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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE Dialogues of Plato have been grouped together in this little volume as their subject or argument seemed to suit the requirements of the Chapter in which they will be found, without regard to chronological order. Nor has the vexed question of the "Platonic Canon," or what are or are not the genuine works of Plato, been entered upon in these pages. All the Dialogues attributed to him in Stallbaum's edition are accepted here, and discussed with more or less brevity, as their interest for the general reader seemed to require.

The writer desires to express his deep sense of his obligations to Professor Jowett for permission to use his valuable translation of Plato, from which most of the quotations found in the text (including the extracts marked "J.") have been made. Those

marked "D." are taken from the translation of the "Republic" by Messrs Davies and Vaughan.

The other authorities most frequently consulted are Grote's 'Plato and the other Companions of Socrates,' Whewell's 'Platonic Dialogues,' Zeller's 'Socrates and the Socratic Schools,' and the Histories of Philosophy by Maurice, Ritter, and Ueberweg.

The writer also wishes to record his sense of the kindness of H. W. Chandler (Waynflete Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford), who was good enough to read through the proofs of the first four chapters of this volume.

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PLATO.

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CHAPTER I.

LIFE OF PLATO.

"Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb,—
To what sublime and star-y-paven home
Floatest thou?
I am the image of great Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below."
—(*Epitaph translated from the Greek by Shelley.*)

PLATO was born at Ægina in B.C. 430—the same year that Pericles died—of a noble family which traced its descent from Codrus, the last hero-king of Attica. Little is told us of his early years beyond some stories of the divinity which hedged him in his childhood, and a dream of Socrates,* in which he saw a cygnet

* Athenæus tells us of another dream, by no means so complimentary to Plato, in which his spirit appeared to Socrates in the form of a crow, which planted its claws firmly in the bald head of the philosopher, and flapped its wings. The interpretation of this dream, according to Socrates (or Athenæus), was, that Plato would tell many lies about him.

fly towards him, nestle in his breast, and then spread its wings and soar upwards, singing most sweetly. The next morning Ariston appeared, leading his son Plato to the philosopher, and Socrates knew that his dream was fulfilled.

It is easy to fill in the meagre outlines of the biography as given us by Diogenes Laertius; for Plato lived in a momentous time, when Athens could not afford to let any of her sons stand aloof from military service, and when every citizen must have been more or less an actor in the history of his times. Plato of course underwent the usual training of an Athenian gentleman, such as he has sketched it himself in the "Protagoras;" first attending the grammar school, where he learnt his letters, and committed to memory long passages from the poets, which he was taught to repeat with proper emphasis and modulation; and the frequent quotations from Homer in his Dialogues prove how thoroughly this part of his mental training was carried out.* Then he was transferred to the Master who was to infuse harmony and rhythm into his soul by means of the lyre and vocal music. Then he learned mathematics, for which subject he showed a special aptitude; and we hear of him

* Several pieces of poetry bearing Plato's name have come down to us; and there is a graceful epitaph on "Stella," ascribed to him, which Shelley has thus translated:—

> "Thou wert the morning star among the living,
> Till thy fair light had fled;
> Now having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
> New splendour to the dead."

wrestling in the palæstra, where his breadth of shoulders stood him in good stead, and winning prizes at the Isthmian games. He also found time to study "the old masters" of philosophy, and (as might be expected) the two whose works attracted him the most were Heraclitus and Pythagoras. The melancholy of the one, and the mysticism of the other, found an echo in his own thoughts.

He was fifteen at the time of the expedition to Sicily, and was probably among the crowd which watched the great fleet sail out of the harbour of Piræus in all the pomp and circumstance of war; and two years afterwards he must have shared in the general despair, when the news came that the fleet and the flower of the army had perished, and with them the hopes of Athens.

Then Decelea (only fifteen miles from the city) was fortified by the Spartans, and proved a very thorn in the side of Attica; for flocks and herds were destroyed, slaves fled thither in numbers, and watch had to be kept by the Athenians night and day, to check the continual sallies made from thence by the enemy. Plato was now eighteen, and was enrolled in the list which corresponded to the modern Landwehr, and had to take his share in that harassing garrison duty which fell on rich and poor alike, when the citizens (as Thucydides tells us) slept in their armour on the ramparts, and Athens more resembled a military fort than a city.

Then followed the loss of prestige and the defection of allies; for the subject islands either openly revolted

or intrigued secretly with Sparta; and Alcibiades, the only Athenian who could have saved Athens, was an exile and a renegade, using Persian gold to levy Spartan troops against his country. Suddenly the Athenians, with the energy of despair, made a prodigious effort to recover the empire of the seas, which was passing from their hands. They melted down their treasures; they used the reserve fund which Pericles had stored up for such an emergency; and within thirty days they had equipped a fresh fleet of over a hundred sail. Then followed a general levy of the citizens; every man who could bear arms was pressed into the service; freedom was promised to any slave who would volunteer; and even the Knights (of whom Plato was one) forgot the dignity of their order, hung up their bridles in the Acropolis, and went on board the fleet as marines. There is no reason to suppose that Plato shunned his duty at such a crisis; and we may therefore conclude that he volunteered with the rest, served with the squadron which relieved Mitylene, and was present at the victory of Arginusæ shortly afterwards.

Soon Alcibiades was recalled, and his genius gave a different character to the war; but the success of the Athenians was only temporary. Lysander came upon the scene; and on the fatal shore of Ægos-Potami the Athenian fleet was destroyed—almost without a blow being struck. Then followed the blockade of Athens, the consequent famine, and the despair of the citizens, with the foe without and two rival factions within, till at last the city surrendered, and the long walls were pulled down to the sound of Spartan music.

We have no clue, beyond a casual reference in Xenophon, as to what part Plato took in subsequent events. His own tastes and sympathies lay with the few; and all his intimate friends were among the oligarchs (the "good men and true," as they termed themselves), who, by a *coup d'état*, effected what is known as the Revolution of the Four Hundred. A section of these formed the execrated Thirty Tyrants. Critias, the master-spirit of this body, was Plato's uncle, and probably had considerable influence over him. But be this as it may, we find Plato attracted by the programme in which the oligarchs pledged themselves to reform abuses and to purge the state of evil-doers; and for a time, at all events, he was an avowed partisan of the Thirty. But they soon threw off the mask, and a Reign of Terror followed, which made their name for ever a byword among the Athenians. Plato was probably in the first instance disgusted by the jealous intolerance of this new party, which drove the aged Protagoras into exile, and proscribed philosophical lectures; but when this intolerance was followed by numerous assassinations, he was utterly horrified, and at once withdrew from public life, and from all connection with his former friends.

There was little indeed to tempt a man of Plato's spirit and principles to meddle with the politics of his day. The great statesmen, and with them the bloom and brilliancy of the Periclean age, had passed away; and the very name of Pericles, as De Quincey says, "must have sounded with the same echo from the past as that of Pitt to the young men of our first

Reform Bill." The long war had done its work. Not only had it wellnigh exhausted the revenues and strength of Athens, but it had brought in its train, as necessary consequences, ignoble passions, a selfish party spirit, a confusion of moral sentiments, and an audacious scepticism, which were going far to undermine the foundations of right and wrong. One revolution had followed another so rapidly that public confidence in the constitution was fast disappearing; and the worst symptom of a declining nation had already shown itself, in that men of genius and honour were beginning to despair of their country and to withdraw from public life. We can well believe that the picture which Plato draws of the Philosopher in his "Republic" was no fancy sketch:—

> Those who belong to this small class have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession philosophy is, and have also seen and been satisfied of the madness of the multitude, and known that there is no one who ever acts honestly in the administration of states, nor any helper who will save any one who maintains the cause of the just. Such a saviour would be like a man who has fallen among wild beasts, unable to join in the wickedness of his friends, and would have to throw away his life before he had done any good to himself or others. And he reflects upon all this, and holds his peace, and does his own business. He is like one who retires under the shelter of a wall in the storm of dust and sleet which the driving wind hurries along; and when he sees the rest of mankind full of wickedness, he is content if only he can live his own life, and be pure from evil or unrighteousness, and depart in peace and goodwill, with bright hopes.*

* Republic, iv. (Jowett.)

The next twelve years must have been the period of Plato's greatest intimacy with Socrates; and he was the great philosopher's constant companion until the day of his death. He had now no ties to bind him to Athens—perhaps, indeed, he did not feel secure there—and he went to live at Megara with his friend Euclid. Then he set out upon those travels of which we hear so much and know so little; "and" (says an old historian), "whilst studious youth were crowding to Athens from every quarter in search of Plato for their master, that philosopher was wandering along the banks of Nile or the vast plains of a barbarous country, himself a disciple of the old men of Egypt." * After storing his mind with the wisdom of the Egyptians, Plato is said to have gone on to Palestine and Phœnicia—to have reached China disguised as an oil merchant—to have had the "Unknown God" revealed to him by Jewish rabbis—and to have learned the secrets of the stars from Chaldæan astronomers. But these extended travels are probably a fiction.

His visit to Sicily, however, rests on better evidence. He made a journey thither in the year 387 B.C., with the object of witnessing an eruption of Mount Etna—already fatal to one philosopher, Empedocles. On his way he stayed at Tarentum with his friend Archytas, the great mathematician, and a member of the Pythagorean brotherhood. This order—which, like the Jesuits, was exclusive, ascetic, and ambitious—had formerly had its representatives in every city of Magna

* Valerius Maximus, quoted in Lewes's Hist. of Philos., i. 200.

Græcia, and had influenced their political history accordingly. Even then their traditions and mystic ritual, as well as the ability shown by individual members, daily attracted new converts. Among these was Dion, the young brother-in-law of Dionysius, Tyrant of Syracuse. Dion was introduced by the Pythagoreans to Plato, and their acquaintance soon warmed into a friendship which has become historical. There was much on both sides that was attractive. In Plato, Dion found the friend who never flattered, the teacher who never dogmatised, the companion who was never wearisome. The gracious eloquence, the charm of manner, the knowledge of life, and, above all, the generous and noble thoughts so frankly expressed by Plato, must have had the same effect upon him as the conversation of Socrates had upon Alcibiades. His heart was touched, his enthusiasm was kindled, and he became a new man. There dawned upon him the conception of another Syracuse,—freed from slavery, and from the oppressive presence of foreign guards—self-governed, and with contented and industrious citizens—and Dion himself, the author of her liberties and the founder of her laws, idolised by a grateful people.

These day-dreams had a strong effect on Dion; and Plato partly shared in his enthusiasm. As in his own model Republic, all might be accomplished "if philosophers were kings." Even as things were, if Dionysius would but look with a favourable eye upon Plato and his teaching, much might be done in the way of easing the yoke of tyranny which pressed so heavily upon the wretched Syracusans.

Accordingly, Plato visited Syracuse in company with Dion, and was formally presented at court. But the results were unsatisfactory. It was not, indeed, likely that the philosopher, who was the sworn foe of Tyranny in the abstract, and who looked upon the Tyrant as the incarnation of all that was evil in human nature, would, either by flattery or plain speaking, convince Dionysius of the error of his ways. Plato had several interviews with Dionysius; and we are told that he enlarged upon his favourite doctrine of the happiness of the virtuous and the inevitable misery of the wicked, till all who heard him were charmed by his eloquence, except the despot himself, who in a rage ordered him to be taken down to the market-place there and then, and to be sold as a slave to the highest bidder; that so he might put his own philosophy to a practical test, and judge for himself if the virtuous man was still happy in chains or in prison. Plato was accordingly sold, and was "bought in" by his friends for twenty minæ. Another account is, that he was put on board a trireme and landed at Ægina on the way home, where he was sold, and bought by a generous stranger, who set him at liberty and restored him to Athens. In any case, Plato might consider himself fortunate in escaping from such a lion's den as the court of the savage Dionysius; and he had learnt a salutary lesson, that theoretical politics are not so easily put into practice as men think, and that caution and discretion are necessary in dealing with the powers that be.

On his return to Athens, weary of politics, and wishing to escape from the turmoil and distractions

of the town, he retired to a house and garden which he had purchased (or inherited, for the accounts differ) at Colonus. There, or in the famous "olive grove" of the Academy close by, he gave lectures to, or held discussions with, a distinguished and constantly increasing body of pupils. Sauntering among the tall plane-trees, or pacing those historical colonnades, might be found all the wit and genius of the day,—men of science and men of letters—artists, poets, and, in greater numbers than all, would-be philosophers. The pupils of Plato, unlike the poor crushed followers of Socrates, are described by one comic poet as dandies with curled hair, elegant dress, and affected walk; and we are told by another how the master's broad shoulders towered above the rest, and how he charmed them with his sweet speech, "melodious as the song of the cicalas in the trees above his head." No one must suppose, however, that the subjects of discussion in the Academy were trivial or frivolous. Over the gates was to be seen the formidable inscription—"Let none but Geometricians enter here;" * and, according to Aristotle, the lectures were on the Supreme Good—*i.e.*, the One, as contrasted with the Infinite.

Twenty years thus passed, and Plato's eloquence was daily attracting to the Academy fresh students from all parts of Greece, when he received a second summons to visit Sicily from his old friend and pupil Dion, with whom he had kept up a constant correspondence. Dionysius I. was dead, and his empire, "fastened"

* Sir W. Hamilton considers this tradition "at least six centuries too late."—Essays, p. 27, note.

(as he expressed it) "by chains of adamant," had passed to his son—a young, vain, and inexperienced prince, who had not inherited either the ability or energy of his father. Dion still retained his position as minister and family adviser, and there seemed to be at last an opening under the new *régime* for carrying out his favourite scheme of restoring liberty to the Syracusans. Accordingly he spared no pains to impress the young prince with the wisdom and eloquence of Plato; and so successfully did he work upon his better feelings, that Dionysius, says Plutarch, "was seized with a keen and frantic desire to hear and converse with the philosopher." He accordingly sent a pressing invitation to Plato, and this was coupled with a touching appeal from Archytas and other Pythagoreans, who looked eagerly forward to a regeneration of Syracuse. Plato (though reluctant to leave his work at the Academy) felt constrained to revisit Sicily—"less with the hope of succeeding in the intended conversion of Dionysius, than from the fear of hearing both himself and his philosophy taunted with confessed impotence, as fit only for the discussion of the school, and shrinking from all application to practice."*

He was received at Syracuse with every mark of honour and respect. Dionysius himself came in his chariot to meet him on landing, and a public sacrifice was offered as a thanksgiving for his arrival. And at first all things went well. There was a reformation in the manners of the court. The royal banquets were

* Grote, Hist. of Greece, vii. 517.

curtailed; the conversation grew intellectual; and geometry became so much the fashion that nothing was to be seen in the palace but triangles and figures traced in the sand. Many of the foreign soldiers were dismissed; and at an anniversary sacrifice, when the herald made the usual prayer—"May the gods long preserve the Tyranny, and may the Tyrant live for ever," —Dionysius is said to have stopped him with the words—"Imprecate no such curse on me or mine." So deeply was he impressed by Plato's earnest pleading in behalf of liberty and toleration, that he was even prepared, we are told, to establish a limited monarchy in place of the existing despotism, and to restore free government to those Greek cities in Sicily which had been enslaved by his father. But Plato discountenanced any such immediate action; his pupil must go through the prescribed training, must reform himself, and be imbued with the true philosophical spirit, before he could be allowed to put his principles into practice. And thus, like other visionary schemes of reform, the golden opportunity passed away for ever. The ascendancy of "the Sophist from Athens" (as Plato was contemptuously termed) roused the jealousy of the old Sicilian courtiers, and their slanders poisoned the mind of Dionysius, whose enthusiasm had already cooled. He grew suspicious of the designs of Dion, and, without giving him a chance of defending himself against his accusers, had him put on board a vessel and sent to Italy as an exile. Plato himself was detained a state prisoner in the palace, flattered and caressed by Dionysius, who appears to have had a

sincere admiration and regard for him, but at the same time to have found the Platonic discipline too severe a trial for his own weak and luxurious nature. At last he was allowed to depart, after giving a conditional promise to return, in the event of Dion being recalled from exile. It is said that, as he was embarking, Dionysius said to him—"When thou art in the Academy with thy philosophers, thou wilt speak ill of me." "God forbid," was Plato's answer, "that we should have so much time to waste in the Academy as to speak of Dionysius at all."

Ten years later Plato is induced—for the third and last time—by the earnest appeal of Dionysius to revisit Syracuse; and a condition of his coming was to be the recall of Dion. As before, he is affectionately welcomed, and is treated as an honoured guest; but so far from Dion being recalled, his property is confiscated by Dionysius, and his wife given in marriage to another man; and Plato (who only obtains leave to depart through the intercession of Archytas) is himself the bearer of the unwelcome news to Dion, whom he meets at the Olympic games on his way home. Dion (as we may easily imagine) is bitterly incensed at this last insult, and immediately sets about levying an army to assert his rights and procure his return by force. At Olympia he parts company from Plato, and the two friends never meet again. The remainder of Dion's eventful career (more romantic, perhaps, than that of any other hero of antiquity) has been well sketched by Mr Grote, who records his triumphant entry into Syracuse, his short-lived popularity, the intrigues and

curtailed; the conversation grew intellectual; and geometry became so much the fashion that nothing was to be seen in the palace but triangles and figures traced in the sand. Many of the foreign soldiers were dismissed; and at an anniversary sacrifice, when the herald made the usual prayer—"May the gods long preserve the Tyranny, and may the Tyrant live for ever," —Dionysius is said to have stopped him with the words—"Imprecate no such curse on me or mine." So deeply was he impressed by Plato's earnest pleading in behalf of liberty and toleration, that he was even prepared, we are told, to establish a limited monarchy in place of the existing despotism, and to restore free government to those Greek cities in Sicily which had been enslaved by his father. But Plato discountenanced any such immediate action; his pupil must go through the prescribed training, must reform himself, and be imbued with the true philosophical spirit, before he could be allowed to put his principles into practice. And thus, like other visionary schemes of reform, the golden opportunity passed away for ever. The ascendancy of "the Sophist from Athens" (as Plato was contemptuously termed) roused the jealousy of the old Sicilian courtiers, and their slanders poisoned the mind of Dionysius, whose enthusiasm had already cooled. He grew suspicious of the designs of Dion, and, without giving him a chance of defending himself against his accusers, had him put on board a vessel and sent to Italy as an exile. Plato himself was detained a state prisoner in the palace, flattered and caressed by Dionysius, who appears to have had a

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conspiracy of Heraclides, whose life he had spared, and his base assassination by his friend Callippus.

Once more restored to Athens, Plato continued his lectures in the Academy, and also employed himself in composing those philosophical Dialogues which bear his name, and of which some thirty have come down to us. Several reasons probably contributed to make Plato throw his thoughts into this form. First, it was the only way in which he could give a just idea of the Socratic method, and of the persistent examination through which Socrates was wont to put all comers; again, he wished to show the chain of argument gradually unwinding itself, and by using the milder form of discussion and inquiry, to avoid even the appearance of dogmatism, especially as he must have often felt that he was treading on dangerous ground. Prolix and wearisome as some of these Dialogues may often seem to modern ears, we must remember that they were the first specimens of their kind; that they were written when the world was still young, when there was little writing of any sort, and when romances, essays, or "light literature" were unknown; while at the same time there was a clever, highly-educated, and sympathetic "public" ready then as now to devour, to admire, and to criticise. After the barren wastes of the old philosophy, with its texts and axioms, its quotations from the poets, and crude abstractions from nature, these Dialogues must have burst upon the Athenian world as an unexpected oasis upon weary travellers in the desert; and they must have hailed with delight these fresh springs of truth, and these

new pastures for thought and feeling. As a new phase of literature, we may well believe that they were received with the same interest and surprise as the appearance of the 'Spectator' in the last century, or the 'Waverley Novels' at the beginning of our own. They were, in fact, the *causeries de Lundi* of their age. Plato assuredly knew well the lively and versatile character of those for whom he was writing. The grave and didactic tone of a modern treatise on philosophy would have fallen very flat on the ears of an Athenian audience, accustomed to see their gods, statesmen, and philosophers brought upon the stage in a grotesque medley, and unsparingly caricatured. But not Momus himself (as a Greek would have said) could have turned these Dialogues into ridicule; and their very faults—their want of method and general discursiveness—must have been a relief after the formal commonplaces of the Sophists. Plato himself makes no pretence of following any rules or system. "Whither the argument blows, we will follow it," he says in the "Republic," and he is fond of telling us that a philosopher has plenty of time on his hands. But the vivacity and variety, the subtle humour—which can never be exactly reproduced in a translation—the charming scenes which serve as a framework to the discussion, and, above all, the purity and sweetness of the language, which earned for the writer the title of "The Attic Bee,"—all these were reasons for the popularity which these Dialogues undoubtedly enjoyed.

There is no means of fixing the order in which they were written, but they probably all belong to the last

forty years of his life. A story is indeed extant to the effect that Socrates heard the "Lysis" read to him, and exclaimed—"Good heavens! what a heap of falsehoods this young man tells about me!" but Socrates had in all probability died some years before the "Lysis" was published. The speakers in these Dialogues are no more historical than the characters in Shakspeare's plays, and Plato was (perhaps purposely) careless of dates and names. But the personages thus introduced serve their purpose. They give a life and a reality to the scenes and conversations which is wanting in Berkeley's Dialogues, and in all modern imitations, and their tempers and peculiarities are touched by a master-hand. But there is one character which Plato never paints, and that is—his own. Except in two casual allusions, he never directly or indirectly introduces himself; and no one can argue, from the internal evidence of his writings, as to what he was or was not. Like Shakspeare, he deserves Coleridge's epithet of "myriad-minded," for he appears to us in all shapes and characters. He was "sceptic, dogmatist, religious mystic and inquisitor, mathematical philosopher, artist, poet—all in one, or at least all in succession, during the fifty years of his philosophical life." *

There is one pervading feature of similarity in all the Dialogues, and that is, the style.† If Jove had spoken Greek (it was said of old), he would have

* Grote's Plato, i. 214.

† Sir Arthur Helps, himself a writer of purest English, has given us in 'Realmah' his ideas of what a perfect style should be. Every word in his description would closely apply to Plato,

spoken it like Plato; and Quintilian—no mean critic—declared that his language soared so far at times above the ordinary prose, that it seemed as if the writer was inspired by the Delphic Oracle. But these very sentences which seem to us to flow so easily, and which we think must have been written *currente calamo*, were really elaborate in their simplicity; and the anecdote of thirteen different versions of the opening sentence in the "Republic" having been found in the author's handwriting is probably based upon fact.

Up to the age of eighty-one, Plato continued his literary work—"combing, and curling, and weaving, and unweaving his writings after a variety of fashions;" * and death, so Cicero tells us, came upon him as he was seated at his desk, pen in hand. He was buried among the olive-trees in his own garden; and his disciples celebrated a yearly festival in his memory.

As might be expected, such a man did not escape satire and detraction even in his own day. To say that he was ridiculed by the comic poets, is merely to say that he paid the penalty common to all eminence at Athens; but he was accused of vanity, plagiarism, and what not, by writers such as Antisthenes and Aristoxenus, whose philosophy might have taught

especially the concluding lines; . . . "and withal there must be a sense of felicity about it, declaring it to be the product of a happy moment, so that you feel it will not happen again to that man who writes the sentence, nor to any other of the sons of men, to say the like thing so choicely, tersely, mellifluously, and completely."—Realmah, i. 175.

* Dionysius of Halicarnassus, quoted in Sewell's Dialogues of Plato, p. 55.

them better. Athenæus, with whom no reputation is sacred, devotes six successive chapters to a merciless attack on his personal character; and besides retailing some paltry anecdotes as to his being fond of figs, and inventing a musical water-clock which chimed the hours at night, he accuses him of jealousy and malevolence towards his brother philosophers, and tells a story to show his arrogance, and the dislike with which his companions regarded him. On the same evening that Socrates died (so says Athenæus), the select few who had been with him in the prison, met together at supper. All were sad and silent, and had not the heart to eat or drink. But Plato filled a cup with wine, and bade them be of good cheer, for he would worthily fill their master's place; and he invited Apollodorus to drink his health, and passed him the cup. But Apollodorus refused it with indignation, and said, "I would rather have pledged Socrates in his hemlock, than pledge you in this wine."

CHAPTER II.

PHILOSOPHERS AND SOPHISTS.

DIALOGUES: PARMENIDES—SOPHISTES—PROTAGORAS—GORGIAS—HIPPIAS—EUTHYDEMUS.

"Divine Philosophy,
Not harsh and rugged, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute."—*Milton.*

"PHILOSOPHY," says Plato in his 'Theætetus,' "begins in wonder, for Iris is the child of Thaumas." It is the natural impulse of the savage, wherever he sees force and motion that he cannot explain, to invent a god; and so the first stage of Science is a sort of Fetishism, or worship of the powers of nature. The Greek, especially curious and inventive, carried this tendency to its furthest limits; and the result was an elaborate Mythology, in which every object and operation in the physical world was referred to a special god. Thus the thunder was caused by the wrath of Zeus; the earthquake was produced by Poseidōn; and the pestilence by the arrows of Apollo. Poets like Homer and Hesiod reduced these myths to a system, and perpetuated them in their verse; and so it may be said that Greek philosophy springs from poetry, for in this poetry are contained the germs of

all subsequent thought. Homer, indeed, has been called "the Greek Bible;" and every Athenian gentleman is said to have known the Iliad and Odyssey by heart. Their morality, it is true, was of a rough and ready character, suited to the high spirit of heroic times, when war and piracy were the hero's proper profession; but there are everywhere traces of a strict code of honour and a keen sense of rights and duties. The oath and the marriage tie, the claims of age and weakness, the guest and the suppliant, are all respected; and though all stratagems are held to be fair in war, Achilles, the poet's model hero, tells us that his soul detests the liar "like the gates of hell."

Hesiod looks back with regret to the heroes of this golden time, long since departed to the islands of the blest. His own lot has fallen upon evil days; the earth has lost its bloom; the present race of men are sadly degenerate; and Shame and Retribution, the two last remaining virtues, have gone for ever.

Simonides and Theognis complete this gloomy picture; they and the other "Gnomic" poets, fragments of whose writings have come down to us, preach for the most part a prudential morality, unlike the chivalrous *naïveté* of Homer, and expressed in mournful sentences which read like verses from Ecclesiastes. The uncertainty of fortune, the inconstancy of friends, the miseries of poverty and sickness—these are the phases of life which strike them most.

Then come the "Seven Wise Men," of whom Solon was one, who stand on the border-land of romance and history, like the Seven Champions of

Christendom. We know little of them beyond those aphorisms ascribed to each of them, and said to have been engraven in gold on the gates of Delphi, which became as household words in Greece, and some of which have found their way into modern proverbs —"The golden mean," "Know thyself," "Virtue is difficult," "Call no man happy till he dies." Another of the seven was Thales—half star-gazer, half man of business — honoured by Aristotle with the title of "the first philosopher." He and those who followed him tried to discover some one element or first principle underlying the incessant change and motion which they saw in the world around them. Thales believed this principle to be Water—improving on the old myth of Oceanus, the eternal river that girds the universe. Anaximander thought the universe originally was a bath of flames, or a ring of fire broken up into sun, moon, and stars, while the earth remained balanced like a column in the centre. Anaximenes, again, said that "Air ruled over all things; and the Soul, being Air, ruled in man." Thus these three Ionian philosophers took each some one element as the symbol of an abstract idea.

Then came Heraclitus of Ephesus, surnamed the Obscure,—"shooting," says Plato, "as from a quiver, sayings brief and dark." He is oppressed with the sense of the perpetual change in nature. Nothing is at rest, all is in continual movement and progression. Life and time are like a stream flowing on for ever, in which thoughts and actions appear for a moment and then vanish. Pythagoras, again, maintained that

Number was the sacred and unchangeable principle by which the universe was regulated; that there was a "music of the spheres;" and that the soul itself was a harmony imprisoned in the body: while his contemporary Democritus, "the first materialist," held that by some law of necessity countless atoms had moved together in the void of space, and so produced a world.

Lastly, the Eleatics took higher ground, and conceived the idea of one eternal and absolute Being which alone exists, while non-existence is inconceivable. Plurality and change, space and time, are merely illusions of the senses. This doctrine is set forth at some length by Parmenides, the founder of this school of thought, in an epic poem, in which he has been commissioned, he says, by the goddess of wisdom, "to show unto men the unchangeable heart of truth." Plato, who always speaks of him with respect—"more honoured than all the rest of philosophers put together"—has given his name to one of his Dialogues, in which he introduces him as visiting Athens in his old age, in company with Zeno, his friend and pupil, and there discussing his theories with Socrates, then a young man of twenty.

