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978-1-107-63398-8 - Lectures on Dryden

Delivered by A. W. Verrall and Edited by Margaret De G. Verrall

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LECTURES ON DRYDEN

DELIVERED BY

A. W. VERRALL, LITT.D.

KING EDWARD VII PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
AND FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

EDITED BY

MARGARET DE G. VERRALL

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1914

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PREFACE

I N October and November 1911, Dr Verrall, as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, delivered a course of twelve lectures on Dryden, thus carrying out the intention which he formed as soon as he was appointed to the English Chair. The reason for the selection of this subject was not only his own long-standing admiration for Dryden, but the importance of his work in the development of English prose and verse, and its comparative neglect among the younger lovers of literature at the present day. He had hoped to recast and publish in other forms—partly as essays on particular points, partly in a contemplated edition of *Absalom and Achitophel*—the material gathered for these lectures. The present volume reproduces strictly the original manuscript notes as arranged for delivery. These notes, written by himself or dictated to our daughter and to me, were unusually full, so that it has hardly been necessary to do more than give grammatical completeness to the abbreviated sentences, to alter a word here and there, and to verify or supply references.

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Preface

Besides the draft used in the lecture-room, I have had before me pencilled notes made in the spring and summer of 1911, when Dr Verrall was re-reading Dryden's writings for the purposes of this course. These notes, like the full lecture-notes, were compiled solely for the lecturer's own use, and to that must be attributed some unconventionalities of expression which would not have found place in his published work. Nor would he have admitted into a work intended for readers digressions and a certain looseness of structure appropriate in the lecture-room.

Those who heard the lectures will find here some comments and suggestions the delivery of which time did not permit; in particular, I have included a lecture on *All for Love*, which was to have completed the course but which had to be omitted, as two lectures on Dryden's Religious Poems were found necessary, instead of the one originally planned. On the other hand, it is probable that many points, compressed in the notes, were more amply treated in the lectures, and there has been unavoidable curtailment where the lecturer dealt with metrical questions; for effects easily explained and illustrated by recitation to an audience do not lend themselves to reproduction in print. The proportions of the scheme have in consequence been somewhat altered; the lectures on Dryden's Odes and his verse generally

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fill a relatively smaller space in print than in the lecture-room, and no place has been here given to the *Secular Masque*, a reading of which, with attention to metrical effects but without other comment, concluded the course.

The general intention and purpose is apparent from the lectures themselves: they were essentially addressed to students and more particularly to Cambridge students. It was, I know, a special pleasure to my husband to have this opportunity of speaking to a Cambridge audience about a great Cambridge poet—'John Dryden of Trinity College.'

In preparing this book for publication I have received valuable assistance from friends: my thanks are due to Mr M. A. Bayfield, Mr E. H. Marsh, and more especially to Mr G. C. Macaulay, Lecturer in English in this University.

MARGARET DE G. VERRALL.

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