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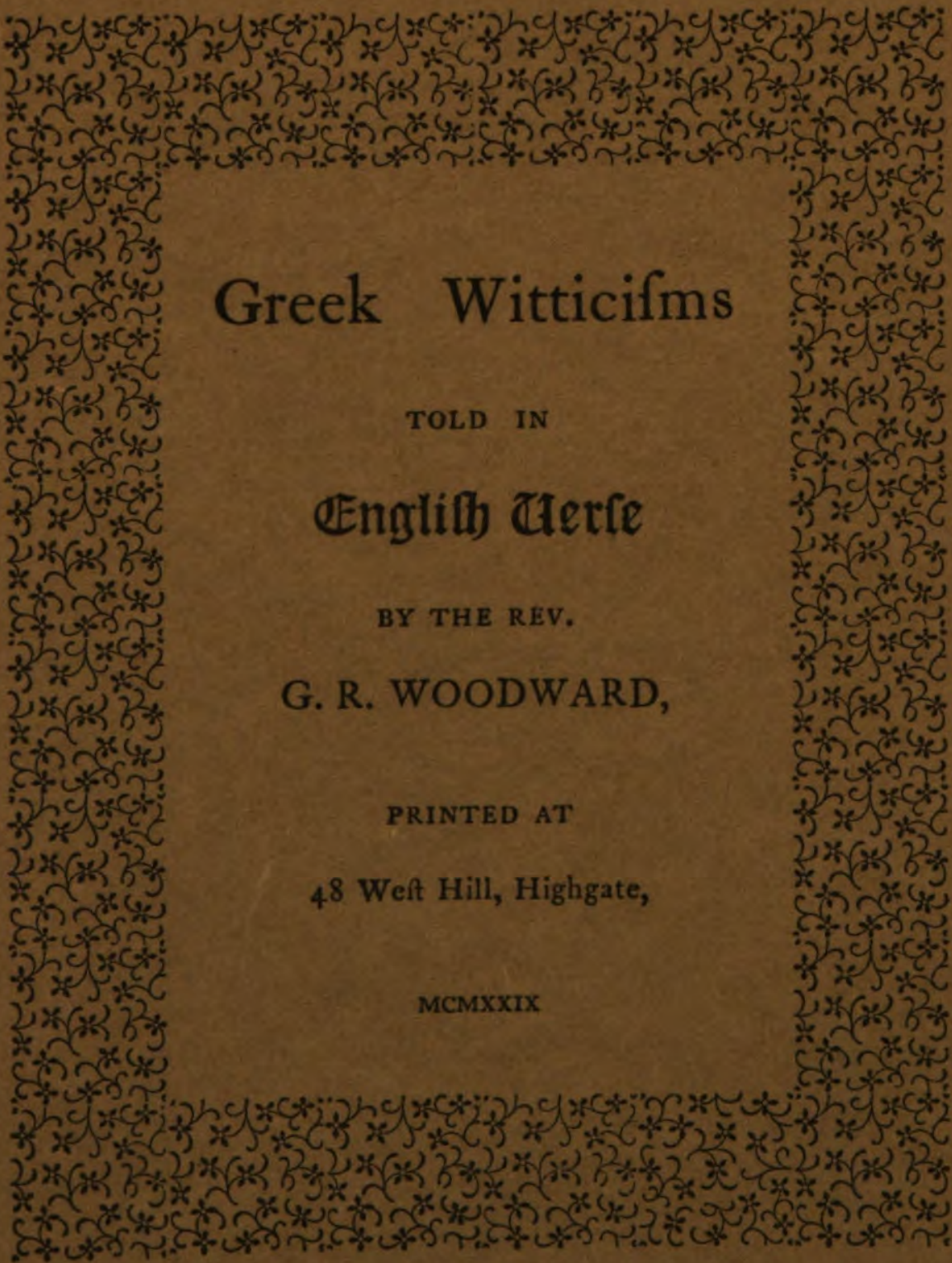
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A decorative border of repeating floral and scrollwork patterns frames the central text on the book cover.

Greek Witticisms

TOLD IN

English Verse

BY THE REV.

