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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 XXXVIII. Sackville's Gordobuc. Our first regular tragedy. Its fable, conduct, characters, and style. Its defects. Dumb-show. Sackville not assisted by Norton.

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S E C T. XXXVIII.

THE first poem which presents itself at the commencement of the reign of queen Elisabeth, is the play of GORDONBUC, written by Thomas Sackville lord Buckhurst, the original contriver of the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES*^a. Thomas Norton, already mentioned as an associate with Sternhold and Hopkins in the metrical version of David's Psalms, is said to have been his coadjutor^b.

It is no part of my plan, accurately to mark the progress of our drama, much less to examine the merit of particular plays. But as this piece is perhaps the first specimen in our language of an heroic tale, written in blank verse, divided into acts and scenes, and clothed in all the formalities of a regular tragedy,

^a It is scarcely worth observing, that one Thomas Brice, at the accession of Elisabeth, printed in English metre a *Register of the Martyrs and Confessors under queen Mary*, Lond. for R. Adams, 1559. 8vo. I know not how far Fox might profit by this work. I think he has not mentioned it. In the Stationers registers, in 1567, were entered to Henry Binneman, *SONGES and SONNETTS* by Thomas Brice. REGISTER. A. fol. 164. a. I have never seen the book. In 1570, an elegy, called "An epitaph on Mr. Bryce preacher" occurs, licenced to John Alde. Ibid. fol. 205. b. Again, we have the *COURT OF VENUS*, I suppose a ballad, MORALISED, in 1566, by Thomas Bryce, for Hugh Singleton. Ibid. fol. 156. a.

^b See *supr.* p. 169. See Preface to *GORDONBUC*, edit. 1571. Strype says, that

Thomas Norton was a clergyman, a puritan, a man of parts and learning, well known to secretary Cecil and archbishop Parker, and that he was suspected, but without foundation, of writing an answer to Whitgift's book against the puritans, published in 1572. LIFE OF PARKER, p. 364. LIFE OF WHITGIFT, p. 28. I forgot to mention before, that Norton has a copy of recommendatory verses prefixed to Turner's *PRESERVATIVE*, a tract against the Pelagians, dedicated to Hugh Latimer, printed Lond. 1551. 12mo. In the Conferences in the Tower with Campion the Jesuit, in 1581, one Norton, but not our author, seems to have been employed as a notary. See "A TRUE REPORTE OF THE DISPUTATION, &c." Lond. 1583. Bl. Lett. 4to. SIGNAT. A a. iij.

it seems justly to deserve a more minute and a distinct discussion in this general view of our poetry.

It was first exhibited in the great Hall of the Inner Temple, by the students of that Society, as part of the entertainment of a grand Christmas, and afterwards before queen Elisabeth at Whitehall, on the eighteenth day of January in 1561. It was never intended for the press. But being surreptitiously and very carelessly printed in 1565, an exact edition, with the consent and under the inspection of the authors, appeared in 1571, in black letter, thus entitled. "The TRAGIDIE OF FERREX AND PORREX, set forth without addition or alteration, but altogether as the same was showed on stage before the queenes Majestie about nine yeare past, viz. The xvij day of Januarie, 1561. By the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. Seen and allowed, &c. Imprinted at London by John Daye dwelling ouer Aldersgate." It has no date, nor notation of pages, and contains only thirty-one leaves in small octavo^c. In the edition of 1565, it is called the TRAGEDIE OF GORDOBUC. The whole title of that edition runs thus. "The Tragedie of Gordobuc, whereof three actes were wrytten by Thomas Norton and the two laste by Thomas Sackvyle. Sett forthe as the same was shewed before the queenes most excellent maiestie in her highnes court of Whitehall, the 18 Jan. 1561. By the gentlemen of thynner Temple in London. Sept. 22. 1565." Printed by William Griffith at the sign of the falcon in Fleet-street, in quarto^d. I have a most incorrect black lettered

^c For the benefit of those who wish to gain a full and exact information about this edition, so as to distinguish it from all the rest, I will here exhibit the arrangement of the lines of the title page. "The Tragedie of Ferrex | and Porrex, | set forth without addition or alteration but altogether as the same was shewed | on stage before the queenes Majestie, | about nine yeares past, viz. the | xvij daie of Januarie. 1561. by the Gentlemen of the | Inner Temple.

