Enter Stasimus, ‘Steady’, in much the same mood as the White Rabbit at the beginning of Alice in Wonderland. He deserves his name; he is loyal to his young master in adversity, and in his previous scene he actually managed to stand still and hold his
peace for longer than any other leading slave in Plautus, at last bursting forth with the earliest surviving piece of Roman literary criticism (627-704). Here, however, he is anything but *stasimus*; Plautus characteristically takes delight in the strongest possible contrasts of mood and presentation. However, when one considers the situation and its exigencies, it becomes clear that all this hurry and flurry on Stasimus' part is adventitious. It is Plautus who has presented him as a *running* slave at this point as the prelude to a classic scene of one of his best plays.

To be sure, the Getas, Syros, or whoever he was in Plautus' model, the *Thesauros* of Philemon, will also have returned from the Agora at this point in the action. After reflections which may or may not have taken up some space—certainly not as much as in Plautus—he too will have acknowledged with great joy the presence of the *Signor Padrone*, Plautus' Charmides. This old gentleman has been on stage throughout, having just returned from a protracted business venture abroad. The encounter will have led in the *Thesauros* as in the *Trinummus* to the revelation, dreadful to the *Signore*, that his spendthrift son (Lesbonicus in Plautus' play) has gone so far in profligacy as to have been obliged to sell the family home. As if this were not bad enough, the sale implies the loss of Charmides' savings, for before leaving he had buried them in the house, and, knowing his son's weaknesses, he had deliberately not told the lad about the money. Fortunately for all concerned Charmides did tell a responsible and trusty friend, Plautus' Callicles, who, as we learn early in the action, has bought the house with the intention of returning it to Charmides if and when he returns. Callicles has thus acted honourably, but to all appearances he has basely taken advantage of Lesbonicus' immaturity, and has incurred the condemnation of public opinion.

Charmides came on stage at 820 from the side-entrance understood to lead to the Piraeus, and before he has the opportunity to approach what was once but is no longer his own front door, he encounters someone who claims to be none other than Charmides himself. The grounds for this superbly comic and ineptly handled deception need not detain us here (843-997); suffice to say that when the real Charmides has sent the embarrassed impostor