



UNIVERSITÄTS-  
BIBLIOTHEK  
PADERBORN

## Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

### **The History Of English Poetry**

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

**Warton, Thomas**

**London, 1778**

Section VII. Harding's Chronicle. First mention of the king's Poet Laureate occurs in the reign of Edward the fourth. History of that office. Scogan. Didactic poems on chemistry by Norton and Ripley.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51407](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51407)

SECT. VII.

THE first poet that occurs in the reign of king Edward the fourth is John Harding'. He was of northern

' To the preceding reign of Henry the sixth, belongs a poem written by James the first, king of Scotland, who was atrociously murdered at Perth in the year 1436. It is entitled the KING'S COMPLAINT, is allegorical, and in the seven-lined stanza. The subject was suggested to the poet by his own misfortunes, and the mode of composition by reading Boethius. At the close, he mentions Gower and Chaucer as seated on the *stepps of rhetorike*. Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Selden. Archiv. B. 24. chart. fol. [With many pieces of Chaucer.] This unfortunate monarch was educated while a prisoner in England, at the command of our Henry the fourth, and the poem was written during his captivity there. The Scotch historians represent him as a prodigy of erudition. He civilised the Scotch nation. Among other accomplishments, he was an admirable musician, and particularly skilled in playing on the harp. See Lesley, *DE REB. GEST. SCOT.* lib. vii. p. 257. 266. 267. edit. 1675. 4to. The same historian says, "ita orator erat, ut ejus dictione nihil fuerit artificiosus: ita POETA, ut carmina non tam arte strinxisset, quam natura sponte fudisse videretur. Cui rei fidem faciunt carmina diversæ generis, quæ in rhythmum Scotice illigavit, eo artificio, &c." Ibid. p. 267. See also Buchanan, *REB. SCOT.* lib. x. p. 185.—196. Opp. tom. i. Edingb. 1715. Among other pieces, which I have never seen, Bale mentions his *CANTILENÆ SCOTICÆ*, and *RHYTHMI LATINI*. Bale, *paral. post.* Cent. xiv. 56. pag. 217. It is not the plan of this work to comprehend and examine in form pieces of Scotch poetry, except such only as are of singular merit. Otherwise, our royal bard would have been considered at large, and at his proper period, in the text. I will, how-

ever, add here, two stanzas of the poem contained in the Selden manuscript, which seems to be the most distinguished of his compositions, and was never printed.

In ver that full of vertue is and gude,  
When nature first begynneth her emprise,  
That quilham was be cruell frost and flude,  
And shoures scharp, opprest in many wyse;  
And Cynthus gynneth to aryse  
Heigh in the est a morow soft and swete  
Upwards his course to drive in Ariete:

Pasit bot mydday foure grees evyn  
Off lenth and brede, his angel wingis bright  
He spred uppon the ground down fro the  
hevyn;

That for gladnes and confort of the sight,  
And with the tiklyng of his hete and light  
The tender floures opinyt thanne and sprad  
And in thar nature thankit him for glad.

This piece is not specified by Bale, Dempster, or Mackenzie. See Bale, *ubi sup.* Dempster, *SCOT. SCRIPTOR.* ix. 714. pag. 380. edit. 1622. Mackenzie, vol. i. p. 318. Edingb. 1708. fol.

John Major mentions the beginning of some of his other poems, viz. "Yas sen, &c." And "At Beltayn, &c." Both these poems seem to be written on his wife, Joan daughter of the dutchess of Clarence, with whom he fell in love while a prisoner in England. Major mentions besides, a *libellus artificiosus*, whether verse or prose I know not, which he wrote on this lady in England, before his marriage; and which Bale entitles, *Super Uxore futura*. This historian, who flourished about the year 1520, adds, that our monarch's *CANTILENÆ* were commonly sung by the Scotch as the most favorite compositions: and that he played better on the harp, than

extraction, and educated in the family of lord Henry Percy<sup>u</sup>; and, at twenty-five years of age, hazarded his fortunes as a volunteer at the decisive battle of Shrewsbury, fought against the Scots in the year 1403. He appears to have been indefatigable in examining original records, chiefly with a design of ascertaining the fealty due from the Scottish kings to the crown of England: and he carried many instruments from Scotland, for the elucidation of this important enquiry, at the hazard of his life, which he delivered at different times to the fifth and sixth Henry, and to Edward the fourth<sup>v</sup>. These investigations seem to have fixed his mind on the study of our national antiquities and history. At length he cloathed his researches in rhyme, which he dedicated under that form to king Edward the fourth, and with the title of *The Chronicle of England unto the reigne of king Edward the fourth in verse*<sup>x</sup>. The copy probably presented to the king, although it exhibits at the end the arms of Henry Percy earl of Northumberland, most elegantly transcribed on vellum, and adorned with superb illuminations, is preserved

than the most skillful Irish or highland harper. Major does not enumerate the poem I have here cited. Major, *GHST. SCOT. lib. vi. cap. xiv. fol. 135. edit. 1521. 4to.* Doctor Percy has one of James's *CANTILENE*, in which there is much merit.

