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SOME ASPECTS OF-GREEK ETHICS.

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IN the few words which I have to say here to-day in response to the invitation and courtesy of the Philosophical Society and its President, I shall call your attention first and foremost to one or two of the questions connected with the evolution of the virtues in Greek civilization. The doctrine of such an evolution is of course now a commonplace, but it is curious and interesting, I think, to note what a meagre part such speculations play even in the Ethical works of Plato and Aristotle themselves. The "relativity" of moral standards is conspicuous rather by its absence; the "absoluteness" of moral standards seems rather to be maintained in the absolute sense of the term.

And first with Plato in the "Republic." Socrates asks for a definition of justice, and is referred, as is natural, to the Greek Bible, Catechism and Confession, to the writings of the poets, in particular to Homer and Simonides; but it appears from these writings, as ordinarily understood at any rate, that conduct ambiguous or worse will be included under the title of "just"; for Homer has praised not Odysseus only, but his grandfather Autolycus, whose record was unsurpassed in perjury and stealing; while Simonides is generally understood to have defined justice as "helping friends and injuring enemies," whereas it is evident, says Socrates, that the just man will injure no one.