

**SENECA THE
PHILOSOPHER AND HIS
MODERN MESSAGE**

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Seneca the Philosopher and His Modern Message by Richard Mott Gummere

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**SENECA THE
PHILOSOPHER AND HIS
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Our Debt to Greece and Rome

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**BY
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To

THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

FRANCIS BARTON GUMMERE

*Vivit: ad posteros usque transiit et se in
memoriam dedit. (SENECA)*

"He lives in life that ends not with his breath."

EDITORS' PREFACE

THE LIBRARY, "Our Debt to Greece and Rome," should reveal the inherited permanent factors in the civilization of the twentieth century which have resisted the effects of chance and time and outlived the ephemeral experiments of man. Those classifications of our intellectual, moral and spiritual life, which have had their origin in the Greek and Roman world and which have steadied human life and thinking ever since, are today of enormous importance for determining the aim and direction of life and for creating a sense of unity in life. These elements in our life are the bases of civilization, upon which the fancy and imagination of the human mind may build, but without which or without knowledge of which, life sails upon an uncharted sea. Whether in philosophy, science or religion, in literature or language, in art or architecture, or in political thinking we are so largely Greek and Roman, European and American civilizations are so shot through

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and through with the ancient traditions and habits of thought, that we can understand ourselves and our institutions only as we comprehend that large inherited element and the history of its influence. "We think in terms like those idiomatic in Rome and Greece." The Hebraic mood and mind, alone, of the ancient past, possess a hold comparable to that of Greece and Rome upon our thinking and imagination. Greece has been the source of most of our aspirations, and Rome, the great mediator.

An account of the long-continued Influence of these ancient forces, the vicissitudes of their acceptance, of correct or of false application or even of rejection, possess a peculiar charm and fascination. This Library will furnish a fresh appraisal of these Influences and will point out the values of ancient forms as a constant guidance to human endeavor, as a constant corrective in the midst of crises, as a constant inspiration for a better world. It is this aspect of human history that will engage the writers of the volumes in this Series, who may thereby contribute much, not merely to a better understanding of this historical phenomenon, but also to a true recognition of the

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supreme importance to civilization of those elements of the ancient world that are deathless.

A clear exposition, therefore, of those inherited elements, of their survival through medieval Europe, of their effects upon the Renaissance, upon later European and American civilization, of their influence today, should lead to a clearer understanding of ourselves, which is the first essential for true progress. To what extent that legacy will possess value for the future, time alone will tell. Far from advocating stereotyped thinking according to traditional forms, which we must constantly revise, we should at least as individuals, as a society, as a civilization, know ourselves in order to establish a firm foundation for a new speculation and for a new freedom, in order to attain an independence that is truly rational. If from the past some traditions have come that serve as unworthy inhibitions, we shall come to know their unworthiness only by a study of their historic development. On the other hand, we predict a clear revelation, through the pages of this new Series, of many *abiding values*, whose merit is determined not merely by fancied vested rights existing in tradition, but established by reason of inherent worth and trial.