

Socrates

Voltaire




1906

Exported from Wikisource on August 3, 2024

SOCRATES

Drama in three acts.

- [DRAMATIS PERSONÆ](#)
- [ACT I](#)
- [ACT II](#)
- [ACT III](#)

 This work is a translation and has a separate copyright status to the applicable copyright protections of the original content.

Original:



This work was published before January 1, 1929, and is in the [public domain](#) worldwide because the author died at least 100 years ago.

Translation:



This work is in the [public domain](#) worldwide because it has been so released by the [copyright](#) holder.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SOCRATES.

ANITUS. High Priest of Ceres.

MELITUS, one of the Judges of Athens.

XANTIPPE, Wife of Socrates.

AGLAE, a young Athenian Lady, brought up by Socrates.

SOPHRONIMUS, a young Athenian Gentleman, brought up by
Socrates.

DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS, Friends of Anitus.

*Judges, Disciples of Socrates, and three Pedants, Protected
by Anitus.*

ACT I. SCENE I.

ANITUS, DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS.

ANITUS.

My dear confidante, and you my trusty friends, you well know how much money I have put into your pockets this last feast of Ceres: I am now going to be married, and I hope you will all do your respective duties on this great occasion.

DRIXA.

That, my lord, we most certainly shall, provided you give us an opportunity of getting a little more by it.

ANITUS.

I shall want of you, Madam Drixia, two fine Persian carpets; from you, Terpander, I must have two large silver candlesticks; and from you, half a dozen robes.

TERPANDER.

A considerable demand, my lord; but there is nothing which we would not do to merit your holy protection.

ANITUS.

O you will be rewarded for it a hundred fold: 'tis the best means to gain the favor of the gods: give much, and much you shall receive; but above all fail not, I beseech you, to stir up the people against all the rich and great, who are deficient in paying their vows, and presenting their offerings.

ACROS.

On that, my lord, you may depend; it is a duty too sacred ever to be neglected by us.

ANITUS.

'Tis well, my friends; may heaven continue to inspire you with the same just and pious sentiments, and be assured you

will prosper; you, your children, and your children's children, to all posterity.

TERPANDER.

You have said it, my lord, and therefore it must be so.

SCENE II.

—

ANITUS, DRIXA.

ANITUS.

Well, my dear Drixia, I believe you will have no objection to my marrying Aglae; I shall not love you the less, and we may still live together as we used to do.

DRIXA.

O my lord, I am not jealous; as long as trade goes on well, I am contented. While I had the honor of being one of your

mistresses, I was a woman of some consequence in Athens: but if you are in love with Aglae, I, in my turn, am as fond of young Sophronimus: and Xantippe, Socrates's wife, has promised that he shall marry me. I shall be always, notwithstanding, as much at your service as ever. I am only vexed that this young fellow has been brought up with that rascal Socrates, and that Aglae is still in his hands. We must take them both out as fast as we can. Xantippe will be glad to get rid of them. The beautiful Sophronimus and the fair Aglae have a sad time of it with the surly Socrates.

ANITUS.

I am in great hopes, my dear, that Melitus and I together shall soon be able to destroy this dangerous fellow, who preaches nothing but virtue and divinity, and has taken the liberty to laugh at some certain adventures that happened at the mysteries of Ceres: but he is Aglae's tutor: her father, Agathon, they tell me, has left her a great fortune: in short, Aglae is a charming girl; I love her, and I will marry her; and as to Socrates, I shall take care of him.

DRIXA.

Do what you please with Socrates, so I can but get my dear Sophronimus: but how could that fool Agathon leave his

daughter in the hands of this old flat-nosed Socrates, that intolerable reasoner, who corrupts all our young men, and keeps them away from courtesans and the mysteries?

ANITUS.

Agathon himself was tainted with the same vile principles: he was one of your sober, serious fools, whose manners differed in every respect from ours; a man, in short, of another age, one of our sworn and inveterate enemies, who think they have fulfilled every duty when they worship God, assist man, cultivate friendships, and study philosophy; one of those ridiculous creatures who insolently deny that the gods prognosticate future events by the liver of an ox; those merciless reasoners, who find fault with priests for sacrificing young girls, or passing a night with them on occasion. These you see, Drixa, are a kind of people not fit to live. As to Socrates, I should have been glad to have him strangled long ago. However, I have agreed to meet him here in the portico, and talk with him about the marriage.

DRIXA.

Here he comes: you do him too much honor: but I must leave you, and talk to Xantippe about my young man.

ANITUS.

The gods conduct you, my dear Drixa; remember to serve them, and don't forget my two fine Persian carpets.

SCENE III.

ANITUS, SOCRATES.

ANITUS.

Good morning, my dear Socrates, thou favorite of the gods, and wisest of men; methinks every time I see you I am raised above myself; in you I look up with admiration to the dignity of human nature.

SOCRATES.

O my lord, I am a plain simple man, as void of knowledge, and as full of weakness, as any of my fellow-creatures: it is enough for me if you can bear with me.

ANITUS.

Bear with? I admire you, and would it were possible I could resemble you! To convince you of it, and that I may oftener be a witness to your virtues, and improve by your instructions, I am willing to espouse your fair pupil Aglae, whom I find you have the entire disposal of.

SOCRATES.

It is true indeed that her father Agathon, who was my friend, the dearest of all relations, bequeathed to my care, by his last will, this amiable and virtuous orphan.

ANITUS.

With a considerable fortune no doubt, for I hear she is one of the best matches in all Athens.

SOCRATES.

With regard to that I can give you no information; her father, my dearest friend, whose will is ever sacred to me,

forbade me to divulge the situation of her affairs in that point.

ANITUS.

This respect and discreet veneration for the last will of your friend are worthy of your noble soul; but it is well enough known that Agathon was rich.

SOCRATES.

He deserved to be so, if riches are a mark of the divine favor.

