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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

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Section XIX. Petrarch's sonnets. Lord Surrey. His education, travels, mistress, life, and poetry. He is the first writer of blank-verse. Italian blank-verse. Surrey the first English classic poet.

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
E N G L I S H P O E T R Y.

S E C T. XIX.

OUR communications and intercourse with Italy, which began to prevail about the beginning of the sixteenth century, not only introduced the studies of classical literature into England, but gave a new turn to our vernacular poetry. At this period, Petrarch still continued the most favorite poet of the Italians; and had established a manner, which was universally adopted and imitated by his ingenious countrymen. In the mean time, the courts both of France and England were distinguished for their elegance. Francis the first had changed the state of letters in France, by mixing gallantry with learning, and by admitting the ladies to his court in company with the ecclesiastics*. His carousals were celebrated with a brilliancy and a festivity unknown to the ceremonious shews of former princes. Henry the eighth vied with Francis in these gaieties. His ambition, which could not bear a rival even in diversions,

* See *supr.* vol. ii. p. 414.

was seconded by liberality of disposition and a love of ostentation. For Henry, with many boisterous qualities was magnificent and affable. Had he never murdered his wives, his politeness to the fair sex would remain unimpeached. His martial sports were unincumbered by the barbaric pomp of the antient chivalry, and softened by the growing habits of more rational manners. He was attached to those spectacles and public amusements, in which beauty assumed a principal share; and his frequent masques and tournaments encouraged a high spirit of romantic courtesy. Poetry was the natural accompaniment of these refinements. Henry himself was a leader and a chief character in these pageantries, and at the same time a reader and a writer of verses. The language and the manners of Italy were esteemed and studied. The sonnets of Petrarch were the great models of composition. They entered into the genius of the fashionable manners: and in a court of such a complexion, Petrarch of course became the popular poet. Henry Howard earl Surrey, with a mistress perhaps as beautiful as Laura, and at least with Petrarch's passion if not his taste, led the way to great improvements in English poetry, by a happy imitation of Petrarch, and other Italian poets, who had been most successful in painting the anxieties of love with pathos and propriety.

Lord Surrey's life throws so much light on the character and subjects of his poetry, that it is almost impossible to consider the one, without exhibiting a few anecdotes of the other. He was the son and grandson of two lords treasurers dukes of Norfolk; and in his early childhood discovered the most promising marks of lively parts and an active mind.

While a boy, he was habituated to the modes of a court at Windfor-castle; where he resided, yet under the care of proper instructors, in the quality of a companion to Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond, a natural son of king Henry the eighth, and of the highest expectations.

This young nobleman, who also bore other titles and honours, was the child of Henry's affection: not so much on account of
his

his hopeful abilities, as for a reason insinuated by lord Herbert, and at which those who know Henry's history and character will not be surpris'd, because he equally and strongly resembled both his father and mother.

A friendship of the closest kind commencing between these two illustrious youths, about the year 1530, they were both removed to cardinal Wolfey's college at Oxford, then universally frequented, as well for the excellence as the novelty of its institution; for it was one of the first seminaries of an English university, that profess'd to explode the pedantries of the old barbarous philosophy, and to cultivate the graces of polite literature. Two years afterwards, for the purpose of acquiring every accomplishment of an elegant education, the earl accompanied his noble friend and fellow-pupil into France, where they received king Henry; on his arrival at Calais to visit Francis the first, with a most magnificent retinue. The friendship of these two young noblemen was soon strengthened by a new tie; for Richmond married the lady Mary Howard, Surrey's sister. Richmond, however, appears to have died in the year 1536, about the age of seventeen, having never cohabited with his wife^b. It was long, before Surrey forgot the untimely loss of this amiable youth, the friend and associate of his childhood, and who nearly resembled himself in genius, refinement of manners, and liberal acquisitions.

The FAIR GERALDINE, the general object of lord Surrey's passionate sonnets, is commonly said to have lived at Florence, and to have been of the family of the Geraldini of that city. This is a mistake, yet not entirely without grounds, propagated by an easy misapprehension of an expression in one of our poet's odes, and a passage in Drayton's heroic epistles. She was undoubtedly one of the daughters of Gerald Fitzgerald, earl of Kildare. But it will be necessary to transcribe what our author himself has said of this celebrated lady. The history of one

^b Wood, ATH. OXON. i. 68.

who

who caused so memorable and so poetical a passion naturally excites curiosity, and will justify an investigation, which, on many a similar occasion, would properly be censured as frivolous and impertinent.

From Tuskan came my ladies worthy race ;
 Faire Florence was sumtyme her^c auncient feat :
 The western yle, whose plesant shore doth face
 Wild Camber's cliffs, did gyve her lively heate :
 Fostred she was with milke of Irishe brest ;
 Her sire an earle : her dame of princes blood :
 From tender yeres in Britain she doth rest
 With kinges child, where she tasteth costly food.
 Hunsdon did first present her to mine yien :
 Bright is her hewe, and Geraldine she hight.
 Hampton me taught to wish her first mine,
 And Windsor alas ! doth chase me from her sight^d.

These notices, it must be confessed, are obscure and indirect. But a late elegant biographer has, with the most happy sagacity, solved the difficulties of this little enigmatical ode, which had been before either neglected and unattempted as inexplicable, or rendered more unintelligible by false conjectures. I readily adopt Mr. Walpole's key to the genealogy of the matchless Geraldine^e.

