

THE
METHODIST QUARTERLY REVIEW.

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ART. I.—THE BACON OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

IN a former number of this Review* we exhibited the need of a second grand Instauration of the Intellect, and the reasonableness of anticipating its early accomplishment. But the investigation which led us to those conclusions, however important in itself, was undertaken chiefly as a necessary preliminary to the examination of the characteristics by which we might recognise the true Coryphæus of the new reform, if such recognition should be deemed possible, and to the determination of the validity of the claims already alleged in favour of M. Comte, or hereafter to be advanced in favour of any other system-builder, to be esteemed truly the Bacon of the Nineteenth Century. These are questions of great moment, involving, as they do, the correct estimate of the present necessities and prospective fortunes of existing civilization; and awarding or refusing, according to their decision, the highest intellectual prize which is presented to human ambition, or is spontaneously bestowed when due, as the loftiest meed of intellectual service which humanity can confer on the greatest of its recognised benefactors.

It is with a proper sense of the magnitude and difficulty of the subject, and with a full consciousness of the necessity for extreme caution, impartiality, and sobriety of judgment, that we venture upon the task of attempting to solve, honestly and candidly, however imperfectly, these great problems. We believe with a firm conviction that the completion of the investigation proposed will enable us to question on broad and elevated grounds the pretensions advanced in behalf of M. Comte by his zealous but indiscreet followers, and, at the same time, will assist in expediting the coming Instauration, by pre-shadowing its true type. If it should still leave our allegiance free, we shall at least be rescued from the imminent perils of a fatal delu-

° July, 1852, Art. I.

FOURTH SERIES, VOL. V.—21

ART. IV.—SOCRATES.

1. *The Works of Plato.* A new and literal version, chiefly from the text of Stallbaum. Vols. I-V. London: Henry G. Bohn. Classical Library. 1848-1852.
2. *The Memorable Things of Socrates.* Written by Xenophon, in five books. Translated into English. To which is prefixed the Life of Xenophon. Collected from several authors, together with some account of his writings. London. Printed for George Sawbridge at the Three Golden Flower d'lys in Little Britain. 1712.
3. *The Life of Socrates.* By M. Charpentier. Translated into English. London, 1712.
4. *A Life of Socrates.* By Dr. G. Wiggers. Translated from the German, with Notes. London, 1840.
5. *Thirlwall's History of Greece.* Vol. I. New-York: Harper & Brothers. 1845.
6. *History of Greece.* By George Grote, Esq. Vol. VIII. Boston, 1852.

THERE are some lives that seem never to lose their interest to the human race by the lapse of time. Springing as they do from the great heart of human things, and embodying elements of unchangeable value, they never cease to awake an answering throb of sympathy in the soul of man. There is, after all, a deep identity of nature that links the whole race in bonds of brotherhood, so that when we understand our common nature in one of its developments, we understand it better in all the rest, and when we meet one of its largest and best types, we are drawn to its study by an irresistible interest. Such a nature is that of Socrates. The history of its development has arrested the admiring study of more than twenty centuries, and yet possesses an exhaustless interest that is as fresh to us as it was to the most reverent Academic that ever cherished the memory of his great master. On these general grounds, therefore, it were well to refresh our memories, and extend our knowledge in regard to one so well worth our study. But as Christians, there are peculiar reasons for this task, as will probably appear in the sequel. There is no heathen life that contains so many elements of interest to us as that of Socrates, for none came so near what Christianity requires, none furnished such a model of conduct to instruct and reprove those who have a better and surer word of prophecy, and none showed so clearly how much man at his highest development needs a light from heaven. The recent investigations of Mr. Grote have thrown new light on certain questions connected with the life of Socrates, and rendered a revision of it the more necessary. Without then undertaking to discuss all the points of his history, or to consider his character as a philosopher, or the extent of his contributions to the metaphysical capital of the race, we propose simply to

present some of those aspects of his life and character that a cursory examination of the original sources of his history has impressed upon our minds.

Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, a statuary, and Phænerete, a midwife, was born on the 6th of the month Thargelion, in the 4th year of the 77th Olympiad, about the 16th of May, B. C. 468. Athens having incorporated many of the adjacent tribes into its municipality, it was customary to designate this fact in describing an individual in any legal document. Socrates in such a reckoning was of the borough of Alopece, and belonged to the tribe Antiochis. Of his early life we know but little, except some rumours of filial insubordination, which, although reaching us through a hostile channel, are not wholly out of keeping with the gnarled texture of his natural character. He learned the trade of his father, and it is even said that some products of his chisel were allowed to adorn the Acropolis. At the age of seventeen he placed himself under the tuition of Archelaus, a disciple of the sceptical Anaxagoras, and applied himself to the study of natural science. But this, among the Greeks at this time, was wholly a different thing from that noble and massive product of observation and induction that we know by this name. It consisted of a few meagre and undigested observations of natural phenomena, smothered over with a mass of puerile frivolities and anile conceits, that soon disgusted such a mind as that of Socrates, and led him to turn from such shadowy speculations to subjects more practical and intelligible. It seems difficult at this day, when physical science is so much more practical than metaphysical, to conceive how their positions could have ever been reversed; and yet it is obvious that mere theorizings about the heavenly bodies, the elements, the origin of the gods and men, and similar themes, were barren figments, incapable of verification, or of application to the things of common life; whilst an examination into the principles of human action, where there was no revealed rule of faith and practice, was as obviously susceptible of the most valuable use. Hence he totally abandoned natural science, as a field incapable of exploration, and turned his attention to that which was most patent to his observation, the science of right knowing and right living, or ethics in its largest application to the powers of the human soul and the things of common life.

The period of Athenian history, in which Socrates lived, was remarkable on some accounts, and tended to give caste to his character. It was a period of great national glory, without being preëminently a period of great men. Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Salamis had placed Athens in envied supremacy, as the queen of the world.

