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The History Of English Poetry

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

Warton, Thomas

London, 1774

Section XI. John Barbour's History of Robert Bruce, and Blind Harry's Sir William Wallace. Historical romances of recent events commence about the close of the fourteenth century. Chiefly composed by ...

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S E C T. XI.

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 strain of versification, expression, and poetical imagery, far superior to their age; and who consequently deserve to be mentioned in a general review of the progress of our national poetry. They have written two heroic poems. One of them is John Barbour, archdeacon of Aberdeen. He was educated at Oxford; and Rymer has printed an instrument for his safe passage into England, in order to prosecute his studies in that university, in the years 1357 and 1365^a. David Bruce, king of Scotland, gave him a pension for life, as a reward for his poem called the HISTORY OF ROBERT BRUCE, KING OF THE SCOTS^b. It was printed at Glasgow in the year 1671^c. A battle fought by lord Douglas is thus described.

When that thus thir two battles were
 Assembled, as I said you air,
 The Stewart Walter that then was,
 And the good lord als of Dowglas,
 In a battle when that they saw
 The earl, foroutten dread or aw,
 Assemble with his company
 On all that folk so sturdily,
 For to help him they held their way,
 And their battle with good array,

^a Fœd. vi. 31. 478.^b Tanner, Bibl. p. 73.^c 12^m.

Beside

Befide the earl a little by,
They fembled all fo hardily,
That their foes felt ther coming well;
For with weapons stallwort of steel,
They dang on them with all their might,
Their foes received well, I heght,
With fwords and fpears, and als with mafs,
The battle there fo fellon was,
And fo right great fpillling of blood,
That on the erd the flouces ftood.
The Scottifhmen fo well them bare,
And fo great flaugther made they there,
And fra fo feil the lives they reav'd,
That all the field was bloody leav'd.
That time that thir three battles were
All fide by fide fighting well near,
There might men hear many a dint,
And weapons upon arms fuint,
And might fee tumble knights and fteeds,
And many rich and royal weeds
Fouly defiled under feet.
Some held on loft, fome tint the fuet.
A long while fighting thus they were,
That men in no wife might hear there.
Men might hear nought but groans and dints
That flew, as men ftrike fire on flints.
They fought ilk ane fo eagerly,
That they made neither noife nor cry,
But dang on other at their might,
With weapons that were burnifht bright.
The arrows alfo thick there flaw,
(That they well might fay, that them faw)
That they a hideous fhower can ma;
For where they fell, I underta,

They

They left after them tokening,
That shall need, as I trow, leeching.
The English archers shot so fast,
That might their shot have any last,
It had been hard to Scottishmen.
But king Robert, that well can ken,
That their archers were perillous,
And their shot right hard and grievous,
Ordain'd forouth the assembly,
His marshal, with a great menzie,
Five hundred armed into steel,
That on light horse were horfed well,
For to prick amongst the archers,
And to assail them with their spears,
That they no leifure have to shoot.
This marshal that I hereof mute,
Sir Robert of Keith he was call'd,
And I before here have you tould.
When that he saw the battles so
Assemble, and together go,
And saw the archers shoot stoutly,
With all them of his company,
In hy upon them can he ride,
And overtake them at a fide,
And rush'd among them so rudely,
Sticking them so despiteously,
And in lik fusion bearing down,
And slaying them forout ransoun,
That they them skailed e'erilkane;
And, fra that time forth, there was nane
That assembled, shot for to ma.
When Scots archers saw that they fa
Reboted were, they wax'd hardy,
And with their might shot eagerly

Among

Among the horsemen that there rade,
 And wounds wide to them they made,
 And flew of them a full great deal.
 They bore them hardily and well;
 For fra that their foes archers were
 Skilled, as I said to you air,
 They more than they were by great thing,
 So that they dread not their shooting.
 They wax'd so hardy, that them thought,
 They should set all their foes at nought^e.

The following is a specimen of our author's talent at rural description. The verses are extremely soft.

This was in midst of month of May,
 When birds sing in ilka spray,
 Melland their notes with seemly soun,
 For softness of the sweet seasoun,
 And leaves of the branches spreeds,
 And blooms bright beside them breeds,
 And fields strowed are with flowers
 Well favouring of feir colours,
 And all thing worthis, blyth and gay^e.

The other wrote a poem on the exploits of Sir William Wallace. It was first printed in 1601. And very lately reprinted at Edinburgh in quarto, with the following title, "The acts and deeds of the most famous and valiant champion Sir William Wallace, knight, of Ellerslie. Written by BLIND HARRY in the year 1361. Together with ARNALDI BLAIR RELATIONES. Edinburgh, 1758." No circumstances of the life of our blind bard appear in Dempster^f. This poem, which consists of twelve books, is translated from the Latin of Robert Blare, or Blair, chaplain

^d p. 262.^e p. 326.^f See Dempst. viii. 349. 662.

to Sir William Wallace'. The following is a description of the morning, and of Wallace arming himself in his tent⁵.

