

**DRYDEN'S PALAMON AND
ARCITE. EDITED WITH
INTRODUCTION AND
NOTES**

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Dryden's Palamon and Arcite. Edited with Introduction and Notes by John Dryden & George E. Eliot

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JOHN DRYDEN & GEORGE E. ELIOT

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Jon: Dryden

DRYDEN'S
PALAMON AND ARCITE

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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1899

TO
HENRY A. BEERS
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN
YALE UNIVERSITY
WHO FIRST AROUSED MY INTEREST IN
DRYDEN
AND DIRECTED MY STUDY OF HIS WORKS
THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED

PREFACE.

To edit an English classic for study in secondary schools is difficult. The lack of anything like uniformity in the type of examination required by the colleges and universities complicates treatment. Not only do two distinct institutions differ in the scope and character of their questions, but the same university varies its demands from year to year. The only safe course to pursue is, therefore, a generally comprehensive one. But here, again, we are hampered by limited space, and are forced to content ourselves with a bare outline, which the individual instructor can fill in as much or as little as he pleases.

The ignorance of most of our classical students in regard to the history of English literature is appalling; and yet it is impossible properly to study a given work of a given author without some knowledge of the background against which that particular writer stands. I have, therefore, sketched the politics, society, and literature of the age in which Dryden lived, and during which he gave to the world his *Palamon and Arcite*. In the critical comments of the introduction I have contented myself with little more than hints. That particular line of study, whether it concerns the poet's style, his verse forms, or the possession of the divine instinct itself, can be much more satisfactorily devel-

oped by the instructor, as the student's knowledge of the poem grows.

It is certainly a subject for congratulation that so many youth will be introduced, through the medium of Dryden's crisp and vigorous verse, to one of the tales of Chaucer. May it now, as in his own century, accomplish the poet's desire, and awaken in them appreciative admiration for the old bard, the best story-teller in the English language.

G. E. E.

CLINTON, CONN., July 26, 1897.

INTRODUCTION.

THE BACKGROUND.

THE fifty years of Dryden's literary production just fill the last half of the seventeenth century. It was a period bristling with violent political and religious prejudices, provocative of strife that amounted to revolution. Its social life ran the gamut from the severity of the Commonwealth Puritan to the unbridled debauchery of the Restoration Courtier. In literature it experienced a remarkable transformation in poetry, and developed modern prose, watched the production of the greatest English epics, smarted under the lash of the greatest English satires, blushed at the brilliant wit of unspeakable comedies, and applauded the beginnings of English criticism.

When the period began, England was a Commonwealth. Charles I., by obstinate insistence upon absolutism, by fickleness and faithlessness, had increased and strengthened his enemies. Parliament had seized the reins of government in 1642, had completely established its authority at Naseby in 1645, and had beheaded the king in front of his own palace in 1649. The army had accomplished these results, and the army proposed to enjoy the reward. Cromwell, the idolized commander of the Ironsides, was placed at the head of the new-formed state with the title of Lord Protector; and for five years he ruled England, as she had been ruled by no sovereign since Elizabeth. He suppressed Parliamentary dissensions and royalist uprisings, humbled the Dutch, took vengeance on the Spaniard, and made England indis-