

**LONGMAN'S HANDBOOK
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.
PART I: FROM THE EARLIEST
TIMES TO CHAUCER**

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Longman's Handbook of English Literature. Part I: From the Earliest Times to Chaucer by R. McWilliam

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R. MCWILLIAM

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ENGLISH LITERATURE

PART I

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OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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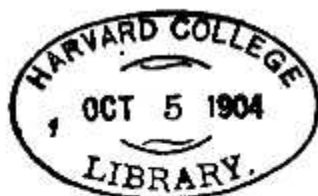
PART I.
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO CHAUCER



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George P. Winslow

P R E F A C E.

IN the little work of which the present volume is an instalment it is proposed to trace the story of English Literature in a manner simple enough to interest beginners, and at the same time to afford information full enough to satisfy those who have made some little progress in the subject.

Books on English literature abound, and many of them are excellent, but the subject itself is so important and so growing in interest that it will need to be set forth again and again in many different ways, and it is to be hoped that this little book will find a place and serve a useful purpose.

In the execution of the work much has been omitted which very properly would find a place in a more exhaustive treatise. Mere names of authors or of works excite but a languid interest, and an attempt has therefore been made to give a sketch of each life and a specimen of each work mentioned, and the result is a series of typical sketches rather than a complete and unbroken account of the progress of literature.

It has also been needful to exclude all or nearly all that was not distinctly *English*, and therefore such men as Adhelm, Anselm, and Roger Bacon, highly interesting as they are, have been passed over. Bæda, however, occupies a position so unique and interesting that it would be unwise to omit him from any sketch of the beginnings of English literature.

The period under review in the present volume is necessarily less interesting than the age of Elizabeth or Anne, or than our own times. Chaucer is the one figure of supreme interest in it, and an endeavour has been made to treat his life and works with some degree of fulness. Two other subjects, 'Beowulf' and the 'Saxon Chronicles,' are perhaps intrinsically of equal importance, but for beginners the language and the subject-matter of these works are so foreign to the present time that only an imperfect picture of them could be presented. If, however, the reader shall be incited by these imperfect sketches to pass on to deeper and more comprehensive works, one chief object of this little book will have been secured.

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