

**THE POETICAL
WORKS, VOL. II:
EDWIN THE FAIR**

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The poetical works, Vol. II: Edwin the fair by Henry Taylor

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HENRY TAYLOR

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EDWIN THE FAIR.

ISAAC COMNENUS.

BY HENRY TAYLOR, D. C. L.

"Pessima enim res est errorum upotheosis."

Novum Organum, l. 65.

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LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, PICCADILLY.
1864.

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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

HENRY TAYLOR, D. C. L.

VOL. II.

Edwin the Fair.

Isaac Commens.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, PICCADILLY.

1864.

EDWIN THE FAIR.

'Pessima enim res est errorum apothecia.'

Notum Orogalum, l. 65.

TO
SIR HENRY HOLLAND, BART., M.D., F.R.S.,

THIS DRAMA IS INSCRIBED,
IN REMEMBRANCE
OF IMPORTANT SERVICES
RENDERED MANY YEARS AGO
TO THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO EDWIN THE FAIR.

MR. TURNER'S learned and elaborate work has done much to make the Anglo-Saxon times better known than they were formerly, and we have ceased to regard them as antecedent to the dawn of civilization amongst us, or as destitute of the spiritual and chivalric features by which in reality some of the subsequent centuries (though not those *immediately* subsequent) were less distinguished than they. Of the dark ages, in this country, the tenth century was hardly so dark as the fifteenth; and if the aspects of each could be distinctly traced, the civil wars of the Anglo-Saxons would probably excite a deeper interest than struggles such as those of the houses of York and Lancaster, in which there was no religious and hardly any political principle at stake. Indeed though the three centuries which preceded the Conquest were on the whole less enlightened than the three which followed it, yet the Anglo-Saxon times furnish examples of both the Hero and the Scholar, which the Norman can hardly match; and perhaps the real distinction between the periods is, that amongst the Anglo-Saxons, learning and ignorance and rudeness and refinement co-existed in stronger contrast.

But even when Anglo-Saxon history was less read and

otherwise understood than it is now, some interest was always felt in the reign of Edwin the Fair. There was left to us little more than the outline of a tragic story: in some parts, indeed, even less—for here and there the outline itself is broken and wavering; but the little that was known was romantic enough to have impressed itself upon the popular mind, and the tale of 'Edwy and Elgiva' had been current in the nursery long before it came to be studied as an historical question.

Edwin's contemporaneous annalists, being Monks, were his natural enemies; and their enmity is sufficiently apparent in their writings. But notwithstanding all their efforts, and all the influence which the monastic orders undoubtedly possessed over the English populace of the tenth century, there is reason to think that the interest taken in Edwin's story may have dated from his own times. His name having been supplanted by its diminutive 'Edwy,' seems to indicate a sentiment of tenderness and pity as popularly connected with him from the first; and his surname of 'The All-Fair' (given him, says the Monk Ingulphus, "*pro nimia pulchritudine*"), may be construed as a farther indication that the success of the monastic faction in decrying him with the people, was not so complete as the merely political events of his reign might lead us to suppose.

Whilst the details of his story are left, with one or two exceptions, to our imagination, the main course of the struggle in which he was engaged, represents in strong and vivid colours the spirit of the times. It was a spirit which exercises human nature in its highest faculties and deepest feelings—the spirit of religious enthusiasm; a spirit which never fails to produce great men and to give an impulse to the mind of a nation; but one which commonly passes into a spirit of ecclesiastic discord, and which