-sentinel of the shrine.

WOMAN And all those dreadful owls with their
weird hooting!
Though I'm wearied out, I can't close an eye.

LYSISTRATA You wicked women, cease from
juggling lies.
You want your men. But what of them as well?
They toss as sleepless in the lonely night,
I'm sure of it. Hold out awhile, hold out,
But persevere a teeny-weeny longer.
An oracle has promised Victory
If we don't wrangle. Would you hear the
words?

WOMEN Yes, yes, what is it?

LYSISTRATA Silence then, you chatterboxes.
Here—

*Whenas the swallows flocking in one place from the
hoopoes*

*Deny themselves love's gambols any more,
All woes shall then have ending and great Zeus the
Thunderer*

Shall put above what was below before.

WOMEN Will the men then always be kept
under us?

LYSISTRATA *But if the swallows squabble among
themselves and fly away*

*Out of the temple, refusing to agree,
Then The Most Wanton Birds in all the World
They shall be named for ever. That's his decree.*

WOMAN It's obvious what it means.

LYSISTRATA Now by all the gods
We must let no agony deter from duty,
Back to your quarters. For we are base indeed,
My friends, if we betray the oracle.

She goes out.

OLD MEN. I'd like to remind you of a fable they
used to employ,

When I was a little boy:
How once through fear of the marriage-bed a
young man,

Melanion by name, to the wilderness ran,
And there on the hills he dwelt.

For hares he wove a net
Which with his dog he set—

Most likely he's there yet.

For he never came back home, so great was the
fear he felt.

I loathe the sex as much as he,
And therefore I no less shall be
As chaste as was Melanion.

MAN Grann'am, do you much mind men?

WOMAN Onions you won't need, to cry.

MAN From my foot you shan't escape.

WOMAN What thick forests I espy.

MEN So much Myronides' fierce beard
 And thundering black back were feared,
 That the foe fled when they were shown—
 Brave he as Phormion.

WOMEN. Well, I'll relate a rival fable just to
 show to you
 A different point of view:
 There was a rough-hewn fellow, Timon, with a
 face
 That glowered as through a thorn-bush in a
 wild, bleak place.
 He too decided on flight,
 This very Furies' son,
 All the world's ways to shun
 And hide from everyone,
 Spitting out curses on all knavish men to left
 and right.
 But though he reared this hate for men,
 He loved the women even then,
 And never thought them enemies.

WOMAN O your jaw I'd like to break.

MAN That I fear do you suppose?

WOMAN Learn what kicks my legs can make.

MAN Raise them up, and you'll expose—

WOMAN Nay, you'll see there, I engage,
 All is well kept despite my age,
 And tended smooth enough to slip

From any adversary's grip.

LYSISTRATA appears.

LYSISTRATA Hollo there, hasten hither to me
Skip fast along.

WOMAN What is this? Why the noise?

LYSISTRATA A man, a man! I spy a frenzied
man!
He carries Love upon him like a staff.
O Lady of Cyprus, and Cythera, and Paphos,
I beseech you, keep our minds and hands to the
oath.

WOMAN Where is he, whoever he is?

LYSISTRATA By the Temple of Chloe.

WOMAN Yes, now I see him, but who can he be?

LYSISTRATA Look at him. Does anyone
recognise his face?

MYRRHINE I do. He is my husband, Cinesias.

LYSISTRATA You know how to work. Play with
him, lead him on,
Seduce him to the cozening-point—kiss him, kiss
him,
Then slip your mouth aside just as he's sure of
it,
Ungirdle every caress his mouth feels at
Save that the oath upon the bowl has locked.

MYRRHINE You can rely on me.

LYSISTRATA I'll stay here to help
In working up his ardor to its height
Of vain magnificence....
The rest to their quarters.

Enter CINESIAS.

Who is this that stands within our lines?

CINESIAS I.

LYSISTRATA A man?

CINESIAS Too much a man!

LYSISTRATA Then be off at once.

