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Discussion Piece: New Volume in the Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke

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Abstract: A brief discussion of the material in the newly published title from the Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*.

Keywords: John Locke, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke

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Literary and Historical Writings, the latest volume in the Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke, was published in March. This collection is a diverse medley of texts, many of them published for the first time. Most of them are primarily of biographical interest and shed light on interesting corners of Locke's life:

- Locke's first published works were poems published in 1654, 1660, and 1662. These poems, along with an oration delivered on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Denmark to Christ Church, show Locke participating in the literary culture of the University.
- Locke is said to have admitted to Pierre Coste that he spent his early years at Oxford reading romances "from his aversion to the disputative way then in fashion there." One interesting result of his reading was an outline for a play (untitled, but titled by the editor *Orozes, King of Albania* from its main character).
- Locke loved to participate in discussion groups with his friends, and he wanted the discussion to proceed in a regular manner. Locke wrote two sets of "rules" for a society or club.
- Locke corresponded with his friends Edward Clarke and John Freke (known as "the College") on matters of interest coming before Parliament. During 1694 and 1695, one such issue was whether to renew the Printing Act of 1662. Locke wrote a set of criticisms of the Act, which Clarke may have used in discussion in parliamentary committees. He also provided some amendments to a new draft Printing Bill in 1695. Surprisingly, some of Locke's reasons for opposing the Printing Act had nothing to do with intellectual freedom.
- Locke's ideas on the education of children included a proposed edition of Aesop's *Fables*, with an English translation interlined below the Latin text. The difficulties that stood in the way of this project included a monopoly for publishing classical texts that was the subject of some of Locke's comments on the Printing Act.
- One of Locke's last works was a set of memoirs on his patron the First Earl of Shaftesbury. These dealt with events during the 1640s and late 1650s, long before Locke met the future Earl. They show an aging Locke recollecting (with dubious accuracy) conversations that he had with his patron some thirty years earlier.

Along with other papers relating to the Shaftesbury family, they demonstrate Locke's admiration for his former patron.

For Locke scholars, perhaps the most significant section of this volume is that devoted to "Writings on the New Method"—Locke's explanation of his method for taking notes. This method, with a number of variations described in the introduction, is the key to understanding the many manuscript notebooks in Locke's papers. The method makes it possible to determine (roughly) the order in which the notes were written, and the system of keywords that Locke used to index his papers.

This diverse collection of texts testifies to the breadth of Locke's interests. It is edited and meticulously explicated by J. R. Milton, in collaboration with an equally diverse team of contributors who drafted sections of the general introduction. Brandon Chua (University of Hong Kong) describes the context of Locke's occasional poetry; David McInnis (University of Melbourne) explains the background of Locke's play outline; Richard Yeo (Griffith University, Brisbane, emeritus) discusses Locke's method of organizing notebooks; Geoff Kemp (University of Auckland) describes the context of Locke's papers opposing the renewal of the Printing Act; and John Spurr (Swansea University) provides background for Locke's writings on the Earl of Shaftesbury.

Literary and Historical Writings is published by Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198824381. For further information, see:

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