

THE

POETS AND POETRY OF SCOTLAND.

PERIOD 1219 TO 1776.

THOMAS THE RHYMER.

BORN 1219 — DIED 1299.

SO little is known with certainty concerning Thomas the Rhymer, the "day-starre" of Scottish poetry, that even his name has long been a subject of controversy. No other bard of ancient or modern times is more rich in designations. Commonly called Thomas the Rhymer, he is also known as Thomas Rymer, Sir Thomas Learmont or Lermont, Thomas of Ercildoune, and Thomas Rymer of Erceldon, the name given to him by his son, and one that existed in the poet's native county of Berwickshire during the thirteenth century. In the year 1296 one John Rimour, a Berwickshire freeholder, did homage, in company with others, to Edward I. King of England. The fact that persons named Learmoth still claim the right of sepulchre in the churchyard at Earlston as representing Thomas the Rhymer, is a fact in favour of the supposition that he

did bear that name. His territorial appellation as proprietor of a mount or hill at Ercildoune may have grown into Laird of Ercildoune, and have gradually become converted into Larsilmount or Learmont.¹

But whatever may have been his name, he was undoubtedly a gentleman of condition, and his wife is believed to have been a daughter of the knight of Thirlstane, an ancestor of the Earls of Lauderdale. The same uncertainty concerning his proper designation also exists in respect to the exact time of his birth. Sir Walter Scott, who styles him the earliest Scottish poet, conjectures that he was born between 1226 and 1229, while later authorities assign 1219 as the year of his birth.

The family to which Thomas belonged seems to have taken its territorial title from Ercil-

¹ The biographers of Russia's greatest poet, with the single exception of Alexander Pushkin, claim for Michael Lermontof (1811-41)—whose Scottish ancestors settled in Poland in the seventeenth century, and from thence passed into the dominions and service of the first Tsar of the Romanoff dynasty—kinship with the father of Scottish poetry. Lermontof often refers in his poems to the home of his forefathers. In one he says:—

"Beneath the curtain of mist,
Beneath a heaven of storms,
Among the hills of my Scotland,
Lies the grave of Ossian;
Thither flies its weary soul,
To breathe its native gale,
And from that forgotten grave,
A second time to draw its life."

And in another poem called "The Wish," he longs to

have the wings of the bird, that he might fly "to the west, to the west, where shine the fields of my ancestors," and where "in the deserted tower among the misty hills rests their forgotten dust." Above the sword and shield hanging on the ancient walls he would fly, he cries, and with his wing flick off the gathered dust of ages.

"And the chords of the harp of Scotland would I touch,
And its sounds would fly along the vaults,
By me alone awakened, by me alone listened to;
No sooner resounding than dying away."

But vain are his fancies, he adds, his fruitless prayers to be delivered from the harsh laws of fate—

"Between me and the hills of my fatherland
Spread the waves of seas;
The last scion of a race of hardy warriors
Withers away amid alien snows."

doune, or according to modern corruption Earlston, a small village situated on the Leader, two miles above its junction with the Tweed. He himself resided in a Border keep at the south-western extremity of this hamlet, the ruins of which, called "Rhymer's Tower," are, after the lapse of six centuries, still to be seen; and on a stone in the front wall of the church of Earlston is the inscription:—

"Auld Rhymer's race
Lies in this place."

Tradition says that this stone with its modernized spelling was transferred from the old church, which stood at a distance of a few yards from the existing building; also that it was substituted for a very ancient stone destroyed in 1782. The poet probably lived to be more than threescore and ten. He is known to have died before, or early in, the year 1299, as that is the date of a charter granted by his son and heir to the Trinity House at Soltra, in which he calls himself *filius et hæres Thomæ Rymour de Erceldoune*. Henry the Minstrel represents the poet to have been a companion-in-arms of Sir William Wallace in 1296; so if this authority is to be credited the poet died between that period and the date of his son's document.

Among his countrymen Thomas is celebrated as a prophet no less than a poet. The prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer were first published in Latin and English, early in the seventeenth century. Barbour, Wyntoun, and Blind Harry each refer to his prophetic character. The Bishop of St. Andrews is introduced by Barbour as saying, after Bruce had slain the Red Cumin—

"I hop Thomas' prophcie
Of Hersildoune, were fyd be
In him; for swa our Lord help me,
I haiff gret hop he schall be king,
And haiff this land all in leding."

Wyntoun's words are these:—

"Of this sycht quhillum spak Thomas
Of Erceldoune, that sayd in derne,
Thare suld meet stalwarty, stark, and sterne.
He said it in his prophecie
But how he wist, it was ferly."

Blind Harry represents Rhymer as saying, on being falsely informed that Sir William Wallace was dead—

"For such, or he decess,
Mony thousand on feild shal mak thar end.
And Scotland thriiss he sall bring to the pess;
So gud of hand agayne sall nevir be kend."

"The popular tale of the neighbourhood relates," says Sir Walter in a note to his *Border Minstrelsy*, that "Thomas was carried off at an early age to Fairy Land, where he acquired all the knowledge which afterwards made him famous. After seven years' residence he was permitted to return to the earth to enlighten and astonish the world by his prophetic powers; still, however, being bound to return to his royal mistress (the Queen of the Fairies) whenever she should intimate her pleasure. Accordingly, Thomas was making merry with his friends in the Tower of Erceldoune, when a person came running in with fear and astonishment, and told that a hart and hind had left the neighbouring forest, and were composedly and slowly parading the street of the village. The poet arose instantly and followed the animals to the forest, whence he was never seen to return. According to the popular belief he still 'drees his weird' (undergoes his doom) in Fairy Land, and is expected, at some future day, to revisit the earth."

Robert de Brunne, an English writer who was contemporary with Thomas of Erceldoune, commemorates him as the author of a metrical romance entitled "Sir Tristrem," which was supposed to be lost, till a copy of it was discovered among the Auchinleck manuscripts in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, and published in 1804, with an introduction and notes by Sir Walter Scott. It was for a long time to Robert de Brunne alone that we owed the preservation of Thomas the Rhymer's fame as a poet. In the "Prolog" to his *Annals*, written about 1338, he thus records his admiration of Sir Tristrem:—

"Sir Tristrem
Over Gestes¹ it has the 'steem'²
Over all that is, or was."

The recovery of this poem is of the more consequence that it presents us, in its original simplicity, with a story of great celebrity, which was subsequently altered and perverted into a thousand degenerate forms by the *disseurs* of Normandy. Sir Tristrem was one of the ancient

¹ Romances.

² Esteem.

heroes of Wales, and if we can trust ancient authorities acted a distinguished part in the history of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. Gottfried of Strasburg, a German minstrel of the thirteenth century, says "that many of his profession told the tale of Sir Tristrem imperfectly and incorrectly, but that he derived his authority from 'Thomas of Britannia,' master of the art of romance, who had read the history in British books, and knew the lives of all the lords of the land, and made them known to us." The poem is written in what Robert de Brunne calls

"so quainte Inglis
That many one wate not what it is;"

and Sir Walter Scott has drawn from this circumstance, combined with the originality of the romance, a conclusion of so much importance to the literary fame of Scotland, that we are induced to give it in his own words.

