

THE
SECOND ALCIBIADES:
A
DIALOGUE
CONCERNING
PRAYER.

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE SECOND ALCIBIADES.

THE Second Alcibiades, which in the supposed time of it is subsequent to the first of the same name, is on a subject which ranks among the most important to a rational being; for with it is connected piety, which is the summit of virtue. Hence, as all nations in the infinity of time past have believed in the existence of certain divine powers superior to man, who beneficently provide for all inferior natures, and defend them from evil; so likewise they worshipped these powers by numerous religious rites, of which prayer formed no inconsiderable part. The exceptions, indeed, to this general belief of mankind are so few that they do not deserve to be noticed. For we may say, with the elegant Maximus Tyrius¹, that, “if through the whole of time there have been two or three atheists, they were govelling and insensate men, whose eyes wandered, whose ears were deceived, whose souls were mutilated, a race irrational, barren, and uselefs, resembling a timid lion, an ox without horns, a bird without wings.” All others, as well those engaged in public affairs, as philosophers who explored the hidden causes of things, most constantly believed that there were Gods, viz. one first ineffable source of all things, and a multitude of divine powers proceeding from, and united with, him; and always endeavoured to render these divine natures propitious, by sacrifice and prayer. Hence, the Chaldeans among the Assyrians, the Brahmans among the Indians, the Druids among the Gauls, the Magi among the

¹ In his Dissertation “What God is according to Plato.” See Reiske’s edition, p. 317.

Persians, and the tribe of priests among the Egyptians, constantly applied themselves to the worship of Divinity, and venerated and adored the Gods by various sacred ceremonies, and ardent and assiduous prayers.

As the leading design, therefore, of the following dialogue is to show the great importance of prayer, I persuade myself, that I cannot do any thing more illustrative of this design, or more beneficial to the reader, than to present him with the divinely luminous conceptions of Porphyry, Jamblichus, Proclus, and Hierocles on prayer, together with what the pseudo Dionysius has stolen from the Platonic philosophers on this subject. As these observations never yet appeared in any modern language, and as they are not to be equalled in any other writer for their profundity and sublimity, I trust no apology will be requisite for their length. Previous to their insertion, therefore, I shall only give the following definition of prayer, viz. that it is a certain force supernally imparted to the soul, elevating and conjoining her to Divinity, and which always unites in a becoming manner secondary with primary natures.

Porphyry then observes¹, that prayer especially pertains to worthy men, because it is a conjunction with a divine nature. But the similar loves to be united to the similar. And a worthy man is most similar to the Gods. Since those also that cultivate virtue are enclosed in body as in a prison, they ought to pray to the Gods that they may depart from hence. Besides, as we are like children torn from our parents, it is proper to pray that we may return to the Gods, as to our true parents: and because those that do not think it requisite to pray, and convert themselves to more excellent natures, are like those that are deprived of their fathers and mothers. To which we may add, that as we are a part of the universe, it is fit that we should be in want of it: for a conversion to the whole imparts safety to every thing. Whether, therefore, you possess virtue, it is proper that you should invoke that which causally comprehends² the whole of virtue. For that which is all-good will also be the cause to you of that good which it is proper for you to possess.

¹ Vide Procl. in Tim. p. 64.—T.

² The word used by Porphyry here is *πρᾶινθος*, which always signifies in Platonic writings *causal comprehension*; or the occult and indistinct prior to the actual and separate subsistence of things. After this manner numbers subsist causally in the monad.—T.

Or whether you explore some corporeal good, there is a power in the world which connectedly contains every body. It is necessary, therefore, that the perfect should thence be derived to the parts of the universe. Thus far Porphyry, who was not without reason celebrated by posterior philosophers for his *εροπρεπη νοηματα*, or conceptions adapted to sacred concerns.

Let us now attend to Jamblichus¹, whom every genuine Platonist will acknowledge to have been justly furnished *the divine*.

As prayers, through which sacred rites receive their perfect consummation and vigour, constitute a great part of sacrifice, and as they are of general utility to religion, and produce an indissoluble communion between the Divinities and their priests, it is necessary that we should mention a few things concerning their various species and wonderful effects. For prayer is of itself a thing worthy to be known, and gives greater perfection to the science concerning the Gods. I say, therefore, that the *first* species of prayer is *collective*, producing a contact with Divinity, and subsisting as the leader and light of knowledge. But the *second* is the *bond of consent and communion with the Gods*, exciting them to a copious communication of their benefits prior to the energy of speech, and perfecting the whole of our operations previous to our intellectual conceptions. But the *third* and most perfect species of prayer is *the seal of ineffable union with the Divinities*, in whom it establishes all the power and authority of prayer: and thus causes the soul to repose in the Gods, as in a divine and never-failing port. But from these three terms, in which all the divine measures are contained, suppliant adoration not only conciliates to us the friendship of the Gods, but supernally extends to us three fruits, being, as it were, three Hesperian apples of gold². The *first* pertains to *illumination*; the second, to a *communion of operation*; but through the energy of the *third* we receive a *perfect plenitude of divine fire*. And sometimes, indeed, supplication *precedes*; like a forerunner, preparing the way before the sacrifice appears. But sometimes it *intercedes as a mediator*: and sometimes *accomplishes the end of sacrificing*. No operation, however, in sacred concerns can succeed without the intervention of prayer. Lastly,

¹ De Myst. sec. 5, cap. 26.—T.

² This particular respecting the *apples of gold* is added from the version of Scutellius, who appears to have made his translation of Jamblichus from a more perfect manuscript than that which was used by Gale.—T.

the continual exercise of prayer nourishes the vigour of our intellect, and renders the receptacles of the soul far more capacious for the communications of the Gods. It likewise is the *divine key* which unfolds to men the penetralia of the Gods; accustoms us to the splendid rivers of supernal light; in a short time perfects our inmost recesses, and disposes them for the inevitable embrace and contact of the Gods; and does not desist till it raises us to the summit of all. It likewise gradually and silently draws upwards the manners of our soul, by divesting them of every thing foreign from a divine nature, and clothes us with the perfections of the Gods. Besides this, it produces an indissoluble communion and friendship with Divinity, nourishes a divine love, and enflames the divine part of the soul. Whatever is of an opposing and contrary nature in the soul it expiates and purifies; expels whatever is prone to generation, and retains any thing of the dregs of mortality in its ethereal and splendid spirit; perfects a good hope and faith concerning the reception of divine light; and in one word, renders those by whom it is employed the familiars and domestics of the Gods. If such, then, are the advantages of prayer, and such its connection with sacrifice, does it not appear from hence, that the end of sacrifice is a conjunction with the demiurgus of the world? And the benefit of prayer is of the same extent with the good which is conferred by the demiurgic causes on the race of mortals. Again, from hence the *anagogic, perfective, and replenishing* power of prayer appears; likewise how it becomes efficacious and unific, and how it possesses a common bond imparted by the Gods. And in the third and last place, it may easily be conceived from hence how prayer and sacrifice mutually corroborate, and confer on each other a sacred and perfect power in divine concerns.

The following translation (from p. 64) of Proclus on the *Timæus*, containing the doctrine of Jamblichus on prayer, with the elucidations of Proclus, may be considered as an excellent commentary on the preceding observations.

All beings are the progeny of the Gods, by whom they are produced without a medium, and in whom they are firmly established. For the progression of things which perpetually subsist and cohere from permanent causes, is not alone perfected by a certain continuation, but immediately subsists from the Gods, from whence all things are generated, however distant they may be from the Divinities: and this is no less true, even though asserted of matter itself.

itself. For a divine nature is not absent from any thing, but is equally present to all things. Hence, though you consider the last of beings, in these also you will find Divinity: for *the one* is every where; and in consequence of its absolute dominion, every thing receives its nature and coherence from the Gods. But as all things proceed, so likewise they are not separated from the Gods, but radically abide in them, as the causes and sustainers of their existence: for where can they recede, since the Gods primarily comprehend all things in their embrace? For whatever is placed as separate from the Gods has not any kind of subsistence. But all beings are contained by the Gods, and reside in their natures after the manner of a circular comprehension. Hence, by a wonderful mode of subsistence, all things proceed, and yet are not, nor indeed can be, separated from the Gods; (for all generated natures, when torn from their parents, immediately recur to the wide-spreading immensity of non-being,) but they are after a manner established in the divine natures: and, in fine, they proceed in themselves, but abide in the Gods. But since in consequence of their progression it is requisite that they should be converted, and return, and imitate the egress and conversion of the Gods to their ineffable cause, that the natures, thus disposed, may again be contained by the Gods, and the first unities, according to a *telesurgic*, or perfective triad, they receive from hence a certain secondary perfection, by which they may be able to convert themselves to the goodness of the Gods; that after they have rooted their principle in the Divinities, they may again, by conversion, abide in them, and form as it were a circle, which originates from, and terminates in, the Gods. All things, therefore, both abide in, and convert themselves to, the Gods; receiving this power from the Divinities, together with twofold symbols according to essence: the one, that they may abide there; but the other, that having proceeded, they may convert themselves: and this we may easily contemplate, not only in souls, but also in inanimate natures. For what else ingenerates in these a sympathy with other powers but the symbols which they are allotted by nature, some of which contract a familiarity with *this* and some with *that* series of Gods? For nature supernally depending from the Gods, and being distributed from their orders, impresses also in bodies the symbols of her familiarity with the Divinities. In some, indeed, inserting solar symbols, but in others lunar, and in others again the occult characters of some other God. And these, indeed,

convert themselves to the Divinities: some as it were to the Gods simply, but others as to particular Gods; nature thus perfecting her progeny according to different peculiarities of the Gods. The Demiurgus of the universe, therefore, by a much greater priority, impressed these symbols in souls, by which they might be able to abide in themselves, and again convert themselves to the sources of their being: through the symbol of unity, conferring on them stability; but through intellect affording them the power of conversion.

And to this conversion prayer is of the greatest utility: for it conciliates the beneficence of the Gods through those ineffable symbols which the father of the universe has disseminated in souls. It likewise unites those who pray with those to whom prayer is addressed; copulates the intellect of the Gods with the discourses of those who pray; excites the will of those who perfectly comprehend good, and produces in us a firm persuasion, that they will abundantly impart to us the beneficence which they contain: and lastly, it establishes in the Gods whatever we possess.

