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978-1-108-07724-8 - Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets: Volume 1

Edited by Thomas Percy

Excerpt

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RELICKS
SONGS AND BALLADS,
&c.

SERIES THE FIRST.
BOOK I.

I.
THE ANCIENT BALLAD OF CHEVY-CHASE.

The fine heroic song of CHEVY-CHASE has ever been admired by competent judges. Those genuine strokes of nature and artless passion, which have endeared it to the most simple readers, have recommended it to the most refined; and it has equally been the amusement of our childhood, and the favourite of our riper years.

VOL. III.

B

Mr.

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2 ANCIENT SONGS

Mr. Addison has given an excellent critique on this very popular ballad, but is mistaken with regard to the antiquity of our present copy; for this, if one may judge from the stile, cannot be older than the time of Elizabeth, and was probably written after the elogium of Sir Philip Sidney: perhaps in consequence of it. I flatter myself, I have here recovered the genuine antique poem: the true original song, which appeared rude even in the time of Sir Philip, and caused him to lament, that it was so evil-aparrelled in the rugged garb of antiquity.*

This curiosity is printed, from an old manuscript, at the end of Hearne's preface to Gul. Newbrigien's Hist. 1719. 8vo. vol. 1. To the MS. Copy is subjoined the name of the author, RICHARD SHEALE §: whom Hearne had so little judgment as to suppose to be the same with a R. Sheale, who was living in 1588. But whoever examines the gradation of language and idiom in the following volumes, will be convinced that this is the production of an earlier poet. It is indeed expressly mentioned among some very ancient songs in an old book intituled, The Complaint of Scotland †, (fol. 42.) under the title of the HUNTIS OF CHEVET, where the two following lines are also quoted;

The Perssee and the Mongumrye mette ‡.
That day, that day, that gentil day ||:

Which, tho' not quite the same as they stand in the ballad, yet differ not more than might be owing to the author's quoting from memory. Indeed whoever considers the stile and orthography of this old poem will not be inclined to place it lower than the time of Henry VI: as on the other hand the mention of James the Scottish king †, with one or two Ana-

* *Spectator*, N° 70. 74.

§ *Subscribed, after the usual manner of our old poets, explicitly [explicit] quoth Richard Sheale.*

† *One of the earliest productions of the Scottish press, now to be found. The title page was wanting in the copy here quoted; but it is supposed to have been printed in 1540. See Ames.*

‡ *See Pt. 2. v. 25. || See Pt. 1. v. 104. † Pt. 2. v. 36. 140.*

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AND BALLADS.

3

Anachronisms, forbid us to assign it an earlier date. King James I, who was prisoner in this kingdom at the death of his father, did not wear the crown of Scotland till the second year of our Henry VI||, but before the end of that long reign a third James had mounted the throne†. A succession of two or three Jameses, and the long detention of one of them in England, would render the name familiar to the English, and dispose a poet in those rude times to give it to any Scottish king he happened to mention.*

So much for the date of this old ballad: with regard to its subject, altho' it has no countenance from history, there is room to think it had originally some foundation in fact. It was one of the laws of the marches frequently renewed between the two nations, that neither party should hunt in the other's borders, without leave from the proprietors or their deputies‡. There had long been a rivalry between the two martial families of Percy and Douglas, which heightened by the national quarrel, must have produced frequent challenges and struggles for superiority, petty invasions of their respective domains, and sharp contests for the point of honour; which would not always be recorded in history. Something of this kind we may suppose gave rise to the ancient ballad of the HUNTING A' THE CHEVIAT§. Percy earl of Northumberland had vowed to hunt for three days in the Scottish

B 2

border

* Who died Aug. 5. 1406.

|| James I. was crowned May 22. 1424. murdered Feb. 21. 1435-7.

† In 1460.—Hen. VI. was deposed 1461: restored and slain 1471.