"It will follow," says Sir Walter, "that the first classical English romance was written in part of what is now Scotland; and the attentive reader will find some reason to believe that our language received the first rudiments of improvement in the very corner where it now exists in its most debased state. In England it is now generally admitted that after the Norman conquest, while the Saxon language was abandoned to the lowest of the people, and

while the conquerors only deigned to employ their native French, the mixed language now called English only existed as a kind of *lingua franca* to conduct the necessary intercourse between the victors and the vanquished. It was not till the reign of Henry III. that this dialect had assumed a shape fit for the purposes of the poet; and even then the indolence or taste of the minstrels of that period induced them to prefer translating the Anglo-Norman and French romances which had stood the test of years, to the more precarious and laborious task of original composition. It is the united opinion of Wharton, Tyrwhitt, and Ritson, that there exists no English romance¹ prior to the days of Chaucer which is not a translation of some earlier French one." While the kings and knights of England were entertained with chivalric tales, told in the French language—by the *lais* of Marie, the *romances* of Chretien de Foyes, or the *fabliaux* of the *trouveurs*—the legends of Scotland, which could boast of never having owned a victor's sway, were written in that Anglo-Saxon-Pictish mixture known by the name of Inglis or English. Thomas the Rhymer, and other Scottish poets whose works have now perished, had been famed throughout Europe for romances written in their native language—the language of Chaucer, a hundred years before "the day-starre of English poetry" was born.

SIR TRISTREM.

(EXTRACT FROM FYTTE FIRST.)

I was at (Erceldoune :)
With Tomas spak Y thare;
Ther herd Y rede in roune,
Who Tristrem gat and bare.
Who was king with croun;
And who him forsterd yare;
And who was bold baroun,
As thair elders ware,
Bi yere:—
Tomas tells in toun,
This auentours as thai warc.

This semly somers day,
In winter it is nought sen;
This greves wexen al gray,
That in her time were grene:

So dos this world Y say,
Y wis and nought at wene;
The gode bene al oway,
That our elders have bene
To abide:—
Of a knight is that Y mene;
His name is sprong wel wide.

Wald Morgen thole no wrong,
Thei Morgan lord wes;
He brak his castels strong,
His bold borwes he ches:

¹ Sir Walter means no romance in English written by an Englishman, for the English was at that time common to both Scotland and England.—Ed.

His men he slough among,
 And reped him mani a res;
 The wer lasted so long,
 Til Morgan asked pes
 Thurch pine;
 For sothe, withouten les,
 His liif he wende to tine.

Thus the batayl it bigan,
 Witeth wele it was so,
 Bituene the Douk Morgan,
 And Rouland that was thro;
 That never thai no lan,
 The pouer to wirche wo:
 Thai spilden mani a man,
 Betuen hem selven to,
 In prise;
 That on was Douk Morgan,
 That other Rouland Riis.

The knightes that wer wise
 A forward fast thai bond,
 That ich a man schul joien his,
 And seuen yer to stond:
 The Douk and Rouland Riis,
 Therto thai bed her hond,
 To heighe and holden priis,

And foren till Ingland,
 To lende:
 Markes King thai fond,
 With knightes mani and hende.

To Marke the king thai went,
 With knightes proud in pres;
 And told him to th' ende,
 His auentours as it wes:
 He preyd hem as his frende,
 To duelle with him in pes:
 The knightes thai were hende,
 And dede with outen les,
 In lede:
 A turnament they chess,
 With knightes stithe on stede.

Glad a man was he
 The turnament did drie,
 That maidens might him se,
 And ouer the walls to lye:
 Thai asked who was fre,
 To win the maistrie;
 Thai said that best was he,
 The child of Ermonie,
 In tour:
 Forthi chosen was he,
 To maiden Blanche Flour.

JOHN BARBOUR.

BORN 1316 — DIED 1395.

JOHN BARBOUR, an eminent historical poet, whose name is also written Barber, Barbere, and Barbare, was born at Aberdeen, according to Lord Hailes in 1316; other authorities have variously assigned 1320, 1326, and 1330 as the dates of his birth. He studied for the church, and in 1356 was by King David appointed to the archdeaconry of Aberdeen. In August, 1357, there was a safe-conduct granted by Edward III. of England, at the request of the Scottish king, to "John Barber, archdeacon of Aberdeen, with three scholars in his company, coming into England for the purpose of studying at the University of Oxford; *et ibidem actus scolasticos exercendo*," &c. In September of the same year he was appointed by the Bishop of Aberdeen one of his commissioners to treat at Edinburgh concerning the ransom of the Scottish king, then

a prisoner in England. In 1365 he appears to have visited St. Denis, near Paris, in company with six knights, his attendants, it is supposed, for a religious purpose, as the king of England granted them a safe-conduct through his dominions.

At the desire, it is said, of King David he composed his historical poem of "The Actes and Life of that most Victorious Conqueror, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland; wherein are contained the Martiall Deeds of those Valient Princes, Edward Bruce, Syr James Douglas, Erle Thomas Randal, Walter Stewart, and sundrie others," which he finished, as he himself informs us, in 1375. This celebrated poem, though only second in antiquity to the "Sir Tristrem" of Thomas the Rhymer, is one of the finest in the old English language. In clearness and simplicity it must rank before

either Gower or Chaucer; and in elevation of sentiment Pinkerton does not hesitate to prefer it to both Dante and Petrarch. Warton, than whom there was no better judge of the comparative merits of the early British poets, says, that "Barbour adorned the English language by a strain of versification, expression, and poetical images far superior to the age." Dr. Irving, another eminent critic, pronounces his opinion in the following words:—"Barbour seems to have been acquainted with those finer springs of the human heart which elude vulgar observation; he catches the shades of character with a delicate eye, and sometimes presents us with instances of nice discrimination. His work is not a mere narrative of events; it contains specimens of that minute and skilful delineation which marks the hand of a poet."

Had the style of the poem been much inferior to what it is, the subject is of a nature which could not fail to excite a deep interest in the breast of the Scottish people, recounting as it does the gallant deeds of some of the most renowned characters in their history: of a Bruce who rescued Scotland from the dominion of England; and of a Douglas, a Randolph, and other brave spirits, who assisted in that glorious enterprise. To this day "The Bruce"—the first epic in the English language—is a favourite work among the common people of Scotland, through the medium of a modern version. The poem is in octo-syllabic lines forming rhymed couplets, of which there are seven thousand. It was first published at Edinburgh in 1616, although some authorities state that an earlier edition existed. Since that period upwards of twenty different editions have appeared, the best of which are Pinkerton's and Dr. Jamieson's, the latter published in 1826. From some passages in Wyntoun's "Chronicle," it has been supposed that Barbour wrote another poem giving a genealogical history of the kings of Scotland. In 1870 Henry Bradshaw, the learned librarian of Cambridge University Library, discovered MSS. which we can hardly err in believing to be early copies of poems hitherto unknown, by Barbour. The first is a volume which was described at the Duke of Lauderdale's sale in 1692 as a "History of the Grecian and Trojan wars," and is a metrical translation by Lydgate, a monk of Bury, of

Colonna's *Destruction of Troy*. But for some cause the volume does not explain, the translation is not entirely that of Lydgate, and twice the transcriber inserts the following note: "Here endis the monk and beginnis Barbour," with a like note at the end of each interpolated passage. These two portions consist of 1560 and 600 lines respectively, and of them Professor Cosmo Innes says that the language, and the Romance octo-syllabic couplets, would satisfy those well acquainted with "The Brus" that they are unquestionably Barbour's work. The other manuscript contains the lives of about fifty saints in 82,000 lines of octo-syllabic verse, translated from the Latin, which, from internal evidence, is believed to be also the production of Archdeacon Barbour.

About 1378 the sum of ten pounds was paid to Barbour by the king's command, as the first reward, it would seem, for the composition of his poem of "The Bruce." This gift was followed at the interval of a few months by a grant of a perpetual annuity of twenty shillings; and the *Rotuli Scaccarii*, after Barbour's death, state expressly that this annuity was granted "for compiling the Book of the Acts of the most illustrious prince, King Robert Bruce."

