

## Foreword

THE following book was completed in the Summer of 1920. Various circumstances which have arisen have made it impossible for me to publish it before now and, though I have grown increasingly sensible of its defects, the pressure of other work has prevented me from making any revisions since its completion.

When I first began my investigations it was my intention simply to study the controversy which arose over Jeremy Collier's attack upon the theater but I soon discovered that this attack was not an isolated phenomenon and was led further and further afield until I was compelled to trace the various influences which led to the decline of the Restoration Comedy and the rise of the Sentimental Comedy by considering the general social and literary history of the times. The present book is, therefore, an account of several more or less separated movements in literature and morals which converge towards a single point.

As is usual in the case of such a book, there are too many indebtednesses to be mentioned; but in addition to a general acknowledgment of the services of the authorities of Columbia University, the British Museum, and the Public Records Office in London, I wish to tender thanks to the following persons: to Professor W. P. Trent, whose enormous general knowledge of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is matched only by his tolerance of people who know little, for much counsel; to my friend Professor Mark Van Doren, both for specific information and for the

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