

**THE GREEK GENIUS  
AND ITS  
MEANING TO US**

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The Greek genius and its meaning to us by R. W. Livingstone

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**R. W. LIVINGSTONE**

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BY

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## PREFACE

WHEN I began to teach Latin and Greek, a friend asked me what I supposed myself to have learnt from them, and what I was trying to teach others. This book was written as an attempt to answer the question, as far as Greek is concerned. It was written to inform, primarily myself, secondarily my pupils. It is therefore intentionally popular, and, like the poems of Lucilius, designed *neque indoctissimis neque doctissimis*: it uses modern illustrations, and tries, as far as possible, to put what it has to say in a readable form. I hope it may serve as a general introduction to the study of Greek literature, and for that purpose be acceptable, not only to such students or teachers of the classics as feel themselves to be in the class indicated above, but also to the considerable public who take a humane interest in what Greece has done for the world. For my intention has been to try and make the spirit of Greece alive for myself at the present day, to translate it, as far as I could, into modern language, and to trace its relationship to our own ways of thinking and feeling.

If I do not apologize for the manner in which this ambitious task has been executed, it is not because I have no misgivings. Few people could write a book on this subject, and feel satisfied with it. Still, if I am not convincing, I shall at any rate be contentious, and educationally the second quality is perhaps more valuable than the first. On the same grounds I would excuse myself for having raised many questions which are left half-

answered : the method may stimulate readers, if it does not satisfy them.

'The Greek Genius' is an unsatisfactory title for a book which says nothing about Greek politics or Greek sculpture; but 'the Genius of Greek Literature' was too narrow for my purpose, and 'Some Aspects of the Greek Genius', which I should have preferred, was already appropriated : so that the present name has been adopted, and the exact scope of the book indicated in the introductory chapter (see esp. pp. 13, 14). That chapter also explains who, for my purposes, 'the Greeks' have been taken to be; it is intended to safeguard the book against certain obvious criticisms, and may well be omitted by general readers who are not concerned with these points.

As I am writing for a general audience, I have either quoted in English or else translated my quotations. For Thucydides and Plato I have generally made use of Jowett. Gaps in the quotations are not indicated unless they affect the general sense of the passage. For a book of this kind an index is of little value, and I have therefore substituted a full table of contents.

The book owes much to my mother and sister, who have helped me with criticism and in other ways; to Mr. P. E. Matheson, my former tutor, and to Mr. R. W. Chapman of the University Press, who have corrected the proofs and made suggestions; and to Professor Gilbert Murray, to whom I should like to express especial gratitude, not only for reading and criticizing most of the book in draft, but also for teaching me, as he has taught so many others, to look on Greek thought as a living thing.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have, however, no right to imply that Professor Murray agrees with what the book contains.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 1. The achievement of Greece . . . . .   | 11   |
| 2. Questions suggested by it, and aim of this book . . . . .                       | 13   |
| 3. Some difficulties and the attitude taken up to them<br>in it . . . . .          | 14   |
| (a) Is there a Greek genius ?  |      |
| (b) In which of the Greek races is it to be sought ?                               |      |
| (c) In what epochs ?   |      |
| (d) Are we to consider the ordinary man or only<br>the writers and thinkers ?      |      |
| 4. Our aim is to form some idea of Hellenism. Con-<br>clusions from this . . . . . | 21   |

## CHAPTER I

### THE GREEK GENIUS: THE NOTE OF BEAUTY

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Various views of the Greeks . . . . .                                    | 23 |
| → A. The idea that moral striving was their great mark . . . . .         | 24 |
| 1. Objections to this: its absence in typical Greeks . . . . .           | 25 |
| 2. Plato and S. Paul . . . . .   | 26 |
| 3. The Greeks . . . . .  | 27 |
| (a) Had no sense of sin.   |    |
| (b) Were not exclusively interested in the moral<br>side of man.         |    |
| (c) Took up an attitude of reason not of passion in<br>these matters.    |    |
| B. The idea that the Greeks were primarily lovers of<br>beauty . . . . . | 29 |
| 1. This view not borne out by Thucydides and others . . . . .            | 31 |
| 2. But their sense of beauty was more general than ours . . . . .        | 34 |
| 3. Testimony of Heine and Renan to it . . . . .                          | 35 |
| 4. It appears in . . . . .   | 35 |
| (a) Their names.   |    |
| (b) Their sayings.   |    |