Into a vale by a small river fair,
 On either side where wild deer made repair,
 Set watches out that wisely could them keep,
 To supper went, and timeously they sleep,
 Of meat and sleep they cease with suffisaunce,
 The night was mirk, overdrave the darksom chance,
 The merry day sprang from the orient,
 With beams bright illuminate occident,
 After Titan Phebus uprifeth fair,
 High in the sphere, the signs he made declare.
 Zephyrus then began his morning course,
 The sweet vapour thus from the ground resourse;
 The humble bregth down from the heaven avail
 In every mead, both frith, forest and dale.
 The clear rede among the rockis rang
 Through grene branches where the byrds blythly fang,
 With joyous voice in heavenly harmony,
 When Wallace thought it was no time to ly:
 He crossyd him, syn suddenly arose,
 To take the air out of his pallion goes
 Maister John Blair was ready to revefs,
 In goode intent syne bouned to the mafs.

⁴ Tit. GESTA WILLELMI WALLAS. See Dempst. ii. 148. He flourished in 1300. He has left another Latin poem, DE LIBERATA TYRANNIDE SCOTIA. Arnald Blair, mentioned in the title page in the text, probably Robert's brother, if not the same, was also chaplain to Wallace, and monk of Dumferling about the year 1327. Relat. ut supr. p. 1. But see p. 9, 10. In the fifth book of the Scotch poem we have this passage, p. 94. v. 533.

Maister JOHN BLAIR was oft in that message,
 A worthy clerk, both wise and als right sage,
 Levyt he was before in PARYS town, &c,
 He was the man that principell undertook,
 That first compild in dyte the Latin book,
 Of WALLACE life, right famous in renfown,
 And THOMAS GRAY parfoun of LIBERTOWN,
 With him they were and put in story all
 Oft one or both mickle of his travell, &c.
⁵ P. 229. B. viii. v. 65. The editor seems to have modernised the spelling.

When

When it was done, Wallace can him array,
 In his armore, which goodly was and gay;
 His shining shoes that birnisht was ful been,
 His leg-harnes he clapped on so clean,
 Pullane grees he braced on full fast,
 A close birnie with many fiker clasp,
 Breast-plate, brafars, that worthy were in wear:
 Beside him forth Jop could his basnet bear;
 His glittering gloves that graven on either side,
 He seemed well in battell to abide.
 His good girdle, and syne his buirly brand,
 A staffe of steel he gripped in his hand.
 The host him blest, &c.
 Adam Wallace and Boyd forth with him yeed
 By a river, throughout a florisht mead.
 And as they walk attour the fields so green,
 Out of the south they saw when that the queen
 Toward the host came riding soberly,
 And fifty ladies in her company, &c.

The four following lines on the spring are uncommonly terse and elegant.

Gentle Jupiter, with his mild ordinance,
 Both herb and tree reverts into pleafance;
 And fresh Flora her flowery mantle spread,
 In every dale both hop, hight, hill, and mead^a.

A different season of the year is here strongly painted.

The dark region appearing wonder fast,
 In November when October was past,
 The day failed through right course worthit short,
 To banisht man that is no great comfort:

^a Lib. ix. v. 22. ch. i. p. 250.

With their power in paths worthis gang,
 Heavy they think when that the night is lang.
 Thus good Wallace saw the night's messenger;
 Phebus had lost his fiery beams so clear:
 Out of the wood thei durst not turn that side
 For adverstours that in their way would hide¹.

The battle of Black-Ernside shews our author a master in another style of painting.

Kerlie beheld unto the bold heroun,
 Upon Fawdoun as he was looking down,
 A subtil stroke upward him took that tide
 Under the cheeks the grounden sword gart glide,
 By the mail good, both halfe and his craig-bane
 In funder strake; thus ended that chiftain,
 To ground he fell, feil folk about him throng,
 Treason, they cry'd, traitors are us among.
 Kerlie, with that, fled out soon at a side,
 His fellow Steven then thought no time to bide.
 The fray was great, and fast away they yeed,
 Both toward Ern; thus scaped they that dread.
 Butler for wo of weeping might not stint.
 Thus raklesly this good knight have they tint.
 They deemed all that it was Wallace men,
 Or else himself, though they could not him ken;
 He is right near, we shall him have but fail,
 This feeble wood may little him avail.
 Forty there past again to Saint Johnstoun,
 With this dead corps, to burying made it boun.
 Parted their men, fyne divers ways they rode,
 A great power at Doplín still there bode.
 To Dalwryeth the Butler past but let,
 At sundry fords the gate they unbeset,

¹ L. v. ch. 1. p. 78. v. 1.

