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## AMERICA'S DEBT TO GREECE

R. John R. Macarthur, professor of languages at the California Institute of Technology, is the author of a comprehensive volume on Greek influence in America which recently has been published under the title, "Ancient Greece in Modern America."

As the author states in his preface, this book has a number of purposes. It makes easily available to the



JOHN R. MACARTHUR

public the remains of the old classical education, shows how wide has been the influence of Greece upon our ways of life, and sets forth in large measure the classical backgroundfor students of English literature, or art and music. With its complete index, it may well serve both as a classical dictionary and as a textbook. The last

third of the volume recounts in handy length the more important of the Greek myths. The text is illustrated.

We all know what we owe to the Greeks in the arts, but who, aside from the classical scholars, knows so well what we owe to them in the sciences, in mathematics, in medicine, in political science, and in economics? the Greeks laid the bases for all these and developed many to a high point, especially political science and mathematics. In medicine, the conduct of every physician is still guided by the Oath of Hippocrates. In the matter of religion, too, the Greek influence has been profound. For more than a thousand years Aristotle, though a pagan, was revered as an inspired authority by the early fathers of the church. In addition, Aristotle founded the bological sciences and gave system to the arts. The Greeks also developed such diverse sciences as horticulture and astronomy. Pythagoras accurately taught the sphericity of the earth and the movements of the planets, while Aristarchus taught the theory of the sun as center, doctrines which Ptolemy had done well to remember.

It may truthfully be said that as the genius of a nation approaches the ancient Greek genius, it rises in its civilization. All the great periods in world history were closely akin in spirit to the genius of the early Greeks. Is modern America in approach or in retreat? Nothing reflects change in a nation so quickly as its literature. Sadly, today, the study of the classics has gone out of fashion. Since the turn of the century, too, English poetry has been at low ebb. Is it significant that it has fallen off in a direct proportion to the neglect of classical learning? Nowadays, children are not encouraged to read the old myths and fairy tales. The myths, it is objected, do not deal with "a true state of affairs," neither does poetry; they deal with the imagination. Let it be remembered that Plato, the poetic dreamer, put the poets out of his republic because they did not tell the truth, and that Aristotle, the practical scientist, put them back again for the very same reason.

The Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 396 pp. \$6.00.