



Heroes and Heroines of Fiction: Modern Prose and Poetry; Famous Characters and Famous Names in Novels, Romances, Poems and Dramas, Classified, ... From the Best Authorities (Classic Reprint)

William S. Walsh

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Excerpt from *Heroes and Heroines of Fiction: Modern Prose and Poetry; Famous Characters and Famous Names in Novels, Romances, Poems and Dramas, Classified, Analyzed and Criticised, With Supplementary Citations From the Best Authorities*

Roughly speaking, the year 1500 forms the line of cleavage between this volume and its predecessor bearing the subtitle, *Modern Prose and Poetry*. But no merely arbitrary date can furnish a philosophical and consistent division between a volume so subtitled and a companion volume like the present, dealing not only with the characters of classic and oriental myth (these date from the unknown past), but also with heroes of the folk-lore, legend and tradition of all times and of that non-literary literature known as the ballad and the chapbook.

For instance. Captain Kidd, as a ballad hero, properly belongs to this volume (as the compiler has planned it) even though the eccentric pirate flourished in the eighteenth century. So does Mother Shipton, in her quality as a chapbook heroine, though her fame was established in the seventeenth century. So do Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan, because they are of purely popular origin. A distinction worth noting occurs in the case of John Bull. Name and character were originally invented by John Arbuthnot in a purely literary pasquinade. In his original form, therefore, Master Bull belongs to Volume I. But that original and purely literary form has been so transmogrified in the popular imagination, has gathered such an accretion of details from a hundred unidentifiable sources, that the John Bull of to-day, the protagonist of cartoon and caricature, is a totally different being from the John Bull of Arbuthnot's creation. Therefore this secondary character also obtains a niche in the present volume.

Other "heroes and heroines" have won for themselves a dual immortality of a similar sort. Cleopatra and Julius Cæsar, for example, are historic characters, belonging to the classic period of antiquity. But they have obtruded themselves into modern "fiction."

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Kevin Masterson:

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