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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

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Reliques of Ancient English Poetry

While visiting a friend, the writer and cleric Thomas Percy (1729–1811) noticed a neglected folio whose pages were being used by the maids to light the fire. Upon inspection, this manuscript was found to be a seventeenth-century collection of historical ballads. Following this discovery, Percy collected further ballads and songs from a number of sources, which he published in this three-volume work in 1765, although ultimately only a quarter of the texts he presented came from that original manuscript. Although this work proved to be incredibly popular, Percy's idiosyncratic editorial practices also received much criticism. The collection centres on historical ballads and romances, demonstrating the development of language, customs and traditions, to which Percy added contemporary ballads for his readers' enjoyment. Volume 1 contains texts such as 'The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase' and 'The Jew's Daughter', as well as ballads which influenced or illuminate the work of Shakespeare.

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*Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs,
and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets*

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY THOMAS PERCY



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University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108077248

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2015

This edition first published 1765

This digitally printed version 2015

ISBN 978-1-108-07724-8 Paperback

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OF
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J. Wale del.

C. Gignieu sculp.

*These venerable antient Song-enditers
Soar'd many a pitch above our modern writers:
With rough majestic force they mov'd the heart,
And strength and nature made amends for Art.*

Rowe.

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R E L I Q U E S
O F
ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY:
CONSISTING OF
Old Heroic BALLADS, SONGS, and other
PIECES of our earlier POETS,
(Chiefly of the LYRIC kind.)
Together with some few of later Date.
VOLUME THE FIRST.



L O N D O N :
Printed for J. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall.
M DCC LXV.

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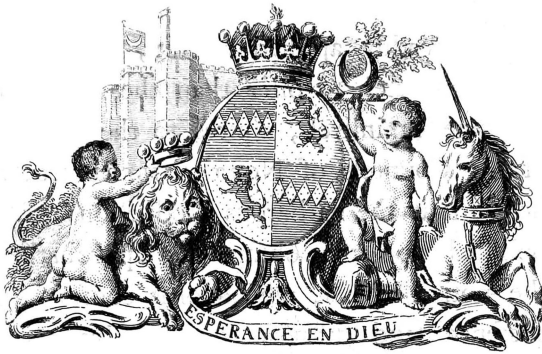
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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
ELIZABETH
COUNTESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND :
IN HER OWN RIGHT
BARONESS PERCY, LUCY, POYNINGS, FITZ-PAYNE,
BRYAN, AND LATIMER.

M A D A M,

THOSE writers, who solicit the protection of the noble and the great, are often exposed to censure by the impropriety of their addressees : a remark that will perhaps

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be

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be too readily applied to him, who having nothing better to offer than the rude songs of ancient minstrels, aspires to the patronage of the Countess of NORTHUMBERLAND, and hopes that the barbarous productions of unpolished ages can obtain the approbation or the notice of her, who adorns courts by her presence, and diffuses elegance by her example.

But this impropriety, it is presumed, will disappear, when it is declared that these poems are presented to your LADYSHIP, not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, shewing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages : of ages that had been almost lost to memory, had not the gallant deeds of your illustrious ancestors preserved them from oblivion.

No active or comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity :

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quity: It is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilized, grossness refined, and ignorance instructed: but this curiosity, MADAM, must be stronger in those, who, like your LADYSHIP, can remark in every period the influence of some great progenitor, and who still feel in their effects the transactions and events of distant centuries.

By such Bards, MADAM, as I am now introducing to your presence, was the infancy of genius nurtured and advanced, by such were the minds of unlettered warriors softened and enlarged, by such was the memory of illustrious actions preserved and propagated, by such were the heroic deeds of the Earls of NORTHUMBERLAND sung at festivals in the hall of ALNWICK: and those songs, which the bounty of your ancestors rewarded, now return to your LADYSHIP by a kind of hereditary right; and, I flatter myself, will find

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such

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such reception, as is usually shewn to poets and
historians, by those whose consciousness of
merit makes it their interest to be long re-
membered.

I am,

MADAM,

Your LADYSHIP'S

Most Humble

And most devoted Servant,

THOMAS PERCY.

