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P. Rickard

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PREFACE

The Entente Cordiale has undoubtedly led to an increased interest, on both sides of the Channel, in the relations between England and France and in the influences, literary and otherwise, which the one country has exercised upon the other. Yet the history of French literary reactions to England is not complete, for the emphasis has tended hitherto to be laid on the recent past, or even on the present. It is true that eighteenth-century Anglomania has been adequately treated, but earlier periods have received less attention, and the Middle Ages have in the main been neglected. In his *La Grande Bretagne devant l'opinion française depuis la guerre de cent ans jusqu'à la fin du seizième siècle*, the late Georges Ascoli wrote an interesting chapter on the medieval aspect of the subject, but he regarded this as a mere preamble to the sixteenth century, with which he was mostly concerned. He was not, as a matter of fact, the first to approach the medieval period in this way. As early as 1855, in an article in the *Revue contemporaine*, E. B. Rathery discussed the historical side of the question and enumerated a few literary sources for our knowledge. He was followed in 1893 by Ch. V. Langlois, whose valuable article 'Les Anglais du moyen âge, d'après les sources françaises'¹ was intended merely as a prelude to a more exhaustive investigation. The only other noteworthy contribution to the subject has been the late Dr H. J. Chaytor's chapter, in *The Troubadours and England* (Cambridge, 1923), on the political allusions in Provençal poetry. Four years later, this was echoed less effectively by J. Audiau in *Les Troubadours et l'Angleterre*.²

So far, then, there has been no comprehensive study of the French and Provençal literature of the Middle Ages with a view to determining how far and in what ways it was affected by the nearness of the British Isles and the implications of that nearness.

¹ *Revue historique*, LII (1893), pp. 298–315.

² Audiau's work had already appeared in a provisional form in 1920, but the definitive edition of 1927 owed much to Dr Chaytor.

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Preface

What part did Britain and Ireland play in French literary consciousness? Whence did the French derive their information? What was the nature of their information? What criticisms did they make of British characters and behaviour? What was the debt of French literature to the British Isles for its subject-matter? What were the means of transmission? In what situations did British characters appear in French fiction? What considerations induced the French to choose English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish characters, or to devise an insular setting for a story? Was the French attitude to the English, in war-time, uniformly hostile, and if not, why not? These are the questions which this study attempts to answer.

Although the subject is literary rather than historical the two aspects obviously cannot be divorced from each other, and it thus seemed desirable to provide an historical introduction which would supply a background for the study of relevant texts, and which could be consulted in connexion with specific events referred to in those texts.

This book is a shortened version of a doctorate thesis written at Oxford between 1948 and 1951. I am particularly indebted to Professor A. Ewert, who first drew my attention to what has proved a fascinating and rewarding subject, and has at all times been ready with encouragement, criticism and advice. I owe a great deal also to Professor I. Ll. Foster, for guidance through the intricate maze of the 'Matter of Britain'.

P. R.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE
1955

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BCS = *Bulletin of Celtic Studies*
 BGDSL = *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und
 Literatur*
 CFMA = *Classiques français du moyen âge*
 CR = *Compte-rendu*
 EHR = *English Historical Review*
 MGH = *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica*
 MLR = *Modern Language Review*
 MP = *Modern Philology*
 PMLA = *Publications of the Modern Language Association of
 America*
 RLR = *Revue des langues romanes*
 SATF = *Société des anciens textes français*
 SHF = *Société de l'histoire de France*
 SHR = *Scottish Historical Review*
 TRHS = *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
 ZDA = *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*
 ZFSL = *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*
 ZRP = *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*
 ZVL = *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*

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