ANITUS.

They tell me a young coxcomb, named Sophronimus, makes love to her on account of her fortune; but I am persuaded you will not give encouragement to such a fellow, and that Anitus will have no rival.

SOCRATES.

I know in what light I ought to consider a person like you; but it is not for me to thwart the inclinations of Aglae. I would supply the place of a father to her, but I am not her master: she has a right to dispose of her own heart: I look upon restraint in this case as a crime: talk to her: if she hearkens to your proposal, with all my heart, I have no objection.

ANITUS.

I have your wife's consent already; without doubt she is acquainted with Aglae's sentiments, and therefore I look upon the affair as good as concluded.

SOCRATES.

But I never look upon things as done till they are really so.

SCENE IV.



SOCRATES, ANITUS, AGLAE.

SOCRATES.

Come hither, Aglae, and determine for yourself. Here is a person of considerable rank, who offers himself to you for a husband: you are at liberty to explain yourself to him: my presence might perhaps be a restraint upon you: whatever choice you make I shall approve: Xantippe will prepare everything for your nuptials.

AGLAE.

Generous Socrates! I am sorry you leave me.

ANITUS.

You seem, charming Aglae, to place great confidence in the good Socrates.

AGLAE.

It is my duty, sir; he has been a father to me; he has educated and instructed me.

ANITUS.

And pray, my dear, as he has instructed you, tell me what is your opinion of Ceres, Cybele, and Venus?

AGLAE.

Of them, sir, I will think just as you please.

ANITUS.

'Tis well said, and you will do as I please, too, then I hope.

AGLAE.

No, sir, that is quite another affair.

ANITUS.

You see, the wise Socrates consents to our marriage, and Xantippe above all things wishes for it. You know my passion for you, and are no stranger to my rank and fortune;

my happiness, perhaps your own too, depends on one word, therefore determine.

AGLAE.

I will answer you, sir, with that truth and sincerity which the great man who just now left us taught me never to depart from: I respect your dignity, know but little of your person, and, in a word, can never be yours.

ANITUS.

Never? cruel Aglae, are you not free? you will not then?

AGLAE.

No, sir, I cannot.

ANITUS.

What an affront, what an indignity is this! but 'tis to Socrates I am obliged for it: he dictated your answer, I

know he did; he prefers Sophronimus to me, that unworthy rival, that impious—

AGLAE.

Sophronimus is not impious, not unworthy; Socrates has loved him from his infancy; he has been a father to us both. Sophronimus is all beauty and all virtue; I love, and am beloved by him; it is in my power to marry him if I think proper; but I shall no more be his than yours.

ANITUS.

You astonish me: what! own you love Sophronimus?

AGLAE.

Yes, sir, I own it, because it is true.

ANITUS.

And yet when it is in your power to make yourself happy with him, refuse him you hand?

AGLAE.

That, sir, is no less true.

ANITUS.

Then I suppose your fear of displeasing me prevents your engaging with him?

AGLAE.

No such thing, I assure you: for having never wished to please, I have no fear of displeasing you.

ANITUS.

You dread then perhaps the displeasure of the gods, at seeing you prefer a profane wretch, like Sophronimus, to a high-priest?

AGLAE.

Not in the least. I am persuaded it is matter of very little concern to the supreme being, whether I marry you, or not.

ANITUS.

The supreme being! my dear child, you should not talk in this manner; you should say the gods and goddesses: take care, for I see you entertain some very dangerous opinions; but I know too well from whom they came. Learn then that Ceres, whose priest I am, may punish you for thus despising her worship, and her minister.

AGLAE.

I despise neither the one nor the other. I have been told that Ceres presides over the harvest, and I believe it; but she has nothing to do with my marriage.

ANITUS.

She has to do with everything; you know it; but I hope I shall be able to convert you. Are you indeed resolved not to marry Sophronimus?

AGLAE.

Yes; I am resolved, and am very sorry for it.

ANITUS.

I cannot understand a word of all these contradictions: but observe me; I love you, would have made you happy, and advanced you to rank and dignity: be advised, and reject not the offers which kind fortune thus courts you to accept: remember that everything should be sacrificed to our real interest; that youth will pass away, but riches remain: that wealth and honors should be your first concern, and that I speak to you on the part of the gods. I beg you will reflect seriously on what I have said: farewell; my dear girl, I shall pray to Ceres that she would inspire you, and still flatter myself she will touch your heart. Once more adieu, remember, you have promised me never to marry Sophronimus.

AGLAE.

I promised myself, but not you.

[Exit Anitus.]

AGLAE.

[*Alone.*

This man but makes me more unhappy. I know not why it is, but I never see him without shuddering: but here comes Sophronimus: alas! whilst his rival fills my heart with terror, he increases my tenderness and doubles my disquietude.

SCENE V.



AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

SOPHRONIMUS.

My dear Aglae, I met Anitus, the priest of Ceres, that worst of men, the sworn enemy of Socrates, just coming from you: your eyes seem bathed in tears.

AGLAE.

Is he the enemy of our benefactor too? then indeed I wonder not at my aversion to him, even before he spoke.

SOPHRONIMUS.

And is he the cause of your tears, my Aglae?

AGLAE.

No, Sophronimus, he can inspire nothing but hatred and disgust: my tears can flow for you alone.

SOPHRONIMUS.

For me? O gods, for me, who would repay them with my blood, for me who adore you, who hope to be beloved by Aglae, who only live for and would die for you? shall I reproach myself with having embittered one moment of your life? Aglae weeps, and Sophronimus is the cause. What have I done? what crime have I committed?

AGLAE.

None, my Sophronimus: you could not do it: 'tis not in your nature. I wept because you merit all my tenderness, because you have it, and because I must renounce you.

SOPHRONIMUS.

What dreadful sentence have you pronounced against me? I cannot believe you: you love me, you said you did, and Aglae can never change. You have promised to be mine, you cannot wish my death.

