



The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. 7 (Classic Reprint)

Sir Adolphus William Ward

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CHAPTER I

CAVALIER LYRISTS

The early years of the reign of Charles I are made illustrious by a great outburst of song, which is very varied in character, and which suffered no diminution in volume or melody until the sound of the lute was drowned by that of the drum, and love-lyrics to Celia or Anthea gave place to the scurrilous abuse of the Rump-Songs. The true home of this lyric, as of the French Pl&iade song of the preceding generation, was the court, where the pastoral fancies and gallant inventions of cavalier poets were promptly set to music by composers in the royal service, and sung before the monarch at Whitehall. But, in the case of the greatest of these Caroline lyrists, the inspiration spread from court to country, and the most memorable of the Hesperides songs are those which sing of hock-carts, country wakes and Devon maidens going a-maying.

The Caroline lyric, again, is a portion of the great renaissance lyric which begins with Surrey and Wyatt, includes the great mas

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