To the REDER.

THIS boke of householde, full of hyghe wisedome, written by the noble philisopher Xenophon, the scholer of Socrates, the whiche for his swete eloquence, and incredyble facilitie, was surnamed Musa Attica, that is to say, the songe of Athenes: is ryght counnyngly translated out the Greke tonge into Englyshe, by Gentian Hervet, at the desyre of mayster Geffrey Pole, whiche boke for the welthe of this realme, I deme very prositable to be red.

ENOPHON, to the degree he is remembered at all by any but classics scholars, is remembered for the *Anabasis*, his very lively account of the escape · led by Xenophon himself · of a Greek army marooned in the heart of a hostile Persia. But he was also a friend and disciple of Socrates, and wrote several Socratic dialogues, which for a variety of reasons are much less often read than Plato's.

Among these is the *Oeconomicus*, really the first in a long tradition of works dealing with the management of a rural estate; works that continued to be written over the next two thousand years, and which preserve most of what we know of country life and labor (and winemaking) throughout the course of Western history.

In this excerpt, Socrates questions Ischomachus, a just and honest man, about his relations with his wife. Particularly in the charming Tudor English translation of Gentian Hervet, it's a far more amusing and tender view of Greek domestic life than the one we're likely to have gotten from reading, say, Agamemnon or Medea, where the picture is much less promising.

I haven't yet had time to do much research about Hervet or his translation. The earliest edition of it in the British Library is dated 1534; the present transcription is from the later edition of 1767, by which time the 16th-century editions were, apparently, already unfindable. The page numbers refer to the 1767 edition.

Yes, I admit this excerpt has absolutely nothing to tell us about wine-making, & is here simply because I like it. But it does bring up a question that has always intrigued me, as to when and how often winemaking has been considered the province of the husband, and how often that of the wife? The question deserves research. And, on a related topic, I must note that Xenophon understood the queen bee to be female. Not rocket science, you may say. But for some two thousand years after him, she was thought to be a king, whose realm was just God's little metaphor of the perfect Kingdom, and an ideal symbol of the ways authoritarians feel we should be governed.

Housebande ♥ Wyfe

...And for bycaufe I harde that Ischomachus was generally, bothe of men, women, citezins, and strangers, called and taken for a good honest man, me thoughte I coude do no better, than to proue howe I myghte commune with hym. And vppon a tyme, whan I fawe hym fitting in a porche of a churche, for bycause me thoughte he was at leyser, I came to hym, and sette me downe by him, and faid, What is the cause, good Ischomachus, that ye, which be wont to be euer more occupied, fytte here nowe after this matter; for I haue feene you for the most part euermore doing somewhat, and lyghtly neuer ydell, except it were very lyttell? Nor ye shulde nowe haue seene me, good Socrates, sayde he, syttynge after this maner, if I had not apointed with certaine straungers to tary here for them. And if ye were not here, where wolde ye haue bene, or howe wolde ye haue ben occupied, fayd I to hym? For I wold knowe of you very fayne, what thynge ye do, that maketh you to be called a good and an honest man? The good complection of your body showeth well ynoughe, that ye dyde not alwaye slouggynge at home. And than Ischomachus laughing at that I faid, what do ye, that maketh you to be called a good and an honest man, and reioysyng in his harte, as me thought by hym, fayd, I can not tell: if any man calleth me fo, whan you and he talke of me, but whan I muste paye money, or for taxes, preastes, or subsidies, they calle me playnely by my name Ifchomachus. And in dede, good Socs. I do not alwaye byde at home, for my wife can order well inoughe fuche thynges as I haue there. Yea, but wold I know of you very fayne, Dyd ye your felfe bring your wyfe to this: (p. 27) or els, hadde her father and her mother brought he vp fufficiently to ordre an house afore she came to you? Ischomachus. Howe coude she haue ben fo, when she was but fiftene yere old whan I maryed her: and afore she hadde ben fo negligently brought vp, that she hadde but very lyttell sene, very little harde, and very lytel spoken of the world. And I trowe ye wolde not thynke it sufficiente in her, if she coude do nothynge but spin and carde, and sette the hande maydens to worke. As for fuche thynges as concerne the lower partes of the bely, good Socrates, fayde he, she had ben very well broughte vp, the whiche is no smalle poynte of good bringgynge vp, both in a man and in a woman.

