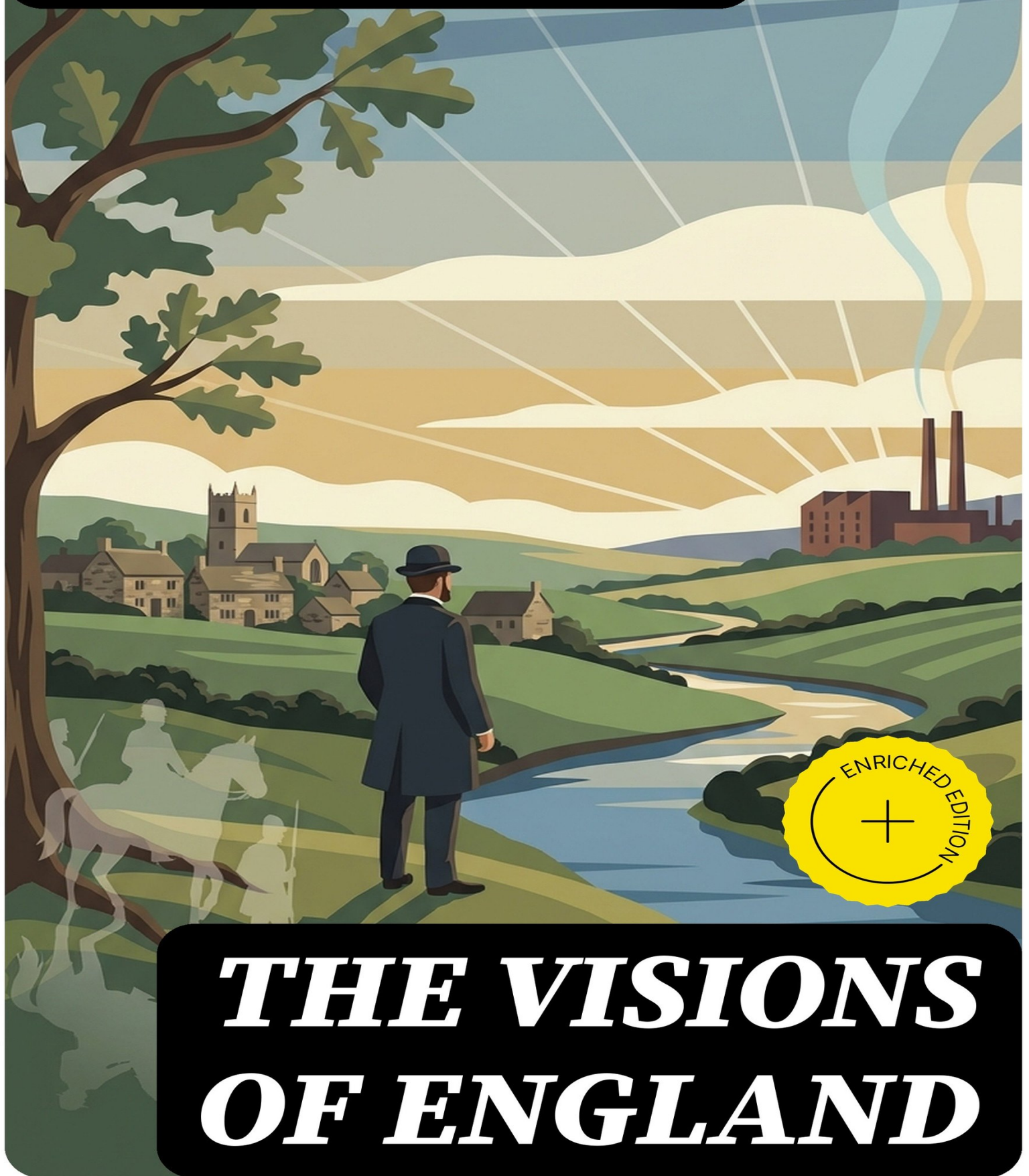


***FRANCIS TURNER  
PALGRAVE***



***THE VISIONS  
OF ENGLAND***

**Francis Turner Palgrave**

# **The Visions of England**

**Enriched edition. Lyrics on leading men and events in English History**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Trevor Grimm*

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# Introduction

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Francis Turner Palgrave, poet and critic (1824–1897), assembled *The Visions of England* as a sustained sequence of historical lyrics. Conceived not as a chronicle but as a series of concentrated episodes, the collection traces the fortunes of the nation through emblematic moments, places, and persons. This volume presents that sequence together with Palgrave's own prefatory materials and an appendix divided into lettered sections, preserving the author's framing of his work. Readers encounter a poet who, renowned for shaping taste as editor of *The Golden Treasury*, here turns that disciplined judgment upon national history, fashioning a compact gallery of moral and imaginative scenes.