CINESIAS Who are you that thus eject me?

LYSISTRATA Guard for the day.

CINESIAS By all the gods, then call Myrrhine
hither.

LYSISTRATA So, call Myrrhine hither! Who are
you?

CINESIAS I am her husband Cinesias, son of
Anthros.

LYSISTRATA Welcome, dear friend! That
glorious name of yours
Is quite familiar in our ranks. Your wife
Continually has it in her mouth.
She cannot touch an apple or an egg
But she must say, "This to Cinesias!"

CINESIAS O is that true?

LYSISTRATA By Aphrodite, it is.
If the conversation strikes on men, your wife
Cuts in with, "All are boobies by Cinesias."

CINESIAS Then call her here.

LYSISTRATA And what am I to get?

CINESIAS This, if you want it.... See, what I
have here.

But not to take away.

LYSISTRATA Then I'll call her.

CINESIAS Be quick, be quick. All grace is wiped
from life

Since she went away. O sad, sad am I
When there I enter on that loneliness,
And wine is unvintaged of the sun's flavour.
And food is tasteless. But I've put on weight.

MYRRHINE (*above*)

I love him O so much! but he won't have it.
Don't call me down to him.

CINESIAS Sweet little Myrrhine!
What do you mean? Come here.

MYRRHINE O no I won't.

Why are you calling me? You don't want me.

CINESIAS Not want you! with this week-old
strength of love.

MYRRHINE Farewell.

CINESIAS Don't go, please don't go, Myrrhine.
At least you'll hear our child. Call your mother,
lad.

CHILD Mummy ... mummy ... mummy!

CINESIAS There now, don't you feel pity for the
child?

He's not been fed or washed now for six days.

MYRRHINE I certainly pity him with so
heartless a father.

CINESIAS Come down, my sweetest, come for
the child's sake.

MYRRHINE A trying life it is to be a mother!

I suppose I'd better go. *She comes down.*

CINESIAS How much younger she looks,
 How fresher and how prettier! Myrrhine,
 Lift up your lovely face, your disdainful face;
 And your ankle ... let your scorn step out its
 worst;
 It only rubs me to more ardor here.

MYRRHINE (*Playing with the child*)
 You're as innocent as he's iniquitous.
 Let me kiss you, honey-petting, mother's
 darling.

CINESIAS How wrong to follow other women's
 counsel
 And let loose all these throbbing voids in
 yourself
 As well as in me. Don't you go throb-throb?

MYRRHINE Take away your hands.

CINESIAS Everything in the house
 Is being ruined.

MYRRHINE I don't care at all.

CINESIAS The roosters are picking all your web
 to rags.
 Do you mind that?

MYRRHINE Not I.

CINESIAS What time we've wasted
 We might have drenched with Paphian
 laughter, flung
 On Aphrodite's Mysteries. O come here.

MYRRHINE Not till a treaty finishes the war.

CINESIAS If you must have it, then we'll get it
 done.

MYRRHINE Do it and I'll come home. Till then I am bound.

CINESIAS Well, can't your oath perhaps be got around?

MYRRHINE No ... no ... still I'll not say that I don't love you.

CINESIAS You love me! Then dear girl, let me also love you.

MYRRHINE You must be joking. The boy's looking on.

CINESIAS Here, Manes, take the child home!...
There, he's gone.
There's nothing in the way now. Come to the point.

MYRRHINE Here in the open! In plain sight?

CINESIAS In Pan's cave.
A splendid place.

MYRRHINE Where shall I dress my hair again
Before returning to the citadel?

CINESIAS You can easily primp yourself in the Clepsydra.

MYRRHINE But how can I break my oath?

CINESIAS Leave that to me,
I'll take all risk.

MYRRHINE Well, I'll make you comfortable.

CINESIAS Don't worry. I'd as soon lie on the grass.

MYRRHINE No, by Apollo, in spite of all your faults

I won't have you lying on the nasty earth.
(From here MYRRHINE keeps on going off to fetch things.)

