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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, 1781

Section XXXII. Sackville's Legend of Buckingham in the Mirrour of
Magistrates. Additions by Higgins. Account of him. View of the early
editions of his Collection. Specimen of Higgin's Legend of ...

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51323](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51323)

S E C T. XXXII.

INOW return to the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES*, and to Sackville's Legend of Buckingham, which follows his *INDUCTION*.

The Complaynt of HENRYE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, is written with a force and even elegance of expression, a copiousness of phraseology, and an exactness of versification, not to be found in any other parts of the collection. On the whole, it may be thought tedious and languid. But that objection unavoidably results from the general plan of these pieces. It is impossible that soliloquies of such prolixity, and designed to include much historical and even biographical matter, should every where sustain a proper degree of spirit, pathos, and interest. In the exordium are these nervous and correct couplets.

Whom flattering Fortune falsely so beguilde,
That loe, she slew, where earst ful smooth she smilde.

Again,

And paynt it forth, that all estates may knowe :
Have they the warning, and be mine the woe.

Buckingham is made to enter thus rapidly, yet with much address, into his fatal share of the civil broils between York and Lancaster.

But what may boot to stay the sisters three,
When Atropos perforce will cut the thred ?
The dolefull day was come, when you might see
Northampton field with armed men orespred.

In

In these lines there is great energy.

O would to God the cruell dismall day
That gave me light fyrst to behold thy face,
With foule eclipse had rest my sight away,
The unhappie hower, the time, and eke the day, &c.

And the following are an example of the simple and sublime united.

And thou, Alecto, feede me with thy foode!
Let fall thy serpents from thy snaky heare!
For such reliefe well fits me in my moode,
To feed my plaint with horroure and with feare!
With rage afresh thy venomd worme areare.

Many comparifons are introduced by the distressed speaker. But it is common for the best poets to forget that they are describing what is only related or spoken. The captive Proteus has his simile of the nightingale; and Eneas decorates his narrative of the disastrous conflagration of Troy with a variety of the most laboured comparifons.

Buckingham in his reproaches against the traitorous behaviour of his antient friend Banastre, utters this forcible exclamation, which breathes the genuine spirit of revenge, and is unloaded with poetical superfluities.

Hated be thou, disdaine of everie wight,
And pointed at whereever thou shalt goe:
A traitorous wretch, unworthy of the light
Be thou esteemde: and, to encrease thy woe,
The sound be hatefull of thy name alsoe.
And in this sort, with shame and sharpe reproch,
Leade thou thy life, till greater grief approach.

The ingenious writers of these times are perpetually deserting propriety for the sake of learned allusions. Buckingham exhorts the peers and princes to remember the fate of some of the most

K k 2

renowned

renowned heroes of antiquity, whose lives and misfortunes he relates at large, and often in the most glowing colours of poetry. Alexander's murder of Clitus is thus described in stanzas, pronounced by the poet and not by Buckingham.

And deeply grave within your stonie harts
The dreerie dole, that mightie Macedo
With teares unfolded, wrapt in deadlie smarts,
When he the death of Clitus forrowed so,
Whom erst he murdred with the deadlie blow;
Raught in his rage upon his friend so deare,
For which, behold loe how his panges appeare!

The launced speare he writhes out of the wound,
From which the purple blood spins in his face:
His heinous guilt when he returned found,
He throwes himself upon the corps, alas!
And in his armes howe oft doth he imbrace
His murdred friend! And kissing him in vaine,
Forth flowe the floudes of salt repentant raine.

His friendes amazde at such a murther done,
In fearfull flockes begin to shrink away;
And he thereat, with heapes of grief fordone,
Hateth himselfe, wishing his latter day.—

He calls for death, and loathing longer life,
Bent to his bane refuseth kindlie foode,
And plungde in depth of death and dolours strife
Had queld^a himselfe, had not his friendes withstoode.
Loe he that thus has shed the guiltlesse bloode,
Though he were king and keper over all,
Yet chose he death, to guerdon death withall.

^a Killed. Manqueller is murderer.