The reward which Barbour received for his second poem, now lost, was a pension for life of ten pounds a year. The grant is dated December 5, 1388. The pension was payable in two moieties—the one at Whitsunday, the other at Martinmas. The last payment which he received was at Martinmas, 1394, so that the celebrated poet must have died between that date and Whitsunday, 1395. The precise day of his death was probably March 13th, on which day Barbour's anniversary continued to be celebrated in the cathedral church of St. Machar, at Aberdeen, until the Reformation—the expense of the service being defrayed from the perpetual annuity granted to Barbour by the first of the Stewart kings in 1378, "*pro compilacione Libri de Gestis illustrissimi principis quondam Domini Regis Roberti de Brus*." Such are all the memorials which the destructive hand of time has left us of one of the earliest and greatest of Scottish poets, the Froissart of his native land. He was justly celebrated in his own times for his learning and genius; but the humanity of his senti-

ments, and the liberality of his views, were greatly in advance of the age in which he lived. His eulogy on liberty, the very first to be found in the English language, has been often quoted, but not more often than it deserves.

SPEECH OF KING ROBERT.¹

(FROM THE BRUCE.)

And quhen the gud king gan thaim se
 Befor him swa assemblit be;
 Blyth and glad, that thar fayis war
 Rabutyt apon sic maner;
 A litill quhill he held him still;
 Syne on this wyss he said his will.
 "Lordingis, we aucht to love and luff
 All mychty God, that syttis abuff,
 That sendis ws sa fayr begynnyng.
 It is a gret discomforting
 Till our fayis, that on this wiss
 Sa sone has bene rabutyt wiss.
 For quhen thai off thair ost sall her,
 And knaw suthly on quhat maner
 Thair waward, that wes sa stout,
 And syne yone othyr joly rout,
 That I trow off the best men war,
 That thai mycht get amang thaim thar,
 War rabutyt sa sodanly;
 I trow, and knawis it all clerly,
 That mony a hart sall wawerand be,
 That semyt er off gret bounté.
 And, fra the hart be discumfyt,
 The body is nocht worth a myt.
 Tharfor I trow that gud ending
 Sall folow till our begynnyng.
 And quethir I say nocht this yow till,
 For that ye suld folow my will
 To fycht; bot in yow all sall be.
 For giff yow thinkis speidfull that we
 Fecht, we sall; and giff ye will,
 We leve, your liking to fulfill.
 I sall consent, on alkn wiss,
 To do, rycht as ye will dwyss.
 Tharfor sayis off your will planly."
 And with a woce than gan thai cry;
 "Gud king, for owty n mar delay,
 To morne alsone as ye se day,
 Ordane yow hale for the bataill.
 For doute off dede we sall nocht fail:
 Na na payn sall refusy be,
 Quhill we haiff maid our countré fre!"

Quhen the king had hard sa manlily
 Thai spak to fechtung, and sa hardely,

In hart gret glaidship can he ta;
 And said; "Lordingis, sen ye will sua,
 Schaip we ws tharfor in the mornyng.
 Swa that we, be the sone rysing,
 Haff herd mess; and buskyt weill
 Ilk man in till his awn eschell,
 With out the pailyownys, arayit
 In bataillis, with baneris displayit.
 And luk ye na wiss brek aray.
 And, as ye luf me, I yow pray
 That ilk man, for his awne honour,
 Purway him a gud baneour.
 And, quhen it cummys to the fycht,
 Ilk man set hart, will, and mycht,
 To stynt our fayis mekill prid.
 On hors thaim will arayit rid;
 And cum on yow in full gret hy.
 Mete thaim with speris hardely.
 And think than on the mekill ill,
 That thai and tharis has done ws till;
 And ar in will yeit for to do,
 Giff thai haf mycht to cum thar to.
 And certis, me think weill that ye
 For owt abasing aucht to be
 Worthy, and of gret wasselagis.
 For we haff thre gret awantagis.
 The fyrst is, that we haf the rycht;
 And for the rycht ay God will fycht.
 The tothyr is, that thai cummyn ar,
 For lyppynnyng off thair gret powar,
 To sek ws in our awne land;
 And has brought her, rycht till our hand,
 Ryches in to sa gret quantité,
 That the powrest of yow sall be
 Bath rych, and mychty thar with all,
 Giff that we wyne, as weill may fall.
 The thrid is, that we for our lyvis,
 And for our childre, and for our wywis,
 And for our fredome, and for our land,
 Ar strenyeit in to bataill for to stand.
 And thai, for thair mycht anerly,
 And for thai lat of ws heychtly,
 And for thai wald destroy ws all,
 Maiss thaim to fycht; bot yeit may fall,
 That thai sall rew thair barganyng.
 And certis I warne yow off a thing;
 That happyn thaim, as God forbed,
 That deyt on roid for mankyn heid!

¹ Delivered on the evening before the battle of Bannockburn.

That thai wyn ws opynly,
 Thai sall off ws haf na mercy.
 And, sen we know thair felone will,
 Me think it suld accord to skill,
 To set stoutnes agayne felony;
 And mak sa gat a juperty.
 Quharfor I yow requer, and pray,
 That with all your mycht, that ye may,
 Ye press yow at the begynnynge,
 But cowardyss or abaysing,
 To mete thaim at thair fyrst assemble
 Sa stoutly that the henmaist trymble.
 And menys of your gret manheid,
 Your worschip, and your douchti deid;
 And off the joy that we abid,
 Giff that ws fall, as weill may tid,
 Hap to wencuss this gret battaill.
 In your handys with out faile
 Ye ber honour, price, and richés,
 Fredome, welth, and blythnes;
 Gyff ye contene yow manley.
 And the contrar all halyly
 Sall fall, giff ye lat cowardyss
 And wykytnes yow suppress.
 Ye mycht haf lewynt in to thredome:
 Bot, for ye yarmyt till have fredome,
 Ye ar assemblyt her with me.
 Tharfor is nedfull that ye be
 Worthy and wycht, but abaysing.
 And I warne yow weill off a thing;
 That mar myscheff may fall ws nane,
 Than in thair handys to be tane:
 For thai suld sla ws, I wate weill,
 Rycht as thai did my brothyr Nele.
 Bot quhen I mene off your stoutnes,
 And off the mony gret prowes,
 That ye haff doyne sa worthely;
 I traist, and trowis sekyrly,
 To haff plane wictour in this fycht.
 For thought our fayis haf mekill mycht,
 Thai have the wrang; and succudry,
 And cowatyss of senyowry,
 Amowys thaim for owtyne mor.
 Na ws thar dreid thaim, bot befor:
 For strenth off this place, as ye se,
 Sall let us enweronyt to be.
 And I pray yow als specially,
 Bath mar and les commonaly,
 That nane of yow for gredynes
 Haff ey to tak of thair ryches;
 Na prisoneris for to ta;
 Quhill ye se thaim contraryit sa,
 That the feld anerly yowris be.
 And than, at your liking, may ye
 Tak all the riches that thar is.
 Giff ye will wyrk upon this wiss,
 Ye sall haiff wictour sekyrly.
 I wate nocht quhat mar say sall I.

Bot all wate ye quhat honour is:
 Contene [yow] than on sic awiss,
 That your honour ay sayvt be.
 And Ik hycht her in leauté;
 Giff ony deys in this bataille,
 His ayr, but ward, releff, or taile,
 On the fyrst day sall weld;
 All be he neur sa young off eild.
 Now makys yow redy for to fycht.
 God help ws, that is maist of mycht!
 I rede, armyt all nycht that we be,
 Purwayit in bataill sua, that we
 To mete our fayis ay be boune.”
 Than ansueryt thai all, with a soune;
 “As ye dywyss all sall be done.”
 Than till thair innys went thair sone;
 And ordanyt thaim for the fechtynge:
 Syne assemblyt in the ewynnyng;
 And swagat all the nycht bad thair,
 Till on the morn that it wes day.

THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY.¹

(FROM THE BRUCE.²)

A! fredome is a nobil thing;
 Fredome mayss a man to haiff liking.

¹ Barbour, contemplating the enslaved condition of his country, breaks out into the following animated lines on the blessings of liberty.—*George Ellis*.

Some readers may more readily arrive at the meaning of this fine apostrophe through the following paraphrase:—

Ah! freedom is a noble thing,
 And can to life a relish bring.
 Freedom all solace to man gives;
 He lives at ease that freely lives.
 A noble heart may have no ease,
 Nor aught beside that may it please,
 If freedom fail—for 'tis the choice,
 More than the chosen, man enjoys.
 Ah! he that ne'er yet lived in thrall,
 Knows not the weary pains which gall
 The limbs, the soul of him who 'plains
 In slavery's foul and festering chains;
 If these he knew, I ween right soon
 He would seek back the precious boon
 Of freedom, which he then would prize
 More than all wealth beneath the skies.

² Our archdeacon was not only famous for his extensive knowledge in the philosophy and divinity of those times, but still more admired for his admirable genius for English poetry; in which he composed a history of the life and glorious actions of Robert Bruce. A work not only remarkable for a copious circumstantial detail of the exploits of that illustrious prince, and his brave companions in arms Randolph, Earl of Moray, and the Lord James Douglas, but also for the beauty of its style, which is not inferior to that of his contemporary, Chaucer.—*Henry's History of Great Britain*.

Fredome all solace to man giffis,
 He levys at ess that frely levys.
 A noble hart may haiff nane ese,
 Na ellys nocht that may him plese,
 Gyff fredome faillyhe; for fre liking
 Is yharnt our all othir thing.
 Na he that ay hass levyt fre,

May nocht know weil the propyrte,
 The angry, na the wrechyt dome
 That is cowplyt to foule thyrl dome,
 Bot gyff he had assayit it,
 Than all perquer he suld it wyt,
 And suld think fredome mar to pryss
 Than all the gold in world that is.

ANDREW WYNTOUN.

BORN 1350—DIED 1420.

ANDREW WYNTOUN, or Andrew of Wyntoun, in point of time the third of the early Scottish poets whose works have been handed down to us, lived towards the close of the fourteenth century. Of the place or exact date of his birth nothing positive is known. He is believed to have been born about 1350. The rhyming chronicler was a canon-regular of St. Andrews, the most important religious establishment in the kingdom, and in or before the year 1395 he was elected prior of the monastery of St. Serf, in Lochleven. Of this Wyntoun gives an account in his "Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland:"—

"Of my defeaute it is my name
 Be baptisme, Andrewe of Wyntoune,
 Of Sanct Andrew's a chanounne
 Regular; bot, noucht forthi
 Of thaim all the lest worthy.
 Bot of thair grace and thair favoure
 I wes but meryt, made prioure
 Of the Ynch within Lochlevyne."

In the chartulary of the priory of St. Andrews there are several public instruments by Andrew Wyntoun, as prior of Lochleven, dated between the years 1395 and 1413; and in the last page of his "Cronykil" he makes mention of the Council of Constance, which began November 16, 1414, and terminated May 20, 1418. On the supposition that he brought down his narrative of events to as late a period as he possibly could, his death may be supposed to have occurred in 1420, or the year following.

Notwithstanding the great value of Wyntoun's historical poem, written at the request of "Schyr Jhone of the Wemys," it was suf-

fered to remain neglected for nearly four centuries. In 1795, however, an edition of that portion of it which relates more immediately to the affairs of Scotland was published, with very valuable notes by David Macpherson, who omitted the introductory portion of this famous "Cronykil," in which, after the fashion of Roger of Chester and other venerable historians, the author most learnedly treats of the creation and of the general history of the world before he reaches the subjects which more pertinently relate to his work, *i.e.* the history of Scotland. "The Chronicle of Wyntoun," says Dr. Irving, "is valuable as a picture of ancient manners, as a repository of historical anecdotes, and as a specimen of the literary attainments of our ancestors. With a perseverance of industry which had numerous difficulties to encounter, he has collected and recorded many circumstances that tend to illustrate the history of his native country; nor, rude as the composition may seem, is his work altogether incapable of interesting a reader of the present age of refinement. To those who delight to trace the progress of the human mind his unpolished production will afford a delicious entertainment." Another writer remarks "that Wyntoun's genius is certainly inferior to that of his predecessor Barbour, but that at least his versification is easy, his language pure, and his style often animated."

In Wyntoun's work the student of history will find what, in the absence of more ancient records, must be now regarded as the original accounts of numerous transactions in Scottish

story. Many of these the poet has related from his own knowledge or from the reports of eye-witnesses; and of the general fidelity of his narrative there is every reason to form the most favourable opinion, from the strict agreement which is to be found between him and other authorities, where there happens, on any fact, to be other authors to refer to—such as the “*Foedera Angliæ*, or the *Fragments of the Chartulary of the Priory of St. Andrews*,” from which Wyntoun drew largely and literally. Of Barbour and other writers he speaks in a generous and respectful manner, and modestly avows his inability to write equal to the author of “*Bruce*,” as in the following lines:—

“The Stewartis originale
The Archedekyne has tretyd hal,
In metre fayre mare wertusly
Than I can thynk be my study,” &c.

That Wyntoun was a man of learning his poem gives evidence, as it contains quotations from Aristotle, Cicero, Josephus, Livy, and other ancient authors, and also mentions Augustin, Cato, Dionysius, Homer, Virgil, &c. In the “*Chronicle*” there is preserved

the first of Scottish songs, which is believed by several authorities to be ninety years older than Barbour’s work. Allan Cunningham deemed it too melodious and too alliterative for that early date, and as rather belonging to the same period as the rhyming chronicler himself. It is a little elegiac song on the death of Alexander III., who was accidentally killed in the year 1286:—

“Quhen Alysandyr oure Kyng wes dede,
Dat Scotland led in luwe and le,
Away wes sons of ale and brede,
Of wyne and wax, of gamin and gle:
Oure gold wes changyd in-to lede,
Cryst, borne in-to virgynyte,
Succour Scotland and remede,
Dat stad is in perplexyte.”

In 1872 a new edition of Wyntoun’s work appeared, edited by David Laing, containing the suppressed or omitted portions of the “*Chronicle*,” and forming nearly one-third of the entire poem. There are several manuscript copies of the “*Chronicle*,” more or less perfect, still extant, of which the one known as the Royal MS., in the British Museum, is by general consent considered the most perfect.

THE CHRONICLE OF SCOTLAND.

(EXTRACT.¹)

Ande, or all this tyme wes gone,
The yhowng Erle off Murrawe Jhone,
And Schyre Archebald off Dowglas,
That brodyr till Schyre Jamys was,
Purchasyd thame a company,
A thowsand wycht men and hardy.
Till Anand in a [tranowntyng]
Thai come on thame in the dawyng:
Thare war syndry gud men slayne.
Schyre Henry the Ballyoll thame agayne
Wyth a staffe fawcht stwrdyly,
And dyntis delt rycht dowhtyly,
That men hym lovyd efftry his day.
Thare deyde Schyre Jhone than the Mowbray:
And Alysawndyre the Brws wes tane.
Bot the Ballyoll his gat is gane
On a barme hors wyth leggys bare:
Swa fell, that he ethchapyd thare.
The lave, that ware noucht tane in hand,
Fled, qwhare thai mycht fynd warrand;

Swa that all that company
Dyscumfyt ware all halily.

