his method freely offered its services in assisting at the birth of the thought with which the pregnant mind was labouring. He busied himself, he used to say, with the officiousness of his maternal art, in exploring the genuine­ness of the fruit of the intellectual womb, which his dex­terous questions had brought to light.@@1 Such a person then could not but fix on himself the eyes of every at­tentive observer of the state of society in Athens. Such teaching evidently could not but have a very conside­rable influence on public opinion. Particularly when he was seen to be acceptable to men of all parties in the state, to the leaders of the aristocratic faction as well as the humblest citizen, it could not but be inferred that his influence was not a transitory one, dependent on the predo­minance of any party, but that it would reach to the funda­mental constitution of the society at large of the city, and be a leaven of fermentation to the whole mass. What, then, it would naturally be asked, must be the effect of such a teacher on existing opinions in religion ? He taught, indeed, that men should acquiesce in what was established in reli­gion ; that they should inquire no further here than what simply was the law of the state. He treated, too, the po­pular imagery of religion with respect. For he would often clothe his instructions in the language of the legends and traditions of their mythology. Nor did he attempt to explain them away, though he waived all discussion of them. He was seen, too, on all stated occasions, sacri­ficing at the altars of the gods, and joining in the rites.@@1 But, it would be asked, if the citizens were taught to exa­mine into received opinions generally, would they abstain from carrying this principle into the subject of religion ? Would they continue still blindly and submissively to fol­low the voice of authority ? Would they not rather, so far as they were disciples of Socrates, begin to speculate on di­vine things, abandoning that reverence which they had hitherto maintained for the objects of public worship, dis­puting and discussing without reserve, and exposing to the vulgar gaze what had been all along venerated in mystic silence, and under the veil of symbol ? The mercurial tem­perament of the Athenian was just the soil in which the seeds now scattered by the hand of Socrates might be ex­acted to vegetate. The excessive prosperity, too, of Athens, during the fifty years immediately following the Persian war, and then its condition of struggle against inter­nal faction and tl>e confederate arms of Peloponnesus, were circumstances calculated to foster the profane irreligious spirit in a light-hearted people. Then, instances were not wanting of young men, tne intimates of Socrates, and whose minds had been especially cultivated by conversation with him, who proved in the end traitors to the religion, as well as to the civil liberties of their country. Critias,@@3 after­wards one of the thirty tyrants, and Alcibiades, at once the pride and the pest of his fellow-citizens, whom they loved and hated, and banished and longed for by turns, were striking evidences to the superficial observation of the evil apprehended from the teaching of Socrates. For here were young men of genius, susceptible by nature of the fullest influence of the lessons of the philosopher. And yet these had failed under his hands. What, therefore, might not be expected of minds of inferior order ? How would not the religion and the institutions of the city fall into profane ne­glect and contempt, should the Socratic spirit of inquiry be

imbibed by the next generation of citizens ? The obser­vation, indeed, was only a very superficial one, which would infer from such instances the evil of the teaching which these individuals misapplied. Still it is plain, that such cases were pointed at with invidious reference to Socrates and philo­sophy in general. We find the orator Æschines attributing the death of Socrates to the circumstance of his having educated Critias ;@@\* not that he must be supposed to have believed this to have been the whole account of the trial and condemnation of Socrates ; but as an orator, he states for the purposes of his argument, what he conceives would be readily believed as part of the account of that event. Plato also studiously addresses himself to the defence of philosophy, from objection on this ground, with evident al­lusion to Alcibiades and the like cases ; arguing that the same individuals who were most susceptible of the good of philosophy, were also such as would be the most apt to abuse it. And probably he had the same design, and re­fers to the degenerate sons of Pericles himself, as an instance in point to those who cherished the memory of that great man, and of the times in which he flourished, to show that the philosopher was not to be held responsible for the ex­travagances and vices of the disciple.@@5

The exhibition of the comedy of “ The Clouds,” appears to have been designed to bring before the people the sup­posed evil tendency of the teaching of Socrates, as exem­plified in such distinguished instances. It was produced in the year b.c. 423, when the philosopher had attained his forty-seventh year, and was at the height of his reputation throughout Greece, and about twenty-three years before his death. There we have Socrates introduced by name under broad caricature, as the representative of the class of sophists, and a consummate master of the arrogant preten­sion, and sordid cunning, and impiety of the class. The clouds are his only divinities. A profligate spendthrift youth, and a dotard father, are his dupes. The inquisitive method which Socrates practised, is also held up to ridi­cule and contempt, by identifying it with the frivolous questionings of the grammarians, and dialecticians, and rhe­toricians of the day, and with the perverse sophistry which held truth a matter of indifference, or, which amountcd to the same thing, called every man’s opinion truth, and boast­ed of its skill to make the worse appear the better cause. It was but too evident to Athenian spectators at least, that the Socrates of Aristophanes was not the Socrates whom they had been accustomed to see and converse with in real life. And the play accordingly failed at the first exhibition. Not all its charms of poetry, and humour, and skilful com­position, could obtain for it a favourable reception. Though Aristophanes was aware that the portrait which he had drawn, was not a portrait of the individual, but of the class, there can be little doubt, that he calculated on the sympathy of the people, in giving the name of Socrates to his personi­fication of the sophistical spirit ; and that he felt it necessary to depreciate the influence of Socrates as the commanding influence of the day, by attributing to his method all the vices of the schools of the sophists. Socrates is honoured and complimented in the very attempt to weaken the re­spect for his instructions, and to awaken a clamour against him. The failure of “ The Clouds,” at the first representa­tion, and one account adds, even at the second, (for the play is said to have been retouched for the third time), has

@@@1 See especially Plato's Theætetus in illustration of this.

@@@t Plato, Eιιthyphr.l pp. 11-13, and Phædrus.

@@@3 Critias is placed by Sextus Empiricus among the atheists. He is said to have resolved all religion into the enactments of legislators providing against the secret commission of crimes, by inculcating the all-seeing power of the gods. He gives also several lines from a poem of Critias to this effect. Adv. Math. lib. viii. p. 318.

@@@4 Æscbin. con. Timarch.

@@@• See the Protagoras and Repub. vi—Xenophon adverts in like manner to the charge of corruption as supported by the instances of Critias and Alcibiades. Memor, i. 2. See also the conversation which Xenophon reports between Socrates and Hippias. Isocrates, in *Busir.* p. 222, c. with the like feeling, *denies* that Alcibiade« was educated by Socrates; meaning, it seems, that Alcibiades was too short a time with Socrates to be benefited by the instructions of the philosopher