And dyd ye teache your wyfe all the remenant, fayd I, fo that she is able to take hede of al maner of thinges? Yes, faid he, but not afore I had made my praiers to all mighty god, desirynge him, that he wold gyue me the grace to teache her so, and her to lerne that of me, that shuld be good and profitable to vs bothe. And dyd your wyfe make the felfe fame prayer with you, fayde I? Yes mary, faid Ischomachus, and it seemed in a maner, that god dyd promyse euidently, and she likewise shewed with clere and manifeste tokens, that she wold very well regarde and take hede to that that she shulde be taught. For goddis sake, good Ischomachus, sayde I, what dyd ye begynne to teache her first: for I had leauer here you tell me fuche a thynge, than if ye shuld dyscriue me a iustyng or a turnament, though it had ben neuer fo triumphant. Mary I wyl tel you, Socrates, fayd he, Whan we were ones fo wel acquainted, and fo familiar, that we talked together, I examined her after this maner: Tel me, good bedfelowe, did ye euer cast in your mind, for what cause I have taken you, and your father and your (p. 28) mother deliuered you vnto me? I trowe ye knowe well inough, that I toke you not for nede that I had of a bedfelowe to lye with me; for I myghte haue had inowe at my commaundemente. But whan I hadde confydered in my mynde, and your father and your mother lyke wyfe, that it were well doone, to fynde out a good one, to be parte taker bothe of our howfe, and of our chyldren, I chofe you afore all other, and your father and mother lyke wyfe chofe me. Wherefore if hereafter god gyue vs the grace, that we maye haue chyldren together, we shall take counfayle howe to brynge theym vppe and instructe theym in vertue. For it shall be for bothe oure profyttes to have them, bothe to defende vs, and to helpe and nouryshe vs in our olde age. Nowe the house that we have is common to vs bothe. For all that euer I haue, I haue shewed you, and delyuered it vnto you to kepe for bothe behoues: and ye lyke wife haue done the fame. And ye may not cast in your mynde, whiche of vs doth broughte more. But this ye must knowe for a fuertie, that loke whiche of vs twayne doth behaue hym felfe, and dothe beste in this felowshyppe, that he bryngeth more, and his parte is the better.

Than my wyfe, good Socrates, answered here vnto after this maner: wherin can I helpe you, faid fhe? or wherin may my littel power do you any good? For truly my mother told me, that al to gether lay in your handes, and that it belonged vnto me to be fobre, and lyue in chastitie. Mary foo it is, good wyfe, fayd I, and fo my father tolde me to. But it is the poynt of a fobre housebande, and of a fobre wyfe, to do foo, that that the whiche they haue may be wel ordred and guyded, and to encreace and get more to it, by some good and rightful way.