But to a perfect and true prayer there is required, first, a knowledge of all the divine orders to which he who prays approaches: for neither will any one accede in a proper manner, unless he intimately beholds their distinguishing properties: and hence it is that the Oracle¹ admonishes, “*that a fiery intellection obtains the first order in sacred veneration.*” But afterwards there is required a conformation of our life with that which is divine; and this accompanied with all *purity, chastity, discipline, and order*. For thus while we present ourselves to the Gods, they will be provoked to beneficence; and our souls will be subjected to theirs, and will participate the excellences of a divine nature. In the third place, a certain contact is necessary, from whence, with the more exalted part of the soul, we touch the divine essence, and verge to a union with its ineffable nature. But there is yet further required an accession and inhesion, (for thus the Oracle calls it, while it says, “*the mortal adhering to fire will possess a divine light,*”) from whence we receive a greater and more illustrious part of the light proceeding from the Gods. In the last place, a union succeeds with the unity of the Gods, restoring and establishing unity to the soul, and causing our energy to become

¹ Viz. one of the Chaldean Oracles.—T.

one with divine energy : so that in this case, we are no longer ourselves, but are absorbed, as it were, in the nature of the Gods ; and residing in divine light, are entirely surrounded with its splendour. And this is, indeed, the best end of prayer, the conjunction of the soul's conversion with its permanency ; establishing in unity whatever proceeds from the divine unities ; and surrounding our light with the light of the Gods.

Prayer, therefore, is of no small assistance to our souls in ascending to their native region : nor is he who possesses virtue superior to the want of that good which proceeds from prayer, but the very contrary takes place ; since prayer is not only the cause of our ascent and reversion, but with it is connected piety to the Gods, that is, the very summit of virtue. Nor, indeed, ought any other to pray than he who excels in goodness : (as the Athenian guest in Plato admonishes us,) for to such a one, while enjoying by the exercise of prayer familiarity with the Gods, an efficacious and easy way is prepared for the enjoyment of a blessed life. But the contrary succeeds to the vicious : since it is not lawful for purity to be touched by impurity. It is necessary, therefore, that he who generously enters on the exercise of prayer should render the Gods propitious to him ; and should excite in himself divine conceptions, full of intellectual light : for the favour and benignity of more exalted beings is the most effectual incentive to their communication with our natures. And it is requisite, without intermission, to dwell in the veneration of Divinity : for, according to the poet, "*the Gods are accustomed to be present with the mortal constantly employed in prayer.*" It is likewise necessary to preserve a stable order of divine works, and to produce those virtues which purify the soul from the stains of generation, and elevate her to the regions of intellect, together with *faith, truth, and love* : to preserve this triad and hope of good, this immutable perception of divine light, and segregation from every other pursuit ; that thus solitary, and free from material concerns, we may become united with the solitary unities of the Gods : since he who attempts by multitude to unite himself with unity, acts preposterously, and dissociates himself from Divinity. For as it is not lawful for any one to conjoin himself by that which is not, with that which is ; so neither is it possible with multitude to be conjoined with unity. Such, then, are the consequences primarily apparent in prayer, viz. that its essence is the cause of associating our souls with the Gods ; and that on this account it unites and

copulates all inferior with all superior beings. For, as the great *Theodorus*[†] says, *all things pray, except the FIRST.*

But the perfection of prayer, beginning from more common goods, ends in divine conjunction, and gradually accustoms the soul to divine light. And its efficacious and vigorous energy both replenishes us with good, and causes our concerns to be common with those of the Gods. We may also rationally suppose that the causes of prayer, so far as they are *effective*, are the vigorous and efficacious powers of the Gods, converting and calling upwards the soul to the Gods themselves. But that, so far as they are *perfective*, they are the immaculate goods of the soul, from the reception of which, souls are established in the Gods. And again, that so far as they are *paradigmatical*, they are the primary fabricating causes of beings; proceeding from *the good*, and conjoined with it by an ineffable union. But that so far as they are *formal*, or possess the proportion of forms, they render souls similar to the Gods, and give perfection to the whole life of the soul. Lastly, so far as they are *material*, or retain the proportion of matter, they are the marks or symbols conferred by the Demiurgus on the essences of souls, that they may be wakened to a reminiscence of the Gods who produced both them and whatever else exists.

But we may also describe the modes of prayer, which are various, according to the genera and species of the Gods. For of prayers, some are *fabricative*; others of a *purifying nature*; and others, lastly, are *vivific*. I call those *fabricative* which are offered for the sake of showers and winds. For the fabricative Gods (*δημιουργοί*) are also the causes of these: on which account, it is customary with the Athenians to pray to such Divinities for the sake of obtaining winds procuring serenity of weather. But I call those prayers of a *purifying nature*, which are instituted for the purpose of averting diseases originating from pestilence, and other contagious distempers: such as are written in our temples. And lastly, those prayers are *vivific* with which we venerate the Gods who are the causes of vivification, on account of the origin and maturity of fruits. Hence it is that prayers are of a perfective nature, because they elevate us to these divine orders: and those who consider such prayers in a different manner, do not properly apprehend in what their na-

[†] Viz. Theodorus Asinæus, a disciple of Porphyry.—T.

ture and efficacy consist. But again, with respect to the things for which we pray, those which regard the *safety of the soul* obtain the first place; those which pertain to *the proper disposition and strength of the body*, the second; and those claim the last place which pertain to *external concerns*. And lastly, with respect to the distribution of the times in which we offer up prayers, it is either according to the seasons of the year, or the centres of the solar revolution; or we establish multifiform prayers according to other such-like conceptions.

With the above admirable passages the following extract from Jamblichus de Myst. fec. i. cap. 12. may be very properly conjoined. Its design is to show, that the Gods are not agitated by passions, though they appear to be moved through the influence of prayer.

Prayers are not to be directed to the Gods, as if they were passive, and could be moved by supplications: for the divine irradiation which takes place through the exercise of prayer, operates spontaneously, and is far remote from all material attraction; since it becomes apparent through divine energy and perfection; and as much excels the voluntary motion of our nature, as the divine will of *the good* surpasses our election. Through this volition, the Gods, who are perfectly benevolent and merciful, pour their light without any parsimony on the supplicating priests, whose souls they call upwards to their own divine natures; impart to them a union with themselves, and accustom their souls, even while bound in body, to separate themselves from its dark embrace, and to be led back by an ineffable energy to their eternal and intelligible original. Indeed it is evident that the safety of the soul depends on such divine operations. For while the soul contemplates divine visions, it acquires another life, employs a different energy, and may be considered, with the greatest propriety, as no longer ranking in the order of man. For it often lays aside its own proper life, and changes it for the most blessed energy of the Gods. But if an ascent to the Gods, through the ministry of prayer, confers on the priests purity from passion, freedom from the bonds of generation, and a union with a divine principle, how can there be any thing passive in the efficacy of prayer? For invocation does not draw down the pure and impassive Gods to us who are passive and impure; but, on the contrary, renders us who are become through generation impure and passive, immutable and pure.

But

But neither do invocations conjoin, through passion, the priests with the Divinities, but afford an indissoluble communion of connection, through that friendship which binds all things in union and consent. Nor do invocations incline the intellect of the Gods towards men, as the term seems to imply; but, according to the decisions of truth, they render the will of men properly disposed to receive the participations of the Gods; leading it upwards, and connecting it with the Divinities by the sweetest and most alluring persuasion. And on this account the sacred names of the Gods, and other divine symbols, from their anagogic nature, are able to connect invocations with the Gods themselves.

And in chap. 15 of the same section, he again admirably discourses on the same subject as follows:

That which in our nature is divine, intellectual, and one, or (as you may be willing to call it) intelligible, is perfectly excited by prayer from its dormant state; and when excited, vehemently seeks that which is similar to itself, and becomes copulated to its own perfection. But if it should seem incredible that incorporeal natures can be capable of hearing sounds, and it is urged, that for this purpose the sense of hearing is requisite, that they may understand our supplications; such objections are unacquainted with the excellency of primary causes, which consists in both knowing and comprehending in themselves at once the universality of things. The Gods, therefore, do not receive prayers in themselves through any corporeal powers or organs, but rather contain in themselves the effects of pious invocations; and especially of such as through sacred cultivation are consecrated and united to the Gods: for, in this case, a divine nature is evidently present with itself, and does not apprehend the conceptions of prayers as different from its own. Nor are supplications to be considered as foreign from the purity of intellect: but since the Gods excel us both in power, purity, and all other advantages, we shall act in the most opportune manner, by invoking them with the most vehement supplications. For a consciousness of our own nothingness, when we compare ourselves with the Gods, naturally leads us to the exercise of prayer. But through the benefits resulting from supplication we are in a short time brought back to the object of supplication; acquire its similitude from intimate converse; and gradually obtain divine perfection, instead of our own imbecility and imperfection.

Indeed he who considers, that sacred prayers are sent to men from the Gods themselves ; that they are certain symbols of the divine natures ; and that they are only known to the Gods, with whom in a certain respect they possess an equal power ; I say, he who considers all this, cannot any longer believe that supplications are of a sensible nature, and that they are not very justly esteemed intellectual and divine : and must acknowledge it to be impossible that any passion should belong to things the purity of which the most worthy manners of men cannot easily equal.

Nor ought we to be disturbed by the objection which urges, that material things are frequently offered in supplications ; and this as if the Gods possessed a sensitive and animal nature. For, indeed, if the offerings consisted solely of corporeal and composite powers, and such as are only accommodated to organical purposes, the objection would have some weight : but since they participate of incorporeal forms, certain proportions, and more simple measures ; in this alone the correspondence and connection of offerings with the Gods ought to be regarded. For, whenever any affinity or similitude is present, whether greater or less, it is sufficient to the connection of which we are now discoursing : since there is nothing which approaches to a kindred alliance with the Gods, though in the smallest degree, to which the Gods are not immediately present and united. A connection, therefore, as much as is possible, subsists between prayers and the Gods : at the same time prayers do not regard the Divinities as if they were of a sensitive or animal nature ; but they consider them as they are in reality, and according to the divine forms which their essences contain.

In the third place, let us attend to the admirable observations on prayer of Hierocles, who, though inferior in accuracy and sublimity of conception to Jamblichus and Proclus, yet, as Damascius well observes, (in his *Life of Isidorus* apud Phot.) he uncommonly excelled in his dianoëtic part, and in a venerable and magnificent fluency of diction. The following is a translation of his Comment on the Pythagoric verse :

————— Ἀλλ' ἐρχεσθ' ἐπ' ἔργον
Θεοῖσιν ἐπευξάμενος τελεσθαι.

i. e. "Betake yourself to the work, having implored the Gods to bring it to perfection."