<sup>u</sup> One William Peiris, a priest, and secretary to the fifth earl of Northumberland, wrote in verse, *William Peiris's discente of the Lord Percis, Pr. Prol.* "Cronykills" "and annuel books of kyngs." *Brit. Mus. MSS. Reg. 18 D. 9.* Then immediately follows (10.) in the same manuscript, perhaps written by the same author, a collection of metrical proverbs painted in several chambers of Lekingfield and Wreskille, ancient seats of the Percy family.

<sup>v</sup> Henry the sixth granted immunities to Harding in several patents for procuring the Scottish evidences. The earliest is dated 20. reg. xviii. [1440.] There is a me-

morandum in the exchequer, that, in 1458, John Harding of Kyme delivered to John Talbot, treasurer of England, and chancellor of the exchequer, five Scottish letters patent, acknowledging various homages of the kings and nobility of Scotland. They are enclosed in a wooden box in the exchequer, kept in a large chest, under the mark, *SCOTIA. HARDING.* So says Ashmole [*MSS. Ashmol. 860. p. 186.*] from a register in the exchequer called the *YELLOW-BOOK.*

<sup>x</sup> Printed, at London, 1543. 4to. by Grafton, who has prefixed a dedication of three leaves in verse to Thomas duke of Norfolk. A continuation in prose from Edward the fourth to Henry the eighth is added, probably by Grafton. But see Grafton's Preface to his *ABRIDGEMENT OF THE CHRONICLE OF ENGLAND*, edit. 1570.

among

among Selden's manuscripts in the Bodleian library<sup>7</sup>. Our author is concise and compendious in his narrative of events from Brutus to the reign of king Henry the fourth: he is much more minute and diffuse in relating those affairs of which, for more than the space of sixty years, he was a living witness, and which occurred from that period to the reign of Edward the fourth. The poem seems to have been completed about the year 1470. In his final chapter he exhorts the king, to recall his rival king Henry the sixth, and to restore the partisans of that unhappy prince.

This work is almost beneath criticism, and fit only for the attention of an antiquary. Harding may be pronounced to be the most impotent of our metrical historians, especially when we recollect the great improvements which English poetry had now received. I will not even except Robert of Gloucester, who lived in the infancy of taste and versification. The chronicle of this authentic and laborious annalist has hardly those more modest graces, which could properly recommend and adorn a detail of the British story in prose. He has left some pieces in prose: and Winstanly says, "as his prose was very usefull, so was his poetry as much delightful." I am of opinion, that both his prose and poetry are equally useful and delightful. What can be more frigid and unanimated than these lines?

Kyng Arthur then in Avalon so dyed,  
Where he was buryed in a chapel fayre,  
Whiche nowe is made, and fully edified,  
The mynster church, this day of great repayre  
Of Glastenbury, where nowe he hath his layre;  
But then it was called the blacke chapell  
Of our lady, as chronicles can tell.

<sup>7</sup> MSS. Archiv. Seld. B. 26. It is richly bound and studded. At the end is a curious map of Scotland; together with many prose pieces by Harding of the historical kind. The Ashmolean manuscript is en-

titled, *The CHRONICLE OF JOHN HARDING in metre from the beginning of England unto the reign of Edward the fourth.* MSS. Ashmol. Oxon. 34. membran.

Where

Where Geryn earle of Chartres then abode  
 Befyde his tombe, for whole devocion,  
 Whither Lancelot de Lake came, as he rode  
 Upon the chafe, with trompet and claryon;  
 And Geryn told hym, ther all up and downe  
 How Arthur was there layd in sepulture  
 For which with hym to abyde he hyght ful sure<sup>z</sup>.

Fuller affirms our author to have "drunk as deep a draught of Helicon as any of his age." An assertion partly true: it is certain, however, that the diction and imagery of our poetic composition would have remained in just the same state had Harding never wrote.