AGLAE.

No; I would have thee live and be happy: but, alas! I cannot make you so: I hoped I could, but fortune has deceived me. I swear to you, Sophronimus, since I cannot be yours, I never will be another's. I have declared so to Anitus, who courts me, and whom I despise; and here I declare the same to you, with a heart full of grief, tenderness, and love.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Since you love me, I must live; but if you refuse me your hand, it will be death to Sophronimus; therefore, my dearest

Aglæ, in the name of love, of all your charms, and all your virtues, explain to me this dreadful mystery.

SCENE VI.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLÆ.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O my honored master, my father, and my friend, behold in Sophronimus the most unfortunate of men, though in the presence of the only two beings upon earth who could make me happy: Socrates first taught me wisdom, and from Aglæ I learned to love; you consented to our marriage, and this beautiful fair one, who seemed so desirous of it, now refuses me; and whilst she says she loves, plunges a dagger in my heart: she has broke off the match without assigning any cause of her cruel caprice: O Socrates, prevent my misery, or teach me, if possible, how to bear it.

SOCRATES.

Aglæ is mistress of herself; her father made me her tutor, but not her tyrant; to see you united would have made me happy: if she has changed her mind I am surprised and sorry for it: but let us hear her reasons; if they are good, we must submit to them.

SOPHRONIMUS.

It is impossible they should.

AGLÆ.

To me however they appear so, but you shall hear them. When you first opened my father's will, most noble Socrates, you told me he had left me a sufficient competency; from that moment I resolved to bestow my fortune on the good Sophronimus, who has no support but you, no riches but his virtue: you applauded my resolution. How great was my happiness, in promoting that of him whom you have so long regarded as your own son! full of this pleasing hope I laid open the situation of my heart to Xantippe, who at once undeceived me. She treated me as an idle visionary; showed me the will of my father, who died a beggar, and left me nothing but your friendship to depend on. Awakened from my dream of promised happiness, nothing remained for me but the melancholy reflection that

it was no longer in my power to make the fortune of Sophronimus: I would not oppress him with the weight of my misfortunes.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I told you, Socrates, her reasons were poor and insufficient. If she loves me, am I not rich enough? Hitherto, it is true, I have subsisted from your bounty; but there is no employment, however irksome, which I would not undertake, to provide for my dearest Aglae: I ought indeed to make her a sacrifice of my passion, to find out some richer, happier lover for her: but I own my weakness, I cannot do it, there I am indeed unworthy of her; but if she could content herself with my low estate, if she could stoop to my humble condition: but I dare not hope so much; I sink beneath a misfortune which her fortitude is able to bear.

SOCRATES.

My dear children, it was very indiscreet in Xantippe to show you the will; but believe me, Aglae, she deceived you.

AGLAE.

Indeed she has not: I saw it with my own eyes: I know my father's hand too well to have the least doubt of it: but be assured, Socrates, I shall be able to bear poverty as I ought: these hands will support me; if I can but live, it is enough for me, but it is not for Sophronimus.

SOPHRONIMUS.

It is too much, a thousand times too much for me: thou tender, noble soul, worthy of thy illustrious master: a virtuous and laborious poverty is the natural state of man. I wish I could have offered you a throne, but if you will condescend to live with Sophronimus, our respectable poverty will be superior to the throne of Cræsus.

SOCRATES.

Your generous sentiments at once delight and distress me: I behold with transport those virtues budding forth in your heart, which I myself had sown: never were my hopes better fulfilled than in Aglae and Sophronimus: but once more believe me, Aglae, my wife has misinformed you: you are richer than you think you are: it was not to her, but to me your father entrusted you. May he not have left you a fortune which Xantippe knows nothing of?

AGLAE.

No, Socrates, he says expressly in his will, that he has left me poor.

SOCRATES.

And I tell you that you are deceived, that he has left you a sufficient competency to enable you to live happily with the virtuous Sophronimus, and that I desire therefore you would come, and sign the contract immediately.

SCENE VII.

—

SOCRATES, XANTIPPE, AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

XANTIPPE.

Come, come, child, don't stand amusing yourself there with my husband's visions and nonsense: philosophy to be sure is a mighty pretty thing when folks have nothing else to do: but you are a beggar, child; and must study how to live first,

and philosophize afterwards. I have concluded your marriage with Anitus, a worthy priest, and a man of fortune. Come, child, follow me, let me have no delays nor contradiction; I love to be obeyed: quick, quick, my dear, 'tis for your good, therefore let me have none of your reasonings, but follow me.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O heaven! my dear Aglae!

SOCRATES.

Let her talk, and trust to me for your happiness.

XANTIPPE.

Let me talk indeed! I shall talk and do too, I assure you. You are a pretty one to be sure, with your wisdom, your familiar demon, your irony, and all your nonsense that signifies nothing, to trouble yourself about matrimony: you are a good sort of a man, but you really know nothing of the world; happy is it for you that I am able to govern you. Come, Aglae, I must settle you as soon as possible: And you, sir, there, that seem as if you were thunderstruck, I

have taken care of you too: Drixa is the woman for you: you will both of you thank me by and by: I shall have done it all in a minute: I am very expeditious: let us lose no time therefore, by rights it should have been all over before this.

SOCRATES.

My children, don't thwart or provoke her, but pay her all kind of deference: we must comply with since we can't mend her: it is the triumph of reason to live well with those who have none.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Divine Socrates, I know not how to believe my own happiness: how can Aglae, whose father died in extreme poverty be possessed of so considerable a fortune?

SOCRATES.

I told you before, she had more than she thought she had: I knew her father's affairs better than herself: let it suffice that you both enjoy a fortune which you deserve: the secrets of the dead should be preserved as religiously as those of the living.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I am only afraid the priest of Ceres, to whom you have preferred Sophronimus, will endeavor to avenge Aglae's

refusal upon you: he is a man whom we have reason to dread.

