

**SIRE DE GARRE A
METRICAL ROMANCE OF
THE END OF THE
THIRTEENTH CENTURY**

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Sire Degarre.

Legende (Romances)

Sire Degarre

a

Metrical Romance

Of the end of

The Thirteenth Century.



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M.DCCC.XLIX.

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PREFACE.

THE Historian of English Poetry has included SIRE DEGARRÉ among the popular Metrical Romances which appeared in England about the end of the Thirteenth Century; and there seems to be no just ground for calling this opinion in question. The well-known AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT, preserved in the Advocates Library, is usually ascribed to the middle of the Fourteenth Century, and it furnishes the earliest and most perfect copy of this Romance, which has been discovered. As hitherto unpublished, it was considered that an accurate edition of the text from that Manuscript, with the defects and the various readings supplied from the more recent copies, might form an acceptable contribution to the Members of the ABBOTSFORD CLUB.

Of the later copies of this Romance, the one most entitled to notice is preserved in a Manuscript volume of the Fifteenth Century, among Bishop More's MSS. in the University Library, Cambridge. Although it contains only the first 602 lines, it serves to supply some of the deficiencies in the Auchinleck Manuscript. The late learned Archdeacon Todd, in his "Illus-

trations of Gower and Chaucer,"¹ has described a fragment on two leaves, containing 160 lines of this Romance, as forming part of a Manuscript supposed to be of the Fourteenth Century, now the property of the Earl of Ellesmere; but the volume, at present, is unfortunately not accessible. A fourth copy, but probably of very little importance, is contained in Bishop Percy's Manuscript.²

The Romance of SYR DEGORE also exists in a printed form; and three editions, printed in black letter, serve to attest its popularity during the Sixteenth Century, in England. These editions, which are probably of equal rarity, are much inferior in intrinsic value to the older Manuscripts. The earliest is one without date, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, 4to. 18 leaves, described in Dibdin's *Typographical Antiquities*,³ and supposed to be unique. A mutilated transcript, apparently from this edition, made in the year 1564, is in the Douce collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Among Selden's books, in that Library, there is a copy of the edition printed at London by John King, in the year 1560, 4to. 16 leaves.⁴ The similar edition without date, but probably about 1545, "imprynted by Wyllyam Copland," 4to. 16 leaves, is preserved in the Garrick collection, in the British Museum.⁵ No second copy of either of these editions has occurred for sale. That of Copland's was reprinted by E. V. Utterson, Esq. in his valuable and interesting collection entitled "Select Pieces of Early Popular Poetry, reprinted from the Black letter." London, 1817, 2 vols. 8vo.

¹ It should evidently be regarded in no other light than as an inaccurate transcript from one of the black letter editions, with the name corrupted to "Sir Degreee."—(*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, edit. 1793, vol. iii. p. xli.)

² Page 107. Lond. 1810, 8vo. and 4to.

³ Vol. ii. p. 376.

⁴ Dibdin's *Typographical Antiquities*, vol. iv. p. 338.

⁵ *Id.* vol. iii. p. 164.