

**TENNYSON: SELECTED POEMS;
CONTAINING THE SELECTIONS
PRESCRIBED FOR THE JUNIOR
MATRICULATION AND JUNIOR
LEAVING EXAMINATIONS, 1904**

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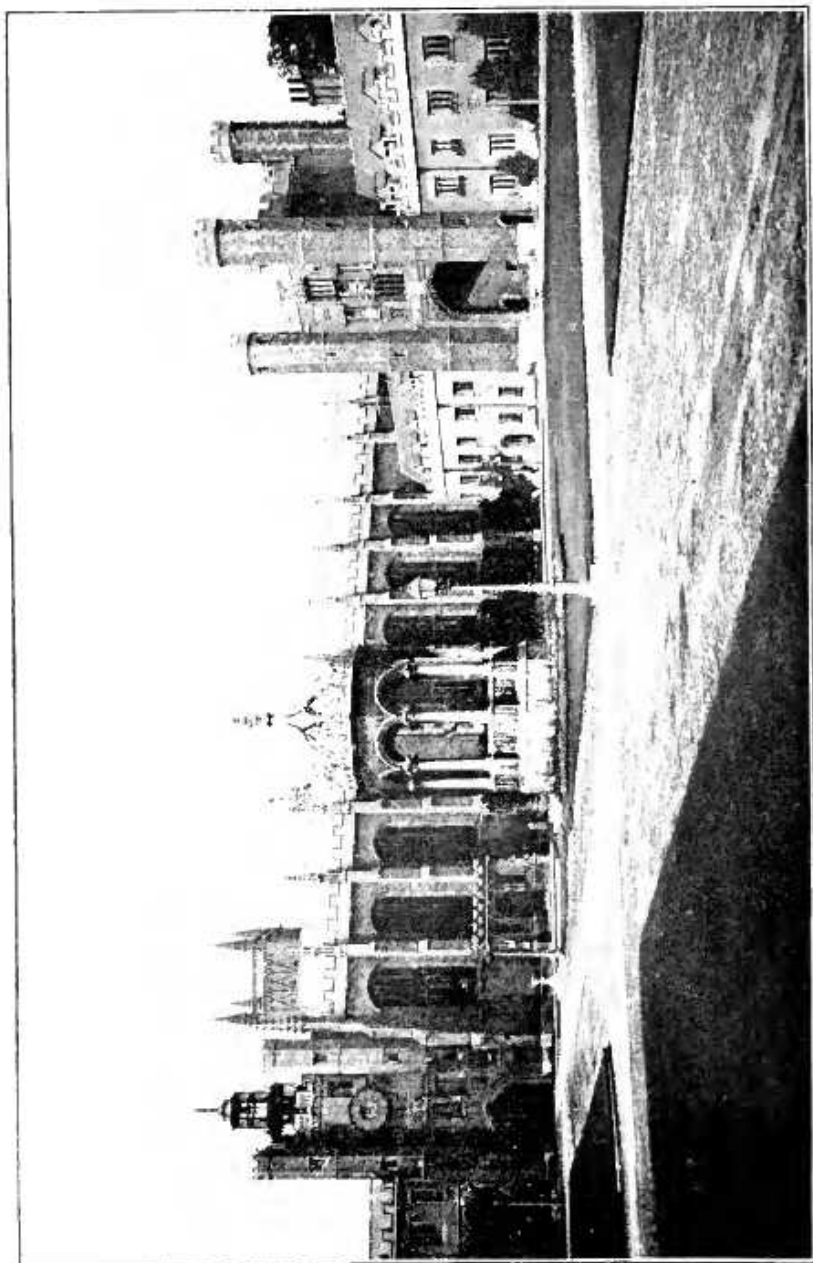
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W. J. ALEXANDER

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Trinity's College (Trinity, Cambridge).

FRONTISPICE

TENNYSON:
SELECT POEMS

CONTAINING THE

SELECTIONS PRESCRIBED FOR THE JUNIOR MATRICU-
LATION AND JUNIOR LEAVING EXAMINATIONS,

1904.

EDITED WITH

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.