The verse briefly describes all that contributes to the acquisition of good,
viz.

viz. the self-moved nature of the soul, and the co-operation of Divinity. For, though the election of things beautiful¹ is in our power, yet, as we possess our freedom of the will from Divinity, we are perfectly indigent of his co-operating with and perfecting the things which we have chosen. For our endeavour appears to be similar to a hand extended to the reception of things beautiful; but that which is imparted by Divinity is the supplier and the fountain of the gift of good. And the former, indeed, is naturally adapted to discover things beautiful; but the latter to unfold them to him by whom they are rightly explored. But prayer is the medium between two boundaries, viz. between investigation by us, and that which is imparted by Divinity, properly adhering to the cause which leads us into existence, and perfects us in well-being. For how can any one receive well-being unless Divinity imparts it? And how can Divinity, who is naturally adapted to give, give to him who does not ask, though his impulses arise from the freedom of his will? That we may not, therefore, pray only in words, but may also corroborate this by deeds; and that we may not confide only in our own energy, but may also beseech Divinity to co-operate with our deeds, and may conjoin prayer to action, as form to matter; and, in short, that we may pray for what we do, and do that for which we pray, the verse conjoining these two, says, "Betake yourself to the work, having implored the Gods to bring it to perfection." For neither is it proper alone to engage with alacrity in beautiful actions, as if it were in our power to perform them with rectitude, without the co-operation of Divinity; nor yet should we be satisfied with the words of mere prayer while we contribute nothing to the acquisition of the things which we request. For thus we shall either pursue atheistical virtue (if I may be allowed so to speak) or unenergetic prayer; of which the former, being deprived of Divinity, takes away the essence of virtue; and the latter, being sluggish, dissolves the efficacy of prayer. For how can any thing be beautiful which is not performed according to the divine rule? And how is it possible that what is done according to this should not entirely require the co-operation of Divinity to its subsistence? For virtue is the image of Divinity in the rational soul; but every image requires its paradigm, in order to its generation, nor is that which it possesses sufficient, unless it looks

¹ By things beautiful, with Platonic writers, every thing excellent and good is included.—T.

to that from the similitude to which it possesses the beautiful. It is proper, therefore, that those should pray who hasten to energetic virtue, and having prayed, that they should endeavour to possess it. It is likewise requisite that they should do this, looking to that which is divine and splendid, and should extend themselves to philosophy, adhering at the same time in a becoming manner to the first cause of good. For that tetractys¹, the fountain of perennial nature, is not only the eternal cause of being to all things, but likewise of well-being, expanding proper good through the whole world, like undecaying and intellectual light. But the soul, when she properly adheres to this light, and purifies herself like an eye to acuteness of vision, by an attention to things beautiful, is excited to prayer; and again, from the plenitude of prayer she extends her endeavours, conjoining actions to words, and by divine conferences giving stability to worthy deeds. And discovering some things, and being illuminated in others, she endeavours to effect what she prays for, and prays for that which she endeavours to effect. And such indeed is the union of endeavour and prayer.

In the last place, the pseudo Dionysius has decorated his book *On the Divine Names* with the following admirable observations on prayer, stolen² from writers incomparably more sublime than any of the age in which he pretended to have lived.

Divinity is present to all things, but all things are not present to him; but when we invoke him with all-sacred prayers, an unclouded intellect, and an aptitude to divine union, then we also are present to him. For he is neither in place, that he may be absent from any thing, nor does he pass from one thing to another. But, indeed, to assert that he is in all things, falls far short of that infinity which is above, and which comprehends, all things. Let us therefore extend ourselves by prayer to the more sublime intuition of his

¹ This *tetractys*, which is the same as the *phanes* of Orpheus, and the *αυτοζωον*, or *animal itself*, of Plato, first subsists at the extremity of the intelligible order, and is thence participated by Jupiter, the fabricator of the universe. See the Introduction to the *Timæus*.—T.

² Fabricius, in the 4th vol. of his *Bibliotheca Græca*, has incontestably proved that this Dionysius lived several hundred years after the time of St. Paul; and observes, that his works are, doubtless, composed from Platonic writings. In confirmation of this remark, it is necessary to inform the learned reader, that the long discourse on Evil in the treatise of Dionysius, *περὶ θεῶν οὐρανοῦ*, appears to have been taken almost verbatim from one of the lost writings of Proclus *On the Subsistence of Evil*, as will be at once evident by comparing it with the *Excerpta* from that work, preferred by Fabricius in *Biblioth. Græc.* tom. viii. p. 502.—T.

divine and beneficent rays. Just as if a chain, consisting of numerous lamps, were suspended from the summit of heaven, and extended to the earth. For if we ascended this chain, by always alternately stretching forth our hands, we should appear indeed to ourselves to draw down the chain, though we should not in reality, it being present upwards and downwards, but we should elevate ourselves to the more sublime splendours of the abundantly-luminous rays. Or, as if we ascended into a ship, and held by the ropes¹ extended to us from a certain rock, and which were given to us for our assistance; we should not in this case draw the rock to us, but we in reality should move both ourselves and the ship to the rock. Just as, on the contrary, if any one standing in a ship pushes against a rock fixed in the sea, he indeed effects nothing in the firm and immovable rock, but causes himself to recede from it: and by how much the more he pushes against, by so much the more is he repelled from the rock. Hence, prior to every undertaking, and especially that which is theological, it is necessary to begin from prayer, not as if drawing down that power which is every where present, and is at the same time no where, but as committing and uniting ourselves to it by divine recollections and invocations.

I shall only add, that the antients appear very properly to have placed this dialogue in the class which they called *maieutic*: and, as Mr. Sydenham justly observes, “the outward form of it, from the beginning to the end, is *dramatic*; the *catastrophe* being a change of mind in Alcibiades, who resolves to follow the advice of Socrates, by forbearing to specify, in his addresses to Divinity, his wants and his wishes, till he shall have attained to a sense of his real indigence through the knowledge of his real good, the only right and proper object of prayer.”

¹ This part is stolen from the Commentaries of Simplicius on Epictetus, as is evident from the following extract: Τὴν τὴν ἡμῶν ἐπιστροφὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν (θεῶν) ὡς αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς λεγομένην τοιοῦτον τι παρῶντες, οἷον οἱ πέτρας τινὲς παραλίας κλάων ἐκίψαιτες, καὶ τῷ κινεῖν ἐπισπαρῆναι ἑαυτοὺς τε καὶ τὸ ἀκᾶτιον τῇ πέτρᾳ προσαγοντες· καὶ δι’ ἀπειρίαν τοῦ ἡν. μενὸν δέκοντες οὐκ αὐτοὶ προσίεναι τῇ πέτρᾳ, ἀλλὰ τὴν πέτραν κατ’ ὀλιγὸν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἰεναι· μεταμελῆσαι δέ, καὶ κτελεῖν, καὶ εὐχαί, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἀναλογισοὶ τῷ καθ’ ἡ. p. 223; 8vo i. e. “We speak of this our conversion to Divinity, as if it was a conversion of him to us; being affected in somewhat the same manner as those who, fastening a rope to a certain rock in the sea, and drawing both themselves and the boat to the rock by pulling it, appear, through their ignorance of this circumstance, not to approach themselves to the rock, but think that the rock gradually approaches to them. For repentance, supplication, prayer, and things of this kind, are analogous to the rope.”

THE SECOND ALCIBIADES.

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE,

SOCRATES, ALCIBIADES.

SCENE.—*The Way to the TEMPLE of JUPITER*¹.

SOCRATES.

ALCIBIADES! are you going to the temple to make your petitions to the God?

ALC. Your conjecture is perfectly right, Socrates.

¹ At Athens were two edifices, built in honour of Jupiter. One of these was a most magnificent temple, called the Olympium, and situate in the lower city. The other was only a chapel in the upper city, sacred to Ζεύς ὁ σωτήρ, *Jupiter the [universal] saviour*, and adjoining to another chapel, sacred to Ἀθηνᾶ ἡ σωτήρ, *Minerva the saviour* [of Athens]. Both these chapels stood at the entrance of the treasury; one probably on each side, as guardians of the public money: and this treasury stood at the back of that beautiful temple of Minerva, called the Parthenon. Now had Socrates met Alcibiades in the ascent, which led first to the Parthenon, and thence to the chapels behind it, no reason appears for his supposing that Alcibiades was going to pay his devotions to Jupiter, rather than to Minerva, the guardian Deity of Athens. But the masculine article τοῦ, used in this place by Plato before the noun θεῶν, forbids us to imagine that Minerva could be here meant. For at Athens, as Minerva was styled ἡ θεῶν, *the Goddess*, by way of eminence, so Jupiter was styled either simply θεῶν, *God*, or ὁ θεῶν, *the God*, as being Supreme. Beside this, we are to observe, that in the chapel of Jupiter in the upper city, he was worshipped in a particular character, as the preserver of his votaries in dangers from which they had escaped; as not only is to be presumed from the title of Saviour, by which he was there invoked, but also is clearly proved from the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, act. 5, sc. 2, and from the oration of Lycurgus against Leocrates, p. 168 and 253, edit. Taylor. Now there is not the least appearance that Alcibiades had had any signal deliverance from danger, or that he was now going to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice, as it was customary to do on such occasions. From all this we justly may conclude, that the scene of this dialogue lies in a direct leading to the temple of Olympian Jupiter in the lower city.—S.

Soc. Indeed your countenance appears close and cloudy; and your eyes are turned toward the ground, as if you were wrapped in some profound thought¹.

ALC. What profound thoughts could a man have at such a time, Socrates?

Soc. Thoughts, Alcibiades, such as seem to me of the highest importance. For tell me, in the name of Jupiter, do you not think, when we happen, whether in private or in public, to be making our petitions to the Gods, that sometimes they grant a part of those petitions, and reject the rest; and that to some of their petitioners they hearken, but are deaf to others?

ALC. No doubt of it.

Soc. Do you not think, then, that much previous consideration is requisite to prevent a man from praying unwittingly for things which are very evil, but which he imagines very good; if the Gods at that time when he is praying to them should happen to be disposed to grant whatever prayers he happens to make? As Œdipus, they say, inconsiderately² prayed the Gods that his sons might divide their patrimony between them by the sword³. Instead,

¹ The first symbolical precept which the Pythagorean philosophers gave to their disciples was this: "When you go from your house with intention to perform your devotions at the temple, neither speak nor do any thing in the way thither concerning any business of human life"—A precept recorded, among others of like kind, by Jamblichus, in the last of his *λογoi προτρεπτικοι*, and rightly there interpreted, p. 134, to this purport:—that a man ought to purify his mind, by abstracting it from earthly cares, and from all objects of sense, whenever he contemplates divine things; because these are abstracted or pure from matter themselves; and pure naturally joins and unites with homogeneous pure. Further, divine things being stable, and always the same, but human things unstable, and for ever changing; they are in this respect also heterogeneous, and, as the same great Platonist elsewhere elegantly speaks, incommensurable, the one sort of things with the other; so that they mix not amicably together in the mind.—S.