The scope of the collection is poetic and historical: it offers lyrics, ballads, odes, elegies, and narrative lays, supported by an Introduction, a Preface, a Prelude, and a set of appendices. The arrangement moves broadly from early kingdoms to the nineteenth century, each poem standing as an independent vision while contributing to a cumulative arc. Titles such as *The First and Last Land*, *Alfred the Great*, *Hastings*, *Crecy*, *Towton Field*, *Trafalgar*, and *The Soldiers' Battle* foreground the range of episodes. Alongside these martial or stately themes, quieter meditations—*A Dorset Idyl*, *A Churchyard in Oxfordshire*, *At Bemerton*—show Palgrave's attention to faith, place, and private duty.

Palgrave's unifying theme is national character tested in time: courage under trial, the responsibilities of command, the endurance of common people, and the moral meanings of victory and loss. The poems repeatedly anchor public action in specific landscapes—London Bridge, Fountains, Sandringham—so that England's history is read through its sites as well as its leaders. Memory and memorial, the passage from rumor to record, and the shaping force of example recur throughout. By treating episodes as visions, not exhaustive narratives, Palgrave discloses how history becomes conscience: a succession of images through which a people recognizes its past and imagines its future.

Stylistically, the sequence shows Palgrave's classical restraint and clarity of diction, allied to strong musical cadence and narrative compression. He adapts familiar English measures from balladry and hymn to elevate public occasion without forfeiting intimacy. Set-piece openings, precise naming, and a concluding moral or emblematic turn are frequent signatures. The poems prefer lucid outline to ornate flourish, relying on contrast—tumult and repose, hall and hearth, pageant and prayer—to secure their effects. Palgrave's critical temperament keeps rhetoric in check; his lyric gift grants swiftness and color, so that even large events are rendered with economy and memorable poise.

The range of figures and scenes affirms the work's inclusive outlook. Kings and captains stand beside scholars, pilgrims, and householders: Alfred the Great and Elizabeth at Tilbury; Sidney at Zutphen and Willelmus van Nassau; Blenheim and Torres Vedras; Jeanne d'Arc and Mount Vernon; After Cawnpore and The Rejoicing of the Land. Such

pairings show England's story entwined with European and Atlantic histories, and with the lives of those who serve as well as those who command. Palgrave's method grants dignity to both the celebrated and the overlooked, asserting continuity across conquest, reform, crisis, and restoration.

As the editor who helped define an English lyric canon, Palgrave here tests his ideals in original verse. *The Visions of England* values selection over exhaustiveness, lyric truth over documentary amplitude. Its apparatus—the Introduction, Preface, and lettered appendices—clarifies aims and ordering while pointing to the historical temper of the project. Read beside *The Golden Treasury*, the sequence reveals the same preferences for purity of phrase, structural balance, and moral gravity, yet now directed toward a single national theme. The result is both an anthology of moments and a single long meditation on identity, duty, and the uses of remembrance.

For modern readers, this collection offers access to a Victorian reimagining of the national past, composed with formal tact and ethical seriousness. It can be entered anywhere—poem by poem—or followed as a designed progression from the Prelude to the closing Ode and *England Once More*. The historical span is wide, the tonal register varied, yet the governing voice remains steady: candid, concise, and humane. By restoring Palgrave's arrangement and supporting matter, this edition invites renewed attention to his art of compression and to his claim that poetry, rightly ordered, can keep a country's memory alive.

