
Lysistrata



by Aristophanes
Trans. Norman Lindsay

Styled by **LimpidSoft**

Contents

FOREWORD	1
LYSISTRATA	19

The present document was derived from text provided by Project Gutenberg (document 7700) which was made available free of charge. This document is also free of charge.

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 col-

FOREWORD

lectors of "curious literature" than the *Ecclesi-azusae* 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 *Lysis-trata*. The intellectual and spiritual tendrils of the poem are more truly interwoven, the oper-

FOREWORD

ation 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 contact 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 aca-

FOREWORD

demic 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 under-

FOREWORD

value 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 lyricism is abstracted, is seen to be an element of Homer, as is the profoundly balanced humour of Aristophanes, at once tenderly human and

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

wholly distinct individuals, yet wholly submerged in the unity that is Wagner; and so reconcile life's duality by balancing its opposing laughters 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

FOREWORD

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 comedies 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

FOREWORD

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 counterbalancing 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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

FOREWORD

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

¹The Boeotian eels were highly esteemed delicacies in Athens.

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 toiles
Of stately silk and dainty little

slippers....

LYSISTRATA These are the very
armaments of the rescue.
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 Anagyras 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

behint.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.

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 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.

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 conspiratrices,
 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
louring 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?

³Vide supra

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.

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 Prytaness?

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' fleeing!

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 sing
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.