² This sentence is evidently meant to prove the necessity of much consideration before a man prays; by showing, from the example of Œdipus, the mischiefs often consequent to rash and unpremeditated prayer. An opposition, therefore, seems intended between the *αυρινα* in this passage, and the *προουβουσια*, *premeditation*, or *previous consideration*, above recommended. Accordingly, we have ventured, against the opinion of Ernestus, in his Notes to Xenophon's Memorab. lib. iv. cap. 7, to give this *opposed meaning* here to the word *αυρινα*, by rendering it in English *inconsiderately*; a meaning very little different from the primary and usual sense of the word, in which it signifies the same with *παρ'αυρινα*, that is, *immediately, directly, without delay*.—S.

³ The same relation of this curse is given by Euripides, in Phœnissæ, ver. 68; by Sophocles, in Œdipus Colon. ver. 1437, 1447, et seq. (where Œdipus himself reiterates the curse:) and by the Scholiast on Æschylus, in Septem apud Thebas, ver. 613, 713, 729, and 853.—S.

therefore,

therefore, of praying for his family, as he might have done, that the evils which it then suffered might be averted, he cursed it by praying¹ that more might be superadded. The event of which curse was this, that not only what he prayed for was accomplished, but from that accomplishment followed other evils, many and terrible, which there is no need to enumerate².

ALC. But, Socrates, you have now spoken of a man who was insane, for who, think you, in his sound mind would venture to make such sort of prayers?

Soc. Whether is it your opinion, that to be insane is to be in a state of mind contrary to that which is sound?

ALC. I am quite of opinion that it is.

Soc. And are you not of opinion, too, that there are men who want understanding, and men who have not that want?

¹ Curses in those ancient days were prayers addressed to the Infernal Deities,—to Tartarus,—to primæval Night, but chiefly to the daughters of Night, the Eumenides. For no Deities who dwelt in light were imagined to be the authors of evil ever to any. In conformity with these practices and opinions, Sophocles, in the last of the two passages cited from him in note 7, and Statius, in his Thebaid, lib. i. ver. 56 et seq., give to this curse, pronounced by Œdipus against his sons, the form of a prayer, addressed to those powers of darkness. Hence appears the ignorance of the author of the *κικλίου Θηβαίης*, or old Greek ballad of the Siege of Thebes, cited by the scholiast on Sophocles, p. 577, edit. P. Steph. For, after he has told a very silly tale, how the two sons of Œdipus, having had an ox killed for a sacrifice, sent a joint of it to their father who was then blind,—and how Œdipus had expected the prime piece of all,—he concludes this part of the story in manner and form following; that is to say, being interpreted (as it ought to be) in ballad style and ballad metre,

As soon as e'er he understood
 'Twas only the ache-bone,
 For him too mean, unworthy food;
 Against the ground, in wrathful mood,
 He straightway dash'd it down.

Then pray'd he to th' immortals all,
 But chief to Jove on high,
 That each by th' other's hand might fall;
 And so to Pluto's darksome hall
 They both at once might fly.—S.

² The particulars are briefly related by Appollodorus, in Bibliothec. lib. iii. cap. 6 and 7.—S.

ALC. I am.

SOC. Come, then, let us consider what sort of men these are. You have admitted, that men there are who want understanding, men who do not want it, and other men, you say, who are insane.

ALC. True.

SOC. Further now; are there not some men in a good state of health?

ALC. There are.

SOC. And are there not others in a bad state of health?

ALC. Certainly.

SOC. These, then, are not the same men with those.

ALC. By no means.

SOC. Whether now are there any men who are in neither of those states?

ALC. Certainly, none.

SOC. For every man must of necessity either *have* good health, or *want* good health.

ALC. I think so too.

SOC. Well: do you think after the same manner with regard to the having of understanding and the want of understanding?

ALC. How do you mean?

SOC. Do you think it to be necessary¹, that a man should either *have* or *want* a good understanding? Or is there, besides, some third and middle state, in which a man neither *has* nor *wants* a good understanding?

ALC. There certainly is not.

SOC. Every man, then, of necessity must be either in the one or in the other of those two conditions.

ALC. So it seems to me.

¹ In all the printed editions of the Greek we here read, Δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι τε εἶναι, *Do you think it possible, &c.* And Cornarius, as if he found this reading in the Heffenstein manuscript, translates it into Latin thus: *Videtur tibi fieri posse, &c.* Ficinus and Stephens translate it, as if they had read in their manuscripts, Δοκεῖ σοι δεῖν εἶναι, *Do you think that a man ought to be, &c.* Neither of these readings can be right, because they, both of them, make this dialectical question to be *foolish* as well as *impertinent*; and because also either of them spoils the argumentation. To make the inference, in the next sentence of Socrates, just and conclusive, we must here read Δοκεῖ σοι ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι, as we have supposed in translating it. The necessity of making this emendation in the Greek text was seen also by Dacier, as appears from his French translation.—S.

Soc.

Soc. Do you not remember that you admitted this, that insanity was contrary to soundness of understanding?

ALC. I do.

Soc. And do you not remember that you admitted this also, that there was no middle or third state, in which a man neither *has* nor *wants* a good understanding?

ALC. I admitted this too.

Soc. But how can two different things be contrary to one and the same thing?

ALC. It is by no means possible.

Soc. Want of understanding, therefore, and insanity, are likely to be found the same thing.

ALC. It appears so.

Soc. If then we should pronounce that all fools were madmen¹, we should pronounce rightly, Alcibiades.

ALC. We should.

Soc. In the first place, your equals in age, if any of them happen to be fools, as indeed they are, and some of your elders too, all these we must pronounce madmen. For consider, are you not of opinion, that in this city there are few wise men, but a multitude of fools, whom you call madmen?

ALC. I am of that opinion.

Soc. Can you imagine then, that, living in the same city with so many madmen, we should live with any ease or comfort? or that we should not have suffered from them long ago, have been buffeted, and pelted, and have met with all other mischiefs which madmen are wont to perpetrate? But consider, my good sir, whether we live not here in a different state of things.

ALC. What is then the truth of the case, Socrates, with respect to the multitude? For it is not likely to be what I just now imagined.

¹ That the philosophers of the Stoic sect derived from Socrates that celebrated paradox of theirs, *παντας τους αφορους μανειναι*, that all fools are mad, is a just observation of Cicero's in *Tuscul. Disputat.* l. iii. § 5; and Dr. Davis, in his notes thereon, shows the justness of it, by referring to the passage in Plato now before us.—S.

Soc.

Soc. Neither do I think it is so myself. But we should consider it in some such way as this.

ALC. In what way do you mean?

Soc. I will tell you. We presume that some men there are who are ill in health: do we not?

ALC. Certainly we do.

Soc. Do you think it necessary then that every man, who is ill in health, should have the gout, or a fever, or an ophthalmy¹? do you not think that a man, without suffering from any of these diseases, may be ill of some other? For diseases, we suppose, are of many various kinds, and not of those only.

ALC. I suppose they are.

Soc. Do you not think that every ophthalmy is a disease?

ALC. I do.

Soc. And do you think that every disease, therefore, is an ophthalmy?

ALC. By no means, not I. Yet still I am at a loss about your meaning.

Soc. But if you will give me your attention, in considering the matter, both of us together, we shall go near to find the truth of it.

ALC. I give you, Socrates, all the attention I am master of.

Soc. Was it not agreed by us, that every ophthalmy was a disease; though not every disease an ophthalmy?

ALC. It was agreed so.

Soc. And I think it was rightly so agreed. For all persons who have a fever have a disease; not all, however, who have a disease have a fever; neither have they all of them the gout, nor all of them an ophthalmy. Every thing indeed of this kind² is a disease; but they whom we call physicians say that diseases differ in their effects on the human body. For

¹ We have no single word in our language to denote that disease of the eyes, called by the Grecian physicians *οφθαλμία*, the word here used by Plato. They meant by it such a ferous inflammation of the eyes, or defluxion of humours on them, as in Latin is called *lippitudo*.—S.

² That is, every continued indisposition of the body; whether the whole body suffer from it throughout, as in a fever; or whether it be seated in any organical part serving to motion, as in the gout; or serving to sensation, as in an ophthalmy. Plato, in his choice of similitudes and instances, where they are requisite to illustrate his subject, (and he never uses any but on such occasions,) is always so exquisitely curious, and often, as here, so scientifically judicious, that, with respect to this ingredient in good writing on ideal or intellectual subjects, we know of no writer who is his equal.—S.

all diseases are not alike, neither are they all attended with like symptoms; but each of them operates with a power peculiar to itself, and yet diseases are they all. Just as it is with respect to workmen; for workmen we suppose some men are, do we not¹?

ALC. Certainly we do.

SOC. Such as shoemakers, smiths, statuaries, and a great multitude of others, whom it is needless to enumerate distinctly. All these have different parts of workmanship divided amongst them; and they all are workmen. They are not, however, smiths, nor shoemakers, nor statuaries, indiscriminately all of them together. Just so folly is divided amongst men. And those who have the largest share of it, we call madmen; such as have a portion somewhat less, we call senseless and stupidified²: but if we choose to speak of these in gentler terms, some of us say they are magnanimous³; others call them simpletons; and others again, harmless and inexperienced in the world and speechless⁴. You will also find, if you reflect, many other names given them beside these. But they are all comprised under the general term, folly or want of understanding. There is, however, a difference between them, as one art differs from another, one disease from another. Or how otherwise doth the case seem to you?

ALC. To me exactly as you represent it.

SOC. This point, therefore, being settled, let us from hence return back again. For it was proposed, I think, in the beginning of our inquiry, to be

¹ In the Socratic manner of arguing from answers given to interrogations, the interrogating party asserts nothing positively; nor even lays down the most certain principles for a foundation of the future reasoning, until they are admitted for truths by the responding party.—S.

² In the Greek, *εμβροτητους*, literally to be translated thunder-stricken. For the effect of lightning, (when attended by thunder,) and indeed of all æthereal or electrical fire, is to stupify, at least for a time, whatever animal it strikes.—S.

³ This euphemism is applied in the way of raillery or good-humour, to such men as want sense or understanding in the common affairs of human life; as men really magnanimous, being usually regardless of things really little and appearing so to them, are looked upon as fools or as senseless by the multitude, to whom those little things appear great and important.—S.

⁴ In the Greek, *ἔνεους*, a word which, in the proper sense of it, is applied only to infants before they have attained to the use of speech. This epithet, and the two preceding it, are used in the way of extenuation or apology; the first for the wholly useless or unferviceable in any affair; the next for the silly or easy to be imposed on; the last for the silent from want of ideas, having nothing to say.—S.

considered by us, what sort of men wanted understanding, and what sort were men of good understanding. For it was agreed that some there were of each sort. Was it not?

