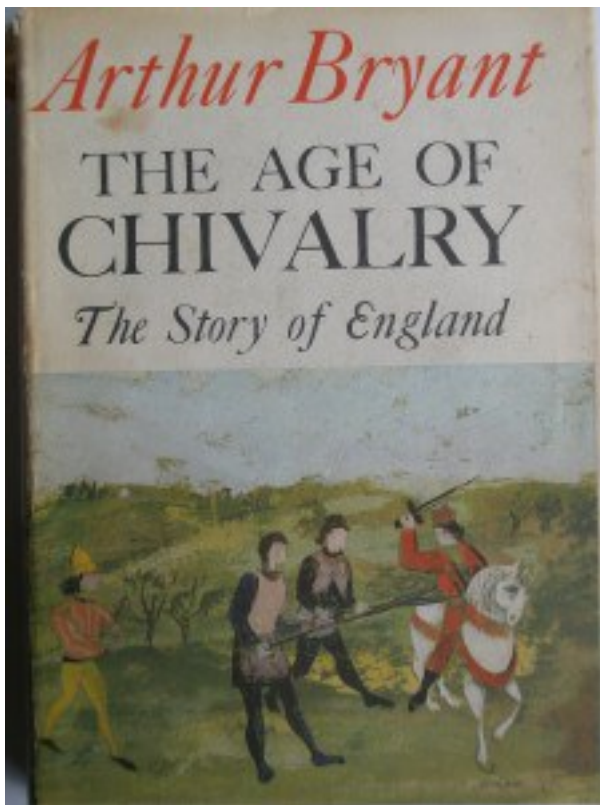


Age of Chivalry



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著者:Arthur Bryant

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The second volume of Sir Arthur Bryant's Story of England covers the high Middle Age—the century and more between the reigns of Edward I and Richard II. When it began, England was still an integral part of Latin Christendom, sharing its beliefs, its religious and, to a large extent, its secular institutions. Her governing class spoke French, her educated folk Latin; wide tracts of the continent received her rule and continental Europeans participated in her government. During this crowded and formative time there emerged many of her distinguishing characteristics as a nation-- parliament, the

legal profession, her system of land tenure and local government, the lovely indigenous modification of Gothic architecture known as Perpendicular, and the popular speech which, cross-bred from many others, became, in the hands of native writers of genius, the instrument of great literature. It saw the attempt to unify Anglo-Saxon and Celtic Britain under a single law and monarchy—successful, after a heroic resistance, in Wales but in Scotland defeated in a war of independence that ensured the continued nationhood of the Scottish people. It was the age of Froissart, of Arthurian chivalry and the foundation of the Order of the Garter, when England fought her giant neighbour, France, for the Plantagenet's hereditary dukedom of Aquitaine. It saw her greatest defeat, Bannockburn, and her most astonishing victory, Crecy, the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt. And in these vital years England became what under changing forms she has since remained : a parliamentary monarchy. By finding the means to reconcile a strong centralised authority with the liberty of the subject and his constitutional right to oppose and demand reform of government, she made a contribution of supreme importance to mankind's future.

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