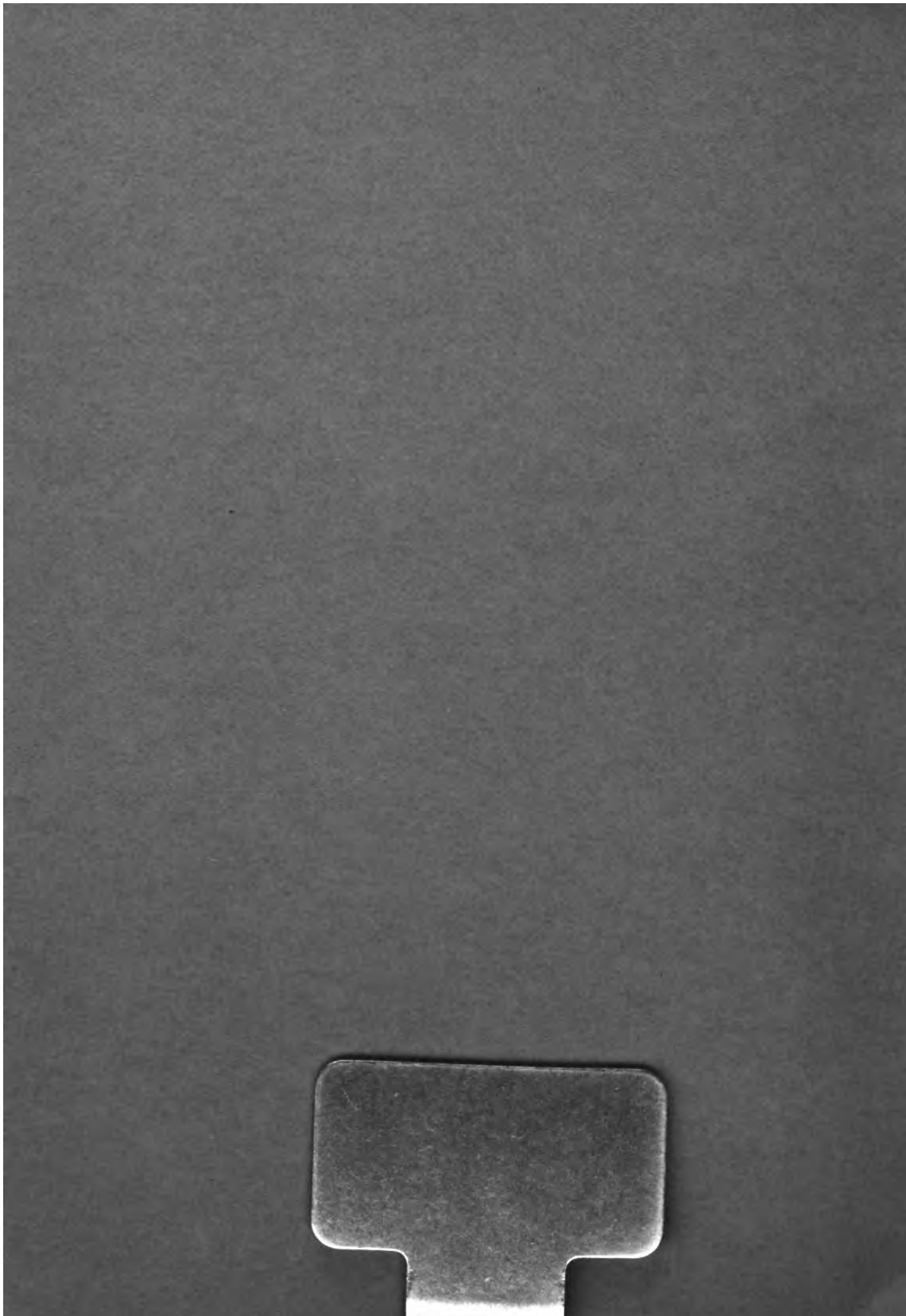
G. R. WOODWARD,

PRINTED AT

48 West Hill, Highgate,

MCMXXIX

304 f. 59





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## GREEK WITTICISMS

D. C. L.

**T**Am Birkenshaw, a man of law,  
Once met an old school friend,  
Whose life had closed, as he supposed,  
For all things have an end.