" | Seen and allowed &c. | Imprinted at London by | John Daye, dwelling ouer Aldersgate." With the Bodleian copy of this edition, are bound up four pamphlets against the papists by Thomas Norton.

^d On the books of the Stationers, "The Tragedie of GORDOBUC where iij actes were written by Thomas Norton and the laste by Thomas Sackvyle," is entered in 1565-6, with William Griffiths. REGISTR. A. fol. 132. b.

copy

copy in duodecimo, without title, but with the printer's monogram in the last page, I suspect of 1569, which once belonged to Pope*, and from which the late Mr. Spence most faithfully printed a modern edition of the tragedy, in the year 1736. I believe it was printed before that of 1571, for it retains all the errors of Griffith's first or spurious edition of 1565. In the Preface prefixed to the edition of 1571, is the following passage. "Where [whereas] this tragedy was for furniture of part of the grand Christmassé in the Inner-temple, first written about nine years ago by the right honourable Thomas now lord Buckhurst, and by T. Norton; and afterwards showed before her maiestie, and neuer intended by the authors thereof to be published: Yet one W. G. getting a copie thereof at some young mans hand, that lacked a little money and much discretion, in the last great plague *anno* 1565, about five yeares past, while the said lord was out of England, and T. Norton far out of London, and neither of them both made priuy, put it forth exceedingly corrupted, &c." W. G. is William Griffith, the printer in Fleet street, abovementioned. Mr. Garrick had another old quarto edition, printed by Alde, in 1590.

These are the circumstances of the fable of this tragedy. Gordobuc, a king of Britain about six hundred years before Christ, made in his life-time a division of his kingdom to his sons Ferrex and Porrex. The two young princes within five years quarrelled for universal sovereignty. A civil war ensued, and Porrex slew his elder brother Ferrex. Their mother Viden, who loved Ferrex best, revenged his death by entering Porrex's chamber in the night, and murdering him in his sleep. The people, exasperated at the cruelty and treachery of this murder, rose in rebellion, and killed both Viden and Gordobuc. The nobility then assembled, collected an army, and destroyed the

* In the year 1717, my father, then a fellow of Magdalene college at Oxford, gave this copy to Mr. Pope, as appears by a letter of Pope to R. Digby, dat. Jun. 2. 1717. See Pope's LETTERS, vol.

ix. p. 39. edit. 12mo. 1754. "Mr. Warburton forced me to take Gordobuc, &c." Pope gave it to the late bishop Warburton, who gave it to me about ten years ago, 1770.

rebels.

rebels. An intestine war commenced between the chief lords: the succession of the crown became uncertain and arbitrary, for want of the lineal royal issue: and the country, destitute of a king, and wasted by domestic slaughter, was reduced to a state of the most miserable desolation.

In the dramatic conduct of this tale, the unities of time and place are eminently and visibly violated: a defect which Shakespeare so frequently commits, but which he covers by the magic of his poetry. The greater part of this long and eventful history is included in the representation. But in a story so fertile of bloodshed, no murder is committed on the stage. It is worthy of remark, that the death of Porrex in the bed-chamber is only related. Perhaps the players had not yet learned to die, nor was the ponyard so essential an article as at present among the implements of the property-room. Nor is it improbable, that to kill a man on the stage was not now avoided as a spectacle shocking to humanity, but because it was difficult and inconvenient to be represented. The writer has followed the series of facts related in the chronicles without any material variation, or fictitious embarrassments, and with the addition only of a few necessary and obvious characters.

There is a Chorus of Four Antient and Sage Men of Britain, who regularly close every Act, the last excepted, with an ode in long-lined stanzas, drawing back the attention of the audience to the substance of what has just passed, and illustrating it by recapitulatory moral reflections, and poetical or historical allusions. Of these the best is that which terminates the fourth Act, in which prince Porrex is murdered by his mother Viden. These are the two first stanzas.

When greedie lust in royall feat to reigne,
Hath rest all care of goddes, and eke of men,
And Cruell Heart, Wrath, Treason, and Disdaine,
Within th' ambitious breast are lodged, then

Behold

Behold howe MISCHIEFE wide herselfe displaies,
And with the brothers hand the brother slaies !