The Scottis men syne, that hade dredyng,
That Schyre Edward, off Inghland Kyng,
Suld cum wyth fors in till oure land
(As he dyd, nowcht agayne standand
The pese, that sworne wes, and made,
And confermyd wyth selys brade),
Made ordynawns thare land to save.
To the Erle Patryk thai gave
The Castell off Berwyke in kepyng;
And syne the town in govornyng
Thai gave till Alysawndyr off Seytown,
That wes a knycht off gud renown.
Schyre Andrew off Murrawe gud and wycht.
That was a bald and a stowt knycht,
That nane bettyr wes in his day,
Fra the gud Kyng Robert wes away,
Was made Wardane off all the land.
And fra he tuk that state on hand,
He gert sowmownd his folk in hy:
And thai assemblyd hastyly.

¹ Book viii. chap. xxvi.

And wyth that folk he held his way
 Till Roxburch, quhare the Ballyoll lay,
 That had befor in England bene:
 Off sergeandys thare and knychtis kene
 He gat a gret cumpany.
 Schyre Andrew thidder can hym hy;
 Hys men held noucht all gud array;
 Swm yhowng men, as I herd say,
 Come on the bryg; bot Inglis men
 Swa gret debate made wyth thame then,
 That thai welle swne war pwt away;
 The bryg syne occupyid thai.
 And in defens off Rawff Goldyng,
 That wes borne downe on a myddyng,
 Schyre Andrew Murrawe owt off his stale,
 That wend, that all his menyhé hale
 Had folowyd, bot thai dyd noucht swa
 (For swme off thame war fere hym fra,
 And othir swme owt off array,

For purwayd noucht at poynt war thai,
 Swa bot full fewe wyth hym ar gane)
 He wes nere-hand lefft hym allane,
 To the bryg went he sturdly,
 As all hys men had bene hym by,
 And made sic pay, that men sayis yhete,
 He gert fele fall down till his fete
 Sprewland, as thai chyknys ware.
 And qwhen his fays saw hym thare
 Forowtyn fere feychtand allane,
 And has hym in his armys tane,
 And enbrasyt hym sturdly,
 [He] turnyd hym wyth hym in hy
 For to beteche hym till his men,
 That he wend at his bake war then,
 Than all the Inglis cumpany
 Behynd stert on hym sturdly,
 And magrawe his, thai have hym tane;
 Bot swthly he yhald hym to nane.

HENRY THE MINSTREL.

BORN 1360—DIED —.

HENRY THE MINSTREL, or Blind Harry, as he was familiarly called, who commemorated the deeds of the champion of Scottish liberty in a heroic poem entitled "Ye Actis and Deidis of ye Illuster and Vailzeand Champioun Shyr William Wallace," flourished in the fifteenth century. Of his personal history we know very little—we do not even possess more than half his name; and have no means of knowing whether Henry was a Christian or surname. He is stated by Dempster to have been living in 1361; but Major, who is supposed to have been born about 1446, stated that when he was in his infancy Henry the Minstrel wrote his "Actis and Deidis." Major also informs us that the poet was blind from his birth, and that he gained his food and clothing by the recitation of histories or "gestes" before the nobles of the land. It is said by the Minstrel himself that his work was founded on a narrative of the life of Wallace written in Latin by Arnold Blair, chaplain to the Scottish hero, and which, if it ever had existence, is now lost; and from the immediate descendants of Wallace's contemporaries.

"The Wallace" abounds in evident exagge-

rations and anachronisms, but as a poem it is simple, interesting, and exciting. As a narrative of facts it must be remembered that we have it not through the medium of the author's own pen, but through oral recitation, to the corruptions of which there are no limits. The circumstance of the poet's correctness as regards several incidents heretofore believed to be fictitious—as, for example, Wallace's expedition to France—having been recently verified by the discovery of authentic evidence, should induce us to be careful in ascribing to the Minstrel errors in which it abounds, rather than to the reciters of his work, who are much likelier to be the culprits. "That a man born blind," says George Ellis, "should excel in any science is sufficiently extraordinary, though by no means without example; but that he should become an excellent poet is almost miraculous, because the soul of poetry is description. Perhaps, therefore, it may be safely assumed that Henry was not inferior, in point of genius, to Barbour or Chaucer, nor indeed to any poet in any age or country." The praise of this eminent critic exceeds that which is justly due to Henry the Minstrel,

deservedly popular as his effusions are. "The Wallace" cannot certainly be compared to the great poem of the learned Archdeacon of Aberdeen."

"The Bruce" is evidently the work of a politician as well as a poet. The characters of the king, of his brother, of Douglas, and of the Earl of Moray are discriminated, and their separate talents always employed with judgment, so that every event is prepared and rendered probable by the means to which it is attributed; whereas the 'Life of Wallace' is a mere romance, in which the hero hews down whole squadrons with his single arm, and is indebted for every victory to his own muscular strength. Both poems are filled with descriptions of battles, but in those of Barbour our attention is successively directed to the cool intrepidity of King Robert, to the brilliant rashness of Edward Bruce, or to the enterprising stratagems of Douglas; while in Henry

we find little more than a disgusting picture of revenge, hatred, and blood." This critic errs in underrating, as the writer first quoted does in overrating, the merits of Blind Harry. The assertion that any portion of his "Wallace" is disgusting only exhibits an ignorance of the work on which the criticism is passed. The poem is in ten-syllable lines, the epic verse of a later period, and it is not deficient in poetical effect or elevated sentiment. A modern paraphrase of the poem, by William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, has long been a favourite book amongst the peasantry of Scotland, and it was the reading of this volume which had so great an effect in kindling the genius and patriotic ardour of Robert Burns. The only MS. of Blind Harry's heroic poem is preserved in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, and bears date 1488. The first edition of the work was published in 1570; the latest and most correct, with notes and glossary by Dr. Jamieson, in 1820.

THE DEATH OF WALLACE.¹

(FROM SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.)

On Wednysday the fals Sotheroun furth brocht,
Till martyr him as thai befor had wrocht.
Rycht suth it is, a martyr was Wallace,
Als Osauold, Edmunt, Eduuard, and Thomas.
Off men in armes led him a full gret rout.
With a bauld spreit gud Wallace blent about:
A preyst he askyt, for God at deit on tre.
King Eduuard than cummandyt his clergé,
And said; "I charge, apayn off loss off lywe,
Nane be sa bauld yon tyrand for to schrywe.
He has rong lang in contrair my hienace."
A blyst byschop sone, present in that place,
Off Canterbery he than was rychtwyss lord,
Agayn the king he maid this richt record;
And [said]; "My self sall her his confessioun,
Gyff I haiff mycht, in contrar off thi croun.
And thou throu force will stop me off this thing,
I wow to God, quhilk is my rychtwyss king,
That all Inghland I sall her enterdyt,
And mak it knawin thou art ane herretyk.

The sacrement off kyrk I sall him geiff;
Syn tak thi chos, to sterwe or lat him leiff.
It war mar wail, in worschip off thi croun,
To kepe sic ane in lyff in thi bandoun,
Than all the land and gud at thow has refyd.
Bot cowaatie the ay fra honour drefyd.
Thow has [thi] lyff rongyn in wrangwis deid;
That sall be seyn on the, or on thi seid."
The king gert charge thai suld the byschop tak;
Bot sad lordys consellyt to lat him ga.
All Inghlissmen said, at his desyr was rycht;
To Wallace than he rakyt in thar sicht,
And sadly hard his confessioun till ane end.
Hvmbly to God his spreit he thar comend;
Lawly him serwyt with hartlye deuocioun
Apon his kneis, and said ane orysoun.
His leyff he tuk, and to West monastyr raid.
The lokmen than thai bur Wallace but baid
On till a place, his martyrdom to tak;
For till his ded he wald na forthyr mak.
Fra the fyrst nycht he was tane in Scotland,
Thai keypt him in to that sammyn band.
Na thing he had at suld haiff doyn him gud;
Bot Inghlissmen him seruit off carnaill fud.
Hys wardly lyff desyrd the sustenance,
Thocht he it gat in contrar off plesance.
Thai thretty dayis his band thai durst nocht slaik,
Quhill he was bundyn on a skamyll off ayk,
With irn cheneyts that was bath stark and keyn.

