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**SELECTION FROM THE GREEK AND ROMAN CLASSICS
(VOL. I AND VOL. II TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL TEXTS)**

MERLIN PEIRIS

Department of Classical Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

These excerpts from famous Greek and Latin authors undertaken for translation, with concise introductions and helpful footnotes, are for the purpose of introducing to Sri Lankan readers in English and Sinhalese the range and excellence of the literature of Classical Greece and Rome. These are translations, it must be mentioned, from the original languages, and have been rendered readably without forsaking accuracy, so that they may always be quoted, by those who need to do so, without fear of misrepresentation.

The passages translated sometimes constitute complete works, for instance the three characterizations by Theophrastus or the 4 letters of the Younger Pliny, but in other cases they are excerpts from longer works, as for instance Herodotus' account of the Great Pyramids, Lucius Apuleius' story of witchcraft, Plato's myth of Er the Pamphilian, or Suetonius, description of the assassination of Julius Ceasar. Greek and Roman writers dealt with all sorts of subjects in a variety of literary forms-plagues and volcanoes, peoples and places adultery and murder, ghosts and magic old-age death and rebirth etc., using as their vehicle, rhetoric, the epistle dialogue, historical writing, biography and other forms of prose (or verse) literature.

Of the two volumes which contain the translations into English, one has been (as pledged) re-translated into Sinhala for the Sinhala reader. The other too will be done into Sinhala in due course.

This is the first time a selection of this nature has been presented to Sri Lankan readers not familiar with the rich legacy of Classical literature, and the expectation is that, like the Classical dramas which have influenced the Sinhala theatre, these works will inspire new writings in the island. Even otherwise, the work (both volumes in English) when out, will provide rich and interesting reading for Sri Lankans, all in one compendium, who may have heard of the wealth of classical Greek and Roman literature but had hardly sampled them, and for whom the names of these great authors are *nomina tantum*, only names.

Among the writers and speakers chosen for presentation are historians like Herodotus, Thucydides, Tacitus and Suetonius, pleaders like Lysias and Antiphon, the philosophers Plato and Theophrastus, the comedian Aristophanes, the father of Western medicine Hippocrates, the natural historian Pliny the Elder (together with his letter-writing nephew, the Younger Pliny), the novelist Apollonius and the satirist Lucius. Between them they also represent a variety of the popular genres of Western literature, some less familiar to us, such as the forensic speech, the medical tract, philosophical dialogue, the discursive letter, natural history and geography, the early novel. For obvious reasons the works are all prose, and all fall within a period of around eight hundred years, that is, from the beginning of the 5th century B.C. to the end of the 3rd century A.D.