CINESIAS Ah, how she loves me.

MYRRHINE Rest there on the bench,
 While I arrange my clothes. O what a nuisance,
 I must find some cushions first.

CINESIAS Why some cushions?
 Please don't get them!

MYRRHINE What? The plain, hard wood?
 Never, by Artemis! That would be too vulgar.

CINESIAS Open your arms!

MYRRHINE No. Wait a second.

CINESIAS O...
 Then hurry back again.

MYRRHINE Here the cushions are.
 Lie down while I—O dear! But what a shame,
 You need more pillows.

CINESIAS I don't want them, dear.

MYRRHINE But I do.

CINESIAS Thwarted affection mine,
 They treat you just like Heracles at a feast
 With cheats of dainties, O disappointing arms!

MYRRHINE Raise up your head.

CINESIAS There, that's everything at last.

MYRRHINE Yes, all.

CINESIAS Then run to my arms, you golden
 girl.

MYRRHINE I'm loosening my girdle now. But
you've not forgotten?

You're not deceiving me about the Treaty?

CINESIAS No, by my life, I'm not.

MYRRHINE Why, you've no blanket.

CINESIAS It's not the silly blanket's warmth but
yours I want.

MYRRHINE Never mind. You'll soon have both.
I'll come straight back.

CINESIAS The woman will choke me with her
coverlets.

MYRRHINE Get up a moment.

CINESIAS I'm up high enough.

MYRRHINE Would you like me to perfume
you?

CINESIAS By Apollo, no!

MYRRHINE By Aphrodite, I'll do it anyway.

CINESIAS Lord Zeus, may she soon use up all
the myrrh.

MYRRHINE Stretch out your hand. Take it and
rub it in.

CINESIAS Hmm, it's not as fragrant as might
be; that is,
Not before it's smeared. It doesn't smell of
kisses.

MYRRHINE How silly I am: I've brought you
Rhodian scents.

CINESIAS It's good enough, leave it, love.

MYRRHINE You must be jesting.

CINESIAS Plague rack the man who first
compounded scent!

MYRRHINE Here, take this flask.

CINESIAS I've a far better one.

Don't tease me, come here, and get nothing
more.

MYRRHINE I'm coming.... I'm just drawing off
my shoes....

You're sure you will vote for Peace?

CINESIAS I'll think about it.

She runs off.

I'm dead: the woman's worn me all away.

She's gone and left me with an anguished pulse.

MEN Baulked in your amorous delight

How melancholy is your plight.

With sympathy your case I view;

For I am sure it's hard on you.

What human being could sustain

This unforeseen domestic strain,

And not a single trace

Of willing women in the place!

CINESIAS O Zeus, what throbbing suffering!

MEN She did it all, the harlot, she

With her atrocious harlotry.

WOMEN Nay, rather call her darling-sweet.

MEN What, sweet? She's a rude, wicked thing.

CINESIAS A wicked thing, as I repeat.

O Zeus, O Zeus,

Canst Thou not suddenly let loose

Some twirling hurricane to tear

Her flapping up along the air
 And drop her, when she's whirled around,
 Here to the ground
 Neatly impaled upon the stake
 That's ready upright for her sake.

He goes out.

Enter SPARTAN HERALD.

The MAGISTRATE comes forward.

HERALD What here gabs the Senate an' the
 Prytanes?

I've fetcht despatches for them.

MAGISTRATE Are you a man
 Or a monstrosity?

HERALD My scrimp-brained lad,
 I'm a herald, as ye see, who hae come frae
 Sparta

Anent a Peace.

MAGISTRATE Then why do you hide that lance
 That sticks out under your arms?

HERALD. I've brought no lance.

MAGISTRATE Then why do you turn aside and
 hold your cloak

So far out from your body? Is your groin
 swollen

With stress of travelling?

HERALD By Castor, I'll swear
 The man is wud.