But most of the mighty spirits whose heroism and genius had won these triumphs were gone. Miltiades and Themistocles had passed away, and the year that gave Socrates birth recorded the death of Aristides and the first poetical triumph of Sophocles. The grand old Æschylus, whose lofty spirit delighted to revel in scenes of terrible sublimity, was bending with age, while the pure-hearted Sophocles, and the polished Euripides, were gradually losing their hold on the popular mind, and their stately tragedies giving place to the buffooneries of Kratinus and the lampoons of Aristophanes. Pericles, the polished and peerless monarch of this proud democracy, had flung around Athens some of the splendour of his own great genius; but he had also planted in it some of its elements of decay. He crowned the Acropolis with the marble miracles of the Parthenon and the Propylæa, adorned them with the splendid taste of a Phidias, and fired the people with an indomitable tenacity of purpose that preserved them from overthrow in after times of peril. But he also breathed into them a more restless spirit of pride, a more grasping spirit of rapacity, and a "manifest destiny" spirit of covetous greed; and by giving entrance money for the theatre and pay for the public assemblies from the treasury, he established a system that in the end corrupted the people and impoverished the state. But the immediate effect of his measures was to give a prodigious activity to the general intellect of Athens. The gains of conquest having relieved the mass of the people from the need of daily labour for their daily bread, they had leisure to meet in the legislative and judicial assemblies of the state, or mingle with the crowds that thronged the porticoes and public walks of that beautiful city. These daily meetings brought mind into collision with mind, and gave a quickness, spring, and acumen to the Athenian intellect that was unparalleled. That restless activity of mind, which in modern free states is expended in commerce, and the industrial pursuits of life, by the peculiar arrangements of Athenian society, in which there was neither scope nor necessity for such efforts on an extended scale, was turned to the discussion of questions of political and metaphysical philosophy. This gave an amazing impulse to the Athenian intellect, and created the circumstances in which the mind of Socrates received its earliest training. Day by day would the young sculptor, with his broad shoulders, his clear gazing eyes, and his keen intellect, mingle with these crowds, listen to their discussions, ponder their opinions, and, as occasion served, join in these colloquial combats with all the zest of an eager disputant.

But there was another peculiarity in Athenian society that also acted powerfully on the development of its intellect. All the move-

ments of state, and most of the judicial causes, were decided in public assemblies. In these every man was expected to plead his own cause. Now as a man's property, influence, reputation, and even life, often depended on his ability to convince a popular assembly, the art of doing so was naturally very desirable. This gave rise to a class of teachers who professed to prepare men to argue with triumphant success on any subject whatever. As adroitness in this kind of intellectual swordplay was greatly admired, and often highly advantageous, it would be sought with great avidity, and at any cost. The men who professed to teach it would naturally become a set of mere word-wrangers, intellectual Swiss mercenaries, pretending to knowledge on every subject, indifferent to truth on any, and stuffed with the pride of mere pretension. Hence, by a natural process, the Sophists became a class of boasters, sciolists, and sceptics, unsettling all solid foundations of opinion, that they might prepare the way for maintaining any opinion, inventing a set of logical puzzles and juggleries that confounded, if they did not convince the multitude, and by making men equally prepared to defend truth and falsehood, they made them equally indifferent to both.

Mr. Grote's vindication of the Sophists is one of the most interesting portions of his valuable work, and shows clearly that odium has unjustly been heaped upon them; but after all it is, in some respects, only a very ingenious specimen of special pleading. His plea for them, that they were simply the professors of that day, teaching the prevalent forms of science, whilst it exempts them from the charge of peculiar depravity, by no means clears them from the charge of injuring the tone of the public mind. It was precisely because they did teach the prevalent philosophy, instead of something better, and because they sought to make men expert logical swordsmen, able to defend themselves from any charge however true, rather than to lead them to know and love the truth, that their influence was so pernicious. When men are prepared to defend indifferently truth and falsehood, they become equally indifferent to both, and from indifference to truth the transition is easy and certain to the blindest scepticism. Moreover, the ability to defend any proposition is incompatible with genuine knowledge, and can only exist in a mind whose knowledge is superficial and verbal, and which has never penetrated to the essential verities of things. The word-knowledge and logical dexterity, taught by the Sophists, would naturally, therefore, tend to puff their pupils with a conceit of knowledge that concealed even from themselves a real ignorance. Hence, whilst it was true that the celebrated Sophists, who taught in Athens, prepared their pupils to act their part in the restless life of that turbulent democracy,

it is also true that it was at the expense of that love of truth, and that modesty of true science, without which the active intellect of this mercurial people would soon effervesce into mere frivolity and weakness.

Such was the state of things in Athens when Socrates was forming his character. The republic was haughty, powerful, and magnificent, yet cherishing elements of inevitable decay. Her fevered activity was in part a factitious energy, a hectic glow that was a symptom of disease rather than a token of health. Pericles, after breathing some of his own lofty spirit into the people, and leading them into the Peloponnesian war, lay down, amid the terrible scenes of the plague, with a heavy heart, to die, and left his darling city to feebler and meaner hands. No great intellects were left to seize the reins that dropped from his hands, and the state was left to the action of the elements of decay already planted in her bosom. In this heaving rush of social life Socrates daily mingled, and saw clearly its radical defects. He saw that the prevalent teachings of those who directed the public opinion of Athens were eating but its heart, and must end in inevitable decay and dissolution.