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The P R E F A C E.

THE Reader is here presented with select remains of our ancient English Bards and Minstrels, an order of men who were once greatly respected by our ancestors, and contributed to soften the roughness of a martial and unlettered people by their songs and by their music.

The greater part of them are extracted from an ancient folio manuscript, in the Editor's possession, which contains near 200 poems, songs, and metrical romances. This MS. was written about the middle of the last century, but contains compositions of all times and dates, from the ages prior to Chaucer, to the conclusion of the reign of Charles I.

This manuscript was shown to several learned and ingenious friends, who thought the contents too curious to be consigned to oblivion, and importuned the possessor to select some of them, and give them to the press. As most of them are of great simplicity, and seem to have been merely written for the people, he was long in doubt, whether in the present state of improved literature, they could be deemed worthy the attention of the public. At length the importunity of his friends prevailed, and he could refuse nothing to such judges as the author of the RAMBLER, and the late Mr. SHENSTONE.

Accordingly such specimens of ancient poetry have been selected as either shew the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets.

They

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They are here distributed into THREE VOLUMES, each of which contains an independent SERIES of poems, arranged for the most part, according to the order of time, and showing the gradual improvements of the English language and poetry from the earliest ages down to the present. Each VOLUME, or SERIES, is divided into three BOOKS, to afford so many pauses, or resting places to the Reader, and to assist him in distinguishing between the productions of the earlier, the middle, and the latter times.

In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques of antiquity will require great allowances to be made for them. Yet have they, for the most part, a pleasing simplicity, and many artless graces, which in the opinion of no mean critics* have been thought to compensate for the want of higher beauties, and if they do not dazzle the imagination, are frequently found to interest the heart.

To atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems, each volume concludes with a few modern attempts in the same kind of writing: And to take off from the tediousness of the longer narratives, they are every where intermingled with little elegant pieces of the lyric kind. Select ballads in the old Scottish dialect, most of them of the first-rate merit, are also interspersed among those of our ancient English Minstrels: and the artless productions of these old rhapsodists, are occasionally confronted with specimens of the composition of contemporary poets of a higher class: of those who had all the advantages of learning in the times in which they lived, and who wrote for fame and for posterity. Yet perhaps the pain will be frequently due to the old strolling

*MR. ADDISON, MR. DRYDEN, and the witty Lord DORSET, &c. See the Spectator, No. 70. To these might be added many eminent judges now alive.—The learned SELDEN appears also to have been fond of collecting these old things. See p. XI.

Minstrels,

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Minstrels, who composed their rhimes to be sung to their harps, and who looked no farther than for present applause, and present subsistence.

The reader will find this class of men occasionally described in the following volumes, and some particulars relating to their history in a slight Essay subjoined to this preface.

It will be proper here to give a short account of the other collections that were consulted, and to make my acknowledgments to those gentlemen, who were so kind as to impart extracts from them: for while this selection was making, a great number of ingenious friends took a share in the work, and explored many large repositories in its favour.

The first of these that deserved notice was the Pepysian library at Magdalen College, Cambridge. Its founder, Sam. Pepys, Esq; secretary of the Admiralty in the reigns of Charles II. and James II. had made a large collection of ancient English ballads, near 2000 in number, which he has left pasted in five volumes in folio; besides Garlands and other smaller miscellanies. This collection he tells us was “ Begun by Mr. SELDEN; improved by the addition of many pieces elder thereto in time; and the whole continued down to the year 1700.”

In the Ashmole Library at Oxford, is a small collection of ballads, made by Anthony Wood, in the year 1676, containing somewhat more than 200. Many ancient popular poems are also preserved in the Bodleian Library.

The archives of the Antiquarian Society at London contain a multitude of curious political poems in large folio volumes, digested under the several reigns of Hen. viii, Edw. vi, Mary, Elizabeth, James I. &c.

In the British Museum is preserved a large treasure of ancient English poems in MS. besides one folio volume of printed ballads.

From all these some of the best pieces were selected,
and

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and from many private collections, as well printed, as manuscript: particularly from one large folio volume which was lent by a lady.