To keep the wood while it wa, day they thought.
As Wallace thus in the thick forest fought,
For his two men in mind he had great pain,
He wist not well, if they were tane or slain,
Or scaped haill by any jeopardy.
Thirteen were left with him, no more had he ;
In the Gask-hall their lodging have they tane.
Fire got they soon, but meat then had they nane ;
Two sheep they took beside them of a fold,
Ordain'd to sup into that seemly hold :
Graithed in haste some food for them to dight :
So heard they blow rude horns upon hight.
Two sent he forth to look what it might be ;
They bode right long, and no tidings heard he,
But bousteous noise so bryvely blowing fast ;
So other two into the wood forth past.
None came again, but bousteously can blaw,
Into great ire he sent them forth on raw.
When that alone Wallace was leaved there,
The awful blast abounded meikle mare ;
Then trow'd he well they had his lodging seen ;
His sword he drew of noble metal keen,
Syne forth he went where at he heard the horn.
Without the door Fawdoun was him beforne,
As to his fight, his own head in his hand ;
A cros he made when he saw him so stand.
At Wallace in the head he fwakked there,
And he in haste soon hint it by the hair,
Syne out again at him he could it cast,
Into his heart he greatly was agast.
Right well he trow'd that was do sprit of man,
It was some devil, that sic malice began.
He wist uo wale there longer for to bide.
Up through the hail thus wight Wallace can glide,
To

To a clofe stair, the boards they rave in twin,
Fifteen foot large he lap out of that inn.
Up the water he fuddenly could fare,
Again he blink'd what pearance he faw there,
He thought he faw Fawdoun, that ugly fire,
That hail hall he had fet into a fire ;
A great rafter he had into his hand.
Wallace as then no longer would he ftand.
Of his good men full great marvel had he,
How they were tint through his feil fantafie.
Trust right well that all this was footh indeed,
Suppofe that it no point be of the creed.
Power they had with Lucifer that fell,
The time when he parted from heaven to hell.
By fuk mifchief if his men might be loft,
Drowned or flain among the Englifh hof ;
Or what it was in likenefs of Fawdoun.
Which brought his men to fudden confufion ;
Or if the man ended in ill intent,
Some wicked fprit again for him prefent.
I cannot fpeak of fuk divinity,
To clerks I will let all fic matters be :
But of Wallace, now forth I will you tell.
When he was won out of that peril fell,
Right glad was he that he had fcaped fa,
But for his men great mourning can he ma.
Flait by himfelf to the Maker above
Why he fuffer'd he fould fuk paining prove.
He wift not well if that it was God's will ;
Right or wrong his fortune to fulfil,
Had he pleas'd God, he trow'd it might not be
He fould him thole in fuk perplexitie.
But great courage in his mind ever drawe,
Of Englifhmen thinking amends to have.

As

As he was thus walking by him alone
Upon Ern side, making a piteous moan,
Sir John Butler, to watch the fords right,
Out from his men of Wallace had a fight;
The mist again to the mountains was gone,
To him he rode, where that he made his mone.
On loud he speir'd, What art thou walks that gate?
A true man, Sir, though my voyage be late;
Erands I pass from Down unto my lord,
Sir John Stewart, the right for to record,
In Down is now, newly come from the king.
Then Butler said, this is a felcouth thing,
You lied all out, you have been with Wallace,
I shall thee know, ere you come off this place,
To him he start the courser wonder wight,
Drew out a sword, so made him for to light.
Above the knee good Wallace has him tane,
Through thigh and brawn in sunder strake the bane.
Derfly to dead the knight fell on the land.
Wallace the horse soon seized in his hand,
An ackward stroke fyne took him in that stead,
His craig in two; thus was the Butler dead.
An Englishman saw their chiftain was slain,
A spear in rest he cast with all his main,
On Wallace drave, from the horse him to bear;
Warily he wrought, as worthy man in wear.
The spear he wan withouten more abode,
On horse he lap, and through a great rout rode;
To Dalwryeth he knew the ford full well:
Before him came feil stuffed in fine steel.
He strake the first, but bade, on the blasoun,
While horse and man both fleet the water down.
Another soon down from his horse he bare,
Stamped to ground, and drown'd withouten mare.

