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Allardyce Nicoll

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A HISTORY OF
ENGLISH DRAMA
1660-1900

BY
ALLARDYCE NICOLL

VOLUME I
RESTORATION DRAMA
1660-1700

FOURTH EDITION

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PREFACE

A History of Restoration Drama, published in 1923, was intended as the first of a series of volumes designed to trace the fortunes of English dramatic literature from the accession of Charles II to the close of Victoria's reign. There is, therefore, every reason for the appearance of the present completely revised and considerably expanded text of this book as volume one of a general stage history covering the years 1660 to 1900.

Restoration Drama had been partly revised in 1927 and again in 1939, but the amount of scholarly attention devoted to the subject during the past twenty-five years has now called for something of further reach. The lengthy appendix dealing with purely theatrical history has been entirely rewritten and the handlist of plays has not only been reviewed in the light of recent specialist studies but there has been added in summary form the basic information by which the performance and printing dates may be determined. In this connection, I should note that the original "handlists" in this book and in its successors have happily succeeded in accomplishing what they were designed to accomplish. Since no effort had previously been made to make complete catalogues of productions and published texts during these years, I fully realised that my work must be tentative merely; but I hoped that the "handlists" would encourage others to indicate errors and to make additions. This is fortunately being done for all the periods covered by the present history of the drama, from the carefully detailed bibliography of Restoration plays now being compiled by Fredson Bowers to the invaluable articles on "Early XIXth Century Plays" which Allen Wade and St Vincent Troubridge are currently contributing to *Theatre Notebook*.

So far as the main text of the present volume is concerned, an effort has been made, at the request of the publishers, to retain as many pages of the original as possible, in order to

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avoid entire resetting. It has proved feasible to rewrite some of these and to insert many references to recent books and articles, yet still some important material could not satisfactorily be included in this way. Consequently, I have added to the three main sections of the book supplementary pages which survey certain aspects of the subject and present additional references not fully dealt with in the text itself. By this means I have endeavoured to make this volume a critical record of all the significant contributions to its theme during recent years.

Like many students, I have been greatly aided in my task by the never-failing courtesy of the officials of the British Museum, the Bodleian Library and the Public Record Office—and to these I should add those of the London Library and of several American libraries where part of my work has been carried out. For particular advice and assistance I wish to thank Professor Emmett L. Avery, Dr William Van Lennep and Dr James G. McManaway—all of whom have so materially assisted, by their researches, every student of the Restoration drama.

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