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## ATHENIAN SOCIETY 300 B.C.

CHARACTER SKETCHES BY  
THEOPHRASTUS.

The great importance of the sketches of Theophrastus is that he enables us to understand the true value of many Greek words which would otherwise be partially significant to us. This was fully explained by Professor Darnley Naylor in one of his interesting extension lectures delivered before a crowded audience at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Adelaide University, on Tuesday evening. Ask a Scotchman the meaning of the word "pawky" and he will find no English equivalent for it, but will confide to you all the little weaknesses and foibles of a mutual acquaintance, and for the first time you realise all the varieties of signification, all the quaint shades of meaning, which centre round a single word, especially round a word which seeks to describe some phase of that evasive Protean creation called human nature. Theophrastus expresses all those shades of meaning. This prolific writer was born in Lesbos in 372 B.C., and was only 12 years junior to Aristotle, though he survived him 35 years. He attended Plato's lectures in the Academy, and often heard Demosthenes striving to arouse the apathetic country against the encroachments of Macedonia. He must often also have seen Praxiteles busy with mallet and chisel. In 342 Aristotle accepted the invitation of Phillip to become tutor to his son Alexander. There was a similar stir to that which would have been caused in England had Herbert Spencer gone out some 40 years ago to superintend the education of the Mikado's son. Seven years later Alexander came to the throne, and Aristotle returned to Athens to lecture in the Lyceum. Theophrastus became a favorite pupil, and remained as such for 13 years.

During this period the political horizon had been dark with storm clouds. Picture the Japanese as gradually encroaching southwards until the independence of Australia is finally threatened. Picture the defeat of Australian troops in the field and the dictation of terms by the Mikado. This is what happened to Athens. They had been beaten by Phillip in 338, and in 324 Alexander the Great, his son, had filled every Greek city with grateful supporters of the Macedonian regime. Anyone who thinks of that will easily realise the disaffected condition in Greece when the news reached the Hellenic States in 323 that Alexander had died at Babylon. A feeble attempt was made to muster a Pan-Hellenic army, but it was a dying flicker of Grecian independence, and in 322 the defeat of the allied forces brought the end. Each State made its own terms, a significant comment on the hopeless want of unity in Hellas. Then followed the suicide of Demosthenes and the deaths of Hyperidas and Aristotle.

But the volatile Athenian was never downcast long, and in this very year Menander, aged 22, brought out his first comedy, while Theophrastus succeeded to the chair of Aristotle, and could count 2,000 attendants at his lectures. In 313 he was possibly Lord Mayor; at any rate, the year was known as the Archonship of Theophrastus. With the general public his popularity was so great that when he was impeached for impiety he was not only acquitted, but had to interfere to save his accuser. One of his maxims was, "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend," and he acted upon it. Aristotle had left his library and the original MSS. of his works to Theophrastus, who made good use of them. The catholicity of his learning and the breadth of his sympathies are well illustrated by a list of his works, which included 24 in law, and others on such subjects as Politics, History, Astronomy, &c. He died in 287 B.C.

The "Character Sketches" of Theophrastus prove how little human nature has changed with the centuries. There are thirty sketches given of types of Athenian citizens of his day, and Professor Naylor permitted the classic writer to describe some of them. Of "The Cautious Man," Theophrastus says—"He will talk blandly to persons who are smarting under a wrong. When people wish to see him in a hurry he will desire them to call again (Scotch deliberation). He will never confess to anything that he is doing, but will always say he is thinking about it. (Scotch caution). To applicants for a loan he will say that he has no money." (Scotch —?) "The Flatterer" will request the company to be silent whilst the great man is speaking, and will praise him in his hearing, and mark his approbation at an awkward pause

with 'very good;' or he will laugh at a feeble joke, and stuff his cloak into his mouth as if he could not repress his amusement. He will buy fruit to bring to the great man's children, and give it to them in their father's presence, adding, with kisses, 'Chicks of a noble father.' Next we have the "Garrulous Man," of whom Theophrastus says—"He will sit down by a perfect stranger and begin a panegyric upon his own wife. Then he will relate his dream of last night, and go through in detail what he has had for dinner." Now comes "The Reckless Man," who "would decline no sort of a disreputable trade. He will gamble and neglect to support his mother." ("Verb. sap.," said the professor, "racing and old age pensions go together.") The "Loquacious Man" "will say to those he meets, if they speak a word to him, that they are quite wrong, and that he knows all about it, and that if they will listen to him they will learn. Then while one is answering him, he will put in, 'Thanks for reminding me,' or, 'How much one gets from a little talk, to be sure,' or, 'Bye-the-by,' and other such cues will he make for himself, so that his victim has not even breathing time. Then on a jury he will prevent his fellows from coming to a verdict; at a theatre from seeing the play, and at a dinner party from eating." Of the "Cross Man," Theophrastus says—"In a theatre he will applaud when others cease, and hiss the actors who please the rest of the spectators. When there is a dead silence in the building he will make disagreeable noises in order to cause people to turn round. He will go up to a man who has lost a great lawsuit and congratulate him." Then we have the "Unseasonable Man," who "will go up to a busy man and open his heart to him. He will serenade a lady when she has a fever. He will come to give evidence when the trial is over. When asked to a wedding he will inveigh against womankind. He will propose a walk to those who have just come off a long journey, and will bring a higher bidder to a man who has just found a market. He loves to go through a long story to those who know it by heart." Of the "Officious Person" the author wrote—"He will rise at a meeting to promise things beyond his power; undertake to show a short cut and then lose himself; or go up to his commanding officer and ask when he intends to give battle, and what is to be the order for the day after to-morrow." Then there is "The Grumbler," who, "if he finds a purse on the road will say, 'Ah, but I have never found buried treasure,' and who, if he have won a lawsuit, will find fault with his lawyer for having left out several points in his favor." Next in order is "The Coward," who, according to Theophrastus, "when on a voyage will protest that promontories are privateers; and in a sea will beg the captain to put him ashore." One cannot help being reminded of the fussy old lady in a storm—"Oh, captain, shall I be drowned?" "No, madam; I'm afraid not." Other types of Athenians were described, such as "The Bore," "The Shameless Man," "The Oligarch," "The Avaricious Man," "The Evil Speaker," "The Offensive Man," &c.

Few of the characters are attractive or pleasant persons. Theophrastus is a Cruickshank or a Hogarth. These characteristics are meant not to represent mankind, but to warn men. Theophrastus was not a misanthrope; how kind a heart glowed beneath his criticisms may be seen in the terms of his last will and testament:—"I entrust to the undermentioned friends, Somatate and the little housemaid, and of my slaves I ratify the emancipation of Molin, and Cimon, and Parmenon. And I hereby give their liberty to Manes and Callicis, who have remained four years in the garden and have worked in it, conducting themselves in an unimpeachable manner." A man who could give such tender thought to his slaves would never, said the professor, sneer, though he might smile, at the foibles of their masters.

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At the last meeting of the Council of the Adelaide University a letter was received from Messrs. Bewick, Moreing and Co., offering to take two men a year from the ranks of those who had passed through the mining and metallurgical course, and give them facilities for gaining practical experience for two years on some of the mines under their control. The Council decided to accept the offer, and at the same time to express their appreciation of the help thus given to the mining students.