

Anabasis

Xenophon 431 – 354 B.C.

BOOK VI

I

.....*After*
this some Aenianians[2] and Magnesians got up and fell to dancing the Carpaea, as it is called, under arms. This was the manner of the dance: one man lays aside his arms and proceeds to drive a yoke of oxen, and while he drives he sows, turning him about frequently, as though he were afraid of something; up comes a cattle-lifter, and no sooner does the ploughman catch sight of him afar, than he snatches up his arms and confronts him. They fight in front of his team, and all in rhythm to the sound of the pipe. At last the robber binds the countryman and drives off the team. Or sometimes the cattle-driver binds the robber, and then he puts him under the yoke beside the oxen, with his two hands tied behind his back, and off he drives.

.....
After this a Mysian came in with a light shield in either hand and danced, at one time going through a pantomime, as if he were dealing with two assailants at once; at another plying his shields as if to face a single foe, and then again he would whirl about and throw somersaults, keeping the shields in his hands, so that it was a beautiful spectacle. Last of all he danced the Persian dance, clashing the shields together, crouching down on one knee and springing up again from earth; and all this he did in measured time to the sound of the flute. After him the Mantineans stepped upon the stage, and some other Arcadians also stood up; they had accoutred themselves in all their warlike finery. They marched with measured tread, pipes playing, to the tune of the 'warrior's march[3]'; the notes of the paeon rose, 11 lightly their limbs moved in dance, as in solemn procession to the holy gods. The Paphlagonians looked upon it as something truly strange that all these dances should be under arms; and the Mysians, seeing their astonishment persuaded one of the Arcadians who had got a dancing girl to let him introduce her, which he did after dressing her up magnificently and giving her a light shield. When, lithe of limb, she danced the Pyrrhic[4], loud clapping followed; and the Paphlagonians asked, "If these women fought by their side in battle?"

to which they answered, "To be sure, it was the women who routed the great King, and drove him out of camp." So ended the night.

Translation by H. G. Dakyns-January, 1998