This D. C. L. said, 'I heard tell  
That you had join'd *The More.*'  
'Lo! your mistake,' the other spake:  
'I breathe as heretofore.'

'Yet to your death the Laird Macbeth  
Bare witness: he, who said it,  
Is to my view, compared with you,  
Far worthier of credit.'

## SPVMANTEMQVE AGITABAT EQVAM

**F**Or himself and his mare, Tim, paying full fare,  
Embark'd at Calais for Dover,  
But on no account, though afloat, would dismount  
Till his journey by water were over.

‘Why, seated on faddle-bag, spur you yon nag?’  
Said one. ‘Sir, my home is in Surrey :  
[Cried Tim] so astride of my beastie I ride,  
As man in a desperate hurry.’

## A COWARD

**A** Fellow, whose valour was worth not a straw,  
Was off to the fight, when the ravens gan caw.  
He dropt all his weapons, and, full of alarms,  
Sat him down, but at length agen shoulder'd his arms.  
But agen fang the birds, and agen must he hide  
For a season, but finally thus he out-cried,  
‘Caw, carrion-crows, carry on till ye 're hoarse,  
But never a taste shall ye have of my corse.’

## A PATRIOT

**W**hen A, an ophthalmic, went forth to the fray,  
His neighbours said, ‘Why do you gó, man,  
And whither, you blear-eyed?’ ‘At least,’ answer'd A,  
‘I can blunt the keen sword of a foe-man.’

## DIVES INDOCTVS

**A**N ignorant snob, when his riches increase,  
Resembles the Ram with the golden fleece.

## NVCIFRANGIBVLVM

**C**ome, for a stone, you 've only but  
To use your pate, to crack this nut.

## COLLEGE DON

**I**T was a Don in cap and gown,  
Who with his lady Lilla  
Had paid the ready money down,  
And bought himself a villa.

Then, peeping from his lattice-case,  
Of all that might pass by him  
He made enquiry if the place  
Was like to satisfy him.

## PAT

**A**Dominie, whose ardent wish  
It was to swim as any fish,  
Was drown'd, as near might be:  
Then vow'd he, till he 'd learnt to swim,  
He would not in the interim  
Touch water; no, not he.



## MAGNANIMOUS

**I**T was a gallant barque at sea;  
The billows brake around her,  
Till she was like to split in three,  
And at the point to founder.

A pedagogue a-board the ship  
Here rose from off his pillow,  
Demanding tablet, pen and scrip,  
Wherewith to make his will, O.

Now when he saw his household slaves  
Were marvellously affrighted  
By reason of the angry waves,  
They, like himself, ill-plighted,

‘Fear not,’ said he : ‘my testament  
[I swear it fore these sea-men]  
Shall make you, one and all, content,  
No longer serfs, but free-men.’ (1)

(1) *Serbs*, Bopp, Pott : *surfs*, Hermann.

¶ *Prefer the harder reading* : Griesbach, Westcott.

## GRANNY-MA

**O**Ld Granny ne'er allows the glass,  
Untasted by her lip, to pass,  
But takes a draught, and that profound,  
Each time the jorum 's push'd around.

## MEGALOMANIAC

**P**Hilip, a jester, at a feast  
When he could raise no laughter  
Among the company, surceased,  
And cried, 'What are ye after?  
Why did ye call me here at all?  
If thus my jokes be taken,  
Then Mistress Mirth hath left this earth,  
Fun elsewhere to awaken.'

## VOX & PRÆTEREA NIHIL

**A**Spartan pluckt, and fain would eat,  
A Nightingale. 'Tis little meat,'  
Said he. 'Nay, nobbut voice and trill:  
*Vox et præterea nihil.*'

## PHEIDIAS

**P**Heidias made th' Eleian Venus  
Treading on a tortoise-shell:  
Hint for women to be silent,  
And to keep indoors as well.

