

MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON MILTON

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Macaulay's Essay on Milton by Thomas Babington Macaulay

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THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

**MACAULAY'S
ESSAY ON MILTON**

Longmans' English Classics

MACAULAY'S
ESSAY ON MILTON

EDITED

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

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PREFACE

It is hard for an editor of a book designed for formal study to determine precisely what parts of the learning that has gathered about his subject should be regarded as indispensable to young students. It is harder still for the editor of a book designated, in the new uniform entrance requirements, for current reading and not for formal study, to determine what he may assume as already a part of the pupil's knowledge. Two methods of treatment at once suggest themselves. He may annotate the text very sparingly, on the assumption that an intelligent boy knows enough to read ordinary English prose literature understandingly, and should be forced to find out for himself the meaning of words or allusions that he does not comprehend. Or he may annotate profusely, on the much sounder assumption that boys and girls are not living dictionaries and encyclopædias, and scarcely ought to be expected to interrupt reading which they are encouraged to enjoy in order to search various volumes for information that might just as well be put at once before them. Both extremes the editor of the present volume has tried to avoid. He has endeavored to give the pupil such facts as will enable him to read rapidly and understandingly; he has endeavored also to stimulate in the pupil an intelligent curiosity in regard to matters worth further investigation and further knowledge.

This edition of Macaulay's essay follows the authoritative text of which Longmans, Green, and Co. are the publishers.

J. G. C.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

(Summary of Macaulay's Essay.)

- §§ 1-8. PREFATORY REMARKS. *Description of a theological work by John Milton, lately discovered.*
- §§ 8-49. FIRST DIVISION OF THE ESSAY: MILTON'S POETRY.
- §§ 8-18. *First topic: Is Milton's place among the greatest masters? Yes, for he triumphed over the difficulty of writing poetry in the midst of a highly civilized society. A discussion of the relation of poetry to civilization.*
- §§ 18-20. *Second topic: Milton's Latin poetry.*
- §§ 20-25. *Third topic: Some striking characteristics of Milton's poetic methods. A description of the effect produced by the peculiar suggestiveness of the words he uses. Examples, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso.*
- §§ 25-30. *Fourth topic: Milton's dramatic poetry. Like the Greek drama, it has much of the lyric character. The Greek drama and Samson Agonistes; Comus and the Italian Masques.*
- §§ 30-47. *Fifth topic: Paradise Lost. Parallel between Milton and Dante. A discussion of Milton's superiority in the management of the agency of supernatural beings.*
- §§ 47-49. *Sixth topic: The sonnets.*
- §§ 49-87. SECOND DIVISION OF THE ESSAY: MILTON'S CONDUCT AS A CITIZEN. THE CONDUCT OF HIS PARTY ASSOCIATES. §§ 49-72. *First topic: Milton's joining the party of the Parliament in 1642.*
- §§ 49-51. *Under the impressions derived from seventeenth and eighteenth century literature, many Englishmen fail to see that the Long Parliament was defending principles of government accepted by all England since 1688, and now struggling for recognition in the rest of the world.*
- §§ 51-57. *The rebellion of Parliament against Charles I. is therefore justified by a comparison, point by point, with the glorious Revolution dethroning James II.*
- §§ 57-72. *Admitting, then, the justice of Parliament's quarrel with the king, was their rebellion too strong a measure? When are revolutions justified?*