This

This prince, whose peere was never under sunne,
 Whose glistening fame the earth did overglide,
 Which with his power the worlde welnigh had wonne,
 His bloody handes himselfe could not abide,
 But folly bent with famine to have dide,
 The worthie prince deemed in his regard
 That death for death could be but just reward.

Our *MIRROUR*, having had three new editions in 1563^b, 1571,
 and 1574^c, was reprinted in quarto in the year 1587^d, with the
 addition of many new lives, under the conduct of John Higgins.

Higgins lived at Winsham in Somersetsshire^e. He was edu-
 cated at Oxford, was a clergyman, and engaged in the instruc-
 tion of youth. As a preceptor of boys, on the plan of a former
 collection by Nicholas Udal, a celebrated master of Eton school,
 he compiled the *FLOSCULI OF TERENCE*, a manual famous in
 its time, and applauded in a Latin epigram by the elegant Latin
 encomiast Thomas Newton of Cheshire^f. In the pedagogic
 character he also published "*HOLCOT'S DICTIONARIE*, newlie
 "corrected, amended, set in order, and enlarged, with many
 "names of men, townes, beastes, fowles, etc. By which you
 "may finde the Latine or Frenche of anie Englishe worde you
 "will. By John Higgins, late student in Oxeforde^g." In an
 engraved title-page are a few English verses. It is in folio, and
 printed for Thomas Marthe at London, 1572. The dedication
 to sir George Peckham knight, is written by Higgins, and is a

^b This edition, printed by Thomas
 Marthe, has six leaves, with a table of
 contents at the end.

^c This edition, printed also for T.
 Marthe, is improperly enough entitled
 "The Last Parte of the *MIRROUR FOR*
 "MAGISTRATES, &c." But it contains
 all that is in the foregoing editions, and
 ends with *JANE SHORE, OR SHORE'S*
WIFE. It has 163 leaves. In the title
 page the work is said to be "Newly cor-
 "rected and amended." They are all in
 quarto, and in black letter.

^d But in the Preface Higgins says he
 began to prepare it twelve years before.
 In imitation of the title, a story-book was
 published called the *MIRROUR OF MIRTH*,
 by R. D. 1583. bl. let. 4to. Also *The*
MIRROUR OF THE MATHEMATIKES, A
MIRROUR OF MONSTERS, &c.

^e DEDICATION, ut infr.

^f In *TERENTII FLOSCULOS N. Udalli et*
J. Higgins opera descriptis. ENCOM. fol. 128.
 It also prefixed to the book, with others.

^g Perhaps at Trinity college, where one
 of both his names occurs in 1566.

good

good specimen of his classical accomplishments. He calls Peckham his principal friend, and the most eminent patron of letters. A recommendatory copy of verses by Churchyard the poet is prefixed, with four Latin epigrams by others. Another of his works in the same profession is the NOMENCLATOR of Adrian Junius, translated into English, in conjunction with Abraham Flemming, and printed at London, for Newberie and Durham, in 1585^b. It is dedicated in Latin to his most bountiful patron Doctor Valentine, master of Requests, and dean of Wells, from Winsham¹, 1584. From this dedication, Higgins seems to have been connected with the school of Ilminster, a neighbouring town in Somersetshire². He appears to have been living so late as the year 1602. For in that year he published an Answer to William Perkins, a forgotten controversialist, concerning Christ's descent into hell, dedicated from Winsham.

To the MIRROR OF MAGISTRATES Higgins wrote a new INDUCTION in the octave stanza; and without assistance of friends, began a new series from Albanact the youngest son of Brutus, and the first king of Albanie or Scotland, continued to the emperor Caracalla¹. In this edition by Higgins, among the pieces after the conquest, first appeared the Life of CARDINAL WOLSEY, by Churchyard^m; of SIR NICHOLAS BURDET, by Baldwinⁿ; and of ELEANOR COBHAM^o, and of HUMFREY DUKE OF GLOUCESTER^p, by Ferrers. Also the Legend of KING JAMES THE FOURTH OF SCOTLAND^q,

^b Octavo.

