



**Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of
Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces, of the
Earlier Poets, With Some of Later Date, Not
Included in Any Other Edition,**

Thomas Percy

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Book may have numerous typos, missing text, images, or index. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. 1839. Excerpt: ... ON THE ANCIENT METRICAL ROMANCES, ETC. I. The first attempts at composition among all barbarous nations, are ever found to be poetry and song. The praises of their gods, and the achievements of their heroes, are usually chanted at their festival meetings. These are the first rudiments of history. It is in this manner that the savages of North America preserve the memory of past events: * and the same method is known to have prevailed among our Saxon ancestors, before they quitted their German forests.t The ancient Britons had their Bards, and the Gothic nations their Scalds or popular poets, J whose business it was to record the victories of their warriors, and the genealogies of their princes, in a kind of narrative songs, which were committed to memory, and delivered down from one reciter to another. So long as poetry continued a distinct profession, and while the Bard, or Scald, was a regular and stated officer in the prince's court, these men are thought to have performed the functions of the historian pretty faithfully; for though their narrations would be apt to receive a good deal of embellishment, they are supposed to have had at the bottom so much of truth, as to serve for the basis of more regular annals. At least, succeeding historians have taken up with the relations of these rude men, and, for want of more authentic * Vide Lasiteau Moeurs de Sauvages, t. 2. Dr. Browne's Hist, of the Rise and Progress of Poetry. t Germani celebrant carminibus antiquis (quod unum apud illos memorise et annalium genus est) Tuistonem, &c. Tacit. Germ. c. 2. } Barth. Antiq. Dan. lib. i. cap. 10.-- Wormii Literatura Runica, ad finem. records, have agreed to allow them the credit of true history.* After letters began to prevail, and history assumed a more stable form, by being committed to plai...

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