THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS: OR, MIRTH AND MARVELS; IN TWO VOLUMES; VOL. I

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The Ingoldsby legends: or, Mirth and marvels; in two volumes; Vol. I by Richard Harris Barham

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RICHARD HARRIS BARHAM

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OR.

MIRTH AND MARVELS.

BY

RICHARD HARRIS BARHAM.

[THOMAS INGOLDSBY, ESQUIRE.]

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Vol. I.

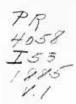
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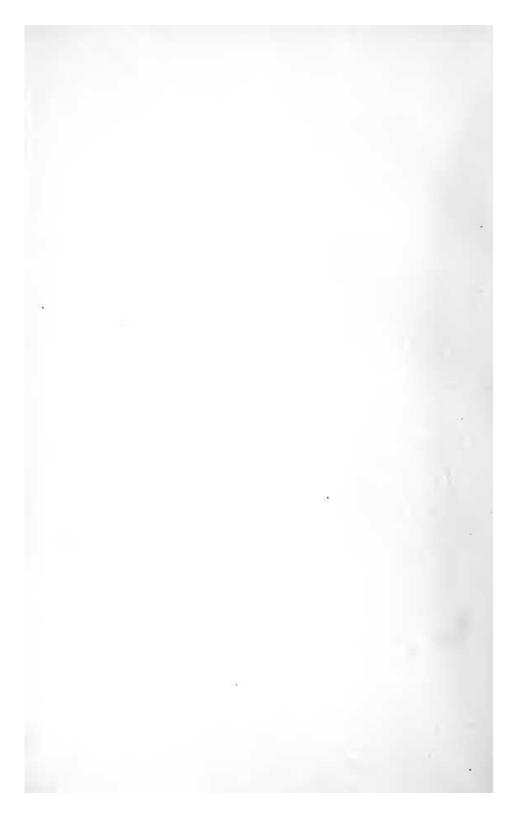
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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

RICHARD HARRIS BARHAM, a celebrated humorist, better known by his nom de plume of "Thomas Ingoldsby," was born at Canterbury, December 6, 1788. At seven years of age he lost his father, who left him a small estate, part of which was the manor of Tappington, so frequently mentioned in the Legends. At nine he was sent to St. Paul's school, but his studies were interrupted by an accident which shattered his arm and partially crippled it for life. Thus deprived of the power of bodily activity, he became a great reader and diligent student. In 1807 he entered Brasenose College, Oxford, intending at first to study for the profession of the law. Circumstances, however, induced him to change his mind and to enter the church. The choice seems surprising, for he had from childhood displayed that propensity to fun in the form of parody and punning which afterwards made him a reputation. In 1813 he was ordained and took a country curacy; he married in the following year, and in 1821 removed to London on obtaining the appointment of minor canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. Three years later he became one of the priests in ordinary of his Majesty's chapel royal. In 1826 he first contributed to Blackwood's Magazine; and on the establishment of Bentley's Miscellany in 1837 he began to furnish the series of grotesque metrical tales known as The Ingoldsby Legends. These became very popular, were published in a collected form, and have since passed through numerous editions. In variety and whimsicality of rhymes these verses

have hardly a rival since the days of Hudibras. But beneath this obvious popular quality there lies a store of solid antiquarian learning, the fruit of patient enthusiastic research by the light of the midnight lamp, in out-of-the-way old books, which few readers who laugh over his pages detect. If it were of any avail we might regret that a more active faculty of veneration did not keep him from writing some objectionable passages of the Legends. His life was grave, dignified, and highly honored. His sound judgment and his kind heart made him the trusted counsellor, the valued friend, and the frequent peacemaker; and he was intolerant of all that was mean, and base, and false. In politics he was a Tory of the old school; yet he was the life-long friend of the liberal Sydney Smith, whom in many respects he singularly resembled. Theodore Hook was one of his most intimate friends. Mr. Barham was a contributor to the Edinburgh Review and the Literary Gazette; published a novel in three volumes, entitled My Cousin Nicholas; and, strange to tell, wrote nearly a third of the articles in Gorton's Biographical Dictionary. His life was not without such changes and sorrows as make men grave. He had nine children, and six of them died in his lifetime. But he retained vigor and freshness of heart and mind to the last, and his latest verses show no signs of decay. He died in London after a long and painful illness, June 17, 1845.—Encyclopædia Britannica.