Her poetical appellation is almost her real name. Gerald Fitzgerald, abovementioned, earl of Kildare in the reign of Henry the eighth, married a second wife, Margaret daughter of Thomas Gray, marquis of Dorset : by whom he had three daughters, Margaret, Elisabeth, and Cicely. Margaret was born deaf and dumb ; and a lady who could neither hear nor answer her lover, and who wanted the means of contributing to the most endearing reciprocations, can hardly be supposed to have

^c i. e. their.

^d Fol. 5. edit. 1557.

^e CATAL. Roy. and Noble Authors, vol. i. p. 105. edit. 1759.

been

been the cause of any vehement effusions of amorous panegyric. We may therefore safely pronounce Elifabeth or Cicely to have been Surrey's favorite. It was probably Elifabeth, as she seems always to have lived in England.

Every circumstance of the sonnet evidently coincides with this state of the case. But, to begin with the first line, it will naturally be asked, what was lady Elifabeth Gerald's connection with Tuscany? The beginnings of noble families, like those of nations, often owe somewhat to fictitious embellishment: and our genealogists uniformly assert, that the family of Fitzgerald derives its origin from Otho, a descendant of the dukes of Tuscany: that they migrated into England under the reign of king Alfred, whose annals are luckily too scanty to contradict such an account, and were from England speedily transplanted into Ireland. Her father was an Irish earl, resident at his earldom of Kildare; and she was consequently born and nursed in Ireland. Her mother, adds the sonnet, was of princely parentage. Here is a no less exact correspondence with the line of the lady's pedigree: for Thomas, marquis of Dorset, was son of queen Elifabeth Gray, daughter of the duchess of Bedford, descended from the royal house of Luxemburgh. The poet acquaints us, that he first saw her at Hundson. This notice, which seems of an indifferent nature and quite extraneous to the question, abundantly corroborates our conjecture. Hundson-house in Hertfordshire was a new palace built by Henry the eighth, and chiefly for the purpose of educating his children. The lady Elifabeth Fitzgerald was second cousin to Henry's daughters the princesses Mary and Elifabeth, who were both educated at Hundson^f. At this royal nursery she therefore *tasted of costly foode with kinges childe*, that is, lived while a girl with the young princesses her relations, as a companion in their education. At the same time, and on the same plan, our earl of Surrey resided at Windfor-castle, as I have already remarked, with the young

^f Strype, ECCL. MEM. vol. i. APPEND. Numb. 71.

duke

duke of Richmond. It is natural to suppose, that he sometimes visited the princesses at Hunfdon, in company with the young duke their brother, where he must have also seen the fair Geraldine: yet by the nature of his situation at Windsor, which implied a degree of confinement, he was hindered from visiting her at Hunfdon so often as he wished. He therefore pathetically laments,

Windsor, alas, doth chafe me from her sight!

But although the earl first beheld this lady at the palace of Hunfdon, yet, as we further learn from the sonnet, he was first struck with her incomparable beauty, and his passion commenced, at Hampton-court.

Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine!

That is, and perhaps on occasion of some splendid masque or caroufal, when the lady Elifabeth Fitzgerald, with the princesses Mary and Elifabeth, and their brother Richmond, with the young lord Surrey, were invited by the king to Hampton-court.

In the mean time we must remember, that the lord Leonard Gray, uncle to lord Gerald Fitzgerald, was deputy of Ireland for the young duke of Richmond: a connection, exclusive of all that has been said, which would alone account for Surrey's acquaintance at least with this lady. It is also a reason, to say no more, why the earl should have regarded her from the first with a particular attention, which afterwards grew into the most passionate attachment. She is supposed to have been Maid of honour to queen Catharine. But there are three of Henry's queens of that name. For obvious reasons, however, we may venture to say, that queen Catharine Howard was Geraldine's queen.

It is not precisely known at what period the earl of Surrey began his travels. They have the air of a romance. He made the tour of Europe in the true spirit of chivalry, and with the
ideas

ideas of an Amadis; proclaiming the unparalleled charms of his mistress, and prepared to defend the cause of her beauty with the weapons of knight-errantry. Nor was this adventurous journey performed without the intervention of an enchanter. The first city in Italy which he proposed to visit was Florence, the capital of Tuscany, and the original seat of the ancestors of his Geraldine. In his way thither, he passed a few days at the emperor's court; where he became acquainted with Cornelius Agrippa, a celebrated adept in natural magic. This visionary philosopher shewed our hero, in a mirror of glass, a living image of Geraldine, reclining on a couch, sick, and reading one of his most tender sonnets by a waxen taper^a. His imagination, which wanted not the flattering representations and artificial incentives of illusion, was heated anew by this interesting and affecting spectacle. Inflamed with every enthusiasm of the most romantic passion, he hastened to Florence: and, on his arrival, immediately published a defiance against any person who could handle a lance and was in love, whether Christian, Jew, Turk, Saracen, or Canibal, who should presume to dispute the superiority of Geraldine's beauty. As the lady was pretended to be of Tuscan extraction, the pride of the Florentines was flattered on this occasion: and the grand duke of Tuscany permitted a general and unmolested ingress into his dominions of the combatants of all countries, till this important trial should be decided. The challenge was accepted, and the earl victorious^b. The shield which he presented to the duke before the tournament began, is exhibited in Vertue's valuable plate of the Arundel family, and was actually in the possession of the late duke of Norfolk^c.

These heroic vanities did not, however, so totally engross the time which Surrey spent in Italy, as to alienate his mind from letters: he studied with the greatest success a critical knowledge

^a Drayton, *HER. EPIST.*—HOWARD TO GERALDINE, v. 57.

