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THE
LACHES OF PLATO.



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THE LACHES OF PLATO

INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION

AND

NOTES

BY THE

REV. A. LLOYD, M. A.,

*HEAD MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE SCHOOL,
PORT HOPE, ONT.,
FORMERLY FELLOW OF ST. PETER'S COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.*

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INTRODUCTION.

The *Laches*, which is one of the earliest of the works of Plato is a dialogue on manliness.

The scene of the dialogue is laid at Athens towards the end of the Peloponnesian War.

Two Athenians of good position, Lysimachus and Melesias, have engaged a fencing-master, one Stesileus, to teach their sons, and are returning from one of Stesileus' professional exhibitions of skill, along with Nicias and Laches. On their way home, as they are discussing the question of education, they meet with Socrates, who is brought into the conversation, which eventually turns not on education but upon one of the greatest ends to be obtained by education—*manliness*.

In choosing the personages who speak in his dialogues, Plato was not guided by facts—he was reporting imaginary conversations, not actual ones—but by the poetical needs of his subject.

In this dialogue, the subject of which is *andria* or *andrea*—manliness, bravery, or courage—he chooses as *personae dramatis* Socrates, Laches, Nicias, Lysimachus and Melesias.

1. *Socrates* is represented as the type of courage, the teacher and example *par excellence* of the highest form of manliness, whose brave deeds have more than once brought credit to the Athenian arms, and who is therefore more fitted than any one else to become the teacher of the particular virtue which he himself so excellently practises.

Socrates himself was the *beau idéal* of courage.

His simple, self-denying life showed that he had that

courage which springs from self-conquest and which manifests itself in self-control. His personal bravery has been amply proved at Potidaea and Delium ; his political courage when after the battle of Arginusae he resisted an unjust vote of the incensed people. His refusal to acquiesce in the acquirement of half a truth, and his habit of never resting till he had tracked an error to its source, demonstrated beyond a doubt his intellectual courage :—whilst his death set the seal to his virtue and placed his courage out of the reach of detraction and obloquy.

The characters chosen to converse with Socrates are themselves men of reputation for courage and bravery, and this fact itself serves more clearly to bring into prominence the idea of Socrates as a model of ideal courage. This will be shown more clearly by considering the character of

2. *Laches*, the son of Melanopus. He is first mentioned by Thucydides (III 86) as taking command of the first expedition to Sicily, in B. C. 427. In this expedition he distinguished himself very highly for his well-planned and equally well executed descents upon Sicily and Southern Italy, but the whole expedition, failed owing to its numbers being inadequate for the task it had undertaken.

After the failure of this expedition he was not entrusted with a command for some time, but Plato tells us that he fought as a private soldier at the battle of Delium, where he aided Socrates in trying to stem the panic of the Athenian troops.

In B. C. 423 he was one of the politicians who voted for the armistice, and in B. C. 421 he was one of the Athenian Commissioners who signed the treaty of peace and alliance with the Lacadæmonians.

In B. C. 418 he was joined with Nicostratus in the command of the Athenian contingent at the battle of Mantinea, and there met his death.

(Thuc. III, 86, 90, 99, 103, 115. V, 19, 24, 61, 74.)

3. *Nicias* the son of Nikeratos is known to us through the history of Thucydides, and also through Plutarch's biography. One of the richest men in Athens, noted for his beneficence and public spirit, as well as for his probity and modesty, he

was early singled out for public offices which for the most part he filled with dignity.

Thucydides first mentioned him as in command of a party which successfully attacked and captured the island of Minoa off the Megarian harbour of Nisaea. He was not so successful in his attack upon Melos, but afterwards invaded and devastated portions of Boeotia and Locris.

Chosen as commander of the expedition to Sphacteria, he allowed himself to be superseded by Cleon who by sheer audacity succeeded in his boastful undertaking. This does not however seem to have lowered him in the estimation of his compatriots, for we find him during the same summer in command of an expedition against the sea-coasts of Corinth and Argos.

In connection with this expedition Plutarch relates a very characteristic episode. Nicias and his men had had a successful encounter with a Corinthian force whose leader they had killed. After the Athenians had erected the trophy of victory customary in such cases, they saw that large reinforcements were coming to the enemy from Corinth, and deemed it prudent to retire. Just as they were on the point of embarking Nicias' attention was called to the fact that two of the Athenian dead lay unburied. Rather than neglect this duty Nicias determined to forego his claim to the victory and, sending a flag of truce, demanded permission from the Corinthians to bury his dead soldiers.

After some further successful landings on Lacedæmonian territory. Nicias was one of the strategi who in B. C. 423, signed the armistice, and was one of the commissioners who drew up the treaty of peace and alliance with Sparta. This treaty proved abortive, and Nicias was sent to conduct military operations in Thrace, but after the death of Brasidas and Cleon he became one of the leaders of the Athenian peace party.

Alcibiades, who was always jealous of the influence which Nicias exercised over his fellow-countrymen, now proposed an expedition against Syracuse. Nicias strenuously opposed the proposal, but in vain, and along with Alcibiades and Lamachus was sent out to Sicily in command of that ill-fated

expedition which was to the Athenian Empire what the invasion of Russia was to Napoleon. Alcibiades was recalled, Lamachus soon was killed, and Nicias alone—doing his duty in spite of his better judgment—failed to reduce Syracuse, and at last in the destruction of his fleet and army met his own death.

He has been accused of vacillation and a want of daring in the conduct of the siege. How little such a charge was really deserved may be gathered from the fact that Thucydides the historian of the siege of Syracuse describes him as the man who on account of the completeness of his "equipment for virtue" least merited to meet with misfortune; that though the hasty judgment of his fellow-countrymen omitted his name from the commemorative pillar erected in memory of those who fell in Sicily, yet Demosthenes in the next generation, classed him with Aristides and Pericles as one of the great men of Athens, and that Plutarch selects him as one whose biography it was profitable to compose.

The two characters here described—Laches, who when deprived of his officer's commission was willing to serve his country as a common soldier, and Nicias who chose rather to face ignominious defeat than be untrue to himself and who remained faithful to his country's service even when his own opinions were contemptuously set aside for those of younger and inferior men,—may serve as an apt illustration of Plato's ideas on bravery.

This may be further illustrated from

4. *Lysimachus*, the son of Aristides, and
5. *Melesias*, the son of Thucydides, (not the historian, but the politician who succeeded Pericles as a party leader but was afterwards ostracised).

In both these cases the bravery of the fathers had not descended to the sons, and it is the shame felt by the fathers at having no deeds of their own to boast about that leads up to the dialogue composed by Plato.

Courage then, or manliness, is according to Plato that faculty or power by which a man is enabled to do his duty at all times and in all places and never to fail from virtue. It is not however hereditary but depends upon a proper

apprehension of right and wrong, of punishments and rewards.

The student will look in vain for this definition of courage in the pages of the *Laches*. It is contrary to Plato's method to come to any definite conclusion. His object was to elicit thought, but not to stereotype it, and consequently he shrinks as a rule from giving any definitions, though he is perpetually seeking for them.

"To stimulate intelligence, to rouse the mind to seek for clear definitions of familiar notions, especially those which are at once most familiar and most indefinite, namely, our moral ideas" was the object of Socrates, who well describes himself as an intellectual midwife, aiding others to conceive and bring forth ideas, but never producing one himself. Plato reproduces this ever-present spirit of enquiry in all his writings, and on finishing any one of his dialogues we generally have a feeling that many ideas have been started, none of which is perfectly satisfactory, and that after showing us the subject in every conceivable light, he leaves us to form our own conclusions.

I append an extract from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. III, which may afford the reader a useful comparison.

Now that courage is a mean state on the subjects and of fear and confidence has been already made apparent: but it is evident that we fear things terrible; and these are to speak generally, evils; and therefore people define fear "the expectation of evil." Now we fear all evils, as disgrace, poverty, disease, friendlessness, and death. But the brave man does not appear to have to do with all evils; for some it is right and good to fear, and not to fear them is disgraceful, as, for example, not to fear disgrace; for he who fears this is a worthy and honest man, and he who does not fear it is shameless. But by some people he is called brave, metaphorically; for he bears some resemblance to the brave man; for the brave man too is fearless. But poverty, perhaps, and disease, and all those things which do not happen from vice, or our own fault, it is not right to fear; but yet the man who is fearless in these things is not brave. But him, too, we call so, from the resemblance; for some

who in war are cowards, are liberal, and behave with courage under pecuniary losses. Nor yet is a man a coward if he is afraid of insult to his children and wife, or of envy, or anything of this kind, nor is he brave if he feels confidence when about to be scourged.

What sort of fearful things, then, has the courageous man to do with ; the greatest ? for no man is more able than he to undergo terrible things ; but death is the most terrible of all things ; for it is a limit ; and it is thought that to the dead there is nothing beyond, either good or bad. And yet the brave man does not appear to have to do with death in every form ; as at sea and in disease. With what kinds of death, then ? Is it with the most honourable ? But those that occur in war are of this kind, for in war the danger is the greatest and most honourable, The public honours that are awarded in states and by monarchs attest this.

Properly, then, he who in the case of an honorable death, and under circumstances close at hand which cause death, is fearless, may be called courageous ; and the dangers of war are, more than any others, of this description. Not but that the brave man is fearless at sea, and in sickness ; but not from the same cause as seamen ; for the brave give up all hope of safety, and are grieved at such a kind of death ; but seamen are sanguine, because of their experience. Moreover, brave men show manliness in cases where there is room for exerting themselves, and in which death is honourable ; but in such deaths as the above-mentioned there is neither one of these conditions nor the other.

PLATONIS LACHES.

ΠΟΙΗΤΑΙΣ ΕΠΙ ΤΟ ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΣ
 ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΣ

I. *Lysimachus*.—You have indeed seen the man fighting in armour, Nicias and Laches; but why we, that is Melesias here and I, invited you to come and join us in the spectacle, we did not tell you at the time, but we will tell you now; for we think that we ought to be open with you. There are some people, *you know*¹, who laugh at such things, and if one asks their advice they will not say what they think, but make a *guess at their consuler*² and say something different to what they really think. But as for you, we thought that you were capable of forming an opinion, and that having formed an opinion you would tell us what you thought in a straight-forward manner. We have therefore invited you to give us your advice in the matter which we are going to *communicate*³ to you.

Now this is the point about which I have made so long a preamble. We have got sons; this boy here belongs to Melesias, and bears his grandfather's name of Thucydides; this one here again is mine, and has the same name as his grandfather and my father — for we call him Aristides. Now we have determined to take the best care possible of these children, and not do as most people do, when they *grow into*⁴ lads to allow them to do what they please. But we have determined to begin at once to care for them to the best of our abilities.

Now we knew that you had sons too, and we thought that you would be more likely than anyone else to have taken thought for their training and development. And if it should happen that you have not paid much attention to this subject, (we hoped) to remind you not to neglect it, and to stir you up to make some provision for your sons along with ourselves.

1. *you know*.—The English colloquial “you know” is very often the best equivalent to the Greek *gar*, and I have so translated it here and elsewhere.
2. *make a guess at their consuler*.—i.e. try to find out what will please him.

II. Now, though it is somewhat of a long story, Nicias and Laches, you must please let me tell you ~~how~~ ^{how} we came to this determination. Well, you must know that Melesias here and I have our meals together, and that our children dine with us. As I said then at the beginning of my speech we will be free with you. For each one of us has many excellent things to tell to the youngsters about his father—of their actions in war and in peace, and how they managed the affairs of the allies and of the city. But neither of us can talk of his own actions. We therefore feel somewhat ashamed of ourselves before these boys, and we blame our fathers for allowing us to be idle when we began to grow up, and devoting their time to other people's affairs. And we point this out to these youngsters here and tell them that if they neglect themselves and do not follow our advice they will never become famous, whereas if they will take the trouble they will assuredly become worthy of the names they bear.

The boys now say that they are going to follow our advice, and so we are trying to discover what study or practice will profit them the most. Well then, someone told us that it was a good thing for a young man to learn fighting in armour, and he kept praising this fellow whose exhibition of skill you have been watching, and telling us to see him for ourselves. So we determined that we ought ourselves to go and see the man, and to take you with us, partly for the pleasure of your company at the exhibition, and partly as advisers and helpers if you so wished, in our care for our boys. This is what we wanted to tell you. It is your turn now to give us your advice with regard not only to this study, whether you think we should pursue it or not, but with regard to other studies as well, if you have any study or pursuit to recommend to a young man, and to tell us what you will do (in the matter of helping us.)

III. *Nicias*.—For my own part, Lysimachus and Melesias, I approve of your design and am ready to aid you in it; and I think that Laches here is of the same mind.

Laches.—You are right, Nicias; I think that what Lysimachus said just now about his own father and Melesias, was a true remark not only as regards them but with re-

179 etc are pages in one of the volumes of Etienne
(Stephanus) a scholar of the 16th or 17th. The a. b. c. e.
has been added later.

spect to ourselves and all that concern themselves with public affairs. It generally happens as he said that both their children and their other private concerns are made little of and negligently set aside. So far you say rightly, Lysimachus, but I am surprised that you should invite us as advisers in the education of the young men, and should pass over Socrates yonder, who in the first place belongs to your deme, and in the second place is always found haunting every place in which any noble study or practice, such as you seek for the young, is going on.

Lysimachus.—What do you say Laches? Do you mean that Socrates here has ever paid any attention to such topics.

Laches.—Most certainly, Lysimaches.

Nicias.—Why even I could tell you as much about this as Laches can. For Socrates lately procured me a music teacher for my son, Damon, a pupil of Agathocles, a most accomplished man, not only in music but in every way that you can think a most desirable companion for young men of that age.

IV. *Lysimachus.*—Old men like myself, Socrates, Nicias and Laches, are no longer in touch with our juniors in-as-much as our age compels us to be much in-doors; but if you, oh son of Sophroniscus, have any good advice to give to your fellow townsman here, I hope you will give it. Indeed it is right that you should do so, for you are an old friend of ours inasmuch as your father and I were companions and friends, and we never had a difference of opinion until the day of his death. And now I remember to have heard them talking. For these boys here when conversing at home frequently make mention of Socrates and praise him very highly. Yet I never yet asked them whether they meant the son of Sophroniscus. Tell me, boys, is this the Socrates you are always talking about?

Boys.—Yes, to be sure, father, this is he.

Lysimachus.—By Hera, Socrates, I am glad that you are a credit to your father^r who was in every way a most excellent

I. a credit to your father.—or perhaps “maintain the name of your father”, with a play upon the name Sophroniscus, which is connected with *sophon* “wise”.

man—especially as you and I shall now be intimate and familiar friends.

Laches.—Well, Lysimachus, you must not let him off. For I have seen him elsewhere too doing credit not only to his father but also to his country. You know, he was marching with me in the retreat from Delium, and I can tell you that if others had been like him, our city would be prosperous and would not then have met with such a reverse.

Lysimachus.—This is a great compliment, Socrates, that has been paid you by men who are worthy of credit, in those very matters about which they praise you. You may be *quite* sure that I was delighted to hear you well spoken of, for you must know that I am one of your most sincere well wishers. Indeed I think that you should have been the first to call upon us and to treat us as your familiar friends (as we are). However from to-day, since we have made one another's acquaintance, I hope you will certainly associate with us and get to know us and these youngsters here, so that you may keep our friendship. Now I am sure that you will do this and I shall remind you to do so once and again.

But to return to our subject, what do you say of it? What do you think? Is it a suitable study for lads or not—to learn fencing?

V. *Socrates.*—Well, Lysimachus, I will try to give you any advice I can in this matter, and also to act upon your kind invitation. But it seems to me that the right way is for me who am younger than these men here and less experienced to hear what they have to say first and to learn from them; and afterwards if I have any objections or additions to make to what they have said, I can then state my case and persuade you and these men also.

Now, Nicias, why don't you speak first?

Nicias.—There is nothing to prevent me Socrates. I think, you know, that this is a most useful study for young men in many ways. For their not spending their time elsewhere, I mean in those places where young men are apt to lounge when they have leisure is an advantage; for here they have bodily improvement—, you know, it is quite as hard and laborious a place as any gymnasium; and at the same time

this exercise and riding are the most suitable exercises for a gentlemen. For the sports which we practise and the places in which we practise them are patronized only by those who make use of these as their instruments of warfare. Further, this study will be of some advantage in the battle itself, when one has to fight in the ranks along with many others. But its greatest advantage is when the ranks have been broken and one comes to single combat either as a pursuer attacking some one on his defence, or as a fugitive defending oneself against the attack of some other assailant. In such a case the man who understands this art would certainly have nothing to fear from a single assailant, possibly not even from several, but would get the better of them in every way by this art.

Again, an art of this sort promotes the desire for another noble study. For every one that has learned sword-exercise would naturally wish to acquire the next thing—i. e. company drill—and when he has acquired this in a creditable manner, he will probably wish to study the whole science of military tactics. Now it is abundantly clear that all the studies and practices connected with these sciences are honorable and quite worthy of a man's study and practice—and to them this art (*that we are speaking of*) would form an introduction.

And to this we will add what is no small recommendation—namely, that it would greatly increase every man's bravery and manliness in war. And let us not be ashamed to say, though perhaps it may seem to some a small matter, that it will add to a man's carriage in the circumstances under which a man's carriage is of importance to him, when, that is, his carriage will make him appear more formidable to his enemies. And so, Lysimachus, I think as I said before that you should teach your lads these things; and I have given you reasons for my opinion. But I should like to hear what additions or objections Laches has to make.

Laches.—Well, Nicias, it is hard to say of any study that one should not learn it. For it seems good to understand everything. And so with regard to this sword-exercise, if it is an art as the fencing-masters say and such as Nicias describes it, we ought to learn it; but if it be no science and its

professors be cheats, or if it be a science but not altogether a reputable one, what is the use of learning it? Now with respect to these points I say that had there been anything in it I think it would not have escaped the attention of the Lacedæmonians whose sole object in life is to find out and to practice anything whereby they may get an advantage over others in war. But if it has escaped their attention it has not escaped the attention of these men who profess this art, that the Lacedæmonians of all the Greeks take the greatest interest in such things and that if a man gains a reputation for his knowledge of these sciences among the Lacedæmonians he will get the highest pay from the other Greeks, just as the tragic poet does who has made his reputation amongst us. For this reason a man that thinks he can compose a tragedy well does not go all round, outside of Attica and shew off in other cities, but he comes straight to Athens and shews off before us here. But with these fencing-masters I see that they consider Lacedæmon to be such an unapproachable sanctuary, that they do not so much as touch it with their toes, but that they go all round about it, and that they prefer shewing off before everybody else and especially before those who would readily themselves confess that they have superiors in war.

- VII. Then again, Lysimachus, I have met with not a few of them in actual work, and I know what they are like. It is quite a simple thing to consider. You know, it seems that as though of set purpose no man that has practised sword-exercise has ever yet earned distinction in war. And yet in all other sciences the men who practise the science are the ones who get a name in it. But these men, it seems, have been far more unfortunate than the others in this respect. For instance, this Stesileus whom you have been watching along with us performing before so great a crowd, and boasting of himself as he did, I once had a better look at him from a different point of view, and I saw him in his real colours engaged in a real performance against his will. The ship on which he was serving was running along side of a merchant man and he was fighting with a halbert—a different weapon indeed, but then he was a different man. Now I have nothing special to remark about this man in other

respects—except only this—what was the result of his skill in handling the hook that was on the spear. For as he was fighting it caught somehow in some of the ship's gear and stuck fast. Stesileus therefore tugged at it to set it free, but could not; in the meanwhile his ship was drifting past the other. For a few minutes he ran along the ship holding fast to the handle; but when at length the other ship was clearing his ship and was dragging him overboard as he clung to the spear-handle, he let it slip through his hands till he had hold only of the spike at the other end. There then arose laughter and derision at his strange appearance from those on board the merchantman, and when finally some one hurled a stone on to the deck close by his feet and he let go the spear even the man-of-war's men were no longer able to restrain their laughter as they saw the halbert being waved in triumph from the merchant ship.

Perhaps, therefore, there is something in this as Nicias said; but this is about what my experience has been.

III. I return therefore to what I said at first, that if it is a science conferring such slight advantages, or if it is no science and its professors only pretend that it is one, then it is not worth while trying to learn it. For I think that if a man who is a coward by nature were to think that he had mastered this science, it would give him more foolhardiness, and so show his true nature more clearly: whilst if a brave man should possess it he would be watched by everybody and for the slightest error receive much disparagement. For to profess an art like this is an invidious thing, so that unless a man be wonderfully superior to his fellows in manliness, he cannot avoid ridicule if he professes to be a master of this art. This is what I think, Lysimachus, about your interest in this science. But I must remind you not to let Socrates off, but to ask him to give his opinion about the subject before us.

Lysimachus.—So I do ask you, Socrates. For, you know, our discussion still seems to need an arbitrator, whereas if these two men had agreed in their opinions there would have been less need of one. But now, you see, Laches took an opposite view to Nicias—so it is fair that you should tell us which of the two men you support.

IX. *Socrates*.—What, Lysimachus? Are you going to adopt the opinion which the majority of us recommend?

Lysimachus.—What else can a man do, Socrates?

Socrates.—And would you too do the same, Melesias? If you were taking counsel about your boy's training and what things he should practise, would you take the advice of the majority of us, or of the man that has been trained under a good trainer and has practised thoroughly?

Melesias.—I should probably I suppose take the advice of the latter.

Socrates.—And you would rather believe him than you would us, four though we be.

Melesias.—Probably.

Socrates.—For, I think, the coming to a good decision depends on a practical knowledge and not on a majority.

Melesias.—Certainly.

Socrates.—Our very first enquiry then should be whether there is any one possessing technical knowledge of the subject that we are discussing, or not; and if there be one we should take his advice, single though it be, and let the others alone; and if there be no such man here, we must go and look for one outside of our number. Or do you and Lysimachus think that your controversy is about some trifling matter, whereas it is in reality about that thing which is the greatest of all your possessions? For you know, I suppose, that the whole future welfare of the father's house depends upon his sons turning out well or the reverse, as the case may be.

Melesias.—You speak the truth.

Socrates.—We should then take the deepest interest in it.

Melesias.—Certainly.

Socrates.—Well then, suppose we were wishing to find out which of us had the greatest technical knowledge of wrestling, how should we set about our enquiry? We should take the man that has studied and practised and has been under good instructors, should we not?