ALC. It was so agreed.

Soc. Whether then do you suppose, that such persons have a good understanding who know how they ought to act, and what they ought to say?

ALC. I do.

Soc. And what persons do you apprehend to be wanting in understanding? are they not such as are ignorant in both those cases?

ALC. These very persons.

Soc. Will not these persons then, who are ignorant of what they ought to do and to say, both say and do what they ought not without being sensible of it?

ALC. It appears so.

Soc. Well then, Alcibiades, of this sort of persons, I said, was *Œdipus*. And you may find many in our own times, who, though they are not seized with sudden anger, as he was, yet pray for things hurtful to themselves; not suspecting evil in them, and imagining nought but good. *Œdipus* indeed, as he did not wish for any thing good, so neither did he imagine the thing he prayed for to be good. But some others there are, whose minds are in a disposition quite contrary to that of *Œdipus*. For you yourself, in my opinion, if the God to whom you are going to offer your petitions should appear to you, and, before you had made any petition to him, should ask you, "whether your desires would be satisfied with your becoming tyrant of Athens;" and (if you held this favour cheap, and no mighty grant) should add further, "and tyrant of all Greece;" and, if he should perceive that you deemed it still too little for you, unless you were tyrant¹ of all Europe, should promise you that also; and not merely promise, but make you so immediately on the spot, if you were in haste to have all the Europeans acknowledge Alcibiades, the son of Clinias, for their lord and master; in this case, it is my opinion, that you yourself would march away full of joy, as if the greatest good had befallen you.

ALC. I believe, Socrates, that I should; and that so would any other man whatever, had he met with such an adventure.

¹ The word *tyrant*, every where in Plato, signifies a despotic or arbitrary monarch.—S.
Soc.

Soc. You would not, however, accept of absolute dominion over the estates and persons of all the Grecians and Barbarians together, on condition of giving your life in exchange for it.

ALC. I suppose not. For why should I, when it could be of no use to me?

Soc. And, if you knew that you should make an ill use of it to your own detriment, would you not also in such a case refuse it?

ALC. Certainly I should.

Soc. You see, then, how dangerous it is, either inconsiderately to accept of it, when offered, or to wish and pray for it of yourself; since a man, by having it, may suffer great detriment, if not the total loss of his life. In confirmation of this, we could mention many persons who longed after tyranny, and laboured to obtain it, as if some mighty good were to be enjoyed from it; but having obtained it, were, from plots and conspiracies to deprive them of it, forced to part with their very lives. Nay, it cannot, I suppose, have escaped your own hearing, what happened as it were but yesterday, that Archelaus, tyrant of the Macedonians, was murdered by his favourite; for this favourite was no less fond of the tyranny, than the tyrant was of him; and imagined that, by obtaining the tyranny himself, he should be made a happy man; but that, after he had held the tyranny three or four days, he himself was, in his turn, secretly murdered by some others, who had conspired against him. Amongst our own fellow citizens, also, you see, (for this we have not from the report of others, but have been eye-witnesses of it ourselves,) that of those who succeeded in their ambition to command our armies, some were banished¹, and still at this day live in exile from the city; others lost their lives²; and such as seem to have fared the best, such as had gone through many terrifying dangers³ in their campaigns,

¹ Thucydides, the son of Melesias, had been banished by ostracism, four or five years before what we suppose the time of this dialogue; and we no where read, that ever he was recalled from exile; nor indeed is it probable that he was, at least during the life of Pericles.—S.

² This was the case of Callias, the son of Calliades; he was slain in battle, about the time when the above-mentioned Thucydides was banished from Athens. See Thucydides the Historian, lib. i. §. 61, 2, and 3.—S.

³ In the Greek, *δια πολλων κινδυνων ελθο τις και φ.σεν.*—But we should be glad to have the *αυθιγη*

campaigns, and were returned to their own country, have ever afterwards suffered at home, from sycophants and detractors, a siege as fierce and as dangerous as any from open enemies in the field, so that some of them at length wished they had never known how to command an army, much rather than ever to have born the burden of that command. Indeed if the dangers and toils, which they underwent, had tended to their advantage, they would have had something plausible to plead in behalf of their ambition : but their case is quite the reverse of that. In the same manner, with respect to the having of children, you will find many men who wish and pray for them ; but after they have¹ them, are brought, on that very account, into the greatest calamities and griefs : for some, whose children were incurably wicked, have spent all their after days in sorrow ; and some, who had good children, but lost them by some bad accident, have been reduced to a state of mind no less miserable than the others, and, like them, have wished that their children never had been born. And yet, notwithstanding the evidence of these and many other cases of like kind, it is rare to find a man who would refuse those gifts of fortune, were they offered to him ; or who, could he obtain them by his prayers, would forbear to pray for them. Few men would reject even a tyranny, if offered them ; or the chief command of an army ; or many other things, which often bring more mischief than benefit to the possessor. Nay, there are few men, of those who happen not to have them at present, who would not be glad if ever they came into their possession. And yet such, as obtain them, every now and then recant their wishes, and pray to be disencumbered of what they before prayed to have. I suspect, therefore, that in reality men accuse the Gods unjustly², in saying, that the evils which they suffer come from them :

For on themselves they draw, through their own crimes,

thority of some antient manuscript, for reading the last word in this sentence *πρωτων*, instead of *ροστων*¹ not only because the word *πρωτων* conveys a better meaning, but because also the words *οι κινδυνοι τε και πρωτοι* in the next sentence evidently appear to have respect to the mention of them both, made just before.—S.

¹ Perhaps the word *ηδη* in the Greek, which, as it is printed, precedes the word *γενεσθαι*, should be transferred from thence hither, that we might here read *ηδη γενημενων*.—S.

² This passage evidently alludes to a speech of Jupiter in Homer's *Odysssey*, lib. i. v. 32, et seq.—S.

(or

(or follies should we say?)

More griefs than fate allots to human life.

And to me, Alcibiades, it seems probable, that some wise man or other, happening to be connected with certain persons void of understanding, and observing them to pursue and to pray for things, which it were better for them still to be without, but which appeared to them good, composed for their use a common prayer¹; the words of which are nearly these—

Sov'reign of Nature! grant us what's good,
Be it, or not, the subject of our pray'rs;
And from thy supplicants, whate'er is ill,
Tho' supplicating for it, still avert.

Now in this prayer, it seems to me, that the poet says what is right; and that whoever makes use of it, incurs no danger. But if you have any thing to say against it, speak your mind.

ALC. It is a difficult matter, Socrates, to speak against any thing which is rightly said. But what I am thinking of is, how many evils are brought on men by ignorance: since to this it seems owing, that we labour to procure for ourselves the greatest mischiefs, without knowing what we are about; and how extreme our ignorance is, appears in our praying for them. And yet no man would imagine that to be his own case; and every one supposes himself sufficiently knowing, to pray for things the most advantageous to himself, and to avoid praying for things the most mischievous: for to pray for these things would in reality be like a curse, and not a prayer.

Soc. But perhaps, my good friend, some man or other, who happens to be wiser than you or I, might say, that we are wrong, in laying the blame so rashly on ignorance, unless we proceed to specify what things we mean

¹ It is necessary to observe, that this prayer is adapted solely to that part of mankind (and a very numerous part it is) who have not arrived at a *scientific* knowledge of divine concerns, and therefore know not what to pray for as they ought. See an excellent remark on this passage from Proclus in a note on the Republic, vol. i. p. 443. Mr. Sydenham, from mistaking the intention of this prayer, has made Socrates assert, without any authority from the text, that the author of it composed it for his own use as well as that of the ignorant. Hence he translates, "composed for his own use and theirs a common prayer."—T.

the ignorance of. To some persons also, in certain conditions and circumstances, ignorance is a good; though it be an evil to those others we have been speaking of.

ALC. How say you? Is it possible there should be any thing, which it is better for any person in any condition whatever to be ignorant of than to know?

Soc. I think it is: are not you of the same opinion?

ALC. Not I, by Jupiter.

Soc. Well now;—but observe, I am not going to charge you with having a will, disposed to have ever perpetrated¹ a deed, like that of Orestes, upon his own mother, as it is reported; or like that of Alcæon, or whoever else happened to act in the same manner.

ALC. Mention not such a horrid deed, I beseech you, Socrates.

Soc. The man, who acquits you of a disposition to have acted in that

¹ That part of the story of Orestes, which is here alluded to, is well known to those who are versed in Greek learning, from the *Χορηγοί* of Æschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* of Euripides.—For the story of Alcæon, we refer them to the old Scholia on Homer's *Odyssey*, lib. xi. v. 326; or to Servius's Commentary on Virgil's *Æneid*, lib. vi. v. 445. It is told more at large by Apollodorus, in lib. iii. cap. 6 and 7. But lest such of our readers, as happen to be unlearned in the history of ancient Greece, should mistake the meaning of this passage; they are to be informed that Orestes and Alcæon were guilty of so atrocious a crime, as the murder of their own mothers, out of a mistaken notion of filial piety, and an ignorance of the bounds of duty towards a father. Orestes was the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. His mother, in the absence of his father during the siege of Troy, carried on an amour with Ægisthus, cousin-german to Agamemnon. At her husband's return home, after the destruction of Troy, she and her paramour procured his death; which was afterwards avenged by his children: for Orestes, at the instigation of his sister Electra, slew the adulterous pair together. Alcæon was the son of Amphiarus and Eriphyle. This lady betrayed her husband into a situation in which he must inevitably lose his life. He knowing how she had acted, and foreseeing the event, enjoined his son Alcæon to avenge his death on Eriphyle, by taking away her life. In neither of these cases, cited here by Plato, does there appear any malice in the young princes against their mothers; no spirit of revenge for personal injuries done to them; no lust of riches or of dominion; in short, no selfish passion or appetite whatever; no other intention than to perform an imagined act of duty to their fathers, by doing such an act of justice on their mothers as belonged not to them to execute. It appears, that both of these unhappy princes perpetrated a deed so unnatural, from erroneous notions of duty, justice, and honour; that is, through want of moral wisdom, or true prudence. We apprehend, therefore, that the drift of Plato in this passage is to prove, from these sad instances of the fatal effects of ignorance in the laws of nature and reason, the necessity of applying our minds to the study of moral science, in order to act rightly and to be happy.—S.

manner, you ought not, Alcibiades, to bid him avoid the mention of such a deed; but much rather ought you to lay that injunction on a man who should express a contrary opinion of you; since the deed appears to you so horrid, as not to admit a casual mention of it in conversation. But do you think that Orestes, had he been a wise and prudent man, and had he known how it was best for him to act, would have dared to be guilty of any such action?

