

topsy-turvy, when these authors are studied in the mass and in the order in which they appear in this work. The date of Dryden's death has been selected as a fitting close, but it is idle to represent even this as other than a more or less arbitrary choice.

All the texts, with the exception of those in the appendices, have been transcribed from the originals, without any alterations beyond the correction of obvious misprints and the revision of the punctuation in the direction of clarity and order ; but a few editorial emendations have been admitted, and duly pointed out in the notes. My own interests as a scholar happen to lie chiefly in the syntheses of literary history, rather than in the textual or philological studies which are its servants. But an unfaithful servant may play havoc with any household, and here, as drudge no less than as master, I have attempted to give that scrupulous adequacy of text which must be the basis of all the higher researches and speculations of literary scholarship. My aim has been to include complete texts only ; but in a few instances, such as in the case of treatises too large and not sufficiently significant to include as wholes, and especially in the case of important *loci* in works not wholly critical in their nature, I have been obliged to restrict myself to chapters, sections, or passages complete in themselves. It is obvious that the trend of criticism is often greatly influenced by books of this latter sort, and the *dicta* they contain often form part and parcel of its history. The somewhat more fragmentary character of the texts in the first volume is not accidental or arbitrary ; it is highly significant in