

First Citizen:
Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

All:
Speak, speak.

First Citizen:
You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

All:
Resolved. resolved.

First Citizen:
First, you know Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.

All:
We know't, we know't.

First Citizen:
Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.
Is't a verdict?

All:
No more talking on't; let it be done: away, away!

Second Citizen:
One word, good citizens.

First Citizen:
We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good.
What authority surfeits on would relieve us: if they
would yield us but the superfluity, while it were
wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely;
but they think we are too dear: the leanness that
afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an
inventory to particularise their abundance; our
sufferance is a gain to them Let us revenge this with
our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I
speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

Second Citizen:
Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

All:
Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty.

Second Citizen:
Consider you what services he has done for his country?

First Citizen:
Very well; and could be content to give him good
report for, but that he pays himself with being proud.

Second Citizen:
Nay, but speak not maliciously.

First Citizen:
I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did
it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be
content to say it was for his country he did it to
please his mother and to be partly proud; which he

is, even till the altitude of his virtue.

Second Citizen:

What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

First Citizen:

If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition. What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitol!

All:

Come, come.

First Citizen:

Soft! who comes here?

Second Citizen:

Worthy Menenius Agrippa; one that hath always loved the people.

First Citizen:

He's one honest enough: would all the rest were so!

MENENIUS:

What work's, my countrymen, in hand? where go you With bats and clubs? The matter? speak, I pray you.

First Citizen:

Our business is not unknown to the senate; they have had inkling this fortnight what we intend to do, which now we'll show 'em in deeds. They say poor suitors have strong breaths: they shall know we have strong arms too.

MENENIUS:

Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbours, Will you undo yourselves?

First Citizen:

We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

MENENIUS:

I tell you, friends, most charitable care Have the patricians of you. For your wants, Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them Against the Roman state, whose course will on The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs Of more strong link asunder than can ever Appear in your impediment. For the dearth, The gods, not the patricians, make it, and Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack, You are transported by calamity Thither where more attends you, and you slander The helms o' the state, who care for you like fathers, When you curse them as enemies.

First Citizen:

Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-houses

crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us.

MENENIUS:

Either you must
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,
Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you
A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;
But, since it serves my purpose, I will venture
To stale 't a little more.

First Citizen:

Well, I'll hear it, sir: yet you must not think to fob off our disgrace with a tale: but, an 't please you, deliver.

MENENIUS:

There was a time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And, mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection common
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd--

First Citizen:

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS:

Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus--
For, look you, I may make the belly smile
As well as speak--it tauntingly replied
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that
They are not such as you.

First Citizen:

Your belly's answer? What!
The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,
The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,
Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter.
With other muniments and petty helps
In this our fabric, if that they--

MENENIUS:

What then?
'Fore me, this fellow speaks! What then? what then?

First Citizen:

Should by the cormorant belly be restrain'd,
Who is the sink o' the body,--

MENENIUS: