THE MENO:

A

DIALOGUE

CONCERNING

VIRTUE.
This Dialogue has been always justly entitled "Concerning Virtue." For the true subject of it is the nature and origin of virtue. The question, indeed, proposed to Socrates by Meno in the very outset of the Dialogue, is this other, "How virtue is acquired." But Socrates immediately waves the question, and draws the conversation to an inquiry "what virtue is," as of necessity previous to the inquiry, "whence it comes." However, from the result of the reasoning, we shall perceive both these questions answerable together: we shall be convinced, that none can know the nature and essence of virtue, without knowing the fountain whence it is derived; and that whoever knows what this is, cannot fail of knowing at the same time what that is in which virtue consists. For, if we attend closely to the steps or gradual advances made in these inquiries, through the course of this Dialogue, we shall discover that virtue consists in that kind of knowledge and that kind of power, taken together, the capacity of both which is in the human, as she partakes of a divine intellect, whose essence is its own object, and whose energy is the contemplation of itself, and the government of the universe. That kind of knowledge, therefore, which belongs to virtue is the knowledge of true good; and that kind of power in the soul, through which, joined to that knowledge, a man is virtuous, is the power of the

1 The whole of this Introduction is extracted from the Argument of Mr. Sydenham to this Dialogue; excepting a few passages, which, from his not being sufficiently skilled in the more profound parts of Plato's philosophy, it was necessary to alter.—T.
INTRODUCTION TO

intellect over the inferior part of the soul, the imagination and the passions. The gradual advances made toward this discovery form the conduct of this divine Dialogue. And the first step is to show, that virtue, though it seems to be a very complex idea, and made up of many virtues, different in their natures, and respectively belonging to different persons, is but one simple idea, though called by different names, as the particular subjects on which it operates, or the particular objects which it has in view, differ one from another. In the next step, we find that this idea includes power and government, to which account immediately are subjoined, by way of explanation, these restrictions, power well and wisely exercised, and government well and justly administered. Here then we discover that the Well, the Wisely, and the Justly, are essential to the idea of virtue. Next, we march into some obscurity: for here we see only by help of a metaphor, seemingly introduced, but in the way of a similitude, to illustrate a point sufficiently made clear already, that is, the wholeness or rather oneness of the idea of virtue. The metaphor is taken from outward figure, the definition of which being given, that it is bound, the bound of solid bodies, suggests to every disciple or studious reader of Plato, that virtue itself is bound, that virtue intellectual is the bound of things within the mind, and that virtue practical is the bound of human actions and human manners. We then move a step further, in the same manner, by the light only of metaphor. The metaphor here is taken from the corpuscular philosophy, then newly brought into vogue by Protagoras, who had learnt it from Democritus, and by Gorgias, who had learnt it from Empedocles. And Socrates here Prosecutes the subject of inquiry in this dialogue, under a pretence of giving a definition of colour, according to the doctrine of this philosophy which Meno had imbibed. Colour, he says, is owing to effluvia from the surfaces of bodies entering the pores of the organs of sight; these being exactly fitted for the reception of such effluvia: by which means those effluvia, being commensurate

Our explication of this part of the Dialogue may perhaps appear fanciful to readers unacquainted with Plato. To obviate this appearance, we are to observe, that, as Pythagoras used to illustrate things mental by mathematical numbers, so Plato frequently illustrates them from the principles of geometry, and frequently also through sensible images, or things corporeal. And perhaps these two ways of illustration are the easiest and the plainest ways, through which we can at first be led to conceive things purely abstract, the objects of intellect.—S.
with these pores, become the objects of sight. Thus the philosopher plays with the prejudices of Meno, a disciple of the sophists, and therefore not a proper subject for his instruction; and introduces, with a professed view of only gratifying him, a point which seems very foreign to the subject, and not at all necessary to illustrate his meaning. But to his own friends and followers, who were acquainted with his doctrine, and were then near him, he thus ænigmatically infinuates that virtue and vice are as it were the colours of human actions; that by the light of mind we are able to distinguish them; that the science of virtue is as natural to the human understanding, as the perception of outward objects is to the eye of sense; that the mental eye is exactly adequate to its objects; and that all truth in general, and moral truth in particular, the present subject, is commensurate with the mind. The next advance we make discovers to us that virtue consists in a love and desire of true good, and true beauty, necessarily consequent to the knowledge of what is truly good and truly beautiful: it being impossible to forbear loving what appears beautiful, or desiring what appears good. And having already found that the idea of virtue includes power and government, we find that the whole idea of virtue is the power of preserving or of recovering true good and beauty, known to be such, and loved and desired because known. The next step brings us to the end of our journey in this inquiry concerning virtue; by showing us that the knowledge of all truth, and consequently of true good and beauty, is connatural to the soul of man: and is so, because her origin is divine, and her essence immortal. Now, the demiurgic intellect, the source of her being, is immortal and divine, and truth eternally there resides, the stable and invariable object of intellect. Plato, therefore, in proving to us, as he does in this part of the Dialogue by an incontestable instance, that the soul of man naturally assents to and embraces truth, when fairly presented to her, and exhibited in a clear light, proves to us at the same time, that she participates of this eternal intellect and truth.

Thus much concerning the first part, about one-half the Dialogue. In the latter half the inquiry into the nature of virtue is resumed, but in a different way. For Meno, having here urged the consideration of his first question, "how virtue is acquired," Socrates, in pretending to yield at length to this inquiry, brings us round by another road to the end, which he himself
himself had all along in view, the teaching "what virtue is." And here it
is suggested, through a geometrical enigma, in the first place, that not every
soul is capable of virtue; that a certain predisposition is requisite; that the
parts of the soul must be well proportioned to each other, in their natural
frame, in order that the whole man may, through virtue, be made totus teres
atque rotundus. In the next place, we find, that virtue consists not in any
particular virtuous habit or habits of the soul, whether intellectual or moral,
but in the prudential use and exercise of them; whence it follows, that vir­tue is not acquired by mere practice or habit. Thirdly, we find that virtue
consists not merely in a good disposition, without being well cultivated, and
consequently comes not by nature. Fourthly, that it consists not in any part­icular science or sciences, and therefore is not acquired by learning, and is
not to be taught in the ordinary method of instruction or discipline. Prepa­ratory to this part of the inquiry, a new character is introduced into the
Dialogue, Anytus, (a great enemy to the sophists, and desirous of being
thought a politician,) as a necessary person to show, that neither the pro­fessed men of wisdom, the sophists, nor the allowed men of virtue, the pre­servers of the Athenian state through their good government, were fit mas­ters or teachers in the science of virtue. At length, by the help of all these
negatives, we find in what it positively doth consist, that is, in true wisdom,
not only derived originally from the divine mind by participation, but also
inspired immediately by it through continual communication; presupposing,
however, as a necessary foundation, or fit subject for the reception of this
wisdom, a soul well disposed by nature, cultivated by right discipline, and
strengthened by constant care and attention. But as the two first requisites,
a good natural disposition, and right institution, depend on the divine Pro­vidence; and as the last, the constant practice of virtue, depends on the di­vine assistance; all these co-operating causes of virtue are, in the conclusion
of this Dialogue, summed up by Plato in one word, θεια μοῖρα, the divine
portion or allotment to men justly styled divine. Thus much may suffice at
present for unfolding the subject, and delineating the parts of this Dialogue.
What is here wanting in clearness, or in fulness, we shall endeavour in the
notes to illustrate and to amplify. The end and design of the Dialogue is to
excite men, well-disposed by nature, and prepared by the rudiments of good
education, to the assiduous culture and improvement of their minds by think­
ing and reasoning. This design appears, first, from the uncommon warmth and zeal with which Socrates is represented in the latter half of the Dialogue, press ing an inquiry after lost knowledge, and an endeavour to discover latent truths. The same design appears further from the long time taken up in recounting many sad instances of a neglect of virtuous studies in the youths of highest rank in Athens; the enumeration of which, being so prolix, can have no other view than to deter us from the same neglect. But the tendency of the Dialogue best appears from that effect, which the grand doctrine of it, as before explained, naturally must have on every docile and candid mind. For, if the human partakes of a divine intellect, and of all therefore which is of its essence; if truth has thus descended from Heaven into the souls of men, and Divinity himself be there, ready to communicate more and more the heart-felt knowledge of things divine and eternal to every soul which retires within itself; who would not wish thither to retire, and there, in that sacred silence, the silence of the passions, in that sacred solitude, the absence of all the objects of imagination, that flight of the alone to the alone, ἐφεξῆς μονος ἐπος μονος¹, to enjoy the presence and converse of the divinely solitary principle of things? Agreeably to this design of Plato, and also on account of the audience, which was composed partly of strangers, and partly of the friends and followers of Socrates, (as usual in that place where the conversation was held,) the inquisitive turn is given to this Dialogue, partly exciting and partly assisting, by means of leading questions, every where proposed by Socrates, and of hints thrown in here and there of his profound meaning. Meno is represented but as an humble disciple of the sophists, and presumes not to dispute or to argue like his masters. And Anytus appears as an enemy to all philosophical disputation. There is not so much as the shadow of a skirmish throughout the Dialogue. Yet the division of Plato’s Dialogues, made by Thra silyus, and followed by Albinus, led them to number it amongst those of the Peirastic kind, as not knowing where else to place it with less impropriety. The outward form of it is purely dramatic; and the character of Anytus, as here exhibited, affords a just specimen of the part he soon afterwards acted in the accusation of Socrates, and the bringing him to a public trial as a malefactor.

¹ Thus Plotinus, in the close of his last Ennead, very finely and justly expresses our sense.—S.
THE MENO:

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE,

MENO¹, Socrates,
A Servant Boy of Meno's, Anytus².

SCENE.—The Lyæum¹.

¹ This is the same Meno mentioned by Xenophon, in his expedition of Cyrus the Younger, as one of the generals of the Grecian allied army in that expedition. Plutarch, in his Life of Phocion, relates, that Meno commanded all the cavalry. Certain it is from Xenophon, that he had the command of the forces sent from Thessaly. Near the end of the second book of that incomparable history above mentioned, the elegant and faithful writer of it, having before given us an instance of Meno's baseness, presents us with a portrait of him drawn at full length, the features of which are odious. But at the time of his conversation with Socrates, recited in this Dialogue, he was so young, that his mind and true character could not as yet have appeared openly, or have been known in the world. He first made a figure in the expedition with Xenophon, whilst he was still in the flower of his youth; but he was soon taken prisoner, and brought to Artaxerxes, by whose orders he was put to a lingering and ignominious death, not as an enemy but as a malefactor. Some slight strokes, however, appear even in this Dialogue, giving us a sketch of his turn of mind; as will be observed in their proper places.

² Enough has been said of this fellow, in the Introduction to this Dialogue, to prepare the reader for his appearance in the figure he there makes.

³ The following circumstances, considered together, evince the scene to be laid in the Lyæum. First, it was the place ordinarily frequented every day by Socrates, with his disciples and followers. Next, it was the place of resort for all strangers, especially the young and noble, such as Meno was, to see the Athenian youth exercise themselves, and to hear the sophists, if any happened to be at Athens, dispute and harangue. See note on the scene of the Greater Hippias. Lastly, it cannot be supposed, that Socrates should meet with Anytus, his enemy, at any other than a public place, free to all men.—S.
CAN you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is to be taught; or whether it is acquired, not through teaching, but through exercise and habit;

The reader will observe this to be a very abrupt way of beginning a conversation, especially with a stranger, known only by his name and character. What makes it the more remarkable is, that a young person, but just arrived at the age of manhood, should thus accost an old man in his seventieth year, venerable from his known wisdom and a long life of virtue. Some may think that Plato intended here to paint the insolent familiarity of young men of large fortune and bad education, in their manner of addressing their inferiors in point of wealth. Such a thought has, perhaps, some foundation in truth. But Plato's principal purpose, in beginning the Dialogue with an impertinent question from the mouth of Meno, is, as appears plainly from the reply of Socrates, to exhibit to us the arrogant pretensions of the sophists, and particularly of Gorgias, in taking upon themselves to answer every philosophical question proposed to them. Meno had in his own country been used to this behaviour of theirs; and Socrates had, long before this, acquired a distinguished character for his superior skill in philosophical disputations. Meno, therefore, who knew no difference between Socrates and the sophists, attacks him directly, without the ceremony of a preface, with a question, point blank, on one of the most knotty subjects of inquiry in all philosophy. For he presumed that Socrates was sitting in the Lyceum, like one of the sophists, ready to answer all such questions. The only other dramatic Dialogue of Plato which begins thus abruptly is the Minos. There is the same kind of propriety in both. The only difference is this, that in the Minos, a Dialogue between Socrates and a sophist, Socrates is the questioner; and in the Meno, he is the person questioned.—S.

Many years before the time of this Dialogue, Socrates had held a disputation with Protagoras on this very point, whether virtue could be taught; a disputation, recited by Plato in a Dialogue called after the name of that great sophist. The question was then debated before a numerous audience of sophists and their followers, as well as of the friends and disciples of Socrates himself. The disputants, however, came to no agreement on the matter in dispute. The result of their conversation was only this, that Protagoras, the prince of sophists, was too generous as to bestow his commendations on the great philosopher, and was graciously pleased to say, that "he should wonder if Socrates in time did not become considerable in fame for wisdom." The commendations of a sophist, no less renowned for his philosophical knowledge, than venerable on account of his experienced age, (for he was then about 75 years old,) increased the reputation of Socrates amongst the tribe of sophists; and it is probable that these men spread the fame of that disputation throughout all Greece. It seems, therefore, as if Meno, an admirer of the sophists, and bred up under one of their disciples, was desirous of hearing Socrates himself speak on that celebrated subject of former debate. Accordingly, meeting with Socrates in a convenient place, he attacks him at once with a question on that very point. We may observe, however, that Meno here states the question in a more ample manner than that in which it had been considered in the debate between Socrates and Protagoras: for he particularly mentions all the other ways, beside that of teaching, in which it ever was supposed that virtue was attainable. So that this Dialogue, The Meno, though not so entertaining as The Protagoras, is more comprehensive and affords a wider field for speculation.—S.
or whether it comes neither by exercise, nor yet by teaching, but is by
nature with those who are possessed of it; or comes it to them by some
other way?

Soc. You Thessalians, Meno, have been of old eminent among the
Grecians 1. You have been long admired for your superior skill in horse-
manship 2, and famed for the great wealth you are possessed of 3. But I
think you have now acquired no less fame for wisdom 4. And amongst
others of you, the fellow-citizens of your friend Aristeippus 5 of Larissa
have distinguished themselves not a little in this respect. Now this is
entirely the work of Gorgias. For in his travels, when he came to their
city, he drew the chiefs of the Aleuadian family 6 (one of whom is your
friend Aristeippus), and indeed all of highest quality in the other states of

1 The Thessalians were the most ancient inhabitants of Greece; and from time to time sending
out colonies from their own country, Thessaly, spread themselves by degrees over all the rest of
Greece; as we are told by the old geographers.—S.

2 The people who lived in Thessaly had the reputation of being the best horsemen, and in war
the best cavalry, in the world. See Suidas in voce Ἰππεισ. ἀνδρικάς. This was owing to their
breeding of excellent horses, which were everywhere valued as the best, both for service and for
beauty; as may be seen in the Zizek and the Epitome of Lucian, and in a note to The Greater
Hippias. And this valuable breed of horses was favoured by the soil of their country, which was
partly mountainous, and partly well watered by fine rivers running through the midst of spacious
and open plains.—S.

3 In the time of Plato these people were grown very rich; but were thought to have acquired
their riches chiefly by very unjust means, by fraud, by theft, and by kidnapping and selling free
men as slaves; for which crimes they were infamous throughout the rest of Greece. See Xenophon,
Memorabilia, lib. i. cap. 2. § 24.—S.

4 Meaning the pretended wisdom taught by the sophists.—S.

5 This Aristeippus was a man of the highest rank and power in the city of Larissa. We here find
him to have been sophistical by Gorgias; and it may justly be inferred, from the mention of him
in this manner, that he himself had sophistical Meno. But it appears in the highest degree
improbable that he should be the same person with an Aristeippus mentioned by Aristotle in the
beginning of the third Book of his Metaphysics; for this latter was a sophist by profession; and the
profession of a sophist was no more becoming to men of high birth and quality, than that of an
itinerant quack-doctor or strolling stage-player is now-a-days amongst us. See Plato in Protag.—S.