When blood thus shed doth staine the heauens face,
Crying to Joue for vengeance of the deede,
The mightie god euen moueth from his place,
With wrath to wreak. Then sendes he forth with spede
The dreadful Furies, daughters of the night,
With serpents girt, carrying the whip of ire,
With haire of stinging snakes, and shining bright
With flames and blood, and with a brande of fire.
These for reuenge of wretched murder done
Do make the mother kill her onelie son !

Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite :
Joue, by his iust and euerlasting doom,
Justly hath euer so required it, &c¹.

In the imagery of these verses, we discern no faint traces of the hand which drew the terrible guardians of hell-gate, in the INDUCTION to the MIRROR of MAGISTRATES.

The moral beauties and the spirit of the following ode, which closes the third act, will perhaps be more pleasing to many readers.

The lust of kingdom² knowes no sacred faithe,
No rule of reason, no regarde of right,
No kindlie loue, no feare of heauens wrathe :
But with contempt of goddes, and man's despight,
Through blodie slaughter doth prepare the waies
To fatall sceptor, and accursed reigne :
The sonne so lothes the fathers lingerynge daies,
Ne dreads his hande in brothers blode to staine !

¹ A& iv. Sc. ult.

² Kingdoms, edit. 1565.

O wretched

O wretched prince! ne dost thou yet recorde
 The yet fresh murthers done within the lande,
 Of thie forefathers, when the cruell sworde
 Bereft Morgain his liefe with cosyn's hande?^a

Thus fatall plagues pursue the giltie race,
 Whose murderous hand, imbrued with giltles bloode,
 Askes vengeance still^b, before the heauens face,
 With endles mischiefes on the cursed broode.

The wicked child thus^c brings to wofull fier
 The mournfull plaintes, to waste his wery^d life:
 Thus do the cruell flames of civyll fier
 Destroye the parted reigne with hatefull strife:
 And hence doth spring the well, from which doth flo,
 The dead black streames of mourning^e, plaint, and wo^f.

Every Act is introduced, as was the custom in our old plays, with a piece of machinery called the DUMB SHOW, shadowing by an allegorical exhibition the matter that was immediately to follow. In the construction of this spectacle and its personifications, much poetry and imagination was often displayed. It is some apology for these prefigurations, that they were commonly too mysterious and obscure, to forestal the future events with any degree of clearness and precision. Not that this mute mimicry was always typical of the ensuing incidents. It sometimes served for a compendious introduction of such circumstances, as could not commodiously be comprehended within the bounds of the representation. It sometimes supplied deficiencies, and covered the want of business. Our ancestors were easily satisfied with this artificial supplement of one of the most important unities, which abundantly filled up the interval that was necessary to pass, while a hero was expected from the Holy Land, or a princess was imported, married, and brought to bed.

^a Still, omitt. edit. 1565.

^b This, edit. 1565.

^c Very, a worse reading, in edit. 1571.

^d Mournings, edit. 1565.

^e Act iii. Sc. ult.

mean time, the greater part of the audience were probably more pleased with the emblematical pageantry than the poetical dialogue, although both were alike unintelligible.

I will give a specimen in the *DOMME SHEWE* preceding the fourth act. "First, the musick of howeboies began to plaie. "Duringe whiche, there came forth from vnder the stage, as "thoughe out of hell, three Furies, *ALECTO*, *MEGERA*, and " *CTESIPHONE* ", clad in blacke garments sprinkled with blood "and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their heds spread "with serpents instead of heare, the one bearing in her hande "a snake the other a whip, and the thirde a burning firebrande: "eche driuynge before them a kynge and a queene, which moued "by Furies vnnaturally had slaine their owne children. The "names of the kinges and queenes were these, *TANTALUS*, " *MEDEA*, *ATHAMAS*, *INO*, *CAMBISES*, *ALTHËA*. After "that the Furies, and these, had passed aboute the stage thrise, "they departed, and then the musicke ceased. Hereby was "signified the vnnaturall murders to followe, that is to saie, "Porrex slaine by his owne mother. And of king *Gordobuc* "and queene *Viden* killed by their owne subjectes." Here, by the way, the visionary procession of kings and queens long since dead, evidently resembles our author *Sackville's* original model of the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES*; and, for the same reason, reminds us of a similar train of royal spectres in the tent-scene of *Shakespeare's KING RICHARD THE THIRD*.