Melesias.—Yes, I think we should.

Socrates.—But first of all, we should seek a definition of the science for which we require teachers, should we not?

Melesias.—How do you mean?

X. *Socrates*.—Perhaps I can make my meaning more clear in this way. I don't think we began by coming to an

agreement as to what the matter is about which we were discussing and considering who possessed technical knowledge and had procured teachers with a view to getting this knowledge, and who had not.

Nicias.—Why yes, Socrates, we were enquiring about sword-exercise—and whether young men ought to learn it or not, were not we?

Socrates.—Quite so, Nicias; but when a man enquires about some medicine for the eyes, whether it is advisable to use it or not, does that enquiry turn, do you think, on the medicine or on the eyes?

Nicias.—On the eyes.

Socrates.—And when a man considers whether he should put a bridle to his horse, and when he should do so, he enquires for the horse and not for the bridle?

Nicias.—True.

Socrates.—Then to be brief, whenever a man makes an enquiry into something for the sake of something, his deliberation concerns itself with the thing for the sake of which he investigated and not with the thing which he investigated for the sake of something else.

Nicias.—Yes, of course.

Socrates.—Well then your adviser must consider whether his technical knowledge has any bearing upon the practice of that thing for the sake of which we are pursuing our investigation.

Nicias.—Of course.

Socrates.—We, say, then, that now we are considering a branch of study for the sake of the *moral nature*¹ of the young men.

Nicias.—Yes.

Socrates.—And then we must enquire if by chance we can find that some one of us is skilled in the development of the moral nature, and has had good teachers in this.

Laches.—Stop a minute, Socrates. Have you never yet

1. *moral nature.*—The Greek *psyche* is more than “soul.” It is the seat of a man’s will, desires and passions. It is also the organ of his *nous*, i.e. his reason, thought and judgment.

met with men who got more technical skill in some matters without teachers than with them?

Socrates.—Yes, I have, Laches—Men whom you would not believe if they said that they were good workmen, unless they had one specimen or more of their workmanship to exhibit to you.

Laches.—That is true.

XI. *Socrates.*—I suppose then, Laches and Nicias, that since Lysimachus and Melesias have invited us to advise them in their zeal to discover how the moral natures of their sons may be best developed, we should do our best if we have any advice to give to show them what we are and what teachers we have had—men, in the first place, good themselves and who have trained the moral natures of many young men, and in the second our teachers. And if any one of us should say that he had no teacher, then at least he should be able to point to some of his actions, and put his hand upon some Athenian or foreigner, bondman or free that has confessedly been influenced through him. But if we have no such thing to show we must ask them to seek for other advisers, and not run the risk with our friends' children of spoiling them, and so incur the greatest blame from our most intimate associates. Now, Lysimachus and Melesias, I will begin by telling you that I had no teacher in the matter, though I have been interested in it from my youth up. I cannot afford to pay the fees of the *Sophists*¹ who were the only ones that professed to be able to make a *gentleman*² of me, and I by myself *I have been unable*³ hitherto to discover the art. But I should not be surprised if Nicias or Laches have found it out or learned it; for as you know, they are

1. *The Sophists.*—Professional teachers of wisdom, such as Protagoras and Gorgias. Socrates had an unbounded contempt for them and their money-making ways. This comes out more clearly in some of his later dialogues.
2. *A gentleman.*—Greek *Kalos kai agathos*. Honourable (in outward demeanour) and good (in moral disposition).
3. *I have been unable.*—This is a good instance of the well-known mock humility of Socrates.

wealthier than I and can afford to learn from others, and moreover they are older men so that they have already discovered it. They seem therefore quite capable of training a man; for I am sure they would never be fearlessly expressing their opinions about what pursuits were good and bad for young men, unless they were persuaded in their own minds that they knew the thing thoroughly. Now in other points, I trust them, but I am surprised at their differing from one another. I shall therefore, Lysimachus, do what Laches did just now when he begged of you not to let me go but to question me—don't please let either Laches or Nicias off, but question them, and say, Socrates professes not to be familiar with this question and to be unable to decide which of you speaks the truth, for he has been able neither to discover nor to learn from anyone about such things. Now do you, Laches and Nicias, tell me each one of you, with what great authority on educational matters have you associated? and did you acquire your knowledge by learning from somebody or by your own investigations? And if you acquired it by learning, tell us who were your respective teachers and who were your fellow-students, so that if we should ever have a respite from state affairs we may go to them and persuade them either by gifts or by compliments or by both to take the charge of our children and of yours so that they may not bring shame upon their parents by turning out badly. But if you made such a discovery by yourselves, give us an instance of some persons whom you have taken in hand and raised from common people to gentlemen. For if you are only just going to begin the work of training, I fear you will be making *Carians*¹ not indeed of yourselves but of your sons and your friends' sons, and, as the proverb says, learning pottery by making a pot. Tell us therefore which of these advantages and qualifications do you profess to possess? Or don't you

1. *Carians*.—'en tō Kari ho kindynos' is the Greek equivalent for the Latin 'fiat experimentum in corpora vili'. The Carians were despised by the Greeks as being the slaves of Persia. It is very probable that this proverb, "Let the danger be run in the person of the Carian," represented the attitude of the European Greeks during the Ionic revolt.

lay claim to any of them? Now Lysimachus, just ask them this and don't let the men off.

XII. *Lysimachus*.—Well, gentlemen, I think that Socrates has spoken reasonably;—but you must decide for yourselves, Nicias and Laches, if you would wish to be questioned and cross-examined on such points. Of course Melesias here and myself would be only too glad if you would answer all Socrates' questions in full. For, if you remember, I began this discussion by the remark that we were inviting you to give us your counsel because we thought it probable that you had given your attention to these things especially as your boys, like our own, would very soon be old enough to begin their education. So if you have no objection please join Socrates in the discussion and investigation, examining one another and submitting to cross-examination. For Socrates here is quite right too when he says that we are now investigating about the greatest of all our possessions. Please consider whether you ought not to do so.

Nicias.—Why, Lysimachus, I really do believe that you know Socrates only by hearsay from your father and that you have never met him but as a child,—perhaps when he came to see you along with his father, amongst his fellow townsmen, either in a temple or at some other civic gathering. But it is quite evident that you have never met him since he grew up.

Lysimachus.—How so, Nicias?

XIII. *Nicias*.—You don't seem to me to know that whoever is most nearly related to Socrates in argument as in family and who comes near him in conversation is bound, whatever subject of conversation he may have begun, with, not to cease being led round and round in argument by him, till he has been entrapped into giving a full account of his manner of life, both now and in the past. And when he has once been entrapped Socrates will not let him off until he has well and thoroughly tested all these things. But I am accustomed to him, and know that one must be treated like this by him, nay more I am quite sure that I myself shall receive this treatment. Still, Lysimachus, I am very glad to meet him, and I do not think it is at all bad for us to be reminded of our

shortcomings past and present, for it follows that a man who has not shrunk from such discipline, but who is willing to act up to *Solon's precept*¹ of learning whilst we live and who does not expect that old age will bring him wisdom, should be more thoughtful and provident with regard to his future life. So you see, then, that it is nothing strange or unpleasant for me to be examined by Socrates—nay I was pretty sure a long time ago that if Socrates were present we should not talk about the youngsters but about ourselves. I repeat then that as far as I am concerned there is no reason why Socrates should not conduct the argument as he likes. But see what Laches thinks about it.

