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PLATO'S STYLE AND METHOD.

I. PLATO'S STYLE. THE DIALOGUE.

AS no philosopher before Plato, and no philosopher since his day, has consistently chosen the dialogue as a vehicle of expression, it is natural to look for an explanation of this peculiarity in the general habits of the age. (a) The remark of Montaigne "*Nous ne sommes jamais chez nous*," "We are never at home," (*Essais*, Chap. III), applied by the essayist to humanity at large, may with a change of meaning be taken to describe the ordinary social life of Athens. The street, the forum, the gymnasium were the places where men most did congregate. The women were indoors. When Aristotle says that the characteristic of perfect friendship or love (*φιλία*) is equality (*ισότης*), meaning by equality an intimacy between men of equal and lofty intellectual and social attainments, and that the friendship of brothers, when of a noble kind, comes to resemble the friendship of comrades, (*Ethics*, VIII, 7, 9, and VIII, 14,) he is merely interpreting the prevailing Greek sentiment. A glance at the scene of any of Plato's dialogues is enough to show how small a part was played by the "home" in the daily life of Athens. The wits of the city drew together for a discussion of public affairs or for an intellectual combat, just as regularly and frequently as the youths took their exercise and bath.

Under such circumstances it would be a matter of surprise if conversation had not developed unusual keenness of edge; it