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J. P. Mahaffy

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Social Life in Greece from Homer to Menander

The classical scholar J.P. Mahaffy (1839–1919) is known equally for his work on Greek texts and Egyptian papyri (his edition of *The Flinders Petrie Papyri* is reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection). He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, and spent the rest of his working life there, as a fellow, and ultimately as provost from 1914 until his death. In this 1874 work, Mahaffy attempts to penetrate what he describes as the ‘subjective side ... the feelings of the Greeks in their temples and their assemblies, in their homes, and their wanderings’. He considers the methodology to be used in interrogating works of literature for this sort of sociological, or even psychological, research, and examines the written evidence from Homer to Menander, focusing, almost inevitably, on Athens. This is an early and pioneering work in an area of study which has become increasingly significant over the last century.

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BY THE

REV. J. P. MAHAFFY, M.A.

Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

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PREFACE.

THERE are many books, German, French, and English, on the objective side of old Greek life—upon the religion, the laws, the feasts, the furniture of the Greeks; but there are very few on the subjective side, on the feelings of the Greeks in their temples and their assemblies, in their homes, and their wanderings.

It is on this side that I offer the present volume as a contribution. It is, of course, very incomplete; but, were I able to remedy this defect, the book must become unserviceable to the general reader, for whom it is intended. The materials are so vast and so fragmentary, that any systematic treatment must result in a mere dictionary—a mosaic of references, and not in a work fit for ordinary perusal. It is, moreover, generally true that no work is so disappointing as that which professes completeness.

In my treatment of the subject, I have endeavoured to take homely and common sense views, and have thus arrived at many results opposed to what I

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consider sentimentalism or pedantry. These results are in all cases supported by direct references to the Greek texts themselves, on which I have relied in preference to modern authority. I hope my readers will adopt the same method in judging me, and will thus be brought into contact with the great originals, which are too often studied at second hand.

Wherever modern writers have suggested to me interesting views or quotations, I trust I have fully acknowledged my obligations. I cannot do so adequately to my old pupils, Mr. H. B. Leech, of Caius College, Cambridge, and Mr. Oscar Wilde, of Magdalen College, Oxford, who have made improvements and corrections all through the book. I am likewise indebted to Mr. J. G. Butcher, of Trinity College, Cambridge, for reading the proof sheets and making many valuable criticisms.

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,
November 4, 1874.

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