

**CHARACTERS FROM THE  
HISTORIES & MEMOIRS OF THE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY; WITH  
AN ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER  
AND HISTORICAL NOTES**

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Characters from the Histories & Memoirs of the Seventeenth Century; With an Essay on the Character and Historical Notes by David Nichol Smith

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**DAVID NICHOL SMITH**

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SEVENTEENTH CENTURY  
CHARACTERS

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*With an Essay on* THE CHARACTER

*and Historical Notes*

By DAVID NICHOL SMITH

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## THE CHARACTER

THE seventeenth century is rich in short studies or characters of its great men. Its rulers and statesmen, its soldiers and politicians, its lawyers and divines, all who played a prominent part in the public life, have with few notable exceptions been described for us by their contemporaries. There are earlier characters in English literature; but as a definite and established form of literary composition the character dates from the seventeenth century. Even Sir Robert Naunton's *Fragmenta Regalia, or Observations on the late Queen Elizabeth her Times and Favourites*, a series of studies of the great men of Elizabeth's court, and the first book of its kind, is an old man's recollection of his early life, and belongs to the Stuart period in everything but its theme. Nor at any later period is there the same wealth of material for such a collection as is given in this volume. The eighteenth century devoted itself rather to biography. When the facts of a man's life, his works, and his opinions claimed detailed treatment, the fashion of the short character had passed.

Yet the seventeenth century did not know its richness. None of its best characters were then printed. The writers themselves could not have suspected how many others were similarly engaged, so far were they from belonging to a school. The characters in Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* were too intimate and searching