MAGISTRATE Indeed, your cloak is wide,
 My rascal fellow.

HERALD But I tell ye No!
 Enow o' fleering!

MAGISTRATE Well, what is it then?

HERALD It's my despatch cane.

MAGISTRATE Of course—a Spartan cane!
 But speak right out. I know all this too well.
 Are new privations springing up in Sparta?

HERALD Och, hard as could be: in lofty lusty
 columns
 Our allies stand united. We maun get Pellene.

MAGISTRATE Whence has this evil come? Is it
 from Pan?

HERALD No. Lampito first ran asklent, then the
 others
 Sprinted after her example, and blocked, the
 hizzies,
 Their wames unskaited against our every
 fleech.

MAGISTRATE What did you do?

HERALD We are broken, and bent double,
 Limp like men carrying lanthorns in great
 winds
 About the city. They winna let us even
 Wi' lightest neif skim their primsie pretties
 Till we've concluded Peace-terms wi' a' Hellas.

MAGISTRATE So the conspiracy is universal;
 This proves it. Then return to Sparta. Bid them
 Send envoys with full powers to treat of Peace;
 And I will urge the Senate here to choose
 Plenipotentiary ambassadors,
 As argument adducing this connection.

HERALD I'm off. Your wisdom none could
 contravert.
They retire.

- MEN** There is no beast, no rush of fire, like
 woman so untamed.
 She calmly goes her way where even panthers
 would be shamed.
- WOMEN** And yet you are fool enough, it seems,
 to dare to war with me,
 When for your faithful ally you might win me
 easily.
- MEN** Never could the hate I feel for womankind
 grow less.
- WOMEN** Then have your will. But I'll take pity
 on your nakedness.
 For I can see just how ridiculous you look, and
 so
 Will help you with your tunic if close up I now
 may go.
- MEN** Well, that, by Zeus, is no scoundrel-deed, I
 frankly will admit.
 I only took them off myself in a scoundrel
 raging-fit.
- WOMEN** Now you look sensible, and that
 you're men no one could doubt.
 If you were but good friends again, I'd take the
 insect out
 That hurts your eye.
- MEN** Is that what's wrong? That nasty bitie
 thing.
 Please squeeze it out, and show me what it is
 that makes this sting.
 It's been paining me a long while now.
- WOMEN** Well I'll agree to that,
 Although you're most unmannerly. O what a
 giant gnat.

Here, look! It comes from marshy Tricorysus, I
can tell.

MEN O thank you. It was digging out a veritable
well.

Now that it's gone, I can't hold back my tears.
See how they fall.

WOMEN I'll wipe them off, bad as you are, and
kiss you after all.

MEN I won't be kissed.

WOMEN O yes, you will. Your wishes do not
matter.

MEN O botheration take you all! How you cajole
and flatter.

A hell it is to live with you; to live without, a
hell:

How truly was that said. But come, these
enmities let's quell.

You stop from giving orders and I'll stop from
doing wrong.

So let's join ranks and seal our bargain with a
choric song.

CHORUS. Athenians, it's not our intention
To sow political dissension
By giving any scandal mention;
But on the contrary to promote good feeling in
the state

By word and deed. We've had enough
calamities of late.

So let a man or woman but divulge

They need a trifle, say,

Two minas, three or four,

I've purses here that bulge.

There's only one condition made

(Indulge my whim in this I pray)–

When Peace is signed once more,
On no account am I to be repaid.

And I'm making preparation
For a gay select collation
With some youths of reputation.
I've managed to produce some soup and
they're slaughtering for me
A sucking-pig: its flesh should taste as tender
as could be.

I shall expect you at my house today.
To the baths make an early visit,
And bring your children along;
Don't dawdle on the way.
Ask no one; enter as if the place
Was all your own—yours henceforth is it.
If nothing chances wrong,
The door will then be shut bang in your face.

The SPARTAN AMBASSADORS approach.

