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CHAUTAUQUA LIBRARY

OF

ENGLISH HISTORY

AND

LITERATURE.

VOL. II.

THE PERIOD OF THE EARLY PLANTAGENETS.

"In history a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the errors and infirmities of mankind."—BURKE.

"Literature is the thought of thinking souls."—CARLYLE.

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1881.

PREFACE.

We present to the members of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle our second installment of English History and Literature. Those who have read the former volume of this work will understand its plan and purpose; but for the benefit of the several thousand who have joined the Circle since the publication of Volume I. we need only to state that it proposes to present the study of the literature of England side by side with that of its history. The two departments stand in close relation, and no one can become a master of one without understanding the other.

The present volume shows us pictures of England during a very interesting period; the crown of the Middle Ages, with its spirit of knighthood embodied in the Black Prince; the struggle for Scottish liberty led by Wallace and Robert Bruce; and, most important of all in the constitutional history of England, the rise of the Parliament.

We trust that the present work will be found worthy of following its predecessor, and may, by its favorable reception, encourage the preparation of other volumes presenting the annals and the literature of later periods in British history.

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I. The Importance of the Epoch.

The period of the Plantagenets marks a great change in the history of the English people. The reign of Stephen, the last of the early Norman kings, exemplifies to us all