In this reign, the first mention of the king's poet, under the appellation of LAUREATE, occurs. John Kay was appointed poet laureate to Edward the fourth. It is extraordinary, that he should have left no pieces of poetry to prove his pretensions in some degree to this office, with which he is said to have been invested by the king, at his return from Italy. The only composition he has transmitted to posterity is a prose English translation of a Latin history of the Siege of Rhodes<sup>a</sup>: in the dedication addressed to king Edward, or rather in the title, he styles himself *hys humble poete laureate*. Although this our laureate furnishes us with no materials as a poet, yet his office, which here occurs for the first time under this denomination, must not pass unnoticed

<sup>z</sup> Ch. lxxxiv. fol. lxxvii. edit. Graft. 1543.

<sup>a</sup> MSS. Cotton. Brit. Mus. VITELL. D. xii. 10. It was printed at London, 1506. This impression was in Henry Worley's library, Cat. MSS. Angl. etc. tom. ii. p. 212. N. 6873. 25. I know nothing of the Latin; except that Gulielmus Caerifinus, vice-chancellor for forty years of the knights of Malta, wrote an *ONSIDIO RHODIÆ URBS*, when it was in vain attempted to be taken by the Turks in 1480. Separately

printed without date or place in quarto. It was also printed in German, Argentorat. 1513. The works of this Gulielmus, which are numerous, were printed together, at Ulm, 1496. fol. with rude wooden prints. See an exact account of this writer, *Diar. Eruditor. Ital.* tom. xxi. p. 412.

One John Caius a poet of Cambridge is mentioned in *fir T. More's Works*, p. 204. And in *Parker's Def. of Pr. Marr. against Martin*, p. 99.

in the annals of English poetry, and will produce a short digression.

Great confusion has entered into this subject, on account of the degrees in grammar, which included rhetoric and verification<sup>b</sup>, antiently taken in our universities, particularly at Oxford: on which occasion, a wreath of laurel was presented to the new graduate, who was afterwards usually styled *poeta laureatus*<sup>c</sup>. These scholastic laureations, however, seem to have given rise to the appellation in question. I will give some instances at Oxford, which at the same time will explain the nature of the studies for which our academical philologists received their rewards. About the year 1470, one John Watson, a student in grammar, obtained a concession to be graduated and laureated in that science; on condition that he composed one hundred Latin verses in praise of the university, and a Latin comedy<sup>d</sup>. Another grammarian was distinguished with the same badge, after having stipulated, that, at the next public Act, he would affix the same number of hexameters on the great gates of saint Mary's church, that they might be seen by the whole university. This was at that period the most convenient mode of publication<sup>e</sup>. About the same time, one Maurice Byr-

<sup>b</sup> In the antient statutes of the university of Oxford, every Regent Master in Grammar is prohibited from reading in his faculty, unless he first pass an examination *DE MODO VERSIFICANDI et dicendi, &c.* MSS. Bibl. Bodl. fol. membran. Arch. A. 91. [nunc 2874.] f. 55. b. This scholastic cultivation of the art of PROSE gave rise to many Latin systems of METRE about this period. Among others, Thomas Langley, a monk of Hulm in Norfolk, in the year 1430, wrote, in two books, *DE VARIETATE CARMINUM*. Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Digb. 100. One John Seguard, a Latin poet and rhetorician of Norwich, about the year 1414, wrote a piece of this kind called *METRISTENCHIRIDION*, addressed to

Courtney bishop of Norwich, treating of the nature of metre in general, and especially of the *common metres* of the *Hymns* of Boecius and *Oracius* [Horace.] Oxon. MSS. Coll. Merton. Q. iii. 1.

<sup>c</sup> When any of these graduated grammarians were licenced to teach boys, they were publicly presented in the Convocation-house with a rod and ferrel. *Registr. Univ. Oxon. G. fol. 72. a.*

<sup>d</sup> *Registr. Univ. Oxon. G. fol. 143.* I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to the learned Mr. Swinton, keeper of the Archives at Oxford, for giving me frequent and free access to the Registers of that university.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid. fol. 162.*

