

Adventures in World Literature



Preface

ADVENTURES IN WORLD LITERATURE is the geographical sequel to *Adventures in American Literature* and *Adventures in English Literature*. The order of progress is an inevitable one. The young American begins with the literature which springs from his own environment, his native idiom, and the experience of his nation. The various sections of his own land are illuminated for him by the words of those American writers who are our best interpreters. Then the student takes a step into more difficult realms. He crosses the ocean into the old world from which the new inherits its traditions. English literature takes him not only into a distant country, but back into the far past when manners, dress, speech, daily life, education, and politics differed widely from the conditions which he perceives about him.

This gradually developing conception of humanity as a constant stream flowing between banks of varying beauty and interest is part of what we call a cultural background. Yet too often the outlook opened up to young people has stopped short with English literature, and they have never been given sufficient opportunity to look farther into the writings of other languages, through which a world point of view can be developed.

We have assumed that a student trained in our educational system who lacked the direct contact of travel would get his knowledge of the other peoples of the world from a study of foreign languages, from history, or from the universal languages — music and art. But these are all inadequate to convey that intangible something which literature possesses. Few young people study more than two foreign languages at any time. Many of them never approach even one, and often when they do, the tedious hurdling of vocabulary and grammar spoils the direct and vital thoughts the author wished to utter to his reader. Foreign literature to the immature student of a foreign language is indeed seen "through a glass darkly."

History gives him the more rapid view, but it is at best kaleido-

scopic. Races and nations fall into shifting patterns as the centuries roll around. Migrations, battles, economic necessities, dynasties, and powerful individuals stand forth, but the human touch is missing. History is an airplane ride across a continent; not, like literature, a leisurely walk with a group of friends. Art is vivid, but static; music is emotional, but abstract.

Literature transcends any of these studies in its power to create sympathetic understanding because it is personal, direct, and intimate. Thus at a time when the development of world understanding is one of our great educational problems it is essential that our young people should have access to as many of the cultural sources of other nations as possible. Linguistic blockades should be broken down. Literary formulas which have marked Comparative Literature courses for advanced college upperclassmen should give way, in a book for younger students, to a presentation of literature as a human document through which one comes to sense the spirit of other peoples. To us as a nation whose life has been drawn from so many old world strains it is doubly necessary that our youth should appreciate these varied and colorful literary backgrounds.

This volume has endeavored to fulfill that purpose, and in the assembling and arrangement of material the editors have kept in mind the following guiding principles:

The Arrangement of Material. Since this book represents an ever-widening horizon for the student, who, it is assumed, has already studied American and English Literature, it was thought best to begin with the group of modern European languages, just as one might travel from the British Isles to the Continent. The grouping of the six major languages (with their branches) was a matter of careful consideration. French was placed first because that literature has been basic for the rest of Europe. This is followed by the Spanish-Portuguese and Italian sections to give unity to the Romance languages and the South-European group. German, the most central of the North-European languages, precedes the more segregated Scandinavian and Russian groups. Within each of these six sections the material is arranged chronologically to enable the student to watch the emergence of each national literature from the dim beginnings of medieval times into the illuminated power of the recent centuries. Such an arrangement also facilitates cross references in time when it is desirable to see how certain waves of fashion in writing have swept Europe as a whole.

The second part of the book covers the Greek and Roman classic

literature. This gives opportunity to trace back to original sources some of the concepts which the students has found developing in modern Europe after the Renaissance. The instructor who wishes to place the course on a completely chronological basis could easily begin with Classical Literature, but such procedure is not recommended, for it postpones too far into the course that natural interest which recent literature evokes in the average student.

The third part of the book takes the student still farther afield to the Oriental races, where not only costume and custom differ, but the most fundamental conceptions of life philosophy are at variance with those to which the student has been educated. This section, though treated more sketchily than the others, may prove most provocative of thought and discussion as a finale to the course.

The Selection of Material. For each of the individual sections the editors have chosen the selections with the following questions in mind:

1. Is this material intrinsically interesting to a student of the late teens or early twenties? It was accepted as axiomatic that neither world understanding nor love of literature could be fostered through boredom, and therefore long tedious narratives without action, lengthy philosophical disquisitions, mature works of criticism, and abstruse poetry have been eliminated even though they might rank as "world classics." Some of the selections are harder than others. An instructor may shift emphasis or even eliminate the too easy or too difficult according to the maturity of his classes. The readability of the selections has been tested out both in classrooms and with volunteer groups of readers among young people of the age for which this book is intended.