SOCRATES.

What has he to fear who does his duty? I know the malice of my enemies; I know all their calumnies; but when we take care never to offend God, and endeavor to do all the good we can to mankind, then is it that we are afraid of nothing, or whilst we live, or when we die.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I know it well; yet I should die with grief if the happiness you bestowed on me should induce your enemies to put your virtue to the trial.

SCENE II.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLAE.

AGLAE.

O my benefactor, my father, let me fall at your feet, thou more than man; join me, Sophronimus, in mutual acknowledgments; 'tis he, 'tis Socrates who marries us at his own expense, and gives us best part of his own fortune to support us: but we must not suffer him, we must not be rich on these conditions; no, if our hearts have any gratitude, let them imitate his generosity.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O Socrates, with her I throw myself at thy feet; like her I am charmed, astonished and confounded at thy goodness; we will not, must not abuse it: look on us as your children, but do not let those children be a burden to their kind parent; thy friendship is fortune sufficient, 'tis all that we desire: you are not rich, and yet you do more than all the great ones of the earth; but were we to accept thy bounties, we should be unworthy of them.

SOCRATES.

Rise, my children, you affect me too deeply: are we not bound to respect the will of the dead? did not your father, Aglae, whom I always considered as part of myself, did he

not enjoin me to treat you as my daughter? Had I not done so, I had betrayed the confidence of friendship: I took upon me the performance of his will, and I have executed it: the little I bestow on you would have been useless to my old age, which has not many wants to supply. If it was my duty to obey my friend, it is yours to obey your father. I am that father now, and by that sacred name command you not to make me unhappy by your refusal: but retire, I see Xantippe coming this way; I have reasons for desiring you to avoid her at present.

AGLAE.

Your commands are cruel, but they must be obeyed.

SCENE III.

—

SOCRATES, XANTIPPE.

XANTIPPE.

A fine piece of work you have made here; upon my word, my dear husband, I must put a stop to your proceedings.

Here had I promised Aglae to Anitus the high-priest, a man of interest amongst the great, and Sophronimus to the rich Drixa, who has extensive influence in the whole nation; and you marry your two fools together, and make me break my word to both: not content with this, you must needs give them best part of your fortune too. Twenty thousand drachms! good gods! twenty thousand drachms! are you not ashamed of yourself? at the age of threescore and ten too? Who's to pay your physicians when you are sick? or your lawyers when you have a law-suit? What am I to do, when that villainous wry-necked fellow, Anitus, whom you might have had on your side, if he should join his party to persecute you, as they have done so often already? confusion to all philosophy and philosophers I say, and to my own foolish regard for you! You pretend to direct others, and want leading-strings yourself; always reasoning without a grain of common sense. If you were not one of the best men in the world, you would be the most ridiculous and the most insupportable: but mind me, you have only one way left, break off this foolish match, and do what your wife bids you.

SOCRATES.

You talk well, my dear Xantippe, and with great moderation; but hear what I have to say in return. I did not propose this marriage myself, but Aglae and Sophronimus

love and are worthy of each other. I have already made over everything to you that the laws will allow me, and have given almost all that remained to the daughter of my friend: the little which I keep is enough for me. I have no physician to pay because I live sober; no lawyers because I have neither debts nor reversions: and with regard to that philosophy you reproach me with, it will teach me to bear the malice of Anitus, and your treatment of me; nay, even to love you, in spite of your ill-humor.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

—

XANTIPPE.

[*Alone.*

The old fool! and yet, spite of myself, I can't help esteeming him; for after all, there is something great even in his follies: but his coolness and indifference make me mad. To scold him is but lost labor: for these thirty years past I have been perpetually pecking at him; and when I have tired myself with it, he bids me go on, and I am dumbfounded.

Surely there must be something in that soul of his superior to mine.

SCENE V.

XANTIPPE, DRIXA.

DRIXA.

So, Madam Xantippe, I see you are mistress at home: fie! fie! how mean it is to be governed by a husband! this vile Socrates, to prevent my making a young fellow's fortune; but I'll be revenged.

XANTIPPE.

My dear Madam Drixia, don't be so angry with my husband, I am angry enough with him myself: he's a poor, weak man, I confess; but I verily believe has one of the best hearts in the world; has not the least degree of malice, and does a thousand foolish things without designing, and with so much honesty, that one can't help forgiving him: then indeed he is as obstinate as a mule: I have done nothing but

tease and torment him my whole life; nay, I have even beat him sometimes, and yet I have never been able to mend him, nay, not so much as to put him into a passion. What can I do with him?

DRIXA.

I tell you, I'll be revenged; under yonder portico I perceive his good friend Anitus, and some more of our party: let me alone with him.

XANTIPPE.

My god! I am dreadfully afraid these folks, all together, will do my poor husband some mischief: I must go and tell him of it, for after all one can't help loving him.

SCENE VI.

ANITUS, DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS.

DRIXA.

Most noble Anitus, we have all been wronged: you are tricked as well as myself: this vile Socrates has given away three parts of his fortune on purpose to spite you: you must take ample revenge of him.

ANITUS.

I design it: heaven itself requires it of me: this man treats me with contempt, and of course must despise the gods. Already we have had several accusations against him, we must repeat them, you will all assist me: we will put him in danger of his life, then will I offer him my protection, on condition that he resigns Aglae to me, and to you the beautiful Sophronimus: thus we shall all gain our several points: he will be sufficiently punished by the fright we shall put him into: I shall get my mistress, and you your lover.

DRIXA.

Wisdom herself speaks in Anitus: sure some divinity inspires you: but tell us, how are we to proceed?

ANITUS.

This is about the time when the judges go to the tribunal, with Melitus at the head of them.

DRIXA.

That Melitus is a little pedant, a sad fellow, and your enemy.

ANITUS.