7. *Laches*.—Well, Nicias, as far as reasonings are concerned I am a very simple-minded man. Or rather, perhaps, I am not simple but double. For in a way I seem to be a lover of arguments and again a hater of them, For when I hear a man talking of virtue or any other branch of wisdom—one who is a man indeed and worthy of the words he speaks—I am exceedingly delighted because I see that both speaker and words are consistent and suited to one another. A man of this sort seems to me to be in every way a musician, and to be attuned to the best of harmonies, not that of a lyre or childish instrument, but to be attuned to the real living of a life in which his actions are consistent with his words—a true Doric mode—not Ionian, nor I think Phrygian or Lydian, but the only true Greek harmony. A man of this sort then makes me rejoice when he speaks and then any one would take me for a lover of words, so strongly do I acquiesce in what is said. But the man whose actions are inconsistent grieves me, and the better he seems to me to speak the more he grieves me, and then you would take me for a hater of words. Now, as to Socrates, I have no acquaintance with his arguments, but, it seems, I have had some previous experience of his actions, and in these I found him to be a man worthy of high words and of every freedom of speech. If this be the case then my good wishes go with him, and I shall have no

1. *Solon's precept*.—'gerasko d' aiei polla didaskomenos'. "I grow old ever learning many things.

objection to learning; indeed I agree with what Solon says making one addition thereto. For as I grow old I want to learn many things but only from good men. For you must allow me this that my teacher himself must be a good man, else my dislike for learning may be construed as dullness. But I don't care in the least about his being a young man or not yet famous, or any such thing. I exhort you therefore Socrates to teach me and examine me as much as you like, and in your turn to learn from me what I know. These have been my sentiments towards you ever since that day on which you stood by my side in danger and gave in your own person a proof of valour such as one who intends to give justly should give. Say then what you yourself like and don't trouble yourself about my age, (i.e. speak without restraint).

189 (6r)
 XV) *Socrates*.—It seems that I shall not be able to find fault with you for being unready to join in counsel and investigation.

Lysimachus.—We had better get to work then Socrates—you see I reckon you as one of us—; so please consider on behalf of the youngsters what information we require from these men, and advise with them. For my age makes me very often forget what I had intended to ask and again what replies I get; and if another subject comes up in between I can't remember at all. Will you then speak and argue with one another on the subject we proposed? And I will listen and then will do with Melesias whatever you decide.

Socrates.—Nicias and Laches, we must obey Lysimachus and Melesias. To begin then with our queries—who were our teachers in this branch of education, or whom have we improved—perhaps it will not be bad for us to examine ourselves even on such points. But I think that the method which I am going to suggest will bring us to the same point, nay that it is even more fundamental. For if it happens that we know about anything, that, by being added to anything else, it improves that to which it is added, and if further we be able so to add it to the other thing, then it is evident that we also know that about which we should take counsel, namely how a man could most easily and best obtain it. But perhaps you don't understand my meaning, so I will put it for you in this way. If we know that sight added to

eyes makes the eyes to which it is added better, and further if we are able to add sight to the eyes, it is evident that we know the nature of sight—about which we might enquire how a man might obtain it most easily and best. Whereas if we did not even know the nature of sight or of hearing we should scarcely be advisers worth listening to or specialists for the eyes or ears, capable of showing how best to obtain hearing or sight.

Laches.—You speak the truth, Socrates.

VI. *Socrates.*—Well then, Laches, these two men have invited us (have they not)? to take counsel as to the manner in which virtue may be added to their sons so as to make their souls better.

Laches.—Yes, to be sure.

Socrates.—This presupposes then, does it not? that we know what virtue is. For if we have no notion about the nature of virtue, how can we advise a man as to the way in which he can best obtain it.

Laches.—We could not advise him, I think.

Socrates.—We profess then, Laches, to understand what it is.

Laches.—To be sure.

Socrates.—Then if we know it, I suppose we can define it.

Laches.—Yes.

Socrates.—Now, my dear sir, let us not straightway investigate about virtue as a whole—for that would be rather a long business;—but let us first take some part of it, and see if we are sufficiently equipped as to knowledge of it. Thus, methinks, our investigation will be the easier.

Laches.—We will do as you wish, Socrates.

Socrates.—Now, which of the parts of virtue shall we prefer? I suppose it must be that to which the science of arms evidently tends. And I suppose most men will agree that that is manliness. Is it not?

Laches.—I certainly think so.

Socrates.—Let us begin then, Laches, by trying to define manliness. Then we will consider how it can be developed in young men—so far as that is possible by practising and learning. Please then try as I say, to define manliness.

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XVII. *Laches*.—By Zeus, Socrates, that is not difficult to define. You know, when a man voluntarily remains in the ranks under an attack from the enemy and does not retreat he is a brave man. You may be sure of that.

Socrates.—You spoke well, Laches ; but—I suppose it was my fault for not speaking clearly that you did not give an answer to my question but to some quite different question.

Laches.—How do you mean, Socrates ?

91 (a) *Socrates*.—I will tell you if I can. We both of us agree I believe that the man who remains in the ranks fighting the enemy is a brave man.

Laches.—That is what I say.

Socrates.—So do I. But what of the man who fights as he retreats, but does not hold his position ?

Laches.—How do you mean “as he retreats ?”

Socrates.—As I believe the Scythians are said to fight as much when retreating as when advancing, and as *Homer*¹ praises the horses of Aeneas “swift hither and thither, well skilled in pursuit and flight.” And in the same way he praises Aeneas for his knowledge of fear and calls him the “causer of fear.”

Laches.—Quite right too, Socrates. You know, he was speaking of chariots. And you are talking about Scythian cavalry, and this, as you know, is their method of cavalry warfare. But infantry tactics are the true Greek method as I say.

Socrates.—I suppose, Laches, you would except the Lacedæmonians. You know, they say that at Plataea when the Lacedæmonians had to fight the Persian light infantry they purposely did not maintain their positions but retreated, and when the Persian ranks got broken they turned back like cavalry men and attacked them, and that thus they gained that victory.

Laches.—You are quite right.

XVIII. *Socrates*.—This then was what I meant when I said that my bad way of putting the question was the cause of your not answering properly. For I wished to learn from you not

1. *Homer*.—Iliad VIII. 105.

only about those who are brave in infantry tactics but in cavalry tactics also and in every kind of warfare, and not the brave in war only, but those too who are brave in maritime dangers, and those who are brave in enduring sickness or poverty or even in political conjunctures, and again, not only those that are brave in enduring pains or fears, but those too that are skilled in fighting against desires or pleasures, both "by holding their ground and by returning to the attack" —for I suppose, Laches, that there are some people who are brave in these ways.

Laches.—Most certainly there are, Socrates.

Socrates.—All of these then are brave, are they not? but some possess bravery in pleasures, others in pains, others in desires, others in fears, others I think possess cowardice in these same things.

Laches.—Certainly.

Socrates.—Now I asked for a definition of each of them (bravery and cowardice). So please try again, and, first with regard to bravery, tell me what quality there is which is common to all these instances. Or do you not yet grasp my meaning?

Laches.—Not quite.

IX. *Socrates.*—Well, I will put it thus. Supposing I were asking for a definition of swiftness, it would be that which is common for us in running, in playing the cithara, in learning and many other actions, and which we possess the same, as far as we can venture to say, either in the actions of hands or legs, or of the tongue, the voice, or the intellect. Don't you agree with me?

Laches.—Certainly.

Socrates.—If then some one should ask me,—'Socrates, what do you call this common quality of swiftness in all of these?' I should say that I call swiftness the power of doing many things in a short space of time, whether it be with the voice, or in running, or in anything else.

Laches.—And you would be quite right too.

