those who deliberately sought and sedulously cultivated his acquaintance there were some who attached themselves to him as they might have attached themselves to any ordinary sophist, conceiving that by temporary contact with so acute a reasoner they would best prepare themselves for the logomachies of the law courts, the assembly and the senate. Again, there were others who saw in Socrates at once master, counsellor and friend, and hoped by associating with him *“ to* become good men and true, capable of doing their duty by house and household, by relations and friends, by city and fellow-citizens ” (Xenophon). Finally, there was a little knot of intimates who, having some­thing of Socrates’s enthusiasm, entered more deeply than the rest into his principles, and, when he died, transmitted them to the next generation. Yet even those who belonged to this inner circle were united, not by any common doctrine, but by a common admiration for their master’s intellect and character.

For, the paradoxes of Socrates’s personality and the eccentricity of his behaviour, if they offended the many, fascinated the few. “ It is not easy for a man in my condition,” says the intoxicated Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium,* “ to describe the singularity of Socrates’s character. But I will try to tell his praises in similitudes. He is like the piping Silenes in the statuaries’ shops, which, when you open them, are found to contain images of gods. Or, again, he is like the satyr Marsyas, not only in outward appearance—that, Socrates, you will yourself allow—but in other ways also. Like him, you are given to frolic—I can produce evidence to that; and above all, like him, you are a wonderful musician. Only there is this difference—what he does with the help of his instru­ment you do with mere words; for whatsoever man, woman or child hears you, or even a feeble report of what you have said, is struck with awe and possessed with admiration. As for myself, were I not afraid that you would think me more drunk than I am, I would tell you on oath how his words have moved me— ay, and how they move me still. When I listen to him my heart beats with a more than Corybantic excitement; he has only to speak and my tears flow. Orators, such as Pericles, never moved me in this way—never roused my soul to the thought of my servile condition; but this Marsyas makes me think that life is not worth living so long as I am what I am. Even now, if I were to listen, I could not resist. So there is nothing for me but to stop my ears against this siren’s song and fly for my life, that I may not grow old sitting at his feet. No one would think that I had any shame in me; but I am ashamed in the presence of Socrates.”

*The Accusation and its Causes.—*The life led by Socrates was not likely to win for him either the affection or the esteem of the vulgar. Those who did not know him personally, seeing him with the eyes of the comic poets, con­ceived him as a “ visionary ” *(μeτtωρoλbyos)* and a “bore” (αδoλcσχ17s). Those who had faced him in argument, even if they had not smarted under his rebukes, had at any rate winced under his interrogatory, and regarded him in consequence with feelings of dislike and fear. But the eccentricity of his genius and the ill will borne towards him by individuals are not of themselves sufficient to account for the tragedy of 399. It thus becomes necessary to study the circumstances of the trial, and to investigate the motives which led the accusers to seek his death and the people of Athens to acquiesce in it.

Socrates was accused (1) of denying the gods recognized by the state and introducing instead of them strange divinities (δαιμόνια), and (2) of corrupting the young. The first of these charges rested upon the notorious fact that he supposed himself to be guided by a divine visitant or sign (δαιμόνιο?). The second, Xenophon tells us, was supported by a series of particular allegations : *(a)* that he taught his associates to despise the institutions of the state, and especially election by lot; (*b*) that he had numbered amongst his associates Critias and Alcibiades, the most dangerous of the representatives of the oligarchical and democratical parties respectively; (c) that he taught the young to disobey parents and guardians and to prefer his own authority to theirs; *(d)* that he was in the habit of quoting mischievous passages of Homer and Hesiod to the prejudice of morality and democracy.

It is plain that the defence was not calculated to conciliate a hostile jury. Nevertheless, it is at first sight difficult to under­stand how an adverse verdict became possible. If Socrates rejected portions of the conventional mythology, he accepted the established faith and performed its offices with exemplary regularity. If he talked of a δαιμόνιον, the δαιμόνιον was no new divinity, but a mantic sign divinely accorded to him, presumably by the gods of the state. If he questioned the propriety of certain of the institutions of Athens, he was prepared to yield an unhesitating obedience to all. He had never countenanced the misdeeds of Critias and Alcibiades, and indeed, by a sharp censure, had earned the undying hatred of one of them. Duty to parents he inculcated as he inculcated other virtues; and, if he made the son wiser than the father, surely that was not a fault. The citation of a few lines from the poets ought not to weigh against the clear evidence of his large-hearted patriotism; and it might be suspected that the accuser had strangely misrepresented his application of the familiar words.

To the modern reader Xenophon’s reply, of which the fore­going is in effect a summary, will probably seem sufficient, and more than sufficient. But it must not be forgotten that Athenians of the old school approached the sub­ject from an entirely different point of view. Socrates was in all things an innovator—in religion, inasmuch as he sought to eliminate from the theology of his contemporaries “ those lies which poets tell ”; in politics, inasmuch as he distrusted several institutions dear to Athenian democracy; in education, inasmuch as he waged war against authority, and in a certain sense made each man the measure of his own actions. It is because Socrates was an innovator that we, who see in him the founder of philosophical inquiry, regard him as a great man; it was because Socrates was an innovator that old-fashioned Athenians, who saw in the new-fangled culture the origin of all their recent distresses and disasters, regarded him as a great criminal. It is, then, after all in no wise strange that a majority was found first to pronounce him guilty, and afterwards, when he refused to make any submission and professed himself, in­different to any mitigation of the penalty, to pass upon him the sentence of death. That the verdict and the sentence were not in any way illegal is generally acknowledged.

But, though the popular distrust of eccentricity, the irritation of individuals and groups of individuals, the attitude of Socrates himself, and the prevalent dislike of the intellectual movement which he represented, go far to account for the result of the trial, they do not explain the occasion of the attack. Socrates’s oddity and brusquerie were no new things; yet in the past, though they had made him unpopular, they had not brought him into the courts. His sturdy resistance to the demos in 406 and to the Thirty in 404 had passed, if not unnoticed, at all events unpunished. His political heresies and general unorthodoxy had not caused him to be excluded from the amnesty of 403. Why was it, then, that in 399, when Socrates’s idiosyncrasies were more than ever familiar, and when the constitution had been restored, the toleration hitherto extended to him was withdrawn? What were the special circumstances which induced three members of the patriot party, two of them leading politicians, to unite their efforts against one who apparently was so little formidable?

For an answer to this question it is necessary to look to the history of Athenian politics. Besides the oligarchical party, properly so called, which in 411 was represented by the Four Hundred and in 404 by the Thirty, and the democratical party, which returned to power in 410 and in 403, there was at Athens during the last years of the Peloponnesian War a party of “ moderate oligarchs,” antagon­istic to both. It was to secure the co-operation of the moderate party that the Four Hundred in 411 promised to constitute the Five Thousand, and that the Thirty in 404 actually constituted