The

The third he hit in his harness of steel,
 Throughout the cost, the spear it brake some deal.
 The great power then after him can ride.
 He saw no wail there longer for to bide.
 His burnisht brand braithly in hand he bare,
 Whom he hit right they followed him na mare.
 To stuff the chase feil freiks followed fast,
 But Wallace made the gayest ay agast.
 The muir he took, and through their power yeed,
 The horse was good, but yet he had great dread
 For failing ere he wan unto a strength,
 The chase was great, skail'd over breadth and length,
 Through strong danger they had him ay in fight.
 At the Blackford there Wallace down can light,
 His horse stuffed, for way was deep and lang,
 A large great mile wightly on foot could gang.
 Ere he was hors'd riders about him cast,
 He saw full well long so he might not last.
 Sad men indeed upon him can renew,
 With returning that night twenty he flew,
 The fiercest ay rudely rebuted he,
 Keeped his horse, and right wisely can flee,
 While that he came the mickeft muir amang.
 His horse gave over, and would no further gang^m.

I will close these specimens with an instance of our author's allegorical invention.

In that slumber coming him thought he saw,
 An aged man fast toward him could draw,
 Soon by the hand he hint him hastily,
 I am, he said, in voyage charg'd with thee.
 A sword him gave of basely burnisht steel,
 Good son, he said, this wand you shall bruik well.

Of

^m p. 82.

Of topaz stone him thought the plummet was,
 Both hilt and hand all glittering like the glafs.
 Dear fon, he said, we tarry here too long,
 Thou shalt go see where wrought is meikle wrong;
 Then he him led to a mountain on hight,
 The world him thought he might see at a fight.
 He left him there, fyne soon from him he went,
 Thereof Wallace studied in his intent,
 To see him more he had still great desire,
 Therewith he saw begin a fellon fire,
 Which braithly burnt in breadth through all the land,
 Scotland all over, from Rofs to Solway-fand.
 Then soon to him there descended a queen,
 Illuminate, light, shining full bright and sheen;
 In her presence appeared so meikle light,
 That all the fire she put out of his sight,
 Gave him a wand of colour red and green,
 With a sapphire saved his face and eyn,
 Welcome, she said, I choofe thee for my love,
 Thou art granted by the great God above,
 To help people that suffer meikle wrong,
 With thee as now I may not tarry long,
 Thou shalt return to thy own use again,
 Thy dearest kin are here in meikle pain;
 This right region you must redeem it all,
 Thy last reward in earth shall be but small;
 Let not therefore, take redrefs of this miss,
 To thy reward thou shalt have lasting blifs.
 Of her right hand she beraught him a book,
 And humbly thus her leave full soon she took,
 Unto the cloud ascended off his sight.
 Wallace brake up the book in all his might.
 Into three parts the book well written was,
 The first writing was gros letters of brafs,

U u

The

The second gold, the third was silver sheen.
Wallace marvell'd what this writing should mean;
To read the book he busied him so fast,
His spirit again to waking mind is past,
And up he rose, syne soundly forth he went.
This clerk he found, and told him his intent
Of his vision, as I have said before,
Completely through, what needs any words more.
Dear son, he said, my wit unable is
To ranfack fik, for dread I say amifs;
Yet I shall deem, though my cunning be small,
God grant no charge after my words may fall.
Saint Andrew was gave thee that sword in hand,
Of saints he is the vower of Scotland;
That mountain is, where he had thee on hight,
Knowledge to have of wrong that thou must right;
The fire shall be fell tidings, ere ye part,
Which shall be told in many fundry airt.
I cannot well wit what queen that should be,
Whether Fortune, or our Lady so free,
Likely it is, by the brightness she brought,
Mother of him that all the world has wrought.
The pretty wand, I trow, by mine intent,
Assigns to you rule and cruel judgment;
The red colour, who graithly understood,
Betokens all to great battle and blood;
The green, courage, that thou art now among,
In trouble and war thou shalt continue long;
The sapphire stone she blessed thee withal,
Is lasting grace, will God, shall to thee fall;
The threefold book is but this broken land,
Thou must redeem by worthiness of hand;
The brass letters betokens but to this,
The great opprefs of war and meikle mis,

The

The which you shall bring to the right again,
 But you therefore must suffer meikle pain;
 The gold betokens honour and worthines,
 Victory in arms, that thou shalt have by grace;
 The silver shews clean life and heaven's blifs,
 To thy reward that mirth thou shalt not miss,
 Dread not therefore, be out of all despair.
 Further as now hereof I can na mare.

About the present period, historical romances of recent events seem to have commenced. Many of these appear to have been written by heralds^k. In the library of Worcester college at Oxford, there is a poem in French, reciting the achievements of Edward the Black Prince, who died in the year 1376. It is in the short verse of romance, and was written by the prince's herald, who attended close by his person in all his battles, according to the established mode of those times. This was John Chandois-herald, frequently mentioned in Froissart. In this piece, which is of considerable length, the names of the Englishmen are properly spelled, the chronology exact, and the epitaph^l, forming a sort of peroration to the narrative, the same as was ordered by the prince in his will^m. This poem, indeed, may seem to claim no place here, because it happens to be written in the French language: yet, exclusive of its subject, a circumstance I have mentioned, that it was composed by a herald, deserves particular attention, and throws no small illustration on the poetry of this era. There are several proofs which indicate that many romances of the fourteenth century, if not in verse, at least those written

^k See Le Pere Menestrier, Cheval. Ancien. c. v. p. 225. Par. 12^{mo}.