2. Is this author of sufficient importance in his native literature to make him worthy of inclusion in a brief survey where only the best should be considered? It will be evident on glancing over the contents of this book that the great and significant names of each literature have found a place, and that minor writers appear very seldom, and then only perhaps to bridge a pronounced gap between centuries or illustrate some modern tendency. Where a great name is missing or represented briefly, it is because his writing lacks intrinsic appeal for the young student.

3. Does each selection give as true a picture of the work of its author as could be expected in limited space, at the same time convey the flavor of its nation or its century, and yet maintain its universal quality? This is a large order, and one that could not be met equally

well in every case; yet on the whole the selections measure up to this standard.

4. Is the translation the best one available? The compilers of a collection of translated literature have an added problem unknown to the anthologist dealing only with the language of original creation. The translator must be somewhat of an artist himself if he is to convey in another tongue the subtleties and overtones of the native idiom. Occasionally there was no choice since only one translation had been made in English, but wherever plural translations were available, the editors weighed them carefully deciding sometimes according to effectiveness as a piece of English writing (especially in poetry), sometimes according to faithful rendering of the original, and sometimes for a special purpose, such as to show the contrasting metrical effects of the Bryant and Caulfeild translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The translators have been named at the end of each selection.

5. Is the section well balanced? The editors have endeavored, in so far as the national literature permitted, to provide a varied program of poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction prose, ranging from the sprightly and humorous to the serious and tragic. A chronological balance was also desired so that an uninterrupted flow of literature might be represented except where a definite hiatus was evident in the literature itself. The time balance, however, was definitely weighted toward the nineteenth and twentieth centuries throughout Modern European Literature. In the six modern European languages the proportion of literature from 1800 to the present is as follows: French, 57 per cent; Spanish, 50 per cent; Italian, 43 per cent; German, 27 per cent; Scandinavian, 81 per cent; Russian, 100 per cent. Classical and Oriental Literature are, of course, preponderantly ancient, but with considerable modern material in the Indian and Japanese sections.

The Editing of the Material. The selections are complete units as far as possible. Lyric and ballad poetry, short stories, folk tales, and essays are given entire. Where excerpts from novels, epics, and biographies have been included, care has been taken to present a distinct unit with sufficient explanation to avoid confusion in the reader's mind. Novelists have been represented by one of their short stories rather than an extract from a novel, whenever this could be adequately done. Complete long dramas are to be found in the French, Scandinavian, and Greek sections, with short plays or selected acts in many of the others.

It has been the aim of the editors to make the editorial material of

sufficient intrinsic interest to warrant its inclusion with the selections as running comment. This seems especially necessary where so much of the literature has sprung from an environment unfamiliar to the student.

Each section is opened by a short history of the literature of that language. It is recommended that in taking up a new section the student read the introductory survey rapidly to block in the general outlines, but without any idea of mastering the material; then after the study of the literature has made the names meaningful, to return to the survey as a review and a more careful study of time orders and relationships. The survey should always be kept subsidiary to the appreciation of the writings themselves.

The biographical sketches of authors put emphasis only on those facts which help toward understanding the man behind the book and his significance in the world of literature. The footnotes are limited to the minimum information needed by the reader to make the text - comprehensible. The study suggestions are intended to stimulate thought, to show relationships between different writers, different nations, and different arts, and to indicate opportunities for creative work growing out of the material under consideration. Since it is taken for granted that the students using this book are already familiar with American and English Literature, comparisons with our own writers are frequently pointed out. References to art and music are also interspersed. The reading lists at the end of each section, it is to be hoped, will send students to the library for further reading matter to widen their experience of various writers and nations. The illustrated maps contribute their share by sharpening geographical conceptions at the same time that they please the eye and engage the imagination.

The editors wish to express their gratitude to the many teachers, librarians, and students of literature who, by their interest, their timely suggestions, and their willingness to "try out" material, have aided greatly in the preparation of this book. Thanks are especially due to Professor William Stuart Messer, Professor Royal Case Nemiah and Professor John Barker Stearn of Dartmouth College for assistance in preparing the bibliographies of Greek and Roman literature; to Sister Eleanore of St. Catherine's College, St. Paul, and to Miss Margaret Tupper of Washburn High School, Minneapolis, for their constructive criticisms of the Spanish section; to Professor Theodore Jorgenson of St. Olaf's College, Miss Pauline Farseth of North High School, Minneapolis, Miss Hanna Astrup Larsen and Mr. J. B. C.

Watkins of the American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York, for their invaluable help in preparing the Scandinavian section.

It is the sincere hope of the editors that the young people into whose hands this book may come will spend many hours not only profitable to the mind, but satisfying as well to that inner spirit which endlessly seeks to understand and share the experiences of all mankind.

R. B. I.

W. K. S.

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