

which are splendidly expounded in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, it is impossible to estimate at a very high value the actual education of the period in Athens itself, not to speak of the other Greek states.

But a truce to this unwelcome task! Let us rather revel in the serene atmosphere of Athenian culture, refusing to be annoyed by the clouds which throw over it an occasional gloom. Let us admit, for the nonce, that at the climax of Athenian history man rose to an eminence which he never reached again. Yet it must not be forgotten that the culture of a single small state is not the achievement of mankind. Such a state at best stands to the human race as the exceptional genius to the common people. Its value, too, lies in the service which it renders to humanity. That service, moreover, as in the case of the eminent individual, is often accompanied with morbid conditions which weaken the chances of survival in earthly forms. Perhaps, therefore, it is not altogether without truth that Hegel¹ describes even the transcendent geniuses of Athens as "divine monstrosities," indicating the approach of death in the social organism that gave them birth. At all events, Attica, with all its unequalled culture, had failed to form the equipment for holding its own among the nations, and went down whenever it came to grapple with its real match in terrestrial warfare. Does it not seem as if this pointed to an insuperable condition in the evolution of man's higher life? In the physical life of men there is so much to encumber, to fetter, to retard their spiritual work that that work attains a fuller efficiency when it is freed from earthly encumbrances. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It was only by the fall of the Greek states under Macedonian and Roman conquest, that Greece came to exert her civilizing influence in East and West. Plutarch saw that Alexander's work in the world's history was to sow the seeds of Greek culture in the lands he conquered, while among Romans like Cicero, who had become

¹ In one of his earlier essays. See "Werke," Vol. i., p. 389.