

NATURALISM IN ENGLISH POETRY

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Naturalism in English Poetry by Stopford A. Brooke

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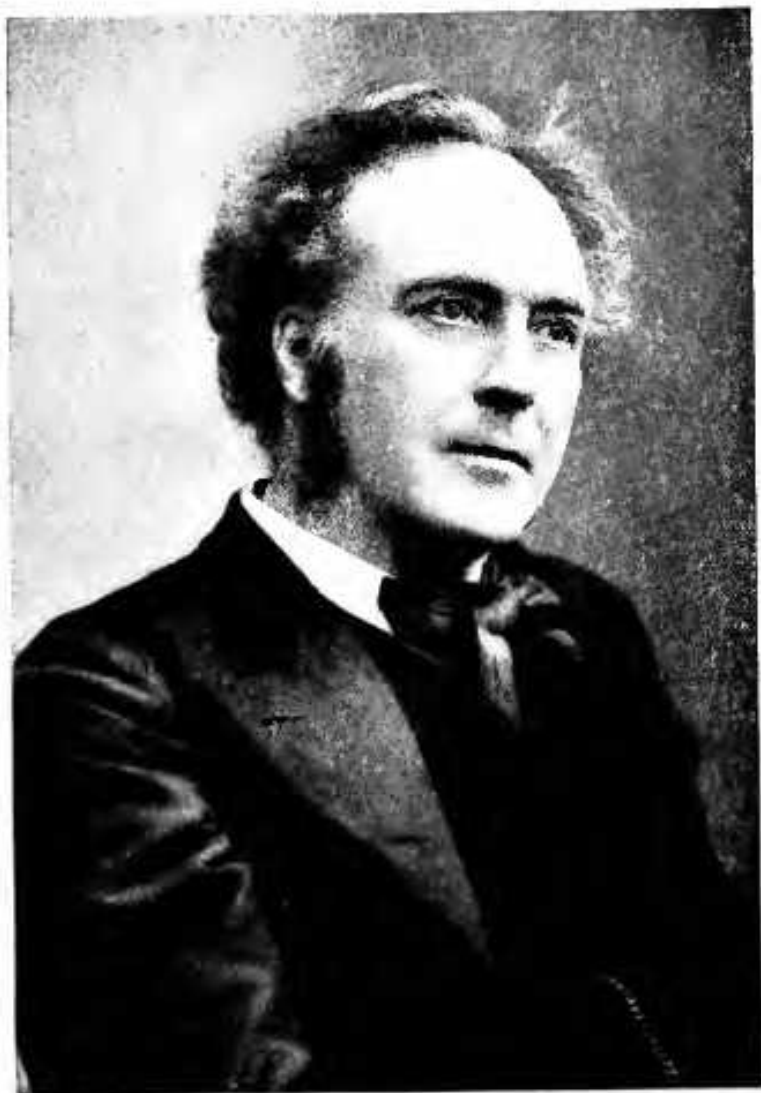
STOPFORD A. BROOKE

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ENGLISH POETRY**

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POETRY

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BY
STOPFORD A. BROOKE
M.A., LL.D.



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FOREWORD

IN the winter term of the year 1902 the Rev. Stopford Brooke delivered at University College, London, a series of lectures on the rise of Naturalism in English Poetry, which met with high appreciation from large and distinguished audiences. They are here printed from the careful MS. which Mr. Brooke always prepared for his public addresses, with the slight verbal alterations necessitated by the change from the form of the lecture to that of the essay. These lectures are represented by the first seven chapters of the present volume. The remaining essays are also printed from the MSS. of lectures, not connected with the above-mentioned course but harmonising with it and completing it so fitly that the volume in which they are included may be said to present a coherent study of a particular epoch of English poetry—an epoch to which Mr. Brooke brought a special sympathy and a special knowledge, and which had a deep and still unexhausted influence on English literature and English sentiment.

Two of these essays, "Shelley's Interpretation of Christianity" and "Byron's *Cain*," have been printed since Mr. Brooke's death in the *Hibbert Journal*, and thanks are due to Dr. L. P. Jacks for permitting their inclusion here. The rest are now published for the first time.

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NATURALISM IN ENGLISH POETRY

CHAPTER I

DRYDEN AND POPE

THE distance in time between the last poems of Pope and the first of Wordsworth was nearly sixty years. During that time, and including the "Lyrical Ballads," the spirit, method, manner, metre, melody and the passion of poetry had suffered a complete and vital change. And the end the poets proposed to themselves in making poetry, and their conception of its origin and sources, were radically different from what they had been in the days of Dryden and Pope. Indeed, the change began before Pope's death, about the middle of his career. Even then, the reaction which brought us to Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge took its rise. It was a reaction which, caused by a weariness of artificial and conventional poetry, went back, in order to draw new life into poetry, to simple human nature, and to Nature herself as seen in her wild and uncultivated beauty. And this, briefly put (it will be sufficiently expanded hereafter), is what is meant by the rise of Naturalism.

If we date it from the middle of Pope's career and not from his death, it took not sixty but fully eighty