

**FROISSART AND  
THE ENGLISH  
CHRONICLE PLAY**

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Froissart and the English Chronicle Play by Robert Metcalf Smith

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AND THE  
**ENGLISH CHRONICLE PLAY**

BY  
**ROBERT METCALF SMITH**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, IN THE  
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A. H. THORNDIKE,  
*Executive Officer*

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**To My Mother**

*"The Epic may wither and the Tragedy fail, but there is seldom want of the good bread of chronicles . . . and there is as little weariness in them as in any things composed by men."*

W. P. KER.

## PREFACE

The present study was undertaken in order to disclose the relationship existing between the *Chronicles* of John Froissart and historical literature in England up to the seventeenth century when the Tudor Chronicle plays vanished from the stage. During the last two decades, critical scholarship has discovered many intimate relations between French and English lyric and romance of the medieval period, and between the writings of the Pléiade and the poetry of the Elizabethan age. Investigation, however, of Froissart's connections with English Literature has been almost wholly confined to his poetry, chiefly with reference to that of his friend, Geoffrey Chaucer. Froissart's most noted work, the *Chronicles*, which was translated into English by Lord Berners as early as 1523-5, has been generally overlooked as a source for the sixteenth century chroniclers, and the succeeding dramatists of English history. Moreover, in searching for sources of chronicle history plays, critics have confined their attention too exclusively to the *Chronicles* of Holinshed, largely perhaps, because Shakespeare has given this history such enviable prestige. But other and better chronicles of this period also found eager readers. Today, when any question arises concerning sources for chronicle plays, the easy and immediate answer is Holinshed. In opposition, then, to what might become a facile dogmatism, the following pages endeavor to reveal to what extent those chapters in Froissart's *Chronicles* that relate English history, particularly the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, influenced the chroniclers and playwrights of the Elizabethan age.