^b Wood, *ubi sup.*

^c Walpole, *ANECD. PAINT.* i. 76.

of the Italian tongue, and, that he might give new lustre to the name of Geraldine, attained a just taste for the peculiar graces of the Italian poetry.

He was recalled to England for some idle reason by the king, much sooner than he expected: and he returned home, the most elegant traveller, the most polite lover, the most learned nobleman, and the most accomplished gentleman, of his age. Dexterity in tilting, and gracefulness in managing a horse under arms, were excellencies now viewed with a critical eye, and practised with a high degree of emulation. In 1540, at a tournament held in the presence of the court at Westminster, and in which the principal of the nobility were engaged, Surrey was distinguished above the rest for his address in the use and exercise of arms. But his martial skill was not solely displayed in the parade and ostentation of these domestic combats. In 1542, he marched into Scotland, as a chief commander in his father's army; and was conspicuous for his conduct and bravery at the memorable battle of Flodden-field, where James the fourth of Scotland was killed. The next year, we find the career of his victories impeded by an obstacle which no valour could resist. The censures of the church have humiliated the greatest heroes: and he was imprisoned in Windsor-castle for eating flesh in Lent. The prohibition had been renewed or strengthened by a recent proclamation of the king. I mention this circumstance, not only as it marks his character, impatient of any controul, and careless of very serious consequences which often arise from a contempt of petty formalities, but as it gave occasion to one of his most sentimental and pathetic sonnets^k. In 1544, he was field-marshal of the English army in the expedition to Bologne, which he took. In that age, love and arms constantly went together: and it was amid the fatigues of this protracted campaign, that he composed his last sonnet called the *FANSIE* of a *wearied Lover*^l.

^k Fol. 6, 7.

^l Fol. 18. See DUDG. BARONAG. ii. p. 275.

But

But as Surrey's popularity encreased, his interest declined with the king; whose caprices and jealousies grew more violent with his years and infirmities. The brilliancy of Surrey's character, his celebrity in the military science, his general abilities, his wit, learning, and affability, were viewed by Henry with disgust and suspicion. It was in vain that he possessed every advantageous qualification, which could adorn the scholar, the courtier, and the soldier. In proportion as he was amiable in the eyes of the people, he became formidable to the king. His rising reputation was misconstrued into a dangerous ambition, and gave birth to accusations equally groundless and frivolous. He was suspected of a design to marry the princess Mary; and, by that alliance, of approaching to a possibility of wearing the crown. It was insinuated, that he conversed with foreigners, and held a correspondence with cardinal Pole.

The addition of the escocheon of Edward the Confessor to his own, although used by the family of Norfolk for many years, and justified by the authority of the heralds, was a sufficient foundation for an impeachment of high treason. These motives were privately aggravated by those prejudices, with which Henry remembered the misbehaviour of Catharine Howard, and which were extended to all that lady's relations. At length, the earl of Surrey fell a sacrifice to the peevish injustice of a merciless and ungrateful master. Notwithstanding his eloquent and masculine defence, which even in the cause of guilt itself would have proved a powerful persuasive, he was condemned by the prepared suffrage of a servile and obsequious jury, and beheaded on Tower-hill in the year 1547^m. In the mean time we should remember, that Surrey's public conduct was not on all occasions quite unexceptionable. In the affair of Bologne he had made a false step. This had offended the king. But Henry, when once offended, could never forgive. And when Hertford was sent into France to take the command, he could not refrain from

^m See Stowe, CHRON. p. 592. Challoner, de REPUBL. ANGL. INSTAURAND. lib. ii. p. 45.

dropping some reproachful expressions against a measure which seemed to impeach his personal courage. Conscious of his high birth and capacity, he was above the little attentions of caution and reserve; and he too frequently neglected to consult his own situation, and the king's temper. It was his misfortune to serve a monarch, whose resentments, which were easily provoked, could only be satisfied by the most severe revenge. Henry brought those men to the block, which other monarchs would have only disgraced.

Among these anecdotes of Surrey's life, I had almost forgot to mention what became of his amour with the fair Geraldine. We lament to find, that Surrey's devotion to this lady did not end in a wedding, and that all his gallantries and verses availed so little! No memoirs of that incurious age have informed us, whether her beauty was equalled by her cruelty; or whether her ambition prevailed so far over her gratitude, as to tempt her to prefer the solid glories of a more splendid title and ample fortune, to the challenges and the compliments, of so magnanimous, so faithful, and so eloquent a lover. She appears, however, to have been afterwards the third wife of Edward Clinton, earl of Lincoln. Such also is the power of time and accident over amorous vows, that even Surrey himself outlived the violence of his passion. He married Frances, daughter of John earl of Oxford, by whom he left several children. One of his daughters, Jane countess of Westmoreland, was among the learned ladies of that age, and became famous for her knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages*.

Surrey's poems were in high reputation with his cotemporaries, and for many years afterwards. He is thus characterised by the author of the old ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE, whose opinion remained long as a rule of criticism. "In the latter
" end of the same kinges [Henry] raigne, spronge up a new
" company of courtly makers, of whom sir Thomas Wyat the

* Dugd. BARON. i. 533. ii. 275.

