

## SOCRATES.

In recently studying, somewhat carefully, the records of this Grecian sage, we were struck, as never before, with the evidence of his deep spirituality. By spirituality we here mean his cultivation of the spiritual part of his nature, that which recognizes the presence of God, not only in His works but as speaking to His creature—man.

We are indebted to the historian Xenophon for this insight into the life of Socrates.

Plato, whose writings are professedly inspired by Socrates, and who affected to be a follower of Socrates almost in the absolute sense, according to our judgment, really failed to discern the true character of his hero. He wrote about Socrates somewhat as the Pharisees wrote of Moses, and modern religionists write about Jesus. He tried to make him a kind of oracle, and have men obey his precepts, without imitating their originator in his obedience to the divinity within them.

Hence, it is to the less voluminous writings of the first historian named that we must go to get a true estimate of this wonderful man.

Xenophon gives the following as the indictment against Socrates by his countrymen: "Socrates violates the laws, inasmuch as he acknowledges not as gods those whom the state acknowledges, but has introduced other and new divinities. He also violates the laws by corrupting the youth." In his comments on this accusation, and the trial which resulted in the condemnation and death of the accused, he bluntly declares that Socrates was condemned to death "for his assertion that the *divinity* forewarned him what he should do and what he should abstain from doing."

He gives an instance of his obedience to this presumed divinity, as follows: When urged by Hermogenes to prepare for his defence, because many innocent persons had been condemned for the want of a good defence, his reply was, "While I was already in the very act of beginning to consider what should be the nature of my defence to the judges, the

divinity opposed my proceeding." And when Hermogenes answered, "You tell a marvellous tale," "Do you regard it as marvellous," asked Socrates, "that the Deity thinks it better for me that I should now bring my life to a close?" Then Socrates gives several reasons why it might be better for him to die than than prolong his life to old age, during which he assumed that thus far his life had been virtuous, satisfactory and happy.

The historian also relates of him, that when praying to the gods, he generalized his askings, simply praying "that they would grant him good gifts," saying that they knew what was best for him, and therefore that it was wrong for him to particularize.

Xenophon further remarked of him "that when he was convinced that he had received some intimation from the gods, he would no more have been persuaded to act contrary to such intimation than any one could have induced him to take a blind man as a guide on a journey, or one who did not know the road, in preference to one who could see, and was acquainted with it. And he condemned the folly of others, who, by disregarding the intimations of the gods, sought to avoid the bad opinion of men. As for himself he held all human behests as not worth a thought in comparison with the counsel of the gods."

From these glimpses the true understanding of the life of this great man can be obtained with some degree of certainty. It is true that some of the accounts of him given by Plato tend to humanize him so soon as man begins to deify him, such as his valuing himself on his ability to drink wine amongst rioters till all but himself were completely overcome, and then, after thus having had a *night of it*, unlike the rest, to be able to go on with his business the next day as if he had been taking his regular sleep.

That is, his life, as a whole, will not compare with that of Jesus Christ, nor yet with that of any of His true imitators; nevertheless, to our mind, it is the nearest approach thereto, outside the kingdom of heaven, which we know of.

And we unhesitatingly say that this