

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FAMOUS WORLD LITERATURE

EDITED BY:

RICHARD GARNETT

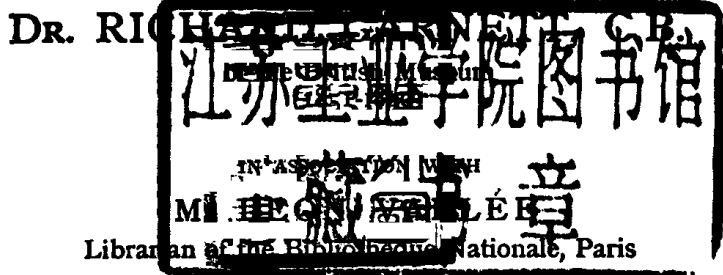
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FAMOUS WORLD LITERATURE

SELECTIONS FROM THE WORLD'S GREAT WRITERS
ANCIENT, MEDIAEVAL, AND MODERN, WITH BIO-
GRAPHICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

AND
CRITICAL ESSAYS

BY
MANY EMINENT WRITERS.

EDITED BY



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CONCERNING THE GREATER LITERATURE OF THE WORLD.

THIS is not the introduction to a book, or even to a series of books: one might call it rather an introduction to Literature itself—or to a goodly portion of that vast literary tide drift of the centuries, which certain honest purveyors and explorers have here brought to shore, and spread out in cleanly type, for whosoever will—to read, to ponder, and enjoy.

From earliest recorded times there has lived a disposition to engarland together songs that have touched the heart—chants that have wakened valor—fables that have exploited truth—maxims that have worded justice. There was reason enough for this before yet printing or types were known, and when some Homer—whose notes we shall find by and by, a-thrill along these pages—lifted up his voice to gathering crowds, that he might bring together his chants, and the chants of many another, to round out the composite tales about Troy, Helen, and Agamemnon.

Again, when manuscripts were fairly plentiful, and printed leaves—more timorously than now—began to show themselves, there was abundant reason why those who could not command numerous books, or the songs of numerous singers, should desire—between two covers—a taste of many. Hence came “garlands,” *Analecta Veterum*, and such *Recueil* of old talk and story, with *Dictes and Sayings*, as tempted our first English printer Caxton.

But if the paucity of books, and the old dearness of them, provoked the assemblage of their best parts into manageable

which the reporters on Cuban ships have made us familiar, set up to catch, through whatever storm or shine, a world of sounds, coming from afar; and which, with ear-tubes (like our lines of type) are judiciously adjusted to hold and treasure only those sweet or strong notes, which carry in them comfort or wisdom?

Just what rules of progression and of selection may have governed the providers of this enwrapment of literary treasures it is not needful to set forth; indeed, methinks one should enjoy it all the more, knowing only that love and respect and care and a good sound conscience have gone to the choosings. I do not want to foreknow by what elaborate scheme of search the seeker after floral beauties is to govern his steps: 'twould weaken interest if he said loudly and presumingly, "I shall go only into such or such well-known fields, or grand domains," and so miss of a hundred quiet haunts which a more plodding and modest wanderer might love better. By all odds, I have a happier confidence in those seekers for the jewels of thought or feeling who do not scorn broad thoroughfares — known of all men — along whose dusty and beaten waysides many poor souls (as needs must be) gather up their most delightful treasures.

Keep your doors shut, you mincers of phrase and misers of learning! Slaver as you will, over your fleshpots of Egypt: there grow outside of your palaces, and your shaven terraces, — pot-herbs, daisies, small-fruit, red roses, — that we love and will evermore cherish, though all the critics in the world gird at us with their pedagogic rods!

EARLY FOREGATHERINGS.