I take this opportunity of expressing my surprisè, that this ostensible comment of the *Dumb Shew* should not regularly appear in the tragedies of *Shakespeare*. There are even proofs that he treated it with contempt and ridicule. Although some critics are of opinion, that because it is never described in form at the close or commencement of his acts, it was therefore never introduced. *Shakespeare's* aim was to collect an audience, and for this purpose all the common expedients were necessary. No

* Tisiphone.

dramatic writer of his age has more battles or ghosts. His representations abound with the usual appendages of mechanical terror, and he adopts all the superstitions of the theatre. This problem can only be resolved into the activity or the superiority of a mind, which either would not be entangled by the formality, or which saw through the futility, of this unnatural and extrinsic ornament. It was not by declamation or by pantomime that Shakespeare was to fix his eternal dominion over the hearts of mankind.

To return to Sackville. That this tragedy was never a favorite among our ancestors, and has long fallen into general oblivion, is to be attributed to the nakedness and uninteresting nature of the plot, the tedious length of the speeches, the want of a discrimination of character, and almost a total absence of pathetic or critical situations. It is true that a mother kills her own son. But this act of barbarous and unnatural impiety, to say nothing of its almost unexampled atrocity in the tender sex, proceeds only from a brutal principle of sudden and impetuous revenge. It is not the consequence of any deep machination, nor is it founded in a proper preparation of previous circumstances. She is never before introduced to our notice as a wicked or designing character. She murders her son Porrex, because in the commotions of a civil dissension, in self-defence, after repeated provocations, and the strongest proofs of the basest ingratitude and treachery, he had slain his rival brother, not without the deepest compunction and remorse for what he had done. A mother murdering a son is a fact which must be received with horror; but it required to be complicated with other motives, and prompted by a cooperation of other causes, to rouse our attention, and work upon our passions. I do not mean that any other motive could have been found, to palliate a murder of such a nature. Yet it was possible to heighten and to divide the distress, by rendering this bloody mother, under the notions of human frailty, an object of our compassion as well as of our abhorrence. But perhaps these artifices were not yet known

or wanted. The general story of the play is great in its political consequences; and the leading incidents are important, but not sufficiently intricate to awaken our curiosity, and hold us in suspense. Nothing is perplexed and nothing unravelled. The opposition of interests is such as does not affect our nicer feelings. In the plot of a play, our pleasure arises in proportion as our expectation is excited.

Yet it must be granted, that the language of *GORDON* has great purity and perspicuity; and that it is entirely free from that tumid phraseology, which does not seem to have taken place till play-writing had become a trade, and our poets found it their interest to captivate the multitude by the false sublime, and by those exaggerated imageries and pedantic metaphors, which are the chief blemishes of the scenes of Shakespeare, and which are at this day mistaken for his capital beauties by too many readers. Here also we perceive another and a strong reason why this play was never popular.

Sir Philip Sydney, in his admirable *DEFENCE OF POESIE*, remarks, that this tragedy is full of *notable moralitie*. But tragedies are not to instruct us by the intermixture of moral sentences, but by the force of example, and the effect of the story. In the first act, the three counsellors are introduced debating about the division of the kingdom in long and elaborate speeches, which are replete with political advice and maxims of civil prudence. But this stately sort of declamation, whatever eloquence it may display, and whatever policy it may teach, is undramatic, unanimated, and unaffecting. Sentiment and argument will never supply the place of action upon the stage. Not to mention, that these grave harangues have some tincture of the formal modes of address, and the ceremonious oratory, which were then in fashion. But we must allow, that in the strain of dialogue in which they are professedly written, they have uncommon merit, even without drawing an apology in their favour from their antiquity: and that they contain much dignity, strength of reflection, and good sense, couched in clear expres-

tion and polished numbers. I shall first produce a specimen from the speech of Arostus who is styled a Counsellor to the King, and who is made to defend a specious yet perhaps the least rational side of the question.