¹ The Dedication of his MIRROR TO MAGISTRATES is from the same place.

² He says, that he translated it in London.

^m Quo facto, novus interpres Waldenus, "Hmestrie gymnasiarcha, moriens, priusquam manum operi summam admovisset, me amicum veterem suum omnibus libris suis et hoc imprimis Nomenclatore [his translation] donavit." But Higgins found his own version better, which he therefore published, yet with a part of his friend's.

¹ At fol. 108. a. The two last lives in the latter, or what may be called Bald-

win's part of this edition, are JANE SHORE and CARDINAL WOLSEY by Churchyard. Colophon, "Imprinted at London by Henry Marthe, being the assigne of Thomas Marthe neare to saint Dunstons church in Fleetstreete, 1587." It has 272 leaves. The last signature is M m 4.

^m Fol. 265. b.

ⁿ Fol. 244. a.

^o Fol. 140. b.

^p Fol. 146. a.

^q Fol. 253. b.

said

said to have been penned *fiftie yeares ago**, and of FLODDEN FIELD, said to be of equal antiquity, and subscribed FRANCIS DINGLEY', the name of a poet who has not otherwise occurred. Prefixed is a recommendatory poem in stanzas by the abovementioned Thomas Newton of Cheshire', who understood much more of Latin than of English poetry.

The most poetical passage of Higgins's performance in this collection is in his Legend of QUEENE CORDILA, or Cordelia, king Lear's youngest daughter". Being imprisoned in a dungeon, and *coucht on strawe*, she sees amid the darkness of the night a *grievly ghost* approach,

Eke nearer still with stealing steps shee drewe:
Shee was of colour pale and deadly hewe.

Her garment was figured with various sorts of imprisonment, and pictures of violent and premature death.

Her clothes resembled thousand kindes of thrall,
And pictures plaine of *hastened deathes* withall.

Cordelia, in extreme terror, asks,

— What wight art thou, a foe or *fawning* friend?
If Death thou art, I pray thee make an end —
But th' art not Death! — Art thou some Fury sent
My woefull corps with paynes more to torment?

With that she spake, " I am thy friend DESPAYRE. —

* * * * *

" Now if thou art to dye no whit afrayde
" Here shalt thou choose of Instruments, beholde,
" Shall rid thy restlesse life." —

* Fol. 255. b.
* Fol. 258. b.

* Subscribed THOMAS NEWTONUS *Cystris*
trifhyrius, 1587. * Fol. 36. b.

DESPAIRE

DESPAIR then, throwing her robe aside, shews Cordelia a thousand instruments of death, knives, sharpe swordes, and ponyards, *all bedyde with bloode and poysons*. She presents the sword with which queen Dido slew herself.

“Lo! here the blade that Dido’ of Carthage hight, &c.

Cordelia takes this sword, *but doubtfull yet to dye*. DESPAIR then represents to her the state and power which she enjoyed in France, her troops of attendants, and the pleasures of the court she had left. She then points out her present melancholy condition and dreary situation.

She shewde me all the dongeon where I sate,
The dankish walles, the darkes, and bade me smell
And byde the favour if I like it well.

Cordelia gropes for the sword, or *fatall knife*, in the dark, which DESPAIR places in her hand.

DESPAYRE to ayde my senceless limmes was glad,
And gave the blade: to end my woes she bad.

At length Cordelia’s fight fails her so that she can see only DESPAIR who exhorts her to strike.

And by her elbowe DEATH for me did watch.

DESPAIR at last gives the blow. The temptation of the Red-crosse knight by DESPAIR in Spenser’s FAERIE QUEENE, seems to have been copied, yet with high improvements, from this scene. These stanzas of Spenser bear a strong resemblance to what I have cited from CORDELIA’S Legend.

Then gan the villaine * him to oueraw,
And brought unto him swords, ropes, poysons, fire,
And all that might him to perdition draw;

* That is, DESPAIR.

And

And bade him chuse what death he would desire :
For death was due to him that had prouokt God's ire.