ALC. By no means.

Soc. Nor, I suppose, would any other man.

ALC. Certainly, not.

Soc. The ignorance therefore of what is best is an evil thing; and whoever is ignorant of that best will always suffer evil.

ALC. So I think.

Soc. And did not he think so too? and do not all other men think the same?

ALC. I cannot deny it.

Soc. Further then, let us consider this also. Supposing, that it should come into your head all at once, from a sudden fancy of its being the best thing you can do, to take a dagger with you, and go to the house of Pericles, your guardian and your friend; and supposing that, when you came there, upon your asking if Pericles was within, with intention to kill him only and no other person, you should receive this answer, He is within;—I do not say, that you have a will or inclination to verify any of these suppositions; I say no more than this—supposing you should be seized with such a fancy¹, (and nothing, I think, hinders a man, who is ignorant of what is best, from being at some time or other so seized,) in that case an opinion might be conceived, that the worst thing a man can do is, in some circumstances, the best: do not you think it might?

ALC. Certainly so.

Soc. If then, upon being admitted to his presence, you should see and

¹ In the Greek, *ει, ομαι, δοξει σοι οπερ ουθεν κωλυει, κ. τ. λ.* The word *ομαι* here seems to be out of its proper place, and to belong to the *parenthetical* part of this sentence, thus, *ει δοξει σοι οπερ, (or rather, as Stephens conjectures, οτιπερ,) ομαι, ουθεν κωλυει δεπου τω γε αγνοουντι το βελτιστον παραστηναι ποτε δεξαν' εσσει, κ. τ. λ.—S.*

yet not know him, but should mistake him for some other person, I ask you, whether you would, notwithstanding that, be so furious as to kill him?

ALC. No, by Jupiter; I do not imagine that I should.

Soc. For you would not be so furious as to kill any person, whom chance threw in your way; but him only at whom you aimed. Is it not for this reason that you would not kill him?

ALC. Without doubt.

Soc. And if you attempted the same thing ever so often, and still mistook Pericles, whenever you were about to execute your design, you never would lay violent hands on him.

ALC. Certainly I should not.

Soc. Well; and can you think that Orestes would ever have laid violent hands on his mother, if in like manner he had mistaken her for some other person?

ALC. I think he would not.

Soc. For he too had it not in his mind to kill any woman he should chance to meet with, nor the mother of any man whatever, but his own mother only.

ALC. It is true.

Soc. To mistake therefore, and not to know whings of that kind, is better for men who are in such dispositions, and who are seized with such imaginations.

ALC. It appears so to be.

Soc. Do you now perceive, that for some persons, in some circumstances, to be ignorant of some things, is a good, and not, as you just now imagined it, an evil?

ALC. It seems to me probable.

Soc. Further; if you are willing to consider what follows after this, though it be strange and paradoxical, you may perhaps be of opinion that there is some truth in it¹.

ALC. Above all things, Socrates, tell me what.

¹ Immediately before *εἴηαι*, which is the last word of this sentence in the Greek, the word *τι* seems to be omitted.—S.

Soc. That the acquisition of other sciences, without the science ¹ of what is best, is, I may venture to say, likely to be found rarely beneficial, and generally hurtful to the person who has acquired them². And consider it in this way: do you not think it necessary that, when we are about to engage in any affair, or to speak on any subject, we should really know, or at least should fancy that we know, the subject we are about to speak on, or the affair we are going so readily to engage in?

ALC. I do think it is.

Soc. And do not our public orators, either knowing, or fancying that they know, what the city ought to do, give us accordingly their counsel off hand on every occasion? Some of them, on the subject of war and peace; others, when the affair of building walls, or that of furnishing the port-towns with proper stores, is in debate. In a word, all the negotiations between our city and any other, and all our domestic concerns, are they not conducted just as these orators advise?

ALC. True.

Soc. Observe then, how we proceed in this argument, if possible. Some men you call wise, and others you call foolish.

ALC. I do.

Soc. Foolish do you not call the many, and wise the few?

ALC. Just so.

Soc. And do you not give those different epithets to those two sorts of persons, in consideration of something in which they differ?

ALC. I do.

Soc. Whether do you call him a wise man, who knows how to harangue the people on those subjects of debate we mentioned, without knowing what advice is the best in general, and what on the present occasion?

¹ The words *των άλλων επιστημων*, in the Greek of this sentence, are sufficient to show, that, presently afterwards, we ought to read *ανευ της του βελτιστου* [*επιστημης*]. And this reading, if it wanted confirmation, is indisputably confirmed by a subsequent passage, in which the very same paradoxical position, having been proved, is repeated as a conclusion from the proofs.—S.

² The last word of this sentence in the Greek, we presume, should be read, not *αυτα*, as it is printed; but, either *αυτας* [*επιστημας*], or *αυτο* [*κτημα*]. The latter of these two emendatory readings is confirmed by that passage, to which we have referred in the preceding note.—S.

ALC. Certainly not.

Soc. Nor him neither, I suppose, who hath the knowledge of military affairs, but knows not when it is best to go to war, nor how long a time to continue it. Is not my supposition just?

ALC. It is.

Soc. Neither then do you call him a wise man, who knows how to procure another man's death, or the confiscation of his estate, or the banishment of him from his country, without knowing on what occasion, or what person, it is best so to persecute.

ALC. Indeed I do not.

Soc. The man, therefore, who possesses any knowledge of such a kind, if that knowledge of his be attended with the knowledge also of what is best, (and this I presume to be the same with the knowledge of what is beneficial; is it so?)

ALC. Certainly it is:)

Soc. We shall say, that he is a wise man, and sufficiently well able to judge for himself, and to be also a counsellor to the city. But of the man who has not the knowledge of what is beneficial¹, we shall say the contrary. Or what is your opinion that we ought to say?

ALC. Mine agrees with yours.

Soc. Well now; let us suppose a man skilled in horsemanship, or in shooting with a bow, or in wrestling, or boxing, or other combat; or in any thing else which art teaches: what do you say concerning him who knows what is executed best, in that art which he has learnt? The man, for instance, who knows what is performed best in horsemanship, do you not say of him, that he is skilled in the horseman's art?

ALC. I do.

Soc. And the man who knows what is performed best in wrestling, I presume you say of him, that he is skilled in the wrestler's art. Of a man who has the like knowledge in music, you say, that he is skilled in the

¹ In the Greek, as it is printed, we here read ποικιλτα, a word which is foreign to the sense. From what goes before, we conjecture the right reading to be either ωφελουτα, that is, ωφελειν επισταμενον, or else ποιουτα, that is, such a one as before described, ὃ παριπτεται ἢ του βελτιστου επιστηλη, whose particular knowledge or skill is attended with the science of what is best.—S.

musician's art. And of men who have the like knowledge in the performances of other arts, you speak after a like manner: or how otherwise?

ALC. No otherwise than just as you say.

SOC. Do you think now, that a man, skilled in any of these arts, must of necessity be a wise man? or shall we say, that he wants much of being so?

ALC. Much indeed does he, by Jupiter.

SOC. Suppose then a commonwealth, composed of good bowmen and musicians, of wrestlers too and other artists; and mixed with these, such persons as we just now mentioned¹, such as understand military affairs, and such as know how to persecute a man to death; and superadded to them, your politicians, swollen with the pride of managing state-affairs; all these people void of the science of what is best; and not a man of them knowing when, or in what case, it is best to exercise the particular skill or knowledge that each man is master of; what sort of a commonwealth do you think this would prove?

ALC. But a bad one, Socrates, I think for my part.

SOC. Neither would you, I suppose, hesitate to pronounce it so, when you saw every one of these men ambitious of being honoured, and making it his chief business in the commonwealth,

To attain to more, and still more, excellence?

(by excellence I mean that which is the best in his own art,) but in what is

¹ Instead of οἷς ἀρτι ἐρημαμεν, printed here in the Greek, we suspect that we ought to read ὡν α. εἰ.—S.

² Plutarch, towards the end of his treatise περὶ ἀδολεσχίας, concerning *Talkativeness*, cites the two following verses, which appear to be taken out of some ancient Greek poet,

Νέμει το πλῆστον ἡμέρας τούτῳ μέρῳ,
Ἴν' αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τυχευῆν κρατίστος ὢν.

He makes it the chief business of the day,
T' attain to more, and still more, excellence.

In the passage now before us, we find the *latter* of these two verses cited by Plato, word for word. The *former* of them indeed has a little altered; but only just so much as to adapt it to his own purpose; which could not be done without weaving it into his own profane style.—S.

best for the public, and best also for himself¹, generally mistaken; as being, I suppose, without rational principles, and governed only by opinion. In this case, should we not be right in pronouncing that such a commonwealth was full of great disorder and of lawless doings?

ALC. Right indeed, by Jupiter.

Soc. Did we not think it necessary for us, either to fancy that we know, or really to know previously, the business we are going to engage in, or off-hand to speak upon?

ALC. We did.

Soc. And did we not also think, that if a man engages in any business which he knows, and his knowledge of it be attended with the knowledge of what is beneficial, he will be in a way of profiting both the public and himself²?

ALC.

¹ In the Greek, *αυτον αυτω βελτιστου*, Stephens perceiving this to be quite ungrammatical, proposes, by a very scholar-like as well as sensible emendation, that instead of *αυτον* we should read *αυτου*. But perhaps the word *αυτον* was altogether intruded here by some transcriber, inattentive to the grammatical construction of this sentence, but who observed the words *αυτον αυτω* used in many following sentences, which have the same meaning with that now before us.—S.

² This interrogative sentence of Socrates no less evidently refers to a former sentence beginning with these words, *The man therefore*—a sentence that will greatly help us in amending this; the Greek of which, as it is printed, runs thus: *Ουκουν και μιν πραττη α τις οιδεν, η δοκει ειδεναι, παρεπιται δε το ωφελιμης και λυσιτελουτως ημας ιζειν, και τη πολει και αυτον αυτω*. Now in this sentence the words *η δοκει ειδεναι* not only are not found in the sentence to which this refers, and the sense of which it repeats with but little variation in the words, but they also convey a meaning contrary to the mind of Socrates. For he takes every occasion to inculcate, that only a man's real knowledge, shown by his speeches, or his actions, and not his own false conceit of it, nor other men's too high opinion of it, can be of any lasting advantage either to himself or to others. Of equal moment with this interpolation, (a fault to which the words *οιθνηαι ειδεναι* in the preceding sentence, where they are used rightly, seem to have given occasion,) is another fault in the sentence now before us, an omission of the words *η του βελτιστου επιστημη*, or others to the same purport. For, without some such words, this sentence, in which Socrates delivers his opinion in the way of a question, is quite contradictory to his opinion, delivered but a little before in that sentence above referred to. Our supposition, that such words are here omitted in the printed editions of Plato, but ought to be inserted, is confirmed by the Latin of Ficinus, who translated faithfully from a manuscript copy of Plato, (probably the Medicean,) with which Grynæus afterwards compared and corrected that translation. For both Ficinus and Grynæus, in their Latin, insert these words; "*addit autem scientiam optimi.*" In this sentence also are wanting

ALC. How could we think otherwise?

