ESSAYS ON THE DRAMA

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JOHN DRYDEN & JR. STRUNK

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DRYDEN

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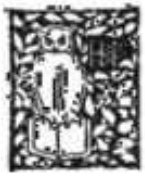
EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

WILLIAM STRUNK, JR.

Instructor in English in Cornell University



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INTRODUCTION.

I. Chronological Table.

[Besides histories of England and biographies of Dryden, the following books treat of the literary history of Dryden's time: Beljame, *Le public et les hommes de lettres en Angleterre au dix-huitième siècle* (1881; 2d ed., 1897); Masson, *Life of Milton*, vol. vi. (1879), pp. 273–387, 606–615; Garnett, *The Age of Dryden* (1895). The following table, which mentions the principal events of English political and literary history during Dryden's life, is intended as a background for the biographical sketch which follows.]

1640. Meeting of the Long Parliament.	
1642. Outbreak of the Civil War.	1642. Closing of the theatres.
	1643. Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.
	1644. Milton's *Areopagitica*.
	1645. Milton's *Poems in English and Latin*.
	1648. New ordinance against theatres.
1649. The King's trial and execution.	
	1651. Hobbes's *Leviathan*.
1653. Cromwell made Lord Protector.	1653. Walton's *Compleat Angler*.

	1656. Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes.*
1658. Death of Cromwell.	
1660. The Restoration.	1660. Pepys begins his *Diary.*
	1663. First part of *Hudibras.*
1664–67. First Dutch War of the Restoration.	
1665. Naval victory over the Dutch, June 3. The Plague.	1665. Theatres closed from May until Christmas, 1666.
1666. The Great Fire.	
1667. The fall of Clarendon.	1667. *Paradise Lost.* Birth of Swift.
1670. The Treaty of Dover.	1670. Birth of Congreve.
	1671. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes. The Rehearsal.*
1672–74. Second Dutch War of the Restoration.	1672. Births of Addison and Steele.
	1674. Death of Milton.
1678. The Popish Plot.	1678. First part of *The Pilgrim's Progress.*
1679. The Exclusion Bill.	
1682–83. Flight and death of Shaftesbury.	1682. Otway's *Venice Preserved.*
1685. Death of Charles. Accession of James II. Monmouth's Rebellion.	
	1687. Newton's *Principia.*
1688. Birth of the Prince of Wales. Landing of William of Orange. Flight of James.	1688. Birth of Pope.
1689. William and Mary proclaimed joint sovereigns.	
	1690. Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding.*
	1693. Congreve's first play, *The Old Bachelor.*

1694. Death of Mary.
1697. Peace of Ryswick.

1698. Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.*

II. Sketch of Dryden's Life.

[Four biographies of Dryden are of permanent excellence: Johnson's *Dryden* in *The Lives of the Poets* (1779–81); Scott's *Life of Dryden* (1808), now forming vol. i. of the Scott-Saintsbury edition of Dryden; Mr. Saintsbury's *Dryden* (1881) in the *English Men of Letters*; Mr. Leslie Stephen's article (1888) in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The third is of especial value for its appreciative criticisms; the fourth is the most convenient for reference in matters of detail. Less valuable than these, but still of interest, are the essays by Macaulay (1828) and by Lowell (*Among My Books*, first series, 1870). The reader will also find some space devoted to Dryden in Macaulay's *History of England* (1849–61), and in Green's *History of the English People* (1877–80); the former account is hostile, even abusive; the latter is harsh, and partly unjust.]

John Dryden is the greatest figure in English letters in the age between the Commonwealth and the reign of Anne; in the age, that is, of the Restoration. Born twenty-three years later than Milton, he was in every way representative of a new generation. His authorship extended from the last years of the Commonwealth to near the end of the reign of William III. From the days of his first successes, early in the reign of Charles II., he was the central figure in literature of many kinds, the greatest master of the language that the nation knew. Turning from one field of literature