But when as none of them he sawe him take,
He to him raught a dagger sharpe and keene,
And gaue it him in hand : his hand did quake
And tremble like a leafe of aspin greene,
And troubled bloud through his pale face was seene
To come and goe, with tydinges from the hart,
As it a running messenger had beene.
At last, resolv'd to worke his finall smart
He lifted up his hand that backe againe did start *.

The three first books of the FAERIE QUEENE were published in 1590. Higgins's Legend of Cordelia in 1587.

At length the whole was digested anew with additions, in 1610, by Richard Niccols, an ingenious poet, of whom more will be said hereafter, under the following title. "A MIRROR FOR MAGISTRATES", *being a true Chronicle-history of the vntimely falles of such vnfortunate princes and men of note as haue happened since the first entrance of Brute into this Iland vntill this our age. NEWLY ENLARGED with a last part called a WINTER NIGHT'S VISION being an addition of such Tragedies especially famous as are exempted in the former Historie, with a poem annexed called ENGLANDS ELIZA.* At London, imprinted by Felix Kyngston, 1610 *." Niccols arranged his edition thus. Higgins's INDUCTION is at the head of the Lives from Brutus to the Conquest. Those from the conquest to LORD CROMWELL'S legend written by Drayton and now

* FAER. QU. i. x. 50.

† Of the early use in the middle ages of the word SPECULUM as the title of a book, see Joh. Finnaeus's DISSERTATIO-HISTORICA-LITTERARIA, prefixed to the

KONGS-SKUGG-SIO, or ROYAL MIRROR, an antient prose work in Norvegian, written about 1170, printed in 1768, 4to. fol. xviii.

* A thick quarto.

first added^a, are introduced by Sackville's INDUCTION. After this are placed such lives as had been before omitted, ten in number, written by Niccols himself, with an INDUCTION^b. As it illustrates the history of this work, especially of Sackville's share in it, I will here insert a part of Niccols's preface prefixed to those TRAGEDIES which happened after the conquest, beginning with that of Robert Tresilian. "Having hitherto
 " continued the storie from the first entrance of BRUTE into
 " this island, with the FALLES of such PRINCES as were neuer
 " before this time in one volume comprised, I now proceed
 " with the rest, which take their beginning from the Conquest:
 " whose penmen being many and diuerse, all diuerslie affected
 " in the method of this their MIRROUR, I purpose onlie to
 " follow the intended scope of that most honorable personage,
 " who by how much he did surpass the rest in the eminence of
 " his noble condition, by so much he hath exceeded them all in
 " the excellencie of his heroicall stile, which with golden pen
 " he hath limmed out to posteritie in that worthie object of his
 " minde the TRAGEDIE OF THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM,
 " and in his Preface then intituled MASTER SACKVILLS
 " INDUCTION. This worthy president of learning intended to
 " perfect all this storie of himselfe from the Conquest. Being
 " called to a more serious expence of his time in the great state
 " affaires of his most royall ladie and soueraigne, he left the
 " dispose thereof to M. Baldwine, M. Ferrers, and others, the
 " composers of these Tragedies: who continuing their methode,
 " which was by way of dialogue or interlocution betwixt euerie
 " Tragedie, gaue it onlie place before the duke of Buckingham's
 " COMPLAINT. Which order I since hauing altered, haue
 " placed the INDUCTION in the beginnige, with euerie Tra-
 " gedie following according to succession and iust computation
 " of time, which before was not obserued^c."

^a Drayton wrote three other legends on this plan, Robert duke of Normandy, Matilda, and Pierce Gaveston, of which I shall speak more particularly under that writer.

^b Fol. 555.

^c Fol. 253. Compare Baldwyne's Prologue at fol. cxiv, b, edit. 1559. ut supr.

In the Legend of king Richard the Third, Niccols appears to have copied some passages from Shakespeare's Tragedy on that history. In the opening of the play Richard says,

Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
 Our bruised arms hung up for monuments :
 Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings ;
 Our dreadfull marches to delightfull meafures.
 Grim-vifag'd War hath smooth'd his wrinkled front ;
 And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds,
 To fright the souls of fearfull adverbaries,
 He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
 To the lascivious pleasing of a lute^c.

