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978-1-107-43274-1 - Abraham Cowley: Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses

The Text Edited by A. R. Waller

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CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH CLASSICS

The English Writings
of
Abraham Cowley

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ABRAHAM COWLEY

Born 1618

Died 1667

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ABRAHAM COWLEY

ESSAYS, PLAYS
AND
SUNDRY VERSES

THE TEXT EDITED BY
A. R. WALLER, M.A.



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NOTE.

THE first volume of this edition of the English writings of Cowley contained the whole of the poems that were collected for the folio which appeared the year after his death. The present volume contains the poems not included in the folio, its prose contents and Cowley's English plays.

The earlier writings have been printed from a copy of the third edition of 1637, preserved in the University Library, Cambridge; but, as that copy is imperfect, transcripts of the missing portions have been made from two other copies and the deficiencies supplied thereby. The collation of these similarly dated copies has shown that they differ in a few passages. In the notes I have printed the variants noted in a collation of the first and second editions of 1633 and 1636. It may, perhaps, be permitted me to remind the reader that, of these earlier writings, *Pyramus and Thisbe* was written at the age 'of ten yeeres,' *Constantius and Philetus* when 'two yeeres older' and that the volume entitled *Poeticall Blossomes* was first published when Cowley was but fifteen.

The *Satyre* called *The Puritan and the Papist* seems entitled to a definite place among the works of Cowley and I have therefore printed it as part of the present text. By the kindness of the authorities of Bodley's Library, Oxford, it has been set up from photographs of the very rare first edition of 1643.

The English play *The Guardian*, and its later recension *Cutter of Coleman-Street*, follow the first editions of

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1650 and 1663 respectively. They were apparently written in 1641 and 1658 respectively. Pepys (ed. Wheatley, ii, p. 155) records in 1661 that he went ‘after dinner to the Opera, where there was a new play (“Cutter of Coleman Street”), made in the year 1658, with reflections much upon the late times, and it being the first time, the pay was doubled, and so to save money, my wife and I went up into the gallery, and there saw very well; and a very good play it is.’

The *Proposition For the Advancement Of Experimental Philosophy* was printed in 1661. I am indebted to Mr W. Aldis Wright for the loan of a copy of that year for the purpose of reproduction. The essay was included in the prose miscellanies of the folio of 1668 referred to above, but the important *Preface* was omitted. The tract is given here, therefore, as it was published in 1661.

The *Discourse By way of Vision, Concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell*, published also in 1661, has been printed from the folio of 1668 and so have the *Several Discourses by way of Essays, in Verse and Prose*.

At the end of these (see p. 462) I have added a poem which was printed in the ninth edition of Cowley’s works (folio, 1700, Printed for *Henry Herringman*, etc.). Attention is drawn to this poem on the title page of the ninth edition by the words ‘To which are added, some Verses by the *AUTHOR* | Never before Printed.’ And I have ventured to add, also as part of the text, the unfinished poem on the Civil War first printed in 1679 (see Cowley’s reference to this in the first volume of the present edition, p. 9).

I have not included *The Four Ages of England, or The Iron Age*, 1648, as it was specifically disavowed by Cowley in the Preface to the folio edition of his works

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referred to above (see the first volume of the present edition, p. 4): I have not been able to find any reason why his statement should be doubted. Nor have I included *A Satyre against Separatists*, 1642, also attributed to Cowley.

A few verses attributed to Cowley are printed in the appendix and notes: of these, the lines *Upon the Happie Birth of the Duke* may be regarded as certainly his, although he never included them in his works; and probably the verses beginning 'Come, *Poetry*, and with you bring along' (p. 489) are his also: the edition in which they are to be found appeared during the lifetime of his literary executor (Bishop Thomas Sprat, 1635—1713).

As previously announced it is not intended to print Cowley's Latin poems as part of the present edition.

Material for a Supplement of Notes, biographical, bibliographical and critical, is being collected and will be published, it is hoped, at no very distant date.

A. R. WALLER.

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