In all those early records, which every explorer and every flower gatherer on the fields of literature must broach, there are gods and demigods, fairies, spirits of evil and of good — a Jupiter, a Pan, a Vulcan, an Eros, — these, or somewhat to correspond with these. So, too, there are courts of paradise,

where celestial beatitudes reign ; and pits of darkness, where Evil wallows in some one of its many lairs. Long before Christian records begin, there are in letters—Coptic, Babylonian, Semitic (how shall we describe them?)—records of great and benign influences that shot rays of joy, of hope, of warning over the minds and thought of created beings, and soothed or darkened their journey along the multitudinous ways of life. Always a “great white throne” has arisen out of the dimness that veiled the beginnings,—which was the eternal symbol of what was good and what was true,—and always this great throne (perhaps by reason of its vastness and solidity) cast a shadow—its negative, its opposite—which represented the bad. These are the eternal combatants ; these cry out, now with hope and now with warning, from all the history and all earnest utterance of a bewildered and struggling humanity. Traditions, myths, fantasies, give their twists to the great story (as different narrators will vary the wordings or lights and shadows of a tale), but always the great counter-currents of dark and white dominate the record ; and literature, in its largest sense, is the weaving or unwinding of those counter-threads—white or black—which guide the march or feed the courage of all those who toil amid the pitfalls where darkness frowns, toward the Delectable Mountains where brightness reigns.

First things are not always the best things : and I can conceive that there may be those ease-loving readers who will falter as they glimpse the pale lights which in such chronologic *fasciculus* of letters—filter through Vedic hymns, or the teachings of the Upanishads—notwithstanding the wordy aids and enlightenments of a Müller or Monier-Williams. Nor does the light upon Hindu or Persian fable and Hebraic wisdom beam only through the kindly words of translators and expositors : the poetic work of many a modern has found its excuse and its warmest glow in the adornment and illustration of misty Orientalisms—as the reader of these volumes will find.

What should one ask for better than the masculine measure and swing of Matthew Arnold's verse to put a glory upon the old Persian tradition of Sohrab and Rustam? And who with an easier pace, or a more amiable and sugared dalliance, than Sir Edwin Arnold's, can set us upon the track of the domesticities of Buddha — all laid bare in the multiplied and prettily refracted "Light of Asia"?

Even Tubal Cain — first of forgers and workers in metal — who belongs to Bible story by so short a genealogy as would shock a colonial dame — finds in our record a blazon of fire-sparks and an echo of booming hammers in one little verselet of Charles Mackay.

Miss Yonge, too, who forty years since made all good young women bow to her "Heir of Redclyffe," has done us a pleasant service in stretching the broidery of her affluent and engaging narrative over many a rescript of religious *motif*, dating from Bethlehem, and in revision of such Plutarchian stories as that of "Damon and Pythias."

These names float us out upon those classic tides which are surging through many pages of these volumes, and which will surge through the thought of scholarly men and women for a great many decades to come.

CLASSICISM.

What large or open-minded reader does not, odd whiles, want to steep himself — were it only for a half-hour — in the old Greek tales of Helen, Ajax, and Achilles? No Spanish fights in these lusty days of ours will make the Trojan stories and war gods grow dim. Such glimpses of Homeric battle as filtrate through those pages of Pope or the English prose of Conington, in this — our mosaic of letters — are, I should say, the least quantum of classicism which will put a reader well "up" in the sort of war news that is good for centuries. Translation counts for more in our Greek or Latin foregatherings, than in those misty Orientalisms, where a happy wordist

by a mere sniff at the roses of Bendemeer will load their petals with sententious talk, and crowd the "Gulistan" of Sadi with poetic dreams and the veiled wisdom of the prophets. There is more need in Epictetus or in Marcus Aurelius to pin ourselves to the line; and so of the poetry and legends which cry out for the simplicities in which they were bred—except indeed (as in Swinburne's "Atalanta") a man can immerse a Greek tradition in musical and imaginative felicities of his own, and so float it to a fame of its own. Many another bit of translated classicism sings its own Saxon way; and will wear its English warble—away from the Greek—for many a year.

Ovid himself would, I think, have nodded approval of the fashion in which Dryden has dashed into his dulcet and daring couplets the old story of Ganymede and of the hirsute Polyphemus; while Professor Conington, in his repeat of Dido's sufferings, has narrated in very significant prose all the woes of wanderers and of widows.

