

Heath's Modern Language Series

Goethes Faust

EDITED BY

CALVIN THOMAS

PROFESSOR OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

VOLUME I: THE FIRST PART

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Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IN undertaking this edition of *Faust* I was actuated chiefly by a desire to promote the study of the poem as a whole. It is not the place here to discuss the misconception which has prevailed so long, and to some extent still prevails, concerning the Second Part of Goethe's masterpiece. Enough that it *is* a misconception to regard it as a mass of riddles, allegories and deep abstractions requiring some sort of occult wisdom for their 'interpretation.' It is a mistake, too, to regard it as in any sense a senile afterthought, or as the product of decadent poetic powers, or as uninteresting. Let it not be supposed, either, that these sweeping statements of mine are only the confident proclamations of a new mystagogue who thinks that *he* has found the key. For the simple truth is that no key and no special order of intelligence are needed. The Second Part of *Faust*, to be sure, is not literature for children, or for the weak-minded, or for the very indolent, but — neither is the First Part. I only wish to urge here that any one who reads and enjoys the First Part (by which I mean the whole First Part and not simply the love story), should be able to read and enjoy the Second Part also. If he fails at first, his failure will be due probably to one of three causes: either he lacks interest in some of the large ideas that interested the maturer Goethe; or he has not made himself sufficiently at home in that dream-world of tradition which underlies the Faust-drama, or, possibly his vision has been obfuscated by one or more of those well-meaning but misguided persons whom the