He is so; but he is still a greater enemy to Socrates; 'tis a rascally hypocrite who supports the rights of the Areopagus against me: but we always hold together when our mutual interest and business is to destroy these pretended wise men, who want to open the eyes of people on our conduct: hearken, my dear Drixa, you are a devotee.

DRIXA.

Certainly, my lord, I love money, and I love pleasure with all my soul, but in matters of devotion I yield to none.

ANITUS.

Go then immediately, and get together as many bawling enthusiasts as you can, and cry out, impiety! impiety.

TERPANDER.

Is there anything to be got by it? if there is, we are all ready.

ACROS.

Ay, ay, that we are; but what sort of impiety?

ANITUS.

O every kind: however, we had best accuse him at once of not believing in the gods; that's the shortest way.

DRIXA.

O let me alone then.

ANITUS.

You shall be well supported; go, and stir up your friends under the portico: I'll inform meantime some of my news-loving friends of it, who come frequently to dine with me, a parcel of contemptible fellows they are, to be sure, but such as, if properly directed, can do a good deal of mischief on occasion: we must make use of every expedient to promote a good cause: away, my friends, recommend yourselves to Ceres, and be ready to cry out when I give you the signal: 'tis the only way for you to live happy here, and gain heaven hereafter.

SCENE VII.

ANITUS, GRAPHIUS, CHOMUS, BERTILLUS.

ANITUS.

Most indefatigable Graphius, profound Chomus, and delicate Bertillus, have you finished those little works as I commanded you against the impious Socrates?

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, I have labored: he'll never hold up his head again.

CHOMUS.

I have proved the fact against him; struck him dumb.

BERTILLUS.

I have only mentioned him in my journal, and it has done for him.

ANITUS.

Graphius, beware, you know I forbade your prolixity: you are naturally tedious, and that may wear out the patience of the court.

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, 'tis all in one leaf: wherein I have proved that the soul is an infused quintessence; that tails were given to animals to drive away flies; that Ceres works miracles; and

consequently, that Socrates is an enemy to the state, and ought to be exterminated.

ANITUS.

A most excellent conclusion! remember to carry your accusation to the second judge, who is a complete philosopher. I'll answer for it, you'll soon get rid of your enemy Socrates.

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, I am not his enemy: I am only vexed that he has so great a reputation: all that I do is for the glory of Ceres, and the good of my country.

ANITUS.

Well, well, make haste and be gone: and you, learned Chomus, what have you done?

CHOMUS.

My lord, finding nothing reprehensible in the writings of Socrates. I shall accuse him point-blank of thinking directly opposite to what he says, and shall show the poison he intends to spread in everything he is to say hereafter.

ANITUS.

Wonderful indeed! carry your piece to the fourth judge: he has not common sense, and therefore will understand you perfectly: now for you, Bertillus.

BERTILLUS.

My lord, here is my last journal upon the Chaos. I have proved, by a regular series from the Chaos to the Olympics, that Socrates perverts the youth of Athens.

ANITUS.

Admirable! go you from me to the seventh judge, and tell him I desire he'd take care of Socrates; so; here comes Melitus already, the first of the eleven; there's no necessity of practising any art with him, we know each other too well.

SCENE VIII.



ANITUS, MELITUS.

ANITUS.

Mr. Judge, one word with you: this Socrates must be destroyed.

MELITUS.

Indeed, Mr. High Priest, I have long thought so: let us agree in this point; we may quarrel, you know, notwithstanding, about everything else.

ANITUS.

I know we hate each other most cordially: but at the same time we may lay our heads together to govern the commonwealth.

MELITUS.

With all my heart, nobody can overhear us: therefore, to speak freely, I know you are a rogue, and you don't look upon me as a very honest man: I can't hurt you because you are high priest, nor you me because I am first judge; but Socrates may do us both a mischief, by exposing us to the world; our first business, therefore, is to destroy him, and then we may be at leisure to fall upon each other the first opportunity.

ANITUS.

[Aside.

'Tis well observed: how I could rejoice now to see this rascally judge upon an altar, his arms hanging on one side and his legs on the other, whilst I with my golden knife was ripping up his guts and consulting his liver at leisure!

MELITUS.

[Aside.

Shall I never be able to send this villainous high priest to jail, and make him swallow a pint of hemlock by my command?

ANITUS.

O my friend, here come our noble assistants. I have taken care to prepare the populace.

MELITUS.

Very well, my dear friend, you may depend upon me in this affair, not forgetting old scores.

SCENE IX.

—

ANITUS, MELITUS, *some of the Judges of Athens passing along under the portico.*

[Anitus whispers Melitus.

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS together.

Justice, justice, scandal, impiety, justice, justice, irreligion, impiety, justice!

ANITUS.

What's the matter, my friends, what's your complaint?

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS.

Justice! in the name of the people.

MELITUS.

Against whom?

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS.

Against Socrates.

MELITUS.

Ha! ha! against Socrates? that fellow has been often accused: what has he done now?

ACROS.

I don't know what.

TERPANDER.

They say he gives money to young girls in marriage.

ACROS.

Ay, he corrupts our youth.

DRIXA.

O he's a wicked wretch: he has offered up no cakes to Ceres; he says there is a great deal of useless gold and silver in the temple.

ACROS.

Ay, and he says the priests of Ceres get drunk sometimes; that's true; he's a wicked wretch indeed.

DRIXA.

He's a heretic; he denies the plurality of gods; he's a deist: he believes only in one God; he's an atheist.

ALL THREE TOGETHER.

Yes; he's a heretic, a deist, and an atheist.

MELITUS.

Dreadful accusations indeed, and all extremely probable: I have heard as much before.

ANITUS.

The state is in danger if we leave such crimes unpunished: Minerva will withdraw her protection from us.

DRIXA.

Ay, that she will, I have heard him laugh at Minerva's owl.

MELITUS.

