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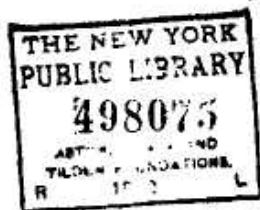
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PREFACE

THE intention of this book is to lay stress on ideas and tendencies that have to be understood and appreciated, rather than on facts that have to be learned by heart. Many authors are not mentioned and others receive scanty treatment, because of the necessities of this method of approach. The book aims at dealing with the matter of authors more than with their lives; consequently it contains few dates. All that the reader need require to help him have been included in a short chronological table at the end.

To have attempted a severely ordered and analytic treatment of the subject would have been, for the author at least, impossible within the limits imposed, and, in any case, would have been foreign to the purpose indicated by the editors of the Home University Library. The book pretends no more than to be a general introduction to a very great subject, and it will have fulfilled all that is intended for it if it stimulates those who read it to set about reading for themselves the books of which it treats.

Its debts are many, its chief creditors two teachers, Professor Grierson at Aberdeen University and Sir Walter Raleigh at Oxford, to the stimulation of

whose books and teaching my pleasure in English literature and any understanding I have of it are due. To them and to the other writers (chief of them Professor Herford) whose ideas I have wittingly or unwittingly incorporated in it, as well as to the kindness and patience of Professor Gilbert Murray, I wish here to express my indebtedness.

G. H. M.

MANCHESTER,

August, 1911.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE: MODERN

CHAPTER I

THE RENAISSANCE

(1)

THERE are times in every man's experience when some sudden widening of the boundaries of his knowledge, some vision of hitherto untried and unrealized possibilities, has come and seemed to bring with it new life and the inspiration of fresh and splendid endeavour. It may be some great book read for the first time not as a book, but as a revelation; it may be the first realization of the extent and moment of what physical science has to teach us; it may be, like Carlyle's "Everlasting Yea," an ethical illumination, or spiritual like Augustine's or John Wesley's. But whatever it is, it brings with it new eyes, new powers of comprehension, and seems to reveal a treasury of latent and unsuspected talents in the mind and heart. The history of mankind has its parallels to these moments of illumination in the life of the individual. There are times when the boundaries of human experience, always narrow, and fluctuating but little between age and age, suddenly