# Historical Context

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Francis Turner Palgrave (1824–1897), close friend of Tennyson and editor of *The Golden Treasury* (1861), composed *The Visions of England* as a sequence of historical lyrics first published in 1881. The project arose from late-Victorian nation-building: expanding mass education, cheap print, and a taste for patriotic narrative verse shaped by Macaulay's *Lays* (1842) and J. R. Green's *Short History* (1874). Palgrave's aim was not chronicle but moral exemplum, turning episodes into emblematic scenes. He wrote amid imperial confidence tempered by recent wars, presenting an "island story" where landscape, faith, and civic duty fuse. This context explains the collection's blend of scholarship, sentiment, and public pedagogy.

Early pieces return to the seventh–ninth centuries, when Christianity and kingship intertwined to shape a fragile polity. Bede's account of Paulinus converting Edwin of Northumbria and the baptism at York in 627 anchors the theme of counsel and conscience. Alfred the Great (871–899) embodies resilient rulership against Viking incursions, reorganizing defense through burhs and promoting learning after the Treaty of Wedmore (878). Poems invoking a "Danish barrow" and sea-washed headlands evoke an island frontier, where burial rites and coastlines mark cultural encounter. Palgrave uses these scenes to root English identity in conversion, law, and stewardship of a storm-guarded land.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 reframes lordship and law, a transformation the collection renders through battle-memory and forest-gloom. Hastings signals a new elite and continental ties; “Death in the Forest” recalls William II’s killing in the New Forest in 1100, a moralized accident set against harsh forest law. Figures such as Edith of Wessex, last great consort of the old line, register loss and continuity. Crusading ideals permeate twelfth-century imagination, while Evesham (1265) laments Simon de Montfort’s fall and the limits of baronial reform. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s death in 1282 marks Edwardian conquest and the tightening ring around the marches.

Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century lyrics track the pressures of long war and social upheaval. Crécy (1346) showcases tactical innovation with the English longbow and a mixed army of gentry and yeomen. The Black Death of 1348–49 shadows this martial glory, deepening labor tensions and devotional introspection reflected in allusions to Langland’s *Piers Plowman*. Across the Channel Joan of Arc (1429–31) recasts the moral stakes of the Hundred Years’ War, while Towton (1461), perhaps the bloodiest battle on English soil, exposes civil fracture during the Wars of the Roses. Palgrave balances chivalric memory with the mounting costs of mass warfare.

Renaissance humanism and the Reformation frame the next movements. William Grocyn’s teaching of Greek at Oxford in the 1490s signals renewed philology and continental exchange. Dynastic strategy appears in Margaret Tudor’s 1503 marriage to James IV, prefiguring the Union of Crowns. Fountains Abbey’s suppression during the

Dissolution (1536–39) registers the spiritual and economic shock of reform. Maritime ambition follows: Sir Hugh Willoughby's 1553 voyage toward the Northeast Passage ended in Arctic tragedy. Mary, Queen of Scots crossed the Solway in 1568, entangling kingdoms. Sidney's death at Zutphen (1586) and Elizabeth at Tilbury (1588) crystallize Protestant nationhood under pressure.

The seventeenth century brings conscience and constitution into conflict. At Bemerton, George Herbert's brief parish ministry (1630–33) expresses Laudian piety. The Civil War threads through Chalgrove Field, where John Hampden was mortally wounded (1643), and Marston Moor (1644), a decisive Parliamentary victory in the north. Charles II's flight after Worcester (1651) gave enduring images of the "fugitive king," while the sale of Charles I's Whitehall art collection after 1649 signaled cultural dislocation. The Monmouth rising (1685) and the Glorious Revolution (1688–89) culminate in a reassertion of law and Protestant succession, themes Palgrave treats as foundations for liberty balanced by order.

Eighteenth-century statecraft and war supply further vignettes. Blenheim (1704) projects Marlborough's European strategy under a confessional alliance, while Admiral Shovell's wreck in the Scillies (1707) exposes the perils preceding reliable longitude. Queen Anne's childlessness and the Act of Settlement steered the succession toward Hanover in 1714, shadowing Jacobite hopes later embodied by Charles Edward Stuart, commemorated here in Roman exile. The arts and Anglican country rectories recur as moral anchors. Napoleonic struggle restores maritime and military

emphasis: Trafalgar (1805) secures the seas; Wellington's Lines of Torres Vedras (1810) fortify Portugal. Britain's global posture becomes a patriotic, defensive vocation.

