day, in the form proposed.@@1 Each of the ten Athenian tribes had its turn of presidency in the council of Five Hundred for thirty-six days of the year ; fifty out of the whole tribe being chosen by lot as its representatives during this pe­riod. These fifty were further subdivided into tens ; and each of these tens, under the name of proëdri, served a week in succession, as it was allotted, until the official term of the tribe was completed. Again, of these ten presidents, seven were appointed by lot, to occupy the chair in succession during their week of office ; each one of the seven becoming in his turn epistates, or superintendent for a day. The tribe Antiochis, to which Socrates belonged, happened to be the presiding tribe on the occasion of the im­peachment of the generals ; and it came to the lot of So­crates to be in the chair of office on the day when the ques­tion of their condemnation was so passionately debated. The generals had nobly done their duty to their country, and gained the most brilliant victory which had been achiev­ed at sea in the course of the war by the Athenian arms. But the crisis was an unfortunate one for them. Athens was then on the verge of ruin. The jealousy of parties was at its height. The hopelessness of recovering the lost ground by military strength at this time, gave an opening and encouragement to personal intrigue, and the arts of an unscrupulous diplomacy ; and a victory, however honour­able to their arms, and hopeful as to the future, seems only to have been hailed with very doubtful congratulations by the struggling factions of the city; each looking at it rather as it might act for or against his party,—as it might tend to the strength of his rivals or their depression,—than as a great public triumph. However this may be, for the event remains a matter of perplexity to the historian, the successful gene­rals were brought to trial through the treachery of their own officers, on the specious charge of having neglected the col­lecting of the dead bodies of their men after the action.@@2 The charge was specious, because it was partly true, and was at­tested indeed by the very officers who were sent by them on that service, and who were now brought as witnesses against their commanders. It was true, so far as the endeavour to collect the dead bodies had been frustrated by a violent storm which followed the engagement. Still the endeavour had been made. The charge was further specious, because it appealed to religious prejudices, as well as to the democra­tic spirit. The generals seemed to have been regardless of the solemn rites due to the dead, and of the persons and feelings of the lower orders of the people. The occasion therefore furnished abundant topic of invective to the de­magogues ; and their addresses too fatally succeeded in ob­taining an ungrateful and factious vote of death against the generals. Socrates was threatened with criminal informa­tion by the orators of the people; and the people themselves were urging on his assailants, and clamouring against him. Still he remained unmoved, and would not put the unjust question to the vote ; preferring the hazard of bonds and death to himself, on the side of the law and right, to a com­pliance with the popular will in an illegal act.@@3 The ini­quity was perpetrated ultimately in spite of his resistance ; but he at least did his utmost to prevent it.

Such was his conduct under the ascendancy of the de­mocratic power. Afterwards, when the oligarchy was es­tablished, and the Thirty were exercising their acts of cruel­ty and extortion without restraint, he was the first to give a check to their tyranny. In their career of confiscation and

blood, they marked out Leon of Salamis for destruction. They conceived that the terror of their power would com­pel even Socrates to be a ready instrument to their ra­pacity ; and they were desirous also doubtless to implicate him in the criminality of the act. Accordingly, they ap­pointed him with four others to go to Salamis, and bring Leon to Athens, that he might be put to death. They were disappointed, however, in their expectation, so far as they depended on Socrates as an instrument in the dark deed. The order was executed, and the unhappy Leon was sa­crificed to their cruel avarice and fears. But Socrates had no hand in it, and resisted it as far as he could. Unawed by their stern command, he said nothing, but as soon as he had left the Tholus, the place where the Thirty were assembled, he left his four colleagues to proceed on their bloody errand and went home. He would not, in­deed, have dared thus to disobey the order with impunity ; he would surely have felt their vengeance ;—for there is no­thing that tyrants resent more than a clemency volunteered by the ministers of their cruelties,@@4—but that happily that reign of terror was soon after put down.

By these intrepid acts, Socrates had shewn that the phi­losopher, in declining the contentions of political life, did not incapacitate himself for his duties when the exigencies of his situation should require him to perform them.@@5 As Thales had proved that the philosopher could, if he pleased, make money, by applying to that purpose his observations on the seasons, and his prognostics of an abundant crop of olives;@@6 so did Socrates defend philosophy in his own per­son, and by his conduct on these great occasions, against the imputation of inactivity and selfish ease. It is quite evident, too, that such a spirit as that displayed in these remarkable instances, had he entered into political life, would have subjected him to violent collisions with the successive leaders of party at Athens. “ You well know, Athenians,” are the words which Plato’s “Apology” puts into his mouth, “ that had I long ago attempted to take part in political affairs, I should long ago have perished, and I should neither have done yon any service nor my­self. And be not aggrieved with me for saying the truth. For there is no one of men that can be safe, in giving a spirited opposition either to you or to any other popular government, and in preventing the occurrence of many unjust and iniquitous things in the state ; but he that would in reality fight for the right, must, if he would be safe but a little while, lead a private life and not engage in public business.”@@7 “ Think you, indeed,” he further asks, “ that I should have lived for so many years, had I engaged in public business ; and had I, engaging in it in a manner be­coming a good man, succoured the cause of right, and, as behoved me, made that the thing of greatest consequence ? Far from it ; for neither could any one individual of men.”@@8

The time, then, appears to have arrived, when the accu­sation was brought by Melitus, for his exemplification of the truth of this observation in his own person. He had hither­to avoided the impending storm by the quiet tenour of his private life. But he had done enough to offend the parti­zans of either extreme in the state. Both extremes would be united against him in their enmity to all moderation ; for the ascendancy of such counsels as his, would have been a death-blow to their own reckless lust of power. Hence, they were readily disposed to concur in sacrificing him to their mutual resentments. And we thus behold

@@@1 Xenophon, whose own reputation for courage gives a strong sanction to his opinion, says of this act of Socrates, \*1» οΰχ *ä. cdμ,aι* oλλor oιdsvα *vxttfulhai,* Mem. iv. 4, p. 208. He alludes in the same place to the story of Leon.

@@@’ Thucyd. ii. Plat. Apol. 28.

@@@» Plato, Gorgias.

@@@4 Herodot. Thalia, 3. 6. Cambyses was glad that his order, given in a moment of passion, to kill Croesus, was not obeyed ; but he could not forgive those who had ventured to reckon upon his return to better feelings ; and be accordingly commands that they should be executed for their disobedience.

@@@• Plato, Apol. 32.

@@@« Cicero, De Divin, i. 49.

@@@’ Plato, Apol. 31, 32.

@@@8 Ibid.