Had Socrates been an ordinary man, he would have yielded to the powerful tide that swept along the channels of Athenian life, and been ranked with the other names that appear in Grecian history. But his was no ordinary nature. With a body of incredible endurance and strength, he had a mind equally marked by strong, clear common sense, and power of logical analysis. These analytical powers were cultivated partly by the schools, and partly by solitary reflection, but mainly by those keen colloquial combats that formed so marked a peculiarity of Athenian life. By these agencies his power of tracing a thought through every doubling of sophistry was developed until it became like the eye of the hunter, who follows his trail with unerring accuracy where others would see nothing but pathless confusion. *But his most remarkable traits were those of his moral nature. Other men had nobler impulses, and warmer affections, what is commonly called a better heart; but no man ever lived who had a larger development of natural conscience. This was, indeed, the master faculty of his soul. Clear perceptions of the right and the true, and proper feelings in regard to them, furnish the key to the character and history of Socrates. Here we find the secret of his revolt against the philosophy of the day and the teachings of the Sophists. The whole tendency of philosophical speculation at that time was sceptical and irreligious, and against this the fine moral nature of Socrates rose up in emphatic protest. He hated wrong, falsehood, and unreality, wherever he found them, but

especially among the leaders of the public mind; and his conscience recoiled with disgust from the insincerity, indifference to truth, and sham pretension of the Sophists. Hence he was by nature a reformer, and, like every other true reformer, the deepest, broadest, richest subsoil of his nature was religious, and from this massive substructure of his character all the rest drew their vitality and strength. Here we find the element that lifts him above all other Greeks, and most other men. Aristides before him had a fine moral development, but lacked that fervent enthusiasm of the religious emotions that lay warm and deep in the heart of Socrates, giving vigour to all the outgrowths of his life. Aristotle after him had more subtlety, more searching power of logical analysis, but lacked this primary formation of every truly great nature; for as the tallest mountains always lay bare at their summits the deepest rocks that underlie the crust of the earth, so the loftiest natures of our race ever lift up toward heaven those deep granitic elements of the religious nature which lie nearest to the great, glowing heart of the world. Socrates had faith, and hence he had power. Indeed, the fact that has impressed us more than any other in his character, was his amazing spirituality, using the term to designate that predominance of the unseen and the eternal in their influence over the soul that is not necessarily confined to the form in which we find it among Christians. Never was there an uninspired man, perhaps, who acted more constantly in view of the right, the true, and the divine, and whose nature was less enthralled by the visible, the temporal, and the sensible. Such then were the natural elements of this extraordinary character—conscience, and common sense, to a wonderful degree; and such the influences acting upon them—a form of social life that sharpened the intellectual element to an amazing acuteness, dexterity, and power, and a tone of thought and action that roused the moral element into indignant and powerful protest.

At what age Socrates began his labours as a public teacher is not entirely certain; but it was probably about the age of thirty, when mind and body had reached their most perfect development. The causes that led to this course of life are apparent from the preceding statements. Like the earnest monk of Erfürth, who found the problem of the Reformation in the struggles of his own great heart, this Luther of Athens found in questioning his own soul the secret of social reform, and seeing the corruption that false teachers were spreading, he set himself steadily to effect a reform. Like every other great reformer, he deemed himself summoned to this work by a divine call, and kindled his soul at the fire of the altar. The

Delphic oracle was, to the devout Greek, a veritable expounder of the will of Heaven, and hence regarded with religious reverence. Whatever was its real character, it was the visible representation of the divine will, and hence concentrated on itself the religious emotions of the Greeks. Its "heaven-descended" *know thyself* fastened on the mind of Socrates, and led him to that searching self-scrutiny, and that exhaustive analysis of his opinions and grounds of belief, that made him the Bacon of Grecian philosophy. In these intense processes of solitary thought he acquired that wonderful power of abstraction that makes credible the story that in the Potidæan expedition he was once seen standing from sunrise to sunrise the following day, in the same posture, absorbed in profound meditation; and that enabled him, in all the confusion of a noisy crowd, to pursue a thought with an undeviating tenacity that was never baffled. Acquiring thus a clear sense of the defects of the prevalent forms of thought, a nature like his would be desirous of attempting to correct them. But we have reason to believe that he had more direct and specific impulses than these.

His friend Chærephon applied to the Delphic oracle to know who was the wisest of the Greeks, and received the response: "Sophocles is wise, Euripides is wiser, but the wisest of all men is Socrates." This utterance of the oracle, which we have no reason to suppose was unfairly obtained, caused Socrates to suspect that he had a divine mission to fulfil to his people. He began to feel that he was called to be a prophet and a missionary, sent forth to recall the wayward and worldly Athenians to the true principles of virtue and piety. This he asserts in the most solemn manner in his Apology, resting the defence of his conduct on this divine legation. (See Apology, c. 18.)

We here find a clew to the proper understanding of the vexed question about the demon of Socrates. This is, undoubtedly, the most difficult matter in his life, and has given rise to the most varied theories of explanation. The difficulty lies in reconciling the accounts we have of it, with what we know to be truth on the one hand, and what we know to be the character of Socrates on the other. It is represented as an internal voice, that warned him in regard to doubtful things, such as, not to take the road that most of the army took after the battle of Delium, and were overtaken by the enemy; not to take a certain street, which his friends taking met with an accident; that the Sicilian expedition would be unfortunate, although everything seemed to promise success, &c., &c.; so that it was said by Socrates himself, that no man ever neglected his advice without having reason to regret it. The most remarkable peculiarity of it

was, that it never commanded, but only forbade, confining its intimations to simple prohibitions of what would be inexpedient.

What was the exact nature of this intimation? If natural, why did Socrates represent it as supernatural, and why did it warn in regard to things beyond the scope of ordinary foresight? If supernatural, how can we conceive of God giving him a messenger that should descend to such trifles as preventing him from coming in contact with a herd of swine, or Crito from being scratched by the branch of a tree, when we have no evidence that such a messenger was ever given to any other mortal? Without discussing the various explanations that have been proposed, in ancient and modern times, we shall give what we deem to be the true one, that whilst Socrates honestly believed it to be supernatural, it was merely natural, the intelligible action of those powers of mind with which he was so preëminently gifted.

