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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 XXXV. Tusser. Remarkable circumstances of his life. His Husbandrie, one of our earliest didactic poems, examined.

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SEC T. XXXV.

BOUT the same time flourished Thomas Tuffer, one of our earliest didactic poets, in a science of the highest utility, and which produced one of the most beautiful poems of antiquity. The viciffitudes of this man's life have uncommon variety and novelty for the life of an author, and his history conveys fome curious traces of the times as well as of himfelf. He feems to have been alike the sport of fortune, and a dupe to his own discontented disposition and his perpetual propensity to change of fituation.

He was born of an antient family, about the year 1523, at Rivenhall in Effex; and was placed as a chorister, or fingingboy, in the collegiate chapel of the castle of Wallingford in Berkshire . Having a fine voice, he was impressed from Wallingford college into the king's chapel. Soon afterwards he was admitted into the choir of faint Paul's cathedral in London; where he made great improvements under the instruction of John Redford the organist, a famous musician. He was next fent to Eton-school, where, at one chastisement, he received fifty-three stripes of the rod, from the severe but celebrated master Nicholas Udall b. His academical education was at Trinity-hall in Cambridge: but Hatcher affirms, that he was from Eton admitted a scholar of King's college in that university,

² This chapel had a dean, fix prebendaries, fix clerks, and four chorifters. It was diffolved in 1549.

^b Udall's English interludes, mentioned

above, were perhaps written for his scho-

lars. Thirty-five lines of one of them are quoted in Wilson's ARTE OF LOGIKE, edit. 1567. fol. 67. a. "Suete maistresse "whereas, &c."

under

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under the year 1543°. From the university he was called up to court by his fingular and generous patron William lord Paget, in whose family he appears to have been a retainer d. In this department he lived ten years: but being difgusted with the vices, and wearied with the quarrels of the courtiers, he retired into the country, and embraced the profession of a farmer, which he fuccessively practised at Ratwood in Suffex, Ipswich in Suffolk, Fairstead in Essex, Norwich, and other places . Here his patrons were fir Richard Southwell f, and Salifbury dean of Norwich. Under the latter he procured the place of a finging-man in Norwich cathedral. At length, having perhaps too much philofophy and too little experience to succeed in the bufiness of agriculture, he returned to London: but the plague drove him away from town, and he took shelter at Trinity college in Cambridge. Without a tincture of careless imprudence, or vicious extragance, this defultory character feems to have thrived in no vocation. Fuller fays, that his stone, which gathered no mols, was the stone of Sifyphus. His plough and his poetry were alike unprofitable. He was by turns a fiddler and a farmer, a grafier and a poet with equal fuccess. He died very aged at London in 1580, and was buried in faint Mildred's church in the Poultry 1.

Some of these circumstances, with many others of less confequence, are related by himself in one of his pieces, entitled the AUTHOR'S LIFE, as follows.

MSS, Catal. Prapos. Soc. Schol, Coll. Regal. Cant.

Our author's HUSBANDRIE is dedicated to his fon Lord Thomas Paget of Beaudefert, fol. 7. ch. ii. edit. ut infr.

In Peacham's Minerva, a book of

* In Peacham's MINERVA, a book of emblems printed in 1612, there is the device of a whethone and a fcythe with these lines, fol. 61. edit. 4to.

They tell me, Tusser, when thou wert

And hadft for profit turned enery stone, Where ere thou camest thou couldst never thrine. Though heereto best couldst counsel every one,

As it may in thy HUSBANDRIE appeare Wherein afresh thou liust among vs here.

So like thy felfe a number more are wont, To sharpen others with advice of wit, When thy themselves are like the whetstone blunt, &c.

Sec Life of SIR THOMAS POPE, 2d

edit. p. 218.

E See his Epitaph in Stowe's SURV.
LOND. p. 474, edit. 1618, 4to. And.
Fuller's WORTHIES, p. 334.

What

THE HISTORY OF

What robes how bare, what colledge fare!
What bread how stale, what pennie ale!
Then Wallingford, how wert thou abhord
Of fillie boies!