At Minerva's owl! O heaven! gentlemen, is not it your opinion he ought to be sent to prison immediately?

THE JUDGES.

[All together.]

To prison with him, to prison.

MELITUS.

Guards, carry Socrates to prison this instant.

DRIXA.

And afterwards let him be burned without a hearing.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

No, no; we must hear him; we must not go against the law.

ANITUS.

No, no; that's what the good woman meant: we must hear him, but not let what he says have too much effect on us; you know these philosophers are devilish subtle: 'tis they who have disturbed all those nations which we have endeavored to render peaceable and quiet.

MELITUS.

To prison with him, to prison.

SCENE X.

XANTIPPE, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLAE, SOCRATES, *in chains.*

[*Entering.*

XANTIPPE.

O mercy, mercy, my poor husband is going to prison; aren't you ashamed, Mr. Judges, to treat a man of his years in this manner? What harm could he do? Alas! it is not in his power, he is more fool than knave, God knows; have pity on him, good gentlemen. O my dear, I told you you would draw yourself into some bad affair. This comes of portioning young girls. What an unhappy creature I am!

SOPHRONIMUS.

O my lords, respect his age, respect his virtue; give me his chains! I am ready to yield up my liberty, my life for his.

AGLAE.

Yes; we will go to prison in his stead; we will die for him: do not destroy the noblest, best of men: take us rather for your victims.

MELITUS.

You see how he corrupts our youth.

SOCRATES.

No more, my wife, no more, my children; do not oppose the will of heaven, which speaks by the laws: he who resists the law, is no longer a citizen. God wills that I should be put in bondage; I submit to his divine decree without murmur, or repining. In my own house, in Athens, or in a prison, I am equally free; and whilst I behold in you so much gratitude, and so much friendship, I am happy. What matters it whether Socrates sleeps in his own chamber, or in a prison? Everything is as the supreme will ordains, and my will should submit to it.

MELITUS.

Take away this reasoner.

ANITUS.

Gentlemen, what he says I must own has affected me; the man seems to have a good disposition; I flatter myself I should be able to convert him; let me have a little private conversation with him; please to order his wife and these young folks to retire.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

Most venerable Anitus, you have our consent to parley with him before he appears at the tribunal.

SCENE XI.

—

ANITUS, SOCRATES.

ANITUS.

Most virtuous Socrates, my heart bleeds to see you in this condition.

SOCRATES.

And have you a heart?

ANITUS.

I have, and one that feels for you: I am ready to do everything for you.

SOCRATES.

I think you have done enough already.

ANITUS.

Hark ye, Socrates, your situation is worse than you think it is; let me tell you, your life is in danger.

SOCRATES.

That is of very little consequence.

ANITUS.

To your noble soul it may appear so, but it is otherwise in the eyes of all those who, like me, admire your virtue: believe me, however you may be armed by philosophy, it is dreadful to die a death of ignominy: but that is not all; your reputation, which should be dear to you, will be sullied in after ages: the religious of both sexes will laugh at your fall, and insult you: if you are burned, they'll light the pile; if you're strangled, they'll tie the cord; if you're poisoned, they'll pound the hemlock; and not only that, but they'll

make your memory execrable to all posterity. Now it is in your own power to prevent all this: I will promise not only to save your life, but even to persuade your judges to say with the oracle, that you are the wisest of men: you have nothing to do but to give me up your young pupil, Aglae, with the portion; you understand me: as to her marriage with Sophronimus, we shall find means to set it aside: thus you will enjoy a peaceful and honorable old age, and the gods and goddesses will bless you.

SOCRATES.

Soldiers, conduct me to prison immediately.

[He is carried off.]

ANITUS.

This fellow is incorrigible; but it's not my fault; I have done my duty, and have nothing to reproach myself with: he must be abandoned as a reprobate, and left to die in his sins.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

THE JUDGES *seated on the Tribunal*, SOCRATES *below*.

JUDGE.

[*To Anitus.*]

You should not sit here, you are priest of Ceres.

ANITUS.

I am only here for edification.

MELITUS.

Silence there: Socrates, you are accused of being a bad citizen, of corrupting youth, of denying a plurality of gods, of being a heretic, deist, and atheist: answer to the charge.

SOCRATES.

Judges of Athens, I exhort you all to be as good citizens as I have always myself endeavored to be: to shed your blood for your country, as I have done in many a battle: with regard to youth, guide them by your counsels, and, above all, direct them by your example; teach them to love true virtue, and to avoid the miserable philosophy of the schools: the article concerning a plurality of gods is a little more difficult to discuss, but hear what I have to say upon it. Know then, ye judges of Athens, there is but one God.

MELITUS *and another judge.*

O the impious wretch!

SOCRATES.

I say, there is but one God, in his nature infinite, nor can any being partake of his infinity. Turn your eyes towards the celestial globes, to the earth and seas; all correspond together, all are made one for the other: each being is intimately connected with other beings, all formed with one design, by one great architect, one sole master, and preserver: perhaps he hath deigned to create genii, and demons, more powerful and more wise than men; if such exist, they are creatures like you, his first subjects, not gods:

but nothing in nature proves to us that they do exist, whilst all nature speaks one God and one father: this God hath no need of Mercury and Iris to deliver his commands to us: he hath only to will, and that is enough. If by Minerva you understand no more than the wisdom of God; if by Neptune you only mean his immutable laws, which raise or depress the sea, you may still reverence Neptune and Minerva, provided that under these emblems you adore none but the supreme being, and that the people are not deceived by you into false opinions.

Be careful above all not to turn religion into metaphysics, its essence is morality: dispute not, but worship. If our ancestors believed that the supreme God came down into the arms of Alcmena, Danæ, and Semele, and had children by them, our ancestors imagined dangerous and idle fables. 'Tis an insult on the divinity to conceive that he could possibly, in any manner whatsoever, commit with woman the crime which we call adultery. It is a discouragement to the rest of mankind to say that, to be a great man, it is necessary to be produced from the mysterious union of Jupiter and one of our own wives and daughters. Miltiades, Cimon, Themistocles, and Aristides, whom you persecuted, were perhaps much greater than Perseus, Hercules, or Bacchus. The only way to become the children of God, is to endeavor to please him. Deserve therefore that title, by never passing an unjust sentence.