¹ Warton, in his *History of English Poetry*, notices Barbour and Henry the Minstrel in these words:—"Although this work is professedly confined to England, yet I cannot pass over two Scotch poets of this period who have adorned the English language by a train of versification, expression, and poetical imagery far superior to their age; and who consequently deserve to be mentioned in a general review of our national poetry."

A clerk thai set to her quhat he wald meyn.
 "Thow Scot," he said, "that gret wrangis has don,
 Thi fatell hour, thow seis, approachis son.
 Thow suld in mynd remembyr thi mysdeid,
 At clerkis may, quhen thai thair psalmis reid
 For Crystyn saullis, that makis thaim to pray,
 In thair nowmyr thow may be ane off thai;
 For now thow seis on fors thou mon decess."
 Than Wallace said; "For all thi roid rahress,
 Thow has na charge, supposs at I did myss;
 Yon blyst byschop has hecht I sall haiff blis;
 And trew [I] weill, that God sall it admyt:
 Thi febyll wordis sall nocht my conscience smyt.
 Conford I haiff off way that I suld gang,
 Maist payn I feill at I bid her our lang."
 Than said this clerk; "Our king oft send the till;
 Thow mycht haiff had all Scotland at thi will,
 To hald off him, and cessayt off thi stryff;
 So as a lord rongyn furth all thi lyff."
 Than Wallace said; "Thou spekis off mychty
 thing.
 Had I leystyt, and gottyn my rychtwyss king,
 Fra worthi Bruce had rasaut his croun,
 I thoctt haiff maid Inghland at his bandoun.
 I wotrally it suld beyn at his will,
 Quhat plessyt him, to sauff thi king or spill."
 "Weill," said this clerk, "than thow repentis
 nocht:

Off wykkydness thow has a felloun thoctt.
 Is nayn in world at has sa mony slane;
 Tharfor till ask, me think thow suld be bane,
 Grace off our king, and syn at his barnage."
 Than Wallace smyld [a] litill at his langage.
 "I grant," he said, "part Inglissmen I slew
 In my quarrel, me thoctt nocht halff enew.
 I mowyt na wer bot for to win our awin;
 To God and man the ryecht full weill is knawin.
 Thi frustyr wordis dois nocht bot taris me,
 I the commaund, on Goddis halff, lat me be."
 A schyrray gart this clerk some fra him pass;
 Rycht as thai durst, thai grant quhat he wald
 ass.
 A Psaltyr buk Wallace had on him euir;
 Fra his childeid fra it wald nocht deseuir.
 Bettyr he trowit in wiage for to speid.
 Bot than he was dispuleyde off his weid.
 This grace he ast at Lord Clyffurd that knyecht,
 To lat him haiff his Psaltyr buk in syecht.
 He gert a preyst it oppyn befor him hauld,
 Quhill thai till him had done all at thai wauld.
 Stedfast he red, for ocht thai did him thar:
 Feyll Sotheroun said, at Wallace feld na sayr.
 Gud deuocion sa was his begynnnyng,
 Conteynd tharwith, and fair was his endyng;
 Quhill spech and spreyt at anys all can fayr
 To lestand blyss, we trow, for euirmayr.

JAMES THE FIRST.

BORN 1394—DIED 1437.

JAMES THE FIRST, one of the most chivalric, and certainly the most accomplished of the ancient Scottish kings, was born at Dunfermline in 1394. His elder brother having fallen a victim to the ambition of his uncle the Duke of Albany, Robert III., filled with anxiety for the safety of his only remaining son, and in order to place him beyond the reach of a faithless kindred until he should attain to manhood, resolved to send him to the court of France to complete his education, which had been begun under the learned prelate Walter Wardlaw, archbishop of St. Andrews. Accordingly, in 1405, the young prince sailed from his native country under the care of the Earl of Orkney, but the vessel being captured by an English squadron, in violation of a treaty of peace which then existed between the two nations, he was car-

ried prisoner to the Tower of London. This act of gross injustice completed the calamities of the infirm King Robert, who sank under the blow, and it led to the captivity of James for more than eighteen years.

After a confinement of two years in the Tower the young prince was removed to Nottingham Castle. In 1413 he was taken back to the Tower, but in the course of the same year was transferred to Windsor Castle. In 1414 the English king, Henry V., took James with him in his second expedition into France, but on his return committed him anew to Windsor Castle, where he remained till his final liberation. Though kept in close confinement he was instructed in every branch of knowledge which that age afforded, and became also eminently expert in all athletic exercises. Hector Boece tells us that he was a proficient

in every branch of polite literature, in grammar, oratory, Latin and English poetry, music, jurisprudence, and the philosophy of the times;¹ and Drummond says "that there was nothing wherein the commendation of wit consisted, or any shadow of the liberal arts did appear, that he had not applied his mind to, seeming rather born to letters than instructed." Philosophy and poetry were the sources from which the unfortunate young prince drew the consolation he so much needed. Speaking of his determination to write the "King's Quhair," his greatest work, he says—

"And in my tyme more ink and paper spent
To lyte effect, I tuke conclusion
Sum new thing to write;"

and that he did not seek the consolations of philosophy in vain is shown by many passages in his matchless poem:—

"Bewailing in my chamber thus allone,
Despeired of all joye and remedye;
For-tirit of my thought and wo-begone,
And to the wyndow gan I walk in hye,
To see the ward and folk yt went forbye,
As for the tyme, *though I of mirthis fude*
Mycht have no more, to luke it did me gude."

At length James was restored, when in his thirtieth year, to his kingdom, returning to Scotland in April, 1424, having espoused the Lady Joanna Beaufort, daughter of the Duke of Somerset, and grand-daughter of John, duke of Gaunt. His descriptions of the small garden, once the moat of Windsor Castle, which was seen from his place of confinement, and the first glimpse he there obtained of his future queen, are among the most beautiful and touching passages in the poem. Proceeding first to Edinburgh he was received by his people with a degree of affectionate enthusiasm which could scarcely have been expected from their former indifference to his fate; he afterwards went to Scone, accompanied by his queen, where they were both solemnly crowned. When first informed on his arrival in the kingdom of the lawlessness which prevailed in

it he exclaimed, "By the help of God, though I should myself lead the life of a dog, I shall make the key keep the castle, and the bush secure the cow." The sentiment was worthy a prince, and he set himself vigorously at work to curb his lawless nobles, and to better the condition of his distracted kingdom.

In 1436 James renewed the allegiance with France, giving his daughter Margaret in marriage to the dauphin. The year following a conspiracy was formed against him, and on the night of February 20 he was assassinated at Perth by a band of ruffians led by Sir Robert Graham of Strathearn. His death was universally bewailed by the nation, and his inhuman murderers were put to death by the horrible tortures practised in that age. Æneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Eugene IV., who was in Scotland as legate at the time of this catastrophe, in giving an account of it, said that he "was at a loss which most to applaud, the universal grief which overspread the nation on the death of the king, or the resentment to which it was roused, and the just vengeance with which his murderers were pursued; who, being all of them traced and dragged from their lurking retreats, were, by the most lingering tortures that human invention could suggest, put to death."

"A cruel crime rewarded cruellie."

Margaret, dauphiness of France, eldest daughter of the murdered king, inherited not a little of her father's gallant spirit and poetic ability. It is of her that the familiar story is related that, walking in the gallery of the palace, and finding Alain Chartier, the poet, asleep there, she reverently kissed him. "How could you kiss one so ugly?" exclaimed one of her maids of honour. "I do not," answered the princess, "kiss the man, but the lips that have uttered so many beautiful thoughts"—a kiss which Menage says will immortalize her.