To suppose that Socrates pretended to such an internal guidance, knowing that it was not supernatural, is simply absurd. There is no possible mark or test of sincerity which he did not repeatedly give. It is usually forgotten in discussing this point, that Socrates was a firm and reverent believer in the traditionary religion of his country. Without receiving the absurd fables of the poets, he held to certain great doctrines, such as the existence of a supreme God, and also of certain subordinate gods, who, although not supreme, were yet endued with a divine nature. (See a very remarkable passage in the *Memorabilia*, lib. iv, cap. iii, especially § 13, where a supreme Creator and Preserver is distinctly asserted.) He further believed in an intermediate order of beings, demons, or angels, who had direct admission to the soul of man, and were capable of conveying to it impulses and impressions. Their aid he believed could be obtained by any man who would seek it in virtuous living. Acts and states of the mind that could be referred to no other cause, he referred to their agency, as one adequate and intelligible, and of whose existence he had not the slightest doubt.

There is a class of mental states, the exact origin of which is somewhat obscure. We believe that a certain thing is so, because we perceive it to be so by a kind of direct intuition; we feel an impression that we ought not to do a certain thing, although we cannot tell why; we have an instinctive attraction to, or recoil from a person, an impression at first sight, for which we can give no valid reason; or we have what is called a presentiment as to the future, not based on reason, and not subject to it, which often precedes some adverse event. There are some men, who always know how to say and do the right thing in the right time and place, not as the result of any logical process, but by a sort of direct intuition.

These are men of strong common sense, or mother wit, or lucky men, as the case may be, and if they were to attempt an explanation of their states of mind, they would simply say, "I felt that I ought to do so, and did it." Suppose these men to believe in the admission of superior intelligences to the soul, and there would be nothing strange in the belief that they caused these direct convictions by immediate impression. Here then was the precise position of Socrates. Along with his wonderful logical powers, he had, to an unequalled degree, the intuitive action of the faculties, and excelled most other men in clear, direct common sense, that inexplicable ability of perceiving the expedient and proper at a glance, without waiting for any process of reasoning. His mental habits gave an unusual distinctness to all his mental states, causing them to come forth to the cognizance of consciousness with the vivid clearness of a voice. Believing in the admission of superior intelligences to the soul, and accustoming himself to regard these mental states under that conviction, we can easily see how they would readily be referred to this supernatural source. The very logical structure of his mind would impel him to give such an explanation of these instinctive impressions; for he could rest only in an adequate cause for every effect, and such a cause for these phenomena he found only in spiritual agency. That these intimations were only prohibitory, arose, doubtless, from the fact, that such is their natural tendency in the mind. It is always easier to know what we ought not to do than what we ought; what is not the truth than what is; and this was preeminently the case with Socrates, who was always more ready to show the error of another man's opinions than give the truth as his own. This negative, protestant character of his mind, would naturally give a mainly prohibitory action to his intuitions, and when the habit was once formed, would grow in emphasis and distinctness. Making the necessary abatements for exaggeration, there is nothing in the accounts of this demon of Socrates that is not explicable on this supposition, and nothing at variance with right reason. There are incidents in the lives of Napoleon, Talleyrand, and every man of extraordinary sagacity, to the full as wonderful as anything recorded of Socrates, which, had they believed in his psychology, would have been referred to the genius, as Napoleon, perhaps, did often refer them to his star, and the hypothesis of the Greek was every whit as reasonable and as intelligible as that of the Corsican.

We have now reached the impulse that lay deepest in the heart of Socrates. The Delphic oracle, which to him was the voice of God, had pronounced him to be the wisest of mortals, and thus designated him as a teacher of his fellow-men. He, therefore, de-

terminated to go forth and ascertain by actual experiment the meaning of the oracle, and thus began his work as a public teacher. He felt that he had a lofty mission to fulfil, a mission to which he was summoned by the highest of all authorities, and therefore to which he was impelled by the deepest of all obligations. There pressed upon his heart a most vehement prophetic impulse, which, like a rushing mighty wind, filled and fired his whole nature, making him feel that a necessity was laid upon him, yea wo was unto him, if he fulfilled not this divine summons; and hence, conferring not with flesh and blood, he went right onward to his task. He saw that the grand defect of the Athenian mind was a conceit of knowledge whilst they were ignorant, mistaking words for things, and thinking that they understood a subject because they could argue about it. With as cordial a hatred of all shams, unrealities, and insincerities, as the cynical Sartor Resartus, he went to work for their overthrow much more effectually than the rugged Carlyle. He determined to aid every man in ascertaining precisely what he did know, by an inventory and analysis of the contents of his mind, and thus bring him to an exact estimate of his own powers and attainments, and reach such an estimate himself.

In entering on this work, he first selected a leading politician, esteemed wise both by himself and others, and after listening to his views, he began to question him as to what he meant by this and that phrase which he used, and soon found that he attached no very definite conception to those words, and that his supposed wisdom was at last really little more than a knowledge of terms, whose real significance was as unknown to him as to others. He tried to prove this to the politician, but very naturally without success. Finding then at last the politician knew no more than he did himself, but could not be made to admit the fact, he began to infer that the superior wisdom attributed to him by the oracle consisted not in greater knowledge than others, but in more exactly knowing wherein he was really ignorant. He then went to other prominent men, statesmen, poets, and philosophers, but with the same result. His relentless questions about the meaning of such and such terms soon carried them beyond their beaten track to a region of indeterminate vagueness, where they were soon entangled in confusion. He then went to the artisans, and found that whilst they understood their own occupations, they were equally deluding themselves with mere word-knowledge in regard to other subjects, and yet equally unwilling to admit that they were really in ignorance or error. Here then was the work of his life: to convince the Athenians of their real wants, to disenthral them from the influence of the Sophists, to give them

clear notions of the great subjects of human thought, and thus lead them to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue.