Thence for my voice, I must, no choice,
Away of forse, like posting horse;
For sundrie men had placardes then
Such child to take.
The better brest', the lesser rest,
To serue the queer, now there now heer:
For time so spent, I may repent,
And sorowe make.

But marke the chance, myself to vance,
By friendships lot, to Paules I got;
So found I grace a certaine space,
Still to remaine.
With Redford there, the like no where,
For cunning such, and vertue much,
By whom some part of musicke art,
So did I gaine.

From Paules I went, to Eaton fent,
To learne straighte waies the Latin phraies,
Where fiftie three stripes given to me
At once I had:
The fault but small, or none at all,

h The livery, or weffir liberata, often called robe, allowed annually by the col-

lege.

' To the passages lately collected by the commentators on Shakespeare, to prove that Breass signifies wrice, the following may be added from Ascham's Toxophilus. He is speaking of the expediency of educating youth in singing. "Trulye

"two degrees of men, which have the highest offices under the king in all this realme, shall greatly lacke the vse of finginge, preachers and lawyers, because they shall not, withoute this, be able to rale theyr BRESTES for everye purpose, &c." fol. 8. b. Lond. 1571.

It came to pas, thus beat I was: See, Udall, see, the mercie of thee To me, poore lad!

To London hence, to CAMBRIDGE thence, With thankes to thee, O TRINITE, That to thy HALL, fo passinge all, I got at last. There ioy I felt, there trim I dwelt, &c.

At length he married a wife by the name of Moone, from whom, for an obvious reason, he expected great inconstancy, but was happily difappointed.

Through Uenus' toies, in hope of ioies, I chanced foone to finde a Moone, Of cheerfull hew: Which well and fine, methought, did shine, And neuer change, a thing most strange, Yet kept in fight, her course aright, And compas trew, &c k.

Before I proceed, I must say a few words concerning the very remarkable practice implied in these stanzas, of seizing boys by a warrant for the service of the king's chapel. Strype has printed an abstract of an instrument, by which it appears, that emissaries were dispatched into various parts of England with full powers to take boys from any choir for the use of the chapel of king Edward the fixth. Under the year 1550, fays Strype, there was a grant of a commission " to Philip Van Wilder gen-" tleman of the Privy Chamber, in anie churches or chappells " within England to take to the king's use, such and as many

k Fol. 155. edit. 1586. See also The dringing up, &c. fol. 5. And the Epistle Authors Epistle to the late lord William to Lady Paget, fol. 7. And his rules for training a boy in music, fol. 141.

" finging

" finging children and chorifters, as he or his deputy shall think " good ." And again, in the following year, the mafter of the king's chapel, that is, the mafter of the king's finging-boys, has licence " to take up from time to time as many children [boys] " to ferve in the king's chapel as he shall think fit"." Under the year 1454, there is a commission of the same fort from king Henry the fixth, De ministrallis propter folatium regis providendis, for procuring minstrels, even by force, for the solace or entertainment of the king: and it is required, that the minstrels so procured, should be not only skilled in arte minstrallatus, in the art of minstrelsy, but membris naturalibus elegantes, handsome and elegantly shaped ". As the word Minstrel is of an extensive fignification, and is applied as a general term to every character of that species of men whose business it was to entertain, either with oral recitation, music, gesticulation, and singing, or with a mixture of all these arts united, it is certainly difficult to determine, whether fingers only, more particularly fingers for the royal chapel, were here intended. The last clause may perhaps more immediately feem to point out tumblers or posture-masters °. But in the register of the capitulary acts of York cathedral, it is ordered as an indispensable qualification, that the chorister who is annually to be elected the boy-bishop, should be competenter corpore formosus. I will transcribe an article of the register, relating to that ridiculous ceremony. "Dec. 2. 1367. Joannes

Dat. April. Strype's Mem. Eccl.

ii. p. 538.

m Ibid. p. 539. Under the fame year, a yearly allowance of 801, is specified, "to find fix singing children for the king's "privy chamber." Ibid. I presume this appointment was transmitted from preceding reigns.

* Rym Foed. xi. 375.