^l It is a fair and beautiful manuscript on vellum. It is an oblong octavo, and formerly belonged to Sir William Le Neve Clarendieux herald.

^m The hero's epitaph is frequent in romances. In the French romance of SAINTRE, written about this time, his epitaph is introduced.

ⁿ p. 150.

in prose, were the work of heralds. As it was their duty to attend their masters in battle, they were enabled to record the most important transactions of the field with fidelity. It was customary to appoint none to this office but persons of discernment, address, experience, and some degree of education. At solemn tournaments they made an essential part of the ceremony. Here they had an opportunity of observing accoutrements, armorial distinctions, the number and appearance of the spectators, together with the various events of the turney, to the best advantage: and they were afterwards obliged to compile an ample register of this strange mixture of foppery and ferocity. They were necessarily connected with the minstrells at public festivals, and thence acquired a facility of reciting adventures. A learned French antiquary is of opinion, that antiently the French heralds, called *Hiraux*, were the same as the minstrells, and that they fung metrical tales at festivals. They frequently received fees or largesse in common with the minstrells. They travelled into different countries, and saw the fashions of foreign courts, and foreign tournaments. They not only committed to writing the process of the lists, but it was also their

⁸ Le Pere Menestrier Cheval. Ancien. ut supr. p. 225. ch. v. "Que l'on croyoit "avoir l'Esprit, &c." Feron says, that they gave this attendance in order to make a true report. L'Instit. des Roys et Herauds, p. 44. a. See also Favin. p. 57. See a curious description in Froissart, of an interview between the Chandois herald, mentioned above, and a marshal of France, where they enter into a warm and very serious dispute concerning the *devises d'amour* borne by each army. Liv. i. ch. 161.

⁹ "L'un des principaux fonctions des "Herautes d'armes estoit se trouver au "jousts, &c. ou ils gardoient les ecus pen- "dans, recevoient les noms et les blasons "des chevaliers, en tenoient REGISTRE, "et en compoioient recueils, &c." Menestrier. Orig. des Armoir. p. 180. See also

p. 119. These registers are mentioned in Perceforest, xi. 68. 77.

¹⁰ Carpentier, Suppl. Du-Cang. Gloss. Lat. p. 750. tom. ii.

¹¹ Thus at St. George's feast at Windfor we have, "Diverfis heraldis et ministrallis, " &c." Ann. 21. Ric. ii. 9 Hen. vi. Apud Anstis, Ord. Gart. i. 56. 108. And again, Exit. Pell. M. ann. 22. Edw. iii. "Ma- "gistro Andreæ Roy Norreys, [a herald,] "Lybekin le Piper, et Hanakino filio suo, "et sex aliis menestrallis regis in denariis "eis liberatis de dono regis, in subsidium "expensarum suarum, lv. s. iv. d."—Exit. Pell. P. ann. 33. Edw. ii. "Willielmo "Volaunt regi heraldorum et ministrallis "existentibus apud Smithfield in ultimo "hastiludio de dono regis, xl." I could give many other proofs.

business,

business, at magnificent feasts, to describe the number and parade of the dishes, the quality of the guests, the brilliant dresses of the ladies, the courtesy of the knights, the revels, disguisings, banquets, and every other occurrence most observable in the course of the solemnity. Spenser alludes expressly to these heraldic details, where he mentions the splendor of Florimel's wedding.

To tell the glory of the feast that day,
The goodly servyse, the devisefull fights,
The bridegrome's state, the bride's most rich array,
The pride of ladies, and the worth of knights,
The royall banquettes, and the rare delights,
Were work fit for an HERALD, not for me¹.

I suspect that Chaucer, not perhaps without ridicule, glances at some of these descriptions, with which his age abounded; and which he probably regarded with less reverence, and read with less edification, than did the generality of his cotemporary readers.

Why shulde I tellen of the rialte
Of that wedding? or which course goth befor?
Who blowith in a trumpe, or in a horn²?

Again, in describing Cambuscan's feast.

Of which shall I tell all the array,
Then would it occupie a sommer's day:
And eke it nedeth not to devise,
At everie course the order of servise:
I will not tellen as now of her strange fewes,
Ne of her swans, ne of her heronfewes³.

¹ F. Q. v. iii. 3.