Of the king's principal poetical work Pinkerton, a writer extremely penurious of praise, says that it "equals anything Chaucer has written;" and Ellis remarks that "it is not inferior in poetical merit to any similar production" of the father of English poetry. It is most undoubtedly true that neither Chaucer nor any contemporary poet of either England or Scotland is characterized by that delicacy

¹ He was well lernit to fecht with the sword, to just, to turnay, to worsyle, to sing and dance, was an expert medicinar, richt crafty in playing baith of lute and harp, and sindry other instruments of music; he was expert in gramer, oratory, and poetry, and maid sæe flowan' and sententious versis—he was ane natural and borne poete.—*Boece's History.*

which distinguishes the productions of King James. Considering the rude age in which he wrote, and that Chaucer and Gower, with whose writings he was well acquainted, and whom indeed he acknowledges in one of his stanzas for his masters, were so distinguished, as well as Dunbar, for an opposite character, it is certainly one of the greatest phenomena in the annals of poetry. The "King's Quhair" was for centuries lost to the world, the only MS. copy in existence, at the Bodleian Library, having been discovered by Lord Woodhouselee, who in 1783 first published it to the world, with explanatory notes and a critical dissertation. The subject is the royal poet's love for his future queen, described in the allegorical style of the age, but with much fine description, sentiment, and poetical fancy. To King James is likewise ascribed two humorous poems entitled "Christis Kirk on the Grene" and "Pebelis to the Play," descriptive of the rural manners and pastimes of that age. These poems are great favourites. To the former allusion is made by Pope, who writes—

"One likes no language but the Fairy Queen:
Or Scot will fight for Christ's Kirk o' the Green."

His claim to either has been disputed, but Allan Ramsay, Sir Walter Scott, and others unhesitatingly ascribe "Christis Kirk on the Grene" to the royal poet, while authorities equally entitled to credit entertain the same feelings of certainty as respects the authorship of his other poem, "Pebelis to the Play." The poems of the royal poet were first collected and published at Perth in 1786, and are also to be found in Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*. In 1873 was published an edition of "The Poetical Remains of King James the First of Scotland, with a Memoir by the Rev. Dr. Rogers," containing, in addition to the compositions previously mentioned, a song on "Absence" and a sacred poem entitled "Divine Trust," the latter included among our selections.

Historians relate that the king was a skilful musician, playing on eight different instru-

ments, and to him accord the honour of introducing "a new kind of music, plaintive and melancholy, different from all others," to quote the language of Tassoni, an Italian writer who flourished in the early part of the sixteenth century. James is known, from contemporary authorities, to have cultivated music with more than usual ardour, and under circumstances of long imprisonment and solitude, singularly calculated to give to his compositions that "plaintive and melancholy" style which the Italian writer tells us was regarded as the characteristic of the kind of music which the king invented, and which we know to be the characteristic of the national music of Scotland as existing during the past four and a half centuries.

Dyer said of this accomplished prince—

"Amid the bards whom Scotia holds to fame,
She boasts, nor vainly boasts, her James's name;
And less, sweet bard! a crown thy glory shows,
Than the fair laurel that adorns thy brows;"

and Washington Irving, in the article entitled "A Royal Poet," in the *Sketch Book*, has given us a charming description of the king and his Quhair (Book), consisting of 197 seven-lined stanzas, declared by Lockhart to be "infinitely more graceful than any piece of American writing that ever came from any other hand, and well entitled to be classed with the best English writings of our day." Mr. Irving, after a visit to Windsor Castle, remarks, "I have been particularly interested by those parts of the poem which breathe his immediate thoughts concerning his situation, or which are connected with the apartment in the Tower. They have thus a personal and local charm, and are given with such circumstantial truth as to make the reader present with the captive in his prison, and the companion of his meditations. . . . As an amatory poem it is edifying, in these days of coarser thinking, to notice the nature, refinement, and exquisite delicacy which pervade it, banishing every gross thought or immodest expression, and presenting female loveliness clothed in all its chivalrous attributes of almost supernatural purity and grace."

THE KING'S QUHAIR.¹

(EXTRACT.)

Than wold I say, Giff God me had devisit
 To lyve my lyf in thraldom thus and pyne,
 Quhat was the cause that he more me comprisit,
 Than othir folk to lyve in such ruyne?
 I suffere alone among the figuris nyne,
 Ane wofull wrache that to no wight may spede,
 And yit of every lyvis help has nede.

The long dayes and the nyghtis eke,
 I wold bewaille my fortune in this wise.
 For quhich, again distresse confort to seke,
 My custum was on mornis for to rise
 Airly as day, O happy exercise!
 By the come I to joye out of turment!
 Bot now to purpose of my first entent.

Bewailing in my chamber thus alone,
 Despeired of all joye and remedye,
 For-tirit of my thought and wo-begone,
 And to the wyndow gan I walk in hye,
 To see the warld and folk that went forbye,
 As for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude
 Mycht have no more, to luke it did me gude.

Now was there maid fast by the Touris wall
 A gardyn faire, and in the corneris set
 Ane herbere grene, with wandis long and small,
 Railit about, and so with treis set
 Was all the place, and hawthorn hegis knet,
 That lyf was non, walkyng there forbye,
 That mycht within scarce any wight aspye.

So thick the beuis and the leves grene
 Beschadit all the allies that there were,
 And myddis every herbere mycht be sene
 The scharp grene suete jenekere,
 Growing so fair with branches here and there,
 That, as it semyt to a lyf without,
 The bewis spred the herbere all about.

And on the small grene twistis sat
 The lytil suete nygtingale, and song
 So loud and clere, the ympnis consecrat
 Of luvus use, now soft now lowd among,
 That all the gardynis and the wallis rong
 Rycht of thaire song.

Kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
 Quhare as I saw walkyng under the Toure,

Full secretelly, new cumyn hir to pleyne,
 The fairest or the freschest young floure
 That ever I sawe, methought, before that houre,
 For quhich sodayne abate, anon astert
 The blude of all my body to my hert.

And though I stood abaisit then a lyte,
 No wonder was, for quhy? my wittis all
 Were so ouercome with plesance and delyte,
 Only through lating of myn eyen fall,
 That sudaynly my hert become hir thrall
 For ever; of free wyll, for of manace
 There was no takyn in hir suete face.

And in my hede I drew ryght hastily,
 And eft sones I lent it forth ageyne,
 And saw hir walk that verray womanly,
 With no wight mo, bot only women tueyne.
 Than gan I study in myself and seyne,
 Ah suete! are ye a wardly creature,
 Or hevilyng thing in likeness of nature?

Or ar ye god Cupidis owin princesse,
 And cumyn are to louse me out of band?
 Or ar ye veray Nature the goddesse,
 That have depayntit with your heviny hand,
 This gardyn full of flouris, as they stand?
 Quhat sall I think, allace! quhat reverence
 Sall I mester to your excellence?

Giff ye a goddesse be, and that ye like
 To do me payne, I may it not astert;
 Giff ye be wardly wight, that dooth me sike,
 Quhy lest God mak you so, my derest hert!
 To do a sely prisoner thus smert,
 That lufis you all, and wote of noucht but wo,
 And, therefore, merci suete! sen it is so.

Quhen I a lytill thrawe had maid my mone,
 Bewailing myn infortune and my chance,
 Unknawin how or quhat was best to done,
 So ferre I fallyng into lufis dance,
 That sodeynly my wit, my contenance,
 My hert, my will, my nature, and my mynd,
 Was changit clene rycht in ane other kind.