Amid such a fund of materials, the Editor is afraid he has been sometimes led to make too great a parade of his authorities. The desire of being accurate has perhaps seduced him into too minute and trifling an exactness; and in pursuit of information he may have been drawn into many a petty and frivolous research. It was however necessary to give some account of the old copies, tho' often for the sake of brevity one or two of these only are mentioned, where yet assistance was received from several*. Where any thing was altered that deserved particular notice, the passage is distinguished by two inverted 'commas'. And the Editor has endeavoured to be as faithful, as the imperfect state of his materials would admit: for these old popular rhymes have, as might be expected, been handed down to us with less care, than any other writings in the world.

The plan of the work was settled in concert with the late elegant Mr. SHENSTONE, who was to have borne a joint share in it had not death unhappily prevented him: Most of the modern pieces were of his selection and arrangement, and the Editor hopes to be pardoned if he has retained some things out of partiality to the judgment of his friend. A large MS. collection of poems was a present from HUMPHREY PITT, Esq; of Prior's-Lee, in Shropshire, to whom this public acknowledgment is due for that, and many other obliging favours. To Sir DAVID DALRYMPLE, Bart. of Hayes, near Edinburgh, the Editor is indebted for most of the beautiful Scottish poems, with which this little miscellany is enriched, and for many curious and elegant remarks with which they are illustrated. Some

* Thus in Book I. No. VI. of this vol. one MS only is mentioned, tho' some additional stanzas were recovered from another fragment: and this has sometimes been the case elsewhere.

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obliging favours of the same kind were received from JOHN M^cGOWAN, Esq; of Edinburgh: and many curious explanations of Scottish words in the glossaries from Mr. JOHN DAVIDSON, of Edinburgh, and from the Rev. Mr. HUTCHINSON, of Kimbolton. Mr. WARTON, who at present does so much honour to the Poetry Professor's chair at Oxford, and another friend in that University, contributed some curious pieces from the Oxford libraries. Two ingenious and learned friends at Cambridge deserve the Editor's warmest acknowledgments: to Mr. BLAKEWAY, late fellow of Magdalen College, he owes all the assistance received from the Pepysian library: and Mr. FARMER, fellow of Emanuel, often exerted in favour of this little work, that extensive knowledge of ancient English literature for which he is so distinguished. Many extracts from ancient MSS. in the British Museum and other repositories, were owing to the kind services of Mr. ASTLE, to whom the public is indebted for the curious Preface and Index lately annexed to the Harleian catalogue. The worthy Librarian of the Society of Antiquaries, deserves acknowledgment for the obliging manner in which he gave the Editor access to the volumes under his care. In Mr. GARRICK's curious collection of old plays are many scarce pieces of ancient poetry, with the free use of which he indulged the Editor, in the politest manner. To the Rev. Dr. BIRCH he is indebted for the use of several ancient and curious tracts. To the friendship of Mr. JOHNSON he owes many valuable hints for the conduct of the work. And if the glossaries are more exact and curious, than might be expected in so slight a publication, it is to be ascribed to the supervision of a friend, who stands at this time the first in the world for northern literature, and whose learning is better known and respected in foreign nations, than in his own country. It is perhaps needless to name the Rev. Mr. LYE, Editor of Junius's Etymologicum and of the Gothic glosses.

THE NAMES of so many men of learning and character
the

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the Editor hopes will serve as an amulet to guard him from every unfavourable censure, for having bestowed any attention on a parcel of OLD BALLADS. It was at the request of many of these gentlemen, and of others eminent for their genius, and taste, that this little work was undertaken. To prepare it for the press has been the amusement of now and then a vacant hour amid the leisure and retirement of rural life, and hath only served as a relaxation from graver studies. It has been taken up at different times, and often thrown aside for many months, during an interval of four or five years. This has occasioned some inconsistencies and repetitions, which the candid reader will pardon. As great care has been taken to admit nothing immoral and indecent; the Editor hopes he need not be ashamed of having bestowed some of his idle hours on the ancient literature of our own country, or in rescuing from oblivion some pieces (tho' but the amusements of our ancestors) which tend to place in a striking light, their taste, genius, sentiments, or manners.

