

**READERS AND
WRITERS
(1917-1921)**

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Readers and writers (1917-1921) by R. H. C.

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R. H. C.

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By

R. H. C. (A. R. Orage)



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Preface

UNDER the title of "Readers and Writers" and over the initials "R. H. C." I contributed to the *New Age*, during a period of seven or eight years, a weekly literary causerie of which the present volume, covering the years 1917-1921, is a partial reprint. My original design was to treat literary events from week to week with the continuity, consistency and policy ordinarily applied to comments on current political events; that is to say, with equal seriousness and from a similarly more or less fixed point of view as regards both means and end. This design involved of necessity a freedom of expression rather out of fashion, though it was the convention of the greatest period of English literature, namely, the Eighteenth Century; and its pursuit in consequence brought the comments into somewhat lively disrepute. That, however, proved not to be the greatest difficulty. Indeed, within the last few years an almost general demand

for more serious, more outspoken and even more "savage" criticism has been heard, and is perhaps on the way to being satisfied, though literary susceptibilities are still far from being as well-mannered as political susceptibilities. The greatest difficulty is encountered in the fact that literary events, unlike political events, occur with little apparent order, and are subject to no easily discoverable or demonstrable direction. In a single week every literary form and tendency may find itself illustrated, with the consequence that any attempt to set the week's doings in a relation of significant development is bound to fall under the suspicion of impressionism or arbitrariness. I have no other defence against these charges than Plato's appeal to good judges, of whom the best because the last is Time. Time will pronounce as only those living critics can whose present judgments are an anticipation of Time's. Time will show what has been right and what wrong. Already, moreover, a certain amount of winnowing and sifting has taken place. Some literary values of this moment are not what they were yesterday or the day before. A few are greater; many of them are less. My most

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confident prediction, however, remains to be confirmed : it is that the perfect English style is still to be written. That it may be in our own time is both the goal and the guiding-star of all literary criticism that is not idle chatter.

A. R. ORAGE.

The New Age,

38 CURSITOR STREET, E.C. 4.

December 1921.



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