Here then we meet with Socrates fairly embarked on his new career, leaving his statuary shop, and exchanging the moulding of marble for the moulding of men. Uncouth, odd, almost ludicrous in his appearance, never have such a body and such a mind been brought together among men. His great goggle-eyes, snub-nose, thick lips, satyr-like features, and obese stomach, made him fitting game for the Satirists; but to the eye of a closer observer the huge mass of brain, the strong lines of character about the mouth, and the square, stalwart frame, evinced an underlying manliness that excited other emotions than those of the comic. He had a body so firm and enduring in its powers, that on a few olives, or a little bread and water daily, he was capable of undergoing incredible fatigue, wearing no under garment, and the same upper one for both summer and winter, going barefoot through the whole year, and retaining the same scanty costume, even through the Potidæan campaign with its Thracian frost and snow, and suffering no inconvenience from the stifling heat of Athens during the dread season of the plague. Calm, good-humoured, and imperturbable, he could come to the theatre to hear himself lashed by the merciless wit of Aristophanes, and even rise up during the play that strangers present might see the original of this laughter-moving picture; and yet he had by nature a lion-like fierceness of temper, which, when at rare intervals it escaped beyond his control, was terrible in its fury, and a courage which could not only rescue Alcibiades and Xenophon from the battle-field at the risk of his own life; but more than all this, could, as presiding Prytanis for the day, refuse to put the question that would, contrary to law, sacrifice the ten generals to the rage of the people, although every other senator shrunk from the storm; could refuse to obey an unjust order of the Thirty Tyrants, though enforced with threats that constrained the obedience of all the others included in it; and could defend the affrighted Theramenes, when even the sacredness of the altar could not furnish him protection against the fury of his murderers. Poor to utter destitution, he had no habit that demanded riches, and no taste that they could gratify. He did not despise the luxuries of life, like Diogenes, or glory in being ragged and dirty, for he was commonly neat in his attire, but was simply indifferent to the elegancies of life for the same reason that he was indifferent to the toys of a child; he had outgrown them. Although rejecting with scorn any fee for his instructions as a degradation of their priceless and Heaven-sent character; and steadily refusing the costly gifts that his admiring

disciples were continually pressing upon him—partly because he would not be cumbered by the care of keeping them, and partly because he preferred to be independent—he yet made no scruple of asking any of his friends for a new cloak when he needed one, and had no money to buy it. He did not despise luxurious living; for he could sit down, at the splendid tables of Crito and Alcibiades, and share their dainties with as much and no more relish than he enjoyed his barley-porridge and water in his simple dwelling. Though habitually temperate, even to abstinence, he could sit and tittle and talk until he had drunk the whole company of bottle heroes under the table; and after reasoning, and disputing, and drinking the live-long night, until every disputant was overcome with drunken sleep, could rise up in the early dawn, and go forth with his head of granite unmoved by the night's work, and hunt some fresh company with which to spend the day in fresh disputations. All that he demanded of the world was simply food and raiment to support life in the plainest manner, and these he commonly provided by his own manual labour. Such was this strange city missionary of Athens, who undertook to reform its mercurial population.

His method of procedure was peculiar. Having found by experience that the public assemblies of the people were not suitable places for his labours, he directed his attention to individuals. He went from place to place, and from man to man, ready to talk with every one, rich or poor, young or old, scholar or clown, one or many; and was withal so simple, so frank, and so communicative, that none could refuse to listen to him. Now he would go and sit down in the workshops and talk with the workmen about their trades, until he had found out all that they could communicate, when he would give them his own sagacious suggestions about their work, thus enlisting their respect and sympathy. He would then insensibly lead them to higher themes, speaking of the great work of human life, until he imparted to them some deeper breathings after virtue than they ever had before. Next he would be found at the house of a friend surrounded by a circle of eager listeners, or at rare intervals walking under the shade of the plane-trees on the banks of the Ilissus, arguing about the true office of the poet, the philosopher, or the man. Then he would go forth into the crowded market-place, where his short, unwieldy figure, rolling along like a half-sobered Silenus, and yet broad and muscular as a dwarfed Hercules, his quaint dress, his naked feet, his enormous head, with its goggle-eyes, snub-nose, and thick lips, would produce an impression on the gay Parisian crowd of Athens, not unlike the appearance of George Munday or Lorenzo Dow, in the gardens of the Tuileries. Ever

ready to bandy a jest or to hold a colloquy, he would soon have around him a crowd of listeners. At first he would talk to them about the smiths and carpenters who were at work around them, or discuss some topic of Athenian gossip for the day, until they would shout with laughter at his sly jokes and homely hits. Their attention being thus gained, he would insensibly glide into other topics of graver moment, and as he talked of these majestic themes his eye would begin to dilate with a strange glow, and his voice to thrill with a wondrous melody that would steal from heart to heart like a spell of fascination. The noise of the laughing crowd would subside, the eager listeners would press closer and closer as if drawn by some resistless attraction, every eye would become fixed, and every ear bent forward to catch those solemn tones that came from his lips at these times of inspiration, which those who heard them compared to the dread chiming of the sacred cymbals in the worship of Cybele, until at last every heart throbbed with the most intense excitement, every eye swam with tears of emotion, and old and young, grave and gay, friend and foe, all stood entranced and spell-bound by this Orpheus of the tongue.