Socrates.—Now, Laches, will you try to define bravery in this way? What power is it, exhibited alike in pleasure and pain and in all the other circumstances that we just now mentioned, which is called "bravery"?

Laches.—Well then if I must define its nature in general terms, I think that bravery is a kind of endurance of the soul.

Socrates.—Well we must agree with you if we are to answer our question. But this is how it seems to me. I don't think that all endurance is bravery. And this is how I form my opinion. I am nearly certain, Laches, that you consider manliness to be one of the noble qualities.

Laches.—Indeed one of the very noblest.

Socrates.—You mean I suppose that endurance coupled with prudence is noble and good.

Laches.—Of course.

Socrates.—And what of endurance coupled with folly? Is it not then quite the opposite—evil in its effects and injurious?

Laches.—Yes.

Socrates.—Would you say then that anything like that, injurious in its effects and hurtful, is noble?

Laches.—It would not be right to do so, Socrates.

Socrates.—Endurance of this kind, then, you would not call manliness, inasmuch as it is not noble, whereas manliness is.

Laches.—You are right.

Socrates.—Then, according to your definition, endurance with prudence is bravery.

Laches.—So it seems.

XX. *Socrates.*—Let us see then. What does this prudence concern itself with? Is it prudence as concerns everything both small and great? For instance, if a man exhibits endurance in spending money wisely because he knows that by so spending it he will presently gain more,—would you call him brave?

Laches.—No, by Zeus, I should not.

Socrates.—Or if a man were a doctor and his child or some one else's were down with inflammation of the lungs and begged him to give him something to eat or to drink, and he were to *obstinately*¹ refuse to give any?

Laches.—This would not be bravery either.

1. *obstinately.*—The Greek word here means “to endure,” but it is impossible to reproduce the word-play in English.

Socrates.—Again, a man of endurance in war and willing to fight, and thoughtfully considering—knowing that there will be reinforcements to aid him, and that the enemy with whom he is going to fight are fewer and weaker than his own side, and moreover that he has the advantage of position—when a man after these considerations and with these preparations shows bravery, would you call him more courageous, or the man who, in the opposing army, should be willing to maintain his position and show endurance?

Laches.—I should say that the man in the opposing army would show the greater courage.

Socrates.—And yet his courage is more imprudent than the other man's.

Laches.—Quite so.

Socrates.—Then I suppose you will say that the man skilled in horsemanship will evince less courage in a cavalry engagement than the man who has no such skill.

Laches.—I think so.

Socrates.—And so too of the man whose endurance is coupled with a knowledge of the use of the sling or bow, or any such art.

Laches.—Yes.

Socrates.—And when men are willing to go down into a well, or to dive, and to show endurance in this work, without having any particular skill therein, or in any singular work,—you would call them braver than the men who are thus proficient.

Laches.—How could one help doing so, Socrates?

Socrates.—If one thought so, one would have to say so.

Laches.—Well, that is what I think.

Socrates.—And yet, I suppose, men of this sort are more imprudent in the risks they run and in the endurance they exhibit than those whose endurance is coupled with skill.

Laches.—So it seems.

Socrates.—But we saw a few minutes ago that thoughtless boldness and endurance was disgraceful and injurious.

Laches.—Yes, we did.

Socrates.—And we agreed that manliness was something noble.

Laches.—So we did.

Socrates.—And now on the other hand we say that that disgraceful thing—thoughtless endurance—is manliness.

Laches.—It appears so.

Socrates.—Do you think then that we are arguing well?

Laches.—No, by Zeus, Socrates, I don't.

XXI. *Socrates.*—I suppose then that according to your expression we have not been attuned, you and I, to any Doric measure, Laches. For our facts do not agree with our reasons. For as it seems, one might say that we had got hold of courage in fact, but that to judge from our present conversation, we have not got it with our reason.

Laches.—That is most true.

Socrates.—Well, then, do you think that is a satisfactory condition for us to be in?

Laches.—By no means.

Socrates.—Are you willing then to acquiesce in what we are saying, up to this point?

Laches.—What are we to acquiesce in, and up to what point?

Socrates.—The reasoning which bids us endure. If you wish it then let us remain firm and constant in our enquiries, so that our manliness may not be open to ridicule for not seeking it bravely, if it be true that very often steadfastness itself is courage.

Laches.—I am quite ready, Socrates, to pursue till we get what we want. And yet I am not accustomed to such enquiries, but a kind of contentiousness towards what has been spoken has arisen in me, and I am truly grieved that I cannot say things just as I think them. For I think that I have a conception about courage, but somehow it has escaped from me, so that I cannot catch it with a definition and tell it.

Socrates.—My dear fellow,—a good huntsman has to follow on with his dogs and not relax.

Laches.—That is perfectly certain.

XXII. *Socrates.*—What do you say then to inviting Nicias here to join us in the chase? It may be that he is a man of more resources than we are.

Laches.—Why, of course, I shall be delighted.

Socrates.—Come now, Nicias, come and help your friends whose arguments are tempest-tost and who are themselves in distress.

You can see what a difficulty we are in. So please tell us what you think manliness to be, and by so doing get us out of our difficulty and confirm your own opinions by arguments.

Nicias.—I have been thinking for some time that you were not defining manliness properly. You know I have heard you give a very good definition of it, but you do not use it now.

Socrates.—What was that?

Nicias.—I have often heard you say that a man is good where he is wise and that where he is ignorant there he is bad.

Socrates.—That is quite so, *Nicias*.

Nicias.—Well then, if the brave man is good, it is evident that he is wise.

Socrates.—Did you hear that, *Laches*?

Laches.—I did and I don't fully understand his meaning.

Socrates.—I think however that I understand it, and I think that *Nicias* is defining bravery as a kind of wisdom.

Laches.—What kind of wisdom, *Socrates*?

Socrates.—You had better ask him.

Laches.—So I will.

Socrates.—Come now, *Nicias*, tell him—what branch of wisdom is bravery? I suppose it isn't flute playing.

Laches.—Not quite.

Socrates.—Nor yet playing on the cithara.

Laches.—Of course not.

Socrates.—Then what science is it, and with what does it concern itself?

Laches.—I am glad you have asked him that question, let him tell us what science he says it is. *what science is it?*

Nicias.—So I will, *Laches*. It is the science of the things which inspire fear and confidence both in war and in all other things.

Laches.—What an absurd definition, *Socrates*!

Socrates.—What makes you say that, *Laches*?

Laches.—Why, surely, wisdom is distinct from courage.

Socrates.—*Nicias* says it is not.

Laches.—By Jove, though—that's all nonsense.

Socrates.—Let's teach him better, then, but don't let's abuse him.

Nicias.—No don't abuse me. You know, *Socrates*, I

*to be shown up as
wrong*

think that Laches is anxious to prove me to be talking rubbish because he has just been talking such rubbish himself.

XXIII. *Laches*.—Exactly so, Nicias, and I am going to prove my point, for you are talking nonsense. For, to begin with, in epidemics do not physicians know all about the grounds of fear? or do you think that the brave ones understand? or do you call the physicians brave?

Nicias.—Not at all.

Laches.—No more than you call farmers brave, I think. And yet these men I suppose understand the risks connected with farming and in all other handicrafts men know the risks and encouragements of their own arts. But that does not make them any the more courageous.

Socrates.—What do you think of Laches' notion, Nicias? I think he is speaking to the point.

Nicias.—It is to the point I know, but it is not true.

Socrates.—How so?