## SIMONIDES

**S**imonides, when ask'd to say  
How long his days had been,  
Said, 'Few and short; although I may  
Have many a winter seen.'

## MODESTY

**D**iogenes espied a boy,  
Was blushing as a maiden coy :  
'Cheer up, my lad,' quoth he ; 'In sooth  
This hue denotes a virtuous youth.'

## NVDA VERITAS

**T**Hus spake Diogenes, when jeer'd  
By one, who, branch and root,  
Was infamous, whose scalp appear'd  
As bald as head of coot.

'You, fir,' said he, 'I will not twit,  
But only gratulate  
Your hair, that had the sence to quit  
So ill-behaved a pate.'

## SAYING & DOING

**D**iogenes is pitiless  
On Orators, who ever  
Have zeal enough for righteoufness,  
But execute it never.

## HIS CURSHIP

**D**iogenes [deny 't who can]  
Lit lamp by day, to seek a man.

## NEEDY IS GREEDY

**T**Hrafyllos, Cynic, we are told,  
Ask'd of Antigonos of old  
A penny-piece for alms.  
The answer was, 'Too small a thing  
A penny is, wherewith a king  
Should greafe a beggar's palms.'  
Thrafyllos, like a grasping foul,  
Replied, 'Then, fir, increase your dole :  
A fiver ye may make it.'  
Said Majesty, 'Twould break the rule  
Of philosoph of Cynic school,  
Thou greedy dog, to take it.'

M. D.

**W**Hen one gan blame Paufanias,  
Vice-roy of Sparta city,  
For flandering, fore lad and lasf,  
Without abate or pity,  
A certain M. D. of the place,  
Who never once had wrong'd him,  
And ne'er had ta'en in hand his case,  
Ne'er phyfick'd, bled, or prong'd him,  
'Stop,' cried Paufanias, 'your din :  
For I have no misgiving  
That had I call'd that Doctor in,  
I should not now be living.'



## POST MORTEM MEDICVM

**A**N usher near Winandermere,  
A daily exerciser,  
Met, on his ride through Amblefide,  
His medical adviser.

‘Good leech, [quod he] I ’m well, you see :  
So pardon, not upbraid, me,  
If I so long have kept so strong,  
Nor call’d you in to aid me.’

## PENNY-WISE

**M**Y tutor, fain to teach his steed  
To eat less corn, cut off his feed  
Entirely. When the naggie died,  
‘Great is my grief,’ the owner cried :  
‘Horse learnt his lesson well enough,  
If dead for lack of eating-stuff.’

## ANNOSA CORNIX

**A** Pedagogue, who hapt to hear  
That corbies lived an hundred year,  
Twice told, and more thereto,  
He bought a young unfeather’d crow,  
And nurtured it, to prove and know  
If such report were true.

ΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ

**Y**oung Square-the-circle Asymptote,  
A failure, nothing better,  
Was felling off his books, and wrote,  
And posted home, this letter :

‘Father, rejoice, rejoice with me ;  
So well doth it betide me,  
That even now my books’, said he,  
‘With bed and board provide me.’

LITT. DOC.

**T**heocritus drew nigh a man,  
A Do-the-boys school-master,  
Who read and spake as charlatan,  
And quack grammaticaster.

‘And why not teach your lads,’ quoth he,  
‘Geometry?’ ‘I doubt it  
Would be in vain,’ said Dominie :  
‘For nought know I about it.’

‘What matter that? For should you speed  
In land-surveying sadly,  
Be not aghast : because you read  
Your grammar no less badly.’

ΠΩΣ ΑΝ ΓΕΝΟΙΤΟ ΠΡΩΙ

**T**O the sad and care-worn wight  
Long appears the shortest night.

## BLUE BLOOD

**W**Hen Softratos, an absolute  
Past-master on the plaining flute,  
Was one day being twitted  
By reason of his humble birth,  
Then, half in anger, half in mirth,  
Thus answer'd he quick-witted,  
'Well, if I lack a noble fire,  
Me all the more should ye admire,  
Not set my heart a-smarting :  
For why, in after-times, from me  
My clan, the great Softratidæ,  
Will trace their point of starting.'