The Dialogue turns upon the difficulties involved in the famous Eleatic saying, that "the All is one, and the many are nought;" but, by an easy transition, the argument in the first part of the Dialogue discusses the doctrine of Ideas—the key-stone of Plato's philosophy. This doctrine seems to have grown upon him, and engrossed his mind; and his poetic feeling is continually suggesting additions and embellishments to it, just as

an artist adds fresh touches to a favourite picture. He admits, with Heraclitus, that all objects of sense are fleeting and changeable; and he admits with the Eleatics that Being alone can really be said to exist; but he blends these two theories together. Everything that we can name or see has its eternal Idea or prototype; and this particular flower, with its sensible bloom and fragrance, is merely the transitory image or expression of the universal Flower that never fades. And thus, far removed from this material world of birth and death, change and decay, Plato conceived another world of pure and perfect forms, imperceptible by earthly senses and perceived by the eye of reason alone, each form in itself separate, unchangeable, and everlasting, and each answering to some visible object to which it imparts a share of its own divine essence, as the sun gives light to nature.

But (objects Parmenides in this Dialogue), how can you bridge over the gulf which separates the sensible from the Ideal world? How do these earthly imitations of the Ideas partake of the essence of their divine prototypes? And how far can you carry your theory? Have the meanest as well as the noblest objects—hair and mud, for instance, as well as beauty and truth—their ideal Forms? Again, there may be Ideas of Ideas, and so you may go on generalising to infinity. Lastly, they cannot be only conceptions of the mind; while, if they are types in nature and have a real existence, we cannot know them; for all human knowledge is relative, and to comprehend these eternal and absolute Ideas, we should require an Ideal and

absolute knowledge, such as the gods alone can possess. Of ourselves, therefore, we cannot know these Ideas; and yet, unless we admit that absolute and abstract Ideas exist, all discussion—nay, all philosophy—is at an end.

These objections, so skilfully put by Parmenides, are not answered by Plato in this, or indeed in any other Dialogue; and he thus makes out a strong case against his own favourite theory. Socrates himself is lectured by Parmenides on his defective mental training. His enthusiasm (says the old philosopher), which makes him "keen as a Spartan hound" in the quest of truth, is a noble impulse in itself; but it will be useless unless he, so to speak, reads his adversary's brief, and studies a question in all its bearings, tracing all the consequences which may follow from the assumption or denial of some hypothesis. Above all, Socrates should cultivate "Dialectic,"* which alone can enable him to separate the ideal from the sensible, and is an indispensable exercise, although most people regard it as mere idle talking.

Parmenides is then prevailed upon himself to give an example of this "laborious pastime;" though, as he says, he shakes with fear at the thought of his self-imposed task, "like an old race-horse before running the course he knows so well." He selects for examination his own Eleatic theory, and traces the consequences which follow from the contradictory assumptions that "One is," and "One is not." We need not follow him

* The process by which the definitions of Logic are attained.

through the mazes of this chain of arguments, which result after all in two contradictory conclusions. It is doubtful if Plato had any other object in this "legerdemain of words" than to stimulate the curiosity of a youthful inquirer like Socrates with a series of arguments as puzzling and equivocal as the riddle in his "Republic," to which Mr Grote compares them: "A man and no man, seeing and not seeing, a bird and no bird, sitting upon wood and no wood, struck and did not strike it with a stone and no stone." The only difference is, that in one case the author knew the solution of his riddle; while it may be doubted if Plato himself held the key to the enigmas in his "Parmenides."

In this Dialogue we are introduced also to Zeno —"Parmenides' second self"—the able exponent of the art of Dialectic, and a type of a new stage of Greek thought which had just commenced with the Sophists. The appearance of these professors at Athens was a sign of the times. Hitherto, as we have seen, philosophy had resulted in rough abstractions from Nature or in a vague Idealism; but now thought was directed to the practical requirements of life, and the Sophists supplied a recognised want in the education of the age. They were the professors of universal knowledge; and, above all, they taught Rhetoric—in the view of an Athenian the most important of all branches of learning. To speak with fluency and dignity was not so much an accomplishment as a necessary safeguard at Athens, where "Informers" abounded, where litigation was incessant, and where a citizen was liable

to be called upon to defend his life and property any day in one of the numerous law-courts. Again, eloquence, far more than with us, was a source of success and popularity in public life; and as a French soldier was said to carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack, so every citizen who had the natural or acquired gift of eloquence might aspire to rise from the ranks, and become president of Athens. Provided that he had a ready and plausible tongue, neither his poverty nor mean descent need stand in his way; for the foremost place in Athens had been occupied in succession by a tanner and a lamp-seller. The small number of citizens, as compared with slaves, made political power more accessible than in our over-grown democracies; and every citizen was forced to become part and parcel of the state in which he lived. Moreover, the Greek Assembly was more easily moved by an appeal to their feelings or imagination, especially on an occasion of strong public interest, than a modern House of Commons. Sometimes their enthusiasm broke through all bounds, and Plato's description of the effect produced by a popular orator is probably not exaggerated.

All motives, therefore—policy, ambition, self-defence—combined to induce the Athenian to learn the art of speaking, and there was an increasing demand for teachers. The Sophists undertook to qualify the young aspirant for political distinction; to teach him to think, speak, and act like a citizen, to convince or cajole the Assembly, to hold his own in the law-court, and generally to give him the power of making "the worse seem the better reason." Their lecture-rooms were

crowded; they were idolised by the rising generation; and they not uncommonly made large fortunes, charging often as much as fifty drachmas (about two guineas) a lesson; for few of them would have the magnanimity of Protagoras, who left it to the conscience of his pupils to name their own fees.

The Sophists were the sceptics and rationalists of their times, and they headed the reaction against the dogmatism of previous philosophy. According to them, there was no fixed standard of morality; real knowledge was impossible; tradition was false; religion was the invention of lying prophets; law and justice were devices of the strong to ensnare the weak; pleasure and pain were the only *criteria* of right and wrong; each man should use his private judgment in all matters, and do that which seemed good in his own eyes.

We can hardly estimate the mingled feelings of fear and dislike with which an average Athenian citizen would regard the influence undoubtedly possessed by this class. Patriotism and religious prejudice would intensify the hatred against these foreign sceptics; and added to this would be the popular antipathy which has in all times shown itself against scheming lawyers and ambitious churchmen—

"Chicane in furs, and casuistry in lawn."

For, inasmuch as philosophy was closely blended with their religion, the Sophist would seem to practise a sort of intellectual simony; tampering with and selling at a high price the divinest mysteries; holding the keys

of knowledge themselves, but refusing to impart, except to such as came with full purses, those truths which were to the Greek as the very bread of life.

Doubtless Plato had sufficient reason to justify the repulsive picture which he has drawn of the Sophist in several of his Dialogues, as "the charlatan, the foreigner, the prince of *esprits faux*, the hireling who is not a teacher; . . . the 'evil one,' the ideal representative of all that Plato most disliked in the moral and intellectual tendencies of his own age, the adversary of the almost equally ideal Socrates."*

In the Dialogue called THE SOPHIST, an attempt is made to define, by a regular logical process called "dichotomy," the real nature of this many-sided creature; no easy task, says Plato, "for the animal is troublesome, and hard to catch." He has a variety of characters. Firstly, he is a sort of hunter, and his art is like the angler's, with the difference that he is a fisher of men, and baits his hook with pleasure, "haunting the rich meadow-lands of generous youth." Secondly, he is like a retail trader, but his merchandise is a spurious knowledge which he buys from others or fabricates for himself as he wanders from city to city. Thirdly, he is a warrior, but his tongue is his sword with which he is eternally wrangling about right and wrong for money. Fourthly, since education purifies the soul by casting out ignorance or the false conceit of knowledge, men would have you believe that the Sophist does this; though, as a matter of fact, he is

* Jowett's Plato, iii. 448.

about as like the real "purger of souls" as a wolf is like a dog. Lastly, this creature aspires to universal knowledge, and will argue—ay, and teach others to argue—about any object in creation; and, like a clever painter, he will impose upon you the appearance for the reality, and thus he steals away the hearts of our young men, deceiving their ears and deluding their senses, while he disguises his own ignorance under a cloud of words. In fact, he is a mere imitator—and an imitator of appearance, not of reality.

"But how" (an objector replies) "can a man be said to affirm or imitate that which is only appearance, and has no real existence?" This quibble is followed by a perplexing discussion on "Not-Being"—the stumbling-block of Eleatic philosophers. To us nothing can be simpler than the distinction between "this is not," *i.e*, does not exist—and "this is not," *i.e.*, is not true; but so oppressed was the Eleatic with the sense of "Being" as alone having existence, that he held that no reality could be attached to non-being; and therefore falsehood, which was merely the expression of non-being, was impossible. Nothing would be gained by following out the threads of this difficult argument; and we may dismiss the Eleatic theory with the consolation that, as Professor Jowett says, Plato has effectually "laid its ghost"—we will hope, for ever.

PROTAGORAS.

The opening of this Dialogue is highly dramatic. Socrates is awakened before daylight by the young Hippocrates, who is all on fire to see and hear this Pro-

tagoras, who has just come to Athens. Socrates calms his excitement, and advises him to be sure, before he pays his money to the great Sophist, that he will get his money's worth; for it is a rash thing to commit his soul to the instruction of a foreigner, before he knows his real character, or whether his doctrines are for good or for evil. "O my friend!" he says, earnestly, "pause a moment before you hazard your dearest interests on a game of chance; for you cannot buy knowledge and carry it away in an earthly vessel: in your own soul you must receive it, to be a blessing or a curse."

Talking thus gravely on the way, they arrive at the house of Callias, who had spent more money on the Sophists—so Plato tells us—than any other Athenian of his times. The doorkeeper is surly, and at first refuses to admit them, thinking that his master has had enough of the Sophists and their friends already. But at last they enter, and find a large company already assembled within. Protagoras himself is walking up and down the colonnade, declaiming to a troop of youths who had followed him from all parts of Greece, attracted by the music of his words, "as though he were a second Orpheus." Hippias, another Sophist, whom we shall meet again, is lecturing on astronomy to a select audience in the opposite portico; while the deep voice of Prodicus, a younger professor, is heard from an adjoining room, where he lies still warmly wrapped up in bed, and conversing from it to another circle of listeners.

Socrates at once steps up to Protagoras, and tells

him the purpose for which they have sought him; and the great man makes a gracious answer. "Yes—Hippocrates has done right to come to him, for he is not as other Sophists. He will not treat him like a schoolboy, and weary him with astronomy and music. No; he will teach him nobler and more useful lessons than these: prudence, that he may order his own house well; and political wisdom, that he may prove himself a good citizen and a wise statesman."

"But," asks Socrates, half incredulously, "can such wisdom and virtue as this be really taught at all? If it were so, would not our statesmen have taught their own children the art by which they became great themselves, and the mantle of Pericles have descended in a measure upon his sons?"

To this Protagoras replies by a parable. Man was overlooked in the original distribution of gifts by Epimetheus among mortal creatures, and was left the only bare and defenceless animal in creation; and though Prometheus strove to remedy his brother's oversight as far as he could, by giving him fire and other means of life, still there was no principle of government, and man kept slaying and plundering his brother man; till at last Jove took pity on him, and sent Hermes to distribute justice and friendship, not to a favoured few, but to all alike. "For," said Jove, "cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts; and further, make a law by my order, that he who has no part in reverence and justice shall be put to death as a plague to the state." The very fact that evil-doers are punished, not in retaliation for

past wrong, but to prevent future wrong, is a proof that certain virtues can be acquired "from study, and exercise, and teaching." In fact, a man's education begins in his cradle. From childhood he is placed under tutors and governors, and stimulated to virtue by admonitions, by threats, or blows. When he arrives at man's estate, the law takes the place of his masters, and compels him to live uprightly. He who rebels against instruction or punishment is either exiled or condemned to death, under the idea that he is incurable. "Who teaches virtue, say you? (Protagoras continues); you might as well ask who teaches Greek. The fact is, all men are its teachers,—parents, guardians, tutors, the laws, society—each and all do their part in forming a man's character."

Socrates professes himself charmed with the eloquence of Protagoras; but there is one little question further upon which he would like to have his opinion. "Is there one virtue, or are there many?" Protagoras, who at first argues that the virtues are separate—like the different features of a man's face—is forced much against his will to admit that holiness is much the same as justice,—and so on with the several others.

Then a line from the poet Simonides is discussed—"It is hard to be good;" and Protagoras, who had been hitherto the chief speaker, is himself put to the question by Socrates, with a reminder that short answers are best for short memories—like his own. This discussion is simply a satire on the verbal criticism so common in that age, and reduced to a science

by the Sophists; when men in the very exuberance of thought, like the Euphuists in the Elizabethan age, fenced with sharp sayings—taking, as here, some well-known text from a poet, illustrating its meaning, and using it to point a moral, like a preacher in a modern pulpit.

But this criticism is admitted by both sides to be a somewhat commonplace amusement. To quote from the poets, says Socrates, with some sarcasm, especially when they are not present to tell us what they really meant, is a mere waste of time; it is like listening to a flute-girl after dinner, and betrays a dearth of invention on the part of the company. So the original argument on the plurality of Virtue is resumed; and it is proved, to the satisfaction at least of one disputant, that knowledge is not only a power in itself, but is also the main element in every virtue; and that even if pleasure were the rule of life—which it is not—still knowledge would be required to strike the balance between pleasure and pain.

GORGIAS.

Among the professors of the day none was more distinguished than Gorgias of Leontini, who came as an ambassador to Athens to obtain her aid against Syracuse before the great Sicilian war. His doctrines resulted in utter Nihilism. Nothing (he said) exists; if anything existed, it could not be known; and, even if it could be known, such knowledge could not be imparted. In this Dialogue he is the guest of Callicles, an accomplished Athenian gentleman; and he is

pressed by Socrates to give an account of himself and his art. Rhetoric, replies Gorgias, is his art, and it is used by him and by others for the best of purposes —namely, to give political freedom to all men, and political power to a few. Of course, like other arts, it is capable of abuse; but it is not the teacher's fault if his pupils, like a boxer in the mere wantonness of strength, use their weapons injuriously or unfairly.

Socrates (who seems to consider Sophistry quite fair in war against a Sophist) uses a fallacy as gross as any of those which he himself exposes in the "Euthydemus," and makes Gorgias contradict his previous assertion. The Rhetorician is asserted to have learned justice from his teacher—granted; he is therefore, *ipso facto*, a just man, and his art is equally just. How, then, can he act injuriously?

Polus—a young pupil of Gorgias—who is sitting near, is indignant at what he rightly thinks an intentional misuse of words, and plunges into the discussion with all the impetuosity of youth. Socrates, he says, has no right to force such a plain contradiction in terms upon Gorgias—nay, it is positive ill-breeding in him to do so.

"Most excellent Polus," says Socrates, in his politest manner, "the chief object of our providing for ourselves friends and children is that when we grow old and begin to fail, a younger generation may be at hand to set us on our legs again in our words and actions; so now, if I and Gorgias are failing, we have you here, ready to be help to us, as you ought to be;

and I, for my part, promise to retract any mistake which you may think I have made—on one condition."

And this condition is that his answers must be brief. True, it is hard that Polus should be deprived of his freedom of speech, especially in Athens; but it is harder still, says Socrates, for his hearers, to have to listen to long-winded arguments.

Then Socrates gives his views on Rhetoric, which was the question they had started with. It is not, strictly speaking, an art at all, but, like cookery or music, is a mere routine for gratifying the senses, being, in fact, a part of flattery, and the shadow of a part of politics, and bearing the same relation to justice that Sophistry bears to legislation.*

In the course of his argument with Polus, Socrates makes two statements which sound to his audience like the wildest paradoxes—truisms as they may appear from a Christian point of view. It is better (he says) to suffer than to do a wrong; and the evil-doer, though possessed of infinite wealth and power, must inevitably be miserable. Though all the world should be against him, he will maintain this to be the truth—yes, and he will go a step further. The evil-doer who

* The following table exhibits the respective places which Socrates considers Rhetoric and Sophistry to hold in the education of his day :—

		Training.	
		Real.	Sham.
Of Body	Gymnastics, with its sham counterpart,		Cosmetics.
	Medicine,	,, ,, ,,	Cookery.
Of Mind	Law-making,	,, ,, ,,	Sophistry.
	Judging,	,, ,, ,,	Rhetoric.

escapes the law, and lives on in his wickedness, is a more miserable man than he who suffers the reward of his crimes; and though the tyrant or murderer may avoid his earthly judge, as a sick child avoids the doctor, still he carries about with him an incurable cancer in his soul. For his own part, Socrates would heap coals of fire upon the head of his enemy by letting him escape punishment. "If he has stolen a sum of money, let him keep it, and spend it on him and his, regardless of religion and justice; and if he have done things worthy of death, let him not die, but rather be immortal in his wickedness."

Callicles—the shrewd man of the world—is amazed to hear such doctrines, which, if put into practice, would, he thinks, turn society upside down. "Is your master really in earnest, or is he joking?" he asks Chærephon.

"He speaks in profound earnest," is the reply.

"Yes," says Socrates; "and my words are but the echo of the voice of truth speaking within my breast."

But Callicles is not to be imposed upon by such "brave words." Gorgias was too modest, and Polus too clumsy an opponent to point out an obvious fallacy. Socrates has been playing fast and loose with the words Custom and Nature, and has confounded two distinct things. To suffer wrong is better than to do wrong by Custom, but not by Nature. Conventional Justice is the refuge of the coward and the slave, and was invented by the weak in self-defence. Naturally, Might is Right—

"The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

Socrates is surely-not too old to learn a little common-sense. Philosophy, as a part of education, is a good thing, no doubt, to start with. But if a man carries it with him into later life, he becomes a useless and ridiculous member of society, at the mercy of any chance accuser; hiding in holes and corners, and whispering to a few chosen youths, instead of standing forth boldly before the world, and making his mark in life.

Socrates compliments Callicles on a frankness so rarely met with, but presses him as to the exact sense of "natural justice"—*i.e.*, the will of the stronger. By "stronger" Callicles explains that he means the wise and stout-hearted politician, who has the ambition and spirit and desires of a king; and who, moreover, will not scruple to gratify them to the full. "Yes," says Callicles, emphatically, "luxury, intemperance, and licence, if they are duly supported, are happiness and virtue—all the rest is a mere bauble, custom contrary to nature, and nothing worth."

Socrates, in his own fashion, disproves these monstrous doctrines, and forces Callicles, though much against his will, to admit that pleasure and virtue are not always identical; that really Virtue is, or should be, the end of all our actions; that in the long-run the just and temperate man alone is happy; and that he who leads a robber's life is abhorred by gods and men while upon earth, and goes down to Hades with his soul branded with the scars of his crimes. There must

come a day of judgment and retribution, when each man shall receive the just reward of his deeds.

Now I (concludes Socrates) am persuaded of the truth of these things, and I consider how I shall present my soul whole and undefiled before the Judge in that day. Renouncing the honours at which the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can, and, when the time comes, to die. And to the utmost of my power, I exhort all men to do the same. And in return for your exhortation of me, I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.—J.

But in spite of his triumphant defence of Virtue, there is a bitter tone of isolation and loneliness in the last part of this Dialogue. "I, and I only, am left," Socrates seems to say—like Elijah upon Carmel—among ten thousand who know not the truth. My own generation will not hear me or believe me; they will not even understand me; and in the end I shall probably be accused—as a physician might be arraigned by a pastry-cook before a jury of children; and as I cannot refer to any pleasures which I have provided for the people, but can only appeal to my own blameless life, any one may foresee the verdict. "Not that I *fear* death"—he says, with a noble scorn—only the coward and the profligate need fear that. There is something nobler than mere ease and personal safety. "He who is truly a man, ought not to care much how long he lives; he knows, as women say, that none can escape the day of destiny, and therefore is not too fond of life; all that he leaves to heaven, and

thinks how he may best spend such term as is allotted him."

THE "GREATER" AND "LESSER" HIPPIAS.

Two short Dialogues ascribed to Plato on doubtful grounds have come down to us bearing the name of Hippias, who is the representative of the younger generation of Sophists, clever and accomplished, but, as we shall see, intolerably vain of his personal merits.

"How is it," asks Socrates on meeting him, "that the wise and handsome Hippias has been so long away from Athens?"

"Public business has taken up all my time," Hippias replies; "for I am always singled out by my countrymen of Elis on any important occasion, as being the only man who can properly represent their city, and I have just been on an embassy to Sparta."

"Lucky fellow!" says Socrates, "to combine such dignity and usefulness, and to get large sums from the youth in return for that knowledge which is more precious than any gold. But how was it that the wise men of old took no practical part in politics?"

"Because they had not the ability to combine public and private business, as we do now."

"Ah, well," says Socrates, "I suppose wisdom has progressed, like everything else. Gorgias and Prodicus have, I know, made immense sums from their pupils; but those old sages were too simple-minded to ask for payment, or make an exhibition of their knowledge. Nowadays, he is wisest who makes most money."

"You would be astonished," says Hippias, "if you

knew what a fortune I have made. I got a hundred and fifty minæ in Sicily alone, though Protagoras was there at the same time."

"And where did you make most?" asks Socrates. "I suppose at Sparta, for you have been there oftenest."

"No," says Hippias; "not a penny could I get from the Spartans, though they have plenty of money. Indeed they care little for Astronomy or Music, or any new sciences; and as for Mathematics, they can hardly count. The only thing they cared about was Archæology—the genealogies of their gods and heroes, and so forth; and they were also greatly pleased with a lecture I gave in the form of advice from Nestor to Neoptolemus on the choice of a profession."

"By the way," says Socrates, suddenly, "there is one question which I want answered, and I have been waiting till I could find one of you wise men to tell me—What is the Beautiful?"

Hippias at first answers that a fair maiden is a beautiful thing; but Socrates shows that this is merely a relative term, and that compared with a goddess she would be ugly, just as the wisest man is an ape compared with a god. There must be some Form or Essence which makes a maiden or a lyre beautiful. It is not "gold" (as Hippias foolishly suggests), for then Phidias would have made Athenè's face of gold instead of ivory: nor is it "the suitable," for that only causes things in their right place to *appear* beautiful, and does not really make them so. Nor, again, does the glowing description of a prosperous life according

to Greek ideas, which is the next definition volunteered, satisfy Socrates.

"It is a beautiful thing, when a man has lived in health, wealth, and honour, to reach old age, and having buried his parents handsomely, to be buried splendidly by his descendants." *

Such vague language tells us nothing. Again, Beauty is not "the useful," nor is it even "power for the production of good," for this would make goodness distinct from beauty. And lastly, Beauty is not simply "that which pleases our sight and hearing." And then by an argument—more subtle than the occasion seems to require—Socrates shows that the pleasures from the other senses should not be excluded.

Finally, the question is left unanswered, and Hippias expresses his dissatisfaction at these "shreds and parings of argument." A man (he thinks) should take a larger view of debate, and learn to make a telling speech in court, instead of wasting time on this minute criticism, which profits him nothing.

No doubt, Socrates replies, his own doubts and difficulties, which some strange power compels him to make known, seem small and valueless to a wise man like Hippias. It has always been his unhappy destiny to seek and inquire, and be reviled by the world for doing so; but this discipline must be endured, if the result is his own improvement. In any case, this discussion has had one advantage, for it has taught him the truth of the old proverb, that "What is beautiful is difficult."

* Whewell's Platonic Dialogues, ii. 101.

In the Dialogue known as the "LESSER" HIPPIAS, we again meet that philosopher, who has just delivered a lecture on Homer at Athens, and who boasts that he can talk on all subjects and answer all questions that may be asked; in fact, he is a professor of every science. Upon this, Socrates reminds him that on his last appearance at Olympia he had worn a tunic and embroidered girdle which he had woven himself, and a ring which he had engraved with his own hand; and had brought with him a quantity of his own writings in verse and prose, and, more wonderful than all, an Art of Memory, which he had himself invented.

The question on which Socrates wishes now to be enlightened by Hippias is the characters of the two heroes of the Iliad and Odyssey. Hippias maintains that Achilles is nobler than Ulysses, as being straightforward, and not mendacious. But Socrates objects to this; the mendacious man is capable, intelligent, and wise: if a man cannot tell a lie on occasion, he shows his ignorance. Those who do wrong wilfully are better than those who do wrong through ignorance or against their will—just as to be wilfully ungraceful is better than to be really awkward; and as a good runner can run fast or slow, and a good archer hit or miss the mark when he chooses.

Again, Socrates continues, if justice is a mental capacity, the more capable mind is the more just; and such a mind, being competent to exercise itself in good or evil, will, if it does evil, do it willingly;

and therefore the wilful wrong-doer is the good man.

And with this gross paradox—established by arguments as sophistical as any which Socrates has elsewhere exposed—the Dialogue ends. He confesses himself to be puzzled and bewildered by the conclusion at which they have arrived; but (he adds) it is no great wonder that a plain simple man like himself should be puzzled, if the great and wise Hippias is puzzled as well.

EUTHYDEMUS.

Nowhere is Plato's humour more sustained than in this Dialogue, portions of which seem to have been written in a spirit of broad farce. The arrogance and self-conceit of the two principal personages, the mock humility of Socrates and the impatience of Ctesippus, form a contrast of character as amusing as a scene in a clever comedy.

Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are introduced as two brothers, possessed, by their own account, of universal genius—able to use their swords and fight in armour—masters, also, of legal fence, and professors of "wrangling" generally—able and willing, moreover, to give lessons in speaking, pleading, and writing speeches. But all these accomplishments are now, as they frankly tell Socrates, matters of merely secondary consideration.

"Indeed," I said, "if such occupations are regarded by you as secondary, what must the principal one be? Tell me, I beseech you, what that noble study is."

"The teaching of virtue, Socrates," he replied, "is our principal occupation; and we believe that we can impart it better and quicker than any man."

"My God!" I said, "and where did you learn that? I always thought, as I was saying just now, that your chief accomplishment was the art of fighting in armour; and this was what I used to say of you, for I remember that this was professed by you when you were here before. But now, if you really have the other knowledge, O forgive me: I address you as I would superior beings, and ask you to pardon the impiety of my former expressions. But are you quite sure about this, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus? the promise is so vast, that a feeling of incredulity will creep in.

"You may take our word, Socrates, for the fact."

"Then I think you happier in having such a treasure than the great king is in the possession of his kingdom. And please to tell me whether you intend to exhibit this wisdom, or what you will do."

"That is why we are come hither, Socrates; and our purpose is not only to exhibit, but also to teach any one who likes to learn."—J.

A circle is formed, and young Cleinias, a grandson of Alcibiades, is selected as the victim to be improved by their logic, and is questioned accordingly as to his ideas of knowledge and ignorance. The poor youth is puzzled and confounded by their ingenious questioning and contradicts himself almost immediately; but Socrates good-naturedly reassures him by telling him that his tormentors are not really in earnest, and that their jests are merely a sort of prelude to graver mysteries to which he will be presently admitted, as soon as he has learnt the correct use of terms. Then Socrates, with the gracious permission of the two

Sophists, gives an example of his own method, and by a series of easy questions elicits from Cleinias the admission that wisdom is the only good, that ignorance is evil, and that to become wise is at present his heart's desire.

Then Euthydemus begins again. "So you want Cleinias to become wise, and he is not wise yet?" Socrates admits this. "Then you want the boy to be no longer what he is—that is, you want him to be done away with? A nice set of friends you must all be!"

Socrates is amazed at this retort; and Ctesippus, who is a warm friend of Cleinias, is most indignant, and calls the Sophists a pair of liars in plain language. To this Euthydemus replies that there is no such thing as a lie, and that contradiction is impossible. The dispute is growing warm, when Socrates interposes. There is no use, he says, in quarrelling about words; if by "doing away with him" the strangers mean that they will make a new man out of Cleinias, by all means let them destroy the youth, and make him wise, and all of us with him.

But if you young men do not like to trust yourselves with them, then, *fiat experimentum in corpore senis;* here I offer my old person to Dionysodorus: he may put me into the pot, like Medea the Colchian, kill me, pickle me, eat me, if he will only make me good. Ctesippus said: "And I, Socrates, am ready to commit myself to the strangers; they may skin me alive, if they please (and I am pretty well skinned by them already), if only my skin is made at last, not like that of Marsyas, into a leathern bottle, but into a piece of virtue. And here is Dionysodorus fancying that I am angry with him, when I am

really not angry at all. I do but contradict him when he seems to me to be in the wrong; and you must not confound abuse and contradiction, O illustrious Dionysodorus; for they are quite different things."

"Contradiction!" said Dionysodorus; "why, there never was such a thing."—J.