² Man of Lawe's T. v. 704.

³ Squires T. v. 83.

And

And at the feast of Theseus, in the KNIGHT'S TALE *.

The minstralcie, the service at the feste,
 The grete gestes also to the most and leste,
 The riche array of Theseus palleis,
 Ne who sat first or last upon the deis,
 What ladies feyrif ben, or best daunfing,
 Or which of them can best dauncin or fing,
 Ne who most felingly spekith of love,
 Ne what haukes sittin on perchis above,
 Ne what houndes ligen on the floure adoun,
 Of all this now I make no mentioun.

In the FLOURE and the LEAF, the same poet has described, in eleven long stanzas, the procession to a splendid tournament, with all the prolixity and exactness of a herald †. The same affectation, derived from the same sources, occurs often in Ariosto.

It were easy to illustrate this doctrine by various examples. The famous French romance of SAINTRE was evidently the performance of a herald. John De Saintre, the knight of the piece, was a real person, and, according to Froissart, was taken prisoner at the battle of Poitiers, in the year 1356 ‡. But the compiler confounds chronology, and ascribes to his hero many pieces of true history belonging to others. This was a common practice in these books. Some authors have supposed that this romance appeared before the year 1380 §. But there are reasons to prove, that it was written by Antony de la Sale, a Burgundian, author of a book of CEREMONIES, from his name very quaintly entitled LA SALLADE, and frequently cited by our learned antiquary Selden ¶. This Antony came into England to see the fo-

* V. 2199. p. 17. Urr.

† From v. 204. to v. 287.

‡ Froissart, Hist. i. p. 178.

§ Byshe, Not. in Upton. Milit. Offic. p. 56. Menestrier, Orig. Arm. p. 23.

¶ Tit. Hon. p. 413, &c.

lemnity

lemnity of the queen's coronation in the year 1445^a. I have not seen any French romance which has preserved the practices of chivalry more copiously than this of SAINTRE. It must have been an absolute master-piece for the rules of tilting, martial customs, and public ceremonies prevailing in its author's age. In the library of the Office of Arms, there remains a very accurate description of a feast of Saint George, celebrated at Windsor in 1471^b. It appears to have been written by the herald Blue-mantle Pourfivant. Meneſtrier ſays, that Guillaume Rucher, herald of Henault, has left a large treatiſe, deſcribing the tournaments annually celebrated at Liſle in Flanders^c. In the reign of Edward the Fourth, John Smarte, a Norman, garter king at arms, deſcribed in French the tournament held at Bruges, for nine days, in honour of the marriage of the duke of Burgundy with Margaret the king's daughter^d. There is a French poem, entitled, *Les noms et les armes des ſeigneurs, &c. a l'aſſiege de Karlewerch en Eſcoce*, 1300^e. This was undoubtedly written by a herald. The author thus deſcribes the banner of John duke of Bretagne.

Baniere avoit cointee et paree
De or et de aſur eſchequeree
Au rouge ourle o jaunes lupars
Determinnee eſtoit la quarte pars^f.

^a Anſt. Ord. Gart. ii. 321.

^b MSS. Offic. Arm. M. 15. fol. 12. 13.

^c "Guillaume Rucher, heraut d'armes du titre de Heynaut, a fait un gros volume des rois de l'Épinette a Liſle en Flanders; c'eſt une ceremonie, ou un feſte, dont il a decrit les joutes, tournois, noms, armoiries, livrees, et equipages de divers ſeigneurs, qui ſe rendoient de divers endroits, avec le catalogues de rois de cette feſte." Meneſtr. l'Orig. des Armoir. p. 64.

^d See many other inſtances in MSS. Harl. 69. fol. entit. THE BOOKE OF CERTAINE

TRIUMPHES. See alſo APPENDIX to the new edition of Leland's COLLECTANEA.

^e MSS. Cott. Brit. Muſ.

^f The biſhop of Gloceſter has moſt obligingly condeſcended to point out to me another ſource, to which many of the romances of the fourteenth century owed their exiſtence. Montfaucon, in his MONUMENS DE LA MONARCHIE FRANÇOISE, has printed the *Statuts de l'Ordre du Saint Eſprit au droit deſir ou du Noeud etabli par Louis d'Anjou roi de Jeruſalem et Sicile en 1352-3-4.* tom. ii. p. 329. This was an annual

