

**PITT PRESS SERIES.
THE PLUTUS OF
ARISTOPHANES**

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ARISTOPHANES . & W. C. GREEN

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THE
PLUTUS OF ARISTOPHANES

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PLUTUS.

THE *Plutus* was exhibited in the archonship of Antipater, that is to say B.C. 388; being the last play that Aristophanes produced in his own name. For his two remaining plays, the *Acolosicon* and *Cocalus*, were put forth through Araros one of his sons, whom he wished thus to introduce to the Athenian public.

Thus much we learn from the writer of one of the Greek arguments. But a Scholiast tells us that there were two plays of Aristophanes bearing this name; and that the first *Plutus* was exhibited in the archonship of Diocles (B.C. 408). From this first *Plutus* a line (not in our play) is quoted by the Scholiast on *Ran.* 1093: on l. 115 of our play the Scholiast gives an alteration made (as he says) in the second *Plutus*; and lines 173, 1146 are noticed as necessarily belonging to the later play. This Scholiast evidently supposes the play which he is annotating to be substantially the first *Plutus*; into which lines 173, 1146, which must belong to the later play, have been transferred.

But the more general and better conclusion is that the play which we have is the second *Plutus*. The whole character of the play, the absence of choric interludes and personalities, are a mark of the later time: the historical references are thus correct and natural. Indeed there is nothing of which we could positively assert that it was not in the second *Plutus*. For though in lines 174, 303, 314 persons are mentioned by name, they are of no great note, we are not sure that they were still living, nor is the satire on them so bitter that it must have provoked the penalty of the law against personalities. Or, if some few lines be thought to have belonged to the earlier, but probably not to the later play, they may as easily have been in-

serted by copyists remembering the earlier play as *vice versa*. And if there be any truth in the proverb that 'second thoughts are best' we shall surely judge our line 115 ταύτης ἀπαλλάξαι σε τῆς ὀφθαλμίας to be later than the weak substitute given by the Scholiast τῆς συμφορᾶς ταύτης σε παύσειν ἢς ἔχεις.

Be it then assumed that our *Plutus* is the later play: 'a refashionment of an earlier work of Aristophanes,' as Donaldson calls it: though how far the two plays differed we do not know; they may have been substantially the same.

It appears however nearly certain that there were interludes of the Chorus in the *First Plutus*, which we have not in ours: and in such parts and elsewhere there was probably personal satire which in the later edition was omitted. For we know that the licence of Comedy had now been abridged by law: as Horace says, 'Chorus turpiter obtinuit sublato jure nocendi.' In fact the *Plutus*, with the *Ecclesiazusae*, belongs to what Meinecke calls the third age of Aristophanic poetry. Athens was conquered and humbled by the issue of the Peloponnesian war. Her leading position and liberty were lost. Comedy, as Aristophanes had originally conceived it—where the comic poet was to be the frank and fearless adviser of the State, reprover of mistaken policy, exposé of trickery and vice even in high places, roundly abusing his countrymen for their own good (see the Parabasis of the *Acharnians*)—comedy of this kind could no longer exist. With the greatness of the country had fallen the greatness of the poet's office. Not only by law was the Chorus silenced or restricted; but also poverty in place of wealth made it impossible to put plays on the stage with the old splendour. Aristophanes therefore of necessity conforms to the times: and though there are sparkles of his old wit, the general character of language is tamer. With the old bitterness is gone much of the old vigour.

The *Plutus* therefore may be ranked as belonging to Middle Comedy (if there be any definite Middle Comedy); at all events to the time of transition from the Old to the New. It deals not with political but private life: with the general question of the distribution of riches in the world, with the question whether

riches or poverty do most good. This question is solved by bringing on the stage the god of Wealth, restoring him to sight, and describing the consequences, when riches were now redistributed according to his and Chremylus' ideas of merit. For a sketch of the play one can hardly do better than reproduce that given by Addison in No. 464 of *The Spectator*. He calls it 'a very pretty allegory which is wrought into a play by Aristophanes the Greek Comedian.'

'Chremylus, who was an old and a good man, and withal exceeding poor, being desirous to leave some riches to his son, consults the oracle of Apollo upon the subject. The oracle bid him follow the first man he should see upon his going out of the temple. The person he chanced to see was to appearance an old sordid blind man, but, upon his following him from place to place, he at last found, by his own confession, that he was Plutus the god of riches, and that he was just come out of the house of a miser. Plutus further told him that when he was a boy he used to declare that as soon as he came to age he would distribute wealth to none but virtuous and just men; upon which Jupiter, considering the pernicious consequences of such a resolution, took his sight away from him, and left him to stroll about the world in the blind condition wherein Chremylus beheld him. With much ado Chremylus prevailed upon him to go to his house; where he met an old woman in a tattered raiment, who had been his guest for many years, and whose name was Poverty. The old woman refusing to turn out so easily as he would have her, he threatened to banish her, not only from his house, but out of all Greece, if she made any more words upon the matter. Poverty on this occasion pleads her cause very notably, and represents to her old landlord that, should she be driven out of the country, all their trades arts and sciences would be driven out with her; and that, if every one was rich, they would never be supplied with those pomps, ornaments and conveniences of life which make riches desirable. She likewise represented to him the several advantages which she bestowed upon her votaries, in regard to their shape, their health, and their activity, by preserving them from gout, drop-