

**STUDIES IN  
MEDIÆVAL LIFE  
AND LITERATURE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649125203

Studies in mediæval life and literature by Edward Tompkins McLaughlin

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AND LITERATURE

BY

EDWARD TOMPKINS MCLAUGHLIN

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

LONDON

27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

*The Knickerbocker Press*

1894

9.18.1

1.02

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BY

SARAH B. McLAUGHLIN

*Entered at Stationers' Hall, London*

By G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

8425

Electrotyped, Printed and Bound by  
The Knickerbocker Press, New York  
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS



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## INTRODUCTION.

**E**DWARD TOMPKINS McLAUGHLIN, the writer of the essays contained in this volume, was born at Sharon, Connecticut, on May 28, 1860. He was the son of the Reverend D. D. T. McLaughlin, a graduate of Yale College of the class of 1834. His mother's maiden name was Mary Whitelsey Brownell. She was the daughter of the Reverend Grove L. Brownell, who was settled for many years over the Congregational church of Cromwell, Connecticut. Thus it will be seen that the author of this work belonged on both sides to what Oliver Wendell Holmes has aptly called the Brahman caste of New England.

At the time of his birth his father was pastor of the Congregational church of Sharon, Connecticut, but in 1866 left that place for Morris in the same county. There he remained until 1872 when he gave up parish duties entirely, and retired to Litchfield, which he thenceforward made his permanent home.

With the exception of a short time spent in the Litchfield Academy, the son was fitted for college almost wholly by his father, who was himself a finished scholar in Latin and Greek. He entered Yale in the autumn of 1879, and received the degree of A.B. in

1883. From the very beginning of his university life he was distinguished for his interest in English literature, and during the entire course of it displayed remarkable proficiency in the pursuit of that study. To him, before his graduation, fell the highest honors which the college has to bestow in that department.

After receiving his bachelor's degree he remained another year in New Haven as a graduate student. During that time he devoted himself with increased ardor to the special branches of study in which from the outset he had been interested. In the following year he was made tutor in English. This position he held until 1890, when he was appointed assistant professor of the same subject. At the meeting of the Corporation of the University in May, 1893, he was elected by it to the chair of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres. Happily married to a wife of congenial tastes, who speedily learned to sympathize with him in the studies which he had made peculiarly his own, he had every reason to expect a long career of usefulness, which would be attended with distinction to himself and would confer distinction upon the institution with which he was connected. But his health had never been vigorous, and in the very summer vacation following his appointment a fever, which came upon him almost without warning, and which seemed at first of slight importance, carried him off after an illness that lasted little more than a week. He died on the 25th of July, 1893, at the age of thirty-three. He lies buried at Litchfield.

Such is a brief sketch of the life of the author of this volume. He had at the time of his death many projects on hand, some partly carried out, some only in contemplation. In 1893 he had edited a volume of

selections from English writers under the title of *Literary Criticism for Students*; and since his death a school-edition of Marlowe's *Edward II.*, prepared by him, but left mainly in manuscript, has come from the press. But these were in a measure tasks imposed upon him by the needs of students, and not those undertaken in consequence of his own inclinations. During the last year of his life, however, he had been devoting himself to the preparation for publication of the following essays. He had long been a student of mediæval literature, not merely of that found in the English tongue, but of the much fuller and more varied work that had been produced at an early period on the continent. The writers of France, of Germany, and of Italy, belonging to that period, were in truth so familiar to him that he was sometimes disposed to assume that general acquaintance with them on the part of others which it is the fortune of but few to possess. Some results of this study he now set about putting into permanent form. The first rough draft of the essays here printed had been finished when the fatal illness fell upon him that carried him away.

There is no intention of apologizing either for the matter or the manner of the pieces contained in this volume. They are in no need of it, and in any event what is published must stand or fall upon its own merits. Yet it is the barest justice to the author of these essays to state that not in a single instance do they represent the final form they would have assumed, had he lived to review and revise the first sketches he made. In the case of two of them, which were nearest to the condition in which they were ultimately to appear, evidences of their incompleteness in his own eyes are plainly seen in the manuscripts. Against par-