

**LITERARY TYPES:
BEING ESSAYS
IN CRITICISM**

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Literary types: being essays in criticism by E. Beresford Chancellor

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E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

BY

Edwin
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"We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something from him."—*Carlyle*.



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PREFACE

I HAVE applied the title of "Literary Types" to the following essays in criticism, because each writer that I have treated of seems to me to develop a particular phase in literary history.

Landor I have termed "Dramatist," not because he wrote one or two plays, but because all the literary work he did was essentially dramatic in intention and execution.

I have appended the epithet of "Man of Letters" to De Quincey for the reason that no narrower term seems able to adequately express his compass or versatility.

The words "Essayist," "Philosopher," and "Novelist," apply naturally, without need of any explanation here, to Lamb, Carlyle, and Dickens.

A word is, perhaps, necessary to explain why I have set down the name "Poet" as an epithet distinctive of Coleridge, considering what I have said of him in the following pages. I have done so because he not only was a pre-eminent poet,

but because this is the title by which he is best known. It is a fact, however, that he can be included in so many other realms of thought that this title is hardly sufficient to describe his claim as a great man; but if not a perfectly logical definition, it is at least sufficient to distinguish him from the others who here bear him company.

The great men I have here essayed to study appear to me to have all had some higher aim than the mere desire for literary fame, for they all seem to hold with Marmontel that, "Le plus digne objet de la littérature, le seul même qui l'ennoblesse et qui l'honore, c'est son utilité morale;" nor are they that sort of men who sometimes, as Montaigne quaintly has it, "expect to derive reputation and applause from little knacks and frivolous subtleties."

In what I have said in criticism I have endeavoured not to be unduly partial, and as the opinions I have ventilated have been inspired by something more than a mere passing admiration for the works of the great men I have written of, I trust that I shall not be accused of the opposite fault of being, as Landor terms it, "a hasty observer or a cold chronologist."

E. B. C.

ORCHARDENE,
BEDFORD PARK, W.

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TO
MY WIFE.

LITERARY TYPES.

Thomas De Quincey,

MAN OF LETTERS.

“He alone is worthy of respect who knows what is of use to himself and others, and who labours to control his self-will.”—*Goethe.*

DE QUINCEY'S personality is at once the most extraordinary and the vaguest of any in the world of English letters. He comes before us in his works more distinctly than any other writer; he is, as it were, always present, and yet he is so shadowy, so misunderstood, that he seems to be at once the medium and the spirit of his own literature. The reason is less obvious than it would appear at first sight. To say that he is too near us, that we should get more distance on him, that we ought to draw back and have the whole of his work and character within the compass of our vision, is to

use but empty phrases, mere commonplaces of criticism; others are nearer than he, and others are better known; they have no more distance on them, and yet we understand them more accurately. Neither is it that he is so overwhelmingly great, although in this respect he is sufficiently formidable, and his light will shine brightly though fitfully when greater blazes have died out. What we see of him is so fragmentary and so inconclusive that he may not inaptly be termed the Will-o'-the-wisp of literature. Doubtless it is well, as Goethe once said, "If we want to understand and enjoy the whole, that we should see it in its smallest parts;" but then we must be allowed, if we would accurately estimate its value, to complete our investigations by viewing the object afterwards as a whole; and it is this that forms our chief difficulty when we would adequately comprehend the life and character of the "English Opium-eater."

Our materials are not inconsiderable, for, putting aside the recognised Autobiography, which in itself fills two volumes of Professor Masson's final edition,¹ we have the man himself in all kinds of reviews and essays, of his own and other men's

¹ Besides this edition, which runs to fourteen volumes, Mr. Hogg has edited two volumes of hitherto uncollected writings of De Quincey's