“ elder

“ elder and Henry earle of Surrey were the two CHIEFTAINES,
 “ who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete
 “ and stately measures and stile of the Italian poesie, as novices
 “ newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Ariosto, and Pe-
 “ trarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of
 “ vulgar poesie from that it had bene before, and for that cause
 “ may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English meeter
 “ and stile.” And again, towards the close of the same chap-
 ter. “ Henry earle of Surrey, and sir Thomas Wyat, between
 “ whom I finde very little difference, I repute them (as before)
 “ for the two chief lanternes of light to all others that have
 “ since employed their pennes upon English poesie: their con-
 “ ceits were loftie, their stiles stately, their conveyance cleanly,
 “ their termes proper, their meetre sweete and well-propor-
 “ tioned, in all imitating very naturally and studiously their
 “ maister Francis Petrarcha.” I forbear to recite the testimo-
 nies of Leland, Sydney, Tuberville, Churchyard, and Drayton.
 Nor have these pieces, although scarcely known at present,
 been without the panegyric of more recent times. Surrey is
 praised by Waller, and Fenton; and he seems to have been a fa-
 vorite with Pope. Pope, in WINDSOR-FOREST, having com-
 pared his patron lord Granville with Surrey, he was immediately
 reprinted, but without attracting many readers^o. It was vainly
 imagined, that all the world would eagerly wish to purchase the
 works of a neglected antient English poet, whom Pope had
 called *the GRANVILLE of a former age*. So rapid are the revo-
 lutions of our language, and such the uncertainty of literary
 fame, that Philips, Milton’s nephew, who wrote about the
 year 1674, has remarked, that in his time Surrey’s poetry was
 antiquated and totally forgotten^p.

Our authors SONGES AND SONNETTES, as they have been
 stiled, were first collected and printed at London by Tottell,

^o Lib. i. ch. xxxi. p. 48. edit. 1589.

^p Ibid. p. 50.

^s By Sewell 1717. Reprinted by Curl, ib.

^r THEATR. POETAR. p. 67. edit. 1674.
12mo.

in 1557^r. As it happens in collections of this kind, they are of various merit. Surrey is said, by the ingenious author of the *MUSES LIBRARY*, to have been the first who broke through the fashion of stanzas, and wrote in the heroic couplet. But all Surrey's poems are in the alternate rhyme; nor, had this been true, is the other position to be granted. Chaucer's Prologues and most of the *Canterbury Tales* are written in long verse: nor was the use of the couplet resumed, till late in the reign of Elizabeth.

In the sonnets of Surrey, we are surpris'd to find nothing of that metaphysical cast which marks the Italian poets, his supposed masters, especially Petrarch. Surrey's sentiments are for the most part natural and unaffected; arising from his own feelings, and dictated by the present circumstances. His poetry is alike unembarrass'd by learned allusions, or elaborate conceits. If our author copies Petrarch, it is Petrarch's better manner: when he descends from his Platonic abstractions, his refinements of passion, his exaggerated compliments, and his play upon opposite sentiments, into a track of tenderness, simplicity, and nature. Petrarch would have been a better poet had he been a worse scholar. Our author's mind was not too much overlaid by learning.

The following is the poem abovementioned, in which he laments his imprisonment in Windsor-castle. But it is rather an elegy than a sonnet.

So cruel prison, how coulde betyde, alas,
As proude Windsor ' ! where I, in lust and joye ⁿ,
With a kynges sonne ^m my childishe yeres did passe,
In greater feast than Priam's sonnes of Troye.

Where eche swete place returnes a taste full sower :
The large grene courtes where we were wont to hove ^x,

ⁿ In quarto. It is extraordinary, that A. Wood should not have known this edition. Another edition appeared in 1565. Others, in 1574.—1585.—1587.—Others appeared afterwards.

ⁱ How could the stately castle of Windsor become so miserable a prison.

^m In unrestrained gaiety and pleasure.

^v With the young duke of Richmond.

^x To hover, to loiter in expectation. So Chaucer, *TROIL. CRESS. B. 5. ver. 33.*

But at the yate there she should ouride
With certain folk he leuid her t' abide.

With

With eyes cast up into the mayden's tower^v,
And easie fighes, such as men drawe in love :

The stately seates, the ladies bright of hewe,
The daunces shorte, long tales of great delight,
With wordes and lookes that tigers could but rewe^z ;
Where ech of us did pleade the others right.

The palme-play^a, where, dispoyled for the game^b,
With dazed yies^c, oft we by gleames of love,
Have mist the ball, and got fight of our dame,
To bayte^d her eyes which kept the leads above^e.

The gravell grounde^f, with sleeves tied on the helme^g,
On fomyng horse, with swordes and frendly hartes ;
With cheare^h as though one should another whelmeⁱ,
Where we have fought and chafed oft with dartes.—

The secret groves, which ofte we made resounde
Of pleasaunt playnt, and of our ladies praise,

^v Swift's joke about the Maids of honour being lodged at Windsor in the round tower, in queen Anne's time, is too well known and too indelicate to be repeated here. But in the present instance, Surrey speaks loosely and poetically in making the MAIDEN-TOWER, the true reading, the residence of the women. The maiden-tower was common in other castles, and means the principal tower, of the greatest strength and defence. MAIDEN is a corruption of the old French *Magne*, or *Mayne*, great. Thus Maidenhead (properly *Maydenhithe*) in Berkshire, signifies the *great* port or wharf on the river Thames. So also, *Mayden-Bradley* in Wiltshire is the *great* *Bradley*. The old Roman camp near Dorchester in Dorsetshire, a noble work, is called *Maiden castle*, the capital fortrefs in those parts. We have Maiden-down in Somersetsshire with the same signification. A thousand other instances might be given.

Hearne, not attending to this etymology, absurdly supposes, in one of his Prefaces, that a strong bastion in the old walls of the city of Oxford, called the MAIDEN-TOWER, was a prison for confining the prostitutes of the town.