6 This was the noblest family in Larissa. They were descended from Aleuas, one of the kings
of Thessaly, of the race of Hercules; and were at this time the oligarchic tyrants of their coun-
try. Meno is here complimented in the seemingly honourable mention thus made of his friend,
whom we presume to have been also his immediate instructor. For at the time supposed in this
Dialogue, Gorgias was upwards of ninety years of age, and Meno a very young man.—S.
Thefaly, to be the admirers of his wisdom. From him you Thefilians learned the habit of answering to any question whatever with an undaunted and a noble confidence, such indeed as becomes those who have a thorough knowledge of the subject proposed to them. For he offered himself to be freely interrogated by any one of the Grecians, whom it should please to ask, concerning any point which the party questioning might choose: and to no question of any person did he ever refuse an answer. But we in this place, my friend Meno, are in a condition quite the contrary. Amongst us there is a dearth, as it were, of wisdom; which seems to have forsaken our country, and to have fled to yours. So that if you should take it into your head to propose to any one here the question you have proposed to me, there is not a man of us who would not laugh and say, "Friend stranger, you must think me wonderfully wise, to know whether virtue is a thing which can be taught, or by what other means it is attained:"

1 The great reputation of Gorgias appears to have had its first rise in Thessaly. For thus Philostratus, in the Proem to his Lives of the Sophists,—την αρχαιόταταν [i.e. σοφιστικήν] Γόργιαν ο Λαοτίδης ει Θεσσαλός. Indeed Thessaly was the most proper of all places for Gorgias to display his art in, and by that means to acquire reputation. For his art was the art of deluding through sophistical oratory and sophistical argumentation; and these are the fittest and most successful engines that can be employed for the purpose of deceiving. If therefore the people of Thessaly were such as they are represented, Gorgias could not fail of meeting there with a multitude of followers and admirers. In fact, these people became so great proficient in the art of deceiving, and so famous for the practice of it, that every ingenious or dextrous stroke of deceit was proverbially called Θεσσαλὸν σοφισμα, a Thessalian sophism. In Athenæus, p. 308, Myrtilus, the sophist of Thessaly, is called Θεσσαλον μαχάριον, a cunning and crafty wrestler in disputation; or, as Eusathius explains the term, Θεσσαλὸν εἰρημάτων, subtle in refuting any argument. The same Myrtilus is called jococely by the same author, p. 11, himself Θεσσαλον σοφισμα, a Thessalian cheat (in his way of arguing).

2 Plato, in his Dialogue named Gorgias, ushers in this great father and prince of sophists by relating, that he had just now, at a private house, challenged any of the company to interrogate him on whatever point they pleased, and had undertaken to answer all sorts of questions. This appears to have been usual with him. For Philostratus reports, that when he came to Athens he had the confidence to present himself in the midst of the theatre, and to say to the whole assembly Προφορος, "propose," meaning, any argument for him to dispute on: agreeably to which is the account given of him by Cicero in the beginning of his second Book de Finibus, that he was the first that ever dared in convivio posce questionem, in public to demand the question, id est, says Tullius, jubeo dicere quid de re quis vellet audire, to bid any man declare what subject he chose to hear a discourse upon.—S.
THE MENO.

attained: when I am so far from knowing whether it can be taught or not, that I have not the good fortune to know so much as what virtue is.”

Now this, Meno, is exactly my own case. I am in the same poverty of knowledge as to this affair, and confess myself to be totally ignorant concerning the essence of virtue. How then should I be able to say what qualities are to be attributed to that which is utterly unknown to me? Or do you think it possible for a man, wholly ignorant who Meno is, to know whether Meno is a man of honour, a man of fortune, a man of a generous spirit, or whether he is the reverse of all these characters? Do you think it possible?

MENO. I do not. But in good earnest, Socrates, do you really not know what virtue is? and do you give me leave to carry home such a character of you, and to make this report of you in my country?

Soc. Not only that, my friend, but this further—that I never met any where with a man whom I thought master of such a piece of knowledge.

MENO. Did you never then meet with Gorgias, during his stay in this city?

Soc. I did.

MENO. And did you think that he knew nothing of the matter?

Soc. I do not perfectly remember, Meno, and therefore am not able to say directly what I then thought of him. But perhaps not only was he himself knowing in the nature of virtue, but what he used to say on that subject you also know. Do you then remind me what account he gave of virtue; or, if you are unwilling so to do, give me an account of it yourself; for I suppose you agree with him in opinion.

MENO. I do.

Soc. Let us leave him, therefore, out of the question, especially considering that he is absent. But what you yourself think virtue to be, tell me, Meno, and freely communicate your knowledge of it, that I may be happy in being convicled of having uttered what is so happily an untruth, when I said that I never any where met with a man who knew what virtue was; when, at the same time, both yourself and Gorgias shall appear to have been so well acquainted with the nature of it.

MENO. Whatever you may imagine, Socrates, it is by no means difficult to tell what you desire to know. In the first place, to instance in the
virtue of a man, nothing is easier to tell than that a man's virtue consists in his ability to manage affairs of state, and, in managing them, to be of service to the public and to its friends, to distress its enemies, and to guard, at the same time, with vigilance and circumspection, against any harm that might arise from those enemies in their turn. Then, if you would know what is the virtue of a woman, it is easy enough to run over the particulars: it is to manage well the affairs of her family, carefully to keep safe all that is in the house, and to hearken with due observance to her husband. Another kind of virtue belongs to a child, different too in a girl from what it is in a boy: so is it likewise of the aged. And if you choose to proceed further, the virtue of a free man is one thing, that of a slave is another thing. Many more virtues are there, of all sorts; so that one cannot be at a loss to tell, concerning virtue, what it is. For in every action, and in every age of life, with reference to every kind of business, some peculiar virtue belongs to each person: and in vice also, I suppose, Socrates, there is the same respective difference, and the same variety.

Soc. I think myself much favoured by Fortune, Meno; for, when I was only in quest of one virtue, I have found, it seems, a whole swarm of virtues hiving in your mind. But, to pursue this similitude, taken from bees:—Supposing, Meno, I had asked you what was the nature of a bee, and you had told me that bees were many and various, what would you have answered me if I had demanded of you further, whether you called them many and various, and differing one from another, in respect of their being bees; or whether you thought they differed not in this respect, but with regard to something else, as beauty, or size, or other thing of like kind, accidental? What answer would you have made to such a question?

Meno. I should have answered thus; that so far as they were bees, and in this respect, they differed not at all one from another.

Soc. Suppose, then, that I had afterwards said, Tell me, therefore, Meno, concerning this very nature of bees, in respect of which they do not differ, but all agree and are alike; what say you that it is? Should you have had any answer to have given me to this question?

Meno. I should.

Soc. Just so is it with the virtues. Many indeed are they, and of various kinds: but they all agree in one and the same idea; through their agree-
ment in which they are, all of them alike, virtues. This idea the man, who is asked the question which I have asked of you, ought to have in his eye when he answers it; and, copying from this idea, to draw a description of virtue. Do you not apprehend the meaning of what I say?

MENO. Tolerably well, I think I do. But I am not in the possession of it so fully as I could wish.

SOC. Take it thus then.—Do you think after this manner concerning virtue only, that the virtue of a man is one thing, the virtue of a woman another thing, and so of other respective virtues, that they are all different? or have you the same way of thinking as to the health, size, and strength of the body? Do you think the health of a man to be one thing, the health of a woman to be a thing different? or is the same idea of health everywhere, wherever health is, whether it be in a man, or in whatever subject it be found?

MENO. The health of a man and the health of a woman, I think, are equally and alike health, one and the same thing.

SOC. Do you not think after the same manner with regard to size and strength; that a woman, if she be strong, is strong according to the same idea, and with the same strength, which gives a strong man the denomination of strong? By the same strength I mean this, that whether strength be in a man, or in a woman, considering it as strength, there is no difference; or do you think that there is any difference between strength and strength?

MENO. I think there is not any.

SOC. And will any difference, think you then, be found in virtue, with respect to its being virtue, whether it be in a child or in an aged person, in a woman or in a man?

MENO. This case of virtue, Socrates, seems somehow to be not exactly parallel with those other instances.

SOC. Why? Did you not tell me that the virtue of a man consisted in his well-managing of civil affairs, and that of a woman in the well-managing of her household?

MENO. I did.

SOC. I ask you, then, whether it is possible to manage any affairs well, whether civil or domestic, or any other affairs whatever, without a prudent and a just management?
MENO. By no means.
Soc. If then the management be just and prudent, must not the managers
manage with justice and with prudence?
MENO. They must.
Soc. Both of them, therefore, have occasion for the same things, to qua-
lify them for being good managers, both the woman and the man, namely,
justice and prudence.
MENO. It appears they have.
Soc. And how is it in the case of a child, or that of an old man? Can
these ever be good, if they are dissolute and dishonest?
MENO. By no means.
Soc. But only by their being sober and honest?
MENO. Certainly.
Soc. All persons, therefore, who are good, are good in the same way;
for they are good by being possessed of the same qualities.
MENO. It seems so.
Soc. Now if virtue were not the same thing in them all, they would not
be good in the same way.
MENO. They would not.
Soc. Seeing, therefore, that virtue is the same thing in all of them, en-
deavour to recollect and tell me, what was the account given of it by
Gorgias, which was the same, it seems, with the account you would give
of it yourself?
MENO. What else is it than to be able to govern men? If you are in
search of that, which is one and the same thing in all persons who have
virtue.
Soc. It is the very thing I am in search of. But is this then the virtue
of a child, Meno? And is it the virtue of a slave, to be able to govern his
master? Do you think him to be any longer a slave, when he can govern?
MENO. I think he is then by no means a slave indeed, Socrates.
Soc. Neither is it proper, my friend, that he should be so. Consider
this also further. You say it is virtue to be able to govern. Should we not
immediately subjoin the word justly, and say, to govern justly? For you
would not say, that to govern unjustly is virtue.
MENO. I think we should. For justice, Socrates, is virtue.
Virtue is it, Meno, or some certain virtue?

MENO. How mean you by this distinction?

SOC. I mean no otherwise than as everything else whatever is distinguished: to instance, if you please, in roundness. Of this I should say that it is some certain figure, and not thus simply and absolutely that it is figure. And for this reason should I express myself in that manner, because there are other figures beside the round.

MENO. You would thus speak rightly. And indeed, to say the truth, I myself not only call justice a virtue, but say that other virtues there are beside.

SOC. Say, what these other virtues are. As I would recount to you, were you to bid me, other figures beside the round; do you recount to me, in like manner, other virtues beside justice.

MENO. Well then; courage I think to be a virtue, and temperance another, and wisdom, and magnanimity, and a great many more.

SOC. Again, Meno, we have met with the same accident as before; we have again found many virtues, while in search of one only; though then indeed in a different way from that in which we have now alighted on them: but the one virtue, which is the same through all these, we are not able to find.

MENO. For I am not able as yet, Socrates, to apprehend such virtue as you are inquiring after, that one in all, as in other things I am able.

SOC. Probably so; but I will do the best I can to help us onward in our inquiry. Already you apprehend, in some measure, that thus it is in every thing. For should any person have asked you what was figure, the thing I just now mentioned, and you had said it was roundness; were he then to ask you, according to the same distinction which I made concerning justice, whether roundness was figure, or some certain figure; you would answer, it was some certain figure.

MENO. Without all doubt.

SOC. And would you not answer thus for this reason, because there are other figures beside the round?

MENO. For that very reason.

SOC. And were he to ask you further, of what sort those other figures were, you would tell him?
THE MENO.

MENO. I should.

SOC. Again; questioned in the same manner concerning colour, what it is? had you answered, It is whiteness; should the questioner immediately proceed to this further question, whether whiteness is colour, or some certain colour? you would say, Some certain colour; because there happen to be other colours.

MENO. I should.

SOC. And if he were to bid you enumerate those other colours, you would speak of colours, which happen to be colours no less than the white.

MENO. Certainly.

SOC. If then he were to prosecute the argument, as I do, he would say, We are always getting into multitude; deal not with me in this manner: but since to all this multitude you give one common name; since you tell me there is none of them which is not figure; and that, notwithstanding, they are contrary some to others; what is this which comprehends the round as well as the straight, this thing to which you give the name of figure, and tell me that the round is figure not more than is the straight? or do you not say this?

MENO. I do.

SOC. I ask you, then, whether when you say this, you mean it in respect

* For the senses are always drawing us into multitude; which, considered as multitude, belongs only to sensible and outward things. But as soon as any multitude, or many, are considered together, and comprehended in one idea, they become the object of mind, and are then one and many; sense and imagination being now accompanied by mind. To this consideration of things, this comprehension of many in one, Socrates here endeavours to lead Meno in the same way in which he elsewhere leads Theaetetus, that is, by means of mathematical objects, to which his mind was familiarized; this being a step the easiest to him, and perhaps naturally the first toward the attainment of universal ideas, things purely mental. For the opening of the mind is in the first place to numbers; thence he proceeds to figures as the bounds of body, and is at first delighted with figures mathematical. If afterwards she is taught the mathematical sciences, then in proportion as her powers open more and become enlarged, she easily attains to view many in one; to view, for instance, the properties of all triangles contained in the triangle itself. And in the circle, the square, the pentagon, and all other figures, she has the same comprehensive view. With these mathematical figures Meno was well acquainted; and upon this foundation did Socrates propose to him to consider the nature of figure in general, or that one thing in which all figures agree and are the same.—S.

* As rectilinear figures are contrary to circles; the whole periphery of these latter being a curve line.—S.
of roundness, and that the round is not more round than is the straight? or with regard to straightness, and that the straight is not more straight than is the round?

MENO. I mean not thus, Socrates.

SOC. But it is with a view to figure, that you assert the round not more to be figure than is the straight, nor the straight more than is the round.

MENO. True.

SOC. Try then if you can tell me, what that thing is which is called by this general name of figure. Now suppose, that to an inquirer in this way concerning figure, or concerning colour, you were to say, I do not comprehend what it is you would have, man; nor do I know what it is you mean: he perhaps would wonder; and would say, Do you not comprehend that I am inquiring, what is the same in all these? Would you have nothing to say neither after this, Meno, were you to be asked, what that was in the round, in the straight, and in the other things you call figures, in all of them the same? Endeavour to find out and tell me what it is; that you may the better afterwards consider of, and answer to, the like kind of question concerning virtue.

MENO. Not so, Socrates; but do you yourself rather say what figure is.

SOC. Would you have me oblige you in this point?

MENO. By all means.

SOC. Shall you then be willing to tell me what virtue is?

MENO. I shall.

SOC. Let us then do our best; for the cause deserves it.

MENO. Without all doubt.

SOC. Come then; let us try if we can tell you what figure is. See if you can accept the following account of figure. Let us say, figure 1 is that which of all things is the only one that always accompanies colour. Are you satisfied with this account? or do you inquire any further? For my part, I should be well contented if you would give me but as good an account of virtue 2.

MENO.

1 In this first definition of figure, Socrates considers it only as it belongs to body; that is, not mathematical figure, but corporeal; figure which always accompanies colour, because it is always seen by the same outward light, which exhibits to us the different colours of all bodies, and without which they have indeed no colour at all.—S.

2 Socrates was very sensible, that his definition had not explained the nature of the thing, and that he had only described it by that which Porphyry terms ἐπιφανέις αἰχματον, an inexpressible
Meno. But, Socrates, this is weak and silly.

Soc. How so?

Meno. According to your account, that is figure which always accompanies colour.

Soc. Well.

Meno. But should any person now reply, that he knew not what colour was, and was equally at a loss concerning colour and concerning figure, what could you think of the answer that you had given to his question?

Soc. I?—that I had answered with truth. And if my questioner happened to be one of your wise men, your disputers and contenders, I would tell him, that I had spoken; and that, if I had not spoken rightly, it was his business to take up the argument, and to refute what I had said. But if two parties, such as you and I here, as friends, and in a friendly way, were inclined to have discourse together, their answers to each other's questions ought to be made in a milder manner, and to be more rational. Now it is perhaps more rational, that an answer should not only be agreeable to truth, but besides, should be conceived in terms confessedly understood by the party questioning. Accordingly, I shall now attempt to make you such a kind of answer. For tell me; do you not call some certain thing by the name of end, speaking of such a thing as bound or extreme? For by all these words I mean the same thing. Prodicus, indeed, might possibly dispute it with us: but you would use these expressions indifferently, that such or such a thing is bounded, or, that it has an end. This is all I mean; nothing of subtle disquisition, or nice distinction.

able accident of it, that is, a circumstance which, though accidental, or not of necessity attending on its essence, yet in fact always did attend on it, namely, the accompaniment of colour. And he here professes, that he would be satisfied with such a description of virtue denoting any circumstance which always attended on it: as if we described virtue thus; Virtue is that which always accompanies wisdom.—S.

