

HEATH
READINGS
in the
LITERATURE
of
EUROPE



CROSS AND SLOVER



HEATH READINGS IN THE LITERATURE OF EUROPE

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PREFACE

This anthology is designed as something more than a mere collection of masterpieces and memorable passages. The selections have been compiled for the twofold purpose of furnishing in convenient form characteristic examples of the major streams of ancient, mediæval, and modern European literature, and of illustrating the literary, philosophic, and critical background of the English-speaking peoples.

These two aims are more closely bound together than is commonly taken for granted. The editors, in choosing their selections, have been moved primarily by the fact that in the midst of a multiplicity of courses offered in the field of literature there is great need for widening the student's cultural horizon. In past years entirely too many graduates have left college without an adequate knowledge of literature other than English or without even an acquaintance with the names of those outstanding European authors of the past and present whose works are our common literary heritage. This situation has been remedied in more recent years by the establishment, in many colleges and universities, of courses in General Literature which offer a suitable survey of the content and trend of world literature, and it is the editors' trust that the present volume may enlarge, or at least strengthen, this movement not only through a novel choice of material but also by means of an arrangement which presents a more closely-knit view of the development of European literature. Then, again, the editors are firmly of the belief that no intelligent appreciation of English literature is possible without at least a bowing acquaintance with the literary forms in other languages which have done most to fix the traditions of literature in England and America. They share with a constantly increasing number of teachers of English the realization that the literatures of English-speaking peoples are actually a part of the great stream of European tradition and that the attitude of looking at English literature as largely an isolated phenomenon is at variance with the modern method of approach in other fields of cultural history.

For the earlier periods of European literature the task of selection has been greatly facilitated by the fact that certain ancient masterpieces have long been recognized as part of the literary inheritance of all cultivated readers of English. The inclusion of Homer, Vergil, Theocritus, and the Greek drama requires no argument, and even an approximate recognition of our debt to Greece and Rome requires some knowledge of the epic of the Argonauts, the Greek Anthology, Longinus' famous *Treatise Concerning Sublimity*, Roman comedy, and the tragedies of Seneca, whose work, along with that of Plautus and Terence, ranked high in the estimation of English dramatists during the Renaissance. The sacred writings of the Hebrews and the *Arabian Nights*, though not European in origin, have influenced European literature and thought so profoundly and over so long a period as to justify fully their inclusion in such a collection as the present.

As we approach the modern period, the problem of making a selection at once representative and yet capable of being included in a single volume becomes, it is true, more and more difficult, but is nevertheless not insoluble. The recognition of the part played in later writings by the literature and thought of the Middle Ages explains the

inclusion of examples drawn not only from Italian, Old French, Germanic, and Celtic, but also from mediæval Latin. During the Renaissance such great names as Petrarch, Rabelais, Montaigne, and Cervantes come to mind at once, while even the most superficial survey requires some recognition of the French *Pléiade* (see Ronsard), the romantic epic (see Ariosto), the great dramatic activity of Calderon and Lope de Vega in Spain (see *The Star of Seville*), and the Italian *novella* (see Bandello), a literary form which furnished a host of plots for dramas and romances in England.

During the last three centuries European literature has increased enormously in extent and has become more genuinely cosmopolitan in character. The intelligent reader should be aware not only of the splendid outburst of drama in seventeenth-century France, but also of the work of Lessing in Germany, of Goldoni in Italy, and of the more recent movements represented by Ibsen, Hauptmann, and other dramatists. Again, in the field of the short story, no one interested in prose fiction can afford to be ignorant of the fact that short stories of marked distinction exist not only in French but also in Russian, Italian, and German, while in Spain narrative fiction has within the last few generations enjoyed a veritable Golden Age. Le Sage's *Gil Blas* deserves to be known to all readers of English literature, both because of its intrinsic merit and because it forms an important link in a long chain of realistic fiction extending from Lucian to modern times.

Unavoidable limitations of space have necessitated the exclusion of a few well-known masterpieces, especially in the ancient period where, for example, it was found impossible to include more than one selection each from Greek and Latin comedy and tragedy. Occasionally a slightly less-known work has been chosen in preference to a more generally accepted masterpiece, the better to illustrate the development of a certain literary trend, but these works are in every case just as typical of the author's thought and style and deserve recognition by the modern reader. Even with the necessary omissions and alternatives, the editors, basing their conclusions on an experience of some fifteen years with general courses in literature, believe that the selections chosen are those which have in the main had the most vital and lasting influence upon the world's culture and that they cover about all that the reader can assimilate within the limits of an ordinary course in European literature.

The general order followed in the arrangement of the selections is chronological, by periods (Ancient, Mediæval, the Renaissance, the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, the Age of Romanticism, and the Modern Period) and by types within each period. This arrangement has not only assured a useful continuity, in that any type, like epic or drama, can be studied by itself in entirety — for which purpose a separate Index by Types appears at the end of the volume — but it has also enabled the editors to prefix to each period, as such, a comprehensive preliminary essay dealing with the general trend of the period as a whole, its chief characteristics and literary monuments, as well as with the historical development of each specific type of literature within that age. The student will find, moreover, in connection with each selection not only its dates but also a brief introduction pointing out the significance and influence of the author's work. In a great many instances details of biography, as well as the larger matters of literary history and criticism, have been provided, so that the anthology may well be used without any manual of literary history.

Additional editorial aid has been provided in notes which, for greater convenience, are placed at the foot of the page. The footnotes contain everything that is essential for the clearer reading of the text. Not only do they make clear words and

expressions having obsolete or unusual meanings and passages difficult of interpretation, but they explain classical mythological allusions, literary events, and other matters as well. At the same time care has been taken to make them brief, pertinent, and really explanatory, so that they will not clog the process of reading the text.

The volume contains two useful indexes. That at the beginning follows the chronological order of the selections, by periods, types of literature, selections and authors; that at the end of the volume is arranged by types of literature and within each section the order of authors is alphabetical.

The editors wish to express their appreciation to the various publishing companies who have allowed them to use copyrighted material; due acknowledgment and specific reference are to be found in each introductory essay throughout the book.

T. P. C.

C. H. S.

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