And then he proves in his own fashion that falsehood has no existence, and that a man must either say what is true or say nothing at all.

One absurd paradox follows another; and the two brothers venture on the most extravagant assertions. According to them, neither error nor ignorance are possible; and they themselves have known all things from their birth—dancing, carpentering, cobbling—nay, the very number of the stars and sands; till even Socrates loses patience, and Ctesippus cannot disguise his disgust at their effrontery.

Several passages of arms take place, of which the following may serve as an instance:—

"You say," asks Euthydemus of Ctesippus, "that you have a dog?"

"Yes, a villain of a one," said Ctesippus.

"And he has puppies?"

"Yes, and they are very like himself."

"And the dog is the father of them?"

"Yes," he said, "certainly."

"And is he not yours?"

"To be sure he is."

"Then he is a father, and he is yours; *ergo*, he is your father, and the puppies are your brothers."

"Let me ask you one little question more," said Dionysodorus, quickly interposing, in order that Ctesippus might not get in his word—"you beat this dog?"

Ctesippus said, laughing, "Indeed I do; and I only wish that I could beat you instead of him."

"Then you beat your father," he said.

I should have had more reason to beat yours, said Ctesippus; "what could he have been thinking of when he begat such wise sons? Much good has this father of you and other curs got out of your wisdom."—J.

More arguments are advanced, in which the perversion of words is no less gross and palpable than in the passage above quoted—even to the most illogical mind. The fallacies, indeed, are generally so transparent as hardly to require serious refutation. The bystanders, however, are represented as being marvellously pleased at the remarkable wit and ingenuity of the two brethren; and Socrates professes to be overcome by this display of their powers of reasoning. He makes them a speech in which he gravely compliments them on their magnanimous disregard of all opinions besides their own, and their "kind and public-spirited denial of all differences, whether of white or black, good or evil."

"But what appears to me to be more than all is, that this art and invention of yours is so admirably contrived that in a very short time it can be imparted to any one. I observe that Ctesippus learned to imitate you in no time. Now this quickness of attainment is an excellent thing; but at the same time I would advise you not to have any more public entertainments—there is a danger that men may undervalue an art which they have so easy an opportunity of learning: the exhibition would be best of all, if the discussion were confined to your two selves; but if there must be an audience, let him only be present who is willing to pay a handsome fee;—you should be careful of this

—and if you are wise, you will also bid your disciples discourse with no man but you and themselves. For only what is rare is valuable; and water, which, as Pindar says, is the best of all things, is also the cheapest. And now I have only to request that you will receive Cleinias and me among your pupils."—J.

CHAPTER III.

SOCRATES AND HIS FRIENDS.

SYMPOSIUM—PHÆDRUS—APOLOGY—CRITO—PHÆDO.

"There neither is, nor shall there ever be, any treatise of Plato. The opinions called by the name of Plato are those of Socrates in the days of his youthful vigour and glory."—Plato, Ep. ii. 314 (Grote).

SOCRATES, in whom, as we have seen, Plato thus merges his own personality, and who is the spokesman in nearly every Dialogue, was the son of a sculptor at Athens, and was born in the year B.C. 468. He left his father's workshop at an early age, and devoted himself to the task of public teaching,—being, as he believed, specially commissioned by the gods to question and cross-examine all he met. Accordingly he might be found, day after day, in the workshops, in the public walks, in the market-place, or in the Palæstra, hearing and asking questions; careless where or when or with whom he talked. His personal ugliness —about which he makes a joke himself in the "Theætetus"—his thick lips, snub nose, and corpulent body, and besides this, his mean dress and bare feet, made him, perhaps, the most remarkable figure in Athens, especially when contrasted with the rich dresses and

classic features of the youths who often followed him. Yet under that Silenus mask (as Alcibiades described it) was concealed the image of a god. None who had ever heard him speak could easily forget the steady gaze, the earnest manner, and, above all, the impassioned words which made their hearts burn within them as they listened. Many youths would approach the circle which always formed whenever Socrates talked or argued, from mere curiosity or as a resource to pass away an hour; and at first they would look with indifference or contempt on the mean and poorly-dressed figure in the centre; but gradually their interest was aroused, their attention grew fixed, and then their hearts beat faster, their eyes swam with tears, and their very souls were touched and thrilled by the voice of the charmer. They came again and again to listen; and so by degrees that company of friends was formed, whose devotion and affection to their master is the best testimony to the magic power of his words.

Among these followers might be found men of every shade of character—the reckless and ambitious Critias, the sceptic Pyrrho, the pleasure-seeking Aristippus, "the madman" Apollodorus, and Euclid, who came constantly twenty miles from Megara, although a decree at that time existed that any Megarian found in Athens should be put to death. Above all, Alcibiades was a constant companion of Socrates; and men wondered at the friendship between this strangely-assorted pair—literally "Hyperion to a Satyr,"—the ugly barefooted philosopher, and the graceful youth, the idol of the rising generation, whose brilliant sayings were quoted, whose

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wild escapades were laughed at, whose figure artists loved to model for their statues of Hermes, and whose very lisp became the fashion of the day. Surrounded by flatterers and admirers, Alcibiades found one man who paid him no compliments, who cared nothing for his rank and accomplishments, yet whose words had the effect of exciting all that was noble in his nature. A strong attachment grew up between the two, and they shared the same tent, and messed together in the winter siege of Potidæa. Alcibiades himself tells us, in the Dialogue which follows, how easily Socrates bore the intense cold of those northern regions, and how, "with his bare feet on the ice, and in his ordinary dress, he marched better than any of the other soldiers who had their shoes on." His personal courage was also remarkable. On one occasion he saved Alcibiades' life at the risk of his own; and in the disastrous retreat after the battle of Delium, we are told that, while all around him were hurrying in wild flight, he walked as unmoved "as if he were in the streets of Athens, stalking like a pelican, and rolling his eyes, while he calmly contemplated friends and foes."

Though Socrates thus discharged his duties as a soldier, he only twice, in the course of his long life, took any prominent part in politics. The first occasion was when he opposed the unjust sentence of death passed by the assembly against the generals after the battle of Arginusæ; and again when, at the peril of his own life, he refused to obey the order of the Thirty Tyrants, and arrest an innocent man. The "divine voice," of which he speaks so frequently, and which interfered

and checked him at any important crisis of his life, had forbidden him to take part in the affairs of the state. He was, however, devoted to Athens; and except on military service, we are told that he never left the city walls. Two Thessalian princes once tried to tempt him, by lavish offers of money, to settle at their courts; but he replied with noble independence that it did not become him to accept benefits which he could never hope to return, and that his bodily wants were few, for he could buy four measures of meal for an obolus at Athens, and there was excellent spring-water to be got there—for nothing.

One secret of the influence exercised by Socrates lay in his genial humour, and in his entire freedom from conventionality. He was not (he says himself) as other men are. He conversed in the open air with all chance-comers, rich and poor alike, instead of immuring himself in a lecture-room. He would take no pay, while the Sophists round him were realising fortunes. Instead of wasting time in the barren field of science, or wearying his hearers with the subtleties of rhetoric, he discussed the great practical questions of life and morality, and, as Cicero said, "brought down philosophy from heaven to earth." What is Truth? What is Virtue? What is Justice?—or, as he put it himself, "All the good and evil that has befallen a man in his home,"—such were the subjects of his daily conversation. He was the first who openly asserted that

"The proper study of mankind is man;"—

that is, man's nature and happiness, his virtues and

his vices, his place in creation, and the end and object of his life.

In the defence which Plato puts into his mouth at his trial, Socrates gives an account of what he conceived to be his own mission. His friend Chærephon had asked the priestess of Delphi "if there was any man on earth wiser than Socrates?" and the oracle had replied that there was none. Socrates then resolved himself to test the truth of this reply, and accordingly he had cross-examined statesmen, poets, philosophers,—all, in short, who had the reputation of wisdom in their profession,—and he had found that their pretended knowledge was only ignorance, that God alone was wise, that human wisdom was worthless, and that among men he was wisest who, like himself,

"Professed
"To know this only, that he nothing knew." *

This was the great point of contrast between Socrates and those professors of universal knowledge, the Sophists. In their presence he always assumed the humble position of a man "intellectually bankrupt," who knows nothing, and who is seeking for information. He addresses some master of rhetoric or science with a modest and deferential air; he will take it as an infinite obligation if the great man will condescend to relieve his doubts by answering a few easy questions on some (apparently) obvious question of morality; and, of course, the Sophist, to save his own reputation, has no alternative but to comply. Then Socra-

* Milton, Par. Reg., iv. 294.

tes, like a skilful barrister, leads his unsuspecting victim on through a series of what seem innocent questions, yet all bearing indirectly on the main point of the argument, till at last his opponent is landed in some gross absurdity or contradiction. This "irony" has been well termed "a logical masked battery," and is more or less a feature in every Dialogue of Plato.

The humour, the genial temper, and the quiet self-possession of Socrates, must have made him a welcome guest in many houses; and in the Dialogue called "The Banquet" (SYMPOSIUM), we have a sketch of the philosopher "at home," joking with his friends, and entering into the humour of the hour; and showing that, though he could abstain, he could also, if the occasion required it, drink as hard and as long as any reveller in Athens. A goodly company are assembled at Agathon's house. There is the host, a handsome young *dilettante* poet: there is Phædrus, another young aspirant in literature: there is Pausanias the historian, and Aristophanes the comic poet, apparently on the best of terms with the philosopher whom he had ridiculed so unsparingly in the "Clouds:" there is a doctor, Eryximachus, genial and sociable, but "professional" throughout: there is Socrates himself, who has put on sandals for the occasion, and who comes late, having fallen into a trance on the way; and lastly, there is his satellite Aristodemus,—"the little unshod disciple,"—who gives the history of this supper-party some time after to his friend Apollodorus.

When the meal is ended, and the due libations have been poured, and a hymn sung to the gods, Pausanias

proposes that instead of drinking and listening to the flute-girl's music—("she may play to herself," says the doctor, considerately, "or to the women inside, if she prefers it")—they shall pass a sober evening, and that each of the guests in turn shall make a speech in praise of Love—hitherto a much-neglected deity. This prudent proposal is readily accepted by the company, many of whom have hardly recovered from the effects of the last night's carouse.

Phædrus accordingly begins, in a high-flown poetic style, and praises Love as being the best and oldest of the gods, and the source of happiness in life and death. It is Love (he says) that inspires such heroism as that of Alcestis, who died to save her husband's life,—unlike that "cowardly harper" Orpheus, who went alive to Hades after his wife, and was justly punished afterwards for his impertinence. Love, again—passing that of women — inspired Achilles, who "foremost fighting fell" to avenge his friend Patroclus, and was carried after death to the islands of the blest.

Pausanias follows in the same vein, but distinguishes between the ignoble and fleeting love of the body and the pure and lasting love of the soul.

Aristophanes should properly have spoken next, "but either he had eaten too much, or from some other cause he had the hiccough." The doctor recommends him to drink some water, or, if that fails, to "tickle his nose and sneeze;" meanwhile he delivers his own speech—from a medical point of view—and shows how Love, like a good and great physician, reconciles

conflicting elements, and produces harmony both in the physical world and in mankind.

Then Aristophanes (who has used the doctor's remedy) opens, as he says, a new line of argument, and gives a whimsical account of the origin of the sexes, which reads as if Plato meant it as a parody of his own myths. Once upon a time (he says) man had three sexes and a double nature: besides this, he was perfectly round, and had four hands and four feet,—one head, with two faces looking opposite ways, set on a single neck. When these creatures pleased, they could walk as men do now, but if they wanted to go faster, they would roll over and over with all their four legs in the air, like a tumbler turning somersaults; and their pride and strength were such that they made open war upon the gods. Jupiter resented their insolence, but hardly liked to kill them with thunderbolts, as the gods would then lose their sacrifices. At last he hit upon a plan. "I will cut them in two," he said, "so that they shall walk on two legs instead of four. They will then be only half as insolent, but twice as numerous, and we shall get twice as many sacrifices." This was done, and the two halves are continually going about looking for one another;* and if we mortals (says Aristophanes, with a comic air of apprehension) are not obedient to the gods, there is

* "He is the half part of a blessed man,
Left to be finished by such a *she*;
And she a fair divided excellence
Whose fulness of perfection lies in him."
—Shakspeare, "King John."

a danger that we shall be split up again, and we shall have to go about in basso-relievo, like those figures with only half a nose which you may see sculptured on our columns.

Agathon, the young tragic poet, then takes up the parable. Love is the best and fairest of the gods, walking in soft places, with a grace that is all his own, and nestling among the flowers of beauty. Again. Love is

"the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired by those who have no part in him, and precious to those who have the better part in him; parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness, softness, grace; careful of the good, uncareful of the evil. In every word, work, wish, fear—pilot, helper, defender, saviour; glory of gods and men."—J.

Lastly, Socrates tells them a story, which he has heard from Diotima, "a wise woman." Love is not in reality a god at all, but a spirit which spans the gulf between heaven and earth, carrying to the gods the prayers of men, and to men the commands of the gods. He is the child of Plenty and Poverty. Like his mother, he is always poor and in misery, without house or home to cover him; like his father, "he is a hunter of men, and a bold intriguer, philosopher, enchanter, sorcerer, and sophist," hovering between life and death, plenty and want, knowledge and ignorance. Love is something more than the desire of beauty;—it is the instinct of immortality in a mortal creature. Hence parents wish for children, who shall come after them, and take their place and preserve their

names; and the poet and the warrior are inspired by the hope of a fame which shall live for ever. And Diotima (continues Socrates) unfolded to me greater mysteries than these. He who has the instinct of true love, and can discern the relations of true beauty in every form, will go on from strength to strength until at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, and he "will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty —in the likeness of no human face or form, but absolute, simple, separate, and everlasting—not clogged with the pollutions of mortality, and all the colours and vanities of human life."

The murmur of applause with which this speech is greeted has hardly died away, when a loud knocking is heard at the outer gate, and the voice of Alcibiades shouting for Agathon. Presently he staggers in, at the head of a troop of revellers, flushed with wine, and crowned with a wreath of ivy-leaves and violets. Though he is drunk already (as he tells the company), he orders one of the slaves to fill a huge wine-cooler "holding more than two quarts," which he drains, and then has it filled again for Socrates, who also empties it. "Why are they so silent and sober?" Alcibiades asks; and Agathon explains to him that they have all been making speeches in praise of Love, and that it will be his turn to speak next.

Alcibiades readily assents; but instead of taking Love as his topic, he gives an account of his intercourse with Socrates. His face (he says) is like those masks of Silenus, which conceal the image of a god: he is as ugly as the satyr Marsyas; but, like Marsyas, he charms

the souls of all who hear him with the music of his words. "I myself am conscious" (Alcibiades continues) "that if I did not shut my ears against him, and fly from the voice of the charmer, he would enchain me until I grew old sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the needs of my own soul, and occupying myself with the affairs of the Athenians; therefore I stop my ears, and tear myself away from him. He is the only person who ever made me feel ashamed of myself—a feeling which you might think was not in my nature, and there is no one else who has that effect on me. . . . And oftentimes I wish he were dead; and yet I know that I should be much more sorry than glad, if he were to die."

Then he goes on to tell some anecdotes of the temperance of Socrates, his endurance of fatigue, and his personal courage; and he assures them, in conclusion, that they will never find any other man who in the least resembles this wonderful being.

Again the doors are violently opened, and a fresh band of revellers enter. All is now confusion and uproar. Phædrus, the physician, and some of the more sober spirits, wisely take their departure; while the few who remain settle down to make a night of it. Aristodemus (who tells the story) falls asleep himself, and is only awakened by the cocks crowing at daybreak. All the last night's party have gone, or are asleep on their couches in the room, except Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates. These three are still passing a large wine-cup from one to the other; and Socrates is giving the two dramatists a lecture on their

own art, and proving to his own satisfaction that the genius of Tragedy and Comedy is the same. His hearers are much too sleepy to argue with or contradict him; and at last the wine takes effect on Aristophanes, who drops under the table, where Agathon soon follows. Socrates puts them to sleep, and then goes tranquilly on his way—takes his bath at the Lyceum, and passes the day as usual.

The following Dialogue, though its main purpose is an attack upon the popular passion for Rhetoric, is perhaps more interesting as a social picture:—

PHÆDRUS.

It is a hot summer afternoon, and Socrates meets young Phædrus (who was one of the guests at Agathon's banquet) walking out for air and exercise beyond the city walls, for he has been sitting since dawn listening to the famous rhetorician Lysias. Socrates banters him on his admiration for Lysias, and at last extorts from him the confession that he has the actual manuscript of the essay which he had heard read hidden under his cloak; and, after some assumed reluctance, Phædrus consents that they shall walk on to some quiet spot where they can read it together. So they turn aside from the highroad, and follow the stream of the Ilissus—cooling their feet in the water as they walk—until they reach a charming resting-place, shaded by a plane-tree, where the air is laden with the scents and sounds of summer, and the *agnus castus*, with its purple and white blossoms, is in full

bloom; while above them the cicalas are chirruping, and at their feet is the soft grass and the cool water, with images of the Nymphs who guard the spot.

"My dear Phædrus," says Socrates, "you are an admirable guide."

"You, Socrates, are such a stay-at-home, that you know nothing outside the city walls, and never take a country walk."

"Very true," says Socrates; "trees and fields tell me nothing: men are my teachers;* but only tempt me with the chance of a discussion, and you may lead me all round Attica. Read on." And Phædrus accordingly reads the formal and rhetorical essay to which he had been listening in the morning. It is on a somewhat wasted theme—the advantages of a sober friendship, which lasts a lifetime, over the jealousies and torments caused by a spasmodic and fleeting love.

Socrates, with an irony which even Phædrus sees through, professes to be charmed with the balanced phrases and the harmonious cadence of the essay which has just been read; but he hints that, if he is allowed to use a few commonplaces, he too might add something to what Lysias has said; and then, inspired (as he says) by the *genius loci*, he delivers himself of a speech, denouncing, in a mock heroic style, the selfish infatuation and the wolf-like passion of the lover. But he almost immediately pretends to be alarmed at

* Socrates would have agreed on this point with Dr Johnson. "Sir, when you have seen one green field, you have seen all green fields. Sir, I like to look upon men.—Let us walk down Cheapside."

his own words; for the divine monitor within tells him that he has insulted the majesty of Cupid, and forbids him to recross the brook until he has recanted his blasphemy. And so he does.

He had previously said that the lover was mad; but this madness is, he explains, really akin to the inspiration of the prophet and Pythian priestess, or the frenzy of the poet, and is, in fact, the greatest blessing which heaven has given to men. And then he weaves his ideas of the origin of Love into a famous myth, which will be found elsewhere.*

"I can fancy," says Socrates, laughingly, "that our friends the cicalas overhead are listening to our fine talk, and will carry a good report of us to their mistresses the Muses. For you must know that these little creatures were once human beings, long before the Muses were heard of; but, when the Muses came, they forgot to eat or drink in their exceeding love of song, and so died of hunger; but now they sing on for ever, and hunger and thirst no more. Let us talk, then, instead of idling all the afternoon, or going to sleep like a couple of slaves or sheep at a fountain-side."

Then follows a severe criticism on the Rhetoric of the day. Truth and accurate definition, says Socrates, are the two first requirements of good speaking; but neither of these are necessarily found in an essay like that of Lysias: and rhetoric, though it undoubtedly influences the rising generation, has done little in the way of perfecting oratory, which depends rather on the natural genius of the speaker than on any rules of art;

* See p. 156.

—indeed, Pericles himself learnt more from Anaxagoras than from the Rhetoricians.

Writing, continues Socrates, is far inferior to speech. It is a spurious form of knowledge; and Thamuz, the old king of Egypt, was right in denouncing letters as likely to spoil men's memories, and produce an unreal and evanescent learning. Letters, like paintings, "preserve a solemn silence, and have not a word to say for themselves;" and, like hothouse plants, they come quickly to their bloom, and as quickly fade away. "Nobler far," he says, "is the serious pursuit of the dialectician, who finds a congenial soil, and there with knowledge engrafts and sows words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, and are not unfruitful, but have in them seeds which may bear fruit in other natures nurtured in other ways—making the seed everlasting, and the possessors happy to the utmost extent of human happiness." *

But severe as he is on ordinary Rhetoricians, he makes an exception in favour of Isocrates. Some divine instinct tells him that the temper of this young orator is cast in a finer mould than that of Lysias and his coterie; and that some day, when he grows older, his genius will surpass all the speakers of his day.

The heat of the day is now past, and the two friends prepare to depart; but first Socrates offers a solemn prayer to the deities who guard this charming spot where they have been resting all the afternoon.

"O beloved Pan, and all ye gods whose dwelling is in

* Jowett's Plato, i. 614.

this place, grant me to be beautiful in soul, and all that I possess of outward things to be at peace with them within. Teach me to think wisdom the only riches. And give me so much wealth, and so much only, as a good and holy man could manage or enjoy. Phædrus, want we anything more? For my prayer is finished."

Phæd. "Pray that I may be even as yourself; for the blessings of friends are common."*

It was hardly possible that Socrates should be popular—puzzling and refuting all he met. "The world cannot make me out" (he says to Theætetus), "therefore they only say of me that I am an extremely strange being, who drive men to their wits' end." His passion for conversation in itself would annoy many; and they probably regarded him as a garrulous and impertinent pedant, whom it was wise to avoid. "I hate this beggar who is eternally talking" (says Eupolis, the comedy-writer), "and who has debated every subject upon earth, except where to get his dinner." And often this vague feeling of dislike would grow into a strong personal hatred. For no man likes to be defeated on his own ground, or to be forced to confess himself ignorant of his favourite subject or theory, still less to be stultified and made ridiculous before a crowd of bystanders. There were numbers who had suffered this humiliation from the unsparing "irony" of Socrates, and their collective enmity grew daily more formidable. Again, few who had seen the "Clouds" of Aristophanes acted some twenty years previously, had forgotten Socrates, as he appeared on the stage,—dangling in a basket between heaven and earth,—the master of "the thinking-shop," who was ready to make, "for a consideration," the worse appear the better reason. And some probability had been given to this picture by the recent career of two of his friends—probably at that time the most detested names in Athens—Alcibiades, the selfish renegade, and Critias, the worst of the Thirty Tyrants. But after all, the great offence of Socrates (as Mr Grote points out*) was one which no society, ancient or modern, ever forgives—his disdain of conventionality, and his disregard of the sovereign power of Custom. As we shall see in the 'Dialogues of Search,' he questions and criticises, and often destroys, the orthodox commonplaces of morality, handed down from father to son, and consecrated in the eyes of the Athenians by tradition, and by those mighty household goddesses, "Use and Wont"—

"Grey nurses, loving nothing new."

In short, Socrates is a "dissenter," who will maintain his right of private judgment, and will speak what his conscience tells him to be right—though it be his own opinion against the world. Hence there grew up a widespread antipathy against this man who continually set at defiance the creed sanctioned by custom and society. This at length found its vent in the tablet of indictment, which was hung up one morning in the portico where such notices were displayed—"Socrates is guilty of crime; first, for not worshipping the gods, whom the city worships, but introducing new divini-

* Sewell's Dialogues of Plato, 199.

* Plato, i. 250.

ties of his own; secondly, for corrupting the youth. The penalty due is Death."

His three accusers were Anytus, a wealthy tradesman; Meletus, an obscure poet; and Lycon, a rhetorician. Socrates himself seems to have been little moved by the danger of his position, and to have hardly wished for an acquittal. He felt that he had done his work, and that "it was no wonder that the gods should deem it better for him to die now than to live longer."* Certainly the tone of his Defence, as we have it from Plato, is more like a defiance than an apology; and the speaker seems, as Cicero said, not so much a suppliant or an accused person, as the lord and master of his judges.†

He begins by disclaiming any resemblance to that Socrates whom they had seen on the stage—the star-gazer and arch-Sophist—for he knows nothing of science, and had never taken a fee for teaching. His life has been passed in trying to find a wiser man than himself, and in exposing self-conceit and pretentious ignorance. To this mission he has devoted himself, in spite of poverty and ill-repute.

Next he turns upon Meletus, his accuser, and cross-examines him in open court. "How can you," he asks, "call *me* the corrupter of the youth, when their fathers and brothers would bear witness that it is not so? How can you call *me* the worshipper of strange gods, when the heresies of Anaxagoras are declaimed on the stage, and sold in our streets?"

* Xen. Mem., IV. viii. 4. † Cic. de Orat., i. 54.

Then he turns to the judges again. As for death,—is it likely that one who has never shunned danger on the battle-field—who dared to record his solitary vote at the trial of the generals, in defence of the innocent and in defiance of the popular clamour—who had braved the anger of the Thirty Tyrants,—is it likely that he would desert the post of duty *now?*

"O Athenians!" he says solemnly, "I both love and honour you; but as long as I live and have the power, I shall never cease to seek the truth, and exhort you to follow it. For I seem to have been sent by God to rouse you from your lethargy, as you may see a gadfly stinging a strong and sluggish horse. Perhaps you will be angry at being thus awakened from your sleep. Shake me off, then, and take your rest, and sleep on—for ever. I shall not try (as others have done) to move your pity by tears and prayers, or by the sight of my weeping children—for Socrates is not as other men are; and if," he concludes, "O men of Athens, by force of persuasion or entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should indeed be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and convict myself, in my own defence, of not believing in them. But that is not the case, for I do believe that there are gods, and in a far higher sense than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best, both for you and for me"—J.

It was not likely that any jury would be convinced by such a speech as this—marked throughout by a "contempt of court" unparalleled in Athenian history; and accordingly Socrates was found guilty on both counts of the indictment—though by a majority of only five

votes out of some 550. It now remained for himself to propose (as was the custom in such trials at Athens) some counter-penalty in place of death.

But now that he is a condemned criminal, his tone becomes even more lofty than before. Of right, he says, they should have honoured him as a public benefactor, and have maintained him, like an Olympic victor, at the expense of the nation. For his own part, he would not even trouble himself to propose an alternative penalty; but as his friends wish it, and will raise the sum (for he is too poor himself), then a fine of thirty minæ is what he will offer as the price of life.

Such a sum (£120) was plainly an utterly inadequate fine from an Athenian point of view, considering the gravity of the crimes of which he was accused, and that the utmost penalty of the law was the alternative. The question is again put to the vote, and Socrates is condemned to death—the majority this time being far larger than before.

Then he makes his farewell address to his judges. They have condemned him because he would not condescend to tears or entreaties; and perhaps if he had done so he might have escaped. But on such terms he prefers death to life, and indeed it is good for him to die; for death is either annihilation, where sense and feeling are not, or it is a passage of the soul from this world to another. In either case, he will be at rest. He will sleep for ever without a dream; or he will find in Hades better men, and a juster judgment, and truer judges, than he has found on earth; and

there he will converse with Homer and Orpheus, and the great men of old; questioning the heroic spirits whom he meets there, as has been his wont to question living men, and finding out who are wise and who are foolish below the earth.

"What infinite delight," he concludes, "there would be in conversing with them and asking them questions! For in that world they do not put a man to death for this,—certainly not. For besides being happier in that world than this, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

"Wherefore, O ye judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth—that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that to die and be released was better for me; and therefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason also I am not angry with my accusers or condemners; they have done me no harm, though neither of them meant to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them. . . .

"The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways —I to die, and you to live. Which is better, God only knows."—J.

So ends this famous defence which Plato has put into his master's mouth; and whether the substance of it was actually delivered or not, assuredly "few persons will be found to wish that Socrates should have defended himself otherwise." The account of his subsequent imprisonment and death is given us in the two following Dialogues.



CRITO.

Thirty days elapsed before the sentence passed on Socrates could be carried into effect. Every year the Athenians sent a vessel on a pilgrimage to Delos, in memory of the preservation of their city in the days of Theseus; and from the moment that the priest of Apollo crowned the vessel before it left the harbour, to the hour of its return, there intervened a holy season, during which the city might be polluted by no executions. Now it happened that the vessel sailed on the day that Socrates was condemned, and his execution was accordingly deferred for a month.

His friends daily assembled in his prison, and the long hours were passed in conversation on the usual subjects. One morning Crito comes earlier than usual —when it is hardly light—and finds Socrates calmly sleeping. "Why have you come at this unusual time?" asks Socrates on waking. "I bring sad news," is the reply; "the sacred vessel has been seen off Cape Sunium on its way home, and will reach Athens by to-morrow." But Socrates is prepared for this. He has seen in a vision of the night "the likeness of a woman, fair and comely, clothed in white raiment, who called to him and said—"O Socrates, the third day hence to Pthia thou shalt go." He is inclined to believe that the dream will prove true, and that on the third day he will be dead.