And what do ye fee in me, fayde my wyfe, that I may encreace our houfe, if I do (p. 29) applie it? Mary, fayd I, if ye endeavour your felf to do those thinges to the best of your power, the whiche both god willeth that ye shulde do, and the lawe exhortethe you to it. And what thinges be those, fayd she? Ueryly, fayd I, no fmall thynges, excepte ye thynke, that that Bee doth but a lyttell good, the which remaineth stil in the hiue, to ouer fee the warkes, whan the other go abrode to gether floures. And forfoth me thynketh, that god almyghty hath fette together for many good causes and confyderations, that goodlye couple, that is the housbande and the wyfe, to thentent that they shuld be most profitable one to an other in that good feloweshyp. Fyrste of all, to thentent that mankynde do not decay and fayle, this ioly couple lieth together, and ingendreth chyldren. Than agayne, by reason herof, they bringe forthe chyldren to helpe and succour them in theyr olde age. Moreouer, the maner and lyuynge of men, doth greatly dyffer from the lyfe of wylde beaftes, the whiche be alway abrode in the fieldes. For it is mete for men to haue houses. Wherfore it is conueniente that they, whiche wyll haue fomewhat to bringe into theyr houses, haue menne with them to do those warkes, that muste nedes be done abrode in the fieldes. For tyllynge of the grounde, fowynge of the corne, fettyng of trees, and kepynge of beaftis at graffe and pasture, be all done abrode. But agayne, it is nedefull, whan those fruites be conueyed into the hous, to ouer fe and faue them, and to do al fuche thinges as must be done at home. Babis and yonge children muste nedes be brought vppe within the house. Breade must be baked, and the meate sod and dressed within the house. Also spynnynge, cardynge, and weauynge muste be doone within the house. And where that bothe those thynges, that must be done abrode, and (p. 30) those that be doone within the house, do require care and diligence: me thinketh that god hath caused nature to shewe plainely, that a woman is borne to take hede of all fuche thynges as muste be doone at home. For he hath made man of body, hart, and stomacke, strong and mighty, to suffre and endure hete and cold, to iourney, and to go to warfare. Wherfore god hath in a manner commaunded and charged hym with those thynges that be done abrode out of the howfe. He also remembrynge, that he hath ordeined the woman to brynge vp yonge chyldren, he hath made her farre more tender in loue towarde her children, than the housebande. And where he hath ordeined, that the woman shuld kepe those thinges, that the man getteth and bringeth home to her, and he knowynge very well, that for to kepe a thynge fuerlye, it is not the worste pointe to be doubtful and fearful, he dealed to her a greate deale more feare, than he dyd to the man.

And he also perceyuinge, that if any man doth hym wronge, the whiche laboureth and worketh without, he must defende him selfe, he distributed to the man a great dele more boldnes. And for because it behoueth, that both they do gyue and receyue, he hath gyuen them indifferentely remembrance and diligence, in fo moche, that it is hard to difcerne, whether kynd hath more of them, either the man or the womanne. He hath also granted them indifferently, to refrayne them felfes from fuch thinges, as is convenyent they do. And hath given the power and auctorite, that loke in what thynge the either of them doth the better, he bringeth the more away with hym. But bycaufe the natures and the difpositions of them both, be not egally foo perfecte in al these thinges, they have so moche the more nede the one of the other. And this couple is fo moch the more profitable, (p. 31) the one to the tother, bycaufe that that the one lacketh, the tother hath. Wherefore, good wife, feing we fe that, which god hath ordeined for us both, we muste enforce, and endeuour our selfes to do both our partis in the beste wyse. The lawe femeth to comforte us and exhort us to it, the which coupleth man and wyfe together. And lyke wyfe, as god maketh them to come together to gette chyldren, so the lawe wyll have them liue together, partakers one of anothers goods in good flowfhyppe[felowfhyppe]. Lyke wyfe, the lawe fheweth, and god commandeth, that it is beste for eche of them to do theyr parte. For it is more honestie for a woman to kepe her house, than to walke aboute. And it is more shame for a man to abyde fluggynge at home, than to apply his mynde to such thinges as muste be done abrode. But if any man doth contrary to that he is naturally borne to, parauenture god will remembre, that he breaketh his statutes and decrees, and wyl punishe hym, outher for bicause he is negligent in that that he shuld do, or els bycause he taketh upon hym that that belongeth to the wife.

Me thynketh also, that the maisters that keepeth the hyve, dothe lyke wyse that that god hath ordeyened her unto. And what dothe the maystress bee, sayde she, whereby it may be likened to that that I must do? For bicause, sayde he, it bydeth alway in the hyve, and wyll not suffre no bees to be ydel: and they that shulde worke without, she sendeth them to their worke. And what so euer any of them bryngeth home, she marketh, receyuethe, and saueth it, untyll the tyme come that it must be occupied. And whan the tyme comethe, that it must be occupied, than she distributeth euery thynge according as equitie requireth. And she causeth them that do bide within, to weaue and make the faire hony comes after the best wise, and (p. 32) taketh hede to the yonge bees, that they be well fed and brought up. But whan they be come to that age, and to that point, that they be

