nature herself would have gently closed the scene of his philanthropic exertions, when the hand of human violence interposed to hasten the approaching end.

The annals of party spirit at Athens had already re­corded many a deed of dark and wanton cruelty. But they were yet to be stained with the iniquity of a persecu­tion even to death, of him, who had been the greatest be­nefactor and ornament, not only of Athens, but of the whole community of the Grecian name.

The banishment by ostracism had this redeeming merit, that it was an avowal in the face of Greece, of the envious and factious spirit, which drove from the state the indivi­dual whose talents or virtues too greatly distinguished him from among his fellow-citizens. The enmity to which So­crates fell a sacrifice, exhibits a deeper character of malig­nity ; inasmuch as it masked itself under a hypocritical zeal for religion and virtue, and thus courted public sym­pathy for proceedings, against which every voice in Athens and in all Greece should have indignantly protested. Os­tracism, again, was content to remove the obnoxious great man from the eyes of his fellow-citizens. The attack on Socrates was satisfied with nothing short of the destruc­tion of its victim.

It was in the midst of the tranquil, but busy course of his daily engagement, that Socrates was suddenly arrested, and without, it seems, any previous intimation of the in­tended attack, summoned to the portico of the king-Ar­chon, to answer a charge of impiety.@@1

The accusation was in this form : “ Socrates is guilty of the crime of not acknowledging the gods whom the state acknowledges, but introducing other new divinities : he is guilty also of the crime of corrupting the young.” The penalty proposed was death. It has been commonly sup­posed that the charge was laid before the court of Areo­pagus. But it would appear rather, from the course of the trial, to have been before one of the popular courts, and probably, from the great number of dicasts or jurors who voted on the cause, before the principal court, the Heliæa.

The circumstances connected with the accusation re­main, after the utmost inquiry now possible, involved in considerable mystery. We are told that Melitus was the accuser, and that he was supported in the prosecution by Anytus and Lycon. These three individuals are also said to have represented distinct classes of persons interested in the proceedings ; Melitus, who was himself a poet, appear­ing in behalf of the offended poets ; Anytus, a wealthy tradesman and demagogue, resenting the affronts of his brother-tradesmen ; Lycon, an orator, or politician by pro­fession, standing up as the assertor of the pretensions of his factious order. But these particulars, though they may account to us in a great measure for the success of the prosecution, do not exhibit the secret agency by which it was effected. The accusers themselves were men of no note or import­ance in the state. Melitus was a young man ; a vain and weak person, it seems, of whom nothing more is known than that the accusation was made in his name. Nor of Anytus and Lycon have we anything to mark the import­ance, beyond the fact, that the former was included, together with Alcibiades and Thrasybulus, among the persons exiled by the Thirty, and the notice taken of him by Plato, where he represents him the inexorable foe of every thing in the shape of a philosopher, and as parting from a conversation with Socrates in anger.@@’ Merely personal offence, however, could not have given sufficient pretext or weight to so grave an accusation. Nor can we suppose that it was even the combined interest of the three classes represented by the three accusers—the poets, the tradesmen, and the orators—which carried the condemnation of so respected a person. The ground of the attack must lie deeper ; and the men whose names ap­pear so prominently in this fatal conspiracy against the life of the venerable old philosopher, could only have been the puppets moved by some secret and more commanding force. The trial would seem to have been only a solemn pageant, exhibited before the public, as a prelude and jus­tification of a deed of murder already resolved on by its real though invisible perpetrators. Whilst the charges themselves, as set forth by the nominal accusers, were but feebly sustained, it is evident that no defence, however just and able, could have availed to avert the sentence of condemnation. The body of jurors before whom the cause was heard, appear to have been disposed to acquit the ac­cused, if we may judge from the number of votes which were given in his favour ; and yet the majority were overruled. This in itself would lead us to think that some secret in­fluence had been exercised, to obviate the chance of failure of the ordinary ostensible means of judicial assault. And so Socrates himself appears to have felt ; if Plato and Xenophon have faithfully reported the substance of his reply to the accusation in their Apologies. His defence, as there re­presented, is that of one who retires, on his own conscious­ness of right, from a bootless conflict with adversaries who are not to be appeased by argument and persuasion. It does not set forth the strength of his cause as against an opponent, but simply asserts the truth and merit of the course of life which he had been pursuing.@@3 The sentence accordingly excites no surprize in him. He yields him­self up as to the sweeping of a tempest, with which it is vain to parley. Would we then explore the circumstances of the trial and condemnation of Socrates, we must obtain a deeper insight into the moving power of Grecian politics, —the spirit of the heathen religion, and the mode of its action on the conduct of states and individuals. This ap­pears to be the proper solution of the case of Socrates. The circumstances of the case evidently point to this. And though, from the want of information, we cannot very distinctly trace the working of the religion of the times in the particular instance before us, we may, from a closer consideration of the facts, not unreasonably suspect its ac­tive operation and instrumentality.

Speculators have sometimes spoken of the mild and tolerant spirit of paganism. The observation, however, is superficial and untrue. The facility with which the polythe­istic worshipper transferred his offerings and prayers to every new idol, has been mistaken for a readiness to admit any variation from the established worship, or any freedom o. opinion respecting divine things, without offence. The contrary is the fact. The heathen, resting his religion on ancient tradition@@\* and the authority of the priests, and not on any intrinsic evidences of its truth, could not but feel a jealousy of any departure from what he had thus received,

@@@, Plato, Thætet. ad fin. Euthyphro, et alib. The king Archon was a sort of minister of state for the department of religion—tbe re­presentative, under the democracy, of the priestly office of the king during the monarchy at Athens. See Demosthenes, c. Neær. p. 1370, ed. Reiske.

@@@, Xen. Hell. ii. 8. 42, 44.—Plato, Meno.

@@@’ See the same exemplified in what Socrates is made to reply to Callicles in the Gorgias of Plato, p. 162, *nβ<Zrm μirreι xal lγω <>Tιa in τaioς ιraQoιμι ά. ιΐβιλΰύ. ι∕ς iιxaffrηξ∣oι, x.τ.λ,*

@@@4 Demosthenes, in bis Oration against Neæra, p. 1370, speaks of a column erected in the temple at Limnæ, r» *rf άξχαΜτάτφ, ιsgω nü ∆u>.umυ xai aγιuraru,* nnd standing in his time, which stated, among other things, *ira ×aπc rà mirgia ¾0r∣τaι rà ltφfra* fcfi ⅛∏e rîji T6λ4aιf, *×ai rà κιμιβμί.α γιγfηrou nui Θ10Ϊ; ιύβι&ως, xal μηhi> ×araλιιr∣rou, μηhi xnnen>μηraι* : and he sums up the account with sft⅞rr, *ύς βtμm xai aγιa,* xα∕ *t⅛χuιa rà viμ<μa iβr∣t.*