

Coriolanus

Act III, sc. 1 (line 153 - intercut)

BRUTUS

*Why, shall the people give
One that speaks thus their voice?*

CORIOLANUS

I'll give my reasons,

More worthier than their voices. They know the corn

Was not our recompense, resting well assured

That ne'er did service for't: being press'd to the war,

Even when the navel of the state was touch'd,

They would not thread the gates. This kind of service

Did not deserve corn gratis. Being i' the war

Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they show'd

Most valour, spoke not for them: the accusation

Which they have often made against the senate,

All cause unborn, could never be the motive

Of our so frank donation. Well, what then?

How shall this bisson multitude digest

The senate's courtesy? Let deeds express

What's like to be their words: 'we did request it;

We are the greater poll, and in true fear

They gave us our demands.' Thus we debase

The nature of our seats and make the rabble

Call our cares fears; which will in time

Break ope the locks o' the senate and bring in

The crows to peck the eagles.

MENENIUS

Come, enough.

BRUTUS

Enough, with over-measure.

CORIOLANUS

No, take more:

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,

Seal what I end withal! This double worship,

Where one part does disdain with cause, the other

Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom,

Cannot conclude but by the yea and no

Of general ignorance,--it must omit

Real necessities, and give way the while

To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd, it follows,

Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you,--

You that will be less fearful than discreet,

That love the fundamental part of state

More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer

A noble life before a long, and wish

To jump a body with a dangerous physic

That's sure of death without it, at once pluck out

The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick

The sweet which is their poison: your dishonour

Mangles true judgment and bereaves the state

Of that integrity which should become't,
Not having the power to do the good it would,
For the in which doth control't.

BRUTUS

Has said enough.

SICINIUS

*Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do.*

CORIOLANUS

Thou wretch, despite o'erwhelm thee!

What should the people do with these bald tribunes?

On whom depending, their obedience fails

To the greater bench: in a rebellion,

When what's not meet, but what must be, was law,

Then were they chosen: in a better hour,

Let what is meet be said it must be meet,

And throw their power i' the dust.