1 Socrates, in conversing with the sophists, never used ἴδος ἀκολουθος, the instructive method of delivering his doctrine: because, fancying themselves sufficiently knowing and wise already, they were not disposed to learn. Nor did he ever take the truly dialectical way with them; or make use of ἴδος ἀκολουθος: because they were not concerned about truth in any argument; and because also they either had: or, would not, acknowledge any first principles to argue from. But he disputed with them always in their own way, ἵππος ἐπιτιμᾶς; confining them from their own concessions, and reducing to absurdities the answers which they gave to his questions.—S.
Meno. Well; there is something which I call end: and I think I understand what you mean.

Soc. And is there not something which you call superficies? another, which you call solid? such as those, I mean, which are the subjects of geometry.

Meno. I call certain things by the names you mention.

Soc. Now then, from these premises which you admit, you may understand what I mean by figure in general. In every figure, that which bounds the solid, I call figure. And to express this in one short proposition, I should say that figure is the bound of solid.

Meno. And what say you colour is?

Soc. You use me ill now, Meno. You put an old man to the task of answering, yet are unwilling yourself to take the trouble only of recollecting and telling me what Gorgias said that virtue was.

Meno. But I will; after you have told me what colour is.

Soc. A man with his eyes hoodwinked might perceive from your way of conversing, Meno, that you are handsome, and still have your admirers.

Meno. How so?

Soc. Because you do nothing but command in conversation, as fine ladies do, that are used to have their wills in all things; for they tyrannize so long as their beauty lasts. At the same time too, perhaps, you have discovered me, how easy I am to be subdued by beauty, and how apt to stoop to it. I shall do therefore as you would have me, and shall answer to your question.

Meno. By all means do, and gratify my request.

Soc. Do you choose that I should make my answer in the style of Gorgias, that by this means you may apprehend it the more easily?

Meno.

1 Gorgias, as appears from what follows, accounted for all the sensible qualities of things, that is, for every thing perceived through any of the five outward senses, by corporeal, or little invisible bodies, continually æterneæ, flowing forth, or emitted, from all larger, visible, and apparently figured bodies, and striking the sense of all sensible animals within their reach. With regard to one kind of the sensible qualities of bodies, namely, odours, whether the fragrant or the fetid, the same account is given of them by most of the modern philosophers. For they are generally held to be the effluvia of bodies odoriferous, striking and affecting either agreeably or disagreeably.
Meno. I should be glad that you would do so, most undoubtedly.

Soc. Do you not hold, you and Gorgias, that certain effluvia flow forth from bodies, agreeably to the doctrine of Empedocles 1?

Meno. We hold that doctrine strongly 2.

Soc.

disagreeably the olfactory nerves, where the particular sense of smell is supposed to be seated. We shall presently observe, in what manner the antient Corpuscularians, whose system was more uniform and simple than that of the moderns, extended the power of these effluvia to all the rest of the outward senses. — S.

1 Empedocles was a Pythagorean philosopher of Agrigentum in Sicily; and wrote a poem in three books, concerning Nature, on the principles of Pythagoras. For this great founder of the Italic sect, though he applied himself chiefly to the study of mind, the governing principle in nature, as the only way to understand nature rightly, yet philosophized also on the outward and corporeal part of the universe: the elements of which, consistently with his notions of mind, he held not to be irregular and infinite, as the Atomic and Atheistic philosophers imagined; but to be formed by rule in number, and in measure, as being the work of mind. Plato, in his Timaeus, hath introduced the Pythagorean, from whom that dialogue takes its name, telling us the measures and proportions of these elements. It sufficeth at present to say of them, that they are the four generally considered ever since as the elements of nature, fire, air, water, and earth. On this foundation Empedocles built his poem, explaining all the appearances of outward nature from the combination and motion of these four elements. His poetry was esteemed by the antients, in point of versification, equal to that of Homer. And he seems to have been a celebrated poet, before he commenced philosopher. For though it does not appear that in this poem he divulged any of the Pythagorean secrets, yet his brothers of that sect, who were all strictly united together in fellowship, did, on the publication of his poem, as fearful of the precedent (and no writings had till then been ever published by any Pythagorean), expel him from their society; at the same time making a law, that from thenceforth no poet should ever be admitted amongst them as a member of their body. — S.

2 Empedocles differed from the Atomic philosophers of old in this, that he held all natural bodies, and even their minutest parts, so long as they remained parts of those bodies, to be composed of the four elements. Now as air and fire, two of those four, are active elements perpetually in motion; and as all compound bodies are more or less porous, he supposed a continual efflux of igneous and aerial particles from those bodies into whose composition they had entered, through such mesures or pores, whether straight or winding, as were fitted for their passage and their exit. To supply the place of these departed particles, and to maintain the same state in the composition of the bodies they had quitted, he supposed a continual influx of fresh air and fire from without, uniting themselves to their congenial elements within, and thus becoming ingredients in the frame of the compounded or mixt bodies into which they had entered. These fresh streams he held to be almost pure and elementary air and fire, as pure however as the circumambient. But the particles, streaming forth from those bodies, he supposed to be impure, and to be mixed or combined with aqueous particles, and also with earthly ones of various kinds, according to the nature.
Soc. And do you not hold certain pores ¹, into which and through which the effluvia pass?

Meno. Certainly.

Soc. And that some of those effluvia ² are adapted to some of those pores, but are either less or greater than other pores?

nature of the body from which they issued. For the union of the four elements in compound bodies he held to be so intimate, and the particles of different elements to adhere so closely one to another, that none pass out pure as they entered; but that every particle of the subter and lighter elements, in departing, carries along with it some particles of the grofier and heavier, earth and water. Now this is obvious to sight in moist bodies, vehemently heated by fire from without acting on them; that is, in bodies into which so great a number of igneous particles have entered as tend to operate the dissolution of those bodies. For we here see the aqueous particles, pregnant with air and fire, issuing forth and ascending in the form of streams and vapours. And that earthy particles are combined with them, we may reasonably conclude from the different colours of these streams or vapours. For the steam, which arises from pure water heated, hath always the same uniform colour. The difference therefore of colour in streams or vapours must be derived from the different kinds of earthy particles, or, as the chemists love to express themselves, the different salts, in those liquors and those moist bodies, from which the diversely coloured streams or vapours arise. The like appearances may be observed in the perspiration of animal bodies, when they suffer a higher degree than usual of intestine heat; that is, when the igneous particles within are put into vehement commotion, and set loose through violent exercise of the body: the perspired moisture we may then see, by retaining it on linen, to be tinged with the colour of those salts, which are constantly separated from the blood by the kidneys and thrown off in urine. It may perhaps not be impertinent to take notice here by the way, that Empedocles, and the rest of the antient Elementarian physiologers, attributed this difference of earth or earthy salts, from whence they supposed all bodies to derive the difference of their colours, to different mixtures of the four elements constituting those very minute earthy particles; the mere earthy part of which is the caput mortuum of the chemists, if this be indeed elementary pure earth. From hence the Corpucularians, by parity of reason, drew this conclusion; that as, in all appearance, bodies derived their different colours from the different kinds of earth which made the grofier part of their composition, the colours which reached our eyes, and which we saw, were the finest earthy particles of those bodies, combined with particles of elementary fire, the essence of light uncoloured of itself, continually streaming forth in effluvia too minute for the eye to discern their figures, and visible only in the colour.—S.

¹ Meaning here the pores of other bodies, surrounding those which emit the effluvia, and either close to them in contact, or at least near to them enough to be reached by those effluvia, before their combination is quite broken, and they are resolved into their pure elements.—S.

² The Elementarian physiologers held, that the effluvia of all compound bodies were of different figures and dimensions, according to the natures and different proportions of their composing elements. And consequently to this they must have held, that the pores of these bodies were
MENO. Things are so framed.

SOC. And do you not admit of something which you call sight?

MENO. I do.

SOC. These premises being granted, "Now let your mind accompany my words," as Pindar says. Colour then is the flowing off from figures, commenfurate with the sight, and by that sense perceived.

MENO.

were large enough for the passage and emission of their own effluvia, as well as for the admission and reception of other particles from without to supply their places. But this was not sufficient to account for the different kinds of sensation, arising in the several senses of sentient animals, from the operation and effect of the effluvia of other bodies transmitted to them. They supposed, therefore, that the pores of the organs of sense were exactly adequate, in figure and dimension, to these foreign effluvia; not all of those pores adequate to all of these effluvia indiscriminately; for this is impossible, unless the souls of any animals had the power of adapting the pores of their organs of sensation, occasionally, to the reception of all kinds of effluvia: and in this case, all such animals would be like Milton's angels, all eye, all ear: and would feel, at pleasure, the other various kinds of sensation in all parts of their bodies indiscriminately. But the hypothesis of those physiologists we are speaking of was this, that the organs of each sense had their pores respectively fitted to admit those effluvia which were the objects of that sense, and none other; the eye, for instance, those effluvia which gave colour; the ear, those which made sound; and that the organs of the other senses were framed in like manner. The heterogeneous effluvia, therefore, which could not enter, as being either too large for the pores, or else figured differently, passed by; and the too minute passed in and through, without affecting the sense.—S.

Socrates here cites a verse from Pindar, to usher in his definition with solemnity, as if it was something very fine. But this solemnity is merely burlesque: for it is in mimickry of the sophists, who valued at a high rate their doctrines of this kind, and taught them to their disciples as wonderful discoveries and pieces of profound wisdom.—S.

Aristotle tells us, in his treatise ΠΕΙΡΑ ΑΙΘΩΝΕΩΝ, that Empedocles held the eye, that is, the sight of the eye, to be fire; meaning pure elementary fire collected in the pupil of the eye; as appears from Timæus in Plato's dialogue of his name; and that he supposed vision to be performed by the emission of light from the eye, as from a lantern. In proof of which he cites a passage out of the fine poem of Empedocles, mentioned in a preceding note. We presume it may be agreeable to many of our learned readers, if we here present them with that beautiful passage at full length; and the more so, because Stephens has strangely omitted it, with many other choice fragments of the philosophic Greek poets, in that slender collection of his which he entitles Poësis Philosophipica. The verses are these:

Bitte die Anweisung zur Formatvorlage beachten.
THE MENO.

Meno. In this answer, Socrates, I think you have answered as well as possible.

Soc.

We are unable to do justice to these elegant lines in a literal translation. Instead of it, therefore, we hope our English readers will not refuse to accept of the following paraphrase:

As when the traveller, in dark winter's night,
Intent on journey, kindles up a light,
The moon-like splendour of an oil-fed flame;
He sets it in some lantern's horny frame.
Calm and serene there fits the tender form,
Screen'd from rough winds, and from the wintry storm.
In vain rude airs assault the gentle fire:
Their forces break, disappear, and they retire.
Fences secure, though thin, the fair enclose;
And her bright head she lifts amid her foes.
Through the straight pores of the transparent horn
She shoots her radiance, mild as early morn.
Forth fly the rays; their shining path extends;
Till, lost in the wide air, their lessen'ning luster ends.

After citing these verses, Aristotle is pleased to say, ὅτε μὲν οὖν ὁσαν ἑραν ποτὲν ὅτε δὲ ταῖς ἀποθέσεις ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ὄρμων. "Sometimes he [meaning Empedocles] accounts for vision in this manner; at other times, by the effluvia which proceed from the object." Now, in truth, these two seemingly different accounts are not only very consistent, the one with the other, but neither of them is sufficient, without the other, to explain how the objects of sight are seen, according to the mind of Empedocles. We say this on supposition that he agreed with Timeus, a philosopher of the same sect, who, if Plato represents him rightly, accounted for vision in the same way. He supposes, that part of the pure element of fire is seated in the eye; that the rays
Soc. It may be that you think so, because you are accustomed to a language of this kind; and because at the same time you perceive yourself, as I imagine, able from thence to account in the same way for sound, and smell, and many other things of like kind.

Meno. It really is so.

Soc. The answer, Meno, was theatrical and pompous; and so it pleased you more than that which I gave you concerning figure.

Meno. Indeed it did.

Soc. And yet I persuade myself, O son of Alexidemus, that not this, but that other, was the better answer. I think too, that you yourself would be of the same opinion, if you are not, as you said you were yesterday.

As thus; that sound was air, violently forced out of some body stricken, and propagating its motion by strokes continually repeated along the element of air, until it reach the ear; in the same manner as colour along the rays of light, until it reach the eye: that odours were expressed, a grofser oil, infinuating themselves immediately into the pores of the organ of smell; that from moist bodies, applied to the palate, juices were expressed, a grofser oil, infinuating themselves immediately into the pores of the organ of taste; that the causes of heat and cold were the sulphureous and the nitrous particles of body, or of the circumambient air, penetrating the pores of the skin, and thus affecting with those different sensations the sense of feeling.—S.

H 2 day,
day, under a necessity of going away before the mysteries, but could stay and be initiated.

**Meno.** But if you would tell me many other things such as this, I would certainly stay and hear them.

**Soc.** My best endeavours to say other such things shall certainly not be wanting, for my own sake as well as yours. But I fear I shall not be able to utter many sentences of that kind. But now it comes to your turn to try if you can perform your part of the engagement, in giving me an account of what virtue is, virtue in general, the same in all particular virtues. And do not go on, making many out of one; as is often said jocosely of those who pound or beat any thing to pieces. But leaving virtue as it is, whole and entire, define the nature of it, and tell me what it is. Patterns of such a definition you have had from me.

**Meno.** I think then, Socrates, that virtue is agreeably to that of the poet,

\[
\text{To feel a joy from what is fair,}
\]
\[
\text{And [o'er it] to have pow'r—}
\]

and accordingly I say, that virtue is this; having the desire of things that are fair, to have it in our power to gain them.

**Soc.** I ask you then, whether you suppose the persons who desire things that are fair, to desire things that are good?

**Meno.** Certainly.

**Soc.** In giving that definition of virtue then, did you suppose that some men there were who desire things which are evil, others who desire things which are good? Do you not think, my friend, that all men desire things which are good?

**Meno.** I do not.

**Soc.** But that some desire things which are evil?

**Meno.** I do.

**Soc.** Think you that these men desire things evil, with an opinion of

---

1 This scrap of poetry is taken from some old lyric poet, whose works are not remaining; it is cited for this purpose, to prepare us for a matter of great importance, to be next brought upon the carpet.—S.
their being good? or that, knowing them to be evil, yet they nevertheless desir[e] them?

MENO. I answer Yes to both those questions.

SOC. Is there any man then, do you imagine, who knowing the things which are evil to be what they are, that is, evil, yet nevertheless desires them?

MENO. Without doubt.

SOC. What do you mean, when you say he desires them? Do you not mean, that he desires to have them?

MENO. To have them. For what can I mean besides?

SOC. Does he desire them, think you, imagining that evil things are advantageous to the person who has them, or knowing that evil things are hurtful wherever they are?

MENO. There are persons who imagine of things which are indeed evil, that they are advantageous; and there are who know them to be hurtful.

SOC. Do you think that they know the evil things to be evil, those who imagine such evil things to be advantageous?

MENO. By no means do I think that.

SOC. Is it not then evident, that such persons desire not things evil, such as know not the nature of those things which they desire; but rather, that they desire things which they imagine to be good, but which in reality are evil? So that those who are ignorant of them, and falsely imagine them to be good, plainly desire good things. Do they not?

MENO. Such sort of persons, I must own, seem to be desirous of good things.

SOC. But those others, those who desire things which are evil, as you say, and who at the same time know that evil things are hurtful to the possessor, do they know that they themselves shall receive harm from those evil things in their having them?

MENO. It is clear that they must know it.

SOC. But know they not, that such as receive harm are in evil plight, so far as harm has befallen them?

MENO. This also must they know.

SOC. And know they not besides, that such as are in evil plight are unhappy too?
Meno. I presume they do.
Soc. Is there any man then, who chooses to be in evil plight, and to be unhappy?
Meno. I suppose there is not any, Socrates.
Soc. No man, therefore, O Meno, wills or chooses any thing evil; if it be true, that no man wills or chooses to be in evil plight, or to be unhappy. For indeed what else is it to be thoroughly unhappy, than to desire things which are evil, and to have them our own?
Meno. I suspect that what you say, Socrates, is true. And no man wills or chooses any thing evil.
Soc. Did you not say just now, that virtue consisted in the willing or desiring things which are good, and in the having it in our power to gain them?
Meno. I suspected that what you say, Socrates, is true. And no man wills or chooses any thing evil.
Soc. Did you not say just now, that virtue consisted in the willing or desiring things which are good, and in the having it in our power to gain them?
Meno. I did say so; it is true.
Soc. Is not this will or desire, according to what has been said in all men? so that, in this respect, one man is not at all better than another man.
Meno. It appears so.
Soc. It appears, therefore, that if one man is better than another, he must be so in respect of his power.
Meno. Undoubtedly.
Soc. This therefore, as it seems, according to your account, is virtue, the power of gaining things which are good.
Meno. The case seems to me, Socrates, to be entirely so, as you now state it.