MELITUS.

What insolence! what blasphemy!

ANOTHER JUDGE.

What absurdities! one can't tell what he means.

MELITUS.

Socrates, you are always too fond of argument: answer briefly, and with precision: did you, or did you not, laugh at Minerva's owl?

SOCRATES.

Judges of Athens, take care of your owls; when you propose ridiculous things as objects of belief too many are apt to resolve that they will believe nothing: they have sense enough to find out that your doctrine is absurd, though they have not elevation of mind sufficient to discover the law of truth; they know how to laugh at your little deceits, but not to adore the first of beings, the one incomprehensible,

incommunicable being, the eternal, all-just, and all-powerful God.

MELITUS.

O the blasphemer! the monster! he has said too much already: I condemn him to death.

MANY OF THE JUDGES.

And so do we.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

Several of us are of another opinion; Socrates has spoken wisely; we believe men would be more wise and just if they thought like him: for my part, far from condemning him, I think he ought to be rewarded.

MANY OF THE JUDGES.

We think so too.

MELITUS.

The opinions seem to be divided.

ANITUS.

Gentlemen of the Areopagus, permit me to interrogate him a little. Do you believe, Socrates, that the sun turns round, and that the Areopagus acts by divine right?

SOCRATES.

You have no authority to ask any questions, but I have authority to teach you what you are ignorant of: it is of little importance to society, whether the sun or the earth turns round, but it is of the utmost consequence, whether the men who turn with them be just or unjust: virtue only acts from the right divine, and you and the Areopagus have no rights but those which your country has bestowed on you.

ANITUS.

Illustrious and most equitable judges, let Socrates retire.

[Melitus makes a sign, Socrates is carried out.]

ANITUS.

[Proceeds.]

Most august Areopagus, instituted by heaven, you hear what he says: this dangerous fellow denies that the sun turns round, and that you act by right divine: if these opinions prevail, adieu to magistracy, and adieu to the sun: you are no longer judges appointed by Minerva; you will become accountable for your proceedings; you must no longer determine but according to the laws; and if you once depend on the laws, you are undone: punish rebellion therefore, revenge earth and heaven: I am going: dread you the anger of the gods if Socrates is permitted to live.

[Anitus goes out, and the Judges demur.]

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

I don't care to quarrel with Anitus; he is a dangerous man to offend. If he troubled himself with the gods only it would not signify.

ANOTHER JUDGE.

[To his brother sitting near him.]

Between you and me, Socrates is in the right; but then he should not be in the right so publicly. I care no more for Ceres and Neptune than he does; but he should not speak out to the whole Areopagus what he ought to have whispered: yet after all, what is there in poisoning a philosopher, especially when he is old and ugly?

ANOTHER JUDGE.

If there be any injustice in condemning Socrates, it is Anitus' business and not mine: I lay it all upon his conscience: besides, it grows late, we lose our time; let us talk no more about it: to death with him.

ANOTHER.

Ay, ay, they say he's a heretic, and an atheist; to death with him.

MELITUS.

Call Socrates.

[He is brought in.]

Blessed be the gods, the plurality of voices is for death; Socrates, the gods by us condemn you to drink hemlock.

SOCRATES.

We are all mortal: nature condemns you also to death in a short time, probably you may meet with a more unhappy end than mine: the distempers which bring on death are much more painful than a cup of hemlock. I thank those amongst my judges who pleaded in favor of innocence; for the rest, they have my pity.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

[Going out.]

Certainly this man deserved a pension from the state, rather than a cup of poison.

ANOTHER JUDGE.

I think so too; but why would he quarrel with a priest of Ceres?

ANOTHER.

After all, it is best to get rid of a philosopher: those fellows have always a certain fierceness of spirit which should be damped a little.

ANOTHER.

One word with you, gentlemen: would not it be right, whilst our hand is in, to make an end of all the geometricians, who pretend that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones? they are a mighty scandal to the foolish people that read their works.

ANOTHER.

Ay, ay, we'll hang them all the next session; let's go to dinner.

SCENE II.



SOCRATES.

[*Alone.*

I have been long prepared for death; all I fear at present is, that my wife Xantippe will be troubling me in my last moments, and interrupt me in the sweet employment of recollecting my soul, and preparing myself for eternity: I ought to busy myself only in the contemplation of that supreme being, before whom I am soon to appear: but here she comes; I must be resigned to all things.

SCENE III.



SOCRATES, XANTIPPE, *with the Disciples of Socrates.*

XANTIPPE.

Well, my poor man, what have these gentlemen of the law concluded? have they fined you, are you banished, or

acquitted? my God! how uneasy have I been about you! pray take care this don't happen a second time.

SOCRATES.

No, my dear, this will not happen a second time, I'll answer for it; give yourself no uneasiness about anything. My dear disciples, my friends, welcome.

CRITO.

[At the head of his disciples.]

You see us, beloved Socrates, no less concerned for you than Xantippe; we have gained permission of the judges to visit you; just heaven! must we behold Socrates in chains! permit us to kiss those bonds which reflect shame on Athens. How could Anitus and his friends reduce you to this condition?

SOCRATES.

Let us think no more of these trifles, my friends, but continue the examination we were making yesterday into the soul's immortality. We observed, I remember, that

nothing could be more probable, or at the same time more full of comfort and satisfaction, than this sweet idea; in fact, matter we know changes, but perishes not; why then should the soul perish? can it be that, raised as we are to the knowledge of a God through the veil of this mortal body, we should cease to know him when that veil is removed? no, as we think now, we must always think; thought is the very essence of man; and this being must appear before a just God, who will recompense virtue, punish vice, and pardon weakness and error.