^z Pity.

^a At ball.

^b Rendered unfit, or unable, to play.

^c Dazzled eyes.

^d To tempt, to catch.

^e The ladies were ranged on the leads, or battlements, of the castle to see the play.

^f The ground, or area, was strown with gravel, where they were trained in chivalry.

^g At tournaments they fixed the sleeves of their mistresses on some part of their armour.

^h Looks.

ⁱ Destroy.

Recording

Recording ofte what grace^k ech one had founde,
What hope of speede^l, what drede of long delayes.

The wilde forest, the clothed holtes with grene,
With raynes avayled^m, and swift ybreathed horse,
With crië of houndes, and merry blastes betwene
Where we did chafe the fearful harte of force.

The wide valesⁿ eke, that harbourd us ech night,
Wherewith, alas, reviveth in my brest
The sweete accorde! Such slepes as yet delight:
The pleafant dreames, the quiet bed of rest.

The secreet thoughtes imparted with such trust;
The wanton talke, the divers change of play;
The frendship sworne, eche promise kept so just,
Wherewith we past the winter night away.

^k Favour with his mistress.

^l Or, Success.

^m The holtes, or thick woods, clothed in green. So in another place he says, fol. 3.

My speckled cheeks with Cupid's hue.

That is, "Cheeks speckled with, &c."

ⁿ With loosened reins. So, in his fourth Aeneid, the fleet is "ready to *avale*." That is, to *loosen* from shore. So again, in Spenser's FEBRUARIE.

They went in the wind wagge their
wriggle tayles

Pearke as a peacocke, but now it
AVAYLES.

"*Avayle* their tayles," to drop or lower.
So also in his DECEMBER.

By that the welked Phebus gan AVAYLE
His wearie waine.—

And in the Faerie Queene, with the true
spelling, i. 1. 21. Of Nilus.

But when his latter ebbe gins to AVALE.

TO VALE, or *avale*, the bonnet, was a phrase

for lowering the bonnet, or pulling off the hat. The word occurs in Chaucer, TR. CRESS. iii. 627.

That such a raine from heaven gan A-
VAILE.

And in the fourth book of his BOETHIUS, "The light fire ariseth into height, and the hevie yerthes AVAILEN by their weightes," pag. 394. col. 2. edit. Urr. From the French verb AVALER, which is from their adverb AVAL, downward. See also Hearne's GLOSS. ROB. BR. p. 524. Drayton uses this word, where perhaps it is not properly understood. ECL. iv. p. 1404. edit. 1753.

With that, she gan to VALE her head,
Her cheeks were like the roses red,
But not a word she said, &c.

That is, she did not *veil*, or cover, but *valed*, held down her head for shame.

ⁿ Probably the true reading is *avales* or *avalls*. That is, lodgings, apartments, &c. These poems were very corruptly printed by Tottel.

And

And with this thought the blood forsakes the face;
 The teares berayne my chekes of deadly hewe,
 The whych as fone as fobbing fighes, alas,
 Upfupped have, thus I my plaint renewe!

“ O place of blisse, renewer of my woes!
 “ Give me accompt, where is my noble fere^o,
 “ Whom in thy walles thou dost^o ech night enclose,
 “ To other leefe^o, but unto me most dere!”

Eccho, alas, that doth my sorrow rew^o,
 Returnes therto a hollow sounde of playnte.
 Thus I alone, where all my fredom grewe,
 In prison pine, with bondage and restrainte.
 And with remembrance of the greater greefe
 To banish th^o leefe, I find my chief releefe^o.

In the poet's situation, nothing can be more natural and striking than the reflection with which he opens his complaint. There is also much beauty in the abruptness of his exordial exclamation. The superb palace, where he had passed the most pleasing days of his youth with the son of a king, was now converted into a tedious and solitary prison! This unexpected vicissitude of fortune awakens a new and interesting train of thought. The comparison of his past and present circumstances recalls their juvenile sports and amusements; which were more to be regretted, as young Richmond was now dead. Having described some of these with great elegance, he recurs to his first idea by a beautiful apostrophe. He appeals to the place of his confinement, once the source of his highest pleasures: “ O place of blifs, renewer of my woes! And where is now my noble friend, my companion is these delights, who was once your

^o Companion.
^o We should read, *didst*.

^o Dear to others, to all.
^o Pity. ^o Fol. 6. 7.

“ inhabitant! Echo alone either pities or answers my question, “ and returns a plaintive hollow sound!” He closes his complaint with an affecting and pathetic sentiment, much in the style of Petrarch. “ To banish the miseries of my present “ distress, I am forced on the wretched expedient of remem- “ bering a greater!” This is the consolation of a warm fancy. It is the philosophy of poetry.

Some of the following stanzas, on a lover who presumed to compare his lady with the divine Geraldine, have almost the ease and gallantry of Waller. The leading compliment, which has been used by later writers, is in the spirit of an Italian fiction. It is very ingenious, and handled with a high degree of elegance.

Give place, ye Lovers, here before
That spent your boistes and bragges in vaine:
My Ladie's bewty passeth more
The best of yours, I dare wel saine,
Than doth the funne the candle light,
Or brightest day the darkest night.

And therto hath a troth as just
As had Penelope the faire;
For what she sayth, ye may it trust,
As it by writing sealed were:
And vertues hath she many moe
Than I with pen have skill to shoue.

I could reherse, if that I would,
The whole effect of NATURE's plaint,
When she had lost the perfit mould,
The like to whom she could not paint.
With wringng handes how she did cry!
And what she said, I know it, I.