And what a beautiful byplay of modern lights and shadows is thrown upon all that classic period—whether Attic or Roman—which is represented in this large mosaic! There is Shakespeare, with the great Achilles "lolling" on his couch, or striding giant-wise over the lines of Troilus and Cressida; and Chaucer with his Englished Cresseide strewing a fire into those loves and jealousies which makes the story wholly his own. Walter Landor thrusts a British sword into the hand of Menelaus, and a Saxon bitterness into his vengeful speech; while poor Keats, catching first the Homeric story in the language "loud and bold" of a brother Britisher, brilliantly confesses—

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

And what shall be said of those American interpretations of the fable of the Golden Fleece, or of the witching work of Circe, drawn from the "Wonder Book" of Hawthorne, to

illumine these pages? For myself, I hardly ever give a half-hour to the refreshment of one of his stories about Jason, or about the Gorgon, but I have a regret that the same master had not remodeled for us all the *Parallel Lives* of great Greeks and Romans, and so given to us a Puritan Plutarch.

As the classic din recedes, or loses itself in that other din which belongs to the downfall of Rome and the struggles of Christianity against Paganism, — all made noisy and brilliant by the pen that wrought the startling and overnaked scenes of “*Quo Vadis*,” — the Horatian odes fall away from notice; and so do stories of the brave Horatius and of the rueful Virginia. Then, in our easy-going chronology, the great brazen gates swing open upon mediæval times.

MEDIÆVALISM.

But here there be Christian preludes or interludes which take on Latin form. The “*Dies Iræ*,” very properly, gets its place in vivid translation on these pages; and a certain Bernard de Morlaix (by the gracious aid of a warm-blooded English hymnologist, who made music for “*Jerusalem, the Golden*”) has place in our record; and his Christian exultation wells up serenely through Latin “longs and shorts,” as he dwells, in beatific vision, on —

The home of fadeless splendor
Of flowers that fear no thorn,
Where they shall dwell as children
Who here as exiles mourn.

Shall we loiter here for a scaling of the walls of Jerusalem on the wonderful rhetorical ladders of Gibbon, or shall we put back to the Levantine seas, in the days when the old blind Doge Dandolo officered his whole fleet of Venetian galleys, and laid low the power and the pride of Byzantium? We can find a rich story of both in the ensuing volumes — either at the hand of that august historian of the Roman Empire whom we

have named, or at the second-hand of that adroit and industrious lady (Mrs. Oliphant), who has just now died in her Scottish home, and who has made a vast number of eager readers beholden to her for her pleasant pictures of the makers of Venice, and of the makers of Florence. Again, there comes to mind as we turn over the mediæval pages that rare tale of "The Crusaders," where Saladin the Great and Richard the Lion-hearted try forces, and with a large chivalry weigh and admit their respective merits — as a Sampson might or a Schley.

The same master romancer takes us upon a trans-continental gallop into the dungeons of middle France, where a rancorous, ungainly Louis XI. (whom we know as Sir Henry Irving, with Satan's mask on him) tortures his prisoners, and rages in the background of those Burgundian scenes, where the blithe and adventurous Quentin Durward comes to his own. It is a large refreshment on book journeys through the Middle Ages to come upon such bouncing romance — as shrewd, as lavish of byplay, as piquant, and as entertaining as the charmingest novel of to-day or yesterday!

Then there are Romola and Savonarola: who should not wish for a new half-hour's snatch of dalliance with that gracious, filial, high-minded daughter of the Bardi — outgrowing her girl love for a recreant Greek — and posing with Christian altitudes amid the terrors of a plague? Savonarola, notwithstanding all the eloquent preachments which Villari tells us of, — under the shadows of the Piazza dei Signori, — made no nobler figure, nor was blessed with a serener trust.

I name here, too, that story of King Arthur (by Sir Thomas Malory) which belongs to these times, and has presentment in these volumes — with the swift realism of flesh and blood reflected upon it by the living lines of Tennyson's "Merlin and Vivien."