## FATALISTS

**W**Hile Zeno was with whip and flave  
A-scourging of a thief, his flave,  
The culprit cried, 'Beseech you,  
Spare, spare me; for to steal and pick  
Ordain'd was I.' 'And I with stick,'  
Dan Zeno cried, 'to breech you.'

## FORTVNA

**A**Pelles, when desired to say  
What reason led him to pourtray  
Dame Fortune seated on a chair,  
'Because [quod he] she standeth ne'er.'

## ΔΕΡΜΑ ΥΠΕΡ ΔΕΡΜΑΤΟΣ

**W**Henas Aristippos knew  
That the captain and the crew  
Of the yacht, wherein he fail'd,  
Pirates were, in armour mail'd,  
He gan count his money o'er,  
Golden pieces by the score.

Over-board he dropt the lot,  
Feigning that he meant it not :  
Then he cried aloud, 'Phew ! phew !'  
Adding, some say, thereunto,  
'Better sacrificed for me,  
Thou, my gold, than I for thee.'

## ENOUGH

**A**Sophist said, 'I now proceed  
Upon my lecture, and will read  
To you, my friends and neighbours,  
A painful paper, an ye please,  
In praise of mighty Herakles,  
And eke his twelvesome labours.'

Then up and spake Antalkidas,  
'Sit down, sit down, you filly afs ;  
This theme, we can without it :  
Let Herakles alone. His worth,  
There is no man in all the earth  
That ever once did doubt it.'



## MESSENE

**S**Pake a Spartan on a day,  
‘How my mind doth cherish  
Hesiod’s word, when he doth say,  
*Never an ox would perish,*

*Were no evil neighbour nigh.’*  
This, when said in hearing  
Of Diogenes hard-by,  
Set the Cynic sneering,

‘Yet Messene’s wreck I view,  
Ox and plow-man’s labours  
Brought to nought : and surely you  
Spartans were her neighbours.’

## ΜΗΔΕΝ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ ΚΑΚΟΝ

*(Si bonus es, intra ; si nequam, nequaquam)*

**W**Hen Davy, squire of Pen-y-bryn,  
Had written o’er his gate-way,  
Let no thing evil enter in :  
Then cried the Cynic straightway,  
‘If so, the owner of these halls,  
I fain would hear him telling  
How he may pass within the walls  
Himself of his own dwelling.’

### SMELL-FEASTS

**T**Hus spake Diogenes at table,  
When mice up-crept thereon for bites,  
'Lo! e'en Diogenes is able  
To have and nurture parasites.'

### RETORT CYNICAL

**D**iogenes to Myndos came  
From Hellas o'er the briny :  
The Myndos gates were huge of frame,  
The place itself but tiny.  
Said he, 'Ye men of Myndos, hear ;  
If wisely ye will shape you,  
Ye 'll shut these mighty ports, for fear  
Your little town escape you.'

### ANACHARSIS

**W**hen Anacharsis, from the land  
Of Scythia, was upbraided  
By one of Attic race, and bann'd  
As utterly degraded,  
Said Anacharsis, 'Me you deem  
No better than a Vandal ;  
You to your mother-country seem,  
And are indeed, a scandal.'

### SIMPLE SIMON

**O**F twins one died. A dominie  
Soon after met the tother,  
The living one; to whom said he,  
‘Was ’t you died, or your brother?’

### MOCK TURTLE

**A**Gefilaüs, when entreated  
To hear a wag, who counterfeited  
The nightingale a-carolling,  
Replied, ‘The honour, that you pay us,  
Great is : but King Agefilaüs  
Hath often heard the real thing.’

### A BARGAIN

**A**T wine one said, ‘Antisthenes,  
A song, a song, fir, if you please.’  
Quoth he, ‘If you will on the flute  
Sustain my voice, I grant your suit.’

### TOO SOON, TOO LATE

**O**Ft said Thalès, ‘Too soon, mother,’  
When she begg’d him take a wife :  
Then, grown older, he would answer,  
‘Mother, now too late in life.’