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| (c) The finish of their poetry—Homer and Scott.         |      |
| (d) Their use of the word <i>καλός</i> .                |      |
| 5. They were more than lovers of beauty . . . . .       | 39   |
| Note. A certain characteristic of Greek style . . . . . | 40   |

## CHAPTER II

### THE NOTE OF FREEDOM

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. The meaning of Greek truthfulness : Greek literature and Irish legend contrasted . . . . . | 43 |
| 2. Primary cause of it the religious and political freedom of Greece . . . . .                | 45 |
| A. Religious freedom.   |    |
| 1. Few attacks on free thought in Athens : contrast with Inquisition . . . . .                | 47 |
| 2. This freedom promoted by . . . . .   | 51 |
| (a) Anthropomorphism of Greek religion tending to toleration.                                 |    |
| (b) Absence of a Bible.   |    |
| (c) Greek instinct for rationalism : stories of Job and of Prometheus.                        |    |
| —(d) Greek attitude to God : contrasted with Jewish and Christian attitude.                   |    |
| B. Political freedom.   |    |
| 1. Greek instinct for political individualism : instances . . . . .                           | 62 |
| 2. The old Comedy . . . . .   | 64 |
| 3. Theory of liberty in the Funeral Speech . . . . .  | 66 |
| 4. Contrast with Rome : interferences with liberty there . . . . .                            | 69 |
| 5. Reasons for this difference . . . . .  | 72 |

## CHAPTER III

### THE NOTE OF DIRECTNESS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. There is a further cause of Greek truthfulness . . . . .                        | 74 |
| 2. Directness in Greek descriptions of Nature : Alcman and Mrs. Browning . . . . . | 76 |

## CONTENTS

7

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| 3. Similar quality generally in Greek view of life: Greek ideas on . . . . .                            | 77   |
| (a) Love.   |      |
| (b) Children and friends.   |      |
| (c) Death.  |      |
| 4. Meaning of this quality: it is neither an absence of convention, nor unerring truthfulness . . . . . | 88   |
| 5. Due to the Greeks being a primitive people . . . . .   | 90   |
| —6. Consequent absence of mysticism, romanticism, sentimentality . . . . .                              | 90   |
| 7. But they were not brutal realists . . . . .  | 92   |
| 8. Deviations from directness in Greek literature . . . . .   | 94   |
| 9. Why it persisted . . . . .   | 95   |
| 10. Definition of it; its effects . . . . .   | 96   |
| 11. Criticism of it and contrast with modern literature . . . . .                                       | 96   |
| 12. Instances of poetry, Latin and English, which is not direct . . . . .                               | 99   |
| 13. Directness leads to increased pleasure in common things . . . . .                                   | 105  |
| 14. It is hostile to sentimentality . . . . .   | 107  |
| <i>Note.</i> Further exceptions to it in Greek literature . . . . .                                     | 108  |

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NOTE OF HUMANISM

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. The Greeks viewed the world from a human standpoint, and humanized . . . . . | 110 |
| (a) God.  |     |
| (b) Nature.   |     |
| (c) Life.   |     |
| 2. Greek humanism illustrated from . . . . .                                    | 113 |
| (a) Their views of a future world.  |     |
| (b) Three Greek definitions of happiness.                                       |     |
| 3. Humanism in practice: pictures of Greek life from Xenophon . . . . .         | 116 |
| 4. Humanism and Christianity . . . . .  | 123 |
| 5. Its significance for us . . . . .  | 123 |