Even fo late as the prefent reign of queen Mary, we find tumblers introduced for the diversion of the court. In 1556, at a grand military review of the queen's pensioners in Greenwich park, "came a "Tumbler and played many pretty seats,

"the queen and cardinal [Pole] looking "on; whereat the was observed to laugh heartily, &c." Strype's Eccl. Mem. iii. P. 312. ch. xxxix. Mr. Aftle has a roll of some private expences of king Edward the second: among which it appears, that fifty shillings were paid to a person who danced before the king on a table, "et "lui sist tres-grandement rire." And that twenty shillings were allowed to another, who rode before his majesty, and often fell from his horse, at which his majesty laughed heartily, de queux roi rya grantement. The laughter of kings was thought worthy to be recorded.

" de

" de Quixly confirmatur Episcopus Puerorum, et Capitulum " ordinavit, quod electio episcopi Puerorum in ecclesia Ebora-" censi de cetero fieret de Eo, qui diutius et magis in dicta " ecclesia laboraverit, et magis idoneus repertus fuerit, dum " tamen competenter fit corpore formosus, et quod aliter facta " electio non valebit "." It is certainly a matter of no confequence, whether we understand these Minstrels of Henry the fixth to have been fingers, pipers, players, or posture-masters. From the known character of that king, I should rather suppose them performers for his chapel. In any fense, this is an instance of the fame oppressive and arbitrary privilege that was practised on our poet.

Our author Tuffer wrote, during his residence at Ratwood in Suffex, a work in rhyme entitled Five HUNDRED POINTES OF GOOD HUSBANDRIE, which was printed at London in 1557 %. But it was foon afterwards reprinted, with additions and improvements, under the following title, " Five hundreth pointes of " good Hufbandrie as well for the Champion or open countrie, " as also for the Woodland or Severall, mixed in euerie moneth " with Huswiferie, ouer and besides the booke of Hus-" WIFERIE. Corrected, better ordered, and newlie augmented " a fourth part more, with divers other lessons, as a diet for " the farmer, of the properties of windes, planets, hops, herbs, " bees, and approved remedies for the sheepe and cattell, with

P Registr. Archiv. Eccles. Ebor. MSS. In the Salisbury-missal, in the office of In the Salisbury-missal, in the other of Episcopus Purrorum, among the suffrages we read, "Corpore enim formosus "es O sili, et diffusa est gratia in labiis "tuis, &c." In further proof of the solemnity with which this farce was conducted, I will cite another extract from the chapter-registers at York. "xj febr. "1370. In Scriptoria capituli Ebor. "dominus Johannes Gisson, magister cho-"ristarum ecclesse Eboracensis, liberavit " ristarum ecclesiæ Eboracensis, liberavit "Roberto de Holme choristæ, qui tunc

" ultimo fuerat episcopus puerorum, iij ilibras, xvs. id. ob. de perquisitis ipsius

" episcopi per ipsum Johannem receptis, " et dictus Robertus ad fancta dei evan-gelia per ipfum corporaliter tacta jura-

"gelia per ipfum corporaliter tacta jura"vit, quod nunquam moleflaret dictum
"dominum Johannem de fumma pecuniæ
"prædicta." Registre. Ebor.

Quarto. Bl. Lett. In 1557, John
Daye has licence to print "the hundreth
"poyntes of good Hufferis." Registre.
Station. A. fol. 23. a. In 1559-60,
jun. 20, T. Marihe has licence to print
"the boke of Hufbandry." Ibid. 60. 48. b.
This last title occurs in the fer registers much This last title occurs in these registers much lower.

Vol. III.

" manie

" manie other matters both profitabell and not unpleasant for the

"Reader. Also a table of HUSBANDRIE at the beginning of this booke, and another of HUSWIFERIE at the end, &c.

" Newlie fet foorth by THOMAS TUSSER gentleman"."

It must be acknowledged, that this old English georgic has much more of the simplicity of Hesiod, than of the elegance of Virgil: and a modern reader would suspect, that many of its salutary maxims originally decorated the margins, and illustrated the calendars, of an antient almanac. It is without invocations, digressions, and descriptions: no pleasing pictures of rural imagery are drawn from meadows covered with slocks and fields waving with corn, nor are Pan and Ceres once named. Yet it is valuable, as a genuine picture of the agriculture, the rural arts, and the domestic economy and customs, of our industrious ancestors.