Then Crito earnestly implores him to use the little time that is left in making his escape. Neither friends nor money will be wanting: the jailer can be bribed,

and the mouths of the Informers stopped with gold. He will find a home ready for him in Thessaly, where he will be loved and honoured. "It would be sheer folly," Crito continues, "to play into the hands of his enemies, and to leave his children outcasts on the world. If the sentence of death is carried out, it will be an absurd and miserable end of a trial which ought to have been brought to another issue."

But Socrates has only one answer to these arguments, which might have persuaded any but himself. Would it be right or lawful for him to escape now? Shall he who for half a century has been preaching obedience to the law, now, in the hour of trial, stultify the precepts of a lifetime? For all those years he has been enjoying the privileges of citizenship and the blessings of a free state, and shall he now be tempted by the fear of death to break his tacit covenant with the laws, and turn his back upon his city "like a miserable slave"?

He can fancy the spirit of the laws themselves upbraiding him:—

"Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of the world below. For neither will you nor any that belong to you be happier or holier or juster in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now, you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim not of laws but of men. But if you go forth returning evil for evil and injury for injury, breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least to wrong—that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us—we

shall be angry with you while you live, and our brethren, the laws in the world below, will receive you as an enemy, for they will know that you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us, and not to Crito."

This is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you may say will be vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

Cr. I have nothing to say, Socrates.

Soc. Then let me follow the intimations of the will of God.—J.

PHÆDO.

Two days after this, his friends assemble at the prison-doors for the last time, somewhat earlier than usual. There is a short delay, for the sheriffs have come to take the chains off the prisoner preparatory to his death.

The jailer soon admits them, and "on entering" (says Phædo, who had been present himself) "we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippe sitting by him holding his child in her arms. When she saw us, she uttered a cry and said, as women will, 'O Socrates, this is the last time that either you will converse with your friends, or they with you!' Socrates turned to Crito and said, 'Crito, let some one take her home.' Some of Crito's people accordingly led her away, crying out and beating herself."—J.

Socrates then proceeds to talk in his usual easy manner. He has several times been told in dreams "to make music;" and he has accordingly been turning some fables of Æsop into verse. "Tell Evenus this," he says, "and bid him be of good cheer; say that I would have him come after me, if he be a wise man, and not tarry; and that to-day I am likely to be going, for the Athenians say I must." Then he considers the question—"Why, in a case where death is better than life, a man should not hasten his own end?" He finds the answer to be, Because man is a prisoner, and has no right to release himself, being, in fact, a sort of possession of the gods, who will summon him at their pleasure.*

"Then," says Cebes, one of the party, "the wise man will sorrow and the fool rejoice at leaving his masters the gods, and passing out of life."

"Not so," is the reply; "for I am persuaded that I am going to other gods, who are wise and good, and also (I trust) to men departed, who are better than those I leave behind; therefore I do not grieve, as otherwise I might, for I have good hope that there is yet something awaiting the dead, and, as has been said of old, some far better lot for the good than for the wicked."

He then explains the grounds on which he builds this hope of immortality. Death, he says, is the happy release of the soul from the body. In this life our highest and purest thoughts are distracted by cares and lusts, and diseases inherent in the flesh. He is wisest who keeps himself pure till the hour when the Deity Himself is pleased to release him. "Then shall

* We may compare the argument used by Despair, and the answer of the Red Cross Knight, in Spenser (Fairy Queen, I. ix. 40, 41).

the foolishness of the flesh be purged away, and we shall be pure, and hold converse with other pure souls, and recognise the pure light everywhere, which is none other than the light of truth." Hence the wise man leaves with joy a world where his higher and ethereal sense is trammelled by evil and impurity; and his whole life is but a preparation for death, or rather an initiation into the mysteries of the unseen world. Many, as they say, join the procession in such mysteries; but few are really chosen for initiation.

No fear that our souls will vanish like smoke, or that the dead sleep on for ever, like Endymion. Our souls are born again; and as life passes into death, so, in the circle of nature, the dead must pass into life; for if this were not so, all things must at last be swallowed up in death.

Again, we have in our minds latent powers of thought—ideas of beauty and equality—which are not given us at our birth, and which we cannot have learnt from experience. Such knowledge is but the soul's recollection of a previous state of existence.

"Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised."*

It is only the mortal part of us (Socrates continues) that dies when earth returns to earth. The pure soul, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world—to the divine, the immortal, and the rational; where she dwells in bliss, in company with the gods, released from the errors and follies of men, their fears, their

* Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality

unruly passions, and all other evils of humanity. But the impure soul fears to go down to Hades, and haunts the earth for a time like a restless ghost.*

Then, by a further train of reasoning, Socrates concludes that the soul is beyond all doubt immortal and imperishable. This being so, a graver question follows—"What manner of persons ought we ourselves to be?" "If death had been the end of all things, then the wicked would gain by dying; for they would have been happily rid not of their bodies only, but of their own wickedness, together with their souls. But now, as the soul plainly appears to be immortal, no release or salvation from evil can be found except in the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom. For the soul, on her journey to the world below, carries nothing with her but her nurture and education." After death comes the judgment; the guardian angel of each soul conducts her through the road with many windings that leads to the place where all are tried. After this the impure soul wanders without a guide in helpless misery, until a certain period is accomplished, and then she is borne away to her own place. But the pure soul, "arrayed in her proper jewels—temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth"—dwells for ever in the glorious mansions reserved for the elect.

* "Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved."
—Milton, "Comus," 470.

Thus Socrates ends his noble profession of faith in a future life—with him half instinct, half conviction. His "*Non omnis moriar*" has a triumphant ring about it; and, like the swans to whom he compares himself, "who sing more joyously on the day of their death than they ever did before," he rejoices in the thought of his speedy release from life, and looks confidently beyond the grave.

The evening is fast drawing on, and the shadows are lengthening on the Attic hills, when Crito asks him if he has any last directions to give about his children or about his burial. "Bury me in any way you like," says Socrates, with a touch of his old humour; "but be sure that you get hold of *me*, and that I don't run away from you." Then he turns to the others and says with a smile, "I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument. He fancies that I am the *other* Socrates whom he will soon see—a dead body—and he asks, 'How he shall bury me?' You must all be my sureties to Crito, that I shall go away, and then he will sorrow less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body burned or buried."

Then he takes his bath, and bids farewell to his wife and children; and by this time the sun is low in the heavens, and the jailer comes in to tell him that his hour is come—weeping himself as he utters the words.

Soon the poison is brought. Socrates takes the cup, and

"in the gentlest and easiest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said, 'What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?' The man answered, 'We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough.' 'I understand,' he said, 'yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world: may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me.' Then, holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but in the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out into a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness. 'What is this strange outcry?' he said. 'I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience.' When we heard that we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel, and he said 'No;' and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said, 'When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end.' He was beginning to feel cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said

(they were his last words), 'Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?' 'The debt shall be paid,' said Crito; 'is there anything else?' There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth. Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest and justest and best of all the men whom I have ever known."—J.

So ends the "Phædo;" and as we close the volume, we feel as though we too had lost a friend, so simply and yet so touchingly has every detail of that last scene in the prison been painted for us by a master-hand. Even across the lapse of centuries the picture rises before us distinct and lifelike, as it was to the mind of the writer who described it,—the passionate grief of Apollodorus, the despair of Crito, the silent tears of Phædo—even the jailer weeping, and turning away his face—and the composure meanwhile of the central figure of the group, talking cheerfully, and playing with Phædo's hair, who is sitting next him. We can well understand the mingled feelings of the spectators of the scene. "I could hardly believe" (says Phædo, telling the story to Echecrates) "that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him; his mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death, that to me he appeared blessed. I thought that, in going to the other world, he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him, as might seem natural at such a time. But

neither could I feel the pleasure which I usually felt in philosophical discourse. I was pleased, and I was also pained, because I knew that he was soon to die; and this strange mixture of feeling was shared by us all: we were laughing and weeping by turns, especially the excitable Apollodorus."

Cicero (who was by no means tender-hearted) declared that he could never read the "Phædo" without tears; and we all know the story of "the fair pupil of Ascham, who, while the horns were sounding and dogs in full cry, sat in the lonely oriel with eyes riveted to that immortal page which tells how meekly and bravely the first martyr of intellectual liberty took the cup from his weeping jailer." *

* Macaulay's Essay on Lord Bacon.

CHAPTER IV.

DIALOGUES OF SEARCH.

LACHES—CHARMIDES—LYSIS—MENO—EUTHYPHRO—
CRATYLUS—THEÆTETUS.

"Socrates used to ask questions, but did not answer them, for he professed not to know."—*Aristotle.*

In the Dialogues which follow, we have the negative side of the teaching of Socrates strongly brought out. Both sides of the questions raised are fully argued by him, but no definite conclusion is arrived at. He never, indeed, assumes any attitude of authority. He is a searcher for truth, like the young men with whom he talks; the only difference being that his search is more zealous and systematic than theirs. "We shall" (he says in the Theætetus) "either find what we are looking for, or we shall get rid of the idea that we know what we really do not know. And we philosophers have plenty of leisure for our inquiries, for we are not tied down to time, like a barrister pleading in the law-courts, whose speech is measured by the clock." Socrates had begun, as he tells us, by catechising artisans and mechanics as to their arts and occupations (hence the constant allusions in the Dialogues to mechanical employments — shoemaking, swordmaking, and the like), and from them he had got clear and satisfactory answers. But he found that if he asked a man what was his real work or object in life, or what was the meaning of the moral terms so frequently in his mouth, he got only vague answers or contradictions. Hence the questions which he examines in these 'Dialogues of Search' relate to the most familiar and obvious terms that meet us on the threshold of morality—Holiness, Courage, Temperance, and other cardinal virtues—qualities which many might possess themselves and easily recognise in others, but which they could not explain with any logical precision.

It is true that custom and tradition had given to these set phrases of morality a certain value and significance in the minds of those who used them; but few had learned to define or analyse their full meaning, and Socrates was the first who brought them under a logical scrutiny—examining their various uses, fixing their strict sense, and referring the individuals to their proper class, or, in the words of Aristotle, rallying the stragglers to the main body of the regiment.

In his arguments with the Sophists, as we have seen, Socrates shows his opponents no law. He proves himself a bitter and determined antagonist—turning where he can their own weapons against themselves, and leaving *them* to find out the fallacies in his statements; nor will he listen to any long defence from them, for, as he tells Protagoras, he has a short memory, and expects definite categorical answers. But when talk-

ing, as in these 'Dialogues of Search,' with some young noble of the rising generation, whose character is hardly formed and whose heart is still fresh and pure, the manner of Socrates entirely changes, and his voice softens; he lays aside that terrible "irony" of his; he adapts his questions to the youth's comprehension, encourages and sympathises with his attempts to answer, and uses the easiest language and the homeliest illustrations to explain his meaning.

We may take first the Dialogue entitled LACHES, in which Courage—the instinct of a child and the habit of a man—is discussed. The speakers bear historical names. There is Lysimachus, the son of Aristides, and Melesias, son of Thucydides (not the historian, but a statesman contemporary with Themistocles); but the genius of the fathers has not in this case been inherited by their sons, who are plain respectable citizens of Athens, and nothing more. They are conscious, however, of their own degeneracy, and complain that their education had been neglected, and that their fathers had been so much engrossed in affairs of state as to have neither time nor inclination to act as tutors to their own children. "Both of us," says Lysimachus, "often talk to our boys about the many noble deeds which our fathers did in war and peace—but neither of us has any deeds of his own which he can show: Now we are somewhat ashamed of this contrast being seen by them, and we blame our fathers for letting us be spoiled in the days of our youth when they were occupied with the concerns of others; and this we point out to the lads, and tell them that they will not grow

up to honour, if they are rebellious and take no pains about themselves; but that if they take pains they may become worthy perhaps of the names they bear." (The two youths, as was often the case, had been named after their grandfathers, Aristides and Thucydides.)

In their doubt as to the best means of carrying out these good intentions, the two fathers come to Laches and Nicias—both distinguished generals and statesmen—and ask their advice in the matter; more especially as to whether the lessons of a certain swordsman, who has just been going through a trial of arms, are likely to be of use. The veterans discuss the merits of this new style of fencing,—just as two officers now might criticise the last improved rifle. Nicias is much in favour of the youths learning it, as it will usefully occupy their spare time, will be of real service in war, and will set them up and give them a military air and carriage. But Laches has no opinion of this new-fangled invention, and thinks that if it had been worth anything, the Spartans, the first military power in Greece, would have adopted it. He had indeed himself once been witness of a ridiculous scene in which this very swordsman had left his last invention—a spear with a billhook at the end of it—sticking fast in the rigging of the enemy's vessel, and was laughed at by friends and foes. "No," says Laches, "let us have simplicity in all things—in war as well as music: but these young men must learn something; so let us appeal to Socrates, my old comrade in the battle-field, who has much experience of youth."

Socrates, thus appealed to, joins in the discussion. His opinion is that they should find some wise teacher, not so much with a view to lessons in arms, as to a general education of the mind. For no trifling question, he says, is at issue. They are risking the most precious of earthly possessions—their children, upon whose turning out well or ill depends the welfare of the house. For his own part, he knows nothing of the matter. He is neither professor nor inventor himself, and is too poor to pay fees to the Sophists. Nicias and Laches are wealthier and wiser men than he; and he will gladly abide by their decision. But why do *their* opinions differ?

Nicias thinks they will be drawn into a Socratic argument, as usual, but is very willing to go through an examination; and Laches, though not fond of arguing as a rule, is very ready to listen when the man is in harmony with his words, and willing therefore to be taught by Socrates, whom he knows as not merely a talker, but a doer of brave deeds.

Socrates thinks it will be better to consider, not so much the question of who are the teachers, as what they profess to teach,—namely, Virtue, or more especially that part of it which most concerns them at present — Courage. Then, by a series of questions, he limits the vague definition first given by Laches, and proves to him that there may be other forms of courage as noble as that of the soldier who stands his ground in battle—such as the endurance of pain, or poverty, or reproach; and it generally seems to be a certain wise strength of mind, the intelligent and

reasonable fortitude of a man who foresees coming evil and can calculate the consequences of his acts, and is very different from the fearless courage of a child, or the insensate fury of a wild beast. But then the man who has this knowledge of good and evil, implied in the possession of real courage, must have also temperance and justice, and in fact *all* the virtues; and this would contradict the starting-point of their discussion, in which they agreed that courage was only a part of virtue.

"No," Socrates concludes; "we shall have to leave off where we began, and courage must still be to us an unknown quantity. We must go to school again ourselves, and make the education of these boys our own education."

The introduction to the CHARMIDES is another specimen of that dramatic description in which Plato excelled. "Yesterday evening," says Socrates, "I came back from the camp at Potidæa; and having been a good while away, I thought I would go and look in at my old haunts. So I went into the Palæstra of Taureas, and there I found a number of persons, most of whom I knew, though not all. My visit was unexpected, and as soon as they saw me coming in they hailed me at once from all sides; and Chærephon (who is a kind of lunatic, you know) jumped up and rushed to me, seizing my hand and exclaiming, "How did you escape, Socrates?" (I must explain that a battle had taken place at Potidæa not long before we left, the news of which had only just reached Athens.)

"You see," I replied, "that here I am."

"The report was," said he, "that the fighting was very severe, and that several of our acquaintance had fallen."

"That was too nearly the truth," replied I.

"I suppose you were there?" said he.

"I was."

"Then sit down and tell us the whole story."—J.

So Socrates sits down between Chærephon and Critias, and answers their eager inquiries after absent friends. Then there enters a group of youths, laughing and talking noisily, and among them is Charmides, a cousin of Critias, tall and handsome, and (so say his friends) "as fair and good within as he is without." He comes and sits near Socrates, who professes to know a charm that will cure a headache of which he has been complaining. This charm is a talisman given to Socrates (as he tells Charmides) by Zamolxis, physician to the king of Thrace; but which he is only allowed to use on the condition of his never attempting to cure the body without first curing the soul, and then temperance in the one will produce health in the other. But the question is, "What *is* Temperance?" It is not always what Charmides understands by it, the quietness of a gentleman who is never flurried and never noisy; nor is it exactly modesty, though very like it; nor is it (as Critias defines it) "doing one's own business," even though our work as men be nobly and usefully done. Nor, again, is it true that the golden characters on the gates of Delphi, "Know thyself," simply meant, "Be temperate;" nor is it a "science of sciences," as Critias again explains it—or rather, the knowledge of what a man knows and does not know.

All knowledge is relative, and must have some object-matter; and such a universal knowledge as Critias would imply by temperance would in no way conduce to our happiness.

Finally, Socrates confesses himself puzzled and baffled. They are no nearer the truth than at starting; and the argument, so to speak, "turns round and laughs in their faces." He is sorry that Charmides has learnt so little from him; "and still more," he concludes—

"am I grieved about the charm which I learned with so much pain and to so little profit from the Thracian, for the sake of a thing which is nothing worth. I think, indeed, that there is a mistake, and that I must be a bad inquirer; for I am persuaded that wisdom or temperance is really a great good; and happy are you if you possess that good. And therefore examine yourself, and see whether you have this gift, and can do without the charm; for if you can, I would rather advise you to regard me simply as a fool who is never able to reason out anything; and to rest assured that the more wise and temperate you are, the happier you will be."

Charmides said: "I am sure I do not know, Socrates, whether I have or have not this gift of wisdom and temperance; for how can I know whether I have that, the very nature of which even you and Critias, as you say, are unable to discover? (not that I believe you.) And further, I am sure, Socrates, that I do need the charm; and, so far as I am concerned, I shall be willing to be charmed by you daily, until you say I have had enough."

"Very good, Charmides," said Critias; "if you do this I shall have a proof of your temperance—that is, if you allow yourself to be charmed by Socrates, and never desert him at all."

"You may depend on my following and not deserting him," said Charmides. "If you who are my guardian command me, I should be very wrong not to obey you."

"Well, I do command you," he said.

"Then I will do as you say, and begin this very day."

—J.

In the LYSIS, the scene is again a Palæstra, near a school kept by Micon, a friend of Socrates. It is a half-holiday (like a saint's day in some of our public schools) in honour of the god Hermes; and the boys are scattered round the courtyard, some wrestling, some playing at dice, and others looking on. Among these last is Lysis, of noble birth and of high promise, with his friend Menexenus. Socrates professes himself charmed at the attachment of the two boys, and calls them very fortunate. All people, he says, have their different objects of ambition—horses, dogs, money, honour, as the case may be; but for his own part he would rather have a good friend than all these put together. It is what he has longed for all his life, and here is Lysis already supplied. "But," he asks, "what is Friendship, and who is a friend?"

Is it sympathy—is it, as the poets say, that "the gods draw like to like" by some mysterious affinity of souls? In that case, the bad man can be no one's friend; for he is not always even like himself—much less like any one else; while the good man is self-sufficing, and therefore has no need of friends. Is not Difference rather the principle? Are not unlike characters attracted by a sense of dependence, and do not the weak thus love the strong, and the poor the rich?

But this cannot be so always, for then by this very law of contraries the good would love the bad, and the just the unjust. No—there must be a stage of indifference, between these two; when one whose character is hardly formed—who is neither good nor bad—courts the society of the good, from some vague desire of improvement.

But Socrates is not satisfied yet. He thinks there must be some final principle or first cause of friendship which they have not discovered: "and here," he says,

"I was going to invite the opinion of some older person, when suddenly we were interrupted by the tutors of Lysis and Menexenus, who came upon us like an evil apparition with their brothers, and bade them go home, as it was getting late. At first we and the bystanders drove them off, but afterwards, as they would not mind, and only went on shouting in their barbarous dialect, and got angry, and kept calling the boys (they appeared to us to have been drinking rather too much at the Hermæa, which made them difficult to manage), we fairly gave way, and broke up the company. I said, however, a few words to the boys at parting. O Menexenus and Lysis, will not the bystanders go away and say, 'Here is a jest: you two boys, and I, an old boy, who would fain be one of you, imagine ourselves to be friends, and we have not as yet been able to discover what is a friend!'"—J.

Aristotle devotes two books of his "Ethics" to this much-debated question of Friendship—always romantic and interesting from a Greek point of view. He looks upon it in a political light, as filling up the void left by Justice in the state; and he traces its appear-

ance in different forms in different governments. It is an extension of "Self-Love"—very different from Selfishness,—for a good man (he says) will give up honour and life and lands for his friend's sake, and yet reserve to himself something still more excellent —the glory of a noble deed.* But Aristotle can, no more than Plato, give the precise grounds for any friendship, except that it should not be based on pleasure or utility; and we are told of his saying more than once to his pupils, "O my friends, there is no friend!" Perhaps, after all, Montaigne was right —friendship is inexplicable; and the only reason that can be given for liking such a person is the one given by him, "Because it was he, because it was I."

The MENO of Plato, introduced in the Dialogue which bears his name, is a very different character from the Meno of history—a traitor who did his best to embarrass the retreat of the Ten Thousand Greeks. Plato represents him as a "Thessalian Alcibiades"—a rich young noble, the devoted pupil of the Sophists. He meets Socrates, and abruptly asks him the old question, whether Virtue can be taught; and Socrates, as usual, professes ignorance. He is not a Gorgias, that he can answer such a question offhand "in the grand style." He does not even know what Virtue is, much less who are its teachers: and he adds, with mock humility, that there is a singular dearth of wisdom at Athens just now, for the rhetoricians have carried it all away with them to Thrace. Perhaps Meno will

* Ethics, viii. ix.

kindly enlighten him with the opinions of Gorgias on this difficult question?

Yes, Meno will tell him. Every age and condition of life has its special virtue. A man's virtue is statesmanship, in which he will guard his own and his country's interests; while "a woman's virtue is to order her house and keep what is within doors, and obey her husband;"—a stay-at-home view of her duties which would find little favour with the modern advocates of female suffrage.

But surely, objects Socrates, justice and temperance are needed by all ages and professions. Must there not be some one common element pervading these separate virtues, which are merely individuals of a class, like colours and figures? Virtue, like health, must be a common quality, though it may take various forms.

Meno then comes to understand that a definition is what is wanted, and accordingly quotes one from the poets. "Virtue is the desire of the honourable, and the power of getting it."

But Socrates is not satisfied with this. You must, he says, get what is honourable with justice (or it would not be virtuous); and justice is a part of virtue.

Meno is puzzled by this, and complains that Socrates is a wizard, and has bewitched him. His arguments are like the shock of the torpedo—they benumb and stupefy. But Socrates declares that he is just as much perplexed himself; he is ready, indeed, to search for the truth, but he knows no more what the truth is than Meno does.

"How then" (says Meno, acutely) "can you search for that of which you know nothing; and how, even if you find it, can you be *sure* that you have got it?"

This difficulty Socrates explains by that famous doctrine of Reminiscence, which is so important a principle in the Platonic philosophy. The soul (as the poets say) is immortal, and is continually dying and being born again—passing from one body to another. During these stages of existence, in Hades and in the upper world, it has seen and learnt all things, but has forgotten the greater part of its knowledge. It is capable, however, of reviving by association all that it has learnt—for all nature is akin, and all knowledge and learning is only reminiscence. Socrates then proves his theory by cross-examining a boy—one of Meno's slaves—who gives the successive stages of a problem in geometry; and this implies that the knowledge was already latent in his mind.

Then Socrates goes on to show that knowledge is the distinctive element of virtue, without which all good gifts, such as health, or beauty, or strength, are unprofitable because not rightly used; and if virtue be knowledge, it cannot come by nature, but must be taught.

"But who are its teachers?" he asks, appealing to one of the company, Anytus, afterwards his own accuser: for he has failed, hitherto, to find them. "Shall Meno go to the Sophists — the professed teachers of all Greece?"

"Heaven forbid!" answers Anytus; "the Sophists are the corrupters of our nation. The real teachers are

the good old Athenian gentlemen, and the statesmen of a past age."

But this Socrates will not allow. These great statesmen never imparted their own wisdom to their sons, and yet they surely would have done so had it been possible.

Anytus is indignant that his heroes should be so lightly spoken of, and angrily bids Socrates be careful of his words, and remember that it is easier to do men harm in Athens than to do them good.

Still the original question has not been answered, "Is Virtue teachable?" and Socrates inclines to think it "a gift from heaven," and that it may be directed by another faculty, practically as useful as knowledge, namely, "right opinion;" and this is a sort of divine instinct possessed by statesmen, but which they cannot impart to others. The higher form of virtue—the ideal knowlege—is possessed by none; and if a man *could* be found both possessing it and able to impart it, he would be like Tiresias, as Ulysses saw him in Hades, who alone had understanding in the midst of a world of shadows.

EUTHYPHRO.

This Dialogue carries us back to the days when the trial of Socrates was still impending. One morning the philosopher meets the augur Euthyphro at the entrance of the law-courts.

"What are you doing here?" asks the augur. "I am defendant," Socrates answers, "in a suit which a

young man named Meletus has brought against me on a charge of corrupting the youth ;—and you?"

"I am prosecuting my father for murder," is the startling reply of Euthyphro; and then he proceeds to tell the story. A man employed on his father's estate, in the island of Naxos, had killed a fellow-slave in a drunken quarrel; and his father had bound the offender hand and foot, and thrown him into a ditch, while he sent to inquire of a diviner at Athens what he should do with him. But long before the messenger could return, the unfortunate slave had died of cold and hunger; and Euthyphro had felt it his duty to prosecute his father for murder. "My friends," says he, "call me impious and a madman for so doing; but I know better than they do in what true filial piety consists."

"And what is Piety?" asks Socrates; "the knowledge may be of use to me in my approaching trial."

"Doing as I am doing now," replies the other, in the true spirit of a Pharisee—"bringing a murderer to justice without respect of persons, and following the example set by the gods themselves."

But (asks Socrates again) what is the specific character of piety?—for there must be other pious acts besides prosecuting one's father, and the gods may disagree as to questions of right and wrong. Even suppose they all agree in loving a certain act, the fact of their loving it would not make it pious.

Then Euthyphro defines piety to be that branch of justice which chiefly concerns the gods; and that

man, he says, is most pious who knows best how to propitiate their favour by prayer and sacrifice. Thus piety becomes a sort of business transaction, on the mutual benefit system, between gods and men; where worldly prosperity is bestowed on one side, and honour and gratitude are rendered on the other.

But Socrates is not satisfied. They have, he says, been arguing in a circle, and have got back to the definition they before rejected—that piety is "what is dear to the gods:" for the honour we thus pay to them by prayer and sacrifice is most dear to them. So they must again seek for the true answer; and Euthyphro must tell him, for if any man knows the nature of piety, it is evidently he. But Euthyphro is in a hurry, and cannot stay.

"If Socrates had thought like Euthyphro, he might have died in his bed." Such is the moral M. Cousin* draws from this Dialogue; and undoubtedly the subsequent impeachment of the philosopher might be attributed in part to the enmity of the Athenian priesthood—always jealous and intolerant of any new form of faith. Here the contrast is (as Plato probably meant it to be) a striking one between the augur Euthyphro — perfect in the letter of the law, but whose consistent "piety" is impelling him to be a parricide—and Socrates, even now about to be indicted for worshipping strange gods, yet proving a self-devoted martyr who refuses to save his life by tampering with his conscience, and who dies rather than

* Fragm. de Philos. Anc., 117.

break the law by attempting to escape, when escape was easy.

CRATYLUS.

This Dialogue turns entirely upon etymology, and hence it is extremely difficult to reproduce it in a modern form, as continual reference is made to Greek nouns and names. The humour is so extravagant and sustained, and the derivations, which Socrates gravely propounds, are often so fanciful and far-fetched, that Mr Jowett thinks Plato intended the Cratylus as a satire upon the false and specious philology of the day; but that the meaning of his satire (as is often the case) has "slept in the ear of posterity."

Cratylus, an admirer of Heraclitus, has been arguing about names with Hermogenes—a younger brother of the rich Callias, whom we have met before as the hospitable entertainer of Protagoras—and his brother Sophists. Hermogenes maintains that names are merely conventional signs, which can be given or taken away at pleasure; and that any name which you choose to give anything is correct until you change it: while Cratylus holds that names are real and natural expressions of thought, or else they would be mere inarticulate sounds; and that all truth comes from language. They invite Socrates, who has just joined them, to give his opinion. "Alas!" says Socrates, regretfully, "if I could only have afforded to attend that fifty-drachma course of lectures given by the great Prodicus, who advertised them as a complete education in grammar and language, I could have told you all

about it; but I was only able to attend the single-drachma course, and know as little of this difficult question as you. Still, I should like a free discussion on the subject."