And in your lyfe, while you shall so beholde
 Their rule, their vertues, and their noble deedes,
 Such as their kinde behighteth to vs all ;
 Great be the profites that shall growe thereof :
 Your age in quiet shall the longer last,
 Your lastinge age shall be their longer staie :
 For cares of kynges, that rule, as you haue rulde,
 For publique wealth, and not for private ioye,
 Do waste mannes lyfe, and hasten crooked age,
 With furrowed face, and with enfeebled lymmes,
 To drawe on creepynge Death a swifter pace.
 They two, yet yonge, shall beare the parted ° regne
 With greater ease, than one, now olde, alone,
 Can welde the whole : for whom, muche harder is
 With lessened strength the double weight to beare.
 Your age, your counsell, and the graue regarde
 Of father †, yea of suche a fathers name,
 Nowe at beginning of their sondred reigne,
 When is ‡ the hazarde of their whole successe,
 Shall bridle so the force of youthfull heates,
 And so restrain the rage of insolence
 Whiche most assailes the yong and noble minds,
 And so shall guide and traine in tempred staie
 Their yet greene bending wittes with reuerent awe,
 As † now inured with vertues at the first.
 Custome, O king, shall bringe delightfulness :
 By vse of vertue, vice shall growe in hate.
 But if you so dispose it, that the daye

° Partie, edit. 1565.
 † Fathers, edit. 1565.

‡ It is, edit. 1565.
 † And, edit. 1565.

Which

Which endes your life, shal first begin their reigne,
 Great is the perill. What will be the ende,
 When suche beginning of suche liberties
 Voide of suche stayes[†] as in your life do lye,
 Shall leaue them free to random[‡] of their will,
 An open prey to traiterous flattery,
 The greatest pestilence of noble youthe:
 Which perill shal be past, if in your life,
 Their tempred youth, with aged fathers awe,
 Be brought in vre of skilfull staiednes, &c[¶].

From an obsequious complaisance to the king, who is present, the topic is not agitated with that opposition of opinion and variety of arguments which it naturally suggests, and which would have enlivened the disputation and displayed diversity of character. But Eubulus, the king's secretary, declares his sentiments with some freedom, and seems to be the most animated of all our three political orators.

To parte your realme vnto my lords your sonnes,
 I think not good, for you, ne yet for them,
 But worst of all for this our native land:
 Within[¶] one lande onc single rule is best.
 Diuided reignes do make diuided hartes,
 But peace preferues the countrey and the prince.
 Suche is in man the gredie minde to reigne,
 So great is his desire to climbe aloft
 In wordly stage the stateliest partes to beare,
 That faith, and iustice, and all kindly^{*} loue,
 Do yelde vnto desire of foueraigntie.
 Where egall state doth raise an egall hope,
 To winne the thing that either wold attaine.
 Your grace remembreth, howe in passed yeres

[¶] States, edit. 1565.

[†] To free random, edit. 1565.

[‡] Act i. Sc. ii.

[¶] For with, edit. 1565.

^{*} Natural.

The

The mightie Brute, first prince of all this lande,
 Possessed the same, and ruled it well in one:
 He, thinking that the compasse did suffice,
 For his three sonnes three kingdoms eke to make,
 Cut it in three, as you would nowe in twaine:
 But how much Brittish^r blod hath since^z been spilt,
 What princes slaine before their timely hour^a,
 To ioyne againe the sondred vnitie?
 What wast of townes and people in the lande?
 What treasons heaped on murders and on spoiles?
 Whose iust reuenge euen yet is scarcely ceased,
 Ruthfull remembraunce is yet raw^b in minde, &c.^c.

The illustration from Brutus is here both apposite and poetical.

Spence, with a reference to the situation of the author lord Buckhurst in the court of queen Elisabeth, has observed in his preface to the modern edition of this tragedy, that "'tis no wonder, if the language of kings and statesmen should be less happily imitated by a poet than a privy counsellor." This is an insinuation that Shakespeare, who has left many historical tragedies, was less able to conduct some parts of a royal story than the statesman lord Buckhurst. But I will venture to pronounce, that whatever merit there is in this play, and particularly in the speeches we have just been examining, it is more owing to the poet than the privy counsellor. If a first minister was to write a tragedy, I believe the piece will be the better, the less it has of the first minister. When a statesman turns poet, I should not wish him to fetch his ideas or his language from the cabinet. I know not why a king should be better qualified than a private man, to make kings talk in blank verse.

The chaste elegance of the following description of a region abounding in every convenience, will gratify the lover of classical purity.

^r Brutish, edit. 1565.
^z Sithence, edit. 1565.
^a Honour, edit. 1565.

^b Had, edit. 1565.
^c Ibid.

Yea, and that half, which in^a abounding store
 Of things that serue to make a welthie realme,
 In statelie cities, and in frutefull foyle,
 In temperate breathing of the milder heauen,
 In thinges of nedeful vse, whiche friendlie sea
 Transportes by traffike from the forreine partes^c,
 In flowing wealth, in honour and in force, &c^f.