CHORUS Here come the Spartan envoys with
long, worried beards.
Hail, Spartans how do you fare?
Did anything new arise?

SPARTANS No need for a clutter o' words. Do
ye see our condition?

CHORUS The situation swells to greater tension.
Something will explode soon.

SPARTANS It's awfu' truly.
But come, let us wi' the best speed we may
Scribble a Peace.

CHORUS I notice that our men
Like wrestlers poised for contest, hold their
clothes
Out from their bellies. An athlete's malady!
Since exercise alone can bring relief.

ATHENIANS Can anyone tell us where
Lysistrata is?

There is no need to describe our men's
condition,
It shows up plainly enough.

CHORUS It's the same disease.
Do you feel a jerking throbbing in the morning?

ATHENIANS By Zeus, yes! In these straits, I'm
racked all through.

Unless Peace is soon declared, we shall be
driven

In the void of women to try Cleisthenes.

CHORUS Be wise and cover those things with
your tunics.

Who knows what kind of person may perceive
you?

ATHENIANS By Zeus, you're right.

SPARTANS By the Twa Goddesses,
Indeed ye are. Let's put our tunics on.

ATHENIANS Hail O my fellow-sufferers, hail
Spartans.

SPARTANS O hinnie darling, what a waefu'
thing!

If they had seen us wi' our lunging waddies!

ATHENIANS Tell us then, Spartans, what has
brought you here?

SPARTANS We come to treat o' Peace.

ATHENIANS Well spoken there!

And we the same. Let us callout Lysistrata
Since she alone can settle the Peace-terms.

SPARTANS Callout Lysistratus too if ye don't
mind.

CHORUS No indeed. She hears your voices and
she comes.

Enter LYSISTRATA

Hail, Wonder of all women! Now you must be
in turn

Hard, shifting, clear, deceitful, noble, crafty,
sweet, and stern.

The foremost men of Hellas, smitten by your
fascination,

Have brought their tangled quarrels here for
your sole arbitration.

LYSISTRATA An easy task if the love's raging
home-sickness

Doesn't start trying out how well each other
Will serve instead of us. But I'll know at once
If they do. O where's that girl, Reconciliation?

Bring first before me the Spartan delegates,
And see you lift no rude or violent hands—
None of the churlish ways our husbands used.
But lead them courteously, as women should.

And if they grudge fingers, guide them by
other methods,

And introduce them with ready tact. The
Athenians

Draw by whatever offers you a grip.

Now, Spartans, stay here facing me. Here you,
Athenians. Both hearken to my words.

I am a woman, but I'm not a fool.

And what of natural intelligence I own
Has been filled out with the remembered
precepts

My father and the city-elders taught me.

First I reproach you both sides equally
That when at Pylae and Olympia,

At Pytho and the many other shrines
 That I could name, you sprinkle from one cup
 The altars common to all Hellenes, yet
 You wrack Hellenic cities, bloody Hellas
 With deaths of her own sons, while yonder
 clangs
 The gathering menace of barbarians.

ATHENIANS We cannot hold it in much longer
 now.

LYSISTRATA Now unto you, O Spartans, do I
 speak.

Do you forget how your own countryman,
 Pericleidas, once came hither suppliant
 Before our altars, pale in his purple robes,
 Praying for an army when in Messenia
 Danger growled, and the Sea-god made earth
 quaver.

Then with four thousand hoplites Cimon
 marched

And saved all Sparta. Yet base ingrates now,
 You are ravaging the soil of your preservers.

ATHENIANS By Zeus, they do great wrong,
 Lysistrata.

SPARTANS Great wrong, indeed. O! What a
 luscious wench!

LYSISTRATA And now I turn to the Athenians.
 Have you forgotten too how once the Spartans
 In days when you wore slavish tunics, came
 And with their spears broke a Thessalian host
 And all the partisans of Hippias?
 They alone stood by your shoulder on that day.
 They freed you, so that for the slave's short skirt
 You should wear the trailing cloak of liberty.