But this continuous discourse was not his usual method of procedure, nor perhaps that which was most pleasing to the mercurial people of Athens. The scene that most delighted them was his handling of a Sophist. Never did opera or bull-fight in modern times draw together a more delighted crowd than did the merciless dissection of a Sophist by Socrates charm the intellectual and excitable population of this Paris of the ancient world. A conceited professor of dialectics, who had been swollen to enormous self-admiration by the applause of gaping scholars in his native city, would resort to Athens to increase at once his fame and his fees. Ignorant, in those times of imperfect intercourse, of the person, and, perhaps, even of the character of Socrates, and kept in this ignorance by the mischief-loving citizens into whose hands he would fall, by some seeming accident he would be brought near him, and encouraged to launch out into one of his high-sounding harangues. A little, and rather plain-looking man in the crowd, after listening in seeming admiration to this grandiloquence, would, with the utmost deference, beg leave to ask a few questions, as was customary in such cases. He is delighted, the little man, with the wisdom of this fluent stranger, rejoiced that now at length he has met one who can instruct his ignorance, and though he would not venture to dispute conclusions so eloquently maintained, yet there are a few difficulties in his slow mind that he would gladly have solved, and which he doubts not such superior wisdom can solve at a glance. The unhappy

Sophist, completely thrown off his guard by this affected humility and ignorance, begs him with the most patronizing condescension to proceed, assuring him of instant and entire satisfaction. The modest little man, then, asks him a question, very simple, and apparently remote from the subject, so absurdly simple, that, with a smile of pity at his stupidity, the luckless Sophist instantly replies. Then comes another, and another, not quite so simple, coming nearer and nearer, until soon, like a narrowing circle of hunters closing on their prey, the astonished Sophist finds himself hemmed in with a tightening coil of difficulties, from which there is no possibility of escape but in the abandonment of the position with which he so confidently started. Vexed and irritated, he takes another, which he is sure must be safe from such obvious overthrow, and triumphantly, almost defiantly, plants himself there. Again does this merciless querist ply him with his difficulties, not seeming to doubt for a moment that now at last he had found the truth, and question follows question with frightful rapidity, until again the hapless wight finds himself landed in the flattest contradiction. Sometimes, with a refinement of cruelty, the wicked tormenter would himself suggest an opening of escape for the hunted Sophist, condoling him with affected sympathy over these unexpected difficulties, and offering his assistance to get out of them. The poor Sophist falls into the lure, and eagerly catches at the offered deliverance, and begins to breathe freely at his escape; but again, to his consternation, he finds these entangling questions enfolding him, until finally he falls helpless, exhausted and enraged, a butt of ridicule to the laughter-loving Athenians, and a victim of the merciless dialectics of Socrates.

These exhibitions, or rather executions, were renewed with every new Sophist that came to display his abilities in Athens. They would have been positively wicked in their cold-blooded cruelty, had it not been for the pernicious influence of the men who were thus flayed; but they displayed a reach and subtlety of thought so consummate as to make Socrates the idol of a large circle of intellectual young men. Had these wonderful powers been exercised only on strangers and Sophists, he would have been the pride of the whole city, and regarded as its most illustrious ornament. But they were exercised on all around him, without discrimination and without mercy. No man was safe from the scalpel of his relentless analysis, and no man was ever thoroughly dissected by it who was not humbled and perhaps irritated by the process. However much this kind of surgery may have been necessary, the subjects of it were not likely to feel much love for the practitioner. Few persons can love the man who humbles them and makes them feel that they are

ignorant when they thought themselves intelligent, and in a population so vain and glory-loving as that of Athens there must have been many who retained sore and unhealed memories of the keen anatomizing of Socrates. As these men were likely to be the most influential in the community, the orators, politicians, poets, &c., there was thus gradually accumulated a most formidable amount of personal grudge against him in all classes of society. His peculiar mission was not understood, and he was regarded as only a more subtle kind of Sophist. Assailing as he did so many settled notions on all subjects, and often assuming a tone of seeming levity about religious subjects, he was esteemed as a secret sceptic, who was silently undermining the foundations of society. Attacking so much, and defending so little, denying rather than asserting, and often doing this with so much drollery, he was naturally classed with the other philosophers. Hence we find him very early in his career brought on the stage by the stinging and scurrilous wit of Aristophanes, and held up to ridicule in the comedy of the *Clouds*, as a sort of irreverent and transcendental dreamer, whose doings and doctrines were alike novel and dangerous. The favourable reception of this comedy showed that an antipathy to this troublesome cross-questioner had become very general.

But there were other causes at work to render him unpopular. Besides his firm resistance to popular injustice on two memorable occasions, he entertained political opinions that were not in perfect harmony with the democratic constitution of Athens. Moreover, the independent spirit that he breathed into his disciples, manifested itself in forms of insubordination to parental and civil authority, in a few cases, such as Critias, Alcibiades, and the son of Anytus, one of his accusers, and naturally excited prejudice against Socrates. The few prominent men who, in spite of his teachings, became corrupt, gave colour to the charge of his enemies that he was a dangerous citizen, sowing in the minds of the young the seeds of sedition and anarchy. Hence instead of wondering that such a man should be arraigned as a state criminal, after such a life, the wonder is, that in such a community, so jealous, excitable, and intolerant as that of Athens, he was not arraigned earlier. It is a striking proof of his wisdom that he could pursue a career that must inevitably accumulate around him such an amount of rankling odium for more than thirty years, and not be arrested by this popular dislike in some legal form, when legal forms were so facile and flexible to the popular will.

But at length it did overtake him, and B. C. 399 there appeared on the portico of the office of the king-archon a tablet with these

fatal and memorable words: "Melitus, son of Melitus, of the people of Pythos, accuses Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, of the people of Alopecæ. Socrates is criminal because he acknowledges not the gods that the republic acknowledges, and because he introduces new deities. He is further criminal because he corrupts the youth. For his punishment, death." This accusation spread consternation and sorrow among the friends of Socrates. Having passed unharmed through war, pestilence and famine; having lived through the French Revolution scenes of the Thirty Tyrants, and reached the three-score and ten that marks the usual limit of human life, they had hoped that this smothered dislike, so long kept in abeyance, would await the inevitable summons that so soon must relieve his enemies of his presence. But they knew that if this enmity was afforded scope, there was little hope that he could be shielded from its deadly purpose. Hence they strained every nerve for his protection. They urged him to prepare for his defence; but he refused, saying that the genius had warned him to take no thought how he should speak, and that if a blameless life of seventy years was not defence enough, mere words would be unavailing. Hence when Lysias the orator offered him an eloquent oration, he declined it as unsuitable to the simplicity of his character, and preferred calmly to await the trial without any special preparation.

