

ESSAYS & ADDRESSES

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Essays & addresses by Gilbert Murray

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ESSAYS & ADDRESSES

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PREFACE

SEVERAL of these papers have appeared in periodicals or been published in the proceedings of societies, and I have to thank the editors or the committees for the permission to reprint. Detailed acknowledgements will be found in the table of contents. One or two besides are published in separate volumes, the *Stoic Philosophy* by Messrs. Watts and Co., and others by Messrs. Allen and Unwin. As to these also the details are given elsewhere.

To make a collection even on a small scale of one's occasional writings on popular subjects throughout a long period of years is, I find, a matter of some anxiety. A man has generally little confidence in his past self. There is no knowing what it may have done, or what foolish things it may have thought or written, ten or twenty years ago. I confess that when I began to look through my papers with a view to the present selection I rather expected to find embarrassing self-contradictions or indiscretions of which I should now be ashamed. In this I was agreeably disappointed, but I did find what from the reader's point of view is perhaps worse, a good deal of repetition, or rather a constant attempt, by different means and in different contexts, to say very much the same thing.

This discovery has suggested the order in which the essays are now arranged. Popular essays—if I may venture to hope that these are in any sense popular—are normally written upon large and profound subjects about which neither the writer nor the reader can claim exact knowledge. That is inevitable and by no means blame-worthy. Yet it does seem fair to ask that one who takes it upon him to advise his neighbours about uncertain and speculative things ought first to possess exact knowledge about something or other. It is not merely that he ought to know some little corner of the world before passing judgements on the world as a whole. He ought also to know the difference between knowing and not

knowing ; he ought to have mastered, in some one subject, the method by which knowledge is acquired. And whatever his subject is, his experience of it will be an invaluable help to him in understanding matters outside it, and will probably here and there enable him to see some things which people with a different experience have failed to see. Of course it will also to some extent mislead him ; that is inevitable. It will, in spite of all vigilance, give a bias or a colour to his conceptions.

For good and evil, the present writer is a " grammaticus " and in particular a Greek student. His special form of experience and the point of view to which it leads are given in the first paper, *Religio Grammatici*. Starting from some study of " letters " as the record made by the human soul of those moments of life which it has valued most and most longs to preserve, he makes his attempt to understand its present adventures and prospects. The next three essays deal more or less directly with Greek subjects, or rather with the light thrown by particular phases of Greek experience upon modern problems of society and conduct and literature. Then the connexion with Greece becomes slighter, and by the end of the book we are dealing directly with modern questions.

Most of the papers are recent. One only is twenty years old. The address on National Ideals has been included here after some hesitation because, in spite of a certain crudity and perhaps ferocity of tone, it seemed to me that its expression of the feelings of the Liberal minority during the Boer War afforded an interesting parallel to the feelings of the same minority twenty years later, at the close of the Great War. I will not lay stress on the similarities nor yet on the differences, except one : that now there is a League of Nations and then there was not. To a present-day reader the last half-desperate pages of that paper seem almost like a conscious argument for the foundation of a League of Nations ; but of course at that time the name of the League had never been spoken nor the idea conceived except as a fantasy.

G. M.

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