We cannot (he goes on) accept Hermogenes' principle, that each man has a private right of nomenclature: for if anybody might name anything, and give it as many names as he liked, all meaning and distinction of terms would soon perish—there being as much truth and falsehood implied in words as in sentences. No,—speaking and naming, like any other art, should be done in the right way, with the right instrument, and by the right man in the right place. "This giving of names," he continues, "is no such light matter as you fancy, or the work of chance persons; and Cratylus is right in saying that things have names by nature, and that not every man is an artificer of names, but he only who looks to the thing which each name by nature has, and is, will be able to express the ideal forms of things in letters and syllables." It is the law that gives names through the legislator, who is advised in his work by the Dialectician, who alone knows the right use of names, and who can ask and answer questions properly.

The Sophists profess to teach you the correctness of names; but if you think lightly of them, turn to the poets. In Homer you will find that the same thing is called differently by gods and men — for instance, the river which the gods call Xanthus, men call Scamander; and there is a solemn and mysterious truth in this, for of course the gods must be right.

And so with the two names that Hector's son went by—Astyanax and Scamandrius—which did Homer think correct? Clearly, the name given by the men, who are always wiser than the women. This is another great truth; and besides, in this case, there is a curious coincidence, for the names of the father and son—though having only one letter (*t*) the same—mean the same thing—Hector being "holder," and Astyanax "defender," of the city. The mere difference of syllables matters nothing, if the same sense is retained.*

All these old heroic names, continues Socrates, carry their history with them; and, if you analyse them properly, you learn the character of the men or gods who bore them. Atreus is "the stubborn" or "destructive;" Orestes, the wild "mountain ranger;" Zeus himself, the lord of "life"—and so on with the other personages in Hesiod's genealogy.

Hermogenes is startled by these derivations, and thinks Socrates must be inspired—his language is so oracular.

"Yes," says Socrates, "and I caught this inspiration from the great Euthyphro, with whom I have been since daybreak, listening while he declaimed; his divine wisdom has so filled my ears and possessed my soul, that to-day I will give myself up to this mysterious influence, and examine fully the history of names; to-morrow I will go to some priest or sophist, and be purified of this strange bewitchment."

Sometimes, he continues, we must change and shift the letters to get at the real form of the word: thus

* So says Fluellen; they "are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations."—Henry V., act iv. sc. 7.

sôma, "body," is the same as *sêma*, "tomb"—meaning the grave in which our soul is buried, or perhaps kept safe, as in a prison, till the last penalty is paid. So also *Pluto* is the same as *Plutus*, and means the giver of riches, for all wealth comes from the world below, where he is king. It is true that we use his name as a euphemism for *Hades*, but we do so wrongly, for there is really nothing terrible connected with that word. It does not mean the awful "unseen" world, as people think; but Pluto is called Hades because he knows (*eidenai*) all goodness and beauty, and thus binds all who come to him by the strongest chains—stronger than those of Father Time himself. And so these other awful names, such as Persephatta and Apollo, have really nothing terrible about them, if you examine their derivation. But Socrates will have no more discussion about the gods—he is "afraid of them."

"Only one more god," pleads Hermogenes. "I should like to know about Hermes, of whom I am said not to be a true son. Let us make him out, and then I shall know if there is anything in what Cratylus says."

"I should imagine," says Socrates, "that the name Hermes has to do with speech, and signifies that he is the interpreter, or messenger, or thief, or liar, or bargainer;—language has a great deal to say to all that sort of thing; and, as I was telling you, the word *eirein* is expressive of the use of speech, and we have improved *eiremês* into Hermes."

"Then I am very sure," says Hermogenes, in a tone of conviction, "that Cratylus was quite right in saying that I was no true son of Hermes, for I am not a good hand at speeches."—J.

Then Socrates examines the names of the various elements, virtues, and moral qualities, most of which he derives in a manner that would shock a modern philologist. Some of them, he says truly, have a foreign origin, inasmuch as the Greek borrowed many words from the Barbarians; "for the Barbarians are older than we are, and the original form of words may have been lost in the lapse of ages." The word *dikaion*—"justice"—says Socrates, has greatly puzzled him. Some one had told him, as a great mystery, that the word was the same as *diaion*—the subtle and penetrating power that enters into everything in creation; and when he inquired further, he was told that Justice was the Sun,—the piercing or burning element in nature. But when he quotes this beautiful notion with great glee to a friend, he is met by the satirical answer—"What! is there then no justice in the world when the sun goes down?" And when Socrates begs his friend to tell him his own honest opinion, he says, "Fire in the abstract;" which is not very intelligible. Another says, "No,—not fire in the abstract, but the abstraction of heat in fire." A third professes to laugh at this, and says, with Anaxagoras, that Justice is Mind; for Mind, they say, has absolute power, and mixes with nothing, and governs all things, and permeates all things. At last, he says, he found himself in greater perplexity as to the nature of Justice than when he began his inquiry.

Then follow other derivations, more extravagant than any which we have noticed; but Socrates concludes with a long passage of serious etymology. We

should get at *primary* names (he says), and separate the letters, which have all a distinct meaning—thus *l* expresses "smoothness," *r* "motion," *a* "size," and *e* "length." When we have fixed their meaning, we can form them into syllables and words; and add and subtract until we get a good and true image of the idea we intend to express. Of course there are degrees of accuracy in this process, where nature is helped out by custom; and a name, like a picture, may be a more or less perfect likeness of a person or thought. Great truths may be learned through names; but there are higher forms of knowledge, which can only be learnt from the ideas themselves, of which our words are but faint impressions; and "no man of sense will put himself or his education in the power of names," or believe that the world is in a perpetual flux and transition, "like a leaky vessel." And with this parting blow at Heraclitus, the Dialogue, with its mixture of truth and fiction, of jest and earnest, comes to an end. But, wild and fanciful as many of the derivations undoubtedly are, it must still be admitted that "the guesses of Plato are better than all the other theories of the ancients respecting language put together."*

THEÆTETUS.

Euclid (not the mathematician, but the philosopher of that name) meets his friend Terpsion at the door of his own house in Megara; and their conversation happens to turn upon Theætetus, whom Euclid has just seen carried up towards Athens, almost dead of dysen-

* Jowett's Plato, i. 620

tery, and of the wounds he had received in the battle of Corinth. "What a gallant fellow he was, and what a loss he will be!" says Terpsion; and then Euclid remembers how Socrates had prophesied great things of him in his youth, and had proved—as he always did—a true prophet; for Theætetus had more than fulfilled the promise of his early years. Euclid had taken careful notes of a discussion between Socrates and the young Theætetus in days gone by, and this paper is now read by a servant for the benefit of Terpsion.

As Socrates said, Theætetus was "a reflection of his own ugly self," both in person and character. Snub-nosed, and with projecting eyes, brave and patient, slow and sure in the pursuit of knowledge, "full of gentleness, and always making progress, like a noiseless river of oil." His answers in the Dialogue bear out this character: they are invariably shrewd and to the point, and would have done credit (says his examiner) to "many bearded men." Socrates is still the same earnest disputant, professing to know nothing himself, but willing to assist others in bringing their thoughts to the birth; for so far, he tells Theætetus, he has inherited the art of his mother Phænarete, the midwife. Hence those youths resort to him who are tortured by the pangs of perplexity and doubt, and yearn to be delivered of the conceptions which are struggling for release within their breasts. If these children of their souls are likely to prove a true and noble offspring, they are suffered to see the light; but if, as is often the case, his divine inward monitor warns Socrates

that they are but lies or shadows of the truth, they are stifled in the birth.

The question discussed is Knowledge; and the first definition of it proposed is "sensible perception." This Socrates connects with the old saying of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things;" and this he again links on to the still older doctrine of Heraclitus, "All things are becoming." "These ancient philosophers" (he says)—"the great Parmenides excepted—agreed that since we live in the midst of perpetual change and transition, our knowledge of all things must be relative. There is no such thing, they will tell you, as real existence. You should not say, 'this *is* white or black,' but, 'it is my (or your) impression that it is so.' And thus each man can only know what he perceives; and so far his judgment is true."

"Of course" (continues Socrates), "we might object that our senses may deceive us; that in cases where a man is mad or dreaming—who knows, indeed, whether we are not dreaming at this very moment?—he must get false impressions: or, again, that our tastes may become perverted; and as wine is distasteful to a sick man, so what is really good or true does not appear so to us. But Protagoras would reply that the sick man's dreams are real to him,—that my impressions of wine are certainly different in health and sickness; but then *I* am different, and my impressions in either case are true."

"I wonder (says Socrates, ironically) that Protagoras did not begin his great work on Truth with a declaration that a

pig or a dog-faced baboon, or some other strange monster which has sensation, is the measure of all things; then, when we were reverencing him as a god, he might have condescended to inform us that he was no wiser than a tadpole, and did not even aspire to be a man—would not this have produced an overpowering effect? For if truth is only sensation, and one man's discernment is as good as another's, and no man has any superior right to determine whether the opinion of any other is true or false, but each man, as we have several times repeated, is to himself the sole judge, and everything that he judges is true and right, why should Protagoras be preferred to the place of wisdom and instruction, and deserve to be well paid, and we poor ignoramuses have to go to him, if each one is the measure of his own wisdom?"—J.

Then Socrates takes upon himself to defend Protagoras, who is made to qualify his original statement: "Man is the measure of all things, but one man's knowledge may be superior in proportion as his impressions are better; still, every impression is true and real, and a false opinion is impossible."

Common-sense, replies Socrates, is against this theory, which would reduce all minds to the same level. Practically, men are always passing judgment on the impressions of others, pronouncing them to be true or false, and acting accordingly; they recognise superior minds, and submit to teachers and rulers: thus Protagoras himself made a large fortune on the reputation of having better judgment than his neighbours. And if one man's judgment is as good as another's, who is to decide? Is the question to be settled by a plurality of votes, or what shall be the last court of appeal? Protagoras may think this or

that, but there are probably ten thousand who will think the opposite; and, by his own rule, *their* judgments are as good as his.

But even Socrates feels some compunction in thus attacking the theories of a dead philosopher who cannot defend himself.

"If he could only" (he says) "get his head out of the world below, he would give both of us a sound drubbing—me for quibbling, and you for accepting my quibbles—and be off and underground again in a twinkling."—J.

Then comes a break in the main argument, and Socrates wanders off into a digression, in which he draws a striking contrast between the characters of the lawyer and philosopher—the former always in a hurry, with the water-clock urging him on—busy and preoccupied, the slave of his clients,—keen and shrewd, but narrow-minded, and from his early years versed in the crooked paths of deceit: while the philosopher is a gentleman at large, master of his own time, abstracted and absorbed in thought, seeing nothing at his feet, and knowing nothing of the scandals of the clubs or the gossip of the town—hardly even acquainted with his next-door neighbour by sight—shy, awkward, and too simple-minded to retaliate an insult, or understand the merits of a long pedigree.*

* The Philosopher here argues that a long line of ancestors does not necessarily make a gentleman; for any one, if he chooses, may reckon back to the first Parent,—just as Tennyson reminds Lady Clara that—

> "The grand old Gardener and his wife
> Smile at the claims of long descent."

"Knowledge, then," continues Socrates, resuming the argument, "cannot be perception; for, after all, it is the soul which perceives, and the senses are merely organs of the body springing from a common centre of life. In fact, we see and hear rather *through* them than *with* them. Furthermore, there are certain abstractions which we (that is, the trained and intelligent few) perceive with the eye of reason alone."

Then Theætetus suggests that knowledge may be defined as "true opinion;" but then, says Socrates, the old objection would be raised, that false opinion is impossible; for we must either know or not know, and in either case we know *what* we know. The reply is, that mistakes are always possible; you may think one thing to be another. Our souls, continues Socrates, using a metaphor which has since passed into a commonplace, are like waxen tablets—some broad and deep, where the impressions made by sight or hearing are clear and indelible; others cramped and narrow, where the impressions from the senses are confused and crowded together; and sometimes the wax itself is soft, or shallow, or impure, and so the impression is soon effaced. Often, too, we put, so to speak, the shoe on the wrong foot, or stamp with the wrong seal; and from these wrong and hasty impressions come false opinions. There can be no mistake when perception and knowledge correspond; but we often have one without the other. I may see an inscription, but not know its meaning; or I may hear a foreigner talk, but not understand a word he says.

But stay, says Socrates—we have been rashly using

these words "know" and "understand," while all the time we are ignorant of what "knowledge" is. We must try again to define the term; and first, to *have* is quite different from to *possess* knowledge. Our soul is like an aviary full of wild birds, flying all about the place, singly or in groups. You may possess them, but you have none in hand; and until you collect, comprehend, and grasp your winged thoughts, you cannot be said to have them either. When you have once caught your bird (or your thought), you cannot mistake it; but while they are flying about, you may mistake the ring-dove for the pigeon, and so you may mistake the various numbers and forms of knowledge.

"Perhaps," says Theætetus, sharply, "there may be sham birds in the aviary; and you may put forth your hand intending to grasp Knowledge, but catch Ignorance instead. How then?"

"No," says Socrates; "it is a clever suggestion, but if you once know the form of knowledge, you will never mistake it for ignorance. Perhaps, however, there may be higher forms of knowledge in other aviaries, which help you to tell the wrong from the right thought; but on this supposition we might go on imagining forms to infinity."

A third and last definition of knowledge is now proposed—"True opinion *plus* definition or explanation." But what is explanation?—is it the expression of a man's thoughts? But every one who is not deaf and dumb can express his thoughts. Or is it the enumeration of the elements of which anything is composed? But you may know the syllables of a name without

being able to explain the letters. Or, lastly, is explanation "the perception of difference"? For instance (says Socrates, somewhat rudely), I know and recognise Theætetus by his having a peculiar snub nose, different from mine and all other snub noses in the world. But is my perception of this difference opinion or knowledge? If the first, I have only opinion; if the second, I am assuming the very term which we are trying to define.

And thus, in the true "Socratic manner," abrupt and unsatisfactory as it seems to us, the Dialogue ends; and "knowledge" remains the same unknown quantity as before. And yet (Socrates thinks) the discussion has not been altogether fruitless; for he has shown Theætetus that the offspring of his brain were not worth the bringing up.

"If," concludes the philosopher, "you are likely to have any more embryo thoughts, such offspring will be all the better for our present investigation; and if you should prove barren, you will be less overbearing and gentler to your friends, and modest enough not to fancy you know what you do not know. So far only can my art go, and no further; for I know none of the secrets of your famous teachers, past or present."—J.

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CHAPTER V.

PLATO'S IDEAL STATES.

"Il faut bien réfléchir sur la Politique d'Aristote et sur les deux Republiques de Platon, si l'on veut avoir une juste idée des lois et des mœurs des anciens Grecs."—*Montesquieu.*

THE REPUBLIC.

In this, the grandest and most complete of all his works, Plato blends all the stores of past thought on religion, politics, and art, into one great constructive effort; systematising, and, as far as might be, reconciling the conflicting theories and the various systems which had preceded him. Thus he first passes in review the prudential morality of an earlier age, built on texts from the poets and on aphorisms which had come down from the seven sages; he then puts to the proof the rash self-assertion of the Sophists, and the ingenious scepticism of the rising generation. But both these stages of thought, when tried, are found wanting, and the object of his search seems as far off as ever; for perfect justice and wisdom (so Plato thinks) cannot be found in any kingdom of this world. The result is that he frames a State of his own, ideal in one

sense, but purely Greek in another, which was to combine the iron discipline of Sparta with the many-sided culture of Athens—a city where, as her own historian said, men might unite elegance with simplicity, and might be learned without being effeminate.* And then, like some painter who copies a divine original, to use his own comparison,† Plato first cleanses the moral canvas of his visionary state, then sketches the outline of the constitution, fills it in with the ideal forms of virtue, and gives it a human complexion in the godlike colouring of Homer; and the result is a glorious picture, as the world would acknowledge, he thinks, if they could be brought to see the truth; and a picture which might be realised in history, could a single king, or son of a king, become a philosopher.

Ethics and politics were so closely blended in Plato's view, that he regards the virtues of the Man as identical with those of the State, and thus exaggerates, says Mr Grote, "the unity of the one and the partibility of the other." But we must remember that as the ancient state was smaller, so the public spirit pervading it was more intense; each man was, as we might say, citizen, soldier, and member of Parliament; and unlike modern society, which has been defined as "anarchy *plus* the policeman,"—where tolerance is carried to its furthest limits, and where state interference is restricted to the security of life and property,—the Greek theory was to secure as far as possible an absolute uniformity of sentiment and character, and

* Thucyd., ii. 40. † Rep., vi. 501.

to crush anything like heresy or dissent among the members of the social body. The state, if it existed at all, must be at one with itself; and they would point to Sparta as a triumphant proof that a rational character might be created by the all-powerful hand of a legislator like Lycurgus. Pericles indeed might boast that at Athens there were no sour looks at a neighbour's eccentricities, and that it was emphatically

> "A land, where, girt by friends and foes,
> A man might say the thing he would:"

but, as we have seen in the case of Socrates, Athenian tolerance might be tried too far, and theories which tended in their view to outrage religion and morality, could not be endured with the same equanimity as in our sceptical and so-called enlightened age.

The opening scene in the "Republic" is such an excellent specimen of Plato's powers of description, that it is well worth giving in full. It is Socrates who speaks:—

> I went down yesterday to the Piræus with Glaucon the son of Ariston, to offer up prayer to the goddess, and also from a wish to see how the festival, then to be held for the first time, would be celebrated. I was very much pleased with the native Athenian procession, though that of the Thracians appeared to be no less brilliant. We had finished our prayers, and satisfied our curiosity, and were returning to the city, when Polemarchus, the son of Cephalus, caught sight of us at a distance as we were on our way towards home, and told his servant to run and bid us wait for him. The servant came behind me, took hold of my cloak, and said, "Polemarchus bids you wait." I turned round, and asked him where his master was. "There he is," he replied, "coming on behind: pray wait for him."

"We will wait," answered Glaucon. Soon afterwards Polemarchus came up, with Adeimantus the brother of Glaucon, and Niceratus the son of Nicias, and a few other persons, apparently coming away from the procession. Polemarchus instantly began: "Socrates, if I am not deceived, you are taking your departure for the city."

"You are not wrong in your conjecture," I replied.

"Well, do you see what a large body we are?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then either prove yourselves the stronger party, or else stay where you are."

"No," I replied; "there is still an alternative: suppose we persuade you that you ought to let us go."

"Could you possibly persuade us, if we refused to listen?"

"Certainly not," replied Glaucon.

"Make up your minds, then, that we shall refuse to listen."

Here Adeimantus interposed, and said: "Are you not aware that towards evening there will be a torch-race on horseback in honour of the goddess?"

"On horseback!" I exclaimed; "that is a novelty. Will they carry torches, and pass them on to one another, while the horses are racing? or how do you mean?"

"As you say," replied Polemarchus; "besides, there will be a night festival, which it will be worth while to look at. We will rise after dinner, and go out to see this festival; and there we shall meet with many of our young men, with whom we can converse. Therefore stay, and do not refuse us."—D.

And so they are persuaded to return with Polemarchus to his home, where they find his father, the aged Cephalus, surrounded by his sons and friends.

"You should come to see me oftener," says Cephalus to Socrates, "now that I cannot come to you. I find

that the older one grows, the fonder one becomes of conversation."

"And what think you of old age itself?" asks Socrates. "Is the road to the grave rough or smooth?"

"Smooth and peaceful enough," answers Cephalus —"that is, to one of easy temper like myself; though some old men, I know, complain bitterly of the miseries of age, and mourn over the faded pleasures of their youth."

"Yes," says Socrates; "but the world would say that your riches make old age an easy burden."

"There is something in that; but I should say myself that a good man could not be happy in poverty and old age, nor again would all the wealth of Crœsus make a bad man happy."

"What do you think, then, to be the chief advantage of riches?" asks Socrates.

"If I mention it," he replied, "I shall perhaps get few persons to agree with me. Be assured, Socrates, that when a man is nearly persuaded that he is going to die, he feels alarmed and concerned about things which never affected him before. Till then, he has laughed at those stories about the departed, which tell us that he who has done wrong here must suffer for it in the other world; but now his mind is tormented with a fear that these stories may possibly be true. And either owing to the infirmity of old age, or because he is now nearer to the confines of the future state, he has a clearer insight into those mysteries. However that may be, he becomes full of misgiving and apprehension, and sets himself to the task of calculating and reflecting whether he has done any wrong to any one. Hereupon, if he finds his life full of unjust deeds, he is apt to start out of sleep in terror, as children do, and he lives haunted by

gloomy anticipations. But if his conscience reproaches him with no injustice, he enjoys the abiding presence of sweet Hope, that 'kind nurse of old age,' as Pindar calls it. . . . And it is this consideration, as I hold, that makes riches chiefly valuable, I do not say to everybody, but at any rate to the good. For they contribute greatly to our preservation from even unintentional deceit or falsehood, and from that alarm which would attend our departure to the other world, if we owed any sacrifices to a god, or any money to a man. They have also many other uses. But after weighing them all separately, Socrates, I am inclined to consider this service as anything but the least important which riches can render to a wise and sensible man."—D.

"So, then, this is the meaning of Justice," says Socrates, seizing on the word Injustice—"to tell the truth and pay your debts?"

"Certainly, if we are to believe the poet Simonides," says Polemarchus (for Cephalus gives up the discussion, and quits the company); "his words are—to pay back what you owe to each is just."

"But you surely would never give back to a mad friend a sword which he had lent you?"

"No," says Polemarchus; "for Simonides says again, you should give back what is *proper* to each man—that is, good to your friends and evil to your foes; and if you ask how, by making alliance with one and going to war with the other: and in peace, Justice is of use in ordinary dealings between man and man—especially when you wish your money to be safely kept."

"That is," says Socrates, "when your money is idle and useless—*then* only Justice is useful! Again, since the doctor can poison as well as heal, and the general

can overreach the enemy as well as protect himself, Justice, if it can guard, must also steal; and the just man is a sort of thief, like Homer's Autolycus—

"Who best could steal, and swear he never stole."*

Your poets have brought Justice to a pretty pass! And may not men make mistakes, and injure their real friends?"

"Yes," says Polemarchus; "but by a friend I mean one who both seems and really is one; and it is just to injure one's enemy if he is bad, and to help one's friend if he is good."

"But hurting a man is the same as making him worse with respect to virtue, and such moral injury belongs not to good, but to its contrary, evil; just as it is not heat that chills, but its contrary, cold. So it can never be just to injure either friend or foe; and this definition must have been invented not by Simonides but by Periander, or some other potentate, who thought his power irresistible."

Then Thrasymachus, who had been growing more and more impatient, takes advantage of a pause, and, "like a wild beast gathering itself up for a spring," bursts in upon the argument.

"No more of this foolish complaisance, Socrates; answer yourself, instead of asking what justice is; and don't tell me that it is 'the due,' or 'the profitable,' or 'the expedient,' or 'the lucrative,' or any nonsense of that sort. And let us have none of your usual affectation of ignorance, if you please."

* Hom. Odyss., xix. 395.

Socrates, who at first assumes to have been terror-struck at this sudden attack, tries to soothe Thrasymachus. "A clever man like you," he says, "should pity us in our perplexity, instead of treating us harshly; we are searching for what is more precious than any gold, and want all the assistance we can get."

Thrasymachus is somewhat pacified by this flattery, and gives his own theory, which is substantially the same as that we have already seen advocated by Callicles in the "Gorgias,"—that Justice is "the Interest of the Stronger." Rulers always legislate with a view to their own interests; and as a shepherd fattens his sheep for his own advantage, so do the "shepherds of the people" regard their subjects as mere sheep, and look only to the possible profit they may get from them. Justice is thus the gain of the strong and the loss of the weak; for the just man's honesty is ruinous to himself, while the unjust man, especially if he can plunder wholesale like the tyrant, is happy and prosperous, and well spoken of; and thus Injustice itself is a stronger and lordlier thing than Justice.

To this barefaced sophistry Socrates replies that the unjust man may go too far; in overreaching his neighbours—just and unjust alike—he breaks all the rules of art, and proves himself an unskilful and ignorant workman, who has no fixed standard in life to act by. And in an unjust state, where every man is thus trying to get the better of his neighbour, there will be endless discord and divisions, making all united action impossible; it will be like a house divided against itself. And as it is with the unjust state, so will it be with

the unjust man. He will be ever at war with himself, and so unable to act decisively. Lastly, the soul (like the ear or eye) has a work of its own to do, and a virtue which enables it to do that work well. Justice is a work of the soul, and the just man lives well and is happy; and as happiness is more profitable than misery, so is Justice more profitable than Injustice.

Thrasymachus is now in a good temper again, and readily acquiesces in all that Socrates has said; but Glaucon, shrewd and combative, takes upon himself the office of "devil's advocate" (for he admits that his own convictions are the other way), and revives the defence of Injustice from a Sophist's point of view.

"Naturally," he says, "to do injustice is a good, and to suffer it an evil: but as men found that the evil was greater than the good, they made a compact of mutual abstinence, and so justice is simply a useful compromise under certain circumstances. If you were to furnish the just and unjust man each with a ring such as Gyges wore of old, making the wearer invisible to all eyes, you would find them both following the same lawless path; for no man would be so steeled against temptation as to remain virtuous, if he were invisible. As things are, he finds honesty the best policy.

"Again, let us assume both characters—the just and unjust—to be perfect in their parts, so that we may decide which is the happier of the two. Our ideal villain will reduce crime to a science—he will have wealth, and money, and honour, and influence—all that this world esteems precious; he will have a high

reputation for justice (for this is the crowning exploit of injustice); he will accomplish all his ends by force or fraud, and the gods, whose favour he will win by costly offerings, will sanctify the means. While the perfectly simple and noble man, clothed only in his justice, will suffer the worst consequences of a lifelong reputation for seeming to be that which he really is not—unjust. He will be put in chains, scourged, tortured, and at last put to death. Which think you the happier of these two?"

Then Adeimantus takes up the parable,—for brother, he says, should help brother. "Men too commonly make the mistake of dwelling, not upon the beauty of Justice in itself, but on the worldly advantages, the honours, and the high reputation which attend a just life. It is in this spirit that parents advise their children, and that Homer and Hesiod recount the blessings which the gods bestow upon the pious—

"'Like to a blameless king, who, godlike in virtue and wisdom,
Justice ever maintains; whose rich land fruitfully yields him
Harvests of barley and wheat; and his orchards are heavy with fruitage.
Strong are the young of his flocks, and the sea gives him fish in abundance.'*

And other poets describe the glories of a sensual paradise, where their heroes feast on couches, crowned with flowers, and make the fairest reward of virtue to be

* Hom. Odyss., xix. 109 (Davies and Vaughan).

'immortal drunkenness;' while they doom the unjust to fill sieves and languish in a swamp through all eternity.

"Others, again, strike out a different line, and will tell you how narrow and difficult is the way of virtue, and how broad and pleasant is the path of vice; and they affirm, too, that the gods bestow prosperity on the wicked and adversity on the good. And lastly, there is a doctrine of indulgences preached by mendicant prophets, who profess to have power to absolve the rich man from his sins, in this world and the next, by spells and mystic rites; and they quote the poets to prove that vice and atonement are equally easy.

"What is a young man to do amidst all this conflicting advice? Shall he make Justice 'his strong tower of defence,' as Pindar says; or shall he fence his character with the appearance of virtue, and so by fair means or foul obtain that happiness which is the end of life? The gods—if at least there are gods, and if they care for men's affairs—can easily be wrought upon by prayer and sacrifice; and we need have no fear of Hades so long as we perform the mystic rites. And so, if he combines injustice with the semblance of justice, he will reap all the advantages of both, and will fare well in both worlds.

"The blame of all this evil rests with our poets and teachers, who have always dwelt on the glories and rewards following on a just life, but have never adequately discussed what Justice and Injustice really are. Could we see them as they are, we should choose the one as the greatest good, and shun the other as the

by our Guardians; and true *Courage* will be engrained in the hearts of our soldiers by law and education; and *Temperance* will be that social harmony pervading the State, and making all the citizens to be of one mind, like strings attempered to one scale. But where is *Justice?* Here at our feet, after all, for it can be nothing else than our original principle of division of labour: for a man is just when he does his own business, and does not meddle with his neighbour's.

And, returning to Man, we shall also find three parts in his soul corresponding to the three classes in our State. Reason, which should rule; Desire, which should obey; and Passion,* which is properly the ally of reason, and is restrained by it as a dog is restrained by a shepherd. We shall also find the same cardinal virtues in the man as in the State.

The just man will live uprightly, and will reduce all the elements of his soul to unison and harmony; and as to the original question "whether injustice, if undetected, pays in this life?" we may answer that it is a moral disease—and that, as in the body, so in the soul, if the constitution is ruined, life will not be worth having.

