

**FRAGMENTS OF THE
GREEK COMIC
POETS: WITH RENDERINGS
IN ENGLISH VERSE**

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Fragments of the Greek Comic Poets: With Renderings in English Verse by F. A. Paley

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GREEK COMIC POETS.

FRAGMENTS
OF THE
GREEK COMIC POETS.

With Renderings in English Verse.

Frederick Apthorp
BY F. A. PALEY, LL.D.,
Translator of "Greek Wit," etc., etc.

"Versibus exponi tragicis res comica non vult;
Interdum tamen et vocem Comœdia tollit."
HORACE.

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Constantius fund.

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PREFACE.

SOME thousands of verses, attributed by Athenæus, Stobæus, and others who have preserved them, to the many poets of the Old, the Middle, and the New Comedy, never come within the range of school reading in this country. But many of them are extremely witty; and as they represent the best periods of the Attic language and stage, *viz.* from the age of Pericles till some time after the death of Alexander the Great, the neglect of them is a weak point in our classical education. To bring a selection from them to the notice of English readers is almost like the opening of a new mine, or restoring to cultivation land that has been long lying waste.

Of these poets, Antiphanes, of the "Middle," and Menander, of the "New," seem to have been most famous. From the latter especially Plautus and Terence were indebted for not a few of their plays. More than seven hundred "monostichs," or single verses, alphabetically arranged, have come down to us under the name of Menander, though not all of them are genuine.

We have in this interesting collection of the Comic fragments from the writings of about one hundred and fifty poets, a combination of the wise, the witty, the satirical, the sententious, the epigrammatic; and the application of some of them to the circumstances of our own times is striking. In translating them, the employment of rhyme makes the exact rendering often impossible; but the general spirit is preserved, while the claims of English readers rather than of classical scholars have been consulted.

The "Old Comedy," of which Aristophanes is the chief representative, had this great fault, that it revelled in immorality and made sport of depravity. The influence of the Socratic teaching, and the schools of Sophists and philosophers, did much to correct this terrible abuse, by which the Comic stage had become an incentive to unrestrained vice. It is to the credit of Menander and the New Comedy that it rarely offends.

The edition used in making these extracts is the *Editio Minor* of the "Fragmenta Comicorum Græcorum," by Augustus Meineke, in two octavo volumes, together containing some 1,300 pages (Berlin, 1847). To these reference is made by the figures, the marginal number of the fragment being subjoined to each extract, but not that of the drama from which it was taken, and which is supplied in Meineke's edition.

It is well to repeat, that the translations here given

were made mainly with the view of introducing a school of Attic wit, by no means familiar even to scholars, to ordinary English readers. Hence the "point" is attended to rather than the form of expression, and some of the pieces may justly be regarded in the light of a paraphrase rather than as a translation, properly so called.

Nevertheless, as the Publishers have decided to print along with them the Greek text, which is almost identical with that of Meineke, it is hoped that translations in rhyming verse will be found near enough to give a ready help in correctly interpreting the original. And the Greek text, it is believed, will be judged to have an independent value for more advanced students, as a selection, if only a small one, from a form of Attic poetry of the best age, which is in the hands of very few, and which appears indeed to be practically unknown in English classical courses, though it might with great advantage be allowed its proper place in them. Why should Aristophanes be read in the schools while Menander is wholly neglected? Such a selection, perfectly unobjectionable in morality, not difficult as a lesson in Greek, and highly entertaining in itself, assuredly would form a valuable enlargement of the subjects now commonly recommended and set by Lecturers.

This little book therefore is intended alike for the School-room and the Drawing-room. It is hoped it may find its way into both.

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