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AN ESSAY

ON THE ANCIENT ENGLISH MINSTRELS.

THE MINSTRELS seem to have been the genuine successors of the ancient Bards, who united the arts of Poetry and Music, and sung verses to the harp, of their own composing. It is well known what respect was shewn to their BARDS by the Britons : and no less was paid to the northern SCALDS † by most of the nations of Gothic race. Our Saxon ancestors, as well as their brethren the ancient Danes, had been accustomed to hold men of this profession in the highest reverence. Their skill was considered as something divine, their persons were deemed sacred, their attendance was solicited by kings, and they were every where loaded with honours and rewards *. In short, poets and their art were held among them in that rude admiration, which is ever shown by an ignorant people to such as excell them in intellectual accomplishments. When the Saxons were converted to christianity, in proportion as letters prevailed among them, this rude admiration began to abate, and poetry was no longer a peculiar profession. The Poet and the Minstrel ‡ became two persons. Poetry was cultivated by men of letters indiscriminately, and

† So the ancient Danes, &c. intitled their Bards. See Pref. to “ Five pieces of Runic poetry, 8vo. 1763.

* Mallet, L’Introd. a l’Hist. de Dannemarc. 4to. Bartholin. Antiq. Dan. 4to.

‡ The word MINSTREL is derived from the French *Ménéfrier* ; and was not in use here before the Norman conquest. It is remarkable that our old monkish historians do not use the word *Citharædus*, *Cantator*, or the like, to express a MINSTREL in Latin ; but either *Mimus*, *Histrion*, *Joculator*, or some other word that implies gesture. Hence it should seem that the Minstrels set off their singing by mimicry or action : or according to Dr. Brown’s hypothesis, united the powers of melody, poem, and dance. See his ingenious Hist. of the Rise of Poetry, &c.
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many of the most popular rhimes were composed amidst the leisure and retirement of monasteries. But the Minstrels continued a distinct order of men, and got their livelihood by singing verses to the harp, at the houses of the great. There they were still hospitably and respectfully received, and retained many of the honours shown to their predecessors the Bards and Scalds. And indeed tho' some of them only recited the compositions of others, many of them still composed songs themselves, and all of them could probably invent a few stanzas on occasion. I have no doubt but most of the old heroic ballads in this collection were produced by this order of men. For altho' some of the larger metrical romances might come from the pen of the monks or others, yet the smaller narratives were probably composed by the Minstrels who sung them. From the amazing variations, which occur in different copies of these old pieces, it is evident they made no scruple to alter each other's productions, and the reciter added or omitted whole stanzas, according to his own fancy or convenience.

In the early ages, as is hinted above, this profession was held in great reverence among the Saxon tribes, as well as among their Danish brethren. This appears from two remarkable facts in history, which show that the same arts of music and song were equally admired among both nations, and that the privileges and honours conferred upon the professors of them were common to both; as it is well known their customs, manners, and even language were not in those times very dissimilar.

When our great king Alfred was desirous to learn the true situation of the Danish army, which had invaded his realm; he assumed the dress and character of a Minstrel*,

* *Fingens se JOCULATOREM, assumpta cithara, &c.* Ingulphi Hist. p. 869.—*Sub specie MIMI . . . ut JOCULATORIÆ professor artis.* Malmesb. l. 2. c. 4. p. 43. One name for a Minstrel in old French was JOUGLEUR.

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and taking his harp, and only one attendant, (for in the early times it was not unusual for a Minstrel to have a servant to carry his harp †) he went with the utmost security into the Danish camp. And though he could not but be known to be a Saxon, the character he had assumed procured him a hospitable reception; he was admitted to entertain the king at table, and staid among them long enough to contrive that assault, which afterwards destroyed them. This was in the year 878.

About sixty years after, a Danish king made use of the same disguise to explore the camp of our king Athelstan. With his harp in his hand, and dressed like a Minstrel ‡, Anlaff, king of the Danes, went among the Saxon tents, and taking his stand near the king's pavilion, began to play, and was immediately admitted. There he entertained Athelstan and his lords with his fingering and his music: and was at length dismissed with an honourable reward; though his songs must have discovered him to have been a Dane. Athelstan was saved from the consequences of this stratagem by a soldier, who had observed Anlaff bury the money which had been given him, from some scruple of honour, or motive of superstition. This occasioned a discovery.