Then Socrates lays down the details of the system of Communism which he proposes to carry out in his State. "Following further our comparison of sheep-

* There is no English equivalent for the Greek word *thumos* —which combines the several meanings which we express in the words spirit, passion, honour, anger, all in one

dogs, men and women are to have the same employment (for there is no real difference between the sexes), and will go out to war together. Marriages must be strictly regulated; and, as in the case of dogs or game-fowl, we must keep up the purity of breed. The best must marry the best, and the worst the worst; and the children of the former must be carefully reared, while any offspring from the latter must be exposed. There must be a public nursery, and no mother must know her own child. Thus, where all have common sympathies and interests, and there are no jealousies arising from separate families or properties, the State will be most thoroughly at unity with itself.

"These children of the State shall be present in the battle-field—but at safe distance—to stimulate the courage of our warriors, and accustom our young to the scene of their future duties. And in war, the runaway and coward shall be degraded: but the brave shall be crowned and shall wed the fair; he shall be honoured at the sacrifice and banquet, and if he falls, we shall proclaim that he sprang from the race of gold, and now haunts the earth in the form of a holy and powerful spirit.

"War between Greek and Greek is an unnatural feud, and therefore we will not despoil the bodies of the dead—for there is a meanness in injuring a body whence the soul has fled; nor will we enslave a free Greek, nor lay waste Greek land, or burn houses, as heretofore."

Glaucon is willing to admit that this ideal State will have a thousand advantages over any at present in

existence, *if* only it could be realised. How is this to be brought about?

Our State might be realised, Socrates replies, on one condition—preposterous as it will seem to the world—"philosophers must be kings;" or, failing this, the princes of this world must be imbued with the true philosophic spirit.

And what, then, is a philosopher? He is a rare and perfect being, who takes all knowledge and virtue as his portion; he is "the spectator of all time and all existence," for he knows the absolute and real ideas of beauty, truth, and justice—far removed from the uncertain twilight of opinion. He is free from the meanness or injustice of petty natures; he is lordly in his conceptions, gracious in manner, with a quick memory, and a well-adjusted mind. It is no argument, continues Socrates, to say that among the so-called philosophers of the present day you will find many rogues and fools. It is so; but the fault rests not with philosophy itself, but with the ignorant multitude, and with the pretentious teachers of our youth; for rare talents may be perverted by bad training, and strong but ill-regulated minds will produce the greatest evils. A young and noble character has indeed little chance of withstanding the corruptions of the age. The fulsome compliments of friends and advisers, the senseless clamour of the law-court or the Assembly, combine to ruin him; and, worse than all, the influence of the Sophists, who act as keepers to this many-headed monster of a people, understanding its habits and humouring its caprices, calling what it fancies good and what it

dislikes evil. And thus Philosophy herself is left desolate, and a crowd of vulgar interlopers leave their proper trades and rush in like escaped prisoners into a sanctuary, and profane the Temple of Truth. There can be but one result to such a debasing alliance as this—a host of spurious sophisms. Few and rare indeed are the cases where men of nobler stamp have remained uncorrupted; whom some favourable accident, such as exile, or indifference, or ill health—or it may be (Socrates adds), as in my own peculiar case, an inward sign from heaven—has saved from such entanglements.

Clearly, then, the real philosopher, who is to stand aloof from that wild beast's den which we call public life, has no place or lot among us as things are now. He is like some rare exotic, which, if transplanted to a foreign soil, would soon fade and wither; for he requires a perfect State to fulfil the perfection of his own nature—a State such as may perhaps have once existed in the countless ages that are passed, or even exists now "in some foreign clime far beyond the limits of our own horizon." *

And in this State, of which we are giving the glorious outlines, philosophers must rule, in spite of their personal reluctance; for they owe us nurture-wages for their training, and must for a time forego their higher life of contemplation. They will be nobly fitted for their office, for their intellectual training will

* Here, at the end of the Sixth and the beginning of the Seventh Book in the original, comes a description of the higher education which these philosophers must undergo, and of which a sketch is given in chap. vii.

have taken them step by step through the higher branches of knowledge—Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy—all studied with a view to deeper and ideal truths. By a strict and repeated process of selection, all except those of a resolute and noble nature will be excluded from the number of these "saviours of the State;" again and again these will be tested and examined, and a select list made, till at last the studies of the chosen few will culminate in Dialectic, the coping-stone of all the Sciences. Their souls will then have mounted from gloom to daylight; they will comprehend first principles, and they will be privileged to know and define in its real nature the Idea of Good. At the age of fifty they shall be tested for their final work, and if they come out unscathed from the trial, the remainder of their life shall be passed partly in philosophy, partly in practical politics—till death shall remove them to the Islands of the Blest, and a grateful city shall honour them with monuments and sacrifices.

Such is our State, continues Socrates in the Eighth Book,—perfect, so long as its various parts shall act in harmony; but, like other mortal productions, it is fated to change and decay at a certain period, determined by a mystic number. So also there is a cycle which controls all human births for good or evil; and, in the lapse of years, it must be that our Guardians will miss the propitious time; a degenerate offspring will thus come into being, Education will languish, and there will be a gradual decline in the Constitution.

The first stage in this "decline and fall" will be a *Timocracy*, marked by a spirit of ambition and love of gain; in which the art of war will preponderate, and our Guardians will think lightly of philosophy and much of political power.

Then comes an *Oligarchy*, where gold is all-powerful and virtue is depreciated; and the State becomes divided into two hostile classes—one enormously rich, the other miserably poor; and in it paupers and criminals multiply, and education deteriorates.

There is a change, says our theorist, in the character of the individual citizen corresponding to each of these changes in the form of government; but it must be confessed that the minute analysis of the causes of this change, and the result of certain characteristics in each parent, would strike a modern reader as something more than fanciful.

The intemperate desire of riches, and the licence and extravagance thus encouraged, do their own work in the State, until you find everywhere grasping misers and ruined spendthrifts. Meanwhile the lower orders grow turbulent and conscious of their power. Their insubordination soon brings matters to a crisis: there is a revolution, and a Democracy is the result. This may be defined as "a pleasant and lawless and motley constitution, giving equal rights to unequal persons;" and it is pervaded by a marvellous freedom in speech and action, and a strange diversity of character. Each man does what he likes in his own eyes, with a magnanimous disregard of the law: he obeys or disobeys at his own pleasure; and if some criminal be sentences

to death or exile, you will probably meet him the next day, come to life again, and parading the streets like a hero. There is something splendid, concludes Socrates comically, in the forbearance of such a commonwealth, and in its entire superiority to all petty considerations.

Again, the democrat is like the democracy. Brought up in a miserly and ignorant way by his father, the oligarch, the young man is soon corrupted by bad company, and a swarm of passions and wild and presumptuous theories seize the citadel of his reason, whence temperance and modesty are expelled. Even if not thoroughly reprobate, he is at the mercy of each fleeting caprice, and gives way to the humour of the hour, now revelling with wine and music, now fasting on bread and water—now an idler, and now a student; by turns politician, general, or trader.*

In a thoroughgoing democracy we have liberty and equality everywhere—in fact, there is soon a universal anarchy. Respect for rank and age soon dies out. Father and son, teacher and scholar, master and servant, are all on the same dead level. The very animals (says the speaker, with an amusing touch of satire) become gorged with freedom, and will run at you if you get in their way.

* Professor Jowett quotes Dryden's well-known description of the Duke of Buckingham—

> "A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one but all mankind's epitome."

He thinks that Alcibiades is referred to; but the lines would apply equally well to Critias, Plato's uncle (Curtius, Hist. Greece, iii. 542).

But extremes in politics produce a reaction; and the result of excessive freedom is excessive slavery. From a Democracy to a Tyranny is an easy stage. Some demagogue, who has shown unusual talent in extorting money from the richer class to feed those "stinging and stingless drones" of whom we spoke, is adopted by the people as their champion, and gradually strengthens his influence. It is always the same story—he banishes, confiscates, murders, and then his own life is threatened, and he obtains a body-guard. Woe to the rich man then, if he does not fly at once, for it will be arrest and death if he lingers.

At first the Tyrant will be all smiles and promises; but, once firmly seated, he will change his tactics. He will employ his citizens in incessant war to weaken their strength, and rid the state of bold and powerful spirits; he will increase his guards, he will plunder the rich and humble the strong, and thus free men will pass under the yoke of slavery.

The man who answers to the Tyrant in private life will have his soul under the dominion of monstrous lusts and appetites, squandering and plundering, and passing on from sin to sin.

Thus a Tyranny is the worst and most miserable State of all. Not only are the citizens in it reduced to slavery, and distracted by fear and grief, but the Tyrant himself, with all his power and splendour, never knows the blessings of peace and friendship. Like some great slave-master in a desert, he lives alone in a crowd: shunned and detested by those about him, tortured by remorse, and haunted by a

lifelong terror, he is himself the most pitiable slave of all.

The only pleasure that such a man ever knows is mere sensual enjoyment—in itself worthless and fleeting. The attractions of gold or of glory are of a nobler stamp; but the best and purest of all pleasures that a man can feel, and the ineffable sweetness of which the world can never realise, is that which the philosopher alone finds in the study and contemplation of existence. For he prunes close the hydra-headed passions by which the many are enslaved, and subjects the lion to the man, by making reason rule his soul. Thus none can measure his happiness; but it cannot be possessed by any in perfection, save in our own ideal state—"which does not, indeed, at present exist in this world, but has, perhaps, its pattern laid up in heaven for him who is willing to see it, and, seeing it, rules his life on earth accordingly." *

Such is the Platonic State, with its strange medley of noble aspirations and impracticable details. How far Plato himself believed it to be ideal, or how far, if *he* had been Alexander's tutor, he would have tried to carry it out in history, we have no means of telling. But it is easy to understand his feeling, and the point of view from which he wrote. He is weary of the pretensions, the falsehood, and the low morality around him—("it is dreadful to think," he says, "that half the people we meet have perjured themselves in one of the numerous law-courts")—and so he turns away with a

* Rep. ix. ad fin.

sort of despair from the sad realities of Athenian life; and instead of writing a bitter satire, as a Roman might have done, or waging war against the society he despises in "latter-day pamphlets," he throws himself as far as he can out of the present, with all its degrading associations, and builds for himself (as we have seen) a new State—after a divine and perfect pattern—in a world a thousand leagues from his own.

Those "three waves" of the "Republic" (as Socrates terms them)—the community of families and that of property, and the assumption that philosophers must be kings—which threaten to swamp the argument even with such friendly criticism as Glaucon and Adeimantus venture to offer, prove with less partial opponents insurmountable obstacles to the realisation of the Platonic State. Aristotle heads the list of objectors, and disapproves both of the end and the means to be pursued. So far from promoting the unity of the State, he argues that Plato's system of Communism will create an endless division of interests and sympathies; will tend to destroy the security of life and property; and, among other evils, will do away with the virtues of charity and liberality, by allowing no room for their exercise. Modern critics generally touch upon the repression of all individual energy, the cramping of all free thought and action, and the necessary abolition of any sense of mutual rights and obligations which are necessary parts of Plato's system; and De Quincey has denounced in an eloquent passage the social immorality encouraged by Plato's marriage regulations, and his "sensual bounty on infanticide"—"cutting adrift the little boat to go

down the Niagara of violent death, in the very next night after its launching on its unknown river of life." *

Plato's "Republic" is the first of a long series of ideal States;† and we find the original thought "Romanised" by Cicero, "Christianised" by St Augustine in his 'City of God,' and in more modern times reappearing in Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia,' and in Lord Bacon's 'New Atlantis,' with its wonderful anticipations of modern science. We have in our own day seen specimens of the same class of literature in works like 'Erewhon' and 'The Coming Race.'

THE LAWS.

This Dialogue is the last and the longest that Plato wrote, and bears traces of the hand of old age. The fire and spirit of his earlier works seems gone, while Plato himself is changed; he is not only older, but more conservative, more dogmatic, and—we must also say—more intolerant and narrower-minded than was his wont. Much had happened since he wrote the "Republic" to disenchant him of visionary politics. His mission to Syracuse had proved, as we have seen, a miserable failure, and his grand schemes of reform had sadly ended in the violent death of his friend Dion. And so the tone of the "Laws" is grave, prosaic, and even commonplace in its trivial details. The high aspirations of the "Republic" have sobered down into a tedious and minute legislation. The king-

* De Quincey, viii.

† An interesting account of these States may be found in Sir G. C. Lewis's Methods of Reasoning in Politics, II. ch. xxii.

philosophers, with their golden pedigree and elaborate training, are here superseded by a council of elderly citizens elected by vote. The celestial world of "Ideas" and the sublime heights of Dialectic have passed from view; the study of science is curtailed; and it is even hinted that a young man may possibly have too much of education. But Plato seems to have grown even more impressed than before with the belief that the State should mould the characters and keep the consciences of its citizens: he is imbued, says Mr Grote, "with the persecuting spirit of mediæval Catholicism;" there is a strict "Act of Uniformity," and all dissenters from it are branded as criminals; while religion, poetry, music, and education generally are placed under State surveillance.

The first four books of the "Laws" form a kind of desultory preface to the detailed legislation which occupies the remaining eight. The scene of the Dialogue is laid in the island of Crete, and the speakers are three old men—an Athenian, a Spartan, and a Cretan—who meet on the road to the temple of Jupiter at Gnossus, and discuss, as they walk, the form of government in their respective States. Sparta and Crete were then standing instances of the perfection to which military training might be brought, and a warlike ideal realised. Both cities resembled permanent camps, with severe discipline, continual drill, a public mess, and barrack life taking the place of family life and affections. But the Athenian, though not denying the superiority of Spartan troops, finds much to criticise in the principle of the Spartan system. It

has only developed courage, which is, after all, but a fourth-rate virtue; and it has proceeded on the mistaken notion that man's natural state is war. Other virtues—such as wisdom and temperance—are thus made of little account; and Sparta has banished pleasure, which is really as effectual a test of self-control as pain. Wine, too, is forbidden there—though it is a most useful medium for discovering a man's strength or weakness; indeed, at the festival of Bacchus there ought, the Athenian thinks, to be a drinking tournament—with a sober president—and all honour should be paid to the youth who could drink hardest and longest. For it is clear that the man with the strongest head at the banquet will be the coolest and most imperturbable on the battle-field. Again, wine softens and humanises the character; it cures the sourness of old age, and under its influence we renew our youth and forget our sorrows. And if you want to try a friend's honour and integrity—*in vino veritas;* ply him with wine, and you will read all the secrets of his heart. But with all this, there should be a stringent "Licensing Act." The times and seasons when wine may be drunk should be strictly defined by law; and no soldier on active service, no slave, no judge or magistrate during his year of office, no pilot on duty, should be allowed to drink wine at all; and, if these precautions are carried out, a city will not need many vineyards.

The use of wine as a means of training opens the general question of Education, which is examined again at greater length in the Seventh Book of the treatise;

and then Plato passes on to the origin of society. In the "Republic," the State is made to spring from the mutual needs of men; but here it is developed from the House—in fact, we find in this treatise the "patriarchal" theory.

In the illimitable past, says Plato, there must have been thousands and thousands of cities which rose and flourished for a time, and then were swept away; for at certain fixed periods a deluge comes, which covers the whole earth and destroys all existing civilisation, leaving only a vast expanse of desert, and a few survivors on the mountain-tops. This remnant clings together with the instinct of self-preservation. Each little family, under the strict rule of the "house father," lives in a primitive and simple manner on the produce of its flocks and herds, like the Homeric Cyclops:—

> "Unsown, untended, corn and wine and oil
> Spring to their hand; but they no councils know,
> Nor justice, but for ever lawless go.
> Housed in the hills, they neither buy nor sell,
> No kindly offices demand or show;
> Each in the hollow cave where he doth dwell
> Gives law to wife and children, as he thinketh well."*

Gradually several of these isolated units coalesced, and thus the family developed into the tribe, and several tribes uniting made the State. Then came a government, and a code of laws.

* Homer, Od. ix., Worsley's transl. There is an interesting account of this patriarchal age in Maine's Ancient Law, chap. v.

Plato next passes in review the ancient legends of his own country—the Trojan War, the Return of the Heraclidæ, the Dorian settlement in the Peloponnese; and he traces in the history of those times seven distinct and recognised titles to obedience—namely, the authority of parents over children, of nobles over inferiors, of elder over younger, of master over slave, the natural principle that the strong should rule the weak, and the no less natural principle that the wise should have dominion over the fool; and lastly, there is the power conferred by the casting of the lot—in which Plato recognises, as distinctly as the Hebrew legislator, the hand of Heaven.

A great lesson, he continues, may be learned from these ancient States—for they all perished from internal discords—that limited power among the rulers, and harmony and obedience to the laws among the subjects, are the safeguards of every community. Thus Providence wisely tempered the kingly power in Sparta with Ephors and a Senate, and so produced a healthy balance in the constitution; while Persia fell from her high place among the nations from the excess of despotic power, and the want of goodwill between the despot and his people. The great Cyrus and Darius both received a warrior's training, and won their own way to the throne; while Cambyses and Xerxes, born in the purple and bred in the harem, proved weak and degenerate princes, and their ruin was the result of their evil bringing up. Athens, again, went wrong in the other extreme; for with us, says the Athenian, it is always excess of freedom that does the

mischief. Of old, law was supreme in every part of the State—especially in music, with its four primitive and simple divisions. Reverence, and the fear "which the coward never feels," prevailed; all classes were united, and fought for their common hearths and sepulchres; and the grand result was Marathon and Salamis. But gradually a change has come over our national character. There has been a growing lawlessness, beginning in the Music, and spreading thence throughout the community. We no longer any of us listen in respectful silence to the judgment of superior interests, but are one and all become accomplished critics, and every one knows everything. Awe and reverence have gone for ever; and there is a shameless disregard for authority, whether of parents, or elders, or rulers. Even the majesty of the gods is slighted, and the oaths sworn by them are made of no account.

Here, with the Third Book, ends "the prelude" to the "Laws." By a happy coincidence (says the Cretan in the Dialogue), his countrymen are just going to found a colony, and he is one of the ten commissioners appointed to give laws to the colonists. Will the Athenian give him some hints on the subject?

It is clear (replies the Athenian) that all legislation should aim at carrying out three principles—namely, freedom, unity, and wisdom; and that State will be best where the law is best administered by the rulers who are its servants, and where the happiness of the community is the sole object of their legislation.

"The difficulty is to find the divine love of temperate and just institutions existing in any powerful forms of government, whether in a monarchy or oligarchy of wealth or of birth. You might as well hope to reproduce the character of Nestor, who is said to have excelled all men in the power of speech, and yet more in his temperance. This, however, according to the tradition, was in the times of Troy: in our own days there is nothing of the sort. But if such an one either has or ever shall come into being, or is now among us, blessed is he, and blessed are they who hear the wise words that flow from his lips. And this may be said of power in general: when the supreme power in man coincides with the greatest wisdom and temperance, then the best laws are by nature framed, and the best constitution; but in no other way will they ever come into being."—J.

If you could find a despot, young, noble, and enthusiastic—fortunate, moreover, in being advised by some great legislator—you will have your city founded at once; for the change from a despotism to a perfect government is the easiest of all.*

In our legislation we will head each enactment with a prelude or preamble, to show the nature of the case and the spirit of the law,—appealing thus to the reason of our citizens, that they be rather persuaded than forced to obey; more especially as there are many cases which the law can never reach, and where we can only declare the solemn utterances of Heaven, speaking through the law to all who are willing to hear and understand.

* Plato's opinion of the "Tyrant" is greatly modified, since he declared in the "Republic" that "tyranny" was 729 degrees removed from perfection; but here he is probably thinking of the younger Dionysius (see p. 8).

Our city, then, shall be built nine miles from the sea, in a country which has more hill than plain. There will be little timber for shipbuilding; but this is of no importance, as we shall not aim at naval power, nor will war be our normal state. The colonists should, if possible, be all of the same country—like a swarm of bees—as they will be then more united; though perhaps a mixed multitude would be more tractable.

The number of citizens shall be originally fixed, and as far as possible kept, at 5040,* and to each citizen shall be awarded land sufficient to maintain his family (for community of property cannot be carried out); but son shall succeed father, and none shall sell or divide his lot, on pain of being cursed by the priests as an offender against heaven and the law. There shall be a State currency; but no usury or accumulation of private fortune shall be allowed, so that extremes of wealth and poverty may be equally avoided.

The State is to be governed in somewhat complicated fashion. There are to be thirty-seven guardians of the laws, and a council of 360 elected from the whole body of citizens. Each department of public business is to have its own officers. There are to be "country wardens," who would seem to combine the duties of modern county court judges and rural police. For municipal duties there are wardens of the city and market, all

* Plato gives as his reason for fixing on this number, that it is easily divisible. He remarks also that it is not too large to admit of their all knowing one another,—though that would involve a somewhat large circle of acquaintance.

with magisterial powers. There are to be law-courts and judges—though arbitration is recommended where it is possible—and there is a high court of appeal.

Marriages are to be strictly regulated, since their object is to produce a noble and healthy offspring. Slaves should be treated with more perfect justice than we show to equals, and all levity and cruelty towards them should be avoided.

Then follow some desultory remarks on education, which should (Plato thinks) be compulsory—since children belong more to the State than to their parents—and should be directed by a competent minister of public instruction. Infants should be reared with great care—soothed with song, "for they roar continually the first three years of their life"—and carried about in their nurses' arms, "as you see our young nobles carry their fighting-cocks." At the age of six, boys are to be separated from girls, and are to learn riding and the use of weapons. Their amusements are to be carefully watched, as any change in them may breed revolution in the State. They are to learn dancing to give them stately and graceful movement, and wrestling to give them quickness and agility, and music to humanise their souls. But both music and song are to be strictly regulated; there is to be a censorship of the press, and all objectionable poetry is to be expunged. (Plato hints that the "homilies" with which his laws are prefaced would be admirable exercises to be committed to memory.) Till the age of thirteen they are to learn their grammar and letters; afterwards the use of the lyre, and grave and

simple melodies; and their education is to conclude with the rudiments of science, which should, if possible, be taught in an interesting manner.

There must be a religious festival (continues the Athenian) on every day in the year, and a monthly meeting of all the citizens to practise warlike exercises, when there should be public races for the youths and maidens.

In the Ninth Book, we have the somewhat wearisome details of a criminal code, in which Plato justifies the title given to him by Numenius of "the Moses who wrote in Attic Greek." Certainly some of the regulations are much in the spirit of the writer of Leviticus—such as, that no man shall remove his neighbour's landmark, or cut off his supply of water; that the traveller may pluck the grapes at the time of vintage; and we have also, as in the law of Moses, the "avenger of blood" and purification by the priest.

Plato here, as elsewhere, attributes crime in a great measure to ignorance—a sort of moral blindness. We should (he says), if possible, heal the distemper of the criminal soul, or, if he be incurable, he must be put to death. There are certain unpardonable offenders—the profaner of temples, the would-be tyrant, the traitor or conspirator, and the wilful shedder of innocent blood,—these must all suffer the extreme penalty. He distinguishes between the various kinds of homicide,—in some cases a fine, in others exile, is sufficient punishment; but for the parricide he reserves a more awful doom—he shall be slain by the judges, and his body exposed where three ways meet, and then cast

beyond the borders; while the criminal "who has taken the life that ought to be dearer to him than all others—his own"—shall be buried alone in a desolate place, without tomb or monument to show his grave.

The deep-seated aversion and contempt with which every Greek regarded trade and traders is shown in Plato's regulations as to commerce and the market. Among his 5040 citizens there was not to be found a single retail trader. Such a degrading occupation was to be left entirely to the resident foreigners, if any chose to engage in it. If some great personage ("the very idea is absurd," he says) were to open a shop, and thus set a precedent, things might be different. As it is, trade carries with it the stamp of dishonour. And then follow other restrictions, the necessity for which serves to show us that Greek shopkeepers practised much the same imposition on their customers as our own. There was to be no adulteration, no tricks of sale, and all contracts were to be rigorously adhered to.

The last two books are taken up with a number of miscellaneous regulations respecting civil rights and duties. The law is to take the power of will-making into its own hands, and regulate the succession of property "without listening to the outcry of dying persons." Orphans—"the most sacred of all deposits"—are to be protected by the State. A husband and wife with "incompatible tempers" should be divorced. Witchcraft is to be punished with death. No beggar is to be allowed in the land. No man under forty

years of age may travel abroad. Bodies are to be exposed for three days before burial, to see if they are really dead. Magistrates shall give a yearly account of their office before certain public "Examiners," who must be carefully selected, and, if found worthy, shall have special honours paid to them during life, and at their death a solemn public burial,—not with sorrow or lamentation; but the corpse shall be clad in robes of white, and choruses of youths and men shall chant their praises, and yearly contests in music and gymnastics be celebrated at their tomb.

Lastly, there is to be a supreme council of twenty members—ten of the oldest citizens, and ten younger men afterwards added to their number—who shall hold their meetings before daybreak. This council, like a "central Conservative organ," * is to be the anchor of the constitution—carrying out in every detail the original intention of the founder, making his laws irreversible as the threads of fate, and securing that uniformity of faith among the citizens, and that belief in the unity of Virtue, which can be the only safeguard of the "City of the Magnetes"—the new colony which they are about to found.

* Grote, iii. 447.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYTHS OF PLATO.

"The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream."
—*Wordsworth.*

"As Being is to Becoming," says Plato, "so Truth is to Faith." Where a man cannot prove, he must be content to believe; and the myths which the philosopher introduces here and there are guesses after this Truth which he believes and feels, but cannot precisely define. He is conscious that there are more things in heaven and earth than are "dreamed of in his philosophy," and that there are some unseen realities transcending all mortal experience; and so he builds up his doctrine of ideas, embodies them in circumstances, gives them "a local habitation and a name," and describes in detail the mysteries of the unknown future and the unrecorded past. These descriptions are not intended, he says, to be exactly true. "No man of sense ought to affirm *that*." All that he claims for them is verisimilitude. "We may venture to think without impropriety that something of the kind is true." Nor, again, is it desirable that

these myths should be strictly interpreted; so to interpret them would, he thinks, "be the task—and not a very enviable one—of some person who had plenty of time on his hands."*

We have no means of telling how far these Myths are the creation of Plato's own prolific fancy, or how far they are compiled from the ancient Mysteries of his own country, from Pythagoræan tradition, or from oriental legends. But whatever their source may be, his genius has given them a character and beauty of their own; nowhere is his style so grand and impressive as in these fictions, on which he lavishes, as on some "rich strand," all the treasures of his mind.

THE CREATION OF MAN.
(From the "Timæus.")

The world we live in, says the astronomer Timæus, being visible, tangible, and perishable — unlike the world of eternal Ideas—must have been created, and if created, must have been the work of some great First Cause or Architect, who fashioned it after an eternal pattern; "for the work is the fairest of creations, and he is the best of causes." Of this indeed we can have no certain knowledge, but only belief or conjecture, since after all we are but mortal men.

The Creator, being goodness himself, wished that his work should also be good like him; and thus he brought order out of Chaos, and "put intelligence in soul and soul in body, and framed the universe to be

* Phædrus, 229.

the best and fairest work in nature. And therefore, using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living soul, and truly rational, through the providence of God." It was created of four entire elements, blended together in geometrical proportion; and its form was a perfect and solid sphere, smooth and complete, and moving in a circle. In the centre was the soul (also compounded according to a scale of harmony), and circulating all impressions from the ideal essence through every part of this vast and visible animal, which included in itself all visible creation.

"When the Father and Creator saw the image that he had made of the eternal gods moving and living, he was delighted, and in his joy determined to make his work still more like the pattern; and as the pattern was an eternal creature, he sought to make the universe the same as far as it might be. Now the nature of the intelligible being is eternal, and to bestow eternity on the creature was wholly impossible. But he resolved to make a moving image of eternity, and as he set in order the heaven, he made this eternal image having a motion according to number, while eternity rested in unity; and this is what we call time. For there were no days and nights, and months and years, before the heaven was created, but when he created the heaven he created them also. All these are the parts of time, and the past and future are created species of time, which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence: for we say indeed that he was, he is, he will be; but the truth is that 'he is' alone truly expresses him, and that 'was' and 'will be' are only to be spoken in the generation in time, for they are motions; but that which is immovably the same cannot become older or younger by

time, nor ever did or has become, or hereafter will be, older, nor is subject at all to any of those states of generation which attach to the movements of sensible things. These are the forms of time when imitating eternity and moving in a circle measured by number."—J.

