sented on the way, and sacrifices. For these do not conceive, that the birds, and the persons that meet them, know what is expedient to those who divine by them, but that the gods, by means of them, signify this. And so he held.

But the generality say, that they are dissuaded and persuad­ed by the birds, and the objects that meet them ; whereas Socrates spoke of it as he thought. For he said that it was the Divinity, ***to δαιμόνιον,*** that gave signs to him. And to many of his intimates he prescribed to do some things,@@1 to forbear other things, on the ground, that the Divinity had presignified it to him ; and it was to the advantage of those who took his advice, whilst those who rejected his advice had to repent it.”@@2

But how great was the change from the practical devo­tion of the mind here taught by Socrates, from that popu­larly entertained at Athens! The history of divination, as it was regarded, not at Athens only, but throughout Greece, is but a picture of the invidiousness and malignity of the human heart transformed into attributes of the Divine Be­ing. Let us only hear Solon, as he is described by Hero­dotus, speaking of the Deity as a principle of envy and tur­bulence, and as guided by no fixed course in the disposition of human affairs ; and we may judge what a task he had enterprized, who entered into conflict with this inward and subtile idolatry of human passions, established by the heathen system of divination. It was indeed teaching divinities new to Athenian ears, when Socrates inculcated an inward re­formation of the character of those who would look for the favour of the gods, or expect a special interposition and di­rection from the benevolent principle which guided the course of the moral world.

Whereas, too, the popular divination was employed on the most trivial occasions, and made the substitute for the proper exertion of men’s faculties on matters cognizable by them, Socrates differed from this prevalent notion of the subject. He contended, that, where the line of conduct was plain, men should use the best of their judgment in acting,—that they should use their experience and reason in learning what the gods had given them to learn by such means, and only have resort to consultation of the Divine will by the extraordinary means of divination, where the results of con­duct were uncertain. Thus might he be construed as dis­suading men from the use of divination, when he only dis­suaded from an improper use of it, and exhorted to a ra­tional activity.

We may see from the story of Aristodicus of Cyme, how the practice existed among the Greeks, of endeavouring to obtain from the oracles sanctions even to iniquities and im­pieties. Aristodicus consults the oracle whether he may sur­render an unhappy fugitive ; and the oracle permits him, dex­terously reproving, by the very permission, the attempt to cast the burthen of personal responsibility on the oracle itself, and to cover an immoral act with the veil of religious duty.@@3 Divination, in fact, was indolently resorted to in the heathen world, to relieve the mind of the labour and anxiety of thought, and the searchings of conscience. And Socrates addressed himself to the correction of this prac­tice, by recommending, as we have seen, exertion of the judgment, and the acquisition of information on all matters within the sphere of human reason. He would thus pro­voke the hostility of many a professed diviner, who made a trade of his art, and would find individuals of this class ready to join in the outcry raised against him, of innovation on the popular theology.

The jealousy of the sophists in particular, the very class with whom the accusation of Melitus identified him, would also swell the popular envy against him on this head. For the sophists, among their pretensions, claimed to be regard­ed as endued with a predictive sagacity, so as to be expert practical guides respecting the future.@@4 Socrates would of­fend them in this point in two ways,—both as directing per­sons to have recourse to their own judgment, and the regular means of information on all ordinary questions to which human reason was competent ; and as teaching a reference to a secret divine intimation on all other matters beyond the compass of man’s understanding. For in both respects would the sophists find their course interfered with. The use of men’s own judgment, or the appeal to the signs of the Divine will, would equally lessen the value for those counsels which they pretended to impart.

What added still further to this invidious feeling was, that the reputation of Socrates now eclipsed theirs through­out Greece. And Socrates appears himself confidently to have appealed to this public estimation of his character against the partial censures of his countrymen at the time of his trial. He vindicated his assertion of divine intimations specially granted to him, by referring to the oracle of Delphi as having honoured him with its distinct approbation. Chærephon, in the devoutness of his admiration of his master, had, on some occasion, consulted the oracle respecting him, and obtained an answer that Socrates was the wisest of men. The authenticity of the anecdote has been questioned. But the introduction of it in the two “Apologies,”@@5 may be taken as a voucher of its substantial truth. It at any rate shews the favourable opinion which had been conceived of him out of Athens itself; that, as Lycurgus had been compli­mented by the verdict of an oracle, so the same tribute of public applause might, with equal probability, be assigned to Socrates.

According to Laertius, the sentence of condemnation was carried by a majority consisting of 281 votes. The number was little more than sufficient to decide the ques­tion on that side ; for it only exceeded the number of votes of acquittal by three. “ Had but three votes only fallen differently,” says Socrates himself, in the “ Apology” of Plato, ***“* I**should have been acquitted.” Nor, indeed, would Melitus alone, without the aid of Anytus and Lycon, (he is made there confidently to declare) have obtained even a fifth part of the votes to save him the penalty of a thou­sand drachmas, affixed by the law to an unsustained pro­secution. But when the penalty of death was further put to the vote, and he was found unwilling to propose the sub­stitution of any other penalty, such as a fine or exile, but evinced his indignant contempt of their unjust sentence, by asking rather, in his ironical way, instead of even a slight punishment, the highest honour of the state, that of a pub­lic maintenance in the Prytaneum, the multitude of the jurors was so exasperated by the unbending spirit thus dis­played, that eighty additional votes were given on the hos­tile side, determining the sentence of death. So evidently was the whole case ruled by passion and the arts of de­magogues exciting the people to treat it as a slight on their majesty, rather than as a cause in a court of justice. Other­wise it could not have happened, that when the previous question of guilt had been carried with nearly an equal number of dissentients, the severest penalty should have obtained such an accession of voices in its favour.

We have already remarked the little solicitude shewn by

@@@, Xenophon here differs from Plato's Apology, in saying, that Socrates received intimations of what was to be done; whereas Plato expressly says the directions were only negative.

@@@2 Xenopb. Mem. i. l,3,p3. Xeιιoph. Apol. 13, ryω δr τούτο *δαιμόνιον κd∖ω.*

@@@, Herodotus, Clio. c. 158, 159. The same is illustrated in the story of Glaucus in Erato, c. 86. The oracles were consulted, also, on

frivolous matters, such as the petty thefts of Λmasis. Euterpe, c. 174.

@@@\* Isocr. c. Soph. 2, 4, wept *τi>v μίλλόντωι» μiv r!δlvaι πρoσπoισvμlvovc∙*

@@@• Xenoph. Apol. p. 249. Plato, Apol. p. 48.