I must begin my examination of this work with the apology of Virgil on a similar subject,

Possum multa tibi veterum præcepta referre,
Ni refugis, tenuesque piget cognoscere curas .

I first produce a specimen of his directions for cultivating a hop-garden, which may, perhaps not unprofitably, be compared with the modern practice.

Whom fansie perswadeth, among other crops, To haue for his spending, sufficient of hops,

* The oldest edition with this title which I have seen is in quarto, dated 1586, and printed at London, "in the now dwelling "house of Henrie Denham in Aldersgate street at the signe of the starre," In black letter, containing 164 pages. The next edition is for H. Yardley, London 1593. Bl. Lett. 4to. Again at London, printed by Peter Short, 1597. Bl. Lett. 4to. The last I have seen is dated 1610. 4to.

In the Register of the Stationers, a receipt of T. Hackett is entered for licence for printing "A dialoge of wyvynge and "thryvynge of Tusshers with ij lessons for olde and yenge," in 1562 or 1563.

REGISTR. STAT. COMP. LOND. NOLE. A. fol. 74, b. I find licenced to Alde in 1565, "An hundreth poyntes of evell huswyfraye," I suppose a faire on Tusser. Ibid. fol. 131. b. In 1561, Richard Tottell was to print "A booke intituled one hundreth good poyntes of husboundry lately maryed unto a hundreth good poyntes of Huswisser of Hu

Must

Must willingly follow, of choises to choose, Such lessons approued, as skilful do vse.

Ground grauellie, fandie, and mixed with claie, Is naughtie for hops, anie maner of waie; Or if it be mingled with rubbish and stone, For drinesse and barrennesse let it alone.

Choose soile for the hop of the rottenest mould, Well doonged and wrought, as a garden-plot should; Not far from the water, but not ouerflowne, This leffon well noted is meete to be knowne.

The fun in the fouthe, or elfe fouthlie and west, Is ioie to the hop, as a welcomed guest; But wind in the north, or else northerlie east, To the hop, is as ill as a fraie in a feast.

Meet plot for a hop-yard, once found as is told, Make thereof account, as of iewell of gold: Now dig it and leave it, the funne for to burne, And afterward fence it, to ferue for that turne.

The hop for his profit I thus doo exalt: It ftrengtheneth drinke, and it fauoreth malt; And being well brewed, long kept it will last, And drawing abide—if ye drawe not too fast '.

t CHAP. 42. fol. 93. In this stanza, is a copy of verses by one William Kethe, a divine of Geneva, prefixed to Dr. Christopher's Goodman's abfurd and factious pamphlet against queen Mary, How Jupe-rier Powers, &c. Printed at Geneva by John Crispin, 1558, 16mo. Whom fury long fosterd by sufferance and

awe,
Have right rule subverted, and made will
their lawe,
Whose pride how to temper, this truth
will thee tell,

So as thou refift mayft, and yet not rebel,

Q9 2

To



To this work belongs the well known old fong, which begins,

The Ape, the Lion, the Fox, and the Affe, Thus fetts foorth man in a glasse, &c ".

For the farmer's general diet he affigns, in Lent, red herrings, and falt fish, which may remain in store when Lent is past: at Easter, veal and bacon: at Martinmas, salted beef, when dainties are not to be had in the country: at Midfummer, when mackrel are no longer in feafon, graffe, or fallads, fresh beef, and pease: at Michaelmas, fresh herrings, with fatted erones, or sheep: at All Saints, pork and pease, sprats and spurlings: at Christmas, good cheere and plaie. The farmer's weekly fish-days, are Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; and he is charged to be careful in keeping embrings and fast-days ".