The simple truth is, that Socrates was indifferent as to the result. Endowed by nature with a temperament that never knew fear, he had none of that physical shrinking from death that exists as an almost uncontrollable instinct in weaker organizations. Looking forward to a scene of everlasting reward in the life to come, with unwavering confidence, that mighty spectre whose shadow falls with so deep a gloom on other hearts, had no power to appal him. Death he regarded but as the narrow gateway to the scenes of Elysium, where he should wander over the fields of light with the good and the brave who had gone before him, and hence regarded its approach with serene composure. Knowing it to be inevitable, believing it to be the beginning of a better life, and aware that his work in life must soon cease in any event, he felt that the difference of a few years in this cessation would be too dearly purchased by the slightest compromise of the principles that his whole life had been spent in enforcing. Hitherto he had lived in lofty superiority to the common frailties of our nature, his frame of iron never conscious of exhaustion or fatigue; but soon he must descend from this eminence, and yield to the advancing decrepitude of age. This to him would have been a positive humiliation, less desirable than an honourable death. Better to fall like the giant oak beneath the woodman's axe, whilst

its stem was yet strong, and its leaf was yet green, than ignobly perish at last by the dishonouring touch of slow decay. Better, like Moses, depart with an undimmed eye, and an unabated strength, than, like feeble old Priam, remain to present a pitiable spectacle of superannuated weakness.

Moreover, there was here perhaps a chance of crowning with a fitting close the labours of his life. Having lived with a martyr's constancy to witness for certain great truths, if their final attestation demanded that he should seal them with a martyr's blood, the same unfaltering purpose that directed him how to live would also dictate to him when to die. If his enemies were successful, he might thus reach the most heroic and impressive close that could be given to his labours; and, like Samson, do more to tear down the fabric of error by his death, than he had done by his life. If unsuccessful, their failure would be the triumph of his teachings, by the most solemn act of the people. In either event he had reason to be satisfied, and between the two alternatives he had but little to choose. When, therefore, we remember his absolute devotion to this high apostleship of reform, we can readily see why the genius forbade the preparation of an elaborate defence, and led him to leave the issue quietly to the decision of Providence.

The trial came on—a trial which, for sublimity and absorbing interest, has but one superior in the world's history. Five hundred and fifty-six Athenian citizens sat down in the dikastery that was to try this memorable cause, and before them stood this fearless old man, conscious of his rectitude, and aware of the malice that had dragged him there. Other hearts were throbbing with anxiety, and other lips trembling with emotion; but he stood before his accusers and judges with as unquailing an eye and as unfaltering a tongue as if he were about to encounter a Sophist in the crowded agora. Anytus and Lykon sustained the political charges, and sought to rouse the anger of the people by showing that he undervalued the democratic constitution of Athens, and disliked the beggarly trickeries of its mouthing demagogues. Melitus took the accusation of irreligion, and sought to prove him a sceptic and a heretic to the established religion of the state. Scarcely noticing the political accusations, he addressed himself to his main accuser, who had sought to rob him of his fairest fame, and, by almost a single touch of his Ithuriel logic, he unmasked him to the assembly, in his confusion, contradiction, and falsehood, a malignant and perjured accuser. Then, in a tone of lofty superiority, he asserted, that the life he led was by the special call of Heaven, and that it was a blessing to the city. Although there was something offensive in the tone of this

vindication, yet so triumphant was its reasoning, that in spite of the gathered grudges of thirty years, the rancour of political hate, the power of personal influence, and the shielding of suborned perfidy by the ballot, on the vote whether he was guilty of these vague and general charges there was but a majority of six against him in a court of nearly six hundred.

A gleam of hope inspired his friends; for a second vote was required to fix his sentence, and the closeness of the first vote showed that if he would assume the attitude of submissive deprecation that was common in such cases, his only punishment would be a fine that they would have paid on the spot. The rules of criminal trials required that the accuser should name one penalty, and the accused another, when the court would determine the final award. If the demeanour of the accused was respectful, his crime not very great, and his proposed penalty in any due proportion to the proved offence, it was adopted. In the case of Socrates, his uprightness was so unquestionable, his fame so wide, and his career so nearly ended by the course of nature, that had he made any concession to the pride of the court, any acknowledgment of the justice of their sentence, and named an ordinary fine, he would almost certainly have escaped with this award. But, to the consternation of his friends, when he rose to answer the customary question as to his penalty, he seemed to stand before them in the proud dignity of a judge rather than the humble attitude of a prisoner. So far from cringing to his judges to beg his life, as others had done, by a tacit admission of his guilt, he refused to abate a jot of the truth, or retract a syllable of his claims, or do a single act that should concede that his former course had been wrong. He would not purchase his life by the abatement of a single line of his inflexible truthfulness, or the stooping to a single act of dishonour. He, therefore, told them with an honest bluntness that had all the effect of defiance to them, that having given up all his private business for the good of the city, when he was forced to say in sincerity what he thought such a man deserved, he must say, that he deserved to be maintained for the rest of his life at the public expense in the Prytaneum—the highest honour ever conferred on an Athenian citizen. Perceiving the blank astonishment that this declaration produced, he proceeded to defend it by saying, that having never done an injury, or uttered a falsehood as to another, he could not do either to himself by awarding what he honestly did not think his deserts. Death he did not know to be an evil, imprisonment or exile he did, and he could not, therefore, choose what he knew to be evils to avoid what he did not know to be such. A fine he did not regard as an evil; but such was his poverty,

that he could not pay more than a mina of silver, about \$17 50, and in this sum he would amerce himself. His friends knowing that this paltry sum would be regarded as an insult, urged him to name thirty minæ, offering to advance the sum themselves, which accordingly he did, and submitted the case for decision. We cannot wonder that his judges should be exasperated by what seemed to them contempt of the law, and that a majority of them voted that he should die by the hemlock. Considering the facts of the case, no other decision could have been expected after such a defence, and yet, considering the man, no other defence could have been desired.

