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# Sketches of English Literature

*From the Fourteenth to the Present Century*

CLARA LUCAS BALFOUR



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SKETCHES  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE,  
FROM THE  
FOURTEENTH TO THE PRESENT CENTURY.

BY  
CLARA LUCAS BALFOUR,  
AUTHOR OF  
"MORAL HEROISM," "WOMEN OF SCRIPTURE," "HAPPY EVENINGS,"  
ETC. ETC.

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"Thus Genius rose and set, at ordered times,  
And shot a day-spring into distant climes."—COWPER.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages aim at presenting in a familiar and compendious form a general sketch of the progress of our English Literature since the revival of letters in Europe until our own time. Many voluminous and admirable works have treated this subject in its different departments at large. The general or the young reader, however, who is but just beginning to select from, and to feel an interest in, our standard literature; and the female reader who snatches from daily duties brief opportunities for reading, can scarcely be expected or induced to go at once to studies so comprehensive. To these, it is thought, a book would be useful that aims to lead them by a plain path to the sources of the stream of modern English literature, and marks out to them its fertilising and

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rapid course through the four last, and most important, centuries.

Considerable prominence has been given in these pages to the labours of poets. Because great poets not only give form, power, and beauty to a nation's language, but feed the secret springs that render its general literature copious and varied.

The desire of the writer is to stimulate rather than to satisfy a love of reading, and a taste for the writings of our best authors; and to point out names and events that have either constituted important literary eras in our land, or led to the mental advancement of the people.



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