From the uniform procedure of both these kings, it is plain that the same mode of entertainment prevailed among both people, and that the Minstrel was a privileged character among both. Even so late as the reign of Edward II. the Minstrels were easily admitted into the royal presence; as appears from a passage in Stow †, which also shews the splendor of their appearance.

“ In the year 1316, Edward the Second did solemnize
“ his feast of Pentecost at Westminster in the great hall:
“ where sitting royally at the table with his peers about

† See this vol. p. 57. 65.

‡ *Assumpta manu cithara . . . professus MIMUM, qui hujusmodi arte stipem quotidianam mercaretur . . . Jussus abire pretium cantus accepit.* Malmesb. l. 2. c. 6.

† Survey of Lond. 1603. p. 469.

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“ him, there entered a woman ADORNED LIKE A MINSTRELL †, SITTING ON A GREAT HORSE TRAPPED, “ AS MINSTRELS THEN USED, who rode round about “ the tables, shewing pastime; and at length came up “ to the king’s table, and laid before him a letter, and “ forthwith turning her horse saluted every one, and “ departed.”—The subject of this letter was a remonstrance to the king on the favours heaped by him on his minions, to the neglect of his knights and faithful servants.

The messenger was sent in a Minstrel’s habit, as what would gain an easy admission ||; and was a Woman concealed under that habit, I suppose, to disarm the king’s resentment: For I do not find that any of the real Minstrels were of the female sex, and therefore conclude this was only an artful contrivance peculiar to that occasion.

In the 4th year of Richard II. †, John of Gaunt erected at Tutbury in Staffordshire, a COURT OF MINSTRELS, with a full power to receive suit and service from the men of this profession within five neighbouring counties, to enact laws, and determine their controversies; and to apprehend and arrest such of them, as should refuse to appear at the said court, annually held on the 16th of August. For this they had a charter*, by which they were empowered to appoint a KING OF THE MINSTRELS, with four officers, to preside over them. These were every year elected with great ceremony, the whole form of which is described by Dr. Plott §; in whose time however they seem to have become mere musicians.

† *Ornata HISTRIONALi habitu*. Walsingh. p. 109. (That Minstrels sometimes rode on horseback, see in this vol. p. 57. 65. &c.)

|| When the porter was blamed for admitting her, he answered, *Non esse moris domus regie HISTRIONES ab ingressu quomodolibet prohibere*, &c. Walsingh.

* Anno 1381.

† Intituled *Carte le Roy de Ministraulx*. (In Latin *Histriones*. Vid. Plott. p. 437.)

§ Hist. of Staffordsh. Ch. 10. §. 69—76. p. 435, &c.

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ANCIENT ENGLISH MINSTRELS. xix

Even so late as the reign of Henry VIII. the Reciters of verses, or moral speeches learnt by heart, intruded without ceremony into all companies; not only in taverns, but in the houses of the nobility themselves. This we learn from Erasmus †, whose argument led him only to describe a species of these men who DID NOT sing their compositions; but the others that DID, enjoyed without doubt the same privileges.

The Reader will find that the Minstrels continued down to the reign of Elizabeth; in whose time they had lost much of their dignity, and were sinking into contempt and neglect. Yet still they sustained a character far superior to any thing we can conceive at present of the singers of old ballads ‡.

When Queen Elizabeth was entertained at Killingworth Castle by the Earl of Leicester in 1575, among the many devices and pageants which were exhibited for her entertainment, one of the personages introduced was that of an ancient MINSTREL, whose appearance and dress are so minutely described by a writer there present §, and give us so distinct an idea of the character, that I shall quote the passage at large.

