

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE GREEKS, I

SOCIAL LIFE IN GREECE

FROM

HOMER TO MENANDER

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P R E F A C E
T O T H E 1898 E D I T I O N .

THIS book had already in the fourth edition assumed its final form, nor was it my intention hereafter to enlarge it, but rather to add companion volumes upon the later portions of old Greek life. Indeed, maturer study has led me to reject some changes which I had introduced in deference to the censure of professional critics, and I added in the fourth edition some considerations concerning the moral standard of Greek politics in Demosthenes' day, which seem to me of much importance, and which have been generally accepted among later Greek historians, though likely to increase the displeasure with which certain scholars regard my estimate of old Greek civilisation. It is too homely for them; it detracts too much from the ideal they have framed for themselves; it asserts the weaker and commoner side of the nation in the face of their unreal speculations. Nor is it true that homely views imply a grudging appreciation of the perfections of Greek literature and art. What they really imply is only this, that the greatest poets and the greatest artists were not the average representatives of the nation at large, and that the social life of the people was not of that extraordinary perfection which the men of books had imagined. I had long felt that the extremely learned often miss the practical infer-

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ences which may be drawn from our classics by plain common sense, and it occurred to me to seek the materials for sketching the Social Life of the Greeks, not in previous commentators, but in the Greek books themselves, which I re-read one by one specially, with particular attention to the social points they contained. This was the method which led me to draw a picture of the Greeks from their ancient books corresponding in many points to the Greeks of to-day, nor do I know of any attempt to dispute the accuracy of my statements, except some vague assertions put forward without evidence. On a few details I at first surrendered my own opinion too readily; but these points are not worth discussing here. So far as they turn upon the internal evidence for spuriousness in extant orations and other documents I have said all that is necessary in my *History of Greek Classical Literature*, a work which treats of the literary aspects of the life portrayed in the following pages, and is therefore an important supplement for all those who desire to get a general view of Greek civilisation in its various phases. Thus objections have been answered and a want supplied, so that the present volume may maintain the favour with which the general public has honoured it. And now, when I am saying the last word about it, and in some sense taking leave of it, I may be excused for dwelling on the circumstances which gave it a peculiar interest, and have obtained for it a longer life and a better name than I could have hoped.

The same favour has been extended to my *Rambles*

and *Studies in Greece* (3rd ed. 1887, Macmillan), which give my impressions of modern life among the successors of the old Hellenes, and in the land which produced so many centuries of splendid civilization. To this study I had appended a chapter on Greek Music and Painting, which was rightly considered to belong to the present volume. I have therefore added it to this edition, to make way for new matter upon mediæval Greece in future editions of my *Rambles*.

I have since been enabled to complete two new volumes, covering part of the huge gap between classical and modern Greece, and have given in my *Greek Life and Thought from the death of Alexander to the Roman Conquest*, and in *The Greek World under Roman Sway*, the evidence culled from the Greek authors between Menander and Plutarch, as well as some estimate of that literature. These volumes were therefore strictly a sequel to the present one, worked out in the same way from the texts themselves, and will answer the objection that I had paused in the middle of my great subject. There yet remains the appreciation of Greek Life under the Roman Empire; from the days when Christianity became a social force. I trust I may yet be able to complete this task.

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

May, 1898.