Palgrave's nineteenth century turns from triumph to reckoning. The Crimean "Soldiers' Battle" at Inkerman (1854) and the Indian revolt's horrors at Cawnpore (1857) temper glory with grief and questions of command, faith, and empire. Mount Vernon introduces Anglo-American reconciliation through Washington's memory, while Sandringham (acquired in 1862 by the Prince of Wales) and Dorset pastorals counterpose court and countryside. Such scenes met a readership formed by the 1870 Elementary Education Act and popular heritage culture. Writing in a High-Church, Tennysonian key, Palgrave fashions exemplary, place-bound memories; England Once More closes his argument that national character endures through conscience, landscape, and service.

# Synopsis (Selection)

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## **Framing Texts and Coda (Introduction, Preface, Prelude, Ode, England Once More)**

Palgrave frames the sequence as a lyrical pageant of English history, balancing patriotic devotion with reflective moral inquiry.

Recurring motifs—landscapes as witnesses, graves and galleries as memory, ballad cadence tempered by ode-like uplift—signal a design that moves from antiquarian vision to contemporary allegiance.

## **Origins and Conversion (The First and Last Land; Paulinus and Edwin)**

These opening pieces set England's genesis where sea-cliffs, tribal memory, and Christian mission meet.

Their austere, visionary tone fuses stark geography with quiet choices that shape a nation's faith.

## **Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age (Alfred the Great; A Danish Barrow)**

Leadership and endurance define these scenes of defense and rebuilding under northern pressure.

Elegiac textures—earthworks, mounds, and measured maxims—turn warfare into cultural memory.

## **Conquest and Norman Shadow (Hastings; Death in the Forest; Edith of England)**

The poems trace conquest, bereavement, and the uneasy fragility of power after regime change.

Ballad clarity and intimate focus ground national upheaval in personal loss and haunted woodland.

## **Cross and Crown in the High Middle Ages (A Crusader's Tomb; A Ballad of Evesham; The Dirge of Llywelyn; The Rejoicing of the Land)**

Crusade, baronial revolt, and the fall of a Welsh prince converge in laments and reconciliations.

Tombs, banners, and roadside songs anchor a moral panorama where zeal, justice, and peace contend.

## **Late Medieval Wars and Conscience (Crecy; The Black Seats; The Pilgrim and the Ploughman; Jeanne d'Arc; Towton Field)**

Great battles stand beside voices of common devotion and doubt, setting steel against conscience.

Swift, pictorial stanzas weigh victory against suffering, using strangers and pilgrims as mirrors for England.

## **Learning, Trade, and Town (Grocyn at Oxford; Margaret Tudor; London Bridge; At Fountains)**

Humanist scholarship, dynastic linkage, civic engineering, and monastic quiet sketch a changing realm.

Stone, water, and manuscript textures suggest continuity even as intellect and commerce expand.

## **Adventurers and the Tudor North (Sir Hugh Willoughby; Crossing Solway; Sidney at Zutphen; Elizabeth at Tilbury)**

Exploration, border trials, gallantry, and statecraft embody service under hazard.

The martial ballad pulse celebrates courage while keeping an eye on weather, marches, and morale.

## **Devotion and Court in Early Stuart England (At Bemerton; Princess Anne)**

Parish quiet and domestic royalty reveal power reframed as piety and poise.

The mood is intimate and composed, favoring inner discipline over spectacle.

## **Civil War and Aftermath (After Chalgrove Fight; A Churchyard in Oxfordshire; Marston Moor)**

Battlefield shock, village grief, and a turning-point clash show a nation counting its dead.

Elegy overtakes partisanship as fields and graves become the final archive.

## **The Restored and the Risked Crown (The Fugitive King; The Captive Child; The Wreck of the Admiral; The Return of Law; The Poet's Euthanasia; Whitehall Gallery)**

Exile, innocence, shipwreck, stability, a poet's farewell, and a corridor of portraits map the costs of rule.

Emblematic tableaux and a curatorial gaze bind personal peril to institutional memory.