‡ Item. . . Concordatum est, quod, . . . NULLUS unius partis vel alterius ingrediatur terras, boschas, forrestas, warrenas, loca, dominia quæcunque alicujus partis alterius subditi, causa venandi, piscandi, aucupandi, disportum aut solacium in eisdem, aliave quacunque de causa ABSQUE LICENTIA ejus . . . ad quem . . . loca . . . pertinent, aut de deputatis suis prius capt. & obtent. Vid. Ep. Nicholson's *Leges Marchiarum*. 1705. 8vo. pag. 27. 51.

§ This was the original title. See the ballad, Pt. 1. v. 106. Pt. 2. v. 165.

4 ANCIENT SONGS

border without condescending to ask leave from Earl Douglas, who was either lord of the soil, or lord warden of the marches. Douglas would not fail to resent the insult, and endeavour to repel the intruders by force: this would naturally produce a sharp conflict between the two parties: something of which, it is probable, did really happen, tho' not attended with the tragical circumstances recorded in the ballad: for these are evidently borrowed from the BATTLE OF OTTERBOURN †, a very different event, but which sometimes would easily confound with it. That battle might be owing to some such previous affront as this of CHEVY CHASE, though it has escaped the notice of historians. Our poet has evidently jumbled the two events together: if indeed the lines ‡ in which this mistake is made, are not rather spurious, and the after-insertion of some person, who did not distinguish between the two stories.

Hearne has printed this ballad without any division of stanzas, in long lines, as he found it in the old written copy: but it is usual to find the distinction of stanzas neglected in ancient MSS; where, to save room, two or three verses are frequently given in one line undivided. See flagrant instances in the Harleian Catalog. No. 2253. f. 29. 34. 61. 70 & passim.

THE FIRST PART.

THE Persé owt of Northombarlande,
 And a vowe to God mayd he,
 That he wolde hunte in the mountayns
 Off Chyviat within dayes thre,
 In the mauger of doughtè Dogles, 5
 And all that ever with him be.
 The

† See the next ballad. ‡ Vid. Pt. 2. v. 161.
 V. 5, magger in Hearne's MS.

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A N D B A L L A D S. 5

The fattifte hartes in all Cheviat
 He sayd he wold kyll, and cary them away :
 Be my feth, sayd the dougheti Doglas agayn,
 I wyll let that hontyng yf that I may. 10

Then the Perfé owt of Banborowe cam,
 With him a myghtee meany ;
 With fifteen hondrith archares bold ;
 The wear chofen out of thyars thre.

This begane on a monday at morn 15
 In Cheviat the hillys fo he,
 The chyld may rue that ys un-born,
 It was the mor pitté.

The dryvars thorowe the woodes went
 For to reas the dear, 20
 Bomen bickarte uppone the bent
 With ther browd aras cleare.

Then the wyld thorowe the woodes went
 On every fyde shear,
 Grea-hondes thorowe the greves glent 25
 For to kyll thear dear.

The begane in Chyviat the hyls above
 Yerly on a monnyn day ;
 B 3 Be

Ver. 11. The the Perfé. *MS.* *V. 13.* archardes bolde off
 blood and bone. *MS.* *V. 19.* throrowe. *MS.*

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6 A N C I E N T S O N G S

Be that it drewe to the oware off none
 A hondrith fat hartes ded ther lay. 30

The blewe a mort uppone the bent,
 The femblyd on fydis shear;
 To the quyrry then the Perfè went
 To fe the bryttlynge off the deare.

He sayd, It was the Duglas promys
 This day to met me hear;
 But I wyfte he wold faylle verament:
 A gret oth the Perfè swear.

At the laste a squyar of Northombelonde
 Lokyde at his hand full ny, 40
 He was war ath the doughetie Doglas comynge;
 With him a myghtè meany,

Both with spear, 'byll,' and brande:
 Yt was a myghti fight to fe.
 Hardyar men both off hart nar hande 45
 Wear not in Crifiantè.

