

## THE ECONOMIST

OF

## XENOPHON

## CHAPTER I

OF ECONOMY;—THE MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTY, THAT IS WHATEVER IS OF USE TO A MAN, BUT IS OF NO VALUE TO SUCH AS ARE SLAVES TO THEIR PASSIONS

1 Now I once heard him\* talk about economy † in this way. Tell me, Critobulus, said he, is economy the name of some science, as medicine is, and metallurgy and architecture?

Yes, I think so, said Critobulus.

2 And might we assign its function to economy, just as we can to each of these arts?

At any rate, said Critobulus, it seems that a good economist ought to manage his own house well.

3 And if, asked Socrates, the house of another were entrusted to him, should he not be able, if he would, to manage that house well, just as though it were his own? For the architect can do equally for another person what he can for himself, and so too would it be with the economist?

Yes, Socrates, I think so.

4 Is it possible, then, said Socrates, for an adept in this art, who happens to have no property of his own, to earn money by managing the house of another, just as he would were he building it?

Undoubtedly so; and no little pay too would he earn, said Critobulus, if, after undertaking the management of a house, he could both meet all necessary expenses and further increase its wealth and position.

5 But what do we mean by "house"? Do we mean the mere building, or do we include in it all a man's possessions?

Yes, said Critobulus, in my opinion everything that a man possesses, all the world over, is part of his house.

\* Socrates.

† "Economy"—a now far narrower word than *οικονομια*, which means the whole management of house and estate: similarly *οικονομος*, "economist."

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6 But do not some people possess enemies?

Doubtless; and some of them many.

Are we then to call a man's enemies also part of his property?

Indeed it would be absurd, said Critobulus, if a man who increases one's enemies should further be paid for so doing.

7 You know\* we have decided that a man's house meant all his possessions.

By Heaven, yes, said Critobulus; we laid that down about whatever a man has that is good; but of course I should not count as a possession anything that does him harm.

You would, then, call a man's possessions all that benefits him?

Quite so, said he; I call whatever hurts him loss, and not property.

8 Well, then, suppose some one bought a horse, and could not manage it, but fell off it and hurt himself; the horse is not property to him, is it? Certainly not, if property is only what benefits him.

In the same way, one cannot call a piece of land a man's property, if he cultivates it so as to lose thereby?

No; no more is the land property if, instead of supporting him, it reduces him to want.

9 Well, then, if a man did not know what use to make of sheep either, but lost by them, sheep would not be property to him?

No, I do not think they would.

You, then, it seems, count as property only what is useful to a man, but do not include under the term anything that hurts him?

Just so.

10 Then the very same things are property to a man who knows how to use them, and not property to one who does not. For instance, a flute is property to a man who can play on it fairly; but to one who is wholly unskilled in its use it is no more property than mere useless stones would be,—unless indeed he sold it.

11 So it is clear to us that a flute in the hands of a man who does not know how to use it, is not property to him, unless he sell it. So long as he keeps it, it is not property. And indeed, Socrates, we shall thus have reasoned consistently, since we before decided that a man's property must be something that benefits him. If the man does not sell the flute, it is not property, for it is of no use; but if he sell it, it becomes property.<sup>1</sup>

12 To this Socrates answered, Yes, if he know how to sell it. But if he, again, were to sell it to a man who does not know how to use it, it would not be property even when sold, according to what you say.

Your words, Socrates, seem to imply that not even money would be property unless a man knew how to use it.

13 Well, you seem to agree with me that a man's property is only what benefits him. Suppose a man were to make this use of his money, to

\* The text here is uncertain.

<sup>1</sup> [For Ruskin's own translation of §§ 10, 11, and Horace's lines in a similar sense, see Appendix III. to *Munera Pulveris*, Vol. XVII. p. 288.]

buy, say, a mistress, by whose influence his body would be worse, his soul worse, his household worse; how could we then say that his money was any benefit to him?

We could not,—unless, indeed, we are to count as property henbane, the herb that drives mad those who eat it.

- 14 We may, then, Critobulus, exclude money also from being counted as property, if it is in the hands of one who does not know how to use it. But friends,—what shall we say they are, if a man knows how to use them to his advantage?

Why truly they are property, said Critobulus; and much more so than the oxen are, if, that is, they are more profitable than oxen.

- 15 Following that out, enemies are property to a man who can gain benefit from them?

Yes, I think so.

Then a good economist ought to know how to use even his enemies to his own advantage?

Most decidedly so.

True, Critobulus, said he; for war, you see, may bring increase to every one,—not to kings only.

- 16 Well, so far our decision is satisfactory, Socrates, said Critobulus. But what are we to say when we see men endowed with knowledge, and means of adding to their position if they will but exert themselves, quite careless of this, so that thus we see that their knowledge is of no use to them? What can we say but that neither their knowledge nor their possessions are property to them?