Chaucer, too, is now in regal presence, and strews those pearls of "Canterbury Tales" which will be caught up always, and strung anew, on every page where jewels are gathered.

Nor shall that quiet, serene book-lover and God-lover Thomas à Kempis be forgotten. A little man, of quiet conversation, placid, kindly, with soft brown eyes — by virtue of his simple rules of life, living till ninety; genial and plodding; copying psalms and singing them, in days when Europe was all ablaze with the fire that Huss had kindled in Bohemia; writing that little book about the “Imitation of Christ” (as most authorities agree) and putting into it such teachings of love, of self-denial, of charity, as to make of it a sort of Christian handbook of the heart — more widely translated and printed than any book, save the Bible.

Dante and Boccaccio will, or should, have their pictures here; but we must hie away to that wider field of vision, where those English letters which make up the bulk of these volumes begin to pile together monumentally — in shapes of history or fiction — and when the art of writing deploys its forces under the governance of rhetorical law, and dares not any longer to exploit itself, — as in the case of Thomas à Kempis — in a joyous ebullition of Christian faith and love.

LATER TIMES.

It was some time within a month of our present writing that the Hon. John Morley (one of the most scholarly among British political leaders) said, in inaugurating a free library in some Scottish town, — “The purpose [of good reading] is to bring sunshine into our hearts, and to drive moonshine out of our heads” — to which we say, bravo! for Mr. Morley.

There was a good deal of head moonshine in the days when Madame Scudéry was writing, and when Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot and the rest were formulating designs for remodeling human nature. Cervantes, indeed, had indulged at a thwack upon earlier “moonshiners,” with a better result than Don Quixote found in his battle with the windmills (somewhere set forth on these pages of ours): everybody knows how that battle came out; and yet Spanish knighthood still capari-

sons itself to fight — vainly — against the revolution of forces which are set a-going, and kept a-going, by all the winds of Heaven !

If there was a good deal of moonshine in the "Midsummer Night's Dream" that found its way into the heads of readers, and played there with Thisbe, through "a hole in the wall," it was an imported Greek moonshine ; while all up and down, from the pages of this play actor of Stratford, there streams a sunshine that is altogether English, and is good for English and American hearts. And what shall we say of that other master of English verse, who gave his bolstering to the republican measures of Cromwell ? What would such a set of volumes be worth without their dashes, here and there, of the high organry of Milton, or without some masterly "stops" at command of him who "set up" "Comus," and who, so wisely and deftly, governed all the harmonies of poetic conduct ?

It counts not a little toward the values of such an assemblage of chapters and fragments as this series of books presents, that one — within the limits of a morning's reading — can make direct and easy comparisons between those we know and honor. On one page, for instance, we delight in the rhetorical roll and lingual felicities of Dryden ; and on the next we fasten upon the grip and sparkle and burning brevities of Pope : here, it is Milton who conveys us, under classic oar, into the reddened scenes of Pandemonium ; and by the twirling of a few leaves only, we cool ourselves in the quietudes of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," or in the rush of Southey's story of the "Waters at Lodore."

Without rising from our chair, we can match the humor of "John Gilpin" with the fun of Thomas Hood — clinking them together — as suspicious shopkeepers clink doubtful coin. Again, it will be profitable (and easy) for those brooding over such books as these, to weigh the dignified and simple measures of Hume's "Episodes of Early English History" against Macaulay's impassioned advocacy of Whiggism, or the rhetori-

cal lusters of Froude's learning and aplomb. As for Gibbon, we shall find here a taste—if only a taste—of those magniloquent and sonorous periods on which his story of the “Fall of Rome” caracoled in stately fashion to its end.