## **Revolution, Succession, and European War (The Ballad of King Monmouth; Willelmus van Nassau; The Childless Mother; Blenheim)**

Rebellion, a new sovereign, a dynasty under strain, and continental victory compress change into song.

Brisk, drumbeat measures mingle propagandist clarity with humane restraint.

## **Stuart Afterlives (Charles Edward at Rome)**

An exiled claimant is seen with steady sympathy, chivalry dimmed yet not extinguished.

The piece treats nostalgia as moral inquiry, weighing romance against history's verdict.

## **Napoleonic War Landscapes (Trafalgar; Torres Vedras; The Soldiers' Battle)**

Sea triumph, defensive earthworks abroad, and infantry grit compose a study in disciplined force.

Crisp, weather-marked lines prefer endurance to spectacle and tactics to rhetoric.

## **Empire and Its Shadows (After Cawnpore)**

A grim colonial episode prompts mourning and ethical self-scrutiny.

Patriotic feeling is tempered by lament, with justice and restraint pressed against rage.

## **Transatlantic Kinship (Mount Vernon)**

A visit in verse measures kinship and divergence across the ocean through a statesman's home.

The tone is respectful and pastoral, seeking concord in shared civic ideals.

## **Domestic Visions and Modern Monarchy (Sandringham; A Dorset Idyl; A Home in the Palace; At Hursley in Marden)**

Home, parish, and countryside form a mellow counterpoint to the clang of campaigns.

Idylls and soft-focus interiors stress continuity, everyday duty, and quiet grace.

## **Appendix and Notes (Appendix; A: p. 87; B: p. 102; C: p. 108; D: p. 127; E: p. 146; F: p. 152; G: p. 169)**

Concise annotations tether the poems to dates, places, and sources without breaking their spell.

They reveal the historical scaffolding beneath the lyric surface, affirming the book's documentary conscience.

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# INTRODUCTION.

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Again, on behalf of readers of this NATIONAL LIBRARY, I have to thank a poet of our day—in this case the Oxford Professor of Poetry—for joining his voice to the voices of the past through which our better life is quickened for the duties of to-day. Not for his own verse only, but for his fine sense also of what is truest in the poets who have gone before, the name of Francis Turner Palgrave is familiar to us all. Many a home has been made the richer for his gathering of voices of the past into a dainty “Golden Treasury of English Songs.” Of this work of his own I may cite what was said of it in *Macmillan’s Magazine* for October, 1882, by a writer of high authority in English Literature, Professor A. W. Ward, of Owens College. “A very eminent authority,” said Professor Ward, “has accorded to Mr. Palgrave’s historical insight, praise by the side of which all words of mine must be valueless,” Canon [now Bishop] Stubbs writes:—“I do not think that there is one of the *Visions* which does not carry my thorough consent and sympathy all through.”

Here, then, Mr. Palgrave re-issues, for the help of many thousands more, his own songs of the memories of the Nation, addressed to a Nation that has not yet forfeited the praise of Milton. Milton said of the Englishman, “If we look at his native towardliness in the roughcast, without breeding, some nation or other may haply be better composed to a natural civility and right judgment than he. But if he get the benefit once of a wise and well-rectified nurture, I suppose that wherever mention is made of countries, manners, or

men, the English people, among the first that shall be praised, may deserve to be accounted a right pious, right honest, and right hardy nation." So much is shown by the various utterances in this NATIONAL LIBRARY. So much is shown, in the present volume of it, by a poet's vision of the England that has been till now, and is what she has been.

H. M.

TO THE NAMES OF  
HENRY HALLAM AND FRANCIS PALGRAVE  
FRIENDS AND FELLOW-LABOURERS IN ENGLISH HISTORY  
FOR FORTY YEARS,  
WHO, DIFFERING OFTEN IN JUDGMENT,  
WERE AT ONE THROUGHOUT LIFE IN DEVOTED LOVE OF  
JUSTICE, TRUTH, AND ENGLAND,  
IN AFFECTIONATE AND REVERENT REMEMBRANCE  
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED AND DEDICATED

## **PREFACE**

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As the scheme which the Author has here endeavoured to execute has not, so far as he knows, the advantage of any near precedent in any literature, he hopes that a few explanatory words may be offered without incurring censure for egotism.