- 17 But tell me, Critobulus, said Socrates; is it of slaves that you would say this?

Surely not, said he; but rather of men of high birth, of whom I meet some who are skilled in the arts of war and of peace, and yet will not make use of them, for this reason, I think,—that they have no masters.

- 18 And yet, said Socrates, how can we say that they have no masters, if, spite of all their desire to be happy, and eagerness to do what will be to their good, they are after all prevented from so doing by their rulers?

And pray, said Critobulus, who are these invisible rulers?

- 19 By Heaven, said Socrates, they are not invisible, but very visible indeed; nor do you fail to see that they are the worst of rulers,—if, that is, you count as evil, sloth, effeminacy, and carelessness. And moreover there are others, deceiving mistresses, who pretend to be queens of pleasure, such as gambling, and profitless assemblings of men together, until, as time goes on, those whom they deceived see what they really are,—pleasures glossing over pain, getting the mastery over them, and preventing their doing what is right and useful.

- 21 But, Socrates, said he, there are others also whom these do not prevent from exertion, but who, on the contrary, do all they can to exert themselves and increase their incomes; yet they too waste their substance and involve themselves in difficulties.

- 22 That is because they too are slaves, said Socrates,—slaves of mistresses entirely cruel, of luxury, lust, and drunkenness; or else of some foolish and ruinous ambition, which so harshly rules its subjects, that as long as

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it sees them in the prime of life, and able to exert themselves, it compels them to bring all the results of their exertions, and spend them on their desires. But no sooner does it see them grown old, and so unable to work, than it leaves them to a miserable dotage, and ever turns round again to look for others to enslave. But against these mistresses, Critobulus, we must fight for freedom as if ranged against armed hosts seeking to enslave us. Earthly enemies, however, often ere now have been good and noble, and have often by their control taught those whom they have enslaved to be better, and have made their life calmer for the future. Not so mistresses such as these. While they are in power, they never cease to torment the households, the bodies, aye, and the souls of men.

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## CHAPTER II

OF TRUE WEALTH; NOT THAT WHICH BRINGS WITH IT TROUBLE AND TOIL,  
BUT THAT OF THE PROVIDENT AND THRIFTY ECONOMIST: WHERE SUCH  
IS TO BE LEARNED

- 1 CRITOBULUS then continued something in this way: What you have told me about such as these is, I think, quite sufficient; but on examining myself, I find that I have what I consider a fair control\* over them, so that if you would advise me how to increase my estate, I do not think you would find that these mistresses, as you call them, prevent me from following your advice. With all assurance, then, give me what good advice you can. Or do you charge us, Socrates, with being rich enough, and consider that we have no need of further wealth?
- 2 If it is of me that you are speaking, said Socrates, I do not think that I have any need of further wealth: I am rich enough. You, on the contrary, Critobulus, I consider very poor,—and, by Heaven, I heartily pity you sometimes.
- 3 To this Critobulus answered with a laugh: By Heaven, Socrates, said he, how much, think you, would your property fetch, and how much mine? I think, said Socrates, that if I found a good purchaser, I might quite easily get for my house and all five minæ.† But I am perfectly sure that yours would fetch more than a hundred times as much as that.
- 4 And yet, while you know this, do you think that you have no need of further wealth, and pity me for my poverty?
- I do, said he, for I have enough to satisfy all my wants. But your style of living, and the reputation you enjoy, is such that I do not think thrice as much again as you have at present would suffice for it.
- What can you mean? said Critobulus.
- 5 I mean, explained Socrates, that in the first place I see you compelled to offer up many great sacrifices; indeed, if you were remiss in so doing, both gods and men would, I think, put up with you no longer. And again, you have to entertain many strangers, and that in great state; while, besides this, you must either feast and otherwise benefit your fellow-citizens, or else be destitute of supporters. Nor is this all. I know how the State already imposes on you duties of no little importance,—to breed horses for its service, to pay the expenses of a chorus, to superintend the

\* Gk. ἐγκρατής, on the full meaning of which, see Aristotle (Eth. vii. 9, 6): "ὅ τε γὰρ ἐγκρατῆς οἷος μηδὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον διὰ τὰς σωματικὰς ἡδονὰς ποιεῖν καὶ ὁ σώφρων, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἔχων, ὁ δ' οὐκ ἔχων φαύλας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ ἡδεσθαι παρὰ τὸν λόγον, ὁ δ' οἷος ἡδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀγεσθαι," i.e., the perfectly temperate man does not even feel pleasure in acting contrary to right reason; the self-controlled feels it, but is not led astray.

† About £20, a mina being equivalent to £4, 1s. 3d.