Among the Husbandlie Furniture are recited most of the inftruments now in use, yet with several obsolete and unintelligible names of farming utenfils *. Horses, I know not from what superstition, are to be annually blooded on faint Stephen's day, Among the Christmas busbandhe fare, our author recommends good drinke, a good fire in the Hall, brawne, pudding and fouse, and mustard withall, beef, mutton, and pork, shred, or minced, pies of the best, pig, veal, goose, capon, and turkey, cheefe, apples, and nuts, with jolie carols. A Christmas carol is then introduced to the tune of King Salomon 2.

- " Chap. 50. fol. 107.
- * Chap. 12. fol. 25, 26.
- Chap. 15. fol. 31, 32, 33.
- 2 Chap. 30. fol. 37. These are four of the lines.

Euen Christ, I meane, that virgins child, In Bethlem born:

That lambe of God, that prophet mild, Crowned with thorne!

Mar. 4. 1559, there is a receipt from Ralph Newbery for his licence for print-

ing a ballad called "Kynge Saloman." REGISTR. STATION. COMP. LOND. notat. A. fol. 48. a. Again, in 1561, a licence to print "iij balletts, the one entituled "News outs of Kent; the other, a news "Newest oute of Kent; the other, a newe
"ballat after the tune of lynge Solomon;
"and the other, Newes out of Heaven and
"Hell." Ibid. fol. 75. a. See Lycence of
John Tyssale for printing "Certayue
"goodly Carowles to be songe to the glory
"of God," in 1562. Ibid. fol. 86. a.
Again, ibid. "Crestenmas Carowles aucto"risshed by my lord of London." A ballad

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In a comparison between Champion and Severall, that is, open and inclosed land, the disputes about inclosures appear to have been as violent as at prefent . Among his Hufwifelie Admonitions, which are not particularly addressed to the farmer, he advises three dishes at dinner, which being well dressed, will be fufficient to please your friend, and will become your Hall b. The prudent housewife is directed to make her own tallowcandles '. Servants of both fexes are ordered to go to bed at ten in the summer, and nine in the winter: to rise at five in the winter, and four in the fummer ". 'The ploughman's feasting days, or holidays, are PLOUGH-MONDAY, or the first Monday after Twelfth-day, when ploughing begins, in Leicestershire. Shrof-tide, or Shrove-tuesday, in Esfex and Suffolk, when after shroving, or confession, he is permitted to go thresh the fat ben, and "if blindfold [you] can kill her " then give it thy men," and to dine on fritters and pancakes ". SHEEP-SHEARING, which is celebrated in Northamptonshire with wafers and cakes. The WAKE-DAY, or the vigil of the church faint, when everie wanton maie danse at her will, as in Leicestershire, and the oven is to be filled with flawnes. HAR-

lad of Solomon and the queen of Sheba is entered in 1567. Ibid. fol. 166. a. In 1569, is entered an "Enterlude for boyes "to handle and to passe tyme at Christi" mas," Ibid fol. 183. b. Again, in the same year, fol. 185. b. More instances follow.

" Chap. 52. fol. 111.

^b Fol. 133. ^c Fol. 135. ^d Fol. 137.

* I have before mentioned Shrove-Tuefday as a day dedicated to festivities. See supr. vol. ii. p. 387. In some parts of Germany it was usual to celebrate Shrove-tide with bonsires. Lavaterus of Ghostes, &c. translated into English by R. H. Lond. 1572 4to. fol. 51. Bl. Lett. Polydore Virgil says, that so early as the year 1170, it was the custom of the English nation to celebrate their Christmas with plays, massques, and the most magnificent specta-

cles; together with games at dice, and dancing. This practice he adds, was not conformable to the ufage of moff other nations, who permitted these diversions, not at Christmas, but a sew days before Lent, about the time of Shrovetide. Hist. Angl. Lib. xiii. f. 211. Basil. 1534. By the way, Polydore Virgil observes, that the Christmas-prince or Lord of Misrule, is almost peculiar to the English. De Rer. Inventor. lib. v. cap. ii. Shrove-Tuesday seems to have been sometimes considered as the last day of Christmas, and on that account might be celebrated as a festival. In the year 1440, on Shrove-Tuesday, which that year was in March, at Norwich there was a "Disport in the streets, when one rode "through the fireets havyng his hors traping the street was a trouble to the supplemental transfer of the supplemental transfe

