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BY

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P R E F A C E

LIKE many other elderly people I spent a large part of the late turbulent war years in refreshing my acquaintance with the classics of English literature.

That is not an excuse for writing this book. It is only an account of the way in which the book came into existence.

I have had some practice in writing and in lecturing on philosophy. In matters of literature I am only an amateur. It is unlikely that my defects in the latter are compensated by my professional experience in the former. All the same, if it be clearly understood at the outset that I am the last person in the world to disparage the enormous importance of literary training in such a volume as this, I may possibly be able to say something of interest in it, and occasionally something of value, to several types of readers. But for the encouragement of another and very different type of poacher, the late W. MacNeile Dixon, I should not have attempted publication.

I have to thank the editors of *Philosophy* and of *The Review of English Studies* for permission to reprint essays I and III of the present book. All the rest have been unpublished hitherto.

JOHN LAIRD

KING'S COLLEGE
OLD ABERDEEN

2 May 1946