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gymnasia, or to be a foreign consul. And if a war break out, I am well aware that they will demand of you to take your share in fitting out the navy,\* and in other special expenses, so large that even you will find them  
7 no light burden. And if you should be deficient in any of the above, the Athenians would, I am sure, punish you no less than if they caught you robbing them of their own property. But besides all this, you do, I see, consider yourself rich, and thus do not care to make money, but give yourself up to childish pursuits, as if it were your right. And therefore I pity you, and fear for you lest you should suffer some desperate  
8 disaster, and fall into extreme poverty. But what is my case? You know as well as I do, that were I in want, there are those who would help me, and by giving me each a little, overwhelm me with a plenty that I could not spend. But your friends, though their means are far more adequate to their style of living than are your means to yours, still look to receive benefits at your hands.

9 What you say, Socrates, said Critobulus, I cannot dispute. But it is now high time for you to be my guardian, lest I really do become pitiable indeed.

To this Socrates answered thus: Do you not think, Critobulus, that it is somewhat strange that you, who a little while ago, when I called myself rich, laughed † at me for not knowing what wealth was, and did not stop till you had convicted me and made me confess that you had a hundred times as much as I, should now bid me be your master and guardian, to prevent your being really and truly a beggar?

10 Yes, Socrates, said he; for I see that there is one thing about wealth that you know, and that is how to keep a surplus; and then I expect that a man who does this on small means, would on a large income have a large surplus.

11 Do not you remember that in our conversation just now, when you would hardly let me open my mouth, you said ‡ that neither horses, land, sheep, money, nor anything else, were property to a man who did not know how to use them? Such, however, are sources of income; and how do you think that I should know how to use any of these things, when I never yet was possessed of one of them?

12 But we determined § that even a man who had no property of his own, might yet have some knowledge of economy. What, then, should hinder you from having some?

13 Just what hinders, of course, from playing on the flute people who have never had flutes of their own, nor other people's lent them to learn on. And this is the way with me as to economy. For I never had any property of my own to learn it from, nor have I ever had any one else's under my charge, as you would now put yours. You know men often

\* At Athens, special subscriptions were demanded of the wealthy for State purposes. These were called *λειτουργίαι*, and of them the *τριηραρχία* was specially important. In time of war a "trierarch" would have to equip a vessel, and not unfrequently command it in person. Other *λειτουργίαι* are enumerated in the preceding sentence.

† § 3.

‡ Chap. i. § 8.

§ Chap. i. § 4.

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CH. II]

## OF TRUE WEALTH

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spoil the harps on which they learn their first lessons; and in the same way, should I undertake to learn economy with your estate to practise on, I should no doubt seriously damage it.

14 You are trying very hard, Socrates, replied Critobulus, to avoid giving me any help towards managing my necessary business with greater care.

15 No, indeed, replied Socrates; I will most gladly tell whatever I can. But supposing you were to come to me for firewood, and find that I had none, you would not, I think, blame me for directing you to where you could get it; or again, if you came to me for water, and I had none, but took you to where you could get it, you would not blame me for this either; and if you wished to learn music of me, and I pointed out to you men who were at once better musicians than myself, and who would thank you if you would take lessons of them, could you find any grounds for blaming me?

None that were just, Socrates.

16 I will, then, Critobulus, direct you to far greater adepts than myself in this which you are so anxious to learn of me; and I confess that it has interested me to observe who in the city know most of their several

17 occupations. For I could not but feel surprised, when I discovered that of those engaged in the same pursuits, some were very poor and some very rich; and I thought that the cause of this was not unworthy of consideration. So I began to look into it, and found it all very natural.

18 For I saw that those who managed their affairs recklessly were losers; whilst, on the other hand, an earnest application made the business, as I observed, at once prompter, easier, and more profitable. And if you will take these for your masters, you will, I think (unless Heaven be against you), turn out a shrewd man of business.

## CHAPTER III

OF THE VIRTUES AND RESULTS OF ECONOMY ABROAD AND AT HOME;  
AND THE SHARE OF THE WIFE THEREIN

- 1 ON hearing this, Critobulus continued: Now, Socrates, I will not let you go until you have shown me what you have promised before our friends here.

Well, Critobulus, said Socrates, what would you say if I were to begin by showing you how some men spend a good deal of money in building useless houses, while others at a far smaller expense build such as have every necessary advantage? Would you not think that I was showing you herein one point in the matter of economy?

That I should, said Critobulus.

- 2 And what, if I were to show you the natural consequence of this?—namely, how some men have plenty of goods and chattels of every kind, and yet cannot get at them for use, when they want them; nor even, indeed, do they know if they have them safe, thereby causing much annoyance both to themselves and their servants: whilst others, though possessing much less than they, have every necessary at hand to make use of, when they want it.
- 3 Is not this, Socrates, the sole cause of it, that the former throw everything down anywhere at random, while the latter have everything in its place?