* This is referable to that verse of an old poet, cited by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics, lib. iii. cap. 5.

Oudis in eu πονησα, και ανω μακαρ.
No man in evil willingly can rest:
No man with good unwillingly is blest.—S.

* In the Greek τετο χερεντος. But it appears from Ficinus's translation, that in his manuscript it was read εν τω λεχεντος. The sense requires this reading; and we presume, therefore, that it ought to be so printed. We have followed both the Basil editions, and all the translations, in making the sentence interrogative: and in all future editions of Plato we hope it will be so marked.—S.

Soc.
Soc. Let us examine then if this account of yours be true: for perhaps it may be so. You say, that to be able to gain good things is virtue.

Meno. I do.

Soc. Good things do you not call such things as health and riches, that is, the possession of gold and silver, honours also in the state, and offices in the government? You do not speak of any other things as good, beside things of this kind?

Meno. No other; I mean all such sorts of things.

Soc. Well then, to get money is virtue; as says Meno, the hereditary guest of the great king. But let me ask you a question concerning this point; whether you would choose to add something to this account of virtue, and to say that virtue is to get money honestly and religiously? or whether this addition makes no difference in your account; but that, however unjustly it be acquired, you call the mere acquisition of money, equally in any way, virtue?

We learn from Xenophon (in Expedit. Cyri, lib. ii.) that the passion predominant in Meno's soul was the love of money; that his desire of honours and of power in the state was subservient to that other his master-passion; for, that he regarded power and honour no otherwise than as the means of accumulating wealth. In the passage, therefore, before us, it seems as if Plato meant, fily and indirectly, to exhibit to us this strong feature in the character of Meno, or rather as if Socrates had a mind, in his usual jocose manner, to exhibit to Meno a true picture of himself.

* In the more ancient times of Greece, whenever men, illustrious for their birth or station in life, travelled from one Grecian state or kingdom to another, or crossed the sea to Asia, with a view of observing the manners of other people, or of learning the policy of other governments (and they seldom travelled with any different view), they were always nobly entertained at the house of some great man in every country to which they came. Persons of inferior rank, whenever they travelled, which they rarely did, were everywhere treated courteously at the public costs. In the former case, that of private entertainment, not only the noble host himself became entitled to the same hospitable reception from his guest, if ever he should return the visit on a like occasion; but the rights of mutual hospitality accrued also from thence to the descendants of both the parties. Meno it seems had this connection with the Persian monarch, being himself, probably, as well as his friend Aristippus, descended from one of the ancient kings of Thessaly. However this was, that his family was very noble appears from his appointment to the command of the forces which his country sent to the assistance of Cyrus, in his youthful time of life. —Thus much for the explanation of the passage now before us. The beauty of it arises from the opposition here seen between Meno's high rank, naturally productive of high spirit, and his fordid avarice, that passion of the meanest souls.—S.
Meno. By no means; for, to acquire it unjustly, I call vice and wickedness.

Soc. By all means, therefore, as it appears, this acquisition of money ought to be accompanied by honesty, or prudence, or sanctity, or some other part of virtue; for otherwise it will not be virtue, notwithstanding it procures for us good things.

Meno. For without that how should it be virtue?

Soc. And if a man forbear to gain money, whether for himself or others, when he cannot gain it without dishonesty, is not the forbearance of this gain also virtue?

Meno. It is apparent.

Soc. Not the gaining of these good things, therefore, must be virtue, more than the forbearance of that gain; but, as it seems, that which comes accompanied by honesty is virtue; that which is without any thing of that kind is vice and wickedness.

Meno. I think it must of necessity be as you say.

Soc. Did we not say, a little while since, that honesty and prudence, and every thing of that kind, was a part of virtue?

Meno. We did.

Soc. Then, Meno, you are in jest with me.

Meno. How so, Socrates?

Soc. Because, when I had desired you, as I did just now, not to split virtue into pieces, and had given you patterns to copy after, that you might answer as you ought; you, without paying any regard to them, tell me that virtue is the power of gaining good things with honesty or justice; yet this, you say, is only a part of virtue.

Meno. I do.

Soc. It is to be collected then, from your own concessions, that with a part of virtue, to do whatever one does, this is virtue. For justice, you say, is but a part of virtue, and so of every other thing of like kind.

Meno. What then? granting that I say this.

Soc. It follows that, having been requested to tell me what the whole of virtue is, you are far from giving such a complete account of it: for you say, that every action is virtue which is performed with a part of virtue; as though you had already told me what virtue was in the whole, and that I should
should now know it when you come to split it into parts. We must there­
fore, as it seems to me, take the matter again from the beginning, and recur
to this question, What is virtue? Or should every action, accompanied with
a part of virtue, be said to be virtue itself? For it is saying this, to say that
every action, accompanied with justice, is virtue. ——Do you think there is
no occasion for us to resume the same question; but that a man may know
a part of virtue, what it is, without knowing what virtue is itself?

Meno. I think he cannot.

Soc. For, if you remember, when I answered just now your question con­
cerning figure, we rejected such a kind of answer as aimed at explaining the
proposed subject in terms not as yet confessedly understood, but whose mean­
ing was still the subject of inquiry.

Meno. And we did right, Socrates, in rejecting such an answer.

Soc. I would not have you imagine then, while we are as yet inquiring
what virtue is, the whole of it, that by answering in terms which signify the
parts of virtue, you will be able to explain to any man the nature of virtue;
or, indeed, that the nature of any other thing can be explained in such a way,
but that still there will be need of repeating the same question what virtue
is, that which is the subject of our conversation. Or do you think that I
speak idly and nothing to the purpose?

Meno. I think you speak rightly.

Soc. Begin again, therefore, and tell me what it is you hold virtue to be,
you and your friend Gorgias?

Meno. Socrates, I heard, before I had conversed with you, that the only
part you take in conversation is this: — You pretend to be at a loss and doubt­
ful yourself upon all subjects, and make others too no less to be at a loss what
to think and say. You seem to be now playing the same conjurer’s tricks upon
me; you manifestly use incantations to bewitch me, and to fill me with such
perplexity that I know not what to say. If you will allow me to joke a lit­
tle, I think you resemble exactly, not only in form but in other respects also,
that broad sea-fish called the cramp-fish; for that too never fails to give a
numbness to every person who either touches or approaches it 1. You seem

to

1 The benumbing faculty of this fish, by which it is enabled to catch its prey, is mentioned by
Aristotle, in his History of Animals, b. ix, c. 37, where he tells us that some persons have been
to have done some such thing at present to me, and to have benumbed me. For I actually suffer a kind of numbness and stupidity, both in mind and body, and find myself disabled from giving you any answer; and yet have I a thousand times discoursed much about virtue, and to many persons, and extremely well too, as I thought; but I am now not in the least able to tell so much as what virtue is. I think that you have acted very prudently in never going out of your own country either by sea or land. For if you was to behave in this manner in any other city where you are a stranger, you would run a risque of being driven thence as a magician or enchanter.

Soc. You are full of craftiness, Meno; and I was very near being deceived by you.

Meno. Tell me how, Socrates, I pray you?

Soc. I know with what design you brought a simile to which you likened me.

Meno. With what design now, do you imagine?

Soc. That I, on my part, might bring some simile or resemblance of you. For this I know to be true of all handsome persons, they love to have images and pictures made of them. And indeed it is their interest; for of handsome persons the pictures are handsome too. But I shall forbear the drawing of your picture in return. And as to that which you have produced of me, if the cramp-fish be itself numb, and through its numbness benumb others also, then am I like to it, but otherwise I am not. For I do not lead others into doubtfulnes of any subject, and make them be at a loss what to say; when at the same time I can easily explain the matter in hand, and have no doubts at all within my own mind: but as I am entirely distressed for true definitions of things myself; in this condition I involve in the same distresses those with whom I am conversing. Thus at present concerning the nature of virtue; what it is, I, for my part, know not: you indeed knew formerly, perhaps, before that you had touched me; but now you are like one who knows eye-witnesses of the manner in which it is done. Plutarch, in his Treatise of the Sagacity of Animals, relates the matter more circumstantially; and farther assures us, that this power of the numb-fish not only operates on other fish, but on men too; and that it acts at one small distance, as well as through immediate touch.—S.

1 In all the editions of the Greek, we here read ἐν μετροῖς μακρώ; εἰ οὐ καθίζει. This reading we have
knows nothing of the matter. I am desirous, however, of considering it together with you, and of our searching out jointly what kind of a thing virtue is.

MEN. But in what way, Socrates, will you search for a thing of which you are entirely ignorant? For by what mark which may discover it will you look for it when you know none of the marks that distinguish it? Or, if you should not fail of meeting with it, how will you discern it, when met with, to be the very thing you was in search of, and knew nothing of before?

Soc. I apprehend, Meno, what it is you mean. Do you observe how captious a way of reasoning you introduce? For it follows from hence, that it is impossible for a man to seek, either for that which he knows, or for that of which he is ignorant. For no man would seek to know what he knows, because he has the knowledge of it already, and has no need of seeking for what he has. Nor could any man seek for what he is ignorant of, because he would not know what he was seeking for.

MEN. Do you not think then, Socrates, that this way of reasoning is fair and right?

Soc. Not I, for my part.

MEN. Can you say in what respect it is wrong?

Soc. I can. For I have heard the sayings of men and women who were wise, and knowing in divine things?

MEN. What sayings?

Soc. Such as I think true, as well as beautiful.

MEN. But what sayings were they? and by whom were they uttered?

Soc. Those who uttered them were of the priests and priestesses, such as made it their business to be able to give a rational account of those things in which they were employed. The same sayings are delivered also by Pindar, and many other of the poets, as many as are divine. The sayings are these;
but do you consider with yourself whether you think them true. These persons then tell us that the soul of man is immortal; that sometimes it ends, which is called dying; and that afterwards it begins again, but never is dissolved; and that for this reason we ought to live, throughout our lives, with all sanctity. For

**STROPHE.**

*When guilt of lesser crimes the soul hath stain'd,*  
Not meriting sharp pains for aye;  
And eight dark dreary years the hath remain'd  
In Hades, bar'd from gladd'ning day;  
Preferving all that time her sense  
Of good, lamenting her loft innocence;  
With sorrow if her guilt she rue,  
And Proserpine should deem that sorrow true,  
She accepts in full atonement such repentance due.

**ANTISTROPHE.**

Then the ninth year sends back the soul to light,  
And former objects here on earth:  
Of these, thro' death, again the loves right;  
Again to life renews her birth.  
*At length, two trials well endur'd,*  
The soul, to lesser virtues well inur'd,  
Is born some king, for good renown'd;  
Or sage, well learn'd in wisdom's lore profound;  
Or hero, by his prowess spreading peace around.

**EPODE.**

1 That is, ends its present life, and begins a new life. For as Plato observes justly in his Phædo, life and death succeed each other alternately throughout nature. In the passage, however, now before us, the ending of the human soul and its beginning again may be taken in different senses. The most obvious meaning is the dissolution of that body which it inhabits, and its departure into the seeds of a new body, which it then animates, and gradually forms suitable to its own temper and disposition. This sense is agreeable to those verses immediately after cited out of Pindar.—S.

3 In translating the fine fragment of Pindar, which Plato has here preserved to us, we found ourselves under a necessity of paraphrasing very largely, to free it from that obscurity in which it would otherwise appear to an English reader, partly because of the conciseness of Pindar's style, and partly because of the sentiments, taken from the ancient mythology, with which our age is little acquainted. However, we have adhered closely to the sense of our original, completing it only from the same mythology, without adding any new thoughts or conceits of our own.—S.
The soul then being immortal, having been often born, having beheld the things which are here, the things which are in Hades, and all things, there is nothing of which she has not gained the knowledge. No wonder, therefore, that she is able to recollect, with regard to virtue as well as to other things, what formerly she knew. For all things in nature being linked together in relationship, and the soul having heretofore known all things, nothing hinders but that any man, who has recalled to mind, or, according to the common phrase, who has learnt, one thing only, should of himself recover all his ancient knowledge, and find out again all the rest of things; if he has but courage, and faints not in the midst of his researches. For inquiry and learning is reminiscence ¹ all. We therefore ought not to hearken to that sophistical way of reasoning afore-mentioned; for our believing it to be true would make us idle. And, accordingly, the indolent, and such as are averse to

¹ For a defence of reminiscence, which Plato justly considers as ranking among the most important doctrines of philosophy, see the notes on the Phædo.—T.
taking pains, delight to hear it. But this other way of thinking, which I have just now given you an account of, makes men diligent, sets them at work, and puts them upon inquiry. And as I believe it to be true, I am willing, with your assistance, to inquire into the nature of virtue.

Meno. With all my heart, Socrates. But say you this absolutely, that we do not learn any thing; and that all, which we call learning, is only reminiscence? Can you teach me to know this doctrine to be true?

Soc. I observed to you before how full you are of crassinesse, O Meno. And, to confirm my observation, you now ask me if I can teach you; I, who say that there is no such thing as teaching, but that all our knowledge is reminiscence; that I may appear directly to contradict myself.

Meno. Not so, Socrates, by Jupiter. I did not express myself in those terms with any such design; but merely from habit, and the common usage of that expression. But if any way you can prove to me that your doctrine is true, do so.

Soc. This is by no means an easy task. However, for your sake, I am willing to try and do my utmost. Call hither to me then one of those your numerous attendants, whichever you please, that I may prove in him the truth of what I say.

Meno. I will, gladly. Come hither, you.

Soc. Is he a Grecian, and speaks he the Greek language?

Meno. Perfectly well. He was born in my own family.

Soc. Be attentive now, and observe whether he appears to recollect within himself, or to learn any thing from me.

Meno. I shall.

Soc. Tell me, boy; do you know what a square space is? Is it of such a figure as (fig. 1) this?

Boy.

1 The best explanatory notes to this part of the Dialogue will be mathematical figures, drawn after the manner of those used in demonstrating geometrical propositions. Socrates is here supposed, in the first place, to draw a square; and afterwards, while he is putting questions to the boy, he is supposed to be drawing new lines, such as form and bound the several other figures of which he speaks. But, in reading, the figures must be represented as already drawn; and therefore, in every part of the process, a new figure is necessary. All these we have exhibited together, printed from a copper plate; numbering each figure, and referring to each, in its proper place, by the same number. Such figures ought to have been printed in the editions of Plato himself. The editors
Boy. It is.
Soc. A square space then is that which has (fig. 2) all these lines equal, AB, BC, CD, DA, four in number.
Boy. It is so truly.
Soc. Has it not also (fig. 3) these lines, which are drawn through the middle of it, AC and BD, equal each to the other?
Boy. Yes.
Soc. Cannot you imagine a space, square like this, but larger; and another such, but lesser?
Boy. Yes, for certain.
Soc. Now if (fig. 2) the side AB should be two feet long, and the side AD should be two feet long also, how many feet square will the whole space contain? Consider it in this manner. If, in the side AB, the space should be two feet long, and in the side AD it should be but one foot; would not the square be that of two feet once told?
Boy. It would.
Soc. But since it is two feet this way as well as the other way, is it not a space of two feet twice told?
Boy. Just so.
Soc. It is then a space of two feet? 
Boy. So it is.
Soc. How many feet are twice two? reckon them, and tell me.
Boy. Four feet, Socrates.
Soc. May not a space be made (fig. 4), E F G H, double to that other in size, but of the same kind, having, like that, all its sides equal?
Boy. Yes, sure.
Soc. How many square feet then will this space be of?
Boy. Eight.
Soc. Come now, try and tell me, of what length is each of the sides in this square space. Now the sides of that square, you know, we have sup-

---

1 Meaning square feet.—S.

---

editors of Aristotle have not been so much wanting in this respect, where it was necessary: though sometimes indeed, through carelessness, they have printed wrong figures, which are worse than none; as, for instance, equilateral triangles instead of right-angled.—S.
posed to be two feet long. Of what length then are the sides of this square, which is double in largeness to that other?

Boy. It is plain, Socrates, that they are twice as long.

Soc. You see, Meno, that I teach him none of these things which he afferts; I only ask him questions. And now this boy imagines that he knows of what length the lines are which contain a space of eight square feet. Do you not think he does?

Meno. I do.

Soc. And does he really know?

Meno. Certainly not.

Soc. But he imagines them to be twice as long as the lines, which contain a space of four square feet.

Meno. He does.

Soc. I now view him ready to recollect, from this time forward, rightly and as he ought. Now hear me, boy. You say that lines, double in length to the sides of the square A B C D, contain a space double to it in largeness: I mean a space of the same kind; not one way long, the other way short; but every way of equal length, like the space A B C D, only twice as large, that is (fig. 4), a space of eight square feet. Consider now whether you still think this square E F G H to be measured by a line twice as long as the line which measures the square A B C D.

