

**ECLOGÆ  
ARISTOPHANICÆ, PART  
II: FROM THE BIRDS**

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*Eclogæ Aristophanicæ*, Part II: From The Birds by Thomas Kerchever Arnold

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**THOMAS KERCHEVER ARNOLD**

**ECLOGÆ  
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Arnold's School Classics.

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ECLOGÆ ARISTOPHANICÆ,

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PART II.

FROM THE BIRDS.

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WITH ENGLISH NOTES,

AND A

METRICAL TABLE,

BY

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ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

[After what I have said in the Preface to the "*Clouds*," I need not prefix any remarks to the present volume. Professor Felton's Preface, and the admirable account of the plot by Gray, the poet, will give the pupil all the information he can require.

T. K. A.]

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#### REFERENCES TO GRAMMARS.

The grammatical references are :

- 1) to the Editor's larger Greek Grammar.
- 2) to smaller Gr. Gr. [in ( )].
- 3) to Mr. Jalf's Kühner (with § prefixed).

## P R E F A C E.

(By Professor Fäton.)

THE Birds of Aristophanes has always been regarded as one of his most delightful pieces. Like the Clouds, it is comparatively free from the objectionable licence of thought and language, which deforms several of his plays to such a degree that they cannot be used in schools or colleges. It is true there are some passages in this play also too freely executed; but it has been decided, on mature reflection, to let them stand, so as to offer the drama entire, on the principles which guided my decision in editing the Clouds.

The text of this edition is reprinted from the *Poetae Scenici* of Dindorf. In the preparation of the notes I have used Commentaries of Christian Daniel Beck, together with the notes and Scholia edited by Inveruisius; the notes of Bothe, to whose valuable edition I am under great obligations; and the brief, but excellent, annotations of Blaydes. Credit is always given for what has been taken from the labours of these distinguished scholars.

In addition to the critical apparatus just mentioned, I have endeavoured to explain from other sources a branch of the subject, to which less attention has heretofore been given;—I mean the natural history of the birds, which are prominent and entertaining figures among the persons of the play. I have carefully examined Aristotle's *History of Animals*, from which I have drawn illustrative descriptions. But it is well known that a considerable portion of the birds of Aristophanes are not mentioned in Aristotle's work, and some of them are thought to be unknown. The natural history of Greece has been almost entirely neglected since the researches of the philosopher of Stagira; and here is an opportunity for a naturalist, who is at the same time a good classical scholar, to make valuable contributions both to science and philology.

I suspected that the poet's selection of birds was not made at random, but that, in every instance, they were chosen with a special meaning, and to effect a particular purpose in point of art. In considering the play from this point of view, I have been much indebted to my friend and colleague, Professor Agassiz, of whose profound and comprehensive knowledge of ornithology I have been permitted to avail myself in attempting to determine the species of some of the birds supposed to be unknown; and I have come to the conclusion, that, in all cases, the character and habits of the birds are exactly and curiously adapted to the parts they perform in the comedy, showing Aristophanes to have been a most careful observer, as well as a consummate poet. I have also used with profit a little work, entitled "*Beitrag zur Ornithologie Griechenlands, von Heinrich Graf von der Mühle,*" or, *Contributions to the Ornithology of Greece, by*



*Henry, Count von der Müllle*; a work of interest and importance, though written without any reference to the classical bearings of the subject.

Great care has been taken to illustrate the political allusions, and the application of judicial expressions, in the course of the piece. For this purpose, the excellent writings of Hermann, Smith, and Boeckh have been freely cited. St. John's admirable work on the Manners and Customs of the Hellenes has also been consulted.

It is probably impossible, at present, to feel the full force of the wit and gaiety of Aristophanes, much of which turned upon temporary and local relations. Still a careful study of contemporary history, political and judicial institutions, popular prejudices and delusions, and especially such remains of dramatic and lyrical poetry as have come down to us, will make all the material points of the comedy of Aristophanes sufficiently clear.

The playful satire of the *Birds* is more comprehensive and genial than that of any other of the poet's comedies. The spirit of parody and burlesque, which is a general trait of the Aristophanic drama, here displays itself most freely and amusingly. Even the solemn genius of Pindar does not escape entirely the poet's whimsical perversions. The dithyrambic poets in general are unsparingly ridiculed; the philosophers and men of science are not allowed to pass untouched; while profligates of every class and description are here, as well as in the *Clouds*, held up to scorn and contempt.

Much discussion has been held upon the specific object the poet aimed at in his plan. Some have endeavoured to show that the main drift of the piece was to expose the folly of the Athenians in their dreams of universal empire, at the time of the Sicilian Expedition; and they have fancied they could identify, not only the leading parties in the Peloponnesian War, but particular characters in the history of the times. This is pressing matters of fact too far in judging of a poetical work. No doubt Aristophanes sought to lay the foundation of all his pieces in the actual life, public and private, of his age. But his genius could not so completely bind itself to the prosaic realities around him, as these critics would have us believe. His Pegasus trod the firm earth, but never bowed his neck to the yoke. Some of the leading ideas were unquestionably suggested by the popular madness which the versatile and profligate genius of Alcibiades had done so much to kindle; but the groundwork only of the play was laid in these political passions and events. That established, the poet gave free scope to his brilliant fancy, boundless wit, and unsurpassed powers of invention, and produced a poem, not only fitted to amuse and delight his countrymen, but to interest the lovers of literature in future ages, by the richest union of sportive satire and creative imagination that the comic theatre of Athens ever witnessed.

