

**SCENES FROM THE FROGS  
OF ARISTOPHANES;  
RUGBY EDITION**

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Scenes from The Frogs of Aristophanes; Rugby edition by A. Sidgwick

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**A. SIDGWICK**

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SCENES  
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THE FROGS OF ARISTOPHANES.

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## PREFACE TO THE FROGS.

**T**HE Frogs is a comedy written to throw ridicule on Euripides, and on the tone of thought which he promoted and represented. Aristophanes was, if we may call him by a modern name, a rigid Conservative of the most unflinching type. He looked with the greatest abhorrence upon the gradual development of Democracy at Athens; as well the principle itself, as the admitted evils which accompanied it. In the old times, he thought, the state had been well ruled; the standard of patriotism, valour, piety and simplicity of life, developed by the Persian Wars, had been a very high and noble one; and since Democracy had begun to rear its head, everything had changed continuously for the worse. The government was in the hands of the vulgarest, loudest, and corruptest demagogues, whose valour was shamelessness, and whose patriotism was avarice; art was degenerate; manners were degraded; religion was undermined; morality was shaken; and all social stability was endangered.

Of those who had promoted this change, Euripides manifestly was one of the most eminent. In his poetry, which attained a vast popularity at Athens, and won a proportionate influence, Aristophanes found everything combined to excite his indignation. The grandeur, the nobility, the massiveness, the piety, the reverence for old institutions and modes of thought, which had rung through every line of Aeschylus, was lost. In its place was only infinite cleverness, as fatal as it was attractive. No old established belief was safe from the new spirit of questioning and subtle criticism. The Gods, the constitution, the wisdom of ancestors, the common principles of morality, the social and domestic virtues, all in their turn were submitted to the action of this novel scepticism, and all in their turn suffered by it. These blind guides were the worst enemies of the state; and against

## PREFACE.

Euripides, accordingly, as the most eminent of them, Aristophanes directed his most implacable hostility, which not even the death of the poet, (as the poems did not die), could at all mitigate.

A further stimulus was supplied by the political situation. The Great War, begun with the brightest auspices for the Democracy, had proved a bitter disappointment. After the failure of the Sicilian expedition, their disappointment became despair. The oligarchical reaction of 411, which had brought the Four Hundred into power, had, it is true, proved abortive. But the Conservative party were the peace party, and must have been strengthened by the ill success of the war.

The plot of the play is simple enough.

Euripides (and Sophocles) had died the year before (406); and Dionysus is supposed to have gone to Arginusae, and, reading a play of Euripides on board ship, to have desired to fetch him back from Hades. So he dresses up like Heracles, takes a slave with him, and goes down to look for the poet. This situation is for a comedian too good a chance to be lost. Accordingly the three first scenes are taken up with describing the comic incidents of his descent.

Then comes the battle royal between Aeschylus and Euripides below, of which Dionysus is arbiter. First they criticise each other's prologues; then at last they weigh their poetry, verse against verse, in scales. It is needless to say that Aeschylus comes off the victor in every contest, and that Dionysus, though at first he preferred Euripides, finally chooses the other.

We must not be surprised that Aristophanes does not more bring to the front his real objections to Euripides. Alike on social, political, religious, and artistic grounds, he hated him; and his object was to ridicule and discredit him by any means in his power; the broader, the more effective. Of this a good instance is found in the famous *ληκίστιον ἀνάλιστον* scene. Provided some of the dirt would stick, he cared neither how much he threw, nor how undesired it was.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Διώνυσος.

Καθίας, his slave.

Ἡρακλῆς.

Νεκρός, a dead man.

Χάρων, the ferryman of Hades.

Αἴακος, appearing as Pluto's house-porter.

Θερσίπαιρα, a servant of Persephona.

Two κωδοκείτριαι or hostesses.

Εὐριπίδης, }  
Αἰσχύλος, } the poets.

Πλούτων, the king of Hades.

Βάρβαροι, the frogs.

Chorus of Mystæ, or initiated.

*The scene is at first on earth, and is then shifted to the Infernal Regions.*

*The play was acted at the Lenæan festival, in January, B.C. 405.*