chenfaw, a ſcholar in rhetoric, ſupplicated to be admitted to read lectures, that is, to take a degree, in that faculty; and his petition was granted, with a proviſion, that he ſhould write one hundred verſes on the glory of the univerſity, and not ſuffer Ovid's *ART OF LOVE*, and the *Elegies of Pamphilus*<sup>f</sup>, to be ſtudied in his auditory<sup>g</sup>. Not long afterwards, one John Bulman, another rhetorician, having complied with the terms impoſed, of explaining the firſt book of Tully's *OFFICES*, and likewise the firſt of his *EPISTLES*, without any pecuniary emolument, was graduated in rhetoric; and a crown of laurel was publicly placed on his head by the hands of the chancellor of the univerſity<sup>h</sup>. About the year 1489<sup>i</sup>, Skelton was laureated at Oxford, and in the year 1493, was permitted to wear his laurel at Cambridge<sup>k</sup>. Robert Whittington affords the laſt inſtance of a rhetorical degree at Oxford. He was a ſecular prieſt, and eminent for his various treatiſes in grammar, and for his facility in Latin poetry: having exerciſed his art many years, and ſubmitting to the cuſtomary demand of an hundred verſes, he was honoured with the laurel in the year 1512<sup>l</sup>. This title is

<sup>f</sup> Ovid's ſuppoſitious pieces, and other verſes of the lower age, were printed together by Goldaſtus, Francof. 1610. 8vo. Among theſe is, "Pamphili Mauriliani PAMPHILUS, ſive de Arte Amandi, Elegiæ lxiii." This is from the ſame ſchool with Ovid *DE VERULA*, and by ſome thought to be forged by the ſame author.

<sup>g</sup> Registr. Univ. Oxon. G. fol. 134. a.

<sup>h</sup> Registr. ut ſupr. G. fol. 124. b.

<sup>i</sup> Caxton, in the preface to his *ENGYDOS*, Mentions "maſter John Skelton, late created poete laureate in the univerſite of Oxenford, &c." This work was printed in 1490. Churchyard mentions Skelton's academical laureation, in his poem prefixed to Skelton's works, Lond. 1568. 8vo.

Nay Skelton wore the laurel wreath,  
And poſt in ſchools ye knoe.

And again,

That war the garland wreath  
Of laurel leaves ſo late.

<sup>k</sup> Registr. Univ. Cantabrig. ſub anno. Conceditur Johanni Skelton poete in partibus tranſmarinis atque Oxonii laurea ornato, "ut apud nos eadem decoraretur." And afterwards, Ann. 1504, 5. "Conceditur Johanni Skelton poete laureato quod poſſit conſtare eodem gradu hic quo ſtetit Oxonii, et quod poſſit uti habitu ſibi conſeſſo a principe." The latter claufe, I believe, relates to ſome diſtinction of habit, perhaps of fur or velvet, granted him by the king. Skelton is ſaid to have been poet laureate to Henry the eighth. He alſo ſtyles himſelf *Orator regius*, p. 1. 6. 109. 107. 284. 285. 287. Works, 1736.

<sup>l</sup> Registr. Univ. Oxon. ut ſupr. G. 173. b. 187. b.

prefixed

prefixed to one of his grammatical systems. "ROBERTI  
" WHITTINTONI, *Lichfeldiensis, Grammatices Magistri, PRO-*  
" *TOVATIS Angliæ, in florentissima Oxoniensi Achademia LAU-*  
" *REATI, DE OCTO PARTIBUS ORATIONIS*." In his PANE-  
GYRIC to cardinal Wolsey, he mentions his laurel,

Sufcipe LAURICOMI munuscula parva Roberti\*.

With regard to the Poet laureate of the kings of England, an officer of the court remaining under that title to this day, he is undoubtedly the same that is styled the KING'S VER-SIFIER, and to whom one hundred shillings were paid as his annual stipend, in the year 1251°. But when or how that title commenced, and whether this officer was ever solemnly crowned with laurel at his first investiture, I will not pretend to determine, after the searches of the learned Selden on this question have proved unsuccessful. It seems most probable, that the barbarous and inglorious name of VER-SIFIER gradually gave way to an appellation of more elegance and dignity: or rather, that at length, those only were in general invited to this appointment, who had received academical sanction, and had merited a crown of laurel in the universities for their abilities in Latin composition, particularly Latin versification. Thus the *king's Laureate* was nothing more than "a graduated rhetorician

\* Lond. 1513. See the next note.

° In his "Opusculum Roberti Whittin-toni in florentissima Oxoniensi achademia laureati." Signat. A. iii. Bl. Let. 4to. Colophon, "Expliciunt Roberti Whit-tintoni Oxonii protovatis epigrammata, una cum quibusdam panegyricis, im-pressa Londini per me Wynandum de Worde. Anno post virginum partum M.cccc. xix. decimo vero Kal. Maii." The Panegyrics are, on Henry the eighth, and cardinal Wolsey. The Epigrams, which are long copies of verse, are ad-

ressed to Charles Brandon duke of Suffolk, sir Thomas More, and to Skelton, under the title *Ad lepidissimum poetam SCHELTONEM carmen*, &c. Some of the lines are in a very classical style, and much in the manner of the earlier Latin Italian poets. At the end of these Latin poems is a defence of the author, called *ANTILYCON*, &c. This book is extremely scarce, and not mentioned by Wood, Ames, and some other collectors. These pieces are in manuscript, Oxon. MSS. Bodl. D. 3. 22.