The following Argument is somewhat condensed from the works of the poet Gray. It is prefixed to the spirited translation of the Rev. Henry Francis Cary.

C. C. F.

CAMBRIDGE, November 8, 1849.

## ARGUMENT\*.

"EUKLIPIDES and Pistheternus, two ancient Athenians, thoroughly weary of the folly, injustice, and litigious temper of their countrymen, determine to leave Attica for good and all; and having heard much of the fame of Epops, king of the birds, who was once a man under the name of Tereus, and had married an Athenian lady, they pack up a few necessary utensils, and set out for the court of that prince, under the conduct of a jay and a raven, birds of great distinction in augury, without whose direction the Greeks never undertook any thing of consequence. Their errand is to inquire of the birds, who are the greatest travellers of any nation, where they may meet with a quiet, easy settlement, far from all prosecutions, lawsuits, and sycophant informers, to pass the remainder of their lives in peace and liberty.

"The scene is a wild, unfrequented country, which terminates in mountains; there the old men are seen (accompanied by two slaves, who carry their little baggage), fatigued and fretting at the carelessness of their guides, who, though they cost them a matter of a groat in the market, are good for nothing but to bite them by the fingers, and lead them out of the way. They travel on, however, till they come to the foot of the rocks, which stop up their passage, and put them to their wits' end. Here the raven croaks, and the jay chatters and looks up into the air, as much as to say that this is the place: upon which they knock with a stone and with their heels (as though it were against a door) against the side of the mountain.

"Trochilus, a bird that waits upon Epops, appears above; he is frightened at the sight of two men, and they are much more so at the length of his beak and the fierceness of his aspect. He takes them for fowlers; and they insist upon it, that they are not men, but birds. In their confusion, their guides, whom they held in a string, escape and fly away. Epops, during this, is asleep within, after having dined upon a dish of beetles and berries: their noise awakens him, and he comes out of the grove.

"At the strangeness of his figure, they are divided between fear and laughing. They tell him their errand, and he gives them the choice of several cities fit for their purpose, one particularly on the

\* Works of Gray, edited by Mathias, Vol. II. pp. 151—160.

coast of the Red Sea, all which they refuse, for many comical reasons. He tells them the happiness of living among the birds; they are much pleased with the liberty and simplicity of it; and Pistheterus, a shrewd old fellow, proposes a scheme to improve it, and make them a far more powerful and considerable nation. Epops is struck with the project, and calls up his consort, the nightingale, to summon all his people together with her voice. They sing a fine ode.

"The birds come flying down, at first one by one, and perch here and there about the scene; and at last the Chorus, in a whole body, come hopping, and fluttering, and twittering in. At the sight of the two men they are in great tumult, and think that their king has betrayed them to the enemy. They determine to tear the two old men to pieces, draw themselves up in battle array, and are giving the word to fall on. Eselpides and Pistheterus, in all the terrors of death, after upbraiding each the other for bringing him into such distress, and trying in vain to escape, assume courage from mere despair, seize upon the kitchen furniture which they had brought with them, and, armed with pipkins for helmets, and with spits for lances, they present a resolute front to the enemy's phalanx. On the point of battle, Epops interposes, pleads hard for his two guests, who are, he says, his wife's relations, and people of wonderful abilities, and well affected to their commonwealth. His eloquence has its effect: the birds grow less violent, they enter into a truce with the old men, and both sides lay down their arms. Pistheterus, upon the authority of Æsop's fables, proves to them the great antiquity of their nation; that they were born before the creation of the earth, and before the gods, and once reigned over all countries, as he shows from several testimonies and monuments of different nations; that the cock wears his tiara erect, like the Persian king, and that all mankind start out of their beds at his command; that when the kite makes his first appearance in the spring, every one prostrates himself on the ground before it; that the Egyptians and Phœnicians set about their harvest as soon as the cuckoo is heard; that all kings bear an eagle on their sceptre, and many of the gods carry a bird on their head; that many great men swear by the goose, &c. &c. When he has revived in them the memory of their ancient empire, he laments their present despicable condition, and the affronts put upon them by mankind. They are convinced of what he says, applaud his oration, and desire his advice. He proposes that they shall unite, and build a city in the mid-air, whereby all commerce will effectually be stopped between heaven and earth; the gods will no longer be able to visit at ease their Semelæ and Alemeons below, nor feast on the fumes of sacrifices daily sent up to them, nor men enjoy the benefit of the seasons, nor the fruits of the earth, without permission from those winged deities of the middle region. He shows how mankind will lose nothing by this change of government; that the birds may be worshipped at a far less expense, nothing more than a few berries or a handful of corn; that they will need no sumptuous temples; that, by their great knowledge of futurity, they will direct their good votaries in all their expeditions, so as they can never fail of success; that the