## MAUSOLEUM

**C**Ame Anaxagoras to view  
Maufolus tomb, and cried,  
'A costly grave, and mirrour true  
Of riches petrified.'

## POT & KETTLE

**S**Aid Crab to Snake within his claw,  
As he pursued his wide ways :  
A bee-line must my partner draw,  
Not double-shuffle side-ways.'

## CAVE CANEM

**B**E on thy guard with every man,  
Lest one accost thee, when he can,  
Concealing neath a smiling cheer  
Within his heart a pointed spear;  
And lest his darksome mind give sound  
Of bell with double clapper bound.

## ΠΑΤΑΞΟΝ ΜΕΝ, ΑΚΟΥΣΟΝ ΔΕ

**T**O Spartan Eurybiades  
This answer gave Themistocles,  
'Man, though you flout and jeer me,  
And lift against me staff and stake,  
It bear I for my country's sake :  
Strike, an ye will, but hear me.'



## DECEIVERS

**A** Ristotle told a youth,  
‘The gain of gay deceivers  
Is that, when they speak the truth,  
They meet with no believers.’

## HER PET CALF

**O**ld Gammer Gurton bought a Calf,  
A couple of stone-weight and a half:  
She carried it upon her shoulder,  
As day by day the beast grew older.

So, unaware that it was now  
Advanced to be a full-blown cow,  
She 'd carried, strange as it appears,  
Her petty pet Calf years and years.

## ΟΝΟΣ ΛΥΡΑΣ ΗΚΟΥΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΣΑΛΠΙΓΓΟΣ ΥΣ

**T**O one who praised a lutenist,  
And much admired his dextrous wrist,  
Spake Archidamos carping,  
‘What plaudit hast thou left behind  
For men of great and noble mind,  
If thus thou laudest harping?’

## PALSIED

**W**henas Diogenes advised  
Speusippos, being paralyfed  
In either leg, with his own foil  
To 'shuffle off this mortal coil,'  
The latter spake, 'Our life is shrined  
Not in the legs, but in the mind.'

## ΜΗΚΕΤΙ ΥΔΡΟΠΟΤΕΙ

**A**Nacharis spake, with mug  
Of Pramnian beside him,  
When a younker, pert and smug,  
Came forward to deride him,  
'Carry wine to lip, my lad,  
In youthful work engagèd;  
Else be carried off, bedad,  
By water-plague, when agèd.' (*Dropfy*)

## TETCHY

**O**Rbilius, my master, ran  
To see one ill with cancer,  
And make enquiry; but the man  
Was far too sick to answer.  
'If only I were in your stead!'  
Cried he with indignation:  
'That you might visit me a-bed,  
And get no information.'

## THE MODEL FARM

- A. 'Twas Robin Reeve, of whom I bought  
Blind-fold an acre good for nought.  
For, when I sow'd good seed in plenty,  
(The total sum thereof was Twenty  
Fair measures) yet, when harvest came,  
But Thirteen reapt I from the same :  
The rest, The Seven, had march'd to Thebes,  
And not return'd. Alas, my glebes !  
Me thought to wax, by farming, rich ;  
But caught was I, as mouse on pitch.
- B. 'Twas Rob-and-Reeve ? He earns the title,  
Who japed you thus, and sold that pigtle.  
But courage ! Next, I 'de understand  
Where lies this model bit of land.
- A. Not far from Haigh in Lancashire,  
At Aspull it I did acquire.
- B. At Aspull, eh ? As it befel,  
That name, too, suits your bargain well,  
Because one afs could pull the wain,  
Whereon you bore to barn your grain.  
But, xij month on, fir, may your field  
At least not lesser profit yield :  
And Fortune on your farm, I trust,  
Will shine, next August, more augúft.

## STONE UPON STONE

**A** Riftippos, ask'd by one  
Lacking information,  
What advantage should his son  
Gain by education,  
'This, if nothing else,' said he,  
'School-boy life completed,  
In the Play-house none shall see  
Stone on stone enfeated.'



- ¶ *For the originals of the above, see J. E. B. Mayor's First Greek Reader.*
- ¶ *This is to certify that only 120 copies of this edition have been printed. No. 74*

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