Our history is so eminently rich and varied, and at the same time, by the fact of our insular position, so stamped with unity, that from days very remote it has supplied matter for song. This, among Celts and Angles, at first was lyrical. But poetry, for many centuries after the Conquest, mainly took the annalistic form, and, despite the ability

often shown, was hence predoomed to failure. For a nation's history cannot but present many dull or confused periods, many men and things intractable by poetry, though, perhaps, politically effective and important, which cannot be excluded from any narrative aiming at consecutiveness; and, by the natural laws of art, these passages, when rendered in verse, in their effect become more prosaic than they would be in a prose rendering.

My attempt has therefore been to revert to the earlier and more natural conditions of poetry, and to offer,—not a continuous narrative; not poems on every critical moment or conspicuous man in our long annals,—but single lyrical pictures of such leading or typical characters and scenes in English history, and only such, as have seemed amenable to a strictly poetical treatment. Poetry, not History, has, hence, been my first and last aim[2q]; or, perhaps I might define it, History for Poetry's sake[1q]. At the same time, I have striven to keep throughout as closely to absolute historical truth in the design and colouring of the pieces as the exigencies of poetry permit:—the result aimed at being to unite the actual tone and spirit of the time concerned, with the best estimate which has been reached by the research and genius of modern investigators. Our island story, freed from the 'falsehood of extremes,'—exorcised, above all, from the seducing demon of party-spirit, I have thus here done my best to set forth. And as this line of endeavour has conducted and constrained me, especially when the seventeenth century is concerned, to judgments—supported indeed by historians conspicuous for research, ability, and fairness, but often remote from the views popularized by the

writers of our own day,—upon these points a few justificatory notes have been added.

A double aim has hence governed and limited both the selection and the treatment of my subjects. The choice has necessarily fallen, often, not on simply picturesque incident or unfamiliar character, but on the men and things that we think of first, when thinking of the long chronicle of England,—or upon such as represent and symbolize the main current of it. Themes, however, on which able or popular song is already extant,—notably in case of Scotland,—I have in general avoided. In the rendering, my desire has been always to rest the poetry of each Vision on its own intrinsic interest; to write with a straightforward eye to the object alone; not studious of ornament for ornament's sake; allowing the least possible overt intrusion of the writer's personality; and, in accordance with lyrical law, seeking, as a rule, to fix upon some factual picture for each poem.

\* \* \* \* \*

To define, thus, the scope of what this book attempts, is, in itself, a confession of presumptuousness,—the writer's own sense of which is but feebly and imperfectly expressed in the words from Vergil's letter to Augustus prefixed as my motto. In truth, so rich and so wide are the materials, that to scheme a lyrical series which should really paint the *Gesta Anglorum* in their fulness might almost argue 'lack of wit,' *vitium mentis*, in much greater powers than mine. No criticism, however severe, can add to my own consciousness how far the execution of the work, in regard to each of its aims, falls below the plan. Yet I would allow myself the hope, great as the deficiencies may be, that the

love of truth and the love of England are mine by inheritance in a degree sufficient to exempt this book, (the labour of several years), from infidelity to either:—that the intrinsic worth and weight of my subject may commend these songs, both at home, and in the many Englands beyond sea, to those who, (despite the inevitably more engrossing attractions of the Present, and the emphatic bias of modern culture towards the immediate and the tangible), maintain that high and soul-inspiring interest which, identifying us with our magnificent Past, and all its varied lessons of defeat and victory, offers at the same time,—under the guidance from above,—our sole secure guarantee for prosperous and healthy progress in the Future.

The world has cycles in its course, when all  
That once has been, is acted o'er again;

and only the nation which, at each moment of political or social evolution, looks lovingly backward to its own painfully-earned experience—*Respiciens, Prospiciens*, as Tennyson's own chosen device expresses it—has solid reason to hope, that its movement is true Advance—that its course is Upward.

\* \* \* \* \*

It remains only to add, that the book has been carefully revised and corrected, and that nineteen pieces published in the original volume of 1881 are not reprinted in the present issue.

F. T. P.  
*July, 1889*