

**AN ENGLISH ANTHOLOGY OF
PROSE AND POETRY (14TH
CENTURY - 19TH CENTURY).
PART II. NOTES AND INDICES**

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An English Anthology of Prose and Poetry (14th Century - 19th Century). Part II. Notes and Indices by Henry Newbolt

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SIR HENRY NEWBOLT'S AN ENGLISH ANTHOLOGY

SHOWING THE MAIN STREAM OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Second Impression.

"It is indeed no excessive claim that 'shining pieces have gone by hundreds into this mosaic.' It is an inexhaustible delight to turn these leaves at random. . . . In these thousand pages there is store for the leisure hours of a lifetime."—*The Morning Post*.

IN this book Sir Henry Newbolt gives us a selection of English Prose and Verse from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. The book has been compiled for the use of teachers and students of English: its object is to show the progress of the English language and literature as the gradual gathering of a great concourse of characters and influences. The total effect of this concourse at any moment is made clear by the arrangement. The authors included are placed, not by order of birth, but by the dates at which their first or most decisive work appeared. By this arrangement the reader will gain an idea of the effective content of the literary mind at any given date, and will be able to make his own observation of the influence of great writers or great events upon the generations which followed them.

PART II. NOTES AND INDICES

BY SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

THIS book is issued as a companion to the above volume. It contains critical and appreciative comments on the authors and their works, and should be found especially valuable for students.

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(14TH CENTURY—19TH CENTURY)

PART II. NOTES AND INDICES



COMPILED BY
HENRY NEWBOLT

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INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this *English Anthology* is "to show the progress of the English language and literature as the gradual gathering of many tributaries into one stream, or of many characters and influences into one great national concourse." It places every writer therefore, not by the date of his birth—the moment of birth is not the moment of his effective entry into the world of thought—but by the date at which he may be judged to have arrived in the concourse as a conspicuous or influential member of it. The reader is invited to open the book wherever he will and imagine himself to be the contemporary of the author there exemplified: he will be able to get some idea from the preceding pages of what might then have formed the literary content of his mind, and in the succeeding pages he can look forward to that which was still in the future. This is a convenient way of applying the Historic Method: but in suggesting it I am anxious not to give a mistaken view of the relation of History and Literature.

A work of art—a piece of literature—is not the subject of History in any but a very limited way: it is not the product of an Organism or a Process, in the biological sense, but the unique, timeless expression of a spirit in a world of spirits. This timelessness of Art cannot be too clearly stated or too constantly remembered. The worlds of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Keats, Byron, Browning—and even of much lesser and less fertile poets—are all unique, separate, self-existent worlds, each created for the first time and by the act of a single person. But they are created by a transmuting power, out of experiences afforded by the world of every day. The components of these experiences have a history, which may be known and stated, in terms of Time or succession, and even of Causation.

The Time is obvious, but less important than the Causation. Man being what he is, a spirit and member of a society of spirits, can only express himself as such; that is, in forms addressed to or intelligible by others of his kind. Literary art, therefore, is the intercourse of choicer spirits, in which they receive and give experiences: and it is often intercourse which extends beyond the bounds of an age or a national society. The experience of one (or of many) becomes part of the experience of another (or others), and through them of yet others. The gradual onward flow of these transmitted experiences is like a broadening stream: it flows through the whole landscape, and no one, however original, can be wholly unaffected by it.

But originality does not depend on freedom from influences. (It could not, for everyone has an environment, and one resulting from the past.) These influences, this tradition of methods and insight, this store of experiences, is a strength, not a weakness, for those who can use it with a degree of mastery. There will always be, as Mr. Abercrombie says, "the amateur artist who worries himself with anxiety to create beauty"—that is, the man who, being fond of figs, wishes to be a fig tree as well as a consumer—but there will also be the genuine artist whose impulse and vision are his own, though he receives from others the suggestion of a subject, a vocabulary, a technique, or even the first guidance towards a new point of view. His feeling, too, will inevitably be coloured by the social and political life of his country and by the public or semi-public opinion of his generation: and it is on this account that private letters, diaries, and other non-literary documents have been included in our collection.

We may speak then of the history of literature if we please: but let us at the same time remember what Literature really is: let us look at the work of the great initiators and note that the greater they are the more difficult or the less relevant it is to define them in such terms. When we make our survey of literature we are not inspecting a pedigree herd or a school of verbal dexterity: what we see is the spectacle of the timeless, immaterial human spirit expressing itself under the limitations of Time and bodily existence. We too are under those limitations,

and we find a reasonable pleasure in comparing and placing the work of individual artists: but we shall gain a greater experience of sympathy, insight and wonder in proportion as we realise that the artist, though always a person, is not in his essential reality a temporal, a national or an individual being.

One more word of warning is necessary. There are several periods in which the tributaries of our great stream flow in in very rapid succession. When a number of authors are "arriving" close together dates should be exact: and this is sometimes very difficult to ensure. I have gone over the whole list with the aid of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, the huge *Record of English Literature* of Dr. Garnett and Mr. Edmund Gosse, Professor Saintsbury's *History of English Literature* and Professor Elton's *Survey of English Literature*. All these are admirable books, and their differences add to the reader's pleasure—except when they disagree as to dates. They frequently vary by one year, not infrequently by three; and not possessing first editions of the whole company of English writers myself, I have been forced at times to find a verdict on the evidence instead of recording a scientific fact. In three cases (out of 230) I have had to confess mistakes, and these shall some day be remedied. But the arrangement, in spite of any small inaccuracies, will be found to justify itself. It will be noted, on looking down the column of "arrival dates," that there are some remarkable years or short periods—e.g. the period 1590-94, 1610-13, 1710-13, 1817-19, or 1832-33—when a kind of spate came down the stream. To a contemporary, or one living a few years later, or to us now, such periods must have a wonderful appearance—they were great times to be alive in. But write down these same authors or tributaries in the order of their birth-dates and the spate disappears: while on the other hand, when births coincide (e.g. in 1829), neither in fact nor in contemporary effect is there anything to admire at all. Lastly the method over-rides the "grouping" of writers by the specific form of their writings: and that alone is worth doing: for there is no doubt that this device has hitherto saved the historian's time and trouble rather than the reader's.

NOTE

The year which *precedes* each author's name is that assigned as the date of his "arrival"—that is, of the decisive appearance of his fame or influence in the world of letters. The facts by which the date is fixed are given in the note which follows; but strict uniformity cannot be secured. The sky may be clear for one star; another may rise in mist and only be visible some time afterwards, but its influence may be as great as that of North upon Shakespeare or Phineas Fletcher upon Milton.