

Encyclopaedia of References

Human Life and Wisdom

HENRY SOUTHGATE

Encyclopaedia of References

HUMAN LIFE AND WISDOM

(Set in 2 Volumes)

By

HENRY SOUTHGATE

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Preface

“CLASSICAL quotation,” says Dr. Johnson, “is the parole of literary men all over the world;” and a knowledge of general literature, as exhibited in the works of distinguished writers, is one of the evidences of an enlightened mind. From the earliest periods, there is not a celebrated name that has not contributed something to the great mass of sentential lore. It is a treasure which has been constantly accumulating, till at length it comprises a brief abstract of the wisdom of all ages and of all nations. Whether we resort to the Sacred Records, the works of the ancients, the aphoristic writings of the Middle Ages, or the more refined productions of modern times, we have presented to us the most striking instances of the antiquity, dignity, and prevalence of the apothegmatic modes of instruction. Of these, the English language itself presents an inexhaustible mine, in which we may trace the genius and spirit of the people. “We are a mixed race,” says Capel Lofft, “and our character partakes of the compound nature of our descent. Its excellence consists not in one predominant quality, but in the union of several; we have not the rich humour and glowing imagination of the Spaniards, the insidious refinement of the Italians, nor the delicacy and gaiety of the French, but we have a sprinkling of all these.”

In the various authors whose sentiments are embodied in the present collection, will be found illustrations of nearly all the principal phases of Divine goodness, of moral wisdom, of benevolence, of virtue, and of political or personal prudence; for there are certain truths, constantly operating in the world, as unchangeable as the laws of Nature;—they are alike palpable in all ages, and are the same now as they were at the beginning, and will be to the end of the world. In modern times, we find that in the pensive and graceful Petrarch, in the writings of the sublime Dante and the elegant Cervantes, in the lively La Bruyère, in the sarcastic Rochefoucauld, in the productions of Rousseau, of Lavater, of Franklin, of Shakspeare, of Pope,

of Addison, and of Swift, and in the many brilliant writers of the present day—in Carlyle, Dickens, Longfellow, Macaulay, Sigourney, Tennyson, and Thackeray, these most impressive moral truths everywhere abound, and present themselves as landmarks in ethical philosophy.

In the present Work, doubtless many brilliant emanations of the mind have been omitted, while others, perhaps of inferior merit, may have been inserted; but allowance must be made for the diversities of taste, and for the difficulties attendant on so extensive a selection. The merits of the respective extracts, however, will speak for themselves, and the names of their authors will be some guarantee for their excellence. The Compiler therefore ventures to express a hope that the work will be found useful to the student and general reader as a dictionary of reference, and, at the same time, suggestive to the scholar, without the necessity of his sacrificing hours of tedious research among the scattered materials of thought.

This Compilation, however, is not only adapted for occasional reference to any particular subject, but, from the variety of interesting topics, both in prose and verse, which it comprises, it may also afford many an hour of agreeable and instructive reading. We are here conducted, as it were, through a picture-gallery of the first masters,—through a garden of the choicest flowers,—where the social virtues may be promoted, the pleasures of refined intellectuality cultivated, and some of the purest delights of which the human heart is susceptible freely enjoyed.

In this collection, alphabetical classification and analysis have been closely observed, to enable the student to refer with facility to any general subject in which he may feel interested, and which he will find illustrated, in its various phases, by some distinguished writer of ancient or modern times. In some instances, however, the name of the author does not appear to the quotation; and this has arisen from the passage having perhaps been published anonymously, or the authority accidentally lost sight of during the compilation of the Work; but still the thought remains.

In almost all Dictionaries of Quotations, it will be found that the selections intended to illustrate a subject are jumbled together in promiscuous confusion; but in the present collection each subject is closely analysed, and its many different aspects presented and arranged under alphabetical sub-heads. The advantages of this plan will be manifest on reference to the “Analytical Contents,” or to any word of a general abstract nature, as, Ambition, Anger, Beauty, Love, &c.

In conclusion, the Compiler has only to add, that in his hours of relaxation from the cares of business “he has, as well as he could, gathered a posy of observations as they grew; and if some rue and wormwood be found among the sweeter herbs, their wholesomeness will make amends for their bitterness.”

H. S.

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