

**STUDIES IN THE
EVOLUTION OF
ENGLISH CRITICISM**

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Studies in the evolution of English criticism by Laura Johnson Wylie

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LAURA JOHNSON WYLIE

**STUDIES IN THE
EVOLUTION OF
ENGLISH CRITICISM**

STUDIES

IN THE

EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH
CRITICISM

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY
OF YALE UNIVERSITY IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

LAURA JOHNSON WYLIE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The thesis here published was begun in November, 1892, and presented to the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty on November 2, 1893. It is now printed by the authority and at the expense of the University, in the hope that it may be useful to other students of the period which it covers.

ALBERT S. COOK.

YALE UNIVERSITY, February, 1894.

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STUDIES IN THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH CRITICISM.

I.

JOHN DRYDEN.

THE scientific spirit, from the first the undertone of the Renaissance movement, became dominant in England only toward the latter half of the seventeenth century, when men, in some degree at leisure from themselves, could turn freely to the contemplation of the universe and of their own social and intellectual experience. The literature of the time was quickly touched by this universal delight in the operation of law. The imagination became the domain of reason; excessive emphasis of individuality was supplanted by a taste for beauty of type and by zeal for the general good. The application of practical tests, the acceptance of reason as the final judge of truth, were virtues hardly less characteristic of the new poetry than of the new science. Suddenly asked to give an account of itself, literature began forthwith to define its aims and to direct its efforts toward immediate results; its work was emphatically declared to be to delight only that it might instruct, while a growing sensitiveness of the literary conscience forbade any departure from the straightest and shortest way to this end.