

**A BALLADE OF THE
SCOTTYSSHE
KYNGE**

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A Ballade of the Scottyssh Kynge by John Skelton

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JOHN SKELTON

**A BALLADE OF THE
SCOTTYSSHE
KYNGE**



A BALLADE OF THE SCOTTYSSHE
KYNGE.



The Earliest known Printed English Ballad.

A
BALLADE
OF THE
SCOTTYSSE KYNGE.

WRITTEN BY

JOHN SKELTON,

POET LAUREATE TO KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE WITH AN HISTORICAL
AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

BY

JOHN ASHTON.

LONDON :

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1882.

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A BALLADE OF THE SCOTTYSSE
KYNGE.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF BALLADS.



OF all varieties of poetry, the BALLAD, in the form which it affects among us, in distinction to other countries, is, perhaps, one of the most attractive. Although deriving its appellation from a word signifying a *dance* in Italy and France, where the ballad was a metrical narrative, or domestic epic, generally short, or at least not very long, as to its amount, and used as an accompaniment to a dance, the English ballad by no means demanded the dance for its accompaniment, and only signified a fairly short narrative poem in a rhyming metre of a lively, tripping, and popular style, which could be sung or chanted, and as such, was easily distinguished from the true

poem or lay, which was composed in an artificial and more serious verse, and was only intended for recitation. It is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to trace the origin of the present form of the ballad in England. There is great probability that it is contemporary with the times when the alliterative, or initial-rhyming poems of the Anglo-Saxon and Early English poets were gradually giving way to the end-rhyming poetry which Chaucer and his school did so much to dignify.

Of our indigenous ballads, many so-called collections have been compiled. A mere list of the titles would be tedious and of little profit here. Perhaps the oldest known example is that of "King Horn," derived from an older and unfound ballad, yet certainly written in the form in which it is now extant, as early as the thirteenth century. Another celebrated and early ballad, "Gamelyn," is of the fourteenth century. After this period the ballad, in the elastic forms to which it lends itself both as to intrinsic narrative character, and extrinsic metrical adaptation, provided only the quality of being capable of being sung be preserved, springs rapidly into vogue among the copyists, and examples of it abound. In fact, for a season, the ballad occupied a dignified position among less facile forms of poetry. It was a form favoured by the best poets, and admired by the most appreciative listeners. But, after a time, as the progress of