The close of Marcella's narration of the murther of Porrex by the queen, which many poets of a more enlightened age would have exhibited to the spectators, is perhaps the most moving and pathetic speech in the play. The reader will observe, that our author, yet to a good purpose, has transferred the ceremonies of the tournament to the court of an old British king.

O queene of adamante! O marble breaste!
 If not the fauour of his comelie face,
 If not his princelie chere and countenance,
 His valiant active armes, his manlie breaste,
 If not his faier and semelie personage,
 His noble lymmes in suche proporcion^e caste,
 As would haue wrapped^b a fillie womans thought,
 If this mought not haue moued thy^d bloodie harte,
 And that most cruell hande, the wretched weapon
 Euen to let fall, and kisse^g him in the face,
 With teares for ruthe to reauce suche one by death:
 Should nature yet consent to slaye her sonne?
 O mother thou, to murder thus thie childe!
 Euen Ioue, with Justice, must with lightening flames
 From heauen send downe some strange reuenge on thee.
 Ah! noble prince, how oft haue I beheld

^a Within, edit. 1565.

^c Portes, edit. 1565.

^f Act ii. Sc. i.

^e In the edition of 1565, this word is *preparation*. I mention this, as a specimen of the great incorrectness of that edition.

^b Wrapped, rapt, i. e. ravished. I once conjectured *warped*. We have "wrapped" in *wo.* Act iv. Sc. ii.

^d The, edit. 1565.

^g Kisse, edit. 1565.

Thee

Thee mounted on thy fierce and traumpling steede,
 Shyning in armour bright before thy tylte,
 And with thy mistresse' sleaue tied on thy helme,
 And charge thy staffe, to please thy ladies eie,
 That bowed the head peece of thy frendly foe?
 Howe oft in armes on horse to bende the mace?
 How oft in arms on foote to breake the fworde?
 Which neuer now these eyes may see againe^m!

Marcella, the only lady in the play except the queen, is one of the maids of honour; and a modern writer of tragedy would have made her in love with the young prince who is murdered.

The queen laments the loss of her eldest and favorite son, whose defeat and death had just been announced, in the following soliloquy. The ideas are too general, although happily expressed: but there is some imagination in her wishing the old massy palace had long ago fallen, and crushed her to death.

Why should I lyue, and lynger forth my time
 In longer lise, to double my distresse?
 O me most wofull wight, whome no mishap
 Long ere this daie could haue bereued hence!
 Mought not these handes, by fortune or by fate,
 Haue perst this brest, and life with iron rest?
 Or in this pallaice here, where I so longe
 Haue spent my daies, could not that happie hour
 Ones, ones, haue hapt, in which these hugie frames
 With death by fall might haue oppressed me!
 Or should not this most hard and cruell foile,
 So oft where I haue prest my wretched steps,
 Somtyme had ruthe of myne accursed lise,
 To rend in twaine, and swallowe me therin!
 So had my bones possessed nowe in peace
 Their happie graue within the closed grounde,

^l The shaft of the lance,

^m Act iv. Sc. ii.

And

And greedie wormes had gnawen this pyned hart
Without my feelynge paine ! So should not nowe
This lyvyng brest remayne the ruthfull tombe
Wherein my hart, yelden to dethe, is graued, &c^a.

There is some animation in these imprecations of prince Ferrex upon his own head, when he protests that he never conceived any malicious design, or intended any injury, against his brother Porrex^b.

The wrekefull gods poure on my cursed head
Eternall plagues, and neuer dyinge woes !
The hellish prince^c adiudge my dampned ghoſte
To Tantaless^d thirſte, or proude Ixions wheele,
Or cruel gripe^e, to gnaw my growing harte ;
To duryng tormentes and vnquenched flames ;
If euer I conceiued ſo foule a thought,
To wiſhe his ende of life, or yet of reigne,

It muſt be remembered, that the antient Britons were ſuppoſed to be immediately deſcended from the Trojan Brutus, and that conſequently they were acquainted with the pagan hiſtory and mythology. Gordobuc has a long alluſion to the miſeries of the ſiege of Troy^f.

In this ſtrain of correct verſification and language, Porrex explains to his father Gordobuc, the treachery of his brother Ferrex.

