left to each person to avail himself, or not, of the sources of instruction presented in the intellectual society of the city, Socrates was not a person to neglect the advantages placed in his way. Money he had not, to pay to the Sophists, the great masters of his day. But he had from childhood an inquisitive mind. He felt that he was thrown on his own resources of thought, and that he must be his own master in the art of education. And to this great object he ap­pears to have bent, from the earliest time, all the powers of his energetic mind, making it his constant employment to inquire from every one,@@1 and collect on every occasion, some hint towards the right prosecution of it. We may picture to ourselves the young Socrates, resembling the Socrates of mature life, freely entering into conversation with all to whom he had access ; feeling and acknowledging his own ignorance ; listening attentively to all that he heard ; weigh­ing and discussing it in his own mind with patience and acuteness ; and not resting until he had traced it out in all its bearings to the utmost of his power. Thus would he gradually form and strengthen that faculty of observation, and that analytical acumen for which he was afterwards so eminently distinguished.

Nor has Plato improbably put a prophecy of his future eminence in the mouth of one of the great masters of the day, when he makes Protagoras say of him, with the self- complacency of the man of established reputation : “ For my part, Socrates, I commend your spirit, and the method of your reasoning ; for whilst in other points I am no bad sort of person, as I think, I am the farthest from being an envious one. For concerning you in particular, I have al­ready observed to many, that of all I meet, I admire you by far the most; of those of your own age, even to the extreme; and I say too, I should not be astonished if you were to turn out a man of celebrity for philosophy.”@@’ To the same effect is the story, that his father, being at a loss how to educate him, consulted the Delphic oracle, and was ad­vised to leave him entirely to his own bent, inasmuch as he had a director in himself superior to a thousand teachers.@@3 The simple interpretation of what is here thrown into the form of marvel probably is, that he gave, even when a child, striking indications of a devotedness to those studies which became the business of his manhood.

The notice of a wealthy individual of Athens, the ex­cellent Crito, appears to have been early attracted to So­crates. Crito was of about the same age as Socrates;@@4 and an attachment to the pursuit of philosophy, and an ad­miration of the character of Socrates, naturally led to that intimacy which he now commenced with the young philosopher, and steadily maintained through his subse­quent life. Through him Socrates was relieved from the necessity of earning his livelihood by the profession of a sculptor; or, as Laertius expresses it, “was raised from the workshop.”@@3 Sculpture, indeed, was in high honour at Athens, especially at this time. For Phidias, enjoy­ing the protection of Pericles, was now adorning the city with the immortal productions of his own chisel, as well as other noble works of art executed under his taste and di­rection. But to follow up the profession with success, re­quired a devotion of mind and hand that must preclude the opportunities indispensable for the moral student. And though, for a time, Socrates worked at the art,—and with success, if a statue of the Graces in the citadel of Athens, attributed to him, were really his workmanship ;@@6—we may imagine how distasteful the occupation, however intellec­tual in itself, must have been to a mind, so eager for ob­servation on living man, so intent on mental and moral phe­nomena, as that of Socrates ; and how gladly he would ex­change the labour of his paternal art for that philosophic leisure which tl>e friendship of Crito held out to him.

The world of that day reproached the philosophers with servility, taunting them with being ever seen at the “ gates of the rich.” In some instances, the reproach may have been just. But in general, the fact was the reverse. Their society rather was courted by the great and wealthy, who were proud of the reputation of being patrons of phi­losophy. To Socrates, indeed, the patronage of a man of wealth would be peculiarly acceptable, not so much for the means of subsistence, about which he was absolutely thoughtless and indifferent, as for the society itself to which he would thus be introduced, and the opportunity of carry­ing on his researches into philosophy, both by books and by the oral instructions of its living professors. To him it would be the very means by which he would enlarge his field of moral observation. The social evenings of Athens were the natural sequences of the mornings of the agora, and the courts, and the council, and the assembly. They prolonged in festive conversation that strife of words and competition of argument, which had been begun in the busy and serious discussions of the morning, and of which the last murmurs had scarcely died away on the ear of the as­sembled guests. For Athenian life was a life of constant excitement. What Demosthenes observed an hundred years afterwards, and an apostle four hundred years later still, —that the Athenians did nothing but go about and ask the news of the day,—was a characteristic of the people already strongly developed at this period of their history. Socrates, who, in his own person, gave a philosophical cast to this inqui­sitive spirit, would be peculiarly interested by such opportu­nities of exercising it as were presented in the animated encounters of the symposium. There he would see human nature displayed in some of its most striking forms. There he would meet the citizen full of years and honours, experienced in the arts of government and diplomacy, and in the service of the state by land and sea ; the poet flushed with his vic­tories in the dramatic contest ; the sophist armed at all points for the display ; the philosopher expounding his theo­ries; the orator, the idol of the people in his day; the courtly patron of literature ; and a circle of young men, the flower of the highest rank in the state ; each bearing his part in the free and lively interchange of thought, emulously pro­voking one another to discussion, and contending for the mastery in the conflict of debate.

By such society Socrates would be effectually prepared for that active enterprize of philosophy, which formed the whole engagement of his life. In the meagre information handed down to us respecting the details of his history, we are not able to ascertain at what precise period of life he began his career of public teaching, or at least attracted notice as the philosopher of Athens. The transition would probably be gradual, from the youthful inquirer, to the mature and expert teacher of others. This transition would be the less percep­tible in the case of Socrates, from the circumstance, that he never professed to *teach,* even when he was most actively em­ployed in teaching ; but still, at the last, as he had done from the first, merely to *inquire.@@1* For his part, he disdained the *profession* of philosophy. He was disgusted with the vain pretension advanced by the Sophists, of being masters of every science, and capable of imparting instruction on any given subject. He accordingly set out with the antagonist posi­tion, that he *knew* *nothing:* that his only wisdom, if he possessed any beyond other men, consisted in his being *aware of* his real ignorance, whilst others ignorantly presumed on the posses­sion of a knowledge which they had not. His teaching, therefore, was only a continuation of the process of educa-

@@@1 Plato, Laches, p. 186, c., *iyω μiv nvv,* κ.τ.λ. p. 176, Bip. ed.

@@@’ Plato, Protag. Op. iii. p∙ 193.

@@@\* Plutarch, de Gen. Socr.

@@@4 Plato, Apo∣. p. 78, *lμοs ηλuu0τηs.*

@@@» Diog. Laert. in vit. ii. 4.

@@@\* Xenoρh. Mem i. 2, ouδi n∙ωrroτ< *vτriσχerο διδάσκαλος .ιvαι τόντον.*

@@@1 Diog. Laert. ii. 5. Pausanias, i. 22; ix 3ö.