SPARTANS I've never seen a nobler woman

anywhere.

ATHENIANS Nor I one with such prettily
jointing hips.

LYSISTRATA Now, brethren twined with
mutual benefactions,
Can you still war, can you suffer such disgrace?
Why not be friends? What is there to prevent
you?

SPARTANS We're agreed, gin that we get this
tempting Mole.

LYSISTRATA Which one?

SPARTANS That ane we've wanted to get into,
O for sae lang....
Pylos, of course.

ATHENIANS By Poseidon,
Never!

LYSISTRATA Give it up.

ATHENIANS Then what will we do?
We need that ticklish place united to us—

LYSISTRATA Ask for some other lurking-hole in
return.

ATHENIANS Then, ah, we'll choose this snug
thing here, Echinus,
Shall we call the nestling spot? And this
backside haven,
These desirable twin promontories, the Maliac,
And then of course these Megarean Legs.

SPARTANS Not that, O surely not that, never
that.

LYSISTRATA Agree! Now what are two legs
more or less?

ATHENIANS I want to strip at once and plough
my land.

SPARTANS And mine I want to fertilize at once.

LYSISTRATA And so you can, when Peace is
once declared.

If you mean it, get your allies' heads together
And come to some decision.

ATHENIANS What allies?

There's no distinction in our politics:
We've risen as one man to this conclusion;
Every ally is jumping-mad to drive it home.

SPARTANS And ours the same, for sure.

ATHENIANS The Carystians first!

I'll bet on that.

LYSISTRATA I agree with all of you.

Now off, and cleanse yourselves for the
Acropolis,
For we invite you all in to a supper
From our commissariat baskets. There at table
You will pledge good behaviour and
uprightness;
Then each man's wife is his to hustle home.

ATHENIANS Come, as quickly as possible.

SPARTANS As quick as ye like.

Lead on.

ATHENIANS O Zeus, quick, quick, lead quickly
on.

They hurry off.

CHORUS. Broidered stuffs on high I'm heaping,
Fashionable cloaks and sweeping
Trains, not even gold gawds keeping.

Take them all, I pray you, take them all (I do not care)

And deck your children—your daughter, if the Basket she's to bear.

Come, everyone of you, come in and take Of this rich hoard a share.

Nought's tied so skilfully

But you its seal can break

And plunder all you spy inside.

I've laid out all that I can spare,

And therefore you will see

Nothing unless than I you're sharper-eyed.

If lacking corn a man should be

While his slaves clamour hungrily

And his excessive progeny,

Then I've a handfull of grain at home which is always to be had,

And to which in fact a more-than-life-size loaf I'd gladly add.

Then let the poor bring with them bag or sack

And take this store of food.

Manes, my man, I'll tell

To help them all to pack

Their wallets full. But O take care.

I had forgotten; don't intrude,

Or terrified you'll yell.

My dog is hungry too, and bites—beware!

Some LOUNGERS from the Market with torches approach

the Banqueting hall. The PORTER bars their entrance.

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER Open the door.

PORTER Here move along.

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER What's this?

You're sitting down. Shall I singe you with my torch?

That's vulgar! O I couldn't do it ... yet
 If it would gratify the audience,
 I'll mortify myself.

2ND MARKET-LOUNGER And I will too.
 We'll both be crude and vulgar, yes we will.

PORTER Be off at once now or you'll be wailing
 Dirges for your hair. Get off at once,
 And see you don't disturb the Spartan envoys
 Just coming out from the splendid feast they've
 had.

The banqueters begin to come out.

1ST ATHENIAN I've never known such a
 pleasant banquet before,
 And what delightful fellows the Spartans are.
 When we are warm with wine, how wise we
 grow.

