

Memorabilia

Xenophon 431 – 354 B.C.

But (rejoined Socrates) Antisthenes is a man of great pertinacity, who insists on winning, and that is a very necessary quality in a general.[] Do not you see how each time he has been choragos[**] he has been successful with one chorus after another?*

[] See Grote, "Plato," i. 465 foll.*

*[**] Choir-master, or Director of the Chorus. It was his duty to provide and preside over a chorus to sing, dance, or play at any of the public festivals, defraying the cost as a state service of {leitourgia}. See "Pol. Ath." iii. 4; "Hiero," ix. 4; Aristot. "Pol. Ath." 28. 3.*

Nic. Bless me! yes; but there is a wide difference between standing at the head of a band of singers and dancers and a troop of soldiers.

Soc. Still, without any practical skill in singing or in the training of a chorus, Antisthenes somehow had the art to select the greatest proficients in both.

Nic. Yes, and by the same reasoning we are to infer that on a campaign he will find proficients, some to marshal the troops for him and others to fight his battles?

Soc. Just so. If in matters military he only exhibits the same skill in selecting the best hands as he has shown in matters of the chorus, it is highly probable he will here also bear away the palm of victory; and we may presume that if he expended so much to win a choric victory with a single tribe,[5] he will be ready to expend more to secure a victory in war with the whole state to back him.

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Soc. True, if only your path could avoid human beings, as it avoids rule and slavery, there would be something in what you say. But being placed as you are amidst human beings, if you purpose neither to rule nor to be ruled, and do not mean to dance attendance, if you can help it, on those who rule, you must surely see that the stronger have an

art to seat the weaker on the stool of repentance[] both in public and in private, and to treat them as slaves. I daresay you have not failed to note this common case: a set of people has sown and planted, whereupon in comes another set and cuts their corn and fells their fruit-trees, and in every way lays siege to them because, though weaker, they refuse to pay them proper court, till at length they are persuaded to accept slavery rather than war against their betters. And in private life also, you will bear me out, the brave and powerful are known to reduce the helpless and cowardly to bondage, and to make no small profit out of their victims.*

[] See "Symp." iii. 11; "Cyrop." II. ii. 14; Plat. "Ion," 535 E; L. Dindorf ad loc.*

Translation by H. G. Dakyns January, 1998