SOC. But that if it be attended with ignorance of what is beneficial, the contrary will happen; he will neither profit the public nor himself?

ALC. Certainly we thought he would not.

SOC. And what? are you still of the same opinion? or have you in any respect altered your way of thinking about these matters?

ALC. Not at all: I think as I did still.

SOC. Let me ask you then, whether you did not say that you called the many fools, and the few wise men?

ALC. I acknowledge it.

SOC. And do we not still say, that the many are mistaken in their opinion of what is best, for that they are generally, I suppose, without rational principles, and only governed by opinion?

ALC. We still say the same.

SOC. It is the interest, therefore, of the many not to be knowing in any affairs, nor to conceit themselves knowing; if what affairs they know, or conceit they know, they will be the more forward to engage in; and, engaging in them, will receive more harm than benefit.

wanting the words *εδοκει ἡμιν*; unless Plato purposely omitted them, as thinking it needless to repeat them, after they had been expressed in the question immediately preceding. There remains yet another fault in this sentence, the word *ἡμας*, a word which the grammatical construction by no means admits of. If our conjectural emendation of this sentence, which we now beg leave to offer to the learned, should appear to be a just one, it will appear at the same time, on examination, that all the faults in it, as printed, are owing originally to a mere *transposition* of some of the words in transcribing it, an error frequently found in ancient manuscripts, and the cause of those many additional errors, as well in printed as in written copies, which were afterwards committed with intention to correct the former. The proposed reading is this; *Ουκουν, καν μεν πραττη ἂ τις οιδε, παρεπεται δε ειδεσαι το ωφελιμον, [οτ παρεπεται δε ἡ του βελτιστου επιστημη, as Ficinus and Grynæus seem to have read,] εδοκει ἡμιν, λυσιτελειντως εζειν τη πολει, και αυτον αυτω.—S.*

¹ This sentence, interrogative also, is thus printed in the Greek; *'Εαν δε γ', οἰμαι, ταναντια τούτων, ουτε τη πολει, ουτ αυτον αυτω*: it plainly respects that passage cited in the last preceding note. The sense of it therefore must be the same with the sense of that: to express which sense exactly, we presume that we ought here to read, as follows; *'Εαν δ' αγνοια [sc. του ωφελιμου παρεπεται], ταναντια τούτων, κ. τ. λ.* There is thus, we see, but little alteration made, even in the letters; and the corruption of this passage was not perhaps made with more ease, than that with which the genuine reading has been restored.—S.

ALC.

ALC. What you say is very true.

Soc. Do you see then; do I not appear to have been actually in the right, when I said, that the acquisition of other sciences, without the science of what is best, is rarely beneficial, and generally hurtful, to the person who has acquired them?

ALC. If I did not think so at that time, yet now, Socrates, I do.

Soc. It is incumbent therefore on every civil state, and every private person, if they would manage their affairs rightly, to depend absolutely on this science; just as the sick patient depends on his physician; or as the mariner, who would escape the dangers of the voyage, depends on the commander of the vessel. For¹ without this science, the more vehemently an inward gale² impels a man, whether it arise from the consideration of his wealth, or bodily strength, or some other advantage of the same kind with either of those, so much the greater misadventures will of necessity it seem to befall him, from those very advantages. And, in like manner, the man who has acquired what is called much learning, and many arts, but is destitute of this science, and is driven along by each of the others, will not he meet with, and justly too indeed, a very tempestuous voyage? and supposing him to continue still at sea, without a commander of the vessel in which he sails,

¹ Of this passage in the Greek, Monsieur Dacier says, "C'est un des plus difficiles endroits de Platon." Indeed, as it is printed, it is quite unintelligible. For, after a comma put at the word *πλεον*, it proceeds thus; *ὅσπερ αν μη προτερον επισοιση το της ψυχης. Αλλο γαρ ταυτης, ἢ περι, κ. τ. λ.* But what if it were printed thus? Putting a full stop at *πλεον*, let the next sentence immediately begin, *Αλλο γαρ ταυτης, ὅσπερ αν λαβερτερον επισοιση το της ψυχης, ἢ περι, κ. τ. λ.* All the difficulty is now vanished by this slight transposition, and an easy alteration of *μη προτερον* to *λαβερτερον*, a word perhaps mistaken by the writer to whom it was read, from his not being so thoroughly well versed in the language of Homer, as a man must be before he can every where understand the language of Plato. *Προτερον* therefore being, as we suppose by this mistake, written in some manuscript copy of this dialogue, it is probable that some reader of it afterwards, who saw the absurdity of that word, condemned it by writing in the margin *μη προτερον*, and that the next half-learned transcriber, instead of omitting *προτερον*, took *μη* also into the text. Both these spurious words are rightly omitted in the Heßkenstein manuscript, as we are informed by Cornarius; but the genuine word, in the mean time, was lost.—S.

² In the Greek, *το της ψυχης*, by which we understand *το της ψυχης πνευμα* in the nominative case before *επισοιση*, and not as Cornarius imagined, *το πλεον*, or *ακατιον*, in the accusative case after that verb.—S.

it

it will not be long ¹ before he perishes. So that to such a man very applicable, I think, is that verse where the poet says of some person, in dispraise of him,

Much knew he, and in many things had skill;
But whate'er things he knew, he knew them ill.

ALC. How, Socrates, doth this verse of the poet fall in with what we are speaking of? for to me it seems nothing to the purpose.

Soc. Very much to the purpose is it. But poets, you must know, write enigmatically almost all of them, but this poet more especially. For it is the genius of poetry in general to use an enigmatical language; and it is not for any ordinary person to understand it. But when, besides this difficulty, the poetical genius, so enigmatical in itself, seizes a man who is backward in communicating his knowledge, unwilling to tell us plainly what he means, and desirous to conceal his wisdom as much as possible from the world ², it appears in the highest degree difficult to find out the real meaning of any such poet. For you can by no means think that Homer ³, so very divine a poet as he was, could be ignorant, how impossible it was for a man, who possessed any science whatever, not to know it well. But he expresses himself enigmatically, I suppose, by using, instead of the words *evil* ⁴, and *to know*,

¹ In the Greek, *χρονον ου μακρον βιον θεων*. Stephens proposes *βιον θεων* to be read for the two last words. And we embrace his proposal of reading *βιον*, but conjecture the right reading of the very last word to be rather *βιων*.—S.

² From this passage it appears, what opinion either Plato himself, or other learned men in his time, entertained of Homer, as a philosopher. For he here represents the great poet as possessed of some profound knowledge, which he thought proper and prudent to conceal from the bulk of mankind; and therefore making the discovery of it so difficult, on purpose that only those, whose genius led them to philosophy, and whose outward circumstances of fortune permitted them to follow their genius, might be able to make such a discovery from his writings.—S.

³ We see, that the ancient poem, entitled, from the name of the hero of it, *Margites*, in which was the verse above cited, is expressly attributed to Homer by Plato in this place; as it also is by Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, cap. 4, and in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, lib. vi. cap. 7. What ancient writers have acceded to their opinion, and what others have differed from it, may be seen in Fabricii *Bibliothecâ Græcâ*, l. ii. c. 2, § 24, n^o 17.—S.

⁴ In the Greek, *αντι του κακου*, we suspect the right reading to be *αντι του κακου*, that is, *αντι του ουδατος ΚΑΚΟΝ*, instead of the noun *evil*: as *αντι του επιστασθαι*, just after, means *αντι του ηνματος απαριμφατου και πρωτοτυπου ΕΠΙΣΤΑΣΘΑΙ*, instead of the infinitive and primitive verb *to know*.—S.

the

the derivative words, *ill*, and *he knew*¹. If then we use the two proper words, there is formed this sentence, in plain prose indeed, but expressive of the poet's meaning,—*He was knowing and skilled in many things, but to know all those things was to him an evil.*—It is evident then, that if much knowledge was to him an evil, what knowledge he had was worthless, and he himself was some worthless fellow; supposing any credit to be due to the conclusions from our past reasonings.

ALC. And I think, Socrates, it is their due: for I should hardly give credit to any other rational conclusions, if I denied it to those.

Soc. And you think rightly too. But in the name of Jupiter, let us proceed. For you see, how great are the perplexities attending the subject in which we are engaged; you see also, what the nature is of those perplexities. And you seem to me to have a share in them yourself; as you never rest from changing your thoughts over and over again upon this subject; discarding the opinions, which you had before so ardently embraced, and continuing no longer in the same mind. Should the God then, to whom you are going to make your prayers, appear to you, now after all our conclusions; and should he ask you, before you had presented any petition whatever to him—whether or no your desires would be satisfied, if you obtained any of those dominions mentioned in the beginning of our argument;—or should he leave to yourself the naming of what you wished for;—in which way, think you, could you best avail yourself of this opportunity? whether in accepting any of the grants offered you, or in naming some other thing you wished for?

ALC. Now, by the gods, Socrates, I should not know what to say to such a proposal. Indeed, I think, that it would be rash in me to make any decisive answer at all; and that great caution is absolutely requisite in such a case; to prevent a man from praying unwarily for things evil, while he imagines them to be good; and from doing as you said, soon afterwards recanting his choice, and praying to be delivered from what he had before prayed to have.

¹ We have here a specimen of Plato's uncommon skill in philosophical or universal grammar. It appears, not only by his deducing the adverb ΚΑΚΩΣ, *ill*, from the substantive noun ΚΑΚΟΝ, *evil*, but also by (what shows a much deeper theory of words, considered as the parts of speech,) his deriving ΗΠΙΣΤΑΤΟ, *he knew*, a verb of the indicative mode, from the infinitive, or most general verb, ΕΠΙΣΤΑΣΘΑΙ, *to know*. See Mr. Harris's *Hermes*, b. i. ch. xi. and viii.—S.

Soc.

Soc. Did not then the poet, whom I cited in the beginning of this argument, know somewhat more than we do, in supplicating Jupiter to avert from us what is evil, even though we prayed for it?

ALC. Indeed I think so.