Boy. I do.

Soc. Suppose we add to the line A B, from hence, from the point B, another line of equal length (fig. 5), the line B I. Is not the line A I of a length double to that of the line A B?

Boy. Yes, sure.

Soc. Now, from the line A I, do you say that a space will be made of eight square feet, if four lines, each of them as long as the line A I, be drawn so as to contain space?

Boy. I do.

Soc. Let us then draw (fig. 6) these four equal lines so as to contain space, A I, I K, K L, L A. Is this space now any other than that which you say is of eight square feet?

1 Meaning a square equal in largeness to eight square feet.
Boy. No; it is the very same.

Soc. Are there not in this space $AIKL$ these (fig. 7) four spaces, $ABMO$, $BIPM$, $MPKN$, $NLOM$, each of which is equal to that space of four square feet, $ABCD$?

Boy. So there be.

Soc. How large is the whole space $AIKL$? Is it not four times as large as the space $ABCD$?

Boy. To be sure it is.

Soc. Is it only double now to the space $ABCD$, when it is four times as large?

Boy. No, by Jupiter.

Soc. What proportion then has it to the space $ABCD$?

Boy. A quadruple one.

Soc. From a line, therefore, double in length, is drawn a square space, not double, but quadruple, in largeness.

Boy. Why, it is very true.

Soc. Four times four make sixteen: do they not?

Boy. They do.

Soc. But from a line of what length is to be drawn a square, such a one as we suppose (fig. 4) the square $EFGH$ to be, that is a space of eight square feet? You see that from the (fig. 6) line $AI$ is drawn a square, quadruple in largeness to the square $ABCD$.

Boy. I see it.

Soc. And from the line $AB$, which is half of the line $AI$ (fig. 6), a square, you see, is drawn, which is but the fourth part of the square $AK$.

Boy. It is.

Soc. Well; but that square of eight feet $EFGH$, is it not twice as large as the square $ABCD$, and half as large as the square $AIKL$?

Boy. It is so, to be sure.

---

1 We may observe that this boy, whom Meno seems to have chosen out from his retinue on account of his ignorance and total want of education, is represented as not wholly ignorant of common arithmetic. Perhaps Socrates meant to gain some ground in his argument by this circumstance; insinuating, that the principles of the art of numbering were natural to man, and required no teaching. Accordingly we find that the most barbarian nations, and the most unlettered persons in those which are civilized, acquire of themselves so much of that art as is necessary for the uses of common life.—S.
THE MENO.

Soc. Must it not then be drawn from a line longer than the line AB, and shorter than the line AI?

Boy. I think it must.

Soc. You say well; for speak that only which you think. And tell me, was not the line AB supposed to be two feet long, and the line AI four feet long?

Boy. Yes.

Soc. The side therefore of the square EFGH must be shorter than a line of four feet, and longer than a line of two feet.

Boy. It must so.

Soc. Try now, and tell me how long you think it is.

Boy. Three feet long.

Soc. If then it be so, let us take half of the line BI (fig. 8), namely, BQ, and add it to the line AB; and now this line AQ will be such a line as you speak of, a line three feet long. For the lines AB, BI, are each of them two feet long, and the line BQ is half of the line BI, and therefore is one foot long. In the same manner, let us take half of the line OL, namely OR, and add it to the line AO; and thus the line AR will be three feet long also. For the lines AO, OL, are each of them two feet long, and the line OR is one foot long. From these two lines, AQ, AR, let us complete the square AQSR; and it is such a square as you was speaking of, the square of a line three feet long.

Boy. It is so.

Soc. If then the whole space be three feet long and three feet broad, it is a space of thrice three feet.

Boy. It appears so to be.

Soc. And how many feet are thrice three?

Boy. Nine.

Soc. But how many feet were there to be in a square twice as large as the square ABCD?

Boy. Eight.

Soc. It is not true then that from a line three feet long is to be drawn a square containing only eight square feet.

Boy. It is not.

Soc. Try and tell us then exactly how long the line must be from which such
THE MENO.

such a square is to be drawn. Or, if you choose not to tell us the measure of it in numbers, at least point out to us from what line it may be drawn.

Boy. Now, by Jove, Socrates, I do not know.

Soc. Do you observe, Meno, what progress this boy has already made, and whereabouts he is, in the way to recollection? You see that, from the beginning of his examination, he knew not from what line a square eight feet large was to be drawn; as indeed neither does he yet know; but he then fancied that he knew, and answered boldly as a knowing person would, without suspecting that he should ever be at a loss for a true answer. But he now finds himself at a loss, and thinks himself as ignorant as he really is.

MENO. You say what is true.

Soc. Is he not then in a better disposition with regard to the matter which he was ignorant of?

MENO. I agree with you in this too.

Soc. In making him therefore to be at a loss what to answer, and in benumbing him after the manner of the cramp-fish, have we done him any harm?

MENO. I think, we have not.

Soc. And more than this, we have advanced him a little, as it seems, in the way of finding out the truth in the subject laid before him. For, being now sensible of his ignorance, he is prepared to seek and to inquire. But he then fancied, that he could readily, at any time, and in the presence of any number of people, show with certainty, that a square, twice as large as some other square, was produced from a line twice as long.

MENO. So it seemed.

Soc. Think you then, that he would have set about seeking or learning that, which, however ignorant of it, he fancied that he knew; till he had

If Socrates had not added this, he would seem to have put the boy on telling what was impossible for him to tell. For how long the side is of a square, equal in largeness to eight square feet, is impossible to be told in any whole number.—S.

* For it lay before his eyes; being the line A C (fig. 3), the diameter of the square A B C D.—S.
found himself at a loss, and felt his ignorance; and was become therefore
defirous of finding it out?

**Meno.** I think, Socrates, that he never would.

**Soc.** The benumbing him then was of advantage to him.

**Meno.** I think it was.

**Soc.** Now observe how, from this sense of his ignorance, he will find
out the truth in searching for it with me; though the part which I shall
bear in the inquiry will be merely to ask questions, and not to teach. But
be sure to mind, if anywhere you can catch me teaching or telling him any
thing, instead of asking him his own opinions. Now, boy, tell me, is not
this space (fig. 2) ABCD our square, four feet large? Do you apprehend
me?

**Boy.** I do.

**Soc.** Suppose we add to it this other square (fig. 9) BTUC, equal to it in
largeness?

**Boy.** Well.

**Soc.** And a third square too, this (fig. 10), DCWX, equal in largeness
to either of the others?

**Boy.** Very well.

**Soc.** What, if we add another square of equal size, to fill up the corner
here, this (fig. 11), UCWY?

**Boy.** Very well: and so it does.

**Soc.** Are not then these four squares equal all, ABCD, BTUC, CDXW,
WYUC?

**Boy.** Yes.

**Soc.** This whole large square then, ATYX, how much larger is it than the
square ABCD?

**Boy.** Four times as big.

**Soc.** But we wanted a square only twice as big. Do you not re-
member?

**Boy.** I remember it very well.

**Soc.** Do not these lines, which I draw from corner to corner in each of
these squares (fig. 12), BD, BU, DW, WU, cut each square in half?

**Boy.** They do.

**Soc.**
Soc. Are not these four lines drawn of equal length, these, which enclose the square space, BDWU?

Boy. They be so.

Soc. Now consider, how large this square is which is enclosed by those four lines.

Boy. Why, I do not know.

Soc. Are not those four squares (fig. 12), ABCD, BTUC, CDXW, WYUC, cut each of them in half by these four lines, BD, BU, DW, WU, drawn within them; or are they not?

Boy. They be.

Soc. In the square (fig. 12), ATYX, how many spaces are there then, as large as the space ABCD?

Boy. Four.

Soc. And how many such in the square (fig. 12), BDWU, from which half the other is cut off?

Boy. Two.

Soc. How many more are four than two?

Boy. Twice as many.

Soc. How many square feet then doth this square, BDWU, contain?

Boy. Eight.

Soc. From what line is it drawn?

Boy. From this here.

Soc. From (fig. 12) the line BD, do you say, reaching from corner to corner of the square ABCD, which contains four square feet?

Boy. Yes.

Soc. The sophists call such a line the diameter. If the diameter then be its name, from the diameter of a square, as you say, you boy of Meno's, may be drawn a square twice as large as the square of which it is the diameter.

Boy.

*This theorem, said to have been discovered by Pythagoras, is perhaps the most beautiful of all simple theorems in geometry: and yet is not to be found, in explicit terms, among those fundamental theorems, demonstrated in Euclid’s Elements. It is cited, however, in the demonstration of the last proposition in the tenth book: and a reference is there made to the 47th proposition of the first book; in which indeed this fine theorem is implicitly contained: for*
Boy. It is so, Socrates, for certain.

Soc. Well; what think you, Meno? Has this boy, in his answers, given any other opinion than his own?

Meno. None other: he has given his own opinion only.

Soc. And yet, but a little before, as we both observed, he had no knowledge of the matter proposed, and knew not how to give a right answer.

Meno. True.

Soc. But those very opinions, which you acknowledge to be his own, were in him all the time: were they not?

Meno. They were.

Soc. In a man therefore, who is ignorant, there are true opinions concerning those very things of which he is ignorant.

Meno. It appears there are.

Soc. Those opinions then are stirred up afresh in the mind of that boy, as fancies are in dreaming. And if he should frequently be questioned of these things, and by many different persons, you may be assured he will at length know them with as much certainty as any man.

Meno. Indeed, it seems so.

Soc. Will he not then know them without being taught them, having only been asked questions, and recovering of himself from within himself his lost knowledge?

Meno. He will.

Soc. But our recovery of knowledge from within ourselves, is not this what we call reminiscence?

Meno. Without doubt.

Soc. And this knowledge, which he now has, must he not at some time or other have acquired it, or else have always been possessed of it?

Meno. Certainly.

Omne majus continet in se minus.—Proclus, in his Commentary on the First Book of those Elements, admires Euclid, because the noble theorem, introduced here by Plato, relating only to right-angled isosceles-triangles, is by Euclid extended to all right-angled triangles, scalene as well as isosceles. We heartily join with him in this admiration; but could wish that the original theorem of Pythagoras had been subjoined, as a corollary, to that truly admirable proposition, the 47th.—S.
Soc. Now if he was always possessed of it, he was always a person of knowledge. But if at any time he first received it, was it not in this present life? unless some person has taught him the science of geometry. For he will make his answers with no less certainty in every part of geometry, and indeed in all the other mathematical sciences. Is there any one, then, who has taught the boy all this? I ask you; because you ought to know, since he was born and bred up in your family.

Meno. I am certain that no person has ever taught him those sciences.

Soc. And yet he entertains those opinions, which he has just now declared: does he not?

Meno. It appears, Socrates, that he must.

Soc. If then he had this knowledge within him, not having acquired it in this present life, it is plain that in some other time he had learnt it and actually possessed it.

Meno. It appears so.

Soc. And was not that time then, when he was not a man?

Meno. Certainly.

Soc. If true opinions then are in him, at both these times, the time when he is, and the time when he is not a man; opinions which, awakened and roused by questions, rise up into science; must not his soul be well furnished with this discipline throughout all ages? for it is plain, that in every age he either is, or is not a man.

Meno. In all appearance it must be so.

1 For every mathematical demonstration depends on viewing equal and unequal, like and unlike, in all computations, in all diagrams, and in all measures, whether of sound or of motion.—S.

2 In the Greek we here find a negative, οὐκ ἔχει τά ποιέ, which, however, if it be retained, alters not the sense upon the whole; but the sentence is then to be translated thus; "If then, not having acquired this knowledge in the present life, just now he had it not, (because he had forgotten it;) &c. But the meaning seems easier to be conceived, if the οὐκ be omitted.—S.

3 Future editors of Plato may consider, whether we ought not here to read ἡ ἀνὴρ ἁπάντως, instead of ἡ ἀνὴρ ἁπάντως. Cornarius also, we find, has made this emendation.—S.

4 We have here supposed, that the Greek of this place should be thus read, αἱ ἀνὴρ εὐπροσωπίας ἐπιγραφέως.—S.

5 That is, with the principles of science essential to the soul of man.—S.
Soc. If the truth of things is therefore is always in the soul, the soul should be immortal. So that whatever you happen now not to know, that is, not to remember, you ought to undertake with confidence to seek within yourself, and recall it to your mind.

Meno. You seem to me, Socrates, some how or other to speak rightly.

Soc. As to my own part, Meno, I would not contend very strenuously for the truth of my argument in other respects; but that in thinking it our duty to seek after the knowledge of things we are at present ignorant of, we should become better men, more manly, and less idle, than if we suppose it not possible for us to find out, nor our duty to inquire into, what we know not; this I would, if I was able, strongly, both by word and deed, maintain.

Meno. In this also, Socrates, you seem to me to say well.

Soc. Since then we are agreed in this point, that what a man knows not, he ought to inquire after and seek to know, are you willing that we attempt jointly to inquire into the nature of virtue?

Meno. By all means, willing. Not but that I should have most pleasure in taking into consideration, and hearing what you have to say on the question I first asked you, whether, in setting about our inquiries concerning virtue, we should consider it as a thing that may be taught, or as being by nature with those who have it, or as attainable by some other means, and what they are.

Soc. Were I to govern not only myself, Meno, but you too, we would not consider whether virtue could be taught or not, before we had inquired, in the first place, what virtue was. But since you, without so much as attempting to govern yourself, for fear (I suppose) of being less free and less a gentleman, undertake however to govern me, and actually do govern me, I shall yield to you. For indeed how can I help myself? or what is to be done without it? We are to consider then, it seems, what belongs to some certain thing, whilst yet we know not what the thing is. But if you

1 The words of Plato are αληθινα των ουσων.—The truth or reality of all things which are, depends on the truth of the first principles of things. For truth metaphysical is here meant. But in truths logical it is the same: all these depend on the truth of the first principles of science.—S.
still persist, however relax a little the strictness of your command, and suffer
the question, whether virtue can be taught a man, or how otherwise it is
attained, to be considered hypothetically. By hypothetically I mean in the
same manner as geometricians often treat a question; for instance, when
they are asked concerning some geometrical figure, whether it is possible
for (fig. 13) such a particular triangle to be inscribed in (fig. 14) such a
particular circle. A geometrician would answer,—I know not as yet,
of what kind this triangle is. But I can make a supposition, which I think
may be of use in answering your question,—this:——Supposing the
triangle to be of such a kind, as that a circle being drawn about a given
side of it, the whole space of the triangle be included within the circular
space described around it, the consequence will then be one thing; but quite
another consequence will follow, if it cannot be so included.

1 Or rather the largeness of the space contained in that figure. The words of Plato are 'περί χυπου. And χυπου was a term used by the old Greek mathematicians to signify the space comprehended by the lines of any geometrical figure.—S.

2 The Greek word here is ουταθναι, that is, to be extended within. The meaning of which words seems, at first sight, to be the same with that of 'εγγραφθαι in Euclid’s Elements, Lib. iv. Def. 3. But probably there is a difference between them, as will presently be remarked.—S.

3 The angles of this triangle being not, as yet, either measured or supposed.—S.

4 Whether right-angled, obtuse, or acute-angled.—S.

5 It seems necessary here to make a small alteration in the text as it is printed: by reading 'ΠΕΡΙ θηλος γαρ γραμμήν 'ΠΕΡΙ πενήπτα, instead of 'παρα and 'παρατεινα. —Περιτεινω seems, at first view, to have the same meaning with 'εγγραφεῖν in the fourth book of Euclid’s Elements. The difference between them, as also between 'ετεινω and 'εγγραφεῖν, will be conjectured in a subsequent note.—S.

6 If the alteration, made in the preceding note, be just, we are obliged, in consequence of it, to read here 'ΠΕΡΙπετεινω in the Greek, instead of 'παρατεινα, the word in Stephen’s edition. The former editions, by a mistake still greater, give us 'παρατεινα. For want of this small emendation, Grynaeus, who undertook to amend Ficinus’s translation, was led to fancy I knew not what parallelograms; which throw so much obscurity over this whole passage, that the true meaning of it has never since been so much as conjectured. Ficinus himself indeed seems to have had a shrewd guess at it, even without making the emendation; as appears by his marginal reference to the fourth book of Euclid’s Elements, and by the triangles he presents us with.—S.