I knowe,

I knowe, she swore with ragyng minde,
 Her kingdöm only fet apart,
 There was no losse, by lawe of kinde,
 That could have gone so neare her hart :
 And this was chefely all her paine
 She could not make the like againe'. —

The verification of these stanzas is correct, the language polished, and the modulation musical. The following stanza, of another ode, will hardly be believed to have been produced in the reign of Henry the eighth.

Spite drave me into Boreas' raigne *,
 Where hory frostes the frutes do bite ;
 When hilles were spred and every plaine
 With stormy winter's mantle white *.

In an Elegy on the elder sir Thomas Wyat's death, his character is delineated in the following nervous and manly quatrains.

A visage, sterne and mylde ; where both did growe,
 Vice to contemne, in vertue to rejoyce ;
 Amid great stormes, whom grace assured so,
 To live upright, and smile at fortune's choyce. —

A tounge that serv'd in forein realmes his king,
 Whose courteous talke to vertue did enflame
 Eche noble hart ; a worthy guide to bring
 Our English youth by travail unto fame.

An eye, whose judgement none affect* could blind,
 Friends to allure, and foes to reconcile :

* Fol. 10.

* Her anger drove me into a colder

climate.

* Passion.

* Fol. 13.

Whose piercing ^y looke did represent a minde
With virtue fraught, reposed, voyd of gile.

A hart, where dreade was never so imprest
To hide the thought that might the truth advance;
In neither fortune lost, nor yet represt,
To swell in welth, or yeld unto mischance ^z.——

The following lines on the same subject are remarkable.

Divers thy deth do diversly bemone:
Some that in presence of thy livelyhede
Lurked, whose brestes envy with hate had swolne,
Yeld Cesar's teares upon Pompeius' head ^a.

There is great dignity and propriety in the following Sonnet
on Wyat's PSALMS.

The Maeedon, that out of Persia chased
Darius, of whose power all Asia rong,
In the riche arke ^b Dan Homer's rimes he placed,
Who fained gestes of heathen princes song.
What holy grave, what worthy sepulture ^c,
To Wyat's Psalmes should Christians then purchase?
Where he doth paint the lively faith and pure;
The stedfast hope, the swete returne to grace
Of just David by perfitte penitence.
Where rulers may see in a mirroure clere
The bitter fruite of false concupiscence:
How Jewry bought Uria's deth ful dere.
In princes hartes God's scourge imprinted depe
Ought them awake out of their sinful slepe ^d.

^y Piercing.
^z Fol. 17.
^a Fol. 16.

^b Chest.
^c Repository.
^d Fol. 16.

Probably

Probably the last lines may contain an oblique allusion to some of the king's amours.

Some passages in his *Description of the restless state of a Lover*, are pictures of the heart, and touched with delicacy.

I wish for night, more covertly to plaine,
And me withdrawe from every haunted place;
Left by my chere^e my chance appeare too plaine.
And in my mynde I mesure, pace by pace,

To seke the place where I myself had lost,
That day, when I was tangled in the lace,
In sewing slack that knitteth ever most.——

Lo, if I seke, how I do finde my fore!
And if I flee, I carry with me still
The venom'd shaft, which doth its force restore
By haste of flight. And I may plaine my fill

Unto myself, unlesse this carefull song
Print in your hart some parcel of my tene^f.
For I, alas, in silence all too long,
Of mine old hurt yet fele the wound but grene^s.

Surrey's talents, which are commonly supposed to have been confined to sentiment and amorous lamentation, were adapted to descriptive poetry and the representations of rural imagery. A writer only that viewed the beauties of nature with poetic eyes, could have selected the vernal objects which compose the following exquisite ode^h.

The foote season, that bud and blome forth brings,
With grene hath clad the hill, and eke the vale;
The nightingale with fethers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale:

^e Behaviour. Looks.
^f Sorrow.

^s Fol. 2.
^h Fol. 2.

Somer is come, for every spray now springs.
 The hart hath hong his old hed on the pale:
 The buck in brake his winter coate he flings:
 The fishes flete with new repayred scale;
 The adder all her slough away she flings:
 The swift swalow pursueth the flies smale:
 The busy bee her hony now she mings.
 Winter is worne that was the flowers bale¹.

I do not recollect a more faithful and finished version of Martial's HAPPY LIFE than the following.

MARTIAL, the thinges that doe attain
 The happy life, be these I finde.
 The richesse left, not got with pain,
 The fruitfull grounde, the quiet minde.
 The equall friend, no grudge, no strife,
 No charge of rule, nor governaunce;
 Without disease, the healthful life:
 The household of continuance.
 The diet meane^k, no delicate fare,
 Trewe wisdom joynde with simplenesse:
 The night discharged of all care,
 Where wine the wit may not oppresse.
 The faithful wife without debate,
 Such slepes as may begile the night:
 Contented with thine owne estate,
 Ne wish for death, ne feare his might^l.

But Surrey was not merely the poet of idleness and gallantry. He was fitted both from nature and study, for the more solid and laborious parts of literature. He translated the second and fourth books of Virgil into blank verse^m: and it seems probable, that

^k Destruction.
^l Moderate.

¹ Fol. 16.

^m They were first printed in 1557. 12mo.

his

his active situations of life prevented him from completing a design of translating the whole Eneid.

This is the first composition in blank verse, extant in the English language. Nor has it merely the relative and accidental merit of being a curiosity. It is executed with great fidelity, yet not with a profane fervility. The diction is often poetical, and the versification varied with proper pauses. This is the description of Dido and Eneas going to the field, in the fourth book.