Soc. The Lacedæmonians, therefore, O Alcibiades! admiring and imitating this of the poet, or whether they had of themselves considered the subject in the same manner as he did, every one of them in private, and all of them in public, make a prayer similar to his: for they beseech the Gods to grant them such good things as at the same time are beautiful; and nothing more were they ever heard to pray for. Accordingly, no people have hitherto been more prosperous than they. And if it has happened to them not to prosper in all things, it was not because they prayed amiss; but because the Gods, I presume, have it in their choice, either to grant a man that for which he prays, or to send him the reverse. I have a mind to relate to you somewhat else on this subject, what I once heard from certain elderly men;—that, in the differences between the Athenians and the Lacedæmonians, it so fell out, that whenever they came to a battle, whether by land or by sea, our city was always unsuccessful, and was never able to get one victory:—that the Athenians therefore, uneasy at these miscarriages, and at a loss for some contrivance to put an end to their pressing evils, held a council, and came to this conclusion,—that their best way would be to send to Ammon¹, and consult him what they should do; and at the same time to ask him this question father,—on what account the Gods always give victory to the Spartans their enemies, rather than to them; though of all the Grecians, we, said they, bring them the greatest number of sacrifices, and those the fairest in their kinds; and though we, beyond all other people, have decorated their temples with the presents that are hung up in them; and in honour of the Gods have made yearly processions, the most solemn and the

¹ The oracle of Ammon was highly celebrated for the truth of its predictions. It had been antiently consulted by Hercules and by Perseus. Long afterwards it was consulted by Cræsus, when he was meditating to stop the progress of Cyrus's arms in Asia. In what veneration it was held by the Romans we learn from the ninth book of Lucan. And from the present passage in Plato, as also from the lives of Lyfander, Cimon, and Alexander, in Plutarch, it appears to have been, among the Grecians of those days, in as great vogue and credit as any oracles of their own.—S.

most costly; and have paid them a greater tribute in money than all the rest of the Grecians put together: whilst the Lacedæmonians, they said, never regard any of these things; but, on the contrary, worship the Gods in so slighting a manner, as to make their sacrifices commonly of beasts full of blemishes; and, in all other instances, fall far short of us, said they, in honouring the Gods; at the same time that the riches they are masters of are not less than ours. When the ambassadors had thus spoken, and had inquired of the Oracle, what they should do to find an end of their present misfortunes, the prophet made no other answer than this; (for without doubt the God did not permit him :) sending for the Athenian ambassadors, he spake to them these words,—Thus saith Ammon; he saith, that he prefers the pious addresses of the Lacedæmonians to all the sacrifices of all the Grecians.—These words, and no more, spake the prophet. Now it seems to me, that, by pious addresses, the God means only that prayer of theirs. And it is indeed much more excellent than the prayers of any other people. For the rest of the Grecians, when they have either led up to the altar oxen with their horns gilded, or brought rich offerings and presents to hang up in the temples, pray for whatever they happen to desire, whether it be really good or evil. The Gods therefore, when they hear their impious addresses, accept not of their costly processions, sacrifices, and presents. So that much caution and consideration seem to me requisite on this subject, what is fit to be spoken to the Gods, and what is not. You will also find in Homer sentiments similar to those I have been expressing: for he tells us, that the Trojans, on a certain night, taking up their quarters without the city walls,

In honour of the blest Immortals, slew
Unblemish'd hecatombs :—¹

and that the smoke from these sacrifices was by the winds wafted up into heaven ²:

Sweet

¹ In the Greek, Ἐρδειν ἀβανατοῖσι τελευσσας ἱκατομβας; a line this not found in the copies of Homer now extant; but in Barnes's edition, supplied from this passage of Plato; and by Ernestus shown to be genuine, from the next line, which supposes the mention made of a sacrifice just before.—S.

² Κινητη δ' ἐκ πεδίου ἀνεμῖσι φερον ουρανῷ εἰσω. This line of Homer appears in all the editions of

Sweet odourif'rous smoke; yet by the Gods
 Rejected, and the fav'ry taste refus'd.
 For strong aversion in their holy minds
 Was rooted, against Troy's devoted tow'rs,
 Against th' injurious might of Troy's proud king,
 And 'gainst the Trojan people, who withheld
 Helen, unjustly, from her wedded lord¹.

It was of no advantage therefore, it seems, to them to sacrifice, or to offer presents, to the Gods whom they had made their enemies. For the divine nature, I presume, is not of such a kind as to be seduced by presents, like those whose trade it is to make the most of their money, and who care not by what means they are enriched. Besides, we plead very foolishly, in our expostulations with the Gods, if we think to get the better of the Lacedæmonians by such arguments. For it would be a sad thing indeed, if the Gods regarded our presents and our sacrifices, and not the disposition of the soul, when a religious and just man addressed them. Nay, in my opinion, they have much more regard to this, than they have to those pompous processions and costly sacrifices. For nothing hinders, but that any, whether private persons or civil states, let them have sinned against the Gods and against men ever so greatly, may be well able to pay the Gods such a tribute yearly. But they not being to be bribed, disdain all that outward worship; as faith the divine Oracle, and as also faith the Prophet of the Gods. It seems, therefore, that justice and prudence are honoured, above all things, by the Gods, and by men too, such as have good sense and understanding. Now the prudent and the just are no other persons than such as know what behaviour and what speech is proper to be used in our intercourse, whether with gods or with men. But I should be glad to hear from you what your thoughts are on this subject.

of that poet. Plato is here obliged to take this sentence quite out of the metre; because he is relating, only at second hand and as told by Homer, a fact, the narration of which Homer himself puts immediately into the mouth of the muse: and, for the same reason, we have given a prosaic translation of it. In the preceding line, as also in those which follow, Plato was able to preserve the metre, while he only changed the indicative verbs into infinitive.—S.

¹ The verses, here translated, are not found in any of the editions of Homer, except in that of Barnes; but, as Ernestus judiciously observes, they are altogether worthy of that greatest of all poets.—S.

ALC. For my part, I am of the same opinion with you, Socrates, and with the Oracle. And indeed it would ill become me to give my vote opposite to the judgment of the God.

Soc. Do you not remember, that you acknowledged your being much at a loss concerning prayer; for fear you should unwarily pray for evil things, imagining them to be good?

ALC. I do remember it.

Soc. You perceive then, that it is not safe for you to go and make your prayer at the temple, as you intended; lest your addresses should happen to be impious, and the God hearing them should wholly reject your sacrifice, and you perhaps should draw upon your own head some farther evil. It seems to me, therefore, that your best way is to be at quiet. For because of your magnanimity, (that fairest of names given to folly,) I suppose you would not be willing to make use of the Lacedæmonian prayer. It is necessary, therefore, that a man should wait till he has learnt what disposition he ought to be in towards the Gods and towards men.

ALC. But, Socrates, how long will it be before that time comes? and who is he that will instruct me? for I should be very glad, methinks, to see that man, and to know who he is.

Soc. It is he, whose care you are the object of. But as Homer^a says of Minerva, that she removed the mist from before the eyes of Diomedes,

That he might clearly see, and gods from men
Plainly distinguish, —

so must he in the first place, as it seems to me, remove from your soul the mist that now happens to surround it; and after that he will apply those medicines, by means of which you will clearly distinguish good from evil. For, at present, I think you would not be able so to do.

ALC. Let him then remove that mist, or any other obstruction that he pleases: for he will find me readily disposed to follow any of his prescriptions, whoever the man is, if by those means I may become a better man than I am at present.

Soc. It is wonderful to consider how greatly he is disposed towards the making you so.

^a Iliad. lib. v. ver. 127.—S.

ALC. Till that time therefore, I think, it is the better way to defer my sacrifice.

Soc. You think rightly too. For it is a safer way than to run so great a risk.

ALC. It is undeniable, O Socrates. In the mean time, however, since you seem to me to have counselled well, I shall put this crown¹ about your brows. And to the Gods we shall present crowns², and all other accustomed offerings, then, when I see that day arrived. Nor will the time be long before its arrival, if it please the Gods.

Soc. Well, I accept of this: and should have pleasure in seeing the time come, when you yourself³ shall have received some other thing in return for your present to me. And as Creon, when Tiresias, shewing him his crown [of Gold], said, it had been given him [by the Athenians], in honour of his science, as the first-fruits of [their]⁴ victory obtained over the enemy, is by Euripides made to say,

¹ All those, who went to the temples with intent to petition the Gods for any particular favour, carried along with them crowns or garlands; and these they wore whilst they were praying. It was by such a crown, held by Alcibiades in his hand, that Socrates, in meeting him, conjectured rightly whither he was going.—S.

² The learned archbishop Potter, in his *Archæolog. Græc.* b. ii. ch. 4, very justly observes, that crowns and garlands were some of the presents offered to the Gods by their petitioners, to obtain some future benefit. And from the passage now before us we infer, that the very same crowns or garlands, worn by those petitioners during their prayers in the temples, they used, at their departure, to take off from their own heads, and to put them on the heads of the divine images; from whence afterward the priest took, and hung them up on the side walls of the temple. Plato here exhibits Alcibiades giving to Socrates the very honour which he had designed for the image of Jupiter. By this, we presume, he meant to signify, that whoever could teach wisdom and virtue, as Alcibiades supposed of Socrates, was to be esteemed and honoured as a divine man.—S.

³ In the Greek, *αλλο δε [f. αλλο τι] αντι των παρα σου δεθεντων ιδεως ιδιου δεξιμνου εμαυτου.* In which sentence the last word is, we doubt not, a corrupt reading, and was by Plato written *οεσυτορ*. For we cannot apprehend how a man who has received a present can be said to make a return for it, by his own receiving of any other present from the same or any other person.—S.

⁴ In this sentence all the words, enclosed within hooks, we have translated from Euripides, to render this passage of Plato clearer to those who have not read the Phœnissæ of that poet, from which tragedy it is taken.—S.

This crown, a happy omen and presage,
 I deem, of conquest on our Theban side.
 For you know well, how tempest-tost a sea
 We sail on——¹

I, in the same manner, deem this honour, you have now done me, to be a good presage. For, as I think myself sailing on a sea, no less tempest-tost than that of Creon, I should be glad to bear away the crown of victory from the rest of your admirers².

¹ See the Phœnissæ, v. 865.

² The fine turn, which Socrates here gives to his acceptance of the crown, presented to him by Alcibiades, is perfectly in character, being, at the same time, most ingenious, elegant, wise, modest, and polite. He accepts it not as an ensign of divine honour, as it was meant by the donor; but as a token of (future) victory; victory over his competitors for the friendship of Alcibiades, whom they endeavoured to corrupt, and success in his own endeavours to engage him wholly in the study of wisdom and the pursuit of virtue.—S.