able to worke, she sendeth them out with one, the which they solowe as the gyde and capitayne. And must I do so to, sayde my wyfe? Ye, forsoth, sayd I: for ye must alwaye byde within the house, and those men, the whiche muste worke abrode, ye must sende them to it: and they that muste worke within, ye must commaunde them and be ouer them, to fe them do it. And that that is brought in, ye must reciue it. And that whiche muste be spente of it, ye must parte and deuide it. And that that remaineth, ye must ley it vp and kepe it safe, tyll time of nede. And beware, that, that whiche was apoynted to be spente in a twelue-monthe, be not spente in a monthe. And whan the wol is brought in to you, ye must se that it be carded and sponne, that clothe may be made of it. Also ye muste see, that the corne, whiche is brought in to you, be not fo musty and dusty, that it maye not be eaten. But one thynge specially aboue all other there is, that ye must be careful fore, and that shall gette you greate fauour and loue, that is, if any of our feruantes hap to fal ficke, that ye endeuour your felf, the beste that ye canne, not onely to cheryshe them, but also to helpe, that they may have theyr helth agayne. By my feyth, fayde my wyfe, it is a very gracious and a kynde dede. For when they be ones holpen, and eafed, thei wil cunne vs very good thanke, and be the more louynge and feithfull vnto vs. And by the reason of this good prouision of this maystres bee, sayde I, all the tother beare so good loue and affection vnto her, that whan foo euer she goeth out (p. 33) of the hyue, there will none tary behynde, but all wayte vpon her.

Than my wyfe answered me, I do greatly meruayle, whether suche thynges as ye saye the maystres bee dothe, doo not beelonge moche more to you than to me. For my kepinge and departying within were but a lyttell worthe, excepte ye dyd your diligence, that somewhat myght by brought in. And my bryngynge in, sayde I, shulde auayle but a littel, excepte there were one, that kept and sauid that that I brought in.

Do you not fee, fayde I, howe euery man hath great pite of them, the which, they fay, that their punishment is to poure water into tubbes full of hooles, tylle they be full. And they pite them for nothing els, but because they seme to labour in vaine. By my fayth, fayd my wife, they be very miserable in dede, the whiche do so. There be other thynges that belonge to you to take hede of, the which must nedes be very pleasante vnto you, as whan ye haue taken one in to your seruice, that canne neyther spyn nor carde, if ye teache her to doo it, it shall be twyse so moche more worth vnto you.

And if ye haue a maide, the which is other negligent, or is not trewe of her

handes, or that can not wayte, if ye make her diligent, trusty, and a good servante, all shall be to your great profyte. And agayne, whan ye se your servantes good and sobre selowes, and profytable for your house, ye must do them good, and shewe them some gentilnes. But if there be any of them knauishe or frowarde, ye must punishe theym. And this agayne shulde be most pleasant of al, if ye coude make your selse better than I, and make me as it were your servant. And ye nede not seare, lest in process of time, whan ye come to age, ye be lesse set by: but be sure of this, (p. 34) if ye be diligent, louynge, and tendable to me, our chyldren, and householde, the elder that ye waxe, the more honourable and better esteemed shall ye be.

For it is not the beautifulnesse, and goodly shappe, but the very vertue and goodnes that men regarde, and fauour.

 $rac{1}{2}$ pp. 26, \P_1 -34, \P_2 . Omitting pp. 34, \P_3 - 42, \P_1 ; mostly devoted to household order $rac{1}{2}$ its importance, comparing the household to a well-ordered ship, and the housewife to the captain of the ship. Continuing p. 43, \P_1 :