“ A PERSON very meet seemed he for the purpose, of
 “ a xlv years old, apparelled partly as he would himself.
 “ His cap off: his head seemly rounded toniter-wise ||:
 “ fair kembed, that with a sponge daintily dipt in a little
 “ capon's grease, was finely smoothed, to make it shine
 “ like a maltard's wing. His beard smugly shaven:
 “ and yet his shirt after the new trink, with ruffs fair
 “ starched, sleeked and glistering like a pair of new

† See his ECCLESIAST. . . . *Irrumpunt in convivium magnatum, aut in cauponas vinarias; et argumentum aliquod quod edidicerunt recitant*, &c. Jortin, vol. 2. p. 193.

‡ See vol. 2. p. 162.

§ R. L. [Langham] author of a letter 12mo. describing the Queen's entertainment at Killingworth in 1575. p. 46. (This writer's orthography is not here copied.)

|| “Tonsure-wise,” after the manner of the Monks.

b 2

“shoes,

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“ shoes, marshalled in good order with a setting stick,
 “ and strut, ‘ that ’ every ruff stood up like a wafer. A
 “ side [i. e. long] gown of Kendale green, after the
 “ freshness of the year now, gathered at the neck with
 “ a narrow gorget, fastened afore with a white clasp and
 “ a keeper close up to the chin ; but easily, for heat,
 “ to undo when he list. Seemly begirt in a red caddis
 “ girdle : from that a pair of capped Sheffield knives
 “ hanging a’ two sides. Out of his bosom drawn forth
 “ a lappet of his napkin * edged with a blue lace, and
 “ marked with a D for Damian, for he was but a
 “ batchelor yet.

“ His gown had side [i. e. long] sleeves down to
 “ mid-leg, slit from the shoulder to the hand, and lined
 “ with white cotton. His doublet-sleeves of black
 “ worsted : upon them a pair of points of tawny cham-
 “ let laced along the wrist with blue threaden poinets ||, a
 “ wait towards the hands of fustian-a-napes. A pair
 “ of red neather stocks. A pair of pumps on his feet,
 “ with a cross cut at his toes for corns : not new indeed,
 “ yet cleanly blackt with foot, and shining as a shoing
 “ horn.

“ About his neck a red ribband suitable to his girdle.
 “ His HARP in good grace dependent before him. His
 “ WREST † tyed to a green lace and hanging by :
 “ Under the gorget of his gown a fair flaggon chain,
 “ (pewter ‡ for) SILVER, as a SQUIRE MINSTREL OF
 “ MIDDLESEX, that travelled the country this summer
 “ season, unto fair and worshipful mens houses. From
 “ his chain hung a scutcheon, with metal and colour,
 “ resplendant upon his breast, of the ancient arms of
 “ Islington.”

* i. e. handkerchief, or cravat. || Perhaps points.

† The key, or screw, with which he tuned his harp.

‡ The reader will remember that this was not a REAL MINSTREL, but only one personating that character : his ornaments therefore were only such as OUTWARDLY represented those of a real Minstrel.

—This

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ANCIENT ENGLISH MINSTRELS. xxi

—This Minstrel is described as belonging to that vil-
lage. I suppose such as were retained by noble fam-
ilies, wore their arms hanging down by a silver chain
as a kind of badge. From the expression of SQUIRE
MINSTREL above, we may conclude there were other
inferior orders, as YEOMEN MINSTRELS, or the like.

This Minstrel, the author tells us a little below, “after
“three lowly courtesies, cleared his voice with a hem,
“... and wiped his lips with the hollow of his hand for
“filing his napkin, tempered a string or two with his
“wrest, and after a little warbling on his HARP for
“a prelude, came forth with a solemn song, warranted
“for story out of King Arthur’s acts, &c.”—This
song the reader will find printed in this work, volume
III. pag. 25.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century this class of
men had lost all credit, and were sunk so low in the
public opinion, that in the 39th year of Elizabeth † a
statute was passed by which “Minstrels, wandering
“abroad” were included among “rogues, vagabonds,
“and sturdy beggars,” and were adjudged to be punished
as such. This act seems to have put an end to the pro-
fession, for after this time they are no longer mentioned.