— At the threshold of her chamber-dore,
 The Carthage lords did on the Quene attend:
 The trampling steed, with gold and purple trapt,
 Chawing the foming bit ther fiercely stood.
 Then issued she, awayted with great train,
 Clad in a cloke of Tyre embrowderd riche.
 Her quyver hung behinde her backe, her tresse
 Knotted in gold, her purple vesture eke
 Buttred with gold. The Trojans of her train
 Before her go, with gladfom Iulus,
 Aeneas eke, the goodliest of the route,
 Makes one of them, and joyneth close the throng.
 Lyke when Apollo leaveth Lycia,
 His wintring place, and Xanthus' flood likewise,
 To visit Delos, his mother's mansion,
 Repairing eft and furnishing her quire:
 The Candians, and the folke of Driopes,
 With painted Agathyrsies, shoute and crye,
 Environing the altars round about;
 When that he walkes upon mount Cynthus' top,
 His sparkled tresse repress with garlandes softe
 Of tender leaves, and trussed up in golde:
 His quivering^a dartes clattering behind his back.
 So fresh and lustie did Aeneas seme.—
 But to the hills and wilde holtes when they came,
 From the rockes top the driven savage rose.

^a Perhaps the true reading is, instead of *quivering*, "quiver and darts."

Loe from the hills above, on thother side,
 Through the wide lawns they gan to take their course.
 The harts likewise, in troupes taking their flight,
 Rayfing the dust, the mountain-fast forsake.
 The childe Iulus, blithe of his swift steede^p
 Amids the plaine, now pricks by them, now these;
 And to encounter, wisheth oft in minde,
 The foming bore, in steede of fearfull beasts,
 Or lion brown, might from the hill descend.

The first stages of Dido's passion, with its effects on the rising city, are thus rendered.

—And when they al were gone,
 And the dimme moone doth eft withhold her light;
 And sliding^q starres provoked unto slepe:
 Alone she mournes within her palace voide,
 And sits her downe on her forsaken bed:
 And absent him she heares, when he is gone,
 And seeth eke. Oft in her lappe she holdes
 Ascanius, trapped by his father's forme.
 So to begile the love cannot be told^r!
 The turrets now arise not, erst begonne:
 Neither the youth welde armes, nor they avance
 The portes, nor other mete defence for warr.
 Broken there hang the workes, and mighty frames
 Of walles high raised, threting the skie.

The introduction of the wooden horse into Troy, in the same book, is thus described.

We cleft the walles, and closures of the towne,
 Whereto all helpe: and underfet the feet

^p So Milton in *Comus*, v. 59.

—Frolick of his full-grown age.

^q Falling.

^r Which cannot, &c.

With

With sliding rolles, and bound his neck with ropes.
 The fatal gin thus overclambe our walles,
 Stuft with armd men : about the which there ran
 Children and maides *, that holy carolles fang.
 And well were they whoes hands might touch the cordes !
 With thretning chere, thus slided through our town
 The subtill tree, to Pallas temple-ward.
 O native land, Ilion, and of the goddes
 The mansion placce ! O warlik walles of Troy !
 Four times it stopt in thentric of our gate,
 Four times the harnesse ' clattered in the wombe.

The shade of Hector, in the same book, thus appears.

Ah me ! What one ? That Hector how unlike,
 Which erst, returnd clad with Achilles spoiles !
 Or when he threw into the Grekish shippes
 The Trojan flame ! So was his beard defiled,
 His crisped lockes al clustred with his blood :
 With al such woundes as many he received,
 About the walles of that his native towne !
 Whom franckly thus, methought, I spake unto,
 With bitter teres, and dolefull deadly voice.
 " O Trojan light ! O only hope of thine !
 " What lettes so long thee staid ? Or from what costes,
 " Our most desired Hector, dost thou come ?
 " Whom, after slaughter of our many frends,
 " And travail of thy people, and thy towne,
 " Alweried, (lord !) how gladly we behold !

* That is, Boys and girls, *pueri innuptaeque puellae*. Anciently *Child* (or *Children*) was restrained to the young of the male sex. Thus, above, we have, " the *Child* " *Iulus*," in the original *Puer Ascanius*. So the *Children* of the chapel, signifies the *Boys* of the king's chapel. And in the

royal kitchen, the *Children*, i. e. the *Boys* of the Scullery. In the western counties, to this day, *Maid* simply and distinctly means *Girl*: as, " I have got a Boy and a *Maid*," — " My wife is brought to bed of a *Maid*, &c. &c." ' Arms. Armour.

“ What fory chauce hath stained thy lively face ?

“ Or why see I these woundes, alas so wide !”

He answerd nought, nor in my vain demaundes

Abode : but from the bottom of his brest

Sighing he sayd : “ Flee, flee, O goddesse son !

“ And save thee from the furie of this flame !”

This was a noble attempt to break the bondage of rhyme. But blank verse was now growing fashionable in the Italian poetry, the school of Surrey. Felice Figlinei, a Sanese, and Surrey's cotemporary, in his admirable Italian commentary on the ETHICS of Aristotle, entitled *FILOSOFIA MORALE SOPRA IL LIBRO D' ETHICA D'ARISTOTILE*, declaims against the barbarity of rhyme, and strongly recommends a total rejection of this Gothic ornament to his countrymen. He enforces his precept by his own example; and translates all Aristotle's quotations from Homer and Euripides into verse without rhyme. Gonsalvo Perez, the learned secretary to Philip of Spain, had also recently translated Homer's *Odyssie* into Spanish blank-verse. How much the excellent Roger Ascham approved of Surrey's disuse of rhyme in this translation from Virgil, appears from the following passage in his *SCHOLEMMASTER*, written about the year 1566.