The pompous circumstances of which these heraldic narratives consisted, and the minute prolixity with which they were displayed, seem to have infected the professed historians of this age. Of this there are various instances in Froissart, who had no other design than to compile a chronicle of real facts. I will give one example out of many. At a treaty of marriage between our Richard the second and Isabel daughter of Charles the fifth king of France, the two monarchs, attended with a noble retinue, met and formed several encampments in a spacious plain, near the castle of Guynes. Froissart expends many pages in relating at large the costly furniture of the pavilions, the riches of the side-boards, the profusion and variety of sumptuous liquors, spices, and dishes, with their order of service, the number of the attendants, with their address and exact discharge of duty in their respective offices, the presents of gold and precious stones made on both sides, and a thousand other particulars of equal importance, relating to the parade of this royal interview*. On this account, Caxton, in his exhortation to the knights of his age, ranks Froissart's history, as a book of chivalry, with the romances of Lancelot and Percival; and recommends it to their attention, as a manual equally calculated to inculcate

annual celebration *au Chafel de l'Euf enchanti du merveilleux peril*. The castle, as appears by the monuments which accompany these statutes, was built at the foot of the obscure grot of the ENCHANTMENTS of Virgil. The statutes are as extraordinary as if they had been drawn up by Don Quixote himself, or his assessors the curate and the barber. From the seventh chapter we learn, that the knights who came to this yearly festival at the *chafel de l'euf*, were obliged to deliver in writing to the clerks of the chapel of the castle their yearly adventures. Such of these histories as were thought worthy to be recorded, the

clerks are ordered to transcribe in a book, which was called *Le livre des avenemens aux chevaliers*, &c. *Et demorra le dit livre toujours en la dite chapelle*. This sacred register certainly furnished from time to time ample materials to the romance-writers. And this circumstance gives a new explanation to a reference which we so frequently find in romances: I mean, that appeal which they so constantly make to some authentic record.

* See Froissart's *CRONYCLE*, translated by Lord Berners. Pinson, 1523. vol. ii. f. 242.

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the knightly virtues of courage and courtesy ^h. This indeed was in an age when not only the courts of princes, but the castles of barons, vied with one another in the lustre of their shews: when tournaments, coronations, royal interviews, and solemn festivals, were the grand objects of mankind. Froissart was an eye-witness of many of the ceremonies which he describes. His passion seems to have been that of seeing magnificent spectacles, and of hearing reports concerning them ⁱ. Although a canon of two churches, he passed his life in travelling from court to court, and from castle to castle ^k. He thus, either from his own observation, or the credible informations of others, easily procured suitable materials for a history, which professed only to deal in sensible objects, and those of the most splendid and conspicuous kind. He was familiarly known to two kings of England, and one of Scotland ^l. But the court which he most admired was that of Gaston earl of Foix, at Orlaix in Bearn; for, as he himself acquaints us, it was not only the most brilliant in Europe, but the grand center for tidings of martial adventures ^m. It was crowded with knights of England and Arragon. In the mean time it must not be forgot, that Froissart, who from his childhood was strongly attached to carousals, the music of minstrels, and the sports of hawking and hunting ⁿ, cultivated the poetry of the troubadours, and was a writer of romances ^o. This turn, it must

^h *Book of the Order of Chivalry or Knighthood: translated out of the Frenche and imprinted by Wylliam Caxton. S. D. Perhaps 1484. 4^{to}.*

ⁱ His father was a painter of armories. This might give him an early turn for shews. See *M. de la Carne de S. Palaye, Mem. Lit. tom. x. p. 664. edit. 4^{to}.*

^k He was originally a clerk of the chamber to Philippa, queen of Edward the third. He was afterwards canon and treasurer of Chimay in Henault, and of Lille in Flanders; and chaplain to Guy Earl of

Castellon. Labor. *Introd. a l'Hist de Charles vi. p. 69.* Compare also Froissart's *Chron. ii. f. 29. 305. 319.* And Bullart, *Academ. des Arts et des Scienc. i. p. 125. 126.*

^l *Cron. ii. f. 158. 161.*

^m *Cron. ii. f. 30.* This was in 1381.

ⁿ See *Mem. Lit. ut supr. p. 665.*

^o Speaking of the death of king Richard, Froissart quotes a prediction from the old French prose romance of *BEURT*, which he says was fulfilled in that catastrophe. *liv. iv. c. 119.* Froissart will be mentioned again as a poet.

be confessed, might have some share in communicating that romantic cast to his history which I have mentioned. During his abode at the court of the earl of Foix, where he was entertained for twelve weeks, he presented to the earl his collection of the poems of the duke of Luxemburgh, consisting of sonnets, balades, and virelays. Among these was included a romance, composed by himself, called, MELIADER, or THE KNIGHT OF THE SUN OF GOLD. Gaston's chief amusement was to hear Froissart read this romance^p every evening after supper^q. At his introduction to Richard the second, he presented that brilliant monarch with a book beautifully illuminated, engrossed with his own hand, bound in crimson velvet, and embellished with silver bosses, clasps, and golden roses, comprehending all the matters of AMOURS and MORALITIES, which in the course of twenty-four years he had composed^r. This was in the year 1396. When he left

^p I take this opportunity of remarking, that romantic tales or histories appear at a very early period to have been READ as well as SUNG at feasts. So Wace in the *Roman du Rou*, in the British Museum, above-mentioned.

