

## PREFACE

**I**N the final volumes of *The Cambridge History of American Literature* will be found several chapters which cover periods beginning much earlier than the Later National Period to which the volumes are specifically devoted. They are placed here partly because it has been found convenient to hold them till the last, inasmuch as they deal with large groups of writers not readily classified elsewhere, and also because in almost every case the bulk of the material discussed in them was produced after 1850.

The delay in the publication of these volumes has been due, not only to the unsettled conditions of the time, but equally to the realization, as the work has advanced, that the number of pioneer tasks still to be undertaken in the study of American literature was larger than could be entirely foreseen. We cannot claim to have accomplished all or nearly all of them. But it would be equivalent to a failure to acknowledge our appreciation of the aid rendered by our sixty-four contributors, who have faithfully laboured to bring this history to a completion, if we did not express a belief that the work as a whole furnishes a new and important basis for the understanding of American life and culture.

THE EDITORS.

10 September, 1920.