Here, again, in a platoon of pages—not too many, as whoso reads shall find—are set forth two or three great crises in English history, by that clever young clergyman, John R. Green, who died only a few years since in the prime of life, upon the shores of the Mediterranean. Who, pray, among all book lovers has not read that “Short History of England” (very much better than the longer one, which was a publisher's rather than an author's book); or who has not loved that full and lucid and easy-going story of his English forbears? How came it that his work went at once upon the rolls of fame? He was not more painstaking than Professor Stubbs; not giving a more artistic turn to his periods than Froude; not more erudite than Freeman (whom he honored by calling master); yet wherever either of these masters has one reader, Green has ten. He knows *what* to tell: that is the secret, as much as knowing how to tell it. He spares us dullness; he cuts short interminable statistics and the fatiguing roll of dates. His whims did not carry him away; his foregone prejudices did not put him on a hunt to build up forlorn reputations; he had no Teutonic maggot in his brain, that he sought to hatch by tedious incubation; but with unerring instinct he pounced only upon the facts which helped his story. Such good choosers are the best entertainers, if not the best teachers.

But English history with its beguilements cannot veil or dim the philosophic lights shining here at intervals. Adam Smith shows the courage of his kindly beliefs—about tying wealth and workers together by better bonds than are used; Herbert Spencer discourses on moral education in a way that ought to plant many of his utterances on the walls of homes; Mill—built out of logic—kindly and clear-thoughted, but pitifully without a religious sense; Darwin, even more kindly and

eager to establish us all in good cousinship with the brute creation; Huxley, lucidly expounding the wastes of protoplasm, and zealous to redeem the waste by solid thinking; and Tyndal, the benign, clear as crystal, and putting a boy's exuberance into his mountain climbing, of which he makes us a part in his story of the "Weisshorn."

Carlyle and Emerson, in turn, preach their sermons to us — one bristling, the other serene; nor do these and many another of their pith — but more mildly spoken — forbid our keeping ears and eyes open for the story-teller proper. Manzoni, as vividly as in his own Italian, is Englished in the loves and trials of the "Betrothed"; and the light from his book dances spectrally and delightfully along the shores of Maggiore and of the Lago di Guarda. Those who read Balzac here will get a taste that will beget eagerness for the whole sweet story of Eugénie Grandet. As for Miss Mulock, her glimpse of a bread riot, with John Halifax at the front — showing a heart that beat just as those of the rioters beat — tempts one to say, "Bravo, for the Gentleman"; and his nerve and kindness make a sermon of resolve, of faith, and of that moral beauty which stamps true heroes — putting power into their words, and into their hands something better than guns.

And what a change from this to the lively sparring match of "Tom Brown," at Rugby; I mean that with William the "slugger" — when the good fellow, East, sponged Tom's head with the dearest care; and the light-weight parries the big blows of the heavy one, and clinches and throws him; then comes the wait, and the new sponging and all goes on gayly and thwackingly till the old doctor sidles out of his turret door, and the slugger vanishes, and the crowd dissolves, and the battle is over. Hurrah! for Tom Brown at Rugby — and wherever else he turns up, though it were on the dismal heights of Santiago!

Oddly enough — yet the collocation is not inapt — this Rugby business is coupled with Smike and "Dotheboys Hall." 'Tis a great change, to be sure — as if pork chops were to fol-

low upon a delicate "quail on toast." And yet pork chops and Squeers have their relishy savors ; and one softens in spite of himself and the vulgar surroundings, when Newman Noggs tells Nicholas, in a little blurred note, that "they draw good ale at the King's Head," and — "say you know *me* and I don't think they'll charge you for it !"

PRESENT TIMES AND TONES.

Who can tell where or how the tide turns, and when the literary flavors and reputations of the past go down, and those of to-day come up ? There is no drawing stark lines of definition ; the swell of Dibdin's sea songs has hardly subsided when some new billowy stir of the waters brings to us "Hobson's choice" ; if we delight in the wonders of Kipling, or the bewitching enmeshments of Daudet, or Zola, 'tis not that we have forsworn or forgotten the kind, old, limping master of Abbotsford, who has for so long lessened our burdens, brightened our hopes, and sweetened our rest : Bradwardine, and Guy Mannering, and Ivanhoe, thank Heaven, still fling their standards to the breeze, over all the great "Keeps" of literature !