BY

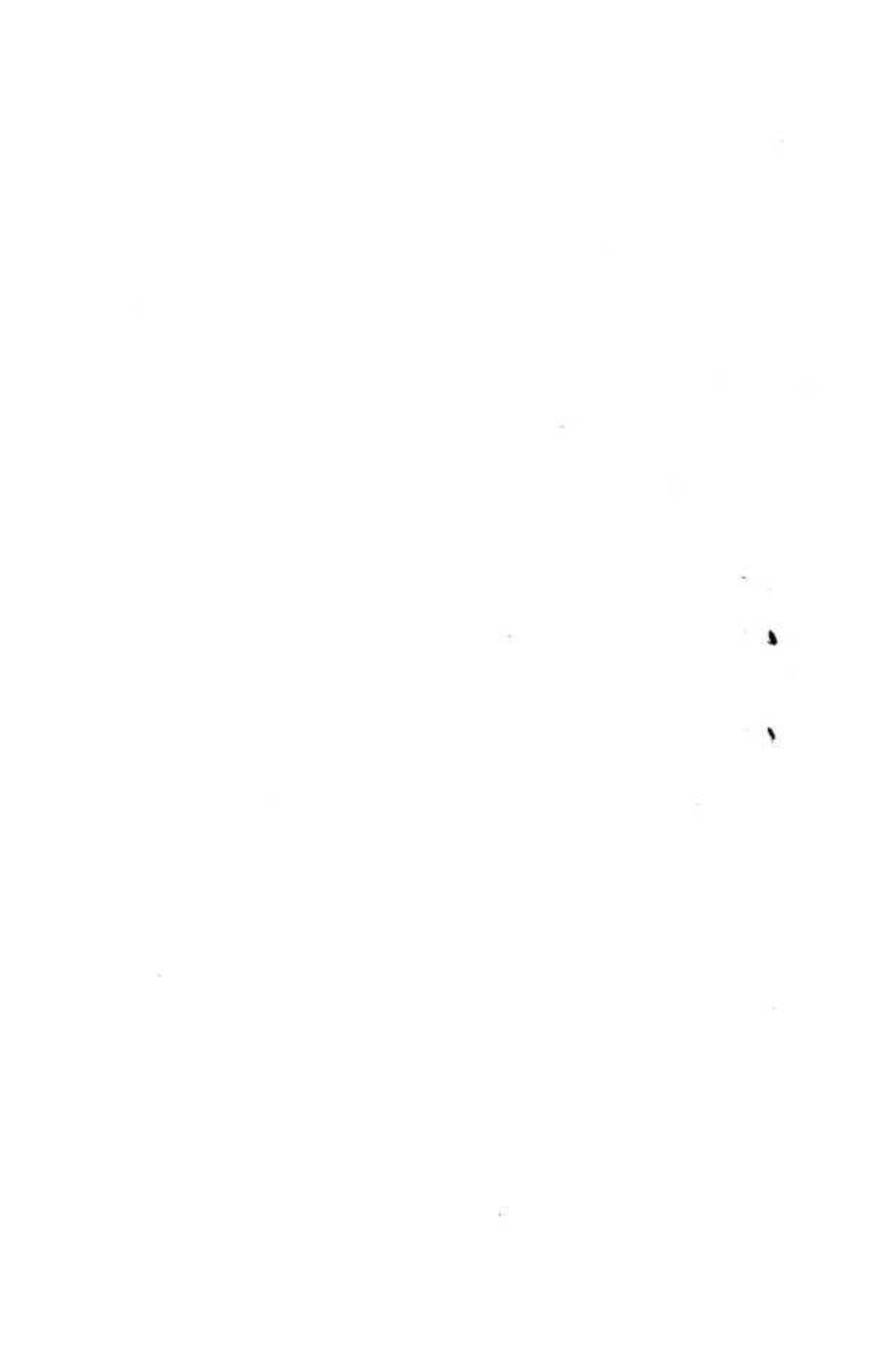
W. J. ALEXANDER, PH.D.,
Professor of English in University College, Toronto.

TORONTO :

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1903.

N.B.—Of the poems contained in this volume,
“Recollections of the Arabian Nights” is not
prescribed for the examinations of the year 1904.



INTRODUCTION.

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE.

I.

Peculiarities of the Study of Literature.

