

and every line of it bears witness to the prevalent corruption arising from the worship of this deity. Ploutos indeed explains that he began his divine office on the plan of distributing wealth in accordance with the moral deserts of men, but that Zeus, the Supreme Ruler, objected to such a distribution, and in order to prevent it inflicted upon him the calamity of blindness. "Thus, from my loss of sight," he declares, "I am unable to see righteous men." "That is no wonder," his interlocutor replies; "for even with the full use of sight I have not seen one for a long time."¹ The play, it may be added, contains² in germ the story which was expanded into Lucian's "Timon," and forms the source of Shakespeare's "Timon of Athens" as well as of Molière's "Misanthrope"—a story which would have been preposterously incredible, except in a society at least as corrupt as our own in its demeaning worship of wealth.

The moral condition of society at large is pretty fairly indicated by the character of men in public life. Now, it has been noticed as a significant fact, that Pericles and his colleague, Ephialtes, are, along with Aristides, too emphatically distinguished for their honourable administration of public funds to let us evade the impression that such honesty was something exceptional in Athens.³ And the general condition of the people at the time is indicated with startling significance by their treatment of the men thus distinguished by their public honour. Aristides was ostracised; Ephialtes was assassinated, and even Pericles was throughout life stung by charges or insinuations so abominable as even the basest of yellow journals would hardly dare to mention in our day.

Nor were other prominent men more generously or more justly appreciated. It was perhaps as a friend of Pericles, though ostensibly for his religious opinions, that Anaxagoras was driven into exile. It was apparently with the same

1 Act i., scene 1.

2 Act iv., scene 2.

3 Lloyd, "The Age of Pericles," Vol. ii., p. 24. The general impression of Lloyd's work in this respect is confirmed by Gilbert's "Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter des Peloponnesischen Krieges."