7 That is, if it be impossible to include the whole triangle within that circle, which is drawn about one of its sides. And impossible this is, when some part of the circle does not fall within it, as it does in the other, the case put first. See the figures referred to. It seems to be supposed in both the cases, that it may appear by inspection, or be found by mensuration of the diameters, whether a circle, drawn about the given side of the triangle, be equal or unequal to the circle given.—S.
down therefore these two hypotheses distinctly, I can tell you what will follow, in each of these cases¹, as to the inscribing that triangle within the circle, whether it be impossible or possible. Now the same way shall we take in our inquiry concerning virtue: since we know not, either what it is, or what is to be attributed to it, we shall lay down an hypothesis concerning it; and, on the footing of that hypothesis, shall consider whether it is to be taught or not. Let us then state the question thus: Supposing virtue to be in that order of things which belongs to the soul, is virtue, on this hypothesis, to be taught, or not to be taught? In the first place, it is either a different kind of thing from knowledge, or a thing of the same kind with knowledge: and on each of these hypotheses let us inquire, whether virtue is or is not to be taught, or (as we lately expressed it) recalled to mind; for whichever of these expressions we use, let it make no difference to us. The question is then, whether virtue is to be taught. Now is it not evident to every one, that man is taught no other thing than knowledge?

MENO. To me it seems so.

Soc. ¹ In stating the question, it must be supposed as evident, that the given side of the triangle is not greater than the diameter of the given circle. For if it be greater, no such question can be proposed by any man; the absurdity of it, or impossibility of the thing proposed to be done, appears too plainly.—It should seem also, that this given side is to be made the diameter of the circle to be drawn, by taking the middle point of this side for the centre. For thus, and thus only, can the circle properly be said περι τον διαμετρον γραμματευομεν, to be drawn around or about the given side. If this be granted; then, in the case which is put first (the possible one), that angle of the triangle, which is subtended by the given side, must be either (fig. 15) a right angle, or (fig. 16) an obtuse angle: in the other (the impossible) case, that angle must be (fig. 17) acute. If the angle be supposed a right angle, then will the circle drawn be περιγραμμαται, circumscribed about the triangle; and the triangle may also εγγραμμαται, be inscribed within the equal given circle: for every angle of it would touch the circumference of that circle. Now in the case, first supposed by Plato, had he meant this only, we presume he would have used those very words of Euclid, περιγραμμαται and εγγραμμαται. For Euclid, the author of the Elements, was one of Plato’s disciples; and it is probable, besides, that the terms of geometry were settled before the time of Plato. But if the angle in question be supposed (fig. 18) an obtuse angle, then though the triangle may εγγραμμαται, be inscribed in a circle, whose diameter is greater than the side subtending the obtuse angle; yet it cannot περιγραμμαται, be inscribed (fig. 16) in a circle, whose diameter is equal to that side. However, it may properly enough be said επαναληπτομεν, to be extended within such a circle; because the utmost extent of it is included within that circle. And just in the same manner, though such a circle (fig. 16) cannot be said, in speaking strictly, and according to Euclid’s definition, περιγραμμαται, to be circumscribed about it; yet is the circle περιγραμμαται,
Soc. If virtue, therefore, be a certain kind of knowledge, it is evident that virtue is to be taught.

Meno. Undoubtedly.

Soc. We have quickly then dispatched this part of the inquiry; and are fairly come to this conclusion, that if virtue be a thing of the same kind with knowledge, it is to be taught; otherwise not.

Meno. Very true.

Soc. Next after this, it seems, that we should consider whether virtue be knowledge or of a kind different from knowledge.

Meno. We ought, I think, in the next place to consider this.

Soc. Well now; shall we suppose that virtue is a thing which is good; and shall we abide by this hypothesis, laying it down for certain that virtue is something good?

Meno. By all means.

Soc. Now if there be also any other good separated from knowledge, then perhaps virtue may not be a certain kind of knowledge. But if there be no sort of good which is not comprehended under knowledge, then a suspicion that virtue was knowledge of a certain kind would be a just suspicion.

Meno. What you say is true.

Soc. But further; is it not through virtue that we are good?

Meno. It is.

Soc. And if good, then advantageous. For all things that are good are advantageous: are they not?

Meno. They are.

Soc. Virtue then is a thing advantageous too.

streched around it, and contains it. So by the Greek historians is a wall said περιτειχίζω, around a camp or a city, when the wall surrounds and encloses it, although no tent or house should touch the wall. But Plato’s meaning is, we think, put out of dispute by the word ἐλκίτων, which agrees not to a triangle that touches the circle by every one of its angles; and is compatible only to a triangle, one angle of which, at the least, falls short of the circumference of that (fig. 16) circle drawn around it. ἐλκίτων is also opposed to ἐπιτετολμέω. And in the latter case, supposed by Plato, where the whole triangle cannot be contained within the (fig. 17) circle drawn about the given side, the angle, which is subtended by this side, must be an acute angle; and the sides, which contain this angle, will, to meet and form the angle, reach beyond the circumference of the circle.—S.
Meno. It follows of necessity from what we just now granted.

Soc. Now let us consider what sort of things those are which profit and are advantageous to us; enumerating the particulars: health, we all say, and strength, and beauty, and riches. These things and others of like kind we call advantageous: do we not?

Meno. We do.

Soc. And say we not, that these very things are sometimes hurtful to us? or do you pronounce otherwise?

Meno. No otherwise: I say the same.

Soc. Consider now, what is the leading cause when any of these things profit us; and what when they hurt us. Is it not, when right use presides in the management of them, that they profit us, and when right use is wanting, that they hurt us?

Meno. Certainly so.

Soc. Further then, let us consider things belonging to the soul. Do you admit that temperance is something in the soul; and so of justice, and fortitude, and docility, and memory, and magnanimity, and all things of like kind?

Meno. I do.

Soc. Now consider such of these things, as you think not to consist in knowledge, but to be of a kind different from knowledge. Do not these procure us sometimes hurt, and sometimes advantage? for instance, fortitude; unless fortitude is not where prudence is wanting: let our instance then be boldness. When a man is bold without reason or understanding, does he not incur mischief? And when he is bold rationally and wisely, does he not gain advantage?

Meno. It is true.

Soc. Is it not true of temperance also, and docility, that to a man who

---

1 We have made our translation here conformable to the text of Plato, as printed by Stephens, and explained in the margin of his edition, διαίτης τε, διαίτης. But we suspect an error in those words, and that the right reading is, διάμορφοι, διαίτης. For if Plato wrote τε, wrong use ought to be mentioned in what immediately follows. But it is not; and rightly not: because wrong use is nothing positive, and can manage nothing; it is only the want of right use. As a crooked line is nothing certain or determinate; it is a deviation only from a straight line.—S. has
has learnt and is provided with them, if his soul at the same time be fraught
with understanding, they are advantageous; but, if he wants understanding,
they are hurtful?

Meno. Most undoubtedly.

Soc. In a word, all the abilities of the soul, whether they be of the active
kind or of the passive, under the conduct of prudence, do they not tend to
happiness; but managed with imprudence, do they not produce the contrary
effect?

Meno. It is probable they do.

Soc. If virtue then be one of those things belonging to the soul, and if
it be of necessity, as you say, always advantageous, virtue must be prudence:
for we see, that all other things belonging to the soul are of themselves
neither advantageous nor hurtful; but let there be added to them impru­
dence or prudence, and they thus become either hurtful or advantageous.
Now according to this reasoning, virtue being always advantageous, must be
some kind of prudence.

Meno. To me it seems so.

Soc. Now then as to those other things, which we said just now were
sometimes beneficial and sometimes hurtful, riches, and the rest of external
goods; I ask whether or no as prudence, presiding in the soul, and governing
her other powers and possessions, applies them to our advantage; and as im­
prudence, having the lead, turns them all to mischief; whether in the same
manner the soul, rightly using and administering those outward things, em­
employs them for our benefit, but by a wrong use renders them prejudicial and
pernicious?

Meno. Most certainly.

Soc. And are not things administered and used rightly by a soul posseffed
of prudence; but amis and ill by a soul posseffed with folly?

Meno. They are.

Soc. Thus then we may pronounce it to hold good universally: to man
all external things depend on his soul; and all things belonging to the soul
itself depend on prudence for their being good and beneficial to him. Now

1 In the Greek 
α"\$αααααα, all other things; all which are not within the soul. The literal word
we have used is exactly agreeable to the mind of Plato.—S.
it follows from this reasoning, that prudence is always advantageous. But did we not just now say the same of virtue too?

Meno. True.

Soc. We conclude, therefore, that prudence is virtue; either the whole of virtue, or some part at least.

Meno. What has been said seems to me, Socrates, to have been well said.

Soc. If then it be so, the good are not good by nature.

Meno. It seems to me, they are not.

Soc. For then, this too would follow. If the good were good by nature we should have, somewhere or other, persons who knew which of our youth were good and virtuous in their natures; and these, when they had discovered them to us, we should take and guard in the citadel, putting our seal on them more carefully than we should on gold; that no person might corrupt them, and that when they arrived at the age of manhood, they might become useful to the state.

Meno. It is likely, Socrates, that in that case this would be done.

Soc. Since the good, therefore, are not good by nature, whether are they good by teaching or not?

Meno. I think it now necessary to hold this in the affirmative. And it is plain, Socrates, that if virtue be knowledge, according to our hypothesis before, then it may be taught.

Soc. Perhaps so, by Jove. But I fear we did amiss in admitting that hypothesis.

Meno. And yet very lately it seemed to be maintained fairly.

Soc. But I suspect, it ought not only to have lately seemed to be maintained fairly, but to seem so at present, and hereafter too, if there be any thing in it found or faultless.

Meno. What is the matter now? in what respect do you find fault with it? and why doubt of its being true, that virtue is a kind of knowledge?

Soc. I will tell you, Meno. That virtue is to be taught, supposing it to be a science, or some kind of knowledge, this position of ours I call not into question, nor have any doubt of its being true. But consider whether I appear not to have reason for doubting the truth of the supposition, that virtue
virtue is a kind of knowledge. For answer me to this question; whatever is taught, I speak not of virtue only, but of every other subject of discipline or teaching, must there not be of necessity both teachers of it and scholars?

Meno. I think there must.

Soc. That thing, therefore, on the contrary, of which there are neither teachers nor scholars to be found, should we not think rightly, in thinking it probable that it is not the subject of teaching?

Meno. True. But do you really think that no masters are to be found who teach virtue?

Soc. Though I have often sought about, and inquired if there were any teachers of virtue, with my utmost endeavours I cannot find any. And yet I invite many persons to join with me in the search, especially such as I might presume to have the most experience in that affair. And just now, Meno, in happy time, is this man sat down by us, who may be a party in our inquiry. And it should seem reasonable for us to make him a party: for, in the first place, he is the son of the wealthy and the wife Anthemion, a man who is become rich, not by accident, nor yet by legacy, as he has done to whom the riches of Polycrates are now of late devoted, Ismenias of Thebes, but having acquired his wealth through his own wisdom and industry; and then as to his other good qualities, he is a citizen who is thought neither contemptuous and insolent, nor ostentatious and giving.

1 Shewing Anytus to Meno, without mentioning his name, because Meno was well acquainted with him, as being at that time entertained at his house. It is probable, that Anytus had now steated himself close to Socrates, to catch at some words or other in his discourse with Meno, for a better handle to the accusation he was now meditating against him.—S.

2 The Polycrates, whom we presume to be here meant, was tyrant of Samos, so famous for succeeding in every affair that he engaged in, (as we learn from Herodotus, lib. iii.) that Lucian, in his Charon, calls him παντοκράτωρ, fortunate in all things; and so immensely rich, that the same Lucian, in his παντοκρατορία, ranks him with Creusus in that respect. The unhappy end he met with, in being murdered by one of his slaves, at the procurement of one of his courtiers, Onontes, a Persian nobleman by birth, who seized on all his vast riches, was fortunate for Ismenias, to whom at length they came by legacy.—S.

3 Ismenias was commander in chief of all the Theban forces, and ambassador from Thebes at the court of Artaxerxes, where he ingratiated himself so much by his address, in complying with the ceremonial of that haughty court, without departing from the dignity of a free Grecian, that he not only met with success in the public ends of his embassy, but obtained that prodigious increase.
giving trouble to all about him, but behaves decently and conducts himself like a modest and frugal man. And besides all this, he has educated and instructed his son here excellently well, in the opinion of the Athenian multitude; for they elect him to the highest offices in the state. Such men it is right to make of our party, when we are inquiring after masters who teach virtue, whether any are to be found and who they are. Join yourself therefore, Anytus, to us, to me, and Meno here, your guest at Athens, in our inquiry concerning virtue, who are the teachers of it. And consider the question thus; Suppose this Meno had an inclination to be made a good physician, and applied to us for our advice in the affair, to what masters should we send him? should we not send him to the physicians?

Any. By all means.

Soc. And to make him a good currier, should we not send him to the curriers?

Any. To be sure.

Soc. And in all other subjects of instruction, should we not take the same way?

Any. Without doubt.

Soc. But concerning this point, let me ask you another question. In sending him to the physicians, we say we should do well, if we intended the making him a good physician. Now when we say this, do we not mean, that we should act with prudence in sending him, not to any who profess not the art of healing, but to those who make it their profession; and who, besides, are paid for teaching it to others; and thus, by this very acceptance of pay, take upon themselves to teach any one who is willing to come and increase of his private fortune, the inheritance of Orontes, left to him probably by the last of Orontes's descendants. That piece of address, however, as related by Plutarch in his Life of Artaxerxes, and more fully by Ælian in his various histories, was no other than such as would have recommended him to our King James the First. Not that we call in question the personal merit of Ismenias; for we suppose it to be with regard to this very merit, as well as to the reward it met with, that he is here set in contrast with Anthemion.—S.

1 A reflection this on the education of Anytus, slyly hinting that he was fit for nothing else. Plato, in this part of the dialogue, indulges a little his satirical genius, out of revenge for the death of Socrates, contrived and compassed by this Anytus.—S.

* It appears from this passage, that there were, in those days, professors of physic at Athens, such as there are in modern universities.—S.
learn; I ask you whether it is not from these considerations that we should
do well in sending him to the physicians?

Any. I answer, yes.

Soc. In the learning music too, and every other art, are not the same con-
Siderations just? Surely it is great want of understanding in us, if we are
desirous of having some person taught music, not to choose for his masters
such as profess the teaching of the art, and the taking of money too for
their teaching; but, instead of this, to give trouble to other people, expec-
ting him to learn from those who do not pretend to be teachers, and have not
one scholar in that learning in which we expect our student should be by
them instructed. Think you not that such an expectation would be very
unreasonable?

Any. I do, by Jupiter; and a great sign of ignorance too, besides.

Soc. You say well. Now then you have an opportunity of considering
together with me, and giving your advice about this guest of yours, Meno
here. For he has often told me long ago, Anytus, that he wished to
acquire that wisdom and virtue, through which men govern well both
their families and the commonwealth; through which also they behave
respectfully to their parents; and know how to entertain both their country-
men and foreigners, and what presents to make them at their departure, in
such a manner as becomes a good man. Were we then to recommend to
him any persons from whom he might learn this virtue, consider
whom we should do right in recommending. Is it not clear that, agreeably
to what we have just now said in other cases, they would be those persons
who profess to be teachers of virtue, and publicly through all Greece offer
themselves to teach it to any one who desires to learn; fixing the price of
this their teaching, and demanding it as their just fee?

---

1 This was probably in some former trip which Meno had made to Athens when a youth.—S.
2 Here we have an account of the principal topics of praise and admiration in those ancient
days.—S.
3 In the Greek of this passage it is evident there is some word omitted. Stephens saw this,
and in the margin of his edition conjectures the word δασκαλίας to be wanting in the beginning of
the sentence. But as this conjecture is not satisfactory to us, we beg leave to offer to the future
editors of Plato one or two of our own; viz. to read either διδασκόντες, or μαθητρικήν, after αὑτούς,
in the middle of the sentence, or the latter of those two words at the end of it.—S.

Any.
ANY. And what persons, Socrates, do you mean?

SOC. You cannot be ignorant that I speak of those who are called sophists.

ANY. O Hercules! speak not so shamefully, Socrates. May none of my relations, friends, or acquaintance, fellow-citizens, or foreign guests, ever be seized with such a madness as to go and be spoiled by those men. For the bane and corruption those men are of all who follow them.

SOC. How say you, Anytus? Are these the only men among those who profess the knowledge of something beneficial to human kind, so widely different from all the rest, as not only not to improve and make better what is put into their hands as the others do, but on the contrary to corrupt and spoil it? and do they think fit openly to demand fees to be paid them for so doing? I cannot tell how I should give credit to this account of yours. For I know one man in particular, Protagoras, to have acquired singly more riches from having this wisdom, than Phidias has from his works so celebrated for their beauty, together with any ten other statuaries besides. It is a prodigy what you tell me; when the menders of old shoes and of old clothes could not escape a month from being publicly known, if they returned the clothes or shoes in a worse condition than they received them; but doing so would be soon reduced to starving; yet, that Protagoras should corrupt and spoil his followers, and send them home worse men than when they first came to him, without being discovered by all Greece, and this for above forty years. For I think he was near seventy years of age when he died, after having spent forty of them in the practice of his profession. And during all that time he maintained a high reputation, which continues even to this day. And not only Protagoras met with this success, but very many others: some of whom were prior to him in time, and some flourish at present. Now shall we suppose that they deceived and corrupted the youth, as you say they did, knowingly? or shall we suppose they did so unconsciously of it to themselves? Shall we deem them to be so much out of their senses, such men, who are said by some to be the wisest of mankind?