Literature in its Widest Sense.—Literature in its widest sense is thought recorded in language. It includes, therefore, all written thought,—not only poems, essays, novels, but also scientific treatises, letters, inscriptions. Euclid's *Elements*, Mill's *Logic*, Cowper's correspondence with his friends (whose publication the writer never contemplated), fall within the province of literature as well as Shakespeare's dramas and Tennyson's poems. Literature also includes thought which is not written down but registered in some fixed form of words upon the memories of men: such was the case originally with ballads and popular songs—with the poems ascribed to Homer, for example—which were registered not in written characters but in the tablets of the brain, and were transmitted by word of mouth.

The Goal of Literary Study.—The immense mass of material included under the definition just given, is the material for literary study, and the aim of the study is simply to understand this record. Setting out from the basis of the language employed, it is the work of the student of literature to attain to the state of mind which the writer intended to embody. The writer had certain thoughts, feelings, definite or vague sensations, to which he desired to give utterance; he sought for the proper vocabulary, sentence forms, imagery, etc., to afford adequate expression to these mental conditions, and having found them recorded them by writing or by other means. The

literary student reverses the process; he takes the recorded language, and by the use of reason, imagination and so forth, interprets this record and sets up within himself, as nearly as may be, the original state of mind of the author.

Difference between the Study of Literature, and the Study of Books for other than Literary Purposes.—If literature includes all sorts of books, as our definition indicates,—even such books as Euclid's *Elements* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—it may be asked, in what respect, when these books are our material, does the study of literature differ from the study of mathematics, or of history. It differs by its aim or point of view, and by its range. The whole aim of the student of literature is to understand with the utmost completeness what the author is expressing by his language; on the other hand, for the student of the special department to which the book under consideration belongs, such understanding is only preliminary to a further end, viz., the determination of what are the *facts*, and to what conclusions they lead. It would not be of much moment to the student of history that he should misinterpret, or inadequately interpret, Gibbon's meaning, provided he arrived at the truth in regard to the decline of Rome; whereas to the student of literature, Gibbon's ideas, feelings, etc., are the main objects, and the Roman Empire is not at all an immediate matter of concern. A second point of difference is, that students in other departments continually go outside of books—the recorded thoughts of men—and study facts existing in material objects and natural phenomena. This is particularly the case in science, where the student continually comes face to face with facts without the intervention of another mind; but the student of literature never investigates, as his subject, anything which has not first passed through the mind of another, and taken form and shape there. The facts with regard to the way in which bodies fall to the earth will never come before him or concern him, as a student of literature, until some other mind has noted and recorded them; and, even then, he does not enquire what is the truth with regard to falling bodies, but what a particular writer has said about them.

“Colour” in Literature.—Facts are sometimes much modified and *coloured* (as one may say) in this passage through another mind which invariably takes place before they come to be considered by the literary student. The axioms of Euclid represent the bare thought; these truths have not taken on any particular modification or colour from the circumstance that it is a certain man, Euclid, who has given them expression; any other person who grasped them clearly, would express them in much the same way. Such an assertion cannot be made of Carlyle’s *History of the French Revolution*, or Green’s *History of England*; other authors than these might embody the same material, and yet give a wholly different impression to the reader. The matter might have taken a different *colour* from the mind of the writer. Now as the student of history is in search of the truth,—the substantial facts—he disregards in as far as possible these modifications which are derived from the mind of the author. But, on the other hand, to the student of literature, whose object is not to know the facts, but the exact mental condition of the writer, it is of prime importance to know not merely the assertions made, but the feelings with which they are regarded, in as far as these are embodied in the language. It is this colour, this human element, that interests him most of all.

Two Kinds of Interpretation in Literature.—In the first place, then, in interpretation, the student of literature has to get at the substantial meaning which the work conveys,—and here he is on common ground with the specialist in the department to which the book belongs,—history, or science, or whatever that department may be. But, in the second place, there may be, beyond this substantial meaning, modifications and colouring imparted by the writer; these, too, the student of literature must understand; and here he parts company with the specialist, who gives little heed to such matters. The first stage of interpretation is usually either very simple, or, if difficult, the difficulty arises from the nature of the subject, and can therefore be overcome only by one who possesses knowledge of that particular subject, *i.e.*,