Time was thus created with the heavens, in order that if one was destroyed the other might likewise perish. Then the Deity created the moon and stars to move in their appointed orbits—some fixed, some wandering, —but all were bodies with living souls imitating the eternal nature; and he "lighted a fire which we now call the sun," that men might have light, and learn from the regular succession of day and night the use of numbers. "And the month was created when the moon had completed her orbit and overtaken the sun, and the year when the sun had completed his own orbit." Of all these stars, which are really gods, the earth, our nurse, was the first and oldest, and was made to revolve on her own axis in the centre of the spheres.*

Then the Creator commanded the other gods, of whose generation we know nothing except from tradition, to finish his good work by weaving together mortal and immortal elements, and forming living creatures. To these he distributed souls equal in number to the stars, assigning to each star a soul; and he showed to each the nature of the universe, and his own decrees of destiny: declaring that whosoever lived a

* The various revolutions and eclipses of the heavenly bodies, according to this Platonic myth, are much too perplexing to be dealt with here.

righteous life upon earth "should return again to the habitation of his star, and there have a blessed existence;" but if he lived unrighteously, he should descend lower and lower in the scale of creation—from a man to a woman, and from a woman to some animal, until at last the spirit should triumph over the flesh, and his reason, which had never become extinct, should restore him to his first and higher self.

And in the head of man the gods put an immortal soul, to be master of the body; and they gave to the body itself its proper limbs and powers of movement and sensation, and in the eyes they placed a pure and gentle fire, which burns not, but streams forth and mingles with the light of day. And they gave man sight, that he might discern the unerring and intelligent motion of the stars, and order his own mind with like exactness; and they gave him voice and hearing, that music might harmonise his soul.

Besides the invisible and imperishable forms of the elements, and the visible images of these Forms—namely, the elements themselves—there is a third kind of being, a formless space or chaos, where these images are stored up, and which is the source and nurse of all generation. From this chaos the great Architect brought forth the four elements, and shook them together "in the vessel of space," and sifted and divided them "as grain is sifted by the winnowing fan," and fashioned them according to certain combinations of form and number. Thus the earth was formed like a cube, the most perfect and solid of all figures; while fire took the shape of a pyramid, and

so with air and water. All these elements were formed according to continuous geometrical proportion.

[Then follows a curious but fanciful description of the various phenomena of light, sound, and colour, which, however, the reader may be spared.]

The gods (continues Timæus) gave to man a triple soul: firstly, an immortal soul, dwelling in the head, with the heart acting as its guard-house, and carrying out its commands by means of a fiery network of veins through every part of the body: secondly, a mortal soul, which is again divided—the nobler part dwelling in the breast, and, though itself moved by fear and anger, taking the side of reason against desire; while the lower part, made up of unruly passions and carnal appetites, is chained like a wild beast in the belly, far from the council-chamber of reason, which it would otherwise disturb. Now the gods knew that this lowest soul would never listen to reason, and they therefore ruled it by means of images reflected on the smooth and brilliant surface of the liver—the seat of prophetic inspiration—sometimes fair and sweet, sometimes dark and discoloured by passion.

The marrow, which binds together soul and body, is the seed-plot of mortal life, and, like the world, was originally formed from triangles. These are sharpest and freshest in our childhood, but they grow blunted and gradually wear out in old age, till at last their fastenings are loosened, and "they unfix also the bonds of the soul, and she being released in the order of nature joyfully flies away."

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Diseases spring from the disturbance of the original elements of which our bodies are composed; and the soul also suffers from two mental distempers—madness and ignorance. As far as possible, nature should be left to herself; but since there is a strong sympathy between soul and body, the conditions of health in both must be observed; the limbs should be trained by exercise, and the mind should be educated by music and philosophy. For no man can prolong his life beyond a certain time; and medicines ignorantly administered multiply diseases and destroy the constitution.

Man should exercise in due proportion the three souls implanted in him, more especially that highest and divinest element in our heads, which makes us look upward like plants, and draws our thoughts from earth to heaven. If he seeks wisdom and truth, then he "must of necessity, so far as human nature is capable of attaining immortality, become all immortal, as he is ever serving the divine power, and having the genius that dwells in him in the most perfect order, his happiness will be complete." But if he gratifies ambition and desire, he will degenerate into a merely mortal being, and after this life will lose his high place in creation, first passing into the form of a woman, and then into the still lower form of an animal; for animals are only deteriorated humanity—the birds being "innocent and light-minded men," who thought in their simplicity that sight alone was needed to know the truths of celestial regions; and the quadrupeds and wild animals being all more or less brutal and

stolid, till at last the lowest stage of all is reached in the fishes.

"These were made out of the most entirely ignorant and senseless beings, whom the transformers did not think any longer worthy of pure respiration, because they possessed a soul which was made impure by all sorts of transgression; and instead of allowing them to respire the subtle and pure element of air, they thrust them into the water, and gave them a deep and muddy medium of respiration; and hence arose the race of fishes and oysters, and other aquatic animals, which have received the most remote habitations as a punishment of their extreme ignorance. These are the laws by which animals pass into one another, both now and ever changing as they lose or gain wisdom and folly."—J.

Thus we may call the world "a visible animal comprehending the visible—itself a visible and sensible God, the image of Him who is intelligible, the greatest, best, fairest, and one most perfect Universe."

THE ISLAND OF ATLANTIS.*

The day after the long discussion of the "Republic," Socrates meets three of his friends who had been present — Hermocrates, a rising statesman, Timæus, a distinguished astronomer of Locris (who gives his name to the Dialogue just noticed), and Critias, a young Athenian whose accomplishments made him seem "all mankind's epitome" — being politician,

* Only two fragments of this "Epic" have come down to us—the prologue and the catastrophe, found in two Dialogues (the "Timæus" and the "Critias"), the latter of which is broken off abruptly.

sophist, poet, musician, all in one. At their request Socrates sums up his theories of the previous day, but professes himself to be hardly satisfied with his ideal sketch. Like one who has seen animals in a painting or at rest, and who would like to see them in active movement, so, he tells them, he would like to see how his imaginary State would really act in some great crisis, and how his citizens would bear themselves when they went forth to war; and he appeals to his friends to help him to exhibit his republic playing a noble part in history. And then Critias tells "an old-world story," handed down in his family from his great-grandfather Dropidas, who had heard it from Solon, and Solon had himself heard it in this wise.

Near the mouths of the Nile in Egypt stands the ancient city called Sais, where Amasis the king was born, founded by a goddess whom the Egyptians call Neith and the Greeks Athenè. Thither Solon came in his travels, and was received with great honour; and he asked many questions of the priests about the times of old, and told them many ancient legends, as he thought them, of his own land. But one of the priests, being himself of a great age, said: "O Solon, you Greeks are always children, and there is not an old man among you all. You have no traditions that are really grey with time, and your stories of Deucalion and Phaeton are only the partial history of one out of many destructions by flood and fire which have come at certain periods upon mankind, sweeping away states, and with them letters and all knowledge. The Nile has preserved our land from such calamities; and therefore we have faithful records of past ages preserved in our temples, while you are ever beginning your history afresh, and know nothing of what formerly came to pass in your own land or in any other; all your so-called genealogies are but children's tales. You do not even know that your own city, 9000 years ago, before the great Deluge, was foremost of all in war and peace, and is said to have done the greatest deeds, and to have possessed the fairest constitution of any city under heaven. And the same great goddess who founded our city founded yours also; for she and her brother Hephæstus obtained the land of Athens as their lot, and they planted there a race of brave men, and gave them a fair and fertile soil, and rich pastures, and a healthy climate. And these ancient Athenians (so Critias tells Socrates) realised in actual life the strict division of classes laid down in your 'Republic;' and their guardian soldiers—both men and women—were trained and went out to battle together like yours; and none among them had house or family or gold that he could call his own, but they had all things in common. And the number of these guardians neither increased nor decreased, but was always twenty thousand. And their most famous victory was over the vast army sent forth from the island of Atlantis.

"Now, this island was of a great size—larger than all Asia and Libya together—and was situated over against the straits now called the Pillars of Hercules. It was founded by the god Neptune, who divided the land among the ten sons that were born to him by a mortal woman. And the eldest, who was called Atlas, he

made king of all the island; and he made his brethren princes under him, and gave them rule over many men and wide provinces. And the descendants of Atlas multiplied, and he had wealth and power such as no other king ever had before or since. And the soil and climate of this island were so good, that the fruits of the earth ripened twice a-year; and there was abundance of both minerals and metals, and many elephants and other tame and wild animals of various kinds. And the city on the mountain in the centre of the island was a wondrous sight to behold; for bridges were built across the 'zones of sea' which Neptune had made, and a canal was dug from the city to the sea, and a fortress was built having stone walls plated with tin and brass and the red 'mountain bronze,' and in the midst was the king's palace and the vast temple of Neptune, covered with silver, and having pinnacles of gold and a roof of ivory. And within was a golden statue of the god himself riding in a chariot drawn by six winged horses — so huge that he touched the roof; and around were a hundred Nereids riding upon dolphins, and outside the temple were golden statues of the ten kings and their wives. Besides all these things there were many baths and fountains, and public gardens and exercise grounds, and dockyards and harbours full of merchant vessels and ships of war.

"And the plain around the city was sheltered by mountains, and guarded by a vast ditch 100 feet deep, and 600 feet broad, and more than 3000 miles long. And the ten kings who ruled the island held council

and offered sacrifice together, and were sworn to assist one another in peace and war. And they had 10,000 chariots and a fleet of 1200 ships.

"And for many generations the people of the island were obedient to the laws, and their kings ruled them wisely and uprightly, setting no value on their riches, nor caring for aught save for virtue only. But as time went on, the divine part of their souls grew faint, and they waxed insolent, and thus in the very plenitude of their power they provoked the jealousy of the gods, who determined to destroy them.

"It was then, or soon after, that the armies of Atlantis were sent to conquer Athens, as they had already conquered Libya and Tyrrhenia. But of the war which followed we know nothing, save that Athens stood alone in the struggle, and won a great battle over these barbarians, and that in the space of one day and night the victors and the vanquished disappeared together—for there was an earthquake and a deluge, and the earth opened and swallowed up all the warriors of Athens, while the great island of Atlantis sank beneath the sea. And to this day the sea which covers this island is shallow and impassable, and there is nothing in the Atlantic Ocean save mud and sandbanks."

THE CHARIOT OF THE SOUL.

(From the "Phædrus.")

Our soul, which has a triple nature, is as a charioteer riding in a chariot drawn by two winged steeds—one of a mortal and the other of an immortal nature. Their wings are the divine element, which, if it

be perfect and fully nourished on the pastures of truth and beauty, lifts the soul heavenwards to the dwelling of the gods. There, on a certain day, gods and demi-gods ascend the heaven of heavens—Zeus leading the way in a winged chariot—to hold high festival, and all who can may follow. The gods and the immortal souls, whose steeds have full-grown wings, are carried by a revolution of the spheres into a celestial world beyond, where all space is filled by a sea of intangible essence which the mind—"lord of the soul"—alone can contemplate: and here are the absolute ideas of Truth and Beauty and Justice. And in these divine pastures of pure knowledge the soul feeds during the time that the spheres revolve, and rests in perfect happiness, and then returns to the heavens whence it came, where the steeds feast in their stalls on nectar and ambrosia.

But only to a few souls out of many is it granted to see these celestial visions. The rest are carried into the gulfs of space by the plunging of the unruly horses, or lamed by unskilful driving; and often the wings droop or are broken, and the soul fails to see the light, and sinks to earth "beneath the double load of forgetfulness or vice." And then she takes the form of a man, and becomes a mortal creature; and, according to the degree in which she has attained to celestial truth, she is implanted in one of nine classes,—the highest being that of the philosophers, artists, poets, or lovers—and the lowest stage of all, the tyrant. Ten thousand years must be passed by the soul in this state of probation, before she can return to the place

whence she came, and renew her wings of immortality. And at the end of each life is a day of judgment, followed by a period of retribution, either for good or for evil, lasting a thousand years; and after that each soul is free to cast lots and choose another life. Then the soul of the man may pass into the life of a beast, or from a beast again into that of a man. But the soul of him who has never seen the truth will not pass again into the human form.

But from the souls of those who have once gazed on celestial truth or beauty the remembrance can never be effaced. Like some divine inspiration, the glories of this other world possess and haunt them; and it is because their souls are ever struggling upwards, and fluttering like a bird that longs to soar heavenwards, and because they are rapt in contemplation and careless of earthly matters, that the world calls the philosopher, the lover, and the poet "mad." For the earthly copies of justice or temperance, or any of the higher qualities, are seen but through a glass dimly, and few are they who can discern the reality by looking at the shadow.

And thus the sight of any earthly beauty in face or form thrills the genuine lover with unutterable awe and amazement, because it recalls the memory of the celestial beauty seen by him once in the sphere of eternal being. The divine wings of his soul are warmed and glow with desire, and he lives in a sort of ecstasy, and shudders "with the misgiving of a former world." Often, indeed, a furious struggle takes place between the charioteer and the dark and vicious horse

that wishes to draw the chariot of the soul on to unlawful deeds, and can only be curbed by bit and bridle. Happy are they who, with the help of the white immortal steed, can win the victory in this struggle, and end their lives in a peaceful and genuine friendship.

THE OTHER WORLD.

(From the "Gorgias" and "Phædo.")

We mortals, says Socrates, know nothing of the real world, for we live along the shores of the Mediterranean like frogs around a swamp; and we think we are on the surface, when we are really only in one of those hollow places of which our earth is full. But if a man could take wings and fly upwards, he would see the true world, which is a thousand leagues above our own; and there all things are brilliant with colour, and sparkle with gold and purple, and a purer white than any earthly snow. And there are trees and flowers and fruits, and jewels on all the hills, more precious than the sardonyx or emerald. And there are living beings there, both men and animals, dwelling around the air; for our air is like their sea, and their air is purest ether. And they know neither pain nor disease; and they live longer lives than we creatures of a day; and all their senses are keener and more perfect; and they have temples in which their gods really dwell, and they see them face to face, and hear their voices, and call them by their names. Moreover, they know the sun and moon and stars in their proper nature.

Now the largest of all the chasms in our earth is that which Homer calls Tartarus; and through it many and mighty streams of fire and water are ever flowing to and fro, some driven upwards to our earth by a rushing wind, and others winding in various channels through the lower world. Of these streams four are larger than the rest; and the first of these is called Oceanus, which flows in a circle round the earth. The second is Acheron, which passes through desert places to a lake in Tartarus, where the souls of the dead wait until such time as they are born again. And the third river is Pyriphlegethon, which boils with flames and falls into a lake of fire. And the fourth river is Cocytus, and it passes into the Stygian lake, where it receives strange powers, and then, after many windings, it also falls into Tartarus.

Even in the days of Saturn the same law prevailed as now—that men should be judged, and that those who had done good should be sent to the Islands of the Blest, and those who had done evil should be thrown into Tartarus. But judgment was then given on the day of a man's death, and both the judges and the judged were alive, and owing to men being still arrayed in beauty or rank or wealth, and the garment of the body also acting as a veil to the perceptions of the soul in the case of the judge, the judgment was not always just. So Jupiter ordained that for the future the naked soul of the judge, stripped of all its gross mortality, should judge the souls that were brought naked before him.

For when the soul separates from the body, each

part still carries with it its mortal features; and he who was tall in his lifetime will be tall after death, and he who had flowing hair will have flowing hair still, and the slave who was branded by the scourge will carry the scars upon his body into the other world. So also the soul of the tyrant will bear indelible marks of crime, and will be "full of the prints and scars of his perjuries and misdeeds." For such a soul as his there can be no cure; nor will there be any pardon for such as have been guilty of foul murder or sacrilege, but they will be thrown into Tartarus, whence they can never come forth, and their punishment will be everlasting.

But those whose crimes are not unpardonable will be condemned by the three judges to abide in Tartarus for a year; and after that they will be cast forth on the shores of Acheron, where they must wander lamenting, and calling out on those whom they have slain or wronged on earth to pardon and deliver them; and until their prayer is heard, they are forced to return again to their place of torment

Now the Three look with awe and reverence on the face of him who has lived a life of holiness and truth in this world, and who is probably a private citizen or philosopher, who has done his own work and not troubled himself about the business of others, and they send him to the Islands of the Blest, or to that purer earth of which we spoke before; "and there," continues Socrates, "they live henceforth, freed from the body, in mansions brighter far than these, which no tongue may describe, and of which time would fail

me to tell. And he concludes, in language almost apostolic:—

"Wherefore seeing these things are so, what ought we not to do, to attain virtue and wisdom in this life, when the prize is so glorious, and the hope so great?"

THE STORY OF ER.

("Republic," Book x.)

Er, the Pamphylian, a brave man, was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards his body, which, unlike all the other dead, was still uncorrupted, was brought home to be buried; but on the funeral pyre he returned to life, and told all that he had seen in the other world. When his soul left the body (he said) he journeyed in company with many other spirits until he came to a certain place where there were two openings in the earth and two in the heaven, and between them judges were seated,

"who bade the just, after they had judged them, ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand, having the signs of the judgment bound on their foreheads; and in like manner the unjust were commanded by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand; these also had the symbols of their deeds fastened on their backs. He drew near, and they told him that he was to be the messenger of the other world to men, and they bade him hear and see all that was to be heard and seen in that place. Then he beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either chasm of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them; and at the two other openings other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright, and always, on their

arrival, they seemed as if they had come from a long journey, and they went out into the meadow with joy, and there encamped as at a festival, and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously inquiring about the things of heaven, and the souls which came from heaven of the things of earth. And they told one another of what had happened by the way, some weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while others were describing heavenly blessings and visions of inconceivable beauty."—J.

And for all evil deeds each soul suffered a tenfold punishment, and for its good deeds it received a tenfold reward. And Er heard one of the spirits ask another, where Ardiæus the Great was? (He had been tyrant of some city in Pamphylia a thousand years before Er lived, and had murdered his aged father and brother, and committed many other crimes.)

"The answer was: 'He comes not hither, and will never come.' And 'indeed,' he said, 'this was one of the terrible sights which was witnessed by us. For we were approaching the mouth of the cave, and, having seen all, were about to reascend, when of a sudden Ardiæus appeared and several others, most of whom were tyrants; and there were also besides the tyrants private individuals who had been great criminals; they were just at the mouth, being, as they fancied, about to return to the upper world, but the opening, instead of receiving them, gave a roar, as was the case when any incurable or unpunished sinner tried to ascend; and then wild men of fiery aspect, who knew the meaning of the sound, came up and seized and carried off several of them, and Ardiæus and others they bound head and foot and hand, and threw them down

and flayed them with scourges, and dragged them along the road at the side, carding them on thorns like wool, and declaring to the pilgrims as they passed what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away to be cast into hell. And of all the terrors of the place, there was no terror like this of hearing the voice; and when there was silence, they ascended with joy.' These were the penalties and retributions, and there were blessings as great."—J.

Er and his spirit-companions tarried seven days in this meadow, and then set out again on their journey; and on the fourth day they came to a place where a pillar of light like a rainbow, but far brighter, stretched across heaven and earth, and in another day's journey they reached it, and found that this light bound together the circle of the heavens, as a chain undergirds a ship; and to either end of this pillar was fastened the distaff of Necessity, having a shaft of adamant and a wheel with eight vast circles of divers colours, fitted into one another, and narrowing towards the centre. And in these circles eight stars were fixed; and as the spindle moved round, they moved with it—each slowly or swiftly according to its proper motion. And on each circle a siren stood, singing in one note, and thus from the eight stars arose one great harmony of sound. And round about these circles at equal distances were three thrones, and on these thrones were seated the three daughters of Necessity, clothed in white robes, with garlands on their heads. And they also sang as they turned the circles of the spindle—Lachesis singing of past time, Clotho of the present, and Atropos of time that shall

be. The spirits, as they arrived, were led to Lachesis in order by a Prophet, who took from her knees lots and samples of lives, and, mounting a rostrum, spoke as follows: "Thus saith Lachesis, daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of mortal life! Your genius will not choose you, but you will choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice of life, which shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and according as a man honours or dishonours her he will enjoy her more or less; the chooser is responsible, heaven is justified." When he had thus spoken he cast the lots among them, and each took up the lot which fell near him, all but Er himself, who was not allowed.

And these lives were of every kind, both of men and animals, and were variously composed—beauty, and wealth, and poverty, and strength, and nobility all mingled together. But no definite character was yet attached to any; for the future nature of each soul depended on the life it might choose. And on the choice (so said the Prophet who had arranged the lots) each man's happiness depended: and to choose aright he should know all that follows from the possession of power and talent; and should choose the mean, and avoid both extremes so far as he may, not in this life only but in that which is to come. "Even the last comer, if he choose discreetly and will live carefully, shall find there is reserved for him a life neither unhappy nor undesirable. Let not the first be careless in his choice, neither let the last despair."

It was a sad yet laughable sight (said Er) to see the

manner in which the souls made their choice. For the first chose the greatest despotism he could find, not observing that it was ordained in his lot that he should devour his own children; and when he found this out, he lamented and beat his breast, accusing the gods, and chance, and everything rather than himself. And their former experience of life influenced many in their choice: thus the soul of Orpheus chose the life of a swan, because he hated to be born again of woman (for women had before torn him in pieces); and Ajax chose the life of a lion, and Agamemnon that of an eagle, because men had done them wrong; and Thersites, the buffoon of the Iliad, took the appropriate form of an ape. Last of all came Ulysses, weary of his former toils and wanderings; and, after searching about for a while, he chose a quiet and obscure life, that was lying neglected in a corner, for all the others had passed it by.

"Now when all the souls had chosen their lives in the order of the lots, they advanced in their turn to Lachesis, who despatched with each of them the Destiny he had selected, to guard his life and satisfy his choice. This Destiny first led the soul to Clotho in such a way as to pass beneath her hand and the whirling motion of the distaff, and thus ratified the fate which each had chosen in the order of precedence. After touching her, the same Destiny led the soul next to the spinning of Atropos, and thus rendered the doom of Clotho irreversible. From thence the souls passed straight forward under the throne of Necessity. When the rest had passed through it, Er himself also passed through; and they all travelled into the plain of Forgetfulness, through dreadful suffocating heat, the ground being destitute of trees and of all vegetation. As the evening

came on, they took up their quarters by the bank of the river of Indifference, whose water cannot be held in any vessel. All persons are compelled to drink a certain quantity of the water; but those who are not preserved by prudence drink more than the quantity: and each, as he drinks, forgets everything. When they had gone to rest, and it was now midnight, there was a clap of thunder and an earthquake; and in a moment the souls were carried up to their birth, this way and that like shooting-stars. Er himself was prevented from drinking any of the water; but how, and by what road he reached his body, he knew not: only he knew that he suddenly opened his eyes at dawn, and found himself laid out upon the funeral pyre." —L.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGION, MORALITY, AND ART.

"Religious ideas die like the sun; their last rays possessing little heat, are spent in creating beauty."—Lecky, Hist. of Morals.

In his famous picture of the School of Athens, Raphael has represented Plato as looking up towards heaven, while Aristotle has his eyes intently fixed upon the earth; and Goethe has endorsed the idea expressed in this painting. "Plato's relation to the world," he says, "is that of a superior spirit, whose good pleasure it is to dwell in it for a time. . . . He penetrates into its depths, more that he may replenish them from the fulness of his own nature, than that he may fathom their mysteries." * Certainly the most careless reader cannot help being struck by the persistency with which Plato dwells upon his favourite thought, that this life is only the first stage of an endless existence, that death is the release of soul from body, which the wise man welcomes with joy, and that philosophy itself is but a "meditation of death," or "the resembling, so far as is possible, of man to God." † In fact, *disce mori* may be

* Quoted in Ueberweg's History of Philosophy, i. 103—English transl.

† Phædo, 80; Theæt., 176.

said to be the text of Platonism. Perhaps, he says in the Gorgias, Euripides was right, and our life here is after all a death, and our body is the tomb or prison of the soul.* And in the same spirit in which Socrates bids Crito not to be too careful about his burial, Plato prohibits in his "Laws" expensive funerals—"for the beloved one whom his relative thinks he is laying in the earth has but gone away to complete his destiny." The soul, he reiterates, really makes each of us to be what he is, and the body is only its image and shadow, and after death all that is divine in us goes on its way to other gods.† Man himself is nothing more than a puppet or plaything of the gods, acting his part on the stage of life with more or less success, and "with some little share of reality." ‡

His view of human nature, and of man's limited powers of knowledge, is best illustrated in his own famous allegory of the Cave, in the seventh book of the "Republic."

"Imagine," says Socrates, "a number of men living in an underground cavernous chamber, with an entrance open to the light, extending along the entire length of the cavern in which they have been confined from their childhood, with their necks and legs so shackled that they are obliged to sit still and look straight forward, because their chains render it impossible for them to turn their heads round: and imagine a bright fire burning some way off, above and behind them, and an elevated roadway passing between the fire and the prisoners, with a low wall built along it, like

* Gorgias, 492. † Laws, xii. 959.
‡ Laws, vii. 803.

the screens which conjurors put up in front of their audience, and above which they exhibit their wonders. . . . Also figure to yourself a number of persons walking behind this wall, and carrying with them statues of men and images of other animals wrought in wood and stone and all kinds of materials, together with various other articles, which overtop the wall; and, as you might expect, let some of the passers-by be talking, and others silent."—D.

"This cave," Socrates continues, "is the world, and the fire that lights it is the sun, and these poor prisoners are ourselves—

'Placed with our backs to bright reality;'

and all sights or sounds in this twilight region are but the shadows or echoes of real objects. And as sometimes a prisoner in this cave may be released from his chains, and turned round, and led up to the light of day; so may our souls pass upwards from the darkness of mere opinion, and from the shadowy impressions of sense into the pure sunlight of eternal truth, lighted by the Idea of Good—in itself the source of all truth and beauty."

But "What is the Good?" Plato tells us, truly enough, that it is what all men pursue under different names,—deriving its existence, seeking its reality, yet totally unable to explain its nature; and he compares it in a parable, as we have seen, to the sun which illuminates the eternal world of Ideas, but as to its own essential nature he leaves us still in the dark. The philosophers in his State will know it, he says, for *their* souls will be enlightened, but he does not

know it himself; and although the knowledge of it is bound up with the existence of his State, and is the culmination of his system, all that he does is to "conduct us to the chamber where this precious and indispensable secret is locked up, but he has no key to open the door." *

Sometimes, indeed, he personifies this supreme Idea, and, as in the "Timæus" and "Philebus," abstract goodness is merged in the concrete God. But even here, his conception of Deity rises far above the jealous and sensitive occupants of Homer's Olympus, who were immortal beings with mortal passions and sympathies, strongly attached to persons and places, and sharing in all the hopes and fears of their worshippers. A Christian writer could hardly frame a more exalted idea of divinity than that which Plato has expressed in many of his Dialogues. With him the Deity is a being of perfect wisdom and goodness, all-wise and all-powerful, ruling the world which he has created by the supremacy of His reason. He can be only known to us through some type or form; but let none suppose that He would put on a human shape by night or by day, to help a friend or deceive a foe: for, being perfect goodness in Himself, such a change could be only for the worse; and, being perfect truth, He hates a lie either in word or in deed.†

In this conception of the Deity, Plato does but represent the tendency of Greek religion towards "Monotheism." Long before his time, all the deeper thinkers

* Grote's Plato, iii. 241.

† Republ., ii.

had ceased to believe in the old mythology. Even the sober piety of Herodotus had questioned some miracles and rejected others; and the keen common-sense of Thucydides had applied the historical test to the "Tale of Troy," looking upon it as a political enterprise, and accepting the catalogue of ships "as an authentic muster-roll." * Then Euemerus had allegorised these myths; and Palæphatus had softened them down into commonplace narratives of actual facts: thus the wings of Dædalus became a swift sailing vessel, the dragon which Cadmus slew was King Draco, and the dragon's teeth were the ivory of commerce. And philosophy had aided this progress of rationalism. More than a century before Plato, Xenophanes had pointed out the discrepancies involved in the popular mythology, and had declared emphatically that there was "one God, not to be compared to mortals in form or thought—all eye and all ear—who without effort rules all things by the insight of his mind." So again Empedocles had recognised, amidst the crash of warring elements, one holy impalpable Spirit, whom none could come near, or touch, or see; and even Anaxagoras, with all his materialism, had paid homage to a sovereign Mind which ruled the universe.

"But," says Professor Maurice, "there lay in the very heart of the faith of the Greek a seed of unbelief which was continually fructifying." † While many clung with unwavering faith to the religion of their fathers; while a few (as we have seen) professed a

* Grote's Greece, i. 333.

