

**ELGIVA; OR, THE MONKS;
AN
HISTORICAL POEM. WITH
SOME MINOR PIECES**

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Elgiva; or, The monks; an historical poem. With some minor pieces by E. H.

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E. H.

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AN
HISTORICAL POEM. WITH
SOME MINOR PIECES**

ELGIVA,
Or THE MONKS.

An Historical Poem.

WITH SOME

MINOR PIECES.

Lord of unsleeping love,
From everlasting thou! We shall not die,
These, even these, in mercy didst thou form,
Teachers of good through evil; by brief wrong
Making truth lovely.

COLERIDGE.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY.

1824.

PR
3991
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TO

MISS HOLFORD,

THE AUTHORESS OF WALLACE,

THIS POEM,

DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE

THE GENEROUS AFFECTIONS

AND HEROIC FORTITUDE

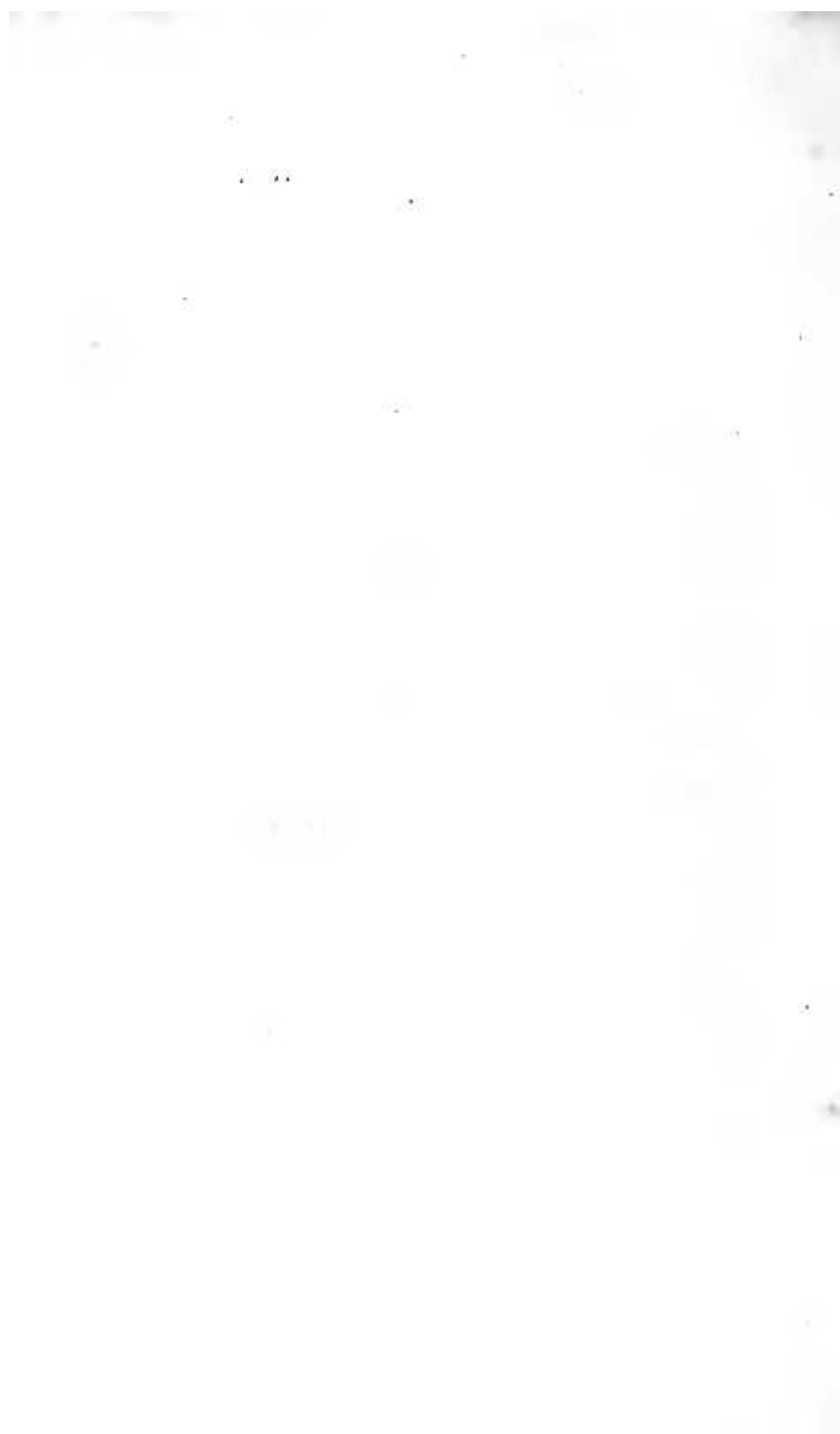
OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER,

IS,

BY HER KIND PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

888859



PREFACE.

IN choosing the present portion of Anglo-Saxon history as the ground-work of a poem, the authoress was chiefly influenced by a wish to exemplify the force of conjugal attachment, as well as the courageous fortitude, of the sex, which proverb-mongers and physical philosophers have denominated the weaker. She has since found reason to repent her choice. The sanguinary incidents, connected with the story, present difficulties, which, perhaps, no genius, unless of the highest order, can entirely overcome. The subject has, indeed, been already treated by writers of popular celebrity; but she declines inviting a comparison, which might be injurious to herself, by assuming the tone of a critical objector. Let it suffice simply to state, that if the substitution of the dagger or the bowl for the modes of infliction, devised by the tender

mercy of Romish churchmen, may be thought to consist with a fair poetic licence, when the events are cast in the form of the ballad or elegiac tale, such an innovation must assuredly offend the judgment in a poem avowedly historical. Besides, the dignity of the art is shewn, not in evading what is arduous, but in coping with it. If the authoress shall have failed in reconciling traditional fidelity with poetic effect, the blame must be laid to the account of her own inadequate talents, and not to that of the limited resources of poetry.

It was essential to the plan, that the heroine should be supposed to have made advances in the knowledge of pure Christianity, of which the Saxon era might vainly be expected to furnish any example; we know no more than that politically she stood opposed to the encroachments and insolence of the priests: chiefly, no doubt, from the interference of their hypocritical cant and unfeeling tyranny with her private affections: she appears to have been a warm-hearted and high-spirited woman, who

deserved a better fate, and who merited the esteem, as well as the compassion, of her countrymen,

The portraiture attempted of **Dunstan** is not intended to justify the principle of **Protestant** intolerance, or to foster a suspicious dislike of a religious body, which includes individuals, whom the traditions and dogmas of their church have not prevented from being charitable and enlightened; but religious liberality does not necessarily embrace the admission of pretensions, which, overstepping the pale of the open profession and fearless defence of principles, claim a decision without appeal, and a controul without resistance, on the faith and conscience of others. It has been, of late, the vogue with **Popish** historians to vindicate the apostolic humility of **Saint Thomas à Becket**, and to justify the mild and moral officiousness of **Saint Dunstan**: the attempt, therefore, will scarcely, by **Protestant** Christians, be considered as mistimed, to clothe the testimony of unimpeachable chronicles in the form of verse.