Doit l'en les vers et les regestes,
Et les estoires LIRE as festes.

^q Froissart brought with him for a present to Gaston Earl of Foix four greyhounds, which were called by the romantic names of *Tristram*, *Hector*, *Brus*, and *Roland*. Gaston was so fond of hunting, that he kept upwards of six hundred dogs in his castle. M. de la Curne, ut sup. p. 676. 678. He wrote a treatise on hunting, printed 1520. See Verdier, Art. *GASTON Comte de Foix*. In illustration of the former part of this note, Crescimbeni says, "Che in molte nobilissime famiglie Italiane, ha 400 a più anni, passarono i nomi de' Lancillotti, de' Tristrami, de' Galvani, di Galeotti, delle Isotte, [Isoulde] delle Genevre, e d'altri cavalieri, à dame in esse TAVOLA RITONDA operanti, &c." *Istor. Volg. Poef.* vol. i. lib. v. p. 327. Venez. 4^{to}.

^r I should think that this was his romance of MELIADER. Froissart says, that the king at receiving it, asked him what the book treated of. He answered *d'Amour*. The king, adds our historian, seemed much pleased at this; and examined the book in many places, for he was fond of reading as well as speaking French. He then ordered Richard Crenon, the chevalier in waiting, to carry it into his privy chamber, *dont il me fit bonne chere*. He gave copies of the several parts of his chronicle, as they were finished, to his different patrons. Le Laboureur says, that Froissart sent fifty-six quires of his *ROMAN AU CRONIQUE*s to Guillaume de Bailly an illuminator; which, when illuminated, were intended as a present to the king of England. *Hist.* ch. vi. *En la vie de Louis duc d'Anjou.* p. 67. seq. See also *Cron.* i. iv. c. 1.—iii. 26. There are two or three fine illuminated copies of Froissart now remaining among the royal manuscripts in the British Museum. Among the stores of Henry the eighth at his manor of Bedington in Surrey, I find the fashionable reading of the times exemplified in the following books,

England the same year; the king sent him a massy goblet of silver, filled with one hundred nobles'.

As we are approaching to Chaucer, let us here stand still, and take a retrospect of the general manners. The tournaments and caroufals of our antient princes, by forming splendid assemblies of both sexes, while they inculcated the most liberal sentiments of honour and heroism, undoubtedly contributed to introduce ideas of courtesy, and to encourage decorum. Yet the national manners still retained a great degree of ferocity, and the ceremonies of the most refined courts in Europe had often a mixture of barbarism, which rendered them ridiculous. This absurdity will always appear at periods when men are so far civilised as to have lost their native simplicity, and yet have not attained just ideas of politeness and propriety. Their luxury was inelegant, their pleasures indelicate, their pomp cumbersome and unwieldy. In the mean time it may seem surprising, that the many schools of philosophy which flourished in the middle ages, should not have corrected and polished the times. But as their religion was corrupted by superstition, so their philosophy degenerated into sophistry. Nor is it science alone, even if founded on truth, that will polish nations.

books, viz. "Item, a great book of parchment written and lymned with gold of a graver's work *De Confessione Amantis*, with xviii other bookes, Le premier volume de Lancelot, FROISSART, Le grant voiage de Jerusalem, Enguerain de Montfrelot, &c." MSS. Harl. 1419. f. 382. Froissart was here properly classed. Froissart says, that he accompanied the king to various palaces, "A Elten, a Ledos, a Kinkelove, a Cenes, a Cer-tesée et a Windsor." That is, Eltham, Leeds, Kingston, Chertsey, &c. Cron. liv. iv. c. 119. p. 348. The French are not

much improved at this day in spelling English places and names.

Cron. f. 251. 252. 255. 319. 348. Bayle, who has an article on Froissart, had no idea of searching for anecdotes of Froissart's life in his CHRONICLE. Instead of which, he swells his notes on this article with the contradictory accounts of Moreri, Vossius, and others: whose disputes might have been all easily settled by recurring to Froissart himself, who has interperfed in his history many curious particulars relating to his own life and works.

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For this purpose, the powers of imagination must be awakened and exerted, to teach elegant feelings, and to heighten our natural sensibilities. It is not the head only that must be informed, but the heart must also be moved. Many classic authors were known in the thirteenth century, but the scholars of that period wanted taste to read and admire them. The pathetic or sublime strokes of Virgil would be but little relished by theologians and metaphysicians.

S E C T.