Of hir array the form gif I sal write,
 Toward her goldin haire, and rich atyre,
 In fretwise couchit with perlis quhite,
 And grete balas lemyng as the fyre,
 With mony ane emerant and faire saphire,
 And on hir hede a chaplet fresch of hewe,
 Of plumys partit rede, and quhite, and blew.

Full of quaking spangis brycht as gold,
 Forgit of schap like to the amoretis,

¹ The "King's Quhair" is a long allegory, polished and imaginative, but with some of the tediousness usual in such productions.—Henry Hallam.

The author of our first serious and purely imaginative poem, the "King's Quhair," and our earliest truly comic and homely poem, "Pebelis to the Play."—Allan Cunningham.

So new, so fresch, so pleasant to behold,
 The plumys eke like to the floure jonettis,
 And other of schap, like to the floure jonettis;
 And, above all this, there was, wele I wote,
 Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote.

About hir neck, quhite as the fayre amaille,
 A gudelic cheyne of small orfeverye,
 Quhare by there hang a ruby, without faille
 Like to ane hert schapin verily,
 That, as a sperk of lowe so wantonly
 Semyt birmyng upon hir quhite throte.
 Now gif there was gud pertye, God it wote.

And for to walk that fresche Mayes morowe,
 Ane huke she had upon her tissew quhite,
 That gudeliare had not bene sene to forowe,
 As I suppose, and girt sche was alyte;
 Thus halflyng lowse for haste, to suich delyte,
 It was to see her youth in gudelihed,
 That for rudenes to speke thereof I drede.

In hir was youth, beautee, with humble aport,
 Bountee, richesse, and womanly faiture,
 God better wote than my pen can report,
 Wisdome, largesse, estate, and conyng sure
 In every point, so guydit hir mesure,
 In word, in dede, in schap, in contenance,
 That nature mycht no more hir childe auance.

And, quhen sche walkit, had a lytill thrawe
 Under the suete grene bewis bent,
 Hir faire fresch face, as quhite as any snawe,
 Sche turnyt has, and furth hir wayis went.
 Bot then began myn axis and turment!
 To sene hir part, and folowe I na mycht;
 Methought the day was turnyt into nycht.

CHRIST'S KIRK ON THE GREEN.¹

Was never in Scotland heard nor seen
 Such dancing nor deray,
 Neither at Falkland on the green,
 Or Peeblis at the Play;
 As was (of *wowaris* as I *ween*)
 At Christ's Kirk on a day;
 There came our Kitties washen clean,
 In their new kirtillis of gray,
 -Full gay,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

¹ James Sibbald has named St. Salvator's Chapel, at St. Andrews, as the scene of the diversions celebrated in this lively ballad; by other authorities the scene is assigned to Garioch, Aberdeenshire. It was, however, most probably at the old kirk-town of Leslie, a place in all respects suiting the requirements of the poem, and within six miles of Falkland Palace, a favourite resort of the gallant king.—ED.

To dance thir damysellis them dicht,
 These lasses licht of laitis;
 Their gloves were of the raffell right,
 Their schone were of the straitis,
 Their kirtles were of lyncome light,
 Well prest with many plaitis;
 They were so nyss when men them nigh'd,
 They squelit like any gaitis,
 Full loud,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

Of all these maidens mild as meid,
 Was none so gymp as Gillie;
 As any rose her rude was red,
 Her lyre was like the lily:
 Fow yellow, yellow was her head,
 But she of love was silly,
 Though all her kin had sworn her dead,
 She would have but sweet Willie
 Alone,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

She scorned Jock and skraipet at him,
 And murgeon'd him with morkkis,
 He would have luvit, she would not let him,
 For all his yellow lokkis;
 He cherisht her, she bad go chat him,
 She comptit him not two clokkis;
 So shamefully his short gown set him,
 His limbs were like two rokkis,
 She said,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

Tom Lutar was their minstrel meet,
 O Lord, as he could lanss,
 He played so schill, and sang so sweet,
 While Towsy took a transs;
 Old Light-foot, there he did forleit,
 And counterfeited France,
 He us'd himself as man discreet,
 And up took morrice dance,
 Full loud,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

Then Stephen came stepping in with stends,
 No rink might him arrest,
 Splayfoot he bobbit up with bends,
 For Maud he made request:
 He lap while he lay on his lends
 But rising he was priest,
 While that he hostit, at both ends,
 For honour of the feast,
 That day,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

Syne Robin Roy began to revel
 And Downy till him druggit,
 Let be, quoth Jock, and call'd him javell,
 And by the tail him tugged;

The town sowtar in grief was bowdin,
 His wife hang in his waist:
 His body was with blood all browdin,
 He granit like any gaist;
 His glittering hair, that was full gowden,
 So hard in love him laist;
 That for her sake he was not zowdin,
 Seven mile while he was chaist,
 And more,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

The miller was of manly mak,
 To meet him was no mowis;
 Their durst not ten come him to tak,
 So nowit he their nowis;
 The buschment hail about him brak,
 And bikkerit him with bowis,
 Syne traitourly behind his back,
 They hewed him on the howis,
 Behind,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

Two that were heidsmen of the herd,
 Ran upon uderis like rammis;
 Than followit feymen, right unaffair'd,
 Bet on with barrow trammis;
 But where their gobbis were ungeird,
 They got upon the gammis;
 While bloody barkit was their beird;
 As they had werreit lammis
 Most like,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

The wives kest up an hideous yell,
 When all the yunkeris yokkit;
 As fierce as any fyr-flaught fell,
 Frieikes to the field they flokkit:
 The carlis with clubbis could other quell,
 While blood at briestis out bokkit;
 So rudely rang the commoun bell,
 While all the steepel rokkit,
 For reird,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

When they had beirrit, like baited bullis,
 And branewod, brynt in bailis,

They wox as meek as any mulis,
 That mangit were with mailis:
 For faintness thir forfochin fulis
 Fell down, like flauchtir failis;
 Fresh men came in and haild the dulis
 And dang them down in dailis,
 Bedene,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

When all was done, Dick, with an aix,
 Came forth, to fell a futher;
 Quod he, Where are yon hangit smaiks,
 Right now wald slain my bruther?
 His wife bad him go home, good glaiks,
 And so did Meg his mother;
 He turn'd, and gave them both their paiks;
 For he durst ding none other,
 For feir,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green, that day.

DIVINE TRUST.¹

Sen throw vertew incessis dignitie,
 And vertew is flour and rute of nobles ay,
 Of ony wit or quhat estait thou be
 His steppis follow, and dreid for none effray;
 Eject vice, and follow truth alway;
 Lufe maist thy God that first thy lufe began,
 And for ilk inche He will thé quyte ane span.

Be not our proude in thy prosperitie,
 For as it cummis, sa will it pas away;
 The tyme to compt is schort, thow may weil se,
 For of grene grass sone cummis wallowit hay.
 Labour in truth quhilk suith is of thy fay;
 Traist maist in God, for He best gyde thé can,
 And for ilk inche He will thé quyte ane span.

Sen word is thrall, and thoct is only fre,
 Thou dant thy toung that power hes and may
 Thou steik thy ene fra warldis vanitie,
 Refraine thy lust and harkin quhat I say:
 Graip or tho slyde, and keip furth the hie way,
 Thou hald thé fast upon thy God and man,
 And for ilk inche He will thé quyte ane span.

ROBERT HENRYSON.

BORN 1430 — DIED 1506.

ROBERT HENRYSON, or HENDERSON, a poet and fabulist of the fifteenth century, was chief

¹ Of the king's hymns or sacred poems only one specimen has been preserved at the close of the collection

schoolmaster of Dunfermline. Lord Hailes conjectures that he acted as preceptor to the

called *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, published in 1570. It has been entitled by Dr. Rogers "Divine Trust."—ED.