“ The noble lord Thomas earle of Surrey, FIRST OF ALL
 “ ENGLISHMEN, in translating the fourth [and second] booke
 “ of Virgill: and Gonsalvo Perez, that excellent learned man,
 “ and secretarie to king Philip of Spayne”, in translating the
 “ ULYSSES of Homer out of the Greeke into Spanish, have
 “ both by good judgement avoyded the FAULT OF RYMING.
 “ — The spying of this fault now is not the curiositie of
 “ English eyes, but even the good judgement also of the best

^u I know of no English critic besides, who has mentioned Surrey's Virgil, except Bolton, a great reader of old English books. *HYPERCRIT.* p. 237. Oxon. 1772.

^v Among Ascham's *Epistles*, there is one to Perez, inscribed *Clarissimo viro D. Gon-*

salvo Perviso Regis Catholici Secretario primario et Consiliario intimo, Amico meo carissimo. In which Ascham recommends the ambassador sir William Cecil to his acquaintance and friendship. *EPISTOL. LIB. UN.* p. 228. b. edit. Lond. 1581.

“ that

“ that write in these dayes in Italie.—And you, that be able to
 “ understand no more than ye find in the Italian tong: and
 “ never went further than the schoole of PETRARCH and
 “ ARIOSTO abroade, or else of CHAUCER at home, though
 “ you have pleasure to wander blindlie still in your foule wronge
 “ way, envie not others, that seeke, as wise men have done
 “ before them, the FAYREST and RYHTEST way.— And
 “ therefore, even as Virgill and Horace deserve most worthie
 “ prayse, that they, spying the unperfitefnes in Ennius and
 “ Plautus, by trewe imitation of Homer and Euripides, brought
 “ poetrie to the same perfectnes in Latin as it was in Greeke,
 “ even so those, that by the same way would BENEFIT THEIR
 “ TONG and country, deserve rather thanks than disprayse.”

The revival of the Greek and Roman poets in Italy, excited all the learned men of that country to copy the Roman versification, and consequently banished the old Leonine Latin verse. The same classical idea operated in some degree on the vernacular poetry of Italy. In the year 1528, Trifino published his *ITALIA LIBERATA DI GOTI*, or, *ITALY DELIVERED FROM THE GOTHS*, an heroic poem, professedly written in imitation of the Iliad, without either rhyme, or the usual machineries of the Gothic romance. Trifino's design was to destroy the *TERZA RIMA* of Dante. We do not, however, find, whether it be from the facility with which the Italian tongue falls into rhyme, or that the best and established Italian poets wrote in the stanza, that these efforts to restore blank-verse, produced any lasting effects in the progress of the Italian poetry. It is very probable, that this specimen of the Eneid in blank-verse by Surrey, led the way to Abraham Fleming's blank-verse translation of Virgil's *Bucolics* and *Georgics*, although done in Alexandrines, published in the year 1589^y.

Lord Surrey wrote many other English poems which were never

^x B. ii. p. 54. b. 55. a. edit. 1589. ^y London, 4to.

published, and are now perhaps entirely lost. He translated the *ECCLESIASTES* of Solomon into English verse. This piece is cited in the Preface to the Translation of the Psalms, printed at London in 1567. He also translated a few of the Psalms into metre. These versions of Scripture shew that he was a friend to the reformation. Among his works are also recited, a Poem on his friend the young duke of Richmond, an Exhortation to the citizens of London, a Translation of Boccace's Epistle to Pinus, and a set of Latin epistles. Aubrey has preserved a poetical Epitaph, written by Surrey on sir Thomas Clere, his faithful retainer and constant attendant, which was once in Lambeth-church^y; and which, for its affection and elegance, deserves to be printed among the earl's poems. I will quote a few lines.

Shelton for love, Surrey for lord thee chase^z :
 (Aye me, while life did last that league was tender !)
 Tracing whose steps, thou sawest Kelfall blase,
 Laundersey burnt, and batterd Bulleyn's render^a :
 At Mortrell gates^b, hopeles of all recure,
 Thine earle halfe dead gave in thy hand his Will ;
 Which cause did thee this pining death procure,
 Ere summers foure tymes seven thou couldst fulfill.
 Ah, Clere ! if love had booted care or cost,
 Heaven had not wonne, nor earth so timely lost^c !

John Clerc, who travelled into Italy with Pace, an eminent linguist of those times, and secretary to Thomas duke of Norfolk father of lord Surrey, in a dedication to the latter, prefixed to his *TRETISE OF NOBILITIE* printed at London in 1543^d, has mentioned, with the highest commendations, many translations done by Surrey, from the Latin, Italian, French, and

^y See Aubrey's *SURREY*, V. 247.

^z Chose. ^a Surrender.

^b Towns taken by lord Surrey in the Bologne expedition.

^c He died in 1545. See Stowe's *CHRON.* p. 586. 588. edit. 1615.

^d Lond. 12mo. A translation from the French.

Spanish

Spanish languages. But these it is probable were nothing more than juvenile exercises.

Surrey, for his justness of thought, correctness of style, and purity of expression, may justly be pronounced the first English classical poet. He unquestionably is the first polite writer of love-verses in our language. It must, however, be allowed, that there is a striking native beauty in some of our love-verses written much earlier than Surrey's. But in the most savage ages and countries, rude nature has taught elegance to the lover.

S E C T.