VEST-HOME, when the harvest-home goose is to be killed. SEED-CAKE, a festival so called at the end of wheat-sowing in Essex and Susfolk, when the village is to be treated with seed-cakes, passies, and the frumentie-pot. But twice a week, according to antient right and custom, the farmer is to give roast-meat, that is, on Sundays and on Thursday-nights. We have then a set of posses or proverbial rhymes, to be written in various rooms of the house, such as "Husbandlie posses for the Hall," Posses for the Parlour, Posses for the Ghests chamber, and Posses for thine own bedchamber. Botany appears to have been eminently cultivated, and illustrated with numerous treatises in English, throughout the latter part of the sixteenth century. In this work are large enumerations of plants, as well for the medical as the culinary garden.

Our author's general precepts have often an expressive brevity, and are sometimes pointed with an epigrammatic turn and a smartness of allusion. As thus,

Saue wing for a thresher, when gander doth die; Saue fethers of all things, the softer to lie: Much spice is a theese, so is candle and fire; Sweet sause is as crastie as euer was frier'.

Again, under the lessons of the housewife.

Though cat, a good mouser, doth dwell in a house, Yet euer in dairie haue trap for a mouse:

"end with the twelve moneths of the
yere: aforn hym went yche [each] Moneth dysgusyfyd after the seon requiryd,

&c." Blomf. Norr ii p. 111. This
very poetical pageautry reminds me of a
similar and a beautiful procession at Rome,
described by Lucretius, where the Seasons, with their accompaniments, walk

personisied. Lib. v. 736. It VER et VENUS, et Veneris prænuntius ante

Pinnatus Zephyrus graditur vestigia propter;

FLORA quibus mater præspergens ante viai Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet,—

Inde Autumnus adit, &c.

f Fol. 138.

g Fol. 144, 145. See Infcriptions of this fort in "The Welfpring of witte Con"ceights," translated from the Italian by W. Phift. Lond. for R. Jones, 1584. Bl. Lett. 4to. Signat. N 2.

h See the Preface to Johnson's edition of Gerharde's HERBAL, printed in 1633. fol.

¹ Fol. 134.

Take

ENGLISH POETRY.

300

Take heed how thou laiest the bane * for the rats, For poisoning thy fervant, thyself, and thy brats'.

And in the following rule of the fmaller economics.

Saue droppings and skimmings, however ye doo, For medcine, for cattell, for cart, and for shoo ".

In these stanzas on haymaking, he rises above his common manner.

Go muster thy servants, be captain thyselfe, Prouiding them weapons, and other like pelfe: Get bottells and wallets, keepe fielde in the heat, The feare is as much, as the danger is great.

With toffing, and raking, and fetting on cox, Grasse latelie in swathes, is haie for an oxe. That done, go to cart it, and haue it awaie: The battell is fought, ye have gotten the daie ".

A great variety of verse is used in this poem, which is thrown into numerous detached chapters °. The HUSBANDRIE is divided into the feveral months. Tuffer, in respect of his antiquated diction, and his argument, may not improperly be styled the English Varro.

- k Poifon.
- 1 Fol. 131.
- m Fol. 134.
- n Fol. 95. CH. 44. o In this book I first find the metre of Prior's f.ng,
 - " Despairing beside a clear stream."

For instance.

What looke ye, I praie you shew what? Termes painted with rhetorike fine?

Good hufbandrie feeketh not that, Nor ift anie meaning of mine.

What lookest thou, speeke at the last, Good lessons for thee and thy wife? Then keepe them in memorie fast To helpe as a comfort to life.

See PREFACE TO THE BUIER OF THIS BOOKE, ch. 5. fol. 14. In the fame mea-fure is the COMPARISON BETWEENE CHAMPION COUNTRIE AND SEVERALL, ch. 52, fol. 108,

Such

310 THE HISTORY OF

Such were the rude beginnings in the English language of didactic poetry, which, on a kindred subject, the present age has seen brought to perfection, by the happy combination of judicious precepts with the most elegant ornaments of language and imagery, in Mr. Mason's English Garden.

SECT.

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