

SIR EUSTACE DE RIBEAUMONT.

A BALLAD FROM FROISSART.

[In the year 1348, during a truce between the English and French, and while the former were withdrawn from the Continent, an attempt was made to procure the surrender of Calais. Sir Amory de Valence, the English Governor, having feigned acceptance of the offered bribe, sent word to King Edward who equipped a small expedition, which sailed under Sir Walter Manny in time to reach Calais secretly on the appointed day.

The French, who marched from St. Omer, were admitted by the Governor, but were at once tacked by Sir Walter Manny, under whom the King served as a private knight. The interlocutor in the following ballad is Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont who relates the incidents of the French defeat.]

THE little town was very dull,
 Slowly the weeks slipped by
 Without a sign upon the earth
 Or omen in the sky ;
 I ween it was a twelvemonth since
 I raised my battle-cry.

The little town of St. Omer
 The truce had left to France,
 And many an archer harboured there
 And many a sturdy lance,
 And many a knight who fretted for
 The order to advance.

There was no noise of champing bit,
 No ring of metalled heel,
 No sound of clarion in the ear
 No rasp of sharp'ning steel ;—
 The hilt grew stranger to the grasp
 It once was wont to feel.

You heard the tinkling sacring bell
 Pass down the noontide street,
 Or marked the dog turn out and bay
 The noisy peasant's feet ;
 Beyond the wall, across the stream,
 You heard the yearlings bleat.

* * * *

The key of France is Calais town,
 And bitter shame it were
 That England's King that golden key
 Should at his girdle bear
 And, like a jailor, turn the lock
 On all our kingdom fair.

This truce,—God's malison upon
 The men who swore it through !—
 How say you friends, is't binding now
 On either me or you ?
 And may we not be false to that
 Yet to our country true ?