



# Restoration Plays

1604

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WYCHERLEY  
OTWAY  
VANBRUGH

DRYDEN  
CONGREVE  
FARQUHAR  
ETHEREGE



AN EVERYMAN PAPERBACK

# RESTORATION PLAYS

INTRODUCTION BY  
SIR EDMUND GOSSE



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## Restoration Plays

When the bells of London rang for the king who had landed at Dover (the last stage of his long exile in Europe), they also rang in a new freedom for the English people on his accession to their throne. For it was Charles II, lover of music and entertainment, they proclaimed, the man who was to frequent the newly opened theatres closed by the Puritans for a quarter of a century. Charles witnessed there a new kind of play, for the Elizabethan and Jacobean acting traditions had been lost. Even the great Mr Dryden was made to confess in his preface to *All for Love* that the 'death of Antony and Cleopatra is a subject which has been treated by the greatest wits of our nation after Shakespeare, and by all so variously that their example has given me the confidence to try myself in this bow of Ulysses . . .'. His tragedy nevertheless has an epic quality and looms formidably in an age more remarkable for plays with a lusty sense of fun, and full of invention and irresponsible gaiety.

When the English Royalists exiled in France returned to England with the king they brought with them memories of stately ceremonial tragedies. It is ironical that just at this time Molière had set all Paris laughing with his polished comedies, and it seemed likely that an equally refined comedy would grace the English stage. At it was Restoration comedy became its own unique and daredevil self. Apart from Dryden's great play, this volume also includes Congreve's 'The Way of the World', Wycherley's gloriously bawdy 'The Country Wife', Farquhar's 'The Beaux' Stratagem', Sir John Vanbrugh's 'Provok'd Wife', Sir George Etherege's 'The Man of Mode' (all outstanding comedies) and Thomas Otway's more serious 'Venice Preserved'.

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