

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01911-8 - *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, Volume 1

Lucy Aikin

Frontmatter

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### Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth

Lucy Aikin (1791–1864) was a prolific writer of educational and historical works. She was a highly educated woman, influenced by her aunt, the educationalist and writer Anna Laetitia Barbauld. First published in 1818 and subsequently reprinted, *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth* focuses on the art, literature, manners and morals of the period, with brief biographies of important individuals. Drawing on published sources rather than archival material, it is a clear and readable narrative that reveals the author's critical insight. This social and personal rather than political approach to history was shared by many nineteenth-century women writers, including Elizabeth Benger and the Strickland sisters, also published in this series. Such writers stressed the role of women in history, rather than relegating them to the sidelines as most male historians did. Volume 1 covers the period from Elizabeth's birth in 1536 to 1570. For more information on this author, see [http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person\\_id=aikilu](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=aikilu)

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# Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth

VOLUME 1

LUCY AIKIN



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## QUEEN ELIZABETH.

*In the dress in which she went to St. Pauls, to return  
thanks for the defeat of the Spanish Armada?*

*Engraved by Wood, from the extremely rare print by  
Crispin de Pasie, after a drawing by Isaac Oliver?*

*Published by Leighton House, 1850, from the original, London, March 22, 1850.*

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MEMOIRS  
OF  
THE COURT  
OF  
QUEEN ELIZABETH.

By LUCY AIKIN.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1818.

## P R E F A C E.

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IN the literature of our country, however copious, the eye of the curious student may still detect important deficiencies.

We possess, for example, many and excellent histories, embracing every period of our domestic annals ;—biographies, general and particular, which appear to have placed on record the name of every private individual justly entitled to such commemoration ;—and numerous and extensive collections of original letters, state-papers and other historical and antiquarian documents ;—whilst our comparative penury is remarkable in royal lives, in court histories, and especially in that class which forms the glory of French literature,—memoir.

To supply in some degree this want, as it affects the person and reign of one of the most illustrious

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illustrious of female and of European sovereigns, is the intention of the work now offered with much diffidence to the public.

Its plan comprehends a detailed view of the private life of Elizabeth from the period of her birth; a view of the domestic history of her reign; memoirs of the principal families of the nobility and biographical anecdotes of the celebrated characters who composed her court; besides notices of the manners, opinions and literature of the reign.

Such persons as may have made it their business or their entertainment to study very much in detail the history of the age of Elizabeth, will doubtless be aware that in the voluminous collections of Strype, in the edited Burleigh, Sidney, and Talbot papers, in the *Memoirs of Birch*, in various collections of letters, in the chronicles of the times,—so valuable for those vivid pictures of manners which the pen of a contemporary unconsciously traces,—in the *Annals of Camden*, the *Progresses of Nichols*, and other large and laborious works which it would be tedious here to enumerate, a vast repertory existed of curious and interesting facts seldom recurred to for the composition of books of lighter literature,



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literature, and possessing with respect to a great majority of readers the grace of novelty. Of these and similar works of reference, as well as of a variety of others, treating directly or indirectly on the biography, the literature, and the manners of the period, a large collection has been placed under the eyes of the author, partly by the liberality of her publishers, partly by the kindness of friends.

In availing herself of their contents, she has had to encounter in full force the difficulties attendant on such a task ; those of weighing and comparing authorities, of reconciling discordant statements, of bringing insulated facts to bear upon each other, and of forming out of materials irregular in their nature and abundant almost to excess, a compact and well proportioned structure.

How far her abilities and her diligence may have proved themselves adequate to the undertaking, it remains with a candid public to decide. Respecting the selection of topics it seems necessary however to remark, that it has been the constant endeavour of the writer to preserve to her work the genuine character of *Memoirs*, by avoiding as much as possible all encroachments

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ments on the peculiar province of history ;— that amusement, of a not illiberal kind, has been consulted at least equally with instruction ; —and that on subjects of graver moment, a correct sketch has alone been attempted.

By a still more extensive course of reading and research, an additional store of anecdotes and observations might unquestionably have been amassed ; but it is hoped that of those assembled in the following pages, few will be found to rest on dubious or inadequate authority ; and that a copious choice of materials, relatively to the intended compass of the work, will appear to have superseded the temptation to useless digression, or to prolix and trivial detail.

The orthography of all extracts from the elder writers has been modernized, and their punctuation rendered more distinct ; in other respects reliance may be placed on their entire fidelity.