

we should but dimly enter into the innermost secret of the verses. For that depends on many minute suggestions and impalpable reminiscences which give the glow and perfume, and can be caught by the initiated alone. If we want to get to the bottom of the things that meet us every day—our social life, our political freedom, our history, poetry and art—we must know about the Greeks. And we shall find it a poor makeshift to do so through the medium of translation if we have not, to begin with, at some time or other of our lives, been brought into living contact with the living spirit of Hellas through immediate converse in their tongue with masters who gave it voice. They come first in almost all departments of secular life. Man first became conscious of himself on the shores of the Aegean. There first he was fully aware—so as to carry out the conviction into all departments of action—that of all earthly things man alone partakes in the divine nature, and has an innate right to be free and noble, owning no absolute lord but reason and inward light. And so, standing upright in the majesty and strength of this conviction, he first overthrew his domestic tyrants. Then the force within him waxed so mighty that he repelled the innumerable hosts of slaves driven on by the lash of Eastern despots who came to enslave him. It was this consciousness of the dignity of man as man, of his indefeasible right to the free and full development of all the higher energies of his nature which was the root of the entire achievements of the Greeks. "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals." This was what the Greek felt, and he pro-

ceeded with marvellous felicity and many-sided vigour to develop in his politics and art and social life this central idea which formed the special revelation committed by divine election to his keeping, that he might give it visible shape in a thousand forms and so impart it to the world. Assyrians and Egyptians had reared great monuments, had learned to carve and build with exquisite technical skill; but their art was vague and vast, petrified by the feeling of individual insignificance into death-like stillness. The mighty energies of nature in those great plains and deserts without hills with their limitless horizons and the crushing power of a despot who was a god, benumbed them and weighed them down. They never awakened to the greatness of the individual soul. But the Greek, living in mountain glens, bright and breezy, and on the bays of a kindly sea, while he borrowed from them his skill in handiwork, used it to fashion human forms of breathing grace and animated majesty, and did not shrink from worshipping these as the fittest emblems and images of the Divine. Thus by making his gods in the image of man he showed at least that he knew that man had been made in the image of God. So, too, in politics, the Greeks felt that it was intolerable that the mass of men should live as the abject thralls of one; they insisted on equal laws, responsible magistrates who were the servants, not the masters, of the people, freedom of speech, open courts, decision of all questions by the voice of the civic majority, the good of the whole body, not the hypertrophy of any part. In social life too, in Athens, at least, the largest scope was permitted to individual taste and even caprice. The very slaves there went about, says Plato, with a jaunty air, as men and brothers. The very dogs would take the wall of you as you walked