

and the majority of his hearers are on tip-toe with excitement and hilarity. Up till now not a word has been uttered concerning Socrates. Full well the author knew, had he begun to ridicule that great man while his audience was yet cool, he would have been hooted, hissed perhaps, even murdered on the spot. But now all are drunk with delight and ecstasy, again and again the audience bursts into roars of laughter. Now Socrates appears lung up in the air in a basket, now for the first time is he made an object of ridicule. Those who hitherto have loved, admired, yea almost adored him, now make fun of him, laugh at him, despise him. Speak not of the power of engine, cannon, or dynamite; what is their power when compared with that of words proceeding from a master intellect? With the power of words, in less than fifteen minutes, Aristophanes induces not a boorish, obtuse, but an enlightened Athenian audience to despise the object of their love, respect and veneration. How well a true poet understands human nature! How high his intellect soars above those of common mortals!

The author having made Socrates an object of laughter his next purpose is to place him before the audience as one who is a corrupter of youth, a despoiser of the gods, an atheist. He is aware however that his hearers are not yet sufficiently prepared to be convinced that the one whom they have loved and respected, is but a rogue and an impostor. They laugh indeed, but they attempt to justify their conduct by thinking that after all, they are not laughing at their master-philosopher, but merely at the words and actions of a comedian. Aristophanes now gives a hint of what is to follow. He does not openly accuse Socrates of atheism, but he makes Strepsiades become an atheist as soon as he enters the thinking-shop. Even the insinuation is thrown out with great caution and care, as though the author would try the feelings of his audience before proceeding farther. Strepsiades does not openly declare that there are no gods, but he merely says while discoursing of them, "If there be such...." and leaves his sentence unfinished.

Mr. Blair lays down a character of probability in the speaker as a fundamental requisite for convincing those whom he addresses. The great Greek comedian well

knew how necessary such a character was for one who would convince the acute Athenian people. So far he has humoured them with his wit, but he is well aware that to convince them of the truth of the statement he is about to make, he must use some mightier weapon. By a gentle and inimitable transition he passes from wit to the very summits of lofty poetry. He makes known to all that he is not a mere buffoon, but a man of ability and intellect, a man whose every word is worthy of the deepest regard. In his choruses which he now introduces, he exhibits the purest spirit of poetry. he here equals Shakespeare in loftiness of conception, and his exalted passages surpass in length those of the great English poet. It was the reading of these choruses which made Plato say that the soul of Aristophanes was a temple for the Graces. The subject of the first chorus is the glories of Grecian civilization. How the words of that chorus thrill the hearts of the Athenians there assembled! Tears of joy start from their eyes and it is only with difficulty they repress the desire of rushing from their seats to embrace the composer of these verses, so rich, so patriotic, so filled with love and respect for the Grecian deities. The desired end is obtained. Let him who wrote these patriotic verses command those before him to set fire to their own city, for his sake they will do so willingly, so devotedly are they attached to him. Socrates is expelled from his throne in the Athenian heart and another sits in his place. That other no longer fears, but now openly charges his enemy with Atheism. Worse still, his charges are patiently heard, yea, even believed. Oh Socrates, greatest of pagan philosophers, thou termed the precursor of the Redeemer to come, thou hast been cast down from the exalted position to which thy wisdom and nobleness of heart gives thee a just right! From this day begins that persecution which will culminate in thy death. Thou hast been cast down, but only to rise again and have thy light shine forth with increased splendor throughout ages to come.

Having convinced his audience that Socrates is an atheist, the poet dwells on the evil effects produced on the minds of the young by such a teacher, and, as a proof of what he affirms, he depicts the graduate of the thinking-shop, Phidip-