\* See *supr.* vol. i. p. 47.

S 2

" employed

“employed in the service of the king.” That he originally wrote in Latin, appears from the antient title *versificator*: and may be moreover collected from the two Latin poems, which Baſton and Gulielmus, who appear to have reſpectively acted in the capacity of royal poets to Richard the firſt and Edward the ſecond, officially compoſed on Richard’s cruſade, and Edward’s ſiege of Striveling caſtle<sup>1</sup>.

Andrew Bernard, ſucceſſively poet laureate of Henry the ſeventh and the eighth, affords a ſtill ſtronger proof that this officer was a Latin ſcholar. He was a native of Thoulouſe, and an Auguſtine monk. He was not only the king’s poet laureate<sup>2</sup>, as it is ſuppoſed, but his hiftoriographer<sup>3</sup>, and preceptor in grammar to prince Arthur. He obtained many eccleſiaſtical preferments in England<sup>4</sup>. All the pieces now to be found, which he wrote in the character of poet laureate, are in Latin<sup>5</sup>. Theſe are, an ADDRESS to Henry the

<sup>1</sup> See ſupr. vol. i. p. 232. By the way, Baſton is called by Bale “*laureatus apud Oxonienses*.” Cent. iv. cap. 92.

<sup>2</sup> See an inſtrument PRO POETA LAUREATO. dat. 1486. Rymer’s FOED. tom. xii. p. 317. But, by the way, in this inſtrument there is no ſpecification of any thing to be done officially by Bernard. The king only grants to Andrew Bernard, *Poete laureato*, which we may conſtrue either THE *laureated poet*, or A *poet laureate*, a ſalary of ten marcs, till he can obtain ſome equivalent appointment. This, however, is only a precept to the treaſurer and chamberlains to diſburſe the ſalary, and refers to letters patent, not printed by Rymer. It is certain that Gower and Chaucer were never appointed to this office, notwithstanding this is commonly ſuppoſed. Skelton, in his CROWNE OF LAWRELL, ſees Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate approach: he deſcribes their whole apparel as glittering with the richeſt precious ſtones, and then immediately adds,

They wanted nothing but the LAURELL.  
Afterwards, however, there is the rubric

*Maſter Chaucer LAUREATE poete to Skelton.* Works, p. 21. 22. edit. 1736.

<sup>3</sup> Apoſtolo Zeno was both poet and hiftoriographer to his imperial majeſty. So was Dryden to James the ſecond. It is obſervable that Petrarch was laureated as poet and hiftorian.

<sup>4</sup> One of theſe, the maſterſhip of ſaint Leonard’s hoſpital at Bedford, was given him by biſhop Smith, one of the founders of Braſe-noſe college, Oxford, in the year 1498. Regiſtr. SMITH, epiſc. Lincoln. ſub. ann.

<sup>5</sup> Some of Skelton’s Latin poems ſeem to be written in the character of the *Royal laureate*, particularly one, entitled “*Hæc Laureatus Skeltonus, orator reginæ, ſuper triumphali, &c.*” It is ſubſcribed “*Per Skeltonida Laureatum, oratorem regium.*” Works, p. 110. edit. ut ſupr. Hardly any of his Engliſh pieces, which are numerous, appear to belong to that character. With regard to the ORATOR REGIUS, I find one John Mallard in that office to Henry the eighth, and his epiſtolary ſecretary. He has left a *Latin elegiac paraphraſe on the lord’s prayer*, MSS. Bibl. Reg. 7 D. xiii.

eighth for the most auspicious beginning of the tenth year of his reign, with an EPITHALAMIUM on the marriage of Francis the Dauphin of France with the king's daughter<sup>u</sup>. A NEW YEAR'S-GIFT for the year 1515<sup>v</sup>. And verses wishing prosperity to his majesty's thirteenth year<sup>w</sup>. He has left some Latin hymns<sup>x</sup>: and many of his Latin prose pieces, which he wrote in the quality of historiographer to both monarchs, are remaining<sup>y</sup>.

I am of opinion, that it was not customary for the royal laureate to write in English, till the reformation of religion had