Nicias.—Because he thinks that physicians know something more about their patients than simply the condition of their health. Whereas that is the only thing they know:—but whether sickness rather than health is a terrible thing or not for anyone, do you think, Laches, that the physicians understand that? Or don't you think that for many people it is better not to recover than to recover? Tell me this, pray. Do you say that life is better for all men, and not that death is preferable for many?

Laches.—That's what I think.

Nicias.—Do you think then that the same things are terrible to those for whom death is preferable, and those for whom life?

Laches.—Not I.

Nicias.—But do you grant that physicians or any other workmen except the man who is versed in what is terrible and not terrible, that is the man whom I call brave,—knows these things.

Socrates.—Do you understand what he means, Laches?

Laches.—Yes, I take it he calls prophets brave men. For who but a prophet should know who had better live or die?

By the bye, Nicias, do you profess to be a prophet yourself, or are you neither a prophet nor brave?

Nicias.—Hallo! Do you think now that it needs a prophet to distinguish objects of fear and of confidence?

Laches.—Yes I do. Who else could do it?

XXIV. *Nicias.*—The man that I am describing could do it far better. A prophet, you know, need only know the signs of coming events, if a man is going to meet with death or disease or loss of property or victory or defeat either in war or in any other matter. But as to who had better meet with such and such accidents, how can that be the province of a prophet to decide more than of any other person?

Laches.—I can't understand what he means, Socrates. He does not make it clear who is the brave man—neither physician, prophet nor anyone else, unless haply it be some god. Now it seems to me that Nicias does not wish to own in a straightforward manner that he is talking rubbish; but he is twisting and turning about to conceal his own perplexity. And yet you and I might just now have twisted and turned about like this ourselves had we wished to avoid seeming to flagrantly contradict ourselves. Such a method of arguing would be all very well in a law-court, but now in a gathering like ours why should any one trick himself out with these idle tricks of argument? *affrica*

Socrates.—Why indeed? I quite agree with you, Laches. But perhaps Nicias is of the opinion that he is saying something and not merely talking for the sake of talking. So let us ask him to tell us more distinctly what he means, and if he says anything correctly we will agree with him—if not, we will instruct him.

Laches.—Ask on, Socrates, if you wish. I think that I have heard enough.

Socrates.—Well, I have nothing to hinder me. You know, I shall ask for us both.

Laches.—Certainly.

XXV. *Socrates.*—Tell me then, Nicias, or rather tell us, for we share the discussion, Laches and I,—do you define courage as a knowledge of the grounds of fear and of confidence?

Nicias.—Yes I do.

Socrates.—And you would say, I suppose, that it is not every man that knows it, seeing that neither physician nor prophet can know it, nor be brave—unless in addition to his professional skill he also possess this knowledge? Was not that what you said?

Nicias.—It was.

Socrates.—If we may use the proverb then, it is not every son that knows, or that becomes manly.

Nicias.—I think not.

Socrates.—It is evident, Nicias, that you do not even think the *Crommyonian*¹ boar was brave. And this I say not as a joke but because I think it is necessary for the man who uses this definition not to expect courage in any animal, or else he must admit that there are some animals so wise that what few men know on account of the difficulty of it we must admit that a lion or a leopard or even a goat may know. But it is necessary that a man who defines bravery as you have done should admit that a lion, a stag, a bull, and an ape are equally capable of manliness.

Laches.—By the Gods you speak well, Socrates; and now answer us truly. Which is it? Do you say that these animals, which we all admit to be courageous, are wiser than us, or are you going to fly in the face of universal opinion and deny that they are even courageous?

Nicias.—I am not going, you know, to apply the term “brave” either to animals or to anything else that is devoid of fear on account of ignorance, but is fearless and foolish. Or do you want me to call “brave” all children who fear nothing on account of their ignorance? To be devoid of fear and to be courageous are not the same thing. And I think that only very few people partake of bravery and forethought, whilst many—men, women, children and beasts—possess audacity, daring and fearlessness with want of forethought. So, what you and most people call courageous, I call bold, and the courageous ones are the prudent ones of whom I speak.

1. *the Crommyonian boar.*—A fabulous beast, said to have been killed by Theseus.

XVI. *Laches*.—Observe, Socrates, how well he tricks himself out with words, as he imagines? Those beings whom all men confess to be brave, he is trying to deprive of their character.

Nicias.—Not so, Laches, put yourself at your ease. I say that you are a wise man, and so is *Lamachus*¹ (if, that is, you are brave) and so are many other Athenians.

Laches.—I won't make any objections to this, though I might—but I don't want you to say that I am a real *Aixonean*.²

Socrates.—Please don't, Laches;—I don't think, you know, that you have the slightest notion that Nicias has got this wisdom from our friend Damon. And Damon is very intimate with Prodicus, who, as you know, is famous among Sophists for the beautiful distinctions he draws between such words.

Laches.—Yes, and it is more fitting for a sophist to deal with such quibbles than for a man whom the State deems worthy of the chief magistracy.

Socrates.—Rather it is fitting that he who presides over the greatest interests should be a possessor of the greatest wisdom. And I think that it is quite right that Nicias should investigate how and on what grounds he defines courage.

Laches.—Won't you do it yourself, Socrates?

Socrates.—I am going to do so, my dear fellow; but don't imagine that I am going to release you from your share of the enquiry; but give me your attention and join me in the investigation.

Laches.—Very well;—if you think I ought to do so.

Socrates.—I think you ought. Now Nicias let us start afresh. Do you remember that we began by considering courage as a part of virtue?

Nicias.—We did.

Socrates.—And that your answers were given as concerning

1 *Lamachus*,—was Nicias' colleague in the Sicilian expedition. The two commanders did not get on very well together.

2 *Aixoneans*—(*Aixone* was a ward of Athens) were noted for their bad language. Cf. the English expression "Billingsgate."

a part,—with many other parts—all of which together are designated virtue?

Nicias.—Yes.

Socrates.—Now, do you agree with me in this? You know I say that, besides courage, prudence and righteousness and the like are virtues. Don't you?

Nicias.—Of course.

Socrates.—So far so good, we agree on this. Now let us see if you and we agree about grounds of fear and confidence. We will first tell you what we think them to be; and if you don't agree with us you must teach us. Now we think that grounds of fear are those things which cause fear: and it is not past evils nor present that cause fear but evils anticipated; for fear is an anticipation of future evil. Don't you agree with me, Laches?

Laches.—Entirely.

Socrates.—Now, Nicias, you have our view namely, that grounds of fear are future evils, and grounds of confidence are things which are not evil, or that are good, in the future. Would you give the same definition?

Nicias.—I should.

Socrates.—Would you then say that the understanding of those things was courage?

Nicias.—Certainly.

XXVIII. *Socrates.*—Now let us see if you agree with us on a third point.

Nicias.—What is it?

Socrates.—I will tell you. Laches and I think that wherever there is knowledge it does not differ as to how past things have occurred or present things occur, nor yet about how that which has not yet come to pass might and will best come to pass, but that it is the same. For instance with regard to the preservation of health through all the ages of man, it is the science of medicine alone and as a whole which considers the past and present and how the future shall come to pass. And again with regard to what grows out of the earth it is agriculture that considers it. And, with matters of war, I am sure that you would bear me witness yourselves that the science of strategy is the one that takes the

best precautions especially for future contingencies, and that it ought not to be subservient to but to, rule, the art of soothsaying, because it has more knowledge of military affairs both present and future. And thus the law orders not that the soothsayer shall command the general, but the general the soothsayer. Shall we say this, Laches?

Laches.—Yes.

Socrates.—Again,—do you agree with me, Nicias, that the same science deals with the same facts both future, present and past?

