

**MODERN ENGLISH
ESSAYS, VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649229963

Modern English essays, Vol. II by Various

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**MODERN ENGLISH
ESSAYS, VOL. II**



Augustus

MODERN
ENGLISH ESSAYS
VOLUME TWO



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1922

LONDON & TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

PK.366

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

EDITOR'S NOTE

Obiter Dicta, which in 1886 announced a new essayist, well in the tradition, yet original, and gifted with allusive, whimsical humour, supplies two essays in this collection. The first, that on Carlyle, is Mr. Birrell's own; the second, on Falstaff, is by his friend, the late George Radford. Leslie Stephen is seen in his less known, more personal vein in his essay from the *Cornhill Magazine*, for which he wrote from the year 1866 onwards. In the cycle also of personal diversions, Samuel Butler's "Ramblings in Cheapside" is a delicious instance of philosophical fantasy, with a scientific moral to the tale. It was first printed in the *Universal Review*, 1890. Mr. Edmund Gosse is presented under two aspects from his *Gossip in a Library*—writing with mischievous zest upon cats and their chroniclers, and with librarious critical assignment on Christopher Smart. Austin Dobson on John Gay and Andrew Lang on Edgar Poe were perfectly suited to those diverse authors, as issued formerly in the *Parchment Library* (1881-1882). They represent a particular mode of essay-writing with an eye to the man behind the book, much in vogue in their day.

The cult of the literary picturesque was a fashion with Lang, Dobson and Robert Louis Stevenson; and its tendency is to be seen in many

EDITOR'S NOTE

pages of those writers and their contemporaries, as in one famous example by the last-named, where it culminates in a Skeltian England:

"Here is the inn with the red curtain, pipes, spittoons and eight-day clock; and there again is that impressive dungeon with the chains, which was so dull to colour. England, the hedge-row elms, the thin brick houses, windmills, glimpses of the navigable Thames—England, when at last I came to visit it, was only Skelt made evident."

For the conscious art of the literary wayfarer, who is of the town, yet delighted with the wild, what better example could be found than Robert Louis Stevenson's "Walking Tours" in this volume, which comes from *Virginibus Puerisque?* (1881). Professor Hales upon Edmund Spenser, the "Poets' Poet," wrote with the feeling of a specialist. His essay, Dr. Garnett's on "A Translator of Plato's *Republic*," and Dean Beeching's on Hugh Latimer, are all from the same source, and were first contributed to editions of those authors prepared for "Everyman." E. R.

For permission to use copyright material in this volume, special acknowledgment is due to the Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell for the essays on Carlyle and on Falstaff; to Mr. Edmund Gosse for the essays on "Cats" and on Christopher Smart; to Mr. Festing Jones and Mr. Jonathan Cape for Samuel Butler's "Ramblings in Cheapside," and to Messrs. Chatto and Windus and Messrs. Scribners for Stevenson's "Walking Tours." The other copyright items have been either acquired by the present publishers from the original holders, or reprinted from volumes already in their list.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CARLYLE (<i>Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell</i>)	1
GAY'S FABLES (<i>Austin Dobson</i>)	32
THE POETRY OF EDGAR ALLAN POE (<i>Andrew Lang</i>)	50
A CYNIC'S APOLOGY (<i>Leslie Stephen</i>)	64
CATS (<i>Edmund Gosse</i>)	84
CHRISTOPHER SMART (<i>Edmund Gosse</i>)	92
A BELT OF ASTEROIDS (<i>Edmund Clarence Stedman</i>)	104
FALSTAFF (<i>George Radford</i>)	141
RAMBLINGS IN CHEAPSIDE (<i>Samuel Butler</i>)	161
WALKING TOURS (<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>)	181
GOLDSMITH (<i>Austin Dobson</i>)	193
A TRANSLATOR OF PLATO'S "REPUBLIC" (<i>Richard Garnett</i>)	215
HUGH LATIMER (<i>H. C. Beeching</i>)	226
THE POETS' POET (<i>John W. Hales</i>)	241

