

**THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS OF  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY; WITH  
ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM  
THE RARER PERIODICALS**

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The periodical essayists of the eighteenth century;with illustrative extracts from the rarer periodicals by George S. Marr

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FROM THE RARER PERIODICALS

BY

GEORGE S. MARR

M.A. (Hons.), B.D., D.Litt. (Edin.)

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## PREFACE

THE present work is an endeavour to give an approximately complete and detailed survey of the periodical essay of the eighteenth century and its writers. In the preparation of the work, the author has seen and examined over one hundred and fifty periodicals. Many of these are now exceedingly rare, and full use has been made of the valuable collections in the great libraries: The British Museum Library, London; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Advocates', the Signet, and the University Libraries, Edinburgh. In addition the author has been privileged to see a number of periodicals in private collections.

The question of arrangement presented difficulties. The simplest solution was to adopt as far as possible a chronological plan. The advantages of this scheme outweighed the disadvantage of a certain "catalogue-y" effect which was almost inevitable when so many periodicals were being passed under review. A number of illustrative extracts support the critical statements made.

Up to the present time no work has appeared devoted exclusively to this subject and limited to this period. The work of Nathan Drake, carried out over a century ago, is only a partial exception to this statement. Accordingly it is hoped that this endeavour to deal with the whole field of the periodical essay in the eighteenth century may be found to be a contribution, however small, to the elucidation of the subject under review.

I ALBYN PLACE, QUEEN STREET,  
EDINBURGH, *September* 1923.

G. S. M.





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# THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

## CHAPTER I

### ORIGINS

THE eighteenth century has come into its own. Its literary production is now valued at its true worth, and that is far higher than, in the past, was commonly supposed. Even in verse we have only to think of one name, Robert Burns, to make us realise that the eighteenth century gave us *some* poetry at least of the very first class; but it was in the realm of prose-writing that the best work was accomplished. The achievements of the eighteenth century in at least two departments of prose were really great—essay-writing and the novel. It is with the former of these that we wish to deal, and more particularly with the periodical essay, which had its rise in the first decade of the century and continued to flourish till wellnigh its close.

With regard to the origin of the essay as a distinct *kind* in literature it is not easy to speak with certainty. Within the last fifty years questions regarding the *origins* of literature and of literary kinds have indeed been much discussed, but usually with negative results, for the most important of these forms are ultimately the expression, the artistic expression, of elements which are part and parcel of human nature itself. One of the most fruitful results of comparative criticism in recent years has been to show that as no civilisation nor epoch is absolutely unique or stands isolated from others, so the literary forms of a people, though they may show striking differences, indicate their relationship with the common stock of humanity. This is