These lines evidently gave rise to part of Richard's soliloquy in Niccols's Legend.

— The battels fought in field before
 Were turn'd to meetings of sweet amitie :
 The war-god's thundring cannons dreadfull rore,
 And rattling drum-sounds warlike harmonic,
 To sweet-tun'd noise of pleasing minstrelsie. —

God Mars laid by his Launce and tooke his Lute,
 And turn'd his rugged frownes to smiling lookes ;
 In stead of crimson fields, warres fatall fruit,
 He bathed his limbes in Cypre's warbling brookes,
 And set his thoughts upon her wanton lookes^d.

Part of the tent-scene in Shakespeare is also imitated by Niccols. Richard, starting from his horrid dream, says,

^c Act i. Sc. i.

^d Pag. 753.

Methought the fouls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
To morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard^e.

So Niccols,

I thought that all those murdered ghosts, whom I
By death had sent to their vntimely graue,
With balefull noise about my tent did crie,
And of the heauens with sad complaint did craue,
That they on guiltie wretch might vengeance haue:
To whom I thought the iudge of heauen gaue eare,
And gainst me gaue a iudgement full of feare^f.

But some of the stanzas immediately following, which are formed on Shakespeare's ideas, yet with some original imagination, will give the reader the most favourable idea of Niccols as a contributor to this work.

For loe, cftfoones, a thousand hellish hags,
Leauing th' abode of their infernall cell,
Seafing on me, my hatefull body drags
From forth my bed into a place like hell,
Where fiends did naught but bellow, howle and yell,
Who in sterne strife stood gainst each other bent,
Who should my hatefull bodie most torment.

^e Act v. Sc. ult. Drayton has also described these visionary terrors of Richard. POLYOLB. S. xxii.

When to the guilty king, the black fore-
running night,
Appear the dreadful ghosts of Henry and
his Son,
Of his owne brother George and his two
nephewes, done

Most cruelly to death, and of his Wife,
and friend

Lord Hastings, with pale hands prepared
as they would rend
Him peacemeal: at which oft he roareth
in his sleep.

The POLYOLBION was published in 1612.
fol.

^f Pag. 764.

Tormented

Tormented in such trance long did I lie,
 Till extreme feare did rouze me where I lay,
 And caus'd me from my naked bed to flie :
 Alone within my tente I durst not stay,
 This dreadfull dreame my soule did so affray :
 When wakt I was from sleepe, I for a space
 Thought I had beene in some infernall place.

About mine eares a buzzing feare still flew,
 My fainting knees languish for want of might ;
 Vpon my bodie stands an icie dew ;
 My heart is dead within, and with affright
 The haire vpon my head doth stand vpright :
 Each limbe abovt me quaking, doth resemble
 A riuers rush, that with the wind doth tremble.

Thus with my guiltie foules sad torture torne
 The darke nights dismall houres I past away :
 But at cockes crowe, the message of the morne,
 My feare I did conceale, &c.^g.

If internal evidence was not a proof, we are sure from other evidences that Shakespeare's tragedy preceded Niccols's legend. The tragedy was written about 1597. Niccols, at eighteen years of age, was admitted into Magdalene college in Oxford, in the year 1602^h. It is easy to point out other marks of imitation. Shakespeare has taken nothing from Seagars's Richard the third, printed in Baldwine's collection, or first edition, in the year 1559. Shakespeare, however, probably caught the idea of the royal shades, in the same scene of the tragedy before us, appearing in succession and speaking to Richard and

^g Pag. 764.

^h Registr. Univ. Oxon. He retired to Magdalene Hall, where he was graduated in Arts, 1606. Ibid.

Richmond,

Richmond, from the general plan of the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES*: more especially, as many of Shakespeare's ghosts there introduced, for instance, King Henry the sixth, Clarence, Rivers, Hastings, and Buckingham, are the personages of five of the legends belonging to this poem.

SECT.