

SKETCHES OF THE HISTORY  
LITERATURE AND LEARNING  
IN ENGLAND

FROM  
THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE ACCESSION  
OF ELIZABETH.

WITH SPECIMENS OF THE PRINCIPAL WRITERS.

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By GEO. L. CRAIK, M.A.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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It is hoped that the survey of our early literature contained in these volumes, notwithstanding many defects in the execution, may be found useful, and may be received with some degree of favour, as offering the only account yet drawn up which aims at taking a complete view of what has been done in the illustration of this interesting subject down to the present day. Ever since the first publication of Bishop Percy's 'Reliques,' nearly eighty years ago, the study of our ancient English poetry has engaged a large share of attention; and, if Percy, Warton, and Tyrwhitt still remain, in every sense, our first names in that department of learning, in respect at least of the number of the followers whom their example has produced there has been nothing to complain of. Undoubtedly, also, much new light has been thrown upon portions of the subject by the improved archæological scholarship of recent times. But our oldest poetry is not English, but French; and, as such, it has of late greatly interested and occupied our neighbours across the Channel, of whose literature it is the root and beginning in a stricter and more exclusive sense than it is of our own. Both Tyrwhitt and Warton had long ago pointed out the obligations of our earliest English poets to their predecessors who wrote in French; but it was reserved for the late Abbé de

la Rue to show that these French *trouveurs* were in fact almost all of them natives of or residents in England, and wrote not for a French, but for an English public, as well as to institute the first comprehensive investigation into their productions and merits. Since he thus led the way, a crowd of his countrymen have given themselves with abundance of zeal, and more or less of ability and accomplishment, to the same line of inquiry. Most of their labours will be found to be noticed in the following compendium. Then, again, there are our numerous old monkish chronicles written in Latin—the great sources of our national history, and also of much of our legendary literature; they have of late years, after a period of neglect, come to attract much attention; and we have endeavoured to indicate everything of importance that has been done, by improved editions of some, and by the printing of others for the first time, either to restore and elucidate them, or to make them better known and more accessible.

It only remains to be added that some portions of what is now before the reader have already appeared in the ‘*Pictorial History of England*,’ but in the main the present is a new work.

G. L. C.

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