1 That Socrates in this speaks ironically and in jest, the readers of Plato will of themselves observe. But let them be pleased to observe further, how little Anytus could know of Socrates, of his way of thinking, or his common conversation, in taking him as he does to be here in earnest.—S.
ANY. They are far from being out of their senses, Socrates: rather so are thes of the youth, who give them money for corrupting them; and still more so than these youths are their relations in committing them to the guidance of such men; but most of all so are those cities which suffer such men to come in amongst them, and drive not away and banish every man, whether foreigner or citizen, who sets up in any such profession.

SOC. Has any of the sophists done you any injury, Anytus? or why else are you so angry with them?

ANY. I have never, by Jupiter, conversed with one of them myself; nor would I suffer so to do any person who belonged to me.

SOC. You have no experience at all then of those men.

ANY. And never desire to have any.

SOC. How then should you know if there is any good or any harm in their teaching, when you have no experience of it at all?

ANY. Easily enough. For I know what sort of fellows they are, whether I have had any experience or not of them and of their teaching.

SOC. You have the gift of divination perhaps, Anytus. For how otherwise you could know what they are, according to your own account, I should much wonder. But we were not inquiring to what persons Meno might go, and be made a bad man. As to these, if you will, let them be the sophists. But now tell us of those others: and do an act of kindness to this hereditary friend of yours, in directing him to what persons in this great city he may go and be made eminent in that virtue which I gave you a description of just now.

ANY. But why did not you direct him to such persons yourself?

SOC. What persons I had imagined were the teachers of these duties I have told you. But I happen to have said nothing to the purpose, as you inform me.

ANY. There is some truth however in that perhaps.

SOC. Now, therefore, do you in your turn tell him to whom of the Athenians he should go. Name any one you choose.

ANY. What occasion has he to hear any one man’s name? For of the men of honour and virtue among the Athenians, there is not one, the first he meets with, who would not make him a better man than the sophists would, if he will but hearken and be observant.
Soc. But did these men of honour and virtue become such spontaneously, and without having learnt from any man to be what they are? and are they able to teach others what they were never taught themselves?

Any. They, I presume, learnt from those who went before them, men of like honour and virtue. Or think you not that our city has produced many excellent men?

Soc. I think, Anytus, that in this city there are men excellent in political affairs, and that there have been others no less excellent before them. But were they good teachers of that political excellence? For it is this which happens to be the subject of our present debate: not whether men of honour and virtue are to be found at present in this city or not; nor whether such were to be found here formerly: but whether virtue is to be taught or not. This we have been of a long time considering and inquiring; and in prosecuting the inquiry, we are fallen upon this question, whether those excellent men, either of these or of former days, knew how to impart, or to deliver down to others, that virtue in which they themselves are so excellent; or whether it be impossible for man to deliver down or to impart virtue, and for men to receive it one from another. This it is which we have been long examining, I and Meno. Consider the question now in this manner, on the footing of your own argument. Would you not say that Themistocles was a man of virtue?

Any. I would; and that he was so the most of all men too.

Soc. And would you not then say, that if ever any man could teach his own virtue to another, Themistocles was a good teacher?

Any. I suppose he was, had he had a mind to teach.

Soc. But do you suppose that he had no mind to have some others made men of honour and virtue, and especially his own son? or do you imagine that he maliciously and designedly withheld from him that virtue in which he himself was excellent? Did you never hear that Themistocles taught his son

1 For the character of this excellent general and statesman see Plutarch, who has written his life.—S.

2 Plutarch had in view this passage of Plato, where, in reckoning up the children of Themistocles, and coming to Cleophaetus, he says, υν και πρατης ὁ πολιτικῷς ὑπὸ ἰπτενς αριτοι, ταλα ὀ ωτες ἀκαν τη νημονον, μηναιον, that he is mentioned also by Plato the Philosopher, as an excellent horseman, but in other respects worthless.—S.
son Clephantus to be an excellent horseman? and that his son attained to such a pitch of excellence, that he would keep himself for a long time standing upright upon horses in full speed, and in this situation would throw his javelin; and performed many other surprising feats of horsemanship, in which his father had him instructed; and that he made him skilled in all other accomplishments, such as depend on having had good masters? Have you heard all this from elderly people who remember it?

ANY. I have.

Soc. The disposition of his son therefore is not to be found fault with as untowardly and unteachable.

ANY. Perhaps it is not.

Soc. But what say you to this? That Clephantus the son of Themistocles was a skilful and an excellent man in the same way as his father was, have you ever heard this from any man, either young or old?

ANY. No, truly.

Soc. Do we imagine then that he chose to breed him up in such studies and exercises as he did; and yet, in that wisdom and skill in which he himself excelled, to make him, his own son, not at all a better man than his neighbours, if virtue could be taught?

ANY. That indeed is, perhaps, not to be supposed.

Soc. Such a teacher of virtue now is this teacher of yours, a man whom you yourself acknowledge to have been one of the best men of the last age. And now let us consider another, Aristides, the son of Lycon. Do you not agree that he was a man of virtue?

ANY. I do entirely.

1 In the Greek of this sentence the word mata is plainly dropped, and ought to be restored in all future editions of Plato. In the Dialogue τοις ἄγροις, attributed by some to Eschines the Socratic, but which is almost copied from this part of the Meno, the necessary word mata is not omitted. It is strange that neither Coruaro nor Stephens observed so gross an omission in the manuscripts of Plato.—S.

2 It is observble that Plato here uses the plural number: from whence we may conclude that the same wonderful performances in horsemanship were then taught at Athens which have lately been exhibited in our own country, such as the stepping or skipping upright from horse to horse in full gallop, &c.—S.

3 How great and how good a statesman Aristides was appears in Plutarch's Life of him.—S.
Soc. And did he not give his son Lysimachus \(^1\) the best education to be had at Athens, so far as depended on masters and teachers? and do you think he has made him a better man than common? You have had some acquaintance with him, and you see what sort of a man he is \(^2\). Let another instance, if you please, be Pericles \(^3\), a man so magnanimously wise. You know that he bred up two sons, Paralus and Xanthippus \(^5\).

ANY. I do.

Soc. These, as you know also, he taught horsemanship so as to make them equal in that skill to any of the Athenians. In music too, and gymnastic, and all other accomplishments which depend on art, he instructed them so well that none excelled them. But had he no mind to make them good men? I believe he wanted not inclination so to do \(^6\); but I suspect it to be impossible to teach virtue. And that you may not imagine that I speak only of a few, and those of the meanest birth \(^7\) among the Athenians, and such as

---

\(^1\) It was common among the Athenians to give the eldest son the name of his grandfather; so that two names were continued alternately in the same family.—S.

\(^2\) We find nothing more of this Lysimachus, than what we read in Plutarch, that the Athenians, out of respect to the memory of his father, who died poor, gave him a little landed estate, a sum of money in hand, and a small pension; probably finding him unfit for any office in the state. He is one of the speakers, however, in Plato's Dialogue called Laches: in which he complains that his father, Aristides, had too much indulged him in leading an idle and luxurious life, and, giving himself up wholly to state affairs, had neglected to cultivate his son's mind and to form his manners.—S.

\(^3\) Plutarch has written the life of this consummate politician, this truly great man.—S.

\(^4\) In the Greek \\textit{μεγαλοπρεπῆς σοφος}. With what propriety this epithet is bestowed on him may be seen in Plutarch.—S.

\(^5\) Concerning Paralus, nothing is recorded by Plutarch to his disadvantage. Indeed he only mentions his name, and that he, as well as his brother and sisters, died of the plague, that great plague described in so lively a manner by Thucydides the historian. But as to Xanthippus, we learn from the great biographer, how unworthy he was of such a father as Pericles, and how disrespectful and undutiful to him was his conduct.—S.

\(^6\) This instance of Pericles is produced for the same purpose as it is here, by Plato in his Protagoras.—S.

\(^7\) It is here plainly intimated, that the three great men, whom he had just before celebrated, were of mean extraction. Of Themistocles this is expressly confirmed by Plutarch, who says that he was of an obscure family. Of Aristides it is probable, from the great poverty under which he laboured all his life-time. But of Pericles, Plutarch reports, on the contrary, that his mother was of a considerable family, and his father a man of great personal merit.—S.
wanted abilities for such an affair, consider that Thucydides 1 also bred up two sons, Melefas and Stephanus 2, giving them a good education in all other respects, and particularly in the exercise of wrestling, in which they excelled all their countrymen. For he had one of his sons instructed by Xanthius, the other by Eudorus 3; and these two masters, in the art of wrestling, were thought to be the best of the age. Do you not remember this?

ANY. I remember that I have heard so.

SOC. Is it not evident then, that he would never have taught his children those things, the teaching of which must have put him to expense, and, at the same time, have neglected what would have cost him nothing, the teaching them to be good men, if such a thing was possible to be taught? But Thucydides, perhaps it may be imagined, was a mean inconsiderable person, who had but few friends among the Athenians or their allies. It was not so. For he was of a noble house 4, and had great power in Athens, and much weight in the other Grecian states 5. So that, if his sons could have made good

1 Thucydides, here mentioned by Plato, was a different person from the historian of the same name. Plutarch tells us, and it is confirmed by Marcellinus, that he was a great politician and haranguer in the forum, and was set up by the aristocratical party in the commonwealth to oppose Pericles, who favoured the other side, the democratic. It is highly probable that he was the same Thucydides who, as we are told by the celebrated writer of the History of the Peloponnesian War, was one of the commanders of the Athenian fleet sent to Samos, to second that which had been sent thither before, under the command of Pericles; for the son of Meleias seems to have been a proper person to counterpoise the excessive weight of the power of Pericles, and to please and conciliate to the Athenians the aristocratical party among the Samians.—S.

2 This Meleias is introduced by Plato in his Laches, as joining Lysinachus in lamenting his want of the better parts of education, and in complaining of his father Thucydides's too great indulgence to him.—S.

3 In all the editions of Plato he is called Eudorus; a name, we believe, not to be met with elsewhere. We have therefore not scrupled to follow the translation of Cornarius, who, we presume, read in his manuscript Eudorus, a name to be found in Homer.—S.

4 Of the greatness of his family, we know not of any thing appearing on record expressly to confirm this passage. But his alliance with Cimon, the son of Miltiades, makes it probable: for it is not usual for either men or women, of noble ancestry, to intermarry with the base-born. Now Plutarch says of this Thucydides, that he was κοινός Κίμωνος, a near relation of Cimon's by marriage.—S.

5 This is very probable, if he was, as Plutarch relates, as τὰς καλὰς καταγραφές αὐξόν, one of the men of honour and virtue in that age. Plutarch, in another place, calls him anίξα ποιητής, a man of sound understanding. Stefinibrotus the Thracian, also wrote a treatise, as we are informed by
THE MENO.

good men by teaching, he might easily have found out some person to make them so, either one of his own countrymen, or a foreigner, if he himself wanted leisure, on account of his public employments and his administration of the state. But I fear, friend Anytus, that virtue is a thing impossible to be taught 1.

ANY. You seem to me, Socrates, to be ready at abuse, and to speak ill of others with great facility. But I would advise you, if you choose to hearken to me, to be more cautious, and to take care of yourself. For that, in other cities too, it is perhaps an easy matter to do a man a mischief, as well as a piece of service; but here, at Athens, it is so more especially 2; and, if I mistake not, you are 3 sensible of it yourself 4.

by Athenæus, p. 589, concerning Themistocles, Thucydid, and Pericles. From the company, therefore, in which he is placed, both by Plato and Stefimbrotus, it appears how very considerable a person he was accounted.——We have written these last notes to prevent its being thought that Socrates speaks here of Thucydid ironically, and really meaning to disparage him. But we cannot conceive what, beside malice, could darken the understanding of Atheneus to such a degree, as to make him imagine that Plato in this dialogue speaks ill of and vilifies Pericles and Themistocles, those greatest of the Grecians, says that writer, p. 506. Anytus, however, as we shall presently see, was smitten with the same blindness, and perhaps from the same cause, the malignity of his own temper.—S.

1 Meaning that it is impossible for those to learn it who want the temper, a truly good natural disposition; and impossible also for those to teach it who cannot teach it scientifically, for want of the principles of wisdom, that is, impossible for any but true philosophers. For this is what Plato would insinuate in all this latter part of the dialogue.—S.

2 Because of the power of the populace, who were easily led away by some favourite demagogue. On which account Socrates, as Aelian reports in his Various Histories, b. iii. ch. xviii., likened the Athenian democracy to a tyranny, the arbitrary government of one man; or to a monarchy (absolute), where the legislative power is in the hands of one: so far was it from an equal republic or commonwealth, which secures the rights, both natural and acquired, of every citizen; and is equitable alike to all.——Within three years before the death of Socrates, an oligarchy was forced upon the Athenians by their Lacedæmonian conquerors. Then was that great Leviathan, with the demagogic head, thrown to the ground, and a monster with thirty heads tyrannized in his room, slaughtered thousands without even pretence of law, and favoured only its own abettors.——The time of this dialogue seems to be, either towards the end of the oligarchic tyranny, or soon after the restoration of the democracy: what Anytus here says is equally applicable to both.—S.

3 Hinting at the dangers which Socrates had incurred under both governments, by a manly opposition to the acts of tyranny committed in each, and by a strict adherence to the ancient laws of his country, as interpreted and explained by the eternal laws of justice and equity.—S.

4 Anytus, having finished his menacing speech, appears to have turned himself away from Socrates.
Soc. Anytus seems to me to be angry, Meno. And I am not at all surprised at it. For, in the first place, he supposes that I spoke ill of those persons I mentioned: and then he takes himself1 to be such another as they were. Now if this man should ever come to know what it is to speak ill of others, he will cease to be angry: but at present he is ignorant of it. Do you therefore answer now, and tell me; are there not amongst us men of honour and virtue?

Meno. Certainly there are.

Soc. But are these men willing to offer themselves to the youth to teach them virtue? do they profess the teaching of it? or do they agree that virtue is a thing which can be taught?

Meno. No, by Jupiter, Socrates, they do not. For you may hear them sometimes maintaining that it may be taught, at other times that it cannot be taught.

Soc. Shall we say then that these men are teachers of virtue, when they have not settled so much as this point, whether virtue can be taught or not?

Meno. I think we should not, Socrates.

Soc. Well; but what say you of those sophists, the only persons who profess to teach virtue, think you that they are the teachers?

Meno. It is for this, O Socrates, that I especially admire Gorgias; for that one shall never hear him making any such professions, or taking upon himself an office of that kind. On the contrary, he laughs at those others whenever he hears them engaging to teach men to be virtuous; and thinks it the office of a sophist only to make men great orators and powerful in speaking.

Soc. You do not think then that the sophists neither are the teachers of virtue?

Meno. I know not what to say, Socrates, to this point. They have the same effect on me as they have on most other people; sometimes I think they are, and sometimes that they are not.

Socrates, but not to have withdrawn from the scene of conversation, which is continued on between Socrates and Meno to the end of the dialogue.—S.

1 That is, he takes himself to be a great man like them; μεγαλοφώνος τον ουρύν, thinking highly of himself, says Laertius, in his Life of Socrates, referring to the Meno; meaning undoubtedly this passage, and rightly explaining it.—S.
THE MENO.

Soc. Do you know, that not only yourself and those others, who are versed in civil affairs, sometimes think that virtue is acquired through teaching, and sometimes that it is not; do you know that Theognis the poet is of the same mind, and speaks exactly in the same manner?

Meno. In what verses of his?

Soc. In his Elegiacs; where he says,

Mix evermore with men, through virtue, great;
And near to theirs be placed thy happy seat:
Still be companion of their board and bowl,
And still to what delights them bend thy soul.
For good through sweet contagion shall be caught,
And virtue be by living manners taught.
But converse of bad men is folly's school;
Where sense, taught backward, sinks into a fool.

Do you perceive, that in these verses he speaks of virtue as if it might be acquired through teaching?

Meno. It appears so to me.

Soc. And yet in other verses a little farther on he says,

To fools their wisdom could the wise impart;
Could understanding be infused by art;
Or could right thought into the mind be driv'n;
For this how oft would great rewards be giv'n?

