

**BALLADS AND POEMS
ILLUSTRATING
ENGLISH HISTORY.
PITT PRESS SERIES**

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Ballads and Poems Illustrating English History. Pitt Press Series by Frank Sidgwick

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FRANK SIDGWICK

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BALLADS AND POEMS

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ENGLISH HISTORY

Edited by
FRANK SIDGWICK

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PREFACE.

A NUMBER of the poems in this book are to be found in many similar collections of historical poems, and only the limits imposed by the law of copyright have prevented the inclusion of others, such as Tennyson's *Revenge*. It is hoped, however, that this deficiency may be more than compensated by the presence of many less hackneyed poems, and in particular of several fine ballads, some of which have hitherto not been put before young pupils. While it must be admitted that these are not conspicuous for historical fidelity, I venture to think that their literary interest is a distinct advantage for educational purposes; and a word or two of guidance to teachers who use this book may not be out of place.

Firstly, every piece is meant to be learned by heart, and half a dozen at least have tunes. Secondly, the distinctions between the "artistic" poems, the traditional ballads, and the "popular" contemporary songs, should be kept clearly in the pupil's mind. Thirdly, seeing that this mixture of styles has necessitated an arrangement by chronological order of subject-matter, each piece should be so dealt with that

the pupil realises the conditions under which it was written. To this end I have added, to the notes on the "artistic" poems, short accounts of their respective authors, and have elaborated the notes on the traditional and "popular" poems and ballads. Proper handling of certain ballads will arouse interest in the methods of oral tradition. In the note to *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury* a hint, easily expanded, is given of the vogue which such folk-tales may enjoy. The poems by Hawker and Wolfe have interesting literary histories, which serve to demonstrate that "artistic" poems may occasionally undergo experiences similar to those of "popular" verse.

The best method of expounding each poem, according as it narrates, disguises, or illustrates history, will be easily decided by the teacher, who will find that the fulness or paucity of the notes is in inverse ratio to the amount of information ordinarily accessible in history-books. Etymological notes are almost entirely omitted, in the belief that interest in the growth of a language is of later development than that interest in the growth of a nation and its literature which this book endeavours to stimulate.

F. S.

January 1907.

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