When thus I ſawe the knot of loue unknitte ;
All honeſt league, and faithfull promiſe broke,
The lawe of kind^g and trothe thus rent in twaine,
His hart on miſchiefe ſet, and in his brest

^a Act iv. Sc. i.

^b Act ii. Sc. i.

^c Pluto.

^d Tantalus, edit. 1565.

^e The vulture of Prometheus.

^f Act iii. Sc. i.

^g Nature.

Blacke treason hid : then, then did I dispaier
 That euer tyme coulde wynne him frende to me ;
 Then sawe I howe he smyled with slaying knife
 Wrapped vnder cloke, then sawe I depe deceite
 Lurke in his face, and death prepared for mee, &c".

As the notions of subordination, of the royal authority, and the divine institution of kings, predominated in the reign of queen Elifabeth, it is extraordinary, that eight lines, inculcating in plain terms the doctrine of passive and unresisting obedience to the prince, which appeared in the fifth act of the first edition of this tragedy, should have been expunged in the edition of 1571, published under the immediate inspection of the authors *. It is well known, that the Calvinists carried their ideas of reformation and refinement into government as well as religion : and it seems probable, that these eight verses were suppressed by Thomas Norton, Sackville's supposed assistant in the play, who was not only an active and I believe a sensible puritan, but a licencer of the publication of books under the commission of the bishop of London †.

As to Norton's assistance in this play, it is said on better authority than that of Antony Wood, who supposes GORDON to have been in old English rhyme, that the three first acts were written by Thomas Norton, and the two last by Sackville. But the force of internal evidence often prevails over the authority of assertion, a testimony which is diminished by time, and may be rendered suspicious from a variety of other circumstances. Throughout the whole piece, there is an invariable uniformity of diction and versification. Sackville has two poems of confi-

* Act iv. Sc. ii.

† See Signat. D. V. edit. 1571.

‡ For instance, "Seven steppes to heaven, also *The seven psalmes reduced into meter* by *W. Hunnys, The bonny succles, &c.*" by Hunnys. Nov. 8, 1581, to Denham. REGISTER. STATION. B. fol. 185. a. Also, in the same year, "The picture of two per-

nicious warlettes called *Prig Pickthank* and "*Clem Clawbacke described by a peevishe painter.*" Ibid. fol. 184. a. All "under the hands of Mr. THOMAS NORTON." Et alibi passim, "The STAGE OF POPISHE TOYES, written by T. N." perhaps the same, is licenced to Binneman, feb. 22. 1580. Ibid. fol. 178. a.

derable length in the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES*, which fortunately furnish us with the means of comparison: and every scene of *GORDOUC* is visibly marked with his characteristical manner, which consists in a perspicuity of style, and a command of numbers, superior to the tone of his times⁷. Thomas Norton's poetry is of a very different and a subordinate cast: and if we may judge from his share in our metrical psalmody, he seems to have been much more properly qualified to shine in the miserable mediocrity of Sternhold's stanza, and to write spiritual rhymes for the solace of his illuminated brethren, than to reach the bold and impassioned elevations of tragedy.

⁷ The same may be said of Sackville's *the behaviour of Court-ladies*, appears to have been translated in 1551, at the request of the marchioness of Northampton. SONNET prefixed to Thomas Hoby's English version of Castiglio's *IL CORTEGIANO*, first printed in 1556. The third part, on

in a short time to have produced
 JOCATA of Euripides, as it is called, and of the Ion Tragedies
 of Euripides, I do not find that it was possibly followed by any
 original composition on the same legitimate model.
 The JOCATA of Euripides was translated by George Gal-
 larde and Francis Kinschmidt, both students of Gray's Inn,
 and added in the library of that society, in the year 1688.
 Gallarde translated the second, third, and fifth acts, and Kin-
 schmidt the first and fourth. It was printed in Groningen
 in 1707, under the title of "Jocata, a Tragedia written in Greek
 by Euripides. Translated and digested into Latin by George
 Gallarde and Francis Kinschmidt, Students of Gray's Inn and
 of their respective Universities. The Latin version was written
 in guidance by Christopher Richardson, then one of their pro-
 fessors. So though we are assured that the author did not venture to present their play
 without introducing a Latin verse at the beginning of every
 act. For this however they had the example and authority of
 Gallarde. Some of the earliest specimens of Anglo-Latin
 JOCATA were written by Gothic originaries.