Exactly so, said Socrates; they have everything well-arranged—not in the first place that came, but in the most convenient.

I suppose this that you are telling me, said Critobulus, is another point in economy.

- 4 Again, what would you say, said Socrates, if I were to show you, at one place slaves, who are, one might say, all in bonds, constantly running away; and elsewhere others, who do not know the chain, willingly doing their work and staying with their masters? Would you not think that I was showing you in this a most noteworthy result of economy?

Yes, by Heaven, exclaimed Critobulus, a very remarkable result.

- 5 And what if I were to show you men working adjoining\* farms, but some of them complaining that their farming is a loss to them, and they themselves are in poverty, and others getting from their farming an unstinted and comfortable abundance of every necessary?

That is a very remarkable result also, said Critobulus; but perhaps the losers spend money not only on what is necessary, but also on what does harm to house and master alike.

\* And, consequently, of a like soil, and with like opportunities.



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6 There are perhaps some such too, said Socrates; but I am speaking, not of them, but of those who, whilst their profession is farming, have no money to spend on the necessaries of agriculture.

And what, Socrates, might the cause of this be? asked he.

I will take you, said Socrates, to see these men, for I am sure you will be the wiser for observing them.

Yes, by Heaven, said he; I will try to be so.

7 Well, you must see them, and so try what you can learn. Now I know that to go to a comedy you sometimes rise very early, and walk a long distance to get there; and you do all you can to persuade me to go with you. But to a task like this you never summoned me.

And so, Socrates, I seem to you ridiculous?

8 By Heaven, far more so to yourself, said he. But what if I were to show you that of breeders of horses, some have been so ruined as to need even the necessaries of life, while others have become quite wealthy, and rejoiced in their riches?

Why, I see such men myself, and know them, rich and poor; but I am not any the more one of the rich men for that.

9 No, for they are to you but actors in a play; and you go, I think, to the theatre, not with the intention of becoming a poet, but merely to find pleasure for eye and ear. And this, perhaps, is well enough, since you do not aim at being a poet: but seeing that you are obliged to keep horses, do not you think you are foolish in not looking to learn some little of the matter, especially when the same horses are good to use and profitable to sell?

10 My dear Socrates, would you have me break in horses?

Of course not, any more than I would have you buy children and bring them up as labourers. Still I think that both with horses and men there are certain ages immediately upon which they become profitable, and keep on improving. But I can show you men who so treat the wives they have married, as to find in them fellow-workers, to the increase of their estates, while others make them a special source of ruin.

11 And are we, Socrates, to blame the husband or the wife for this?

When it goes ill with a sheep, we generally blame the shepherd, said Socrates; and when a horse is vicious, we generally blame the groom. But as regards a wife,—if after being taught by her husband to do right, she still does wrong, then she is perhaps the one we might justly blame; but if, never teaching her what is right and noble, he finds her ignorant of these things, is it not with him that the blame would rest? But come, Critobulus, said he, we are all friends here; so tell us the whole truth;—is there any one whom you oftener trust with important matters than your wife?

No one, said he.

Is there any one with whom you converse less?

Few, if any, said he.

12 You married her when quite a young girl, or at any rate when she could have seen and heard but little?

Quite so.

Well, then, it would be much more wonderful if she did know how to speak and act, than if she failed therein.

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- 14 But, what, Socrates, of the wives you call good? Did their husbands teach them?

Well, there is nothing like looking into it; and more, I will introduce you to Aspasia,\* who will know how to show you all about such things far better than I. But, in my opinion, a wife who manages her share in the household matters well, has as much influence as her husband on their prosperity. For, as a rule, it is the labour of the husband that brings in the money of the family, but the judgment of the wife that regulates the spending of most of it. And whilst houses in which these matters are well managed increase, those in which they are ill managed decrease in prosperity. And moreover, I think that I can point out to you men of remarkable power in all the other sciences, if you consider it worth your while to know them.

\* Aspasia was a celebrated lady of Miletus who lived at Athens in the time of Pericles, and had, it is said, the greatest influence over that statesman. Remarkable at once for her beauty and her wisdom, she attracted to her house politician and author, artist and philosopher alike. Her teaching fascinating,—and novel, no doubt, as well,—won high praise from Socrates. Being a foreigner, it was against the law for any Athenian citizen to marry her; to Pericles, however, whose own wife did not make him happy, she stood in a wife's position, and by him was the mother of a son, afterwards specially legitimated by the Athenian people. Unfortunately, we know but little of Aspasia: it may, however, be fairly questioned whether the evidence we possess justifies the censures passed on her by many critics, who are perhaps too apt to judge her by the standard of modern, not Greek, morality.