

**LONGMAN'S HANDBOOK
OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE; PART IV.
FROM SWIFT TO COWPER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649501854

Longman's Handbook of English Literature; Part IV. From Swift to Cowper by R. McWilliam

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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R. MCWILLIAM

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ENGLISH LITERATURE

PART IV.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

LONGMANS' HANDBOOK
OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY
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PART IV.
FROM SWIFT TO COWPER



LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET
1890

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P R E F A C E

THE present little volume treats of the eighteenth century, and this period is one of the most interesting in our literature.

It is a period sufficiently remote to gain the charm of distance, and the 'Spectator' and 'Tom Jones' carry us back into a world very different from our own. But it is sufficiently near to make us feel we are in living contact with it, and Swift and Pope and Johnson are far more real persons to us than Shakspeare or Bacon or Milton can be.

The poetical language of the eighteenth century, the brilliant couplets of Pope and his followers, has passed away, and has been succeeded by simpler and more expressive verse; but the prose of the last century, the terse and easy flow of language of Addison and Berkeley and Goldsmith, is that which we still use or strive to use.

An attempt has been made in this volume to indicate the great characteristics of this period, to trace the progress of poetry from an artificial style to a simple and natural one, to describe the spiritual deadness and scepticism of the age, and to mark the upspringing of the prose romance.

In a final volume it is proposed to show how the tendencies of the last century have been modified by the French Revolution, and to give some account of the poets and novelists and historians and men of science of this age.

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HANDBOOK
OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE AGE OF QUEEN ANNE

THE early part of the eighteenth century, the age of Swift and Addison and Pope, is a brilliant period in English literature, and it has been justly compared to the Augustan age of Roman literature with its Virgil and Horace, and to the age of Leo X. with its Ariosto and Tasso, to mention only a few names out of the cluster that belong to those periods.

Little direct encouragement was given either by William III., or Anne, or George I. to literature, but some of the chief statesmen of both parties were themselves men of letters, and they became generous patrons of learning.

Charles Montague, the great Whig leader, when a young man, was a joint author with Matt Prior of the 'Town and Country Mouse,' in which they turned to ridicule Dryden's fine poem of the 'Hind and Panther.' At the Revolution Montague devoted himself to politics,