The "dead line" cannot be drawn here ; who is more lively, pray, than many a dead one whose name is shining athwart these pages ? And who is more dead than many a live one whose — but we will not say it ; we will guard our tongue, and pen, and good humor. If the reader discovers a flavor of the rue, or of agrimony on some one of the leaves of this storehouse of treasures, he shall find on pages following quickly thereafter a flow of the milk and the honey of Caanan !

There may be some names that will surprise one ; we wipe our glasses for the deciphering of others ; if some things are not familiar, 'tis a question if others are not too familiar ; for one, I must confess that a little cringe of shamefacedness has stolen over me at sight of one or two such. Yet, how could it be otherwise ? The great, generous drag-net which these liter-

ary purveyors have put to use must needs bring in some little finsters—sporting iris hues, and the pretty phosphorescence that preludes decay; and it would be odd if certain buoyant, turbulent swimmers did not refuse utterly to be caught—copyrights or their own hystericky bounce intervening—and swim away at the head of little schools of their own in quiet bays of their own.

Although it may be difficult, amid the welter of names and of literary work, which belongs to the joining of the tides, to lay down nice and subtle distinctions, yet I think it will be clear to all that certain writers who have their enrollment in the latter volumes of this series do illustrate and express a certain modernity of thought and utterance which in a degree individuates them and plants them in the world-gardens, where the century alleys—nineteenth and twentieth—cross.

Such an one I think is that young British poet—who has not only spliced his own Saxon speech with the swear-words of soldier-folk in India and with the pungent Yankeeisms of Down-Easters, but who has also put a wonderful wheeze of humanity into the cranks and workings of an engine. Tolstoi, too, though doubting the Wagnerism of whatsoever artistic counterfeits, and though he “harks back” to the fables and the folklore of earlier days, has, by his singleness and simple utterances, and absolute truth, engaged the hearts and kindled the emotion of all the world—the humblest and most untaught even more surely than the *ganté* ones who must be educated to admire, and who train after the rulings of some literary clique or court, and shine in pipe-clay trappings. Then we have Ibsen, the Norwegian,—of the leonine locks and looks; no, it is not enough to say he writes interestingly; that is too tame a word even for such play as the “Doll’s House”; he does more than interest; he sets the blood to flowing—scaldingly!

I might speak of a half-score of others,—young and brilliant countrymen and countrywomen of our own,—who are planting seed in these days from which great trees will grow and cast strong shadows and much fruit—whether bitter or

sweet—along the paths men will follow in the century about to open. We read their fresh young record here admiringly; we greet them cordially; we hope they may guard sacredly their allegiance to the great standards of truth and of simplicity.

As I give a last twirl to the pages where these names flash into view, I come upon a glimpse of the good, old, seedy Tit-bottom, in his spectacles—wisely filched from the pleasant story of “Prue and I”—not modern indeed, but carrying a rich, nineteenth-century revival of the eighteenth—(the best-elaborated character of that dainty workman, George William Curtis), shuffling across these lines of type haltingly—as befits an old battler with rheumatic twinges—with quaint observation and quainter figure; almost a cousin (as one might say) of the De Coverley family, or of those old bookkeeping clerks, in threadbare black, who glide up and down in the “*Essays of Elia*”—with such sea pungencies of salty odor in their clothes as might have been caught on Salem wharves, or in Salem Customhouse, when Hawthorne wrought there—withal very vivid and tender, with a delightful monotone of dreamy philosophy and of warm humanities!

But I must stay this tale of reminiscence and of reverie: even now I have brought to notice less than one out of every score of those who have freighted these treasure books with their savings and sayings.

It seems to me that I have been serving as a sort of signalman only—waving now a green light, and now a red—as the trainspeople have selected and shunted the laden cars together: and now that all is in order, and the couplings made good, nothing remains but—for the completed train, rich in its freight and thunderous with its burden, to dash away toward a great white light I see shining far down the track.

Whereupon this signalman hangs his lantern on the wall—wishing good luck to train, to trainsmen, and to all concerned.