Nicias.—Yes, that is what I think, Socrates.

Socrates.—Then you say, courage is the science of grounds of fear and confidence. Is it not?

Nicias.—Yes.

Socrates.—And we agreed that grounds of fear and confidence were respectively evil things and good in the future.

Nicias.—We did.

Socrates.—And the same science deals with them both in the future and in every aspect.

Nicias.—It does.

Socrates.—Courage then is not only a knowledge of grounds of fear and confidence. For it treats of good things and evil not only as future, but also as present, and past, and in every other aspect, as do also the other sciences.

Nicias.—So it seems.

XXIX. *Socrates.*—We have then, as it seems from your answer, Nicias, a third subdivision of courage. And yet we asked for a definition of courage as a whole. But now it would seem from your account that courage is not only the science of grounds of fear and confidence, but we might almost say that, as you show it, courage is the science of all good and evil things in every aspect. May we transpose it in this way, or how would you say it, Nicias?

Nicias.—I think we may.

Socrates.—Now, my good sir, do you think that a man like this would in any way fall short of virtue, if he knew all good things and in every aspect, how they come, came, and will come to pass, and the same of things that are evil? And do you imagine that a man like this would be wanting in

prudence, or righteousness or holiness, seeing that he alone is permitted, both with regard to gods and men, to give cautions about what are grounds of fear or not, and to furnish what is good since he understands how rightly to associate with it.

Nicias.—I think there is something in what you say, Socrates.

Socrates.—What you just now described, then, is not as you said a part of virtue, but virtue in its entirety.

Nicias.—So it is.

Socrates.—And yet we said that courage was one of the parts of virtue.

Nicias.—So we did.

Socrates.—But what we were just now describing did not seem to be so.

Nicias.—No it did not.

Socrates.—Then, it would seem, we have not yet found a definition of manliness.

Nicias.—It seems not.

Laches.—And yet, my dear Nicias, I thought you would find it out, because you were so contemptuous over the answers I gave to Socrates. So I had really very great expectations that the wisdom you had learned from Damon would help you find out.

XXX. *Nicias.*—I am glad to think, Laches, that you don't think much of being proved to talk nonsense yourself, and that when I am proved to be no wiser than yourself you remember it, and are going to make no difference between yourself and me in respect to our knowing nothing of what a man with a good opinion of himself ought to know. Now you, methinks, are doing a very human action in looking not at yourself but at others; but I think that I spoke reasonably enough about what we were discussing; and if I have not spoken quite up to the mark in anything I will correct it later on with the aid of Damon, whom you seem to laugh at though you never saw him, and of others. And when I have proved my point I will teach you—without stint—for you seem to me to be very anxious to learn.

Laches.—You are a very wise man, Nicias, and yet I advise Lysimachus here and Mélesias not to trouble about your

opinion and mine with respect to the education of these youngsters, but to keep hold of Socrates here, as I said at first. And if my boys were of that age I should be doing the same.

Nicias.—I agree with you that if Socrates is willing to take charge of the lads, they need not look for any one else. And I should be very glad to entrust my Niceratus to him if he would take him. But, unfortunately, whenever I mention the subject to him he recommends some one else and won't undertake it himself. But it may be, Lysimachus, that Socrates will be more complaisant to you.

Lysimachus.—It would be but fair, Nicias, for I should be very glad to do many things for him which I would not do for many other people. What do you say Socrates? Will you accede to our request, and help us in making these lads as good as possible?

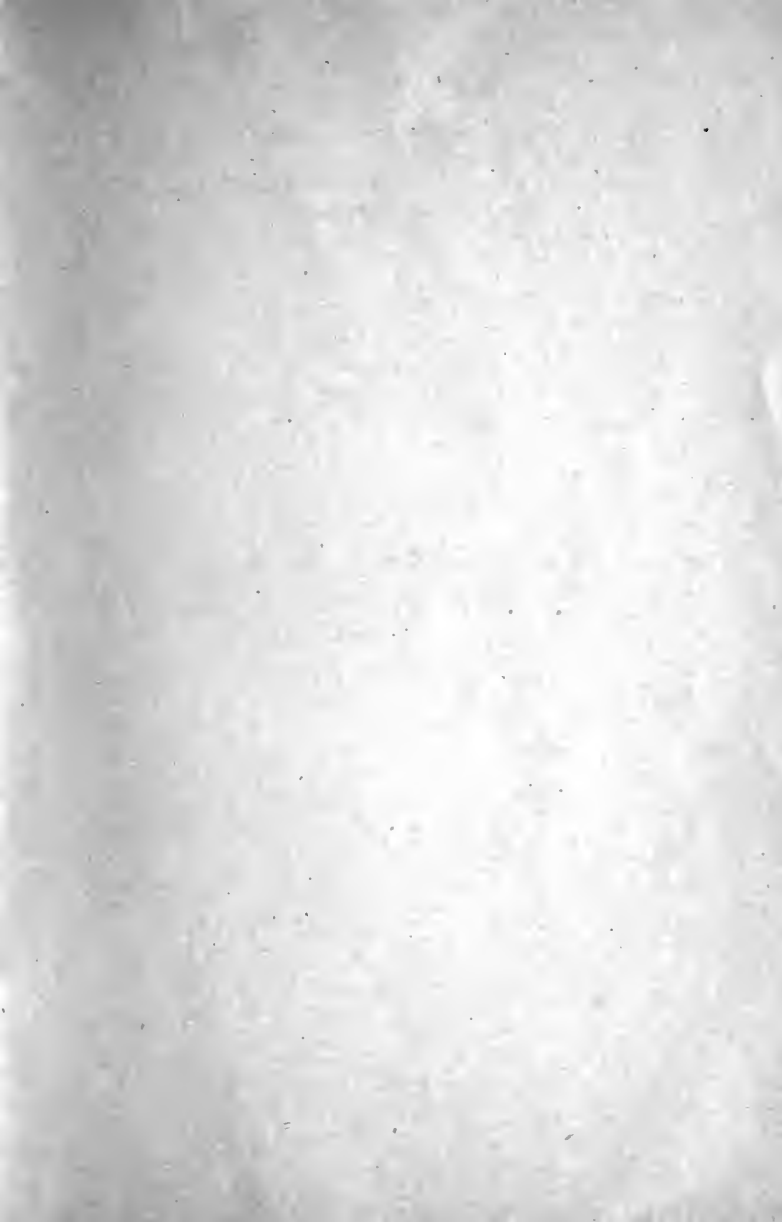
XXXI. *Socrates.*—Why, it would be a terrible thing, Lysimachus, to refuse help in such a cause. If then our conversation just now has shown me to know anything, which these two men did not know, it would be quite right to invite me to this work. But—you know we all alike got into difficulties—why should one prefer any one of us? I think that none of us should be preferred. But since these things are so, consider if I seem to give you any good advice. For I say, gentlemen—and this is between ourselves—that we ought all to find for ourselves a teacher—the best we can find, for we want one,—and then one for the lads, sparing neither expense nor trouble. But I don't advise leaving ourselves as we are. And should anyone laugh at us for going to school at our time of life, we can have recourse to *Homer*—who said that “shame was a bad companion for a man of experience.” So let us not trouble ourselves about our own opinions, but let us take common actions for ourselves and the lads.

Lysimachus.—I am quite satisfied with what you say, Socrates, and as I am the oldest so am I the most eager to learn with the young ones. So please do me this favor. Come to-morrow morning early to my house, without fail, in

order that we may discuss these matters. For the present we must break up our party.

Socrates.—I will do so, Lysimachus, and, God willing, I will come to your house to-morrow.

THE END.





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