

**LEGENDS AND SATIRES
FROM MEDIEVAL
LITERATURE**

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Legends and satires from medieval literature by Martha Hale Shackford

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MARTHA HALE SHACKFORD

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FROM MEDIÆVAL LITERATURE

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PREFACE

This volume of translations is prepared especially for the use of college sophomores who are studying English poetry of the fourteenth century, but it is hoped that other readers may be interested in these old legends. Ideally, it would be better for students to read the original texts, but every teacher knows how difficult it is to provide texts in this field. The various Middle English Readers are not frankly popular in their choice of subject matter, and the publications of learned societies are far too expensive to be available for classroom work. It does not seem, therefore, entirely an offense against scholarship to offer students a volume that will serve humbly as companion to "Piers Plowman," "The Pearl," Chaucer's poems, and various romances and lyrics which are studied in carefully edited texts.

The modern translations are literal, but a certain freedom has been used in reshaping sentences and in omitting conventional phrases when they proved too monotonous in their repetitions. Quite enough *tags* and awkward constructions have been preserved to illustrate fully the style of mediæval clerks.

Acknowledgment is made for help received from Gaston Paris's "La littérature française au moyen âge," and from W. H. Schofield's "English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer." Miss Marion E. Markley has contributed two translations from Old French, and has given many helpful suggestions regarding details.

M. H. S.

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INTRODUCTION

To create anew the walls and towers and gardens of the mediæval world is a comparatively easy task, now that we have so many aids to visualizing that departed age, but it is not so easy to make live again the thoughts and sentiments and beliefs of a vanished generation. All our study of history is valueless unless it brings a clearer revelation of the pulsing, ardent life of humanity. We search old records and old literature that we may find the true image of a world whose hopes and fears and loves prove to us the slow evolution of a progressive civilization in which all human beings share. Out of the failures and the doubts of one age comes the quicker power of another, and true progress looks both backward and forward. To cherish old traditions is both a duty and an inspiration.

The reader who turns his face toward the world of mediæval England and France, seeking to know the spirit which animated our ancestors of six centuries ago, must recognize in plowman, hermit, knight, friar, or minstrel the fundamental fact that their life was actual and real, not a mere tissue of mediæval costume and mechanical movements. In order to understand that epoch it is essential for one to study in detail the works which picture the life of the day. The world of chivalry, with its brilliant pageantry and its vows of courtesy, loyalty, and liberality, is revealed in the pages of Froissart and in the many metrical