

**GREEK WIT: A
COLLECTION OF
SMART SAYINGS
AND ANECDOTES**

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Greek Wit: A Collection of Smart Sayings and Anecdotes by F. A. Paley

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A COLLECTION OF
SMART SAYINGS AND ANECDOTES
TRANSLATED FROM GREEK
PROSE WRITERS

BY

F. A. PALEY M.A.

EDITOR OF MARTIAL'S EPIGRAMS ETC.



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NOTICE.

THE reader will understand that this collection of Anecdotes is made according to no order, and with no classification in respect of subject or date. They are taken just as they were noted down in the course of reading. It is to be observed also, that in no instance is a *literal* translation given. It has been thought advisable in many cases even to abbreviate, that the point of each may be conveyed in as few words as possible. For the purpose intended—to amuse, perhaps to instruct—nothing would have been gained by any affectation of minute accuracy, or by any method or system of arrangement.

It is believed that most of these "Sayings" are not commonly known, nearly all of them being taken from writers little read in the schools. The series might be extended almost indefinitely. Should this little work meet with any success, Part II. will follow at no long interval.

Few English words are more difficult to define than *Wit*. In its origin meaning merely *shrewdness* and *intelligence*, it has no connection, except incidentally, with *joke* and *fun*. We laugh at the latter, we admire the former. True wit is more often allied to satire, and the objects of witticisms, we know, are but too apt to be offended. Wit may be simply didactic, and (as in most of the anecdotes in this little book) convey great truths in terse or homely sayings, or in friendly banterings; but its natural bent is mostly displayed in cutting remarks. Hence we are wont to call wit "incisive," and to talk of its point, its edge, its keenness, &c. The greatest wits of antiquity were the poets Aristophanes and Martial. Alas! that their morality was not equal to their genius, or rather, that their genius should have been perverted to the making light of immorality! Among our national celebrities, Dean Swift, Sheridan, and Sydney Smith stand unrivalled. Wit is a peculiar phase of cleverness, possessed by few, but one that is greatly appreciated by all who are not themselves dunces.

LONDON, *September*, 1880.

GREEK WIT.

I.

4 ONE day, when snow was falling, the King of the Scythians asked a man, who was braving it unclad, whether he felt cold? The man asked in return, whether his majesty felt cold in his face? "Certainly not," said the king. "Then," replied the man, "neither do I feel the cold, for *I am all face.*" AELIAN, *Var. Hist.* vii. 6.

2.

Xantippe, the wife of Socrates, being reluctant to put on her husband's mantle to go and see a procession, was thus rebuked by him: "What you are going for is not to see, but to be seen."

Ibid. 10.

3.

A vain old envoy from Keos came to Sparta with his hair dyed, being ashamed to appear aged. Introduced to the assembly, he delivered his message. Upon which Archidamus, the Spartan king,

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