...Befyde al this, I taught her, that she shulde not be displeased, if I did put her to more busines, and charged her with mo thynges to be done in the house, than any feruant I had, shewynge her, that prentis and couenant feruantes haue no more of their maisters goodes, but as moche as they deliuer them, to do theyr maysters seruice with al, or to bestowe it in their behalfe, or to kepe it for them: and they may occupye none of it to theyr owne vse, excepte their maisters to gyue it them. But he that is the mayster, he hath al, and maye vse euery thing at his owne pleafure, wherfore he that hath most profytte by it, if his goodes be faufe, hath moste losse, if they be loste or perished. I shewed her, it wer reason he shuld be most dilygent, and take best hede about it. Than fayde I, Good Ischomachus, whanne your wyfe harde this, howe dyd she take it? What, wyll ye haue any more of it, good Socrates? but that she fayd, I knowe her not wel, if I thought it dyd greue her, that I should teache her, to take hede to her goodes and substaunce. For it shulde haue ben more greuous vnto me a greate deale, sayd she, if ye had bade me to take no hede to my goodes, than to byd me to be diligent about that that is mine owne. For me thinketh, that like wife, as it is naturally given to a good woman, rather to be diligent about her owne chyldren, thanne not to care for them. Lyke wyfe it is more pleafure for an honest womanne to take hede to her owne goodes, than to fet nought by them.

And whan I harde, fayd Socrates, that his wife gaue him fuch an answere, I faid, By my Faith, Ischomachus, ye tell me of a ioly and a manly stomacke of a

womanne. Ye, fayde he, ye shall (p. 44) here me telle you other thynges yet, that wyl well shewe her good lustye harte, that whan she had hard but ones speake of it, streyght way she dyd after me in it. Soc. I pray you tel me that, for surely I haue more pleasure a greatte deale, to lerne the vertue of a woman aliue, than if Zeusis, the excellent peynter, shuld shewe me the pycture and portraiture of a fayre woman. Than fayde Ischom. whan I had sene her vppon a tyme, that she had peynted her face with a certayne oyntment, that she might seme whitter than fhe was, and with an other oyntment, that she might seme redder than she was in very dede, and that she had a peyre of high showes on her feete, to make her feme taller woman than she was, I fayde vnto her, Tell me, good wyfe, whether wolde ye iuge me worthier to be beloued, if our goodes and fubstance nowe beinge common one to an other, if I shulde shewe you that that I have in very dede, and make nother more of it nor no leffe that it is in very dede, and kepte nothyng priuey from you: or of I went about to deceiue you, faying I had more than I haue, and shewinge you false money, cheines of brasse in stede of golde, counterfeyt precious stones, red in the stede of scarlet, false purple in the stede of pure and good?

Than she answered streyghte waye, God forbid ye shuld be such one. For if ye were fuche one, I coude not fynde in myne hart to loue you. I wyll tell you wyfe, We be come together, to thintent to have plefure of the body one of an other, at the lest men say so. Whether than, seinge I must give you my body to vse with you, were I better to be beloued after your jugement, if I studied and went about to make my bodye feme the luftier, the stronger, the better coloured, and better complectioned, and shuld noynte my face with certaine oyntmentes, and soo shewe me (p. 45) vnto you, and lye with you, and gyue you these oyntmentes to fe and to handle, in the stede of my coloure, and of myne owne face? Forfoth, fayd fhe, I shuld neuer haue more pleafure in handlynge any oyntemente in the stede of your face, nor delyte more in thynge counterfeted, than in your very eies and natural face. Thynke lyke wyfe by me, good wyfe, fayd Ifchomachus, that I haue no more pleafure in oyntmentes, thanne I haue in your owne natural body and face. And like wife, as god hath made horfes to haue pleafure with maares, bulles with kyne, rammes with ewes, fo lyke wife menne doo thynke that body moste pleasant, that is pure. And as for suche wyles and deceytes, they may paraduenture begyle straungers, soo that they shall neuer be spyed, but they that be dayly conversant together, they shal lightly perceive, if the tone go about to deceiue tother. For they well be spyed, either whan they ryse out of theyr bedde,

before they make them redy, or whan they fweate, or whan they wepe, or whan they washe and bathe them. Socra. And I praye you, fayd I, what an aunswere made she to it? Ischo. What, sayde I, by my feyth she went neuer sens aboute no suche matters, but shewed her selfe alway pure, with as good comlines as myght be... (pp. 43-45)

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