That is, to those men who were complete masters in this skill. And again, he says,

An elegiac verse, properly speaking, is a pentameter, a verse consisting of four feet and two half feet, equally divided; two feet and a half constituting the former part of the verse, and two feet and a half the latter. But very few poems were ever written purely in this metre. Those verses were commonly called elegiac, where hexameter and pentameter verses were used alternately; such as the verses cited here by Plato. They are found in that collection of the verses of Theognis, extant at this day, under the title of Γνωμαι τηναξανη, beginning at verse 33. One would imagine, from the last question of Meno and this answer of Socrates, that Theognis wrote some other poems in a different metre. Fabricius accordingly says, that Γνωμαι were written by Theognis in 2800 verses of heroic measure; and cites Suidas as his authority for this. We presume that he read thus in some manuscript or old edition of Suidas; but in Kutter's edition we read elegiac and not heroic.—S.

The verses here cited, and those which follow, begin at line 434 of Theognis.—S.
THE MENO.

Ne'er did bad son from virtuous father rise,
If duly nurtur'd by his precepts wise.
But whate'er culture careful we bestow,
Ne'er in bad foil can seed of virtue grow.

Do you observe, that in speaking again upon the same subject, he contradicts himself, and says the very reverse of what he had said before?

MENO. So it appears.

SOC. Can you tell me now of any other thing, where they who profess to be teachers are held by all men to be so far from teaching it to others, as to be ignorant of it themselves, and to have no merit in that very thing which they pretend to teach; and where those who are by all men allowed to be excellent themselves, sometimes say it may be taught, and sometimes that it cannot? Those who are so unsettled and perplexed about any subject whatever, would you say that they are the proper masters and teachers of it?

MENO. By Jupiter, not I.

SOC. If then neither the sophists, nor those who are themselves excellent men, are teachers of virtue, it is plain there can be no others beside.

MENO. I think there can be none.

SOC. And if no teachers, then no scholars neither.

MENO. I think what you say is true.

SOC. But we agreed before, that a thing in which neither teachers of it nor scholars are to be found, is not the subject of teaching, and cannot be taught.

MENO. We were agreed in this.

SOC. Of virtue now there appear no where any teachers.

MENO. Very true.

SOC. And if no teachers of it, then no scholars in it neither.

MENO. It appears so.

SOC. Virtue therefore must be a thing which cannot be taught.

MENO. It seems so, if we have considered the matter rightly. And hence, Socrates, I am led to wonder, whether any men really good are ever to be found or not; and if there are, by what means they became such.

SOC. We are in danger, O Meno! of being found, you and I, both of us, very insufficient reasoners on the point in question; and you not to have been fully instructed by Gorgias, nor I by Prodicus. Above all things therefore
therefore ought we to apply our minds to ourselves; and to search out a person who by some certain means would make us better men. I say this with regard to the inquiry now before us; in which we have been so foolish as not to consider, that it is not under the conduct of science that the affairs of men are administered rightly and well; or, if we should not choose to grant that, at least that it is not under the conduct of science only, but of some other thing also which is different from science; and perhaps the knowledge of the means by which men become good hath escaped us.

Meno. How so, Socrates?

Soc. I will tell you how. That those men who are good and virtuous must also be advantageous to us we have agreed rightly; and that it is impossible it should be otherwise. Is not this true?

Meno. Certainly.

Soc. And that they are advantageous to us on this account, because they conduct our affairs rightly, should we not do well in admitting this?

Meno. Without doubt.

Soc. But we seem not to have done well in granting, that unless a man be prudent, it is not possible for him to conduct affairs rightly.

Meno. What mean you now by the word rightly?

Soc. I will tell you what I mean. If a man who knew the way to Larissa, or wherever else you please, were to walk at the head of others whom he had undertaken to conduct thither, would he not conduct them well and rightly?

Meno. Without doubt.

Soc. But how would it be were a man to undertake this who had only a right opinion about the way, but had never gone thither himself, nor had any certain knowledge of the way, would not he also conduct them rightly?

Meno. To be sure.

Soc. And so long as he had any how a right opinion of the way, which the other man knew with certainty, he would not in the least be a worse guide, though only surmising justly, and not knowing clearly, than the other with all his perfect knowledge?

1 The road to Larissa is made the instance, because most familiar to Meno, who was of Pharsalus, a city of Thessaly, near to Larissa, the chief city of all that part of the country, and with which Meno was particularly well acquainted.—S.
Meno. Not at all worse.

Soc. Right opinion, therefore, with regard to right action, is not at all a worse guide than science or perfect knowledge. And this it is which we omitted just now in considering the nature of virtue; when we said that prudence only or knowledge led to right action; it is this, right opinion.

Meno. It seems so.

Soc. Right opinion therefore is not at all of less advantage to man than certain knowledge.

Meno. In this respect, however, Socrates, it is; in that he who has a perfect knowledge of his end, would always attain to it; but the man who had only a right opinion of it, sometimes would attain to it, and sometimes would not.

Soc. How say you? would not the man, who had a right opinion of it, always attain to it, so long as he entertained that right opinion?

Meno. It appears to me that he must. And therefore I wonder, Socrates, this being the case, that science is so much more valuable than right opinion; and indeed in what respect it is that they differ at all one from the other.

Soc. Do you know now why you wonder? or shall I tell you?

Meno. By all means tell me.

Soc. It is because you never considered attentively those images made by Daedalus. But perhaps you have none of them in your country.

Meno. With what view is it now that you speak of these images?

Soc. Because these, if they are not fastened, run away from us, and become fugitives: but if they are fastened, they abide by us.

Meno. Well; and what then?

Soc. To have in one’s possession any of these works of his lose and unfastened, is like to the being master of a runaway slave, a matter of little value, because not permanent: but when fastened and secured, they are things of great value; for indeed they are works of great beauty. But you ask, with what view it is that I speak of these images. I answer,—It is with a view to true opinions. For true opinions also, so long as they abide
by us, are valuable goods, and procure for us all good things: but they are not disposed to abide with us a long time; for they soon slip away out of our souls, and become fugitives. Hence are they of small value to a man, until he has fastened and bound them down, by deducing them rationally from their cause. And this, my friend Meno, is reminiscence, as we before agreed. But when they are thus bound and fastened, in the first place they become truly known, and in consequence of this they become fast and abide with us. Now it is on this very account that science is a thing more valuable than right opinion; and in this respect it is they differ, in that the parts of science only are fastened one to another, and bound down together.

Meno. By Jupiter, Socrates, they are similar to some such things as those to which you resemble them.

Soc. Nay, for my part, I speak thus not from knowledge; but only from conjecture. But that right opinion and science are two different things, this, as it appears to me, I do not merely imagine or conjecture. For if I were to profess the knowledge of any thing whatever (and there are but

---

1 In the Greek, ἀπαντάς αἰτίας, by a rational account of the cause; or by proving, how and from what cause it is that they are true. The cause of every truth is some other truth, higher and more general, in which it is included. To those who have considered the method, naturally used by the mind in reasoning, commonly but improperly called the art of reasoning, this will appear from hence;—A proposition is an opinion of the mind expressed in words, which affirm or deny some one thing to belong to some other. If the proposition, that is, if the opinion be true, it admits of a rational proof. And all rational proof consists in showing or exhibiting of some general truth, or true proposition, in which is virtually included the proposition to be proved. In syllogistical reasoning (the only way of reasoning upwards, or tracing any truths from their causes) that truth, or true proposition, which is more general than the proposition to be proved, is called the major proposition on that very account, because it is of larger extent, or more general than the proposition to be proved, the conclusion; containing in it the truth of that conclusion, together with many other truths, collateral to one another, and all of them subordinate to, or less general than, the major proposition itself. In the same manner, the truth of this major and more general proposition is to be traced out and deduced from another proposition still more general; and so on till we arrive at some truth self-evident, apparently the cause from which is deduced the truth of those other propositions less general, which gradually and in order lead the mind up to it; the cause why they are true. If many subordinate truths arise out of one and the same general truth, as they all equally depend from this, so by means of this too they are all connected together, like the collateral chains, mentioned in the way of similitude (though to another subject) by Plato in his 10, depending all from the iron ring at top fastened to the magnet.—S.
THE MENO.

a few things which I could profess to know), this I would set down for one of them 1.

MENO. You are entirely right, Socrates 2.

Soc. Well; and am I not right in this also, that true opinion, having the conduct of any work or action whatever, executes her office full as well as science?

MENO. In this too I think you are in the right.

Soc. Right opinion, therefore, is a thing not at all inferior to science, nor less beneficial with regard to the execution of any work 3, or the performance of any action; nor is the man, who has right opinions, inferior (in this respect) to the man of science.

MENO. Very true.

Soc. And we agreed before, that a good man was beneficial or advantageous to others.

MENO. We did.

Soc. Since, therefore, it is not through science only that men have been good and beneficial to their country (if any such men there may have been),

1 This sentence, together with that which immediately precedes it, seems to us the right key to open that part of the conversation of Socrates with his friends, in which he was generally supposed to dissemble his great knowledge. We find him here disclaiming the knowledge of those things which are not the proper objects of knowledge, but of imagination and opinion only; and such are almost all the subjects even of philosophical conversation; and we find him at the same time openly avowing, not with irony, but with much seriousness, that he knew the different nature of those two judgments of the soul, science and opinion; one of which is from mind, the other from sense. Now if all science depends on knowing the principle of science, if this principle is mind, and if the human soul partakes of mind, it follows, that the human mind knowing herself, knows in what she differs from the lower faculties of the soul, and how her own judgment of things, which is science, differs from theirs, which amounts to no more than mere opinion: it follows, that she knows what science is, and consequently knows what falls short of it: it follows also, that she knows what the objects are of science, and what those of opinion; having and contemplating the former fort in herself; but rejecting and disclaiming the latter, as not belonging to her province. Accordingly we shall find that Socrates, who knew himself, his true self, his mind, on the one hand never pretended, as ignorant men are apt to do, to know things which cannot be known; nor on the other hand, affected not to know the nature of the human mind, the principles of it, or any of its objects, so far as they are communicated to particular minds from and by mind universal.—S.

2 That is, in distinguishing science from right opinion.—S.

3 This is because right opinion principally verges to sensibles; but science to intelligibles.—T.

but
but also by means of right opinion; and since neither of these is with men by nature, neither science nor right opinion; or do you think that either of them comes by nature?

MENO. Not I.

SOC. Since then, they are not by nature, by nature neither is it that men could have been good and virtuous.

MENO. Certainly not.

SOC. Seeing now, that virtue comes not by nature, we should, in the next place, after this consider if it comes through teaching.

MENO. To be sure we should.

SOC. Did it not appear to us both, that if virtue was wisdom, then it came through teaching?

MENO. It did.

SOC. And that if virtue came through teaching, then virtue would be wisdom?

MENO. Very true.

SOC. And that if there were any teachers of virtue, virtue would in that case be a thing that came through teaching; otherwise not?

MENO. Just so.

SOC. But we have agreed that there were no teachers of it.

\* Just here, in all the editions of the Greek, are added these two words, eινὴν ἐκτητεῖα, neither are they acquired. Which part of the sentence is apparently false: for science and right opinion are both of them acquired; science through teaching; and right opinion through other adventitious means: but supposing it ever so true with regard to right opinion; and supposing also, that the word ἐκτητεῖα means in this place acquired through teaching; it would be imper­tent to this part of the argumentation, and premature: for Socrates is here proving only this, that virtue comes not by nature: and this he proves by showing that all men who act rightly and well, act thus either from science or from right opinion; neither of which principles of action men have from nature. It is not till afterwards, in the next place, that he proves virtue not to be acquired through teaching. With great judgment, therefore, did Cornarius, in his translation, take no notice of those two words; and, in his Eclogæ, has with great probability supposed the words αἱλ' ἐκτητεῖα to have been an antient scholium written in the margin, and by subsequent transcribers, as happened frequently, assumed into the text; and afterwards the word αἱλ' to have been changed into eιτ by some later copyist, not attending to the course of the argumentation, but to the conclusion only. The necessity of the omission is so clear, that we wonder not so much at the accuteness of Cornarius in seeing it, as at the instines of Stephens in not seeing but expressly denying it.—S.

MENO.
MENO. True.

Soc. We are agreed, therefore, that virtue comes not through teaching; and that virtue is not wisdom.

MENO. Certainly so.

Soc. But we agreed besides, that virtue was something good.

MENO. True.

Soc. And that whatever conducted affairs rightly was a thing good and serviceable to us.

MENO. We did clearly.

Soc. And that affairs are conducted rightly by these two things only, true opinion and science; possessed of either of which two, a man makes a good leader and guide. Whatever comes from fortune is not the effect of human conduct. But so far as man has to do in conducting rightly, it is only through one of these means, true opinion and science.

MENO. I think so.

Soc. Now since virtue comes not through teaching, it is not the effect of science.

MENO. It appears that it is not.

Soc. Of the two only things then, which are good and serviceable to man's right conduct, we have thrown one out of the question; having agreed that science is not the thing through which civil affairs are administered and conducted rightly.

MENO. I think it is not.

Soc. Not therefore through any wisdom, nor as being wise, did such men govern in the state; such as Themistocles, and the rest, whom Anytus here just now recounted. And for this very reason they were not capable of making others to be such men as themselves; because it was not science that made them what they were.

MENO. The case, O Socrates, seems to be as you represent it.

Soc. If then it is not science, it follows that it must be the other thing which remains of the two, namely, right opinion, through which public affairs are administered rightly by our statesmen and politicians; men who, in point of wisdom, are not at all superior to the oracle singers and divine prophets. For these also utter many true sayings, but have no real knowledge of any one thing they utter.
Meno. I suspect this to be the case.

Soc. Now do not those men, O Meno, deserve the character of divine men, who either speak or act aright in many things of great importance, without any intellectual knowledge of the subjects concerning which they speak or act?

Meno. By all means do they.

Soc. Rightly then should we call those men divine, whom we just now mentioned, the oracle fingers and the prophets, and all who are inspired by the Muses. Nor at all less divine men than these should we say that the politicians are, no less enthusiasts, inspired divinely, and possessed by the Divinity, when in their speeches they direct aright many and great affairs, without any real knowledge of the subjects they are speaking of.

Meno. Certainly we should.

Soc. And accordingly the women, you know, Meno, call men of virtue by the name of divine men. And the Lacedaemonians, when they celebrate with encomiums any man of virtue, are used to say of him that he is a divine man.

Meno. And they appear, O Socrates, to speak justly too. And yet, perhaps, Anytus here is offended at what you say.

Soc. I give myself no manner of concern about it. With him, Meno, we shall have some discourse at another time. But if we, at this time, during all this conversation, have pursued our inquiries and reasonings aright, virtue can neither come by nature, nor yet through teaching; but to those with whom it is, it must come by a divine portion or allotment, without the intelligence or true knowledge of it; unless amongst the politicians there should be found some person capable of making another man a good politician. But if there should, he might almost be said to be such a one amongst the living, as Homer tells us that Tiresias is amongst the dead; where, speaking of him and of the rest who are in Hades, he says 1,

* Fill'd is he only with discerning mind;  
The rest sit, empty shadows, dark and blind.

Exactly the same pre-eminence hath such a man; being as it were the

1 In his Odyssey, lib. x. ver. 495.

truth
truth and substance of things, compared with shadows *, in respect of virtue.

Meno. What you say, O Socrates, seems to me to be in the highest degree just.

Soc. From this reasoning then, Meno, it appears to us, that such as are possessed of virtue, have it as a divine portion or allotment to them. But on this point we shall then arrive at certainty, when, previous to our inquiries by what means it is that virtue comes to men, we set about searching first, what the essence is of virtue.——But it is now time for me to go somewhere else. And do you, since you are persuaded yourself of the truth of these conclusions, the result of our inquiries, persuade your friend Anytus to believe them also. For he may thus be softened and become milder; and you, by thus persuading him, may possibly do a piece of service to your country.

* It is obvious to be seen, that this is a metaphor taken from the simile here used, of Tiresias and the rest of the ghosts in Hades; or an application of the simile to that which it is brought to illustrate in terms used properly in the simile, but metaphorically in the application. For the application of the simile is this:—As all the other ghosts in Hades are to Tiresias, so are men of right opinion only, void of scientific principles, to men of true science, men who are knowing in those principles. In the simile, the common herd of ghosts are unreal, unsubstantial shades, or shadows, compared with Tiresias, who therefore, with respect to them, is real substance. In the subject, resembled to this simile, men of right opinion are as shadows when compared with men of real science.—The justness of the similitude depends on these doctrines of Plato: that matters of opinion are objects of the imagination, and matters of science are objects of the mind or intellect; that all objects of the imagination are only images of the objects of sense, or things sensible; and that these objects of sense, or things sensible, are but the shadows of things intelligible, the objects of intellect.—S.