XANTIPPE.

Nobly said: but what does this fellow here with his cup?

[Enter the Jailer, or Executioner of the Eleven, carrying a cup of Hemlock.]

JAILER.

Here Socrates, the senate have sent you this.

XANTIPPE.

Thou vile poisoner of the commonwealth, would you kill my husband before my face? monster, I'll tear you to pieces.

SOCRATES.

My dear friend, I ask your pardon for my wife's rude behavior: she has scolded me all her life; she only treats you as she does her husband; excuse her impertinence: give me the cup.

[He takes the cup.]

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

O divine Socrates! why may not we take that poison for you? horrible injustice! shall the guilty thus condemn the innocent, and fools destroy the wise? you go then to death!

SOCRATES.

No, my friends, to life: this is the cup of immortality: it is not this perishable body that has loved and instructed you; it is my soul alone that has lived with you, and that shall love you forever.

[He is going to drink.]

JAILER.

I must take off your fetters first; 'tis always done.

SOCRATES.

Do it then, I beg you.

[He scratches his leg.]

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

You smile!

SOCRATES.

I smile at the reflection, that pleasure should arise from pain: thus it is that eternal felicity shall spring from the miseries of this life.

[Drinks the poison.]

CRITO.

Alas! what have you done?

XANTIPPE.

Ay, for a thousand ridiculous discourses of this kind the poor man has lost his life: indeed, my dear, you will break my heart; I could strangle all the judges with my own hands. I did use to scold you indeed, but I always loved you notwithstanding; these polite well-bred gentlemen have put you to death: O my dear, dear husband!

SOCRATES.

Be calm, my good Xantippe; weep not, my friends; it becomes not the disciples of Socrates to shed tears.

CRITO.

How can we avoid it on so dreadful an occasion? this legal murder!

SOCRATES.

Thus it is that men will often behave to the worshippers of one true God, and the enemies of superstition.

CRITO.

And must Socrates be one of those unhappy victims?

SOCRATES.

'Tis noble to be the victim of the deity: I die contented. I wish indeed that, to the satisfaction of seeing you, my friends, I could have added the happiness of embracing Sophronimus and Aglae: I wonder they are not here: they would have made my last moments more welcome.

CRITO.

Alas! they know not that you have already undergone the judges' dreadful sentence: they have been talking to the people, and praising those magistrates who would have acquitted you. Aglae has laid open the guilt of Anitus, and published his shame and dishonor: they perhaps might have saved your life: O dear Socrates, why would you thus precipitate your fate?

SCENE the last.

AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

AGLAE.

[Entering.]

Divine Socrates, be not afraid: be comforted, Xantippe: worthy disciples of Socrates, do not weep.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Your enemies are confounded: the people rise in your defence.

AGLAE.

We have been talking to them; we have laid open the intrigues and jealousy of the wicked Anitus: it was my duty to demand justice for his crime, as I was the cause of it.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Anitus hath saved himself by flight from the rage of the people: he and his accomplices are pursued: solemn thanks have been given to those judges who appeared in your favor: the people are now at the gates of the prison, and wait to conduct you home in triumph.

XANTIPPE.

Alas! 'tis lost labor!

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

O Socrates, why would you so hastily obey?

AGLAE.

Live, dear Socrates, the benefactor of your country, the model of future ages; O live for the general happiness of mankind!

CRITO.

Ye noble pair, my virtuous friends, it is too late.

XANTIPPE.

You stayed too long.

AGLAE.

Alas! too late? what mean you? just heaven!

SOPHRONIMUS.

Has he then already drunk the fatal draught?

SOCRATES.

Sweet Aglae and dear Sophronimus, the law ordained that I should take the poison: I obeyed the law, unjust as it is, because it oppressed myself alone: had the injustice been done to another, I would have resisted it. I go to death, but the example of friendship which you give the world, and your nobleness of soul shall never perish: your virtue is

greater, much greater, than the guilt of those who accused me. I bless that fate which the world may call misfortune, because it hath set in the fairest light the goodness of your hearts. My dear Xantippe, be happy; and remember, that to be so, you must curb your impetuous temper. My beloved disciples, listen always to the voice of that philosophy which will teach you to despise your persecutors, and pity human weakness: and you, my daughter Aglae, and my son Sophronimus, be always what you now are.

AGLAE.

How wretched, are we that we cannot die for you!

SOCRATES.

Your lives are valuable, mine would have been useless: take my tender last farewell; the doors of eternity are opened to receive me.

XANTIPPE.

He was a great man! O I will rouse up the whole nation.

SOPHRONIMUS.

May we raise up temples to Socrates, if ever mortal man deserved it!

CRITO.

At least may his wisdom teach mankind that temples should be raised to God alone!

End of the Third and Last Act.

About this digital edition

This e-book comes from the online library [Wikisource](#). This multilingual digital library, built by volunteers, is committed to developing a free accessible collection of publications of every kind: novels, poems, magazines, letters...

We distribute our books for free, starting from works not copyrighted or published under a free license. You are free to use our e-books for any purpose (including commercial exploitation), under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Unported](#) license or, at your choice, those of the [GNU FDL](#).

Wikisource is constantly looking for new members. During the transcription and proofreading of this book, it's possible that we made some errors. You can report them at [this page](#).

The following users contributed to this book:

- Bradype
- Fish bowl
- Hesperian
- Legofan94
- ShakespeareFan00
- Masur
- Rocket000

- Zscout370
- Boris23
- Abu badali~commonswiki
- Kyle the hacker
- Cumulus
- Noclip~commonswiki
- Ö
- Latebird
- Auralux
- Waldyrrious
- KABALINI
- Bromskloss
- Tene~commonswiki
- AzaToth
- Bender235
- PatríciaR