He heard the result without a throb of emotion, and turned to the judges as calmly as if they had declared his acquittal, and first addressed himself to those who had voted to condemn him. Without a word of anger, bitterness, or defiance, he solemnly assured them that they had done wrong; that the cause of his condemnation was his unwillingness to stoop to beg his life, a thing he had scorned as cowardly in war, and could not regard as honourable in peace; that the effect of his condemnation would be more disastrous to the city and his accusers than himself; and concluded by saying, "Now I depart, condemned by you to death, but my accusers condemned by truth as guilty of iniquity and injustice. I abide my sentence, they theirs. These things, perhaps, ought so to be, and I think them for the best." Then turning to those who voted for his acquittal, he assured them that this event was not for evil, and rising to that high discourse on the immortality of the soul, in which he delighted to revel, he closed his address in a passage which for sublimity and pathos has no parallel in uninspired writing, and which we would not attempt to condense, in the hope that our readers may be led to peruse it themselves.

Then followed those memorable prison-scenes that are so vividly portrayed in the *Crito* and *Phædo* of Plato; his calm discourse on high and holy themes; his refusal to accept the proffered plan of escape; his heroic bearing though loaded with fetters; and his calm awaiting for thirty days the return of the sacred ship from Delos, during whose absence none could be executed in the city. Then came that last memorable day, the description of which in the *Phædo* Cicero tells us he could never read without tears. The hours of this mournful day were spent in discoursing of futurity, of heaven, hell, and the judgment, in words that thrill us now as we read them, and then as the shadows began to grow long on the slopes of the *Hymettus*, and the bustle of busy Athens to wane toward the quiet of the night, the old man eloquent began to prepare to lay aside his mortal part as calmly as he had ever laid aside his garments to sleep,

and made himself ready to die. Then followed that scene of parting and of death, so touchingly and minutely described by Plato that his pages are wet with the tears of twenty-three centuries, and we can only refer the reader to their moving words, if he would learn how Socrates died. He died as he lived, the martyr missionary, the hero sage, the model man of Greece, the tallest and strongest spirit that ever stood on that classic land whose soil is hallowed by the dust of the mighty dead.

A crowd of thoughts press on us, which our limits must exclude, or permit us only to suggest. For his character and relations as a philosopher, we must refer to the pages of Schleiermacher, Grote, and others, who have well nigh exhausted this theme and left but little more to be desired on this aspect of the subject. He was the Bacon of Grecian philosophy, the father of that wondrous method the use of which by his immediate successors carried the science of metaphysics at once to that verge of possible thought, beyond which its boundaries have scarcely been carried a line since the days of Plato and Aristotle, and yet a method which none have ever been able to use like its mighty master. Like the weapons of Goliath, none have been found strong enough to wield them since the giant arm has been laid low. But this theme is too wide for our present limits, and we pass it by.

The relation of Socrates to the history of religion is a theme that has been much less discussed, and one which we would gladly pursue at length, were it possible. The best features of the Platonic element, that have acted for good as well as for evil on the religious history of man, are due to the influence of Socrates. The counteraction of that deadly scepticism that was working in the Grecian mind, and eating out all belief in the divine, the unseen, and the eternal, was furnished by the influence of Socrates. He was the great prophet to the old heathen world of the soul's immortality, and saved it from total corruption. And there was a strength of belief in the great facts of natural religion, and a working of them up into the texture of his daily life, that was amazing. Never have we felt the materialism and the worldliness of the modern Church, and of our own hearts, more sternly rebuked than in reading the words and tracing the life of this wondrous old man. There was a constant sight of the unseen and eternal in his view, a practical acknowledgment of them in all his conduct, and an evident realization of them visible in his maxims of reasoning, his forms of thought, and his whole life, that come nearer the requirements of the Christian teachings, than anything that modern Christianity often furnishes. We stand abashed and condemned, with our Bibles in our hands, before this

high-hearted old heathen, and learn new lessons from his life in regard to the possibility of conforming to its spiritual teachings.

And yet we gather instruction of the most valuable nature from this life. It is the farthest reach that human nature has ever made without the Bible, and far though it be, the errors, fables, and defects that we find mingled with this peerless pagan, are a most powerful proof of the necessity of a revelation. Human nature never went further than this, and yet human nature must go further, or fall far short even of Socrates. He reminds us of some sightless giant, groping in his greatness to find the path that the open-eyed child can run along with ease.

But there are many points of comparison as well as of contrast. We feel that we better comprehend that awful Presence that walked the shores of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem, as we follow this apostle of reform along the streets of Athens, denouncing the Phariseism of the Sophists, mingling alike with the lofty and the lowly, living in contented poverty, and dying in unfaltering faith. Wide and wonderful as is the difference between them, we feel that the one aids us to rise to a more distinct conception of the other. And as we carry the comparison yet further, we find new points of instruction. The diverse portraits of Plato and Xenophon enable us the better to understand the representations of Matthew and John, and see how the same character may be depicted from opposite points, and yet be still the same. The silence of Josephus about the son of Mary finds its exact parallel in the silence of Thucydides about the son of Sophroniscus. The hatred of Jews and Romans toward Christ and his apostles, and the strange *strabismus* of Tacitus and Pliny, are more readily understood when we look at the hatred that assailed Socrates and his followers, and the misapprehension of their mission by Aristophanes and others. And the very partial manifestations of repentance that the Jewish nation made for the murder of their Messiah, finds its counterpart in the conduct of the Athenians after the death of Socrates. For although the common impression is that they bitterly repented it, and put to death his accusers, Mr. Grote shows very clearly that there is no evidence that they ever did thus feel or act, and that this common impression is wholly erroneous. These thoughts would furnish us themes of most interesting reflection; but we must close with the opinion, that there are few characters the study of which will better reward the Christian than that of Socrates.

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