† Hist. of Philos., i. 86.

purer and higher belief than mere anthropomorphism; —there were others who, though they rejected the ancient myths, accepted nothing in their place: and the Sophists seem to have encouraged this increasing tendency to atheism among the younger and more sceptical spirits of this age. Prodicus maintained that men in olden times had deified whatever was of use to them: thus wine was promoted into Bacchus, and bread was dignified with the name of Ceres. Critias, again, declared that the gods had been invented by some crafty statesman to secure the obedience of his subjects; and one daring sceptic of this school, Diagoras of Melos (subsequently banished from both Sparta and Athens for his impious theories), had thrown a wooden statue of Hercules into the fire, saying that he might go through his thirteenth labour in the flames.

In the tenth book of the "Laws"—written, as has been said, in his declining years—Plato makes a bold stand against this growing impiety of his day. It springs, he says, from one of three causes; from utter atheism; or, second, from Epicurean apathy—the feeling that the gods exist, but never trouble themselves about mankind; or, thirdly, from superstition—the gods both exist and care, but you can pacify their anger by sacrifice. Heretics, in his ideal city, are to be punished by solitary confinement or by death, and the heaviest vengeance of the law is to light on the wolf in sheep's clothing—the impious hypocrite who dares to use his priestly garb to further his own ambitious or criminal ends. And then he gravely takes the sceptic

to task, and justifies the ways of Providence.* "Do not" (he says, almost in the very words of the Psalmist) "the heavens declare the glory of God?" Does not the universal testimony of mankind teach us that a God exists? And woe to the rash and presumptuous youth who presumes to charge the Deity with indolence or neglect, merely because he sees the wicked in prosperity, and handing down their power to their children after them. God is no unskilful workman, but in His wisdom has taken thought for all things, both small and great. Each part of the creation has its appointed work and purpose, and all the parts work together to some common end. What is best for one portion is therefore best for the whole. It is impious, indeed, to think that this fair creation around us could have been the work of nature or chance; or, again, that matter could have existed before mind. Such doctrines will sooner or later meet with their reward.

"God, as the old tradition declares, holding in His hand the beginning, middle, and end of all that is, moves according to His nature in a straight line towards the accomplishment of His end. Justice always follows Him, and is the punisher of those who fall short of the divine law. To that law, he who would be happy holds fast, and follows it in all humility and order; but he who is lifted up with pride, or money, or honour, or beauty—who has a soul hot with folly, and youth, and insolence, and thinks that he has no need of a guide or ruler, but is able himself to be the guide of others,—he, I say, is left deserted of God; and being thus deserted, he takes to him others who are like himself, and dances about in wild confusion, and many

* Laws, x. 886.

think that he is a great man, but in a short time he pays a penalty which justice cannot but approve, and is utterly destroyed, and his family and city with him. Wherefore, seeing that human things are thus ordered, what should a wise man do or think, or not do or think?"—J.

The perfection of man's existence, according to Plato, is to bring his nature as far as is possible into harmony with God; and this can only be done by cultivating the soul, which is the divinest part of us, and came to us from heaven long before our earth-born body.* "Honour the soul, then," he says, in one of his homilies in the "Laws," "as being second only to the gods; and the best way of honouring it is to make it better. A man should not prefer beauty to virtue, nor sell his word for gold, nor heap up riches for his children; since the best inheritance he can leave them is the spirit of reverence. Truth is the beginning of all good; and the greatest of all evils is self-love; and the worst penalty of evil-doing is to grow into likeness with the bad: for each man's soul changes, according to the nature of his deeds, for better or for worse."†

In more than one passage Plato combats the objection always raised against every system of Optimism—the existence of evil, which implies, according to the atheist, either a want of goodness in the Deity to allow it, or a want of power to prevent it. Practically, Plato refutes this argument in much the same language

* We may compare with this Kant's famous saying, "On earth there is nothing great but Man; in Man there is nothing great but Mind."

† Laws, x.

as a modern thinker might use. Evil in the creation does not imply evil in the Creator; its existence is part of a vast scheme of Providence: and because, with our limited faculties, we cannot discern the final cause or design of everything in nature (*e.g.*, the poison of the rattlesnake), we have no right to say, therefore, that no such final cause exists. Listen again to Plato (speaking in the person of Socrates) in the "Theætetus."

"*Soc.* Evils, Theodorus, can never perish; for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good. Of necessity, they hover around this mortal sphere and the earthly nature, having no place among the gods in heaven. Wherefore, also, we ought to fly away thither; and to fly thither is to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like Him is to become holy, just, and wise. But, O my friend, you cannot easily convince mankind that they should pursue virtue or avoid vice, not for the reasons which the many give—in order, forsooth, that a man may *seem* to be good;—this is what they are always repeating, and this, in my judgment, is an old wives' fable. Let them hear the truth: In God is no unrighteousness at all—He is altogether righteous; and there is nothing more like Him than he of us who is the most righteous. And the true wisdom of men, and their nothingness and cowardice, are nearly concerned with this. For to know this is true wisdom and manhood, and the ignorance of this is too plainly folly and vice. . . . There are two patterns set before men in nature: the one blessed and divine, the other godless and wretched; and they do not see, in their utter folly and infatuation, that they are growing like the one and unlike the other, by reason of their evil deeds; and the penalty is, that they lead a life answering to the pattern which they resemble. And if we tell them, that unless they depart from their cunning, the place of

innocence will not receive them after death ; and that here on earth they will live ever in the likeness of their own evil selves, and with evil friends,—when they hear this, they in their superior cunning will seem to be listening to fools."—J.

And in the same spirit the first great "type" to which all legends must conform, in his ideal State, is that God is good, and is the author of good alone ; the evil He suffers to exist for the just punishment of men. And therefore Plato will expunge from his new mythology all those false and debasing stories which Homer tells about the gods and heroes, with their violent passions, loves, and hatreds ; where even the great Achilles is represented as insolent and cruel,—as slaying his captives, cursing the Sun-god himself, and dragging Hector's body round the walls of Troy. He will have no sensational pictures of the lower world, with all its horrors of Styx and Tartarus, and with the souls of the dead "fluttering like bats" in sunless caverns. And the music shall be simple and ennobling : he will banish the wailing Lydian and soft Ionian measures, and he will have only martial strains in the Dorian mood, such as Tyrtæus sang when the Spartans marched out to battle ; and he will dismiss with honour from the State the charming and versatile poet who can assume all shapes and speak in all voices, and will take instead the rough but honest story-teller who will recite simple and useful tales.*

He again attacks the poets in the last book of the "Republic ;" and here the ground of offence is their imi-

* Rep., iii. 398.

tation, which is (says Plato) two degrees removed from reality ; for taking any object, such as a bed, there is first the ideal bed, created by the Deity, which alone has real existence ; and then there is the bed made by the carpenter in the image of the first ; and thirdly, there is the shadow of this image, which the painter or poet delineates in his picture or his poem, as it may be. "I have a great liking and reverence for Homer" (Plato continues), "who is the great master of all tragic poets—indeed from childhood I have loved his name ; but I love truth better. And what has Homer done for us, after all? He has not given us laws, like Solon or Lycurgus ; he has not given us inventions, like Thales and Anacharsis ; nor has he founded a brotherhood, like Pythagoras ; nor, again, has he taught us any of the arts of war and peace. If he had done any real good to men, is it likely that he would have been allowed to wander about, blind and poor? No ;—all that he does is to give us a second-hand imitation of reality, to exalt the feelings which are an inferior part of our soul, to thrill us with pity or terror, and so render us unmanly and effeminate." "There are enough sorrows in actual life" (he says, later on, in the "Philebus"), without multiplying them on the stage or in fiction."

Though Plato was more of a poet than a philosopher himself, and in his writings was said to strike the happy medium between poetry and prose, he is always disposed to regard the poets, as a class, in the light of harmless enthusiasts, often the cause of much mischief, but hardly responsible for their actions. In an earlier

Dialogue—the "Ion"—Socrates meets the rhapsodist of that name, and congratulates him upon having just won the prize for recitation at a public festival. "It must be a fine thing" (he says, with a tinge of irony) "to be always well dressed, and to study and recite passages from the prince of poets; but is Ion always master of his subject, and is his talent really an art at all? No" (Socrates goes on); "it must be inspiration—a magnetic influence, passing like an electric current from the loadstone of divine essence into the soul of the poet, and from thence into the souls of his hearers."

The simple-minded Ion is delighted at the idea of being inspired, and confesses that he does feel in a sort of ecstasy when he recites some striking passage—such as the sorrows of Andromache or Hecuba, or the scene where Ulysses throws off his rags, leaps on to the floor among the assembled suitors, and bends that terrible bow of his. "Then" (says Ion) "my eyes fill with tears, my heart throbs, my hair stands on end, and I see the spectators also weeping, and sympathising with my grief."

And the conclusion of this short but graceful Dialogue is, that the Deity sways the souls of men through the rhapsodist or poet, who is himself only the vehicle of inspiration, and knows little or nothing of the meaning of the glorious words which it is his privilege to utter.

Plato's own view of poetry and art, then, is, that it should be pure, simple, and ideal—free from the sensational innovations of modern days; and he points with approval to Egypt, where certain forms had been consecrated in the temples, from which neither painter nor sculptor was allowed to deviate, and where for ten thousand years they had preserved their chants and the statues of their gods unchanged.* The poet should not be left to his own devices; for bad music, like a bad companion, tends to corrupt the character: both the music and the words should be supervised by the magistrate, prizes for the best poems should be awarded by competent judges, and the moral of every lay or legend should be, that all earthly gifts—whether health, beauty, or wealth—are as nothing in comparison with a just and holy life. And in the "City of the Magnetes," where his own laws are to be promulgated, the following is to be the theme of the music consecrated by the State, and appointed to be sung by three choirs—children, youths, and men:—

"All our three choruses shall sing to the young and tender souls of children, reciting in their strains all the noble thoughts of which we have already spoken, or are about to speak; and the sum of them shall be, that the life which is by the gods deemed to be the happiest is the holiest;—we shall affirm this to be a most certain truth, and the minds of our young disciples will be more likely to receive these words of ours, than any others which we might address to them. . . . And those who are too old to sing will tell stories, illustrating the same virtues as with the voice of an oracle."—J.

We can never exactly tell how far Plato's views on

* Laws, ii. 660.

religion are an echo of his master's, or how far they are his own original ideas. We have another description of Socrates and his teaching in Xenophon's "Memorabilia," and there, like Plato, he appeals to the excellence of the creation round him to prove the wisdom of the great "World-builder;" he recognises the all-pervading and invisible presence of the Deity; he exalts the dignity of man, only "lower than the angels" in the possession of an immortal soul; and he points to signs and oracles to prove how closely we may be brought into actual communion with God. But in other respects, if Xenophon can be trusted, he preached a far lower standard of morality—upholding, in fact, the utilitarian doctrines so strongly condemned by the Platonic Socrates in the beginning of the "Republic." "You should test an action," he is made to say, "by its advantages to yourself. Be just, because justice brings its own reward with it; be modest, because immodesty never pays in society; be brave, because you gain glory thereby; be true and faithful, because truth will bring you friends, the most useful of all possessions."* If this was really the tendency of Socratic teaching, it is clear that Plato took far higher ground than his master. Nothing, in fact, could be further from his thoughts than to degrade Virtue into a mere calculation of the chances of more or less possible happiness.

And in the "Philebus" (one of his latest Dialogues), where the relative nature of pleasure and knowledge

* See Zeller's Socrates and the Socratic Schools, chap. vii.

is analysed, Plato distinctly maintains that pleasures differ in *kind* as well as degree,* the lowest being the mixed pleasures of the senses, and the highest and purest the mental enjoyment of music or mathematics. He also holds that wisdom is "ten thousand times better" than pleasure, since it alone satisfies the three criteria of goodness—beauty, symmetry, and truth; while, in the scale of perfection, pleasure is degraded by him to the fifth and sixth places.

The only one of Bentham's four "Sanctions"† which he would allow to influence our conduct would be that described in his Myths—the rewards and punishments in a future world. Virtue *per se* is most excellent—being, in fact, moral health and strength, just as Vice is moral disease; and worldly advantages are not to balance our actions, or influence us in the choice between good and evil. Even in prayer, he maintains that a man should not pray for gold, or honour, or children, but simply for what is good; and the gods will know best how to turn his prayer to his own profit. "The prayer of a fool," he says again, "is fraught with danger, and likely to end in the opposite of what he desires."‡ In the same spirit he quotes (in his "Alcibiades, ii.") some lines from an old poet, which, should, he thinks, be the model for all prayers: "King Jove, give us what is good, whether we pray for it or

* The utilitarian maxims are: "Pleasures differ in nothing but in continuance and intensity" (Paley); "The quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry" (Bentham).

† See his Introduction to Morals and Legislation, chap. iii.

‡ Laws, iii. 688.

not; and ward off what is dangerous, even though we pray for it." And the spirit of the prayer he declares to be worth more than any offerings a man can bring—just as the oracle of Ammon had declared the simple prayer of the Spartans to be worth more than all the sacrifices of Athens.

In one sense, Plato does not deny the "utility" of Virtue, any more than Cudworth or Butler would have denied it; and it is in this sense that we must take the famous sentence in the "Republic" which Mr Grote has prefixed as the motto to his three volumes: "The noblest thing that is said now, or shall be said hereafter, is, that what is profitable is honourable, and what is hurtful is base."*

* Rep., v. 457.

CHAPTER VIII.

LATER PLATONISM.

Speusippus, Plato's nephew, succeeded his uncle at the head of the Academy; and both he and those who succeeded him appear to have taken a few texts and phrases from their great master's writings, and on them to have built up ethical systems of their own; while others, like Hermodorus, traded on those "unwritten doctrines," said to have been divulged only to a favoured few. But all that time has brought down to us of the later Academy is some brief and fragmentary writings, and some untrustworthy traditions; and, for the most part, the memorial of these philosophers has perished with them.

Even in Plato's own day, divisions had sprung up among his followers; and one of his most promising pupils, who for twenty years had attended lectures in the Academy, founded that school which has ever since divided with his own the world of thought. "Every man is born an Aristotelian or a Platonist:" their principles are mutually repugnant, and there is no common ground between the two; and if Aristotle himself could not understand his master's point of view, there is still less chance of a modern Aristotelian

ever doing so. The very beauty of Plato's style, his exuberant fancy, the myths and metaphors in which he clothed his noblest thoughts, were all so many offences to the shrewd common-sense of Aristotle, who reasoned rigidly from fact to fact, who analysed the constitutions of three hundred states before he wrote a line of his "Politics," and whose cold and keen temperament had little sympathy with a philosopher who "poetised rather than thought." * As for the Platonic "Ideas"—the very foundation of Platonism—he regarded them as inconceivable and impossible, or, if possible, practically useless.

Plato's method of doubt and inquiry—carried far farther by his pupils than he ever intended it to be—resulted in the "New Academy," a school of Sceptics, of whom Pyrrho, originally a soldier in Alexander's army, was the leader. These Sceptics were a sign of the times. A weariness and despair of truth was creeping over society, and hence there grew up a feeling of indifference as to all moral distinctions, which the philosophers who professed it termed a "divine repose." Plato had said that there was no reality except in an ideal world, and Pyrrho and his followers pushed this doctrine so far as to deny the existence of any fixed standard of right and wrong, or of any certainty which sense or mind could perceive.

Socrates, it has been said, "sat for the portrait of the Stoic sage;" † and Stoicism perhaps owes as much to Plato as to the Cynics, of which school it was the

* Arist., Met. xi. 5. † Noack, quoted by Ueberweg, 187.

legitimate offshoot. The majesty of mind, the high ideal of a life in accordance with reason and untrammelled by self-interest, the strong sense of a personal conscience, the doctrine that a man's soul was an emanation from the Deity—all these tenets might have been held by Plato or his master. But the Stoic disregarded, if he did not disbelieve in, the immortality of the soul; and suicide, which Plato held to be cowardly and impious, was looked upon by Seneca and Epictetus as an easy and justifiable refuge against all the evils of life.

Zeno was the first who lectured at Athens in the Painted Porch, which gave its name (Stoa) to the sect. His pupil Cleanthes—so slow and sure that his master compared his memory to a leaden tablet, difficult to write upon but retaining an indelible impression—carried out in actual practice the principles of his training, drawing water and kneading dough the whole night long, that he might have leisure for philosophy in the day-time. Chrysippus followed, the second founder of the "Porch," who is said to have written upwards of seven hundred volumes; and lastly Posidonius, the most learned of all, whose lectures at Rhodes were heard both by Cicero and Pompey.

Rome was naturally the home of Stoicism. The pride and "majestic egotism" which was their ideal of virtue, suited stern and zealous characters like Cato or Cornelius; and this pride, when softened by religious sentiment, produced the noblest examples of pagan philosophy in the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the slave Epictetus. But though Stoicism could raise up

a school of heroes, it suppressed all softer emotions, and set up an ideal unattainable by any except the most exalted minds. A change was coming over society, and the want was felt of a more tender and attractive philosophy, and a longing for some deeper truth than the cold comfort given by a "creed outworn" like paganism. Hence a reaction set in against the casuistry and scepticism of the later Stoics in favour of the more spiritual side of humanity. Allegory, Mysticism, Inspiration, and Ecstasy, were the characteristics of this new philosophy; a critical spirit and the strict inductions of reason were discouraged; to elicit divine ideas, and to subdue the senses, was held to be the end of life. And, like other creeds, this dawned in the East.

Alexandria was the meeting-point of Eastern and Western civilisation. In its vast gardens and libraries might be found a medley of all nations, creeds, and languages; for the policy of the first three Ptolemys — known as Soter, Philadelphus, and Euergetes ("Saviour," "Loving-brother," and "Benefactor")— was a liberal and universal toleration. Accordingly, a temple of Isis might be found side by side with a Jewish synagogue, or a shrine dedicated to Venus; and freethinkers like Stilpo or Theodorus (banished from their own states in Greece for their impiety) were received with the same welcome at court as the translators of the Septuagint or the high priest from Eleusis. Everything, indeed, combined to make Alexandria the centre of attraction for philosophers and men of letters. Besides the natural

charms of the place—the bright sunshine, the clear atmosphere, and a soil so rich in flowers and fruits that "a man," says Ammianus, "might almost believe himself in another world"—there was the certainty of royal favour, of learned and congenial society, and (better than all) of a comfortable pension and a luxurious residence in or near the palace. For the further encouragement of literature, Ptolemy I. had founded and liberally endowed the "Museum" (or, as we should call it, "university"), with its porticos and lecture-rooms and dining-hall, and its library of 700,000 volumes—burnt when Alexandria was besieged by Cæsar. In connection with the library there grew up a school of grammarians and critics, whose lives were passed in the usual routine of a royal literary circle,—writing, publishing, dining together, talking scandal, and carrying on an incessant war of words.

In the learned world at Alexandria, some Jews founded a new system of philosophy by blending Judaism with Platonism. They sought for the deeper truth which they believed was hidden under every text of Scripture; intensifying all that was miraculous or supernatural, discarding the literal interpretation, and neglecting the ceremonial law as being merely the symbolism which veiled the truth. Philo headed this "mystical rationalism," tracing Plato's world of ideas back to Moses, but giving them a place in the Word of God as the plan of a building has a place in the mind of the builder. And, in language like that which Plato uses in the "Timæus," he describes how God, an invisible but ever-present

Essence, created and ruled the world by means of ministering spirits or potencies, of whom the Word is highest, and second only to Himself.

Philo lived just before the Christian era; and from his time a succession of Alexandrian Jews continued to give to the world their transcendental theories, founded on one portion or another of Plato's writings; some, like Apollonius of Tyana, going back to Pythagoras for their inspiration, and others, like the Therapeutæ, seeking "illumination" in a lonely and ascetic life,—until, towards the end of the second century, the school of Neo-Platonists was founded by Ammonius Saccas. They united the Eastern doctrine of "emanation" with the Platonic doctrine of ideas, believing that the ideas emanated from the One, as the soul emanates from the ideas, and that the last and lowest stage of emanation was the sensible and material world around us. They held it man's duty to purify his soul, and make it pass through various stages of perfection, until at last it should be freed from all contamination of the senses, and, in a sublime moment of ecstasy, enter into actual communion with God. Four times (so Porphyry tells us) his master Plotinus was thus "caught up" in a celestial trance. Indeed, this philosopher was so ashamed of having a body at all, that he would tell no one who were his parents or what was his country, and resolutely refused ever to have his portrait taken; for it was bad enough (he said) that his soul should be veiled at all by an earthly image, and he would never hand down an image of that image to posterity. How deeply he was imbued with

Platonism may be seen from the mere titles of the fifty-four treatises which have come down to us. Providence, Time and Eternity, Reason, Being, Ideas, the "Dæmon" who has received each of us in charge,—such are the subjects of some of the chapters in his "Enneads." He at one time even obtained leave of the reigning emperor to found a city in Campania, to be called Platonopolis, whither he and his friends were to retire from the world; but happily the idea was never actually put into execution.

The next generation of Neo-Platonists carried their Mysticism still further. They revived divination and astrology; they interpreted dreams and visions; they consulted oracles; and practised those ancient rites of expiation which Plato himself had so strongly condemned. Iamblichus, one of their number, traced a mysterious affinity between earth and heaven; and on one of Plato's texts—"all things are full of gods"—he constructed a hierarchy of heroes, dæmons, angels, and archangels. Proclus, again—a fanatic who wished that all books might be burnt except Plato's "Timæus"—interpreted his "God-enlightened master" in his own fashion, and perfected himself in every form of ritual, fasting and keeping vigil, celebrating the festival of every god in the pagan calendar, and honouring with mysterious rites the souls of all the dead.

There was one Neo-Platonist in the reign of Trajan whose genial and sympathetic character stands out in strong contrast to the superstition and pedantry of his age. This was Plutarch of Chæronea, better known as a biographer than a philosopher. He discusses the

Socratic morality with calm good sense, purges the old mythology, and preaches a purer monotheism than any of his contemporaries.

The last of the Neo-Platonists of whom we have any record was Boethius, who lectured at Athens; and shortly after his time the Emperor Justinian gave the death-blow to Greek philosophy by interdicting all instruction in the Platonic school.

It has been said that "Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts," and certainly most of Christian Mysticism may be traced back to the Neo-Platonists. From their time to our own we find this tendency towards a *theologia mystica* appearing in one form or another, —whether it be in the secret traditions of the Jewish Cabala—in the preaching of Eckhart in the fourteenth century—in the revival of Neo-Platonism at Florence in the days of Cosmo de Medici—in the science of sympathies taught by Agrippa and Paracelsus—in Jacob Behmen's celestial visions—or in Saint Teresa's "four degrees" of prayer necessary to reach a perfect "quietism."

Plato was regarded by the early Fathers of the Church in the light of another apostle to the Gentiles. Justin Martyr, Jerome, and Lactantius, all speak of him as the wisest and greatest of philosophers. Augustine calls him his converter, and thanks God that he became acquainted with Plato first and with the Gospel afterwards: and Eusebius declared that "he alone of all the Greeks had attained the Porch of Truth." It is easy to understand the grounds of this feeling. Passages from his Dialogues might be multiplied to prove the

close similarity which exists between them and the Scriptures, especially the books of the Pentateuch. The picture of the ideal Socrates preaching justice and temperance, and opposing to the self-assertion of the Pharisees of his age the humility of the earnest inquirer and the soberness of truth—his declaration at his trial that he will obey God rather than man, and fears not those who are only able to kill the body —the description of the just man persecuted, scourged, tortured, and finally crucified,*—such passages serve to explain the prayer of Erasmus, who added to the invocation of Christian saints in his litany, "*Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis;*" and the belief of so many of the Fathers that Plato, like St John the Baptist, was a forerunner of Christ. Again, the strong faith in the immortality of the soul—the no less strong sense of the pollution of sin—the belief that virtue is likeness to God—the idea in the "Phædrus" of a word sown in the heart, and bringing forth fruit in due season—the parable of the "Cave" and the Light of the upper world,—are a few instances out of many which might be quoted to show the foreshadowings of Christianity so often traced in Plato. Once, indeed—in the last conversation held by Socrates with his friends —a passage occurs which seems to point even more directly than any we have quoted to a Revelation hereafter to be granted. Simmias, one of the speakers in the Dialogue, thinks it impossible to hope for exact knowledge in the great question they are dis-

* The literal Greek is "impaled."

cussing—the unknown future of the soul; still, he argues, they should persevere in the search for truth, taking the best of human words to bear them up "as on a raft" through the stormy waters of life; but their voyage on this frail bark would be perilous, unless they might hope to meet with some securer stay—some "word from God," it might be.

Passages of this sort explain sufficiently the grounds of the reverence with which Plato was regarded by the Eastern Church, and especially in the school for catechists at Alexandria, where Clement and Origen taught. They even go far to justify the belief of Augustine that Plato might perhaps have listened to Jeremiah in Egypt, and that in his esoteric lectures in the Academy he revealed the mystery of the Trinity to a few chosen disciples.

Tertullian, on the other hand, declaimed bitterly at Carthage against all Greek philosophy. He headed the reaction which had set in against the Gnostics of a former century, who had changed Plato's "Ideas" into a world of Æons, and held that the Word, Wisdom, and Power, were so many emanations from the divine mind. Platonism Tertullian held to be the source of all heresies, and denied that there could be any fellowship between the disciple of Greece and the disciple of heaven, or between the Church and the Academy.

Boethius, as we have said, was the last Neo-Platonist; and his "Consolations of Philosophy" is the link between the old world and the new. Then came the Dark Ages, when the classics were only read by monks

and churchmen, till they were revived in the schools of Alcuin and Charlemagne.

Philosophy soon passed into scholasticism, and was confined to the dogmas of the Church; and throughout the Middle Ages we find two great hostile camps among the Schoolmen—the Realists and Nominalists—each fighting under the shadow of a great name; Plato being the first (said Milton) "who brought the monster of Realism into the schools," in his doctrine of Ideas, so sharply criticised by Aristotle. The question at issue between these two parties was whether Universals had a real and substantial existence, subject to none of the change and decay which affects particulars, or whether (as the Nominalists argued) they were merely general names expressive of general notions.

Early in the thirteenth century came a reaction from the East in favour of Aristotle. His writings (which had escaped destruction by the merest accident) had been translated as early as the fifth century into Syriac and Arabic; the Jews had translated them into Latin; and the conquests of the Arabs in Spain had brought them to the knowledge of the Schoolmen. Averroes, the greatest of Arabian commentators, looked upon Aristotle as the only man whom God had suffered to attain perfection, and as the source of all true science. He died in A.D. 1198, just before the rule of the Moors in Spain came to an end; but "Averroism," with its pantheistic tenets, long survived its founder.

Albert of Bollstadt, Provincial of the Dominican order in Germany, "the universal doctor" (who bears a kind of half-mythical reputation as Albertus Magnus),

reduced Aristotle's writings to a system. His pupil, Thomas Aquinas, "the angelic doctor," soon followed in his steps, rejecting all the texts of Platonism, denying innate ideas, or *à priori* reasoning in theology; but he is so far a realist that he recognises the existence of universals *ante rem*—that is, in the divine mind; and *post rem*—that is, obtained by the effort of the individual reason. His contemporary, Duns Scotus, "the subtle doctor," went further, and assailed Platonism with every weapon that the logic of his age supplied; while, later on, William of Ockham, "the invincible doctor," revived Nominalism, and regarded universals as a mere conception of the mind. Realism passed out of date with Descartes in the sixteenth century, and the tendency of all modern philosophy has been distinctly towards Nominalism. Our own great philosophical writers, Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, and Locke, all maintain that it is possible to have general names as the signs or images of general ideas.

Bacon, the contemporary of Descartes, denounced the wisdom of the Greeks as being "showy and disputatious;" their logic he considers useless, their induction haphazard, their dialectic "the mere chattering of children;" and among one of the grand causes of human error—"the idols of the theatre," as he terms them *—he ranks the Platonic "Ideas."

Once again an attempt was made to revive Platonism, at the end of the seventeenth century, by Cudworth, a writer of profound classical learning, who maintained that there were certain eternal and immutable verities which can only be comprehended by reason, can never be learned by experience, and cannot be changed by the will or opinion of men. And in this sense every intuitive moralist may be said to be a Platonist; for the doctrine of a moral sense, which apprehends of itself the distinctions of right and wrong, and is not merely the product of society or association, has its origin in the Platonic theory of "reminiscence."

* "I look upon the various systems of the philosophers," says Bacon, "as merely so many plays brought out upon the stage — theories of being which are merely scenic and fictitious."—Nov. Org., i. 44.

END OF PLATO.

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