The wear twenty hondrith spear-men good
 Withouten any fayle;
 The wear borne a-long be the watter a Twyde,
 Yth bowndes of Tividale. 50
 Leave

V. 31. blwe a mot. *MS.* *V.* 42. myghtte. *MS.* *passim.*
V. 43. brylly. *MS.* *V.* 48. withowte . . . feale. *MS.*

A N D B A L L A D S. 7

Leave off the brytlyng of the dear, he sayde,
And to your bowys tayk good heed ;
For never fithe ye wear on your mothars borne
Had ye never fo mickle need.

The dougheti Dogglas on a ftede 55
He rode his men beforene ;
His armor glytteryde as dyd a glede ;
A bolder barne was never born.

Tell me ‘ what’ men ye ar, he says,
Or whos men that ye be : 60
Who gave youe leave to hunte in this
Chyviat chays in the fpyt of me ?

The frst mane that ever him an answeare mayd,
Yt was the good lord Perfê :
We wyll not tell the ‘ what’ men we ar, he says, 65
Nor whos men that we be ;
But we wyll hount hear in this chays
In the fpyte of thyne, and of the.

The fattifte hartes in all Chyviat
We have kyld, and cast to carry them a-way. 70
Be my troth, sayd the doughtè Dogglas agayn,
Ther-for the ton of us shall de this day,

B 4 Then

V. 52. boys lock ye tayk. *MS.* *V.* 54. ned. *MS.* *V.* 56. att
his. *MS.* *V.* 59. whos. *MS.* *V.* 64. wnoys. *MS.* *V.* 71.
agay. *MS.*

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8 A N C I E N T S O N G S

Then fayd the doughtè Doglas
 Unto the lord Perfè :
 To kyll all thes giltles men,
 A-las ! it wear great piftè.

But, Perfè. thowe art a lord of lande,
 I am a yerle callyd within my contre ;
 Let all our men uppone a parti ftande ;
 And do the battell off the and of me. 80

Nowe Cristes cors on his crowne, fayd the lord Perfè,
 Who-foever ther-to fays nay.
 Be my troth, doughtè Doglas, he fays,
 Thow fhalt never fe that day.

Nethar in Ynglonde, Skottlonde, nar France, 85
 Nor for no man of a woman born,
 But and fortune be my chance,
 I dar met him on man for on.

Then bespayke a squyar off Northombarlonde,
 Ric. Wytharynton was his nam ; 90
 It fhall never be told in Sothe-Ynglonde, he fays,
 To kyng Herry the fourth for sham.

I wat youe byn great lordes twa,
 I am a poor squyar of lande ;
 I wyll

V. 81. fayd the the. MS. V. 88. on. i. e. one. V. 93. twarw. MS.

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A N D B A L L A D S. 9

I wyll never fe my captayne fyght on a fylde, 95
 And ftande my-felffe, and looke on,
 But whyll I may my weppone welde
 I wyll not ‘fayl’ both harte and hande.

That day, that day, that dredfull day:
 The firft FIT here I fynde. 100
 And youwyll here any mor athe hontyngathe Chyviat
 Yet ys ther mor behynd.

T H E S E C O N D P A R T .

T H E Yngglifhe men hade ther bowys yebent,
 Ther hartes were good yenoughe;
 The firft ou arros that the shote off,
 Seven skore fpear-men the floughe.

Yet bydys the yerle Doglas uppon the bent, 5
 A captayne good yenoughe,
 And that was fene verament,
 For he wrought hom both woo and wouche.

The Dogglas pertyd his oft in thre,
 Lyk a cheffe cheften off pryde, 10
 With

V. 106. youe . . . hountyng. *MS.* *V.* 3. fult, *i. e.* flight.
V. 5. byddys. *MS.*

V. 17. boys. *MS.* *V.* 18. briggt. *MS.* *V.* 21. throrowe.
MS. *V.* 22. done. *MS.* *V.* 26. to, i. e. two. *Ibid.* and of. *MS.*
V. 32. ran. *MS.*