I CANNOT conclude this account of the ancient MIN-
STRELS, without remarking that they are most of them
represented to have been of the North. There is hardly
an ancient Ballad or Romance, wherein a Minstrel or
Harper appears, but he is characterized by way of emi-
nence to have been “OF THE NORTH COUNTRY* :”
and indeed the prevalence of the Northern dialect in such
kind of poems, shews that this representation is real.
The reason of which seems to be this; the civilizing of
nations has begun from the South: the North would
therefore be the last civilized, and the old manners would

† Vid. Pulton’s Stat. 1661. p. 1110. 39° Eliz.

* See p. 65. of this vol.

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longest subsist there. With the manners, the old poetry that painted these manners would remain likewise; and in proportion as their boundaries became more contracted, and their neighbours refined, the poetry of those rude men would be more distinctly peculiar, and that peculiarity more strikingly remarked.

The Reader will observe in the more ancient ballads of this collection, a cast of style and measure very different from that of contemporary poets of a higher class: many phrases and idioms, which the Minstrels seem to have appropriated to themselves, and a very remarkable licence of varying the accent of words at pleasure, in order to humour the flow of the verse, particularly in the rhimes: as

<i>Countrie</i>	<i>harper</i>	<i>battell</i>	<i>morning</i>
<i>Ladie</i>	<i>singer</i>	<i>damsel</i>	<i>loving,</i>

instead of *country, lady, harper, singer, &c.*—This liberty is but sparingly assumed by the classical poets of the same age; or even by the latter composers of Heroical Ballads: I mean by such as professedly wrote for the press. For it is to be observed, that so long as the Minstrels subsisted, they seem never to have designed their rhymes for publication, and probably never committed them to writing themselves; what copies are preserved of them were doubtless taken down from their mouths. But as the old Minstrels gradually wore out, a new race of ballad-writers succeeded, an inferior sort of minor poets, who wrote narrative songs merely for the press. Instances of both may be found in the reign of Elizabeth. The two latest pieces in the genuine strain of the old Minstrelsy that I can discover, are No. III. and IV. of Book III. in this volume. Lower than these I cannot trace the old mode of writing.

The old Minstrel-ballads are in the northern dialect, abound with antique words and phrases, are extremely incorrect, and run into the utmost licence of metre; they have also a romantic wildness, and are in the true spirit of chivalry.—The other sort are written in exacter measure,

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ANCIENT ENGLISH MINSTRELS. xxiii

sure, have a low or subordinate correctness, sometimes bordering on the insipid, yet often well adapted to the pathetic; these are generally in the southern dialect, exhibit a more modern phraseology, and are commonly descriptive of more modern manners.—To be sensible of the difference between them, let the Reader compare in this volume No. III. of book III. with No. IX. of Book II.

Towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, (as is mentioned above) the genuine old Minstrelsy seems to have been extinct, and thenceforth the ballads that were produced were wholly of the latter kind, and these came forth in such abundance, that in the reign of James I they began to be collected into little Miscellanies under the name of GARLANDS, and at length to be written purposely for such collections*.

* In the Pepysian, and other libraries, are preserved a great number of these in black letter, 12mo. under the following quaint and affected titles, viz.

1. A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses gathered out of England's Royall Garden, &c. by Richard Johnson, 1612. [In the Bodleyan Library.]—2. The Golden Garland of Princely Delight.—3. The Garland of Good-will, by T. D. 1631.—4. The Royal Garland of Love and Delight, by T. D.—5. The Garland of Love and Mirth, by Thomas Lanfier.—6. The Garland of Delight, &c. by Tho. Delone.—7. Cupid's Garland set round with gilded Roses.—8. The Garland of withered Roses, by Martin Parker, 1656.—9. The Shepherd's Garland of Love, Loyalty, &c.—10. The Country Garland.—11. The Golden Garland of Mirth and Merriment.—12. The Lover's Garland.—13. Neptune's Fair Garland.—14. England's fair Garland.—15. Robin Hood's Garland.—16. The Lover's Garland.—17. The Maiden's Garland.—18. A loyal Garland of Mirth and Pastime.—&c. &c. &c.

This sort of petty publications were anciently called PENNY-MERRIMENTS: as little religious tracts of the same size went by the name PENNY GODLINESES: In the Pepys Library are multitudes of both kinds.

b 4

C O N-

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