2ND ATHENIAN That's only fair, since sober
 we're such fools:
 This is the advice I'd give the Athenians—
 See our ambassadors are always drunk.
 For when we visit Sparta sober, then
 We're on the alert for trickery all the while
 So that we miss half of the things they say,
 And misinterpret things that were never said,
 And then report the muddle back to Athens.
 But now we're charmed with each other. They
 might cap
 With the Telamon-catch instead of the
 Cleitagora,
 And we'd applaud and praise them just the
 same;
 We're not too scrupulous in weighing words.

PORTER Why, here the rascals come again to
 plague me.

Won't you move on, you sorry loafers there!

MARKET-LOUNGER Yes, by Zeus, they're
already coming out.

SPARTANS Now hinnie dearest, please tak' up
your pipe
That I may try a spring an' sing my best
In honour o' the Athenians an' oursels.

ATHENIANS Aye, take your pipe. By all the
gods, there's nothing
Could glad my heart more than to watch you
dance.

SPARTANS. Mnemosyne,
Let thy fire storm these younkers,
O tongue wi' stormy ecstasy
My Muse that knows
Our deeds and theirs, how when at sea
Their navies swooped upon
The Medes at Artemision—
Gods for their courage, did they strike
Wrenching a triumph frae their foes;
While at Thermopylae
Leonidas' army stood: wild-boars they were
like
Wild-boars that wi' fierce threat
Their terrible tusks whet;
The sweat ran streaming down each twisted
face,
Faen blossoming i' strange petals o' death
Panted frae mortal breath,
The sweat drenched a' their bodies i' that place,
For the hurly-burly o' Persians glittered more
Than the sands on the shore.
Come, Hunting Girl, an' hear my prayer—
You whose arrows whizz in woodlands, come
an' bless

This Peace we swear.
 Let us be fenced wi' age long amity,
 O let this bond stick ever firm through thee
 In friendly happiness.
 Henceforth no guilefu' perjury be seen!
 O hither, hither O
 Thou wildwood queen.

LYSISTRATA Earth is delighted now, peace is
 the voice of earth.
 Spartans, sort out your wives: Athenians,
 yours.
 Let each catch hands with his wife and dance
 his joy,
 Dance out his thanks, be grateful in music,
 And promise reformation with his heels.

ATHENIANS. O Dancers, forward. Lead out the
 Graces,
 Call Artemis out;
 Then her brother, the Dancer of Skies,
 That gracious Apollo.
 Invoke with a shout
 Dionysus out of whose eyes
 Breaks fire on the maenads that follow;
 And Zeus with his flares of quick lightning, and
 call,
 Happy Hera, Queen of all,
 And all the Daimons summon hither to be
 Witnesses of our revelry
 And of the noble Peace we have made,
 Aphrodite our aid.
 Io Paieon, Io, cry—
 For victory, leap!
 Attained by me, leap!
 Euoi Euoi Euai Euai.

SPARTANS Piper, gie us the music for a new
 sang.

SPARTANS. Leaving again lovely lofty Taygetus
 Hither O Spartan Muse, hither to greet us,
 And wi' our choric voice to raise
 To Amyclean Apollo praise,
 And Tyndareus' gallant sons whose days
 Alang Eurotas' banks merrily pass,
 An' Athene o' the House o' Brass.

Now the dance begin;
 Dance, making swirl your fringe o' woolly skin,
 While we join voices
 To hymn dear Sparta that rejoices
 I' a beautifu' sang,
 An' loves to see
 Dancers tangled beautifully;
 For the girls i' tumbled ranks
 Alang Eurotas' banks
 Like wanton fillies thrang,
 Frolicking there
 An' like Bacchantes shaking the wild air
 To comb a giddy laughter through the hair,
 Bacchantes that clench thyrsi as they sweep
 To the ecstatic leap.

An' Helen, Child o' Leda, come
 Thou holy, nimble, gracefu' Queen,
 Lead thou the dance, gather thy joyous tresses
 up i' bands
 An' play like a fawn. To madden them, clap thy
 hands,
 And sing praise to the warrior goddess templed
 i' our lands,
 Her o' the House o' Brass.