

**LITTLE ESSAYS DRAWN
FROM THE WRITINGS OF
GEORGE SANTAYANA**

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Little Essays Drawn from the Writings of George Santayana by George Santayana & Logan Pearsall Smith

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GEORGE SANTAYANA & LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

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PREFACE

THE origin and purpose of this book can be briefly stated. Ever since I became acquainted with Mr. Santayana's writings, I have been in the habit of taking up now and then one or another of his volumes, finding in them, among many things that, being no philosopher, I did not understand, much writing like that of the older essayists on large human subjects, which seemed to me more interesting and in many ways more important than anything I found in the works of other contemporary writers. I soon fell into the way of copying out the passages that I liked, and thus I gradually formed a collection of little essays on subjects of general interest—art and literature and religion, and the history of the human mind as it has manifested itself at various times and in the works of different men of genius. As most of Mr. Santayana's books have not been reprinted in England, and are hardly known to those on this side of the Atlantic who might be interested in them, it occurred to me that it might be worth while to print these little essays. I asked Mr. Santayana if he would permit me to do this, sending him my collection for his consideration and possible approval. I sent it to him with some misgiving, for I felt that it was rather an impertinent thing to cut up the life-work of a distinguished philosopher into a disconnected compilation of "elegant extracts." And then, as I re-read with more careful attention the books from which I had been making excerpts, I came to see that there

lay implicit in the material something of far greater significance, and that a much better use might be made of it. It became clear to me that the estimations and criticisms I had copied out were not mere personal and temperamental insights, but were bound up with, and dependent upon, a definite philosophy, a rational conception of the world and man's allotted place in it, which gave them a unity of interest and an importance far beyond that of any mere utterances of miscellaneous appreciation—any mere "adventures of the soul." Mr. Santayana is by race and temperament a representative of the Latin tradition: his mind is a Catholic one; it has been his aim to reconstruct our modern, miscellaneous, shattered picture of the world, and to build, not of clouds, but of the materials of this common earth, an edifice of thought, a fortress or temple for the modern mind, in which every natural impulse could find, if possible, its opportunity for satisfaction, and every ideal aspiration its shrine and altar. It was from this edifice of Reason that I had been taking the ornaments, and I now saw the much greater beauty they would have if they could appear in their appropriate setting. To sift, however, and rearrange these fragments, to reconstruct out of them some image in miniature of the original edifice from which I had detached them, was not a task for me to undertake—it could only be performed by the architect of the original building. Fortunately I succeeded in persuading Mr. Santayana to undertake this task; and while, therefore, the choice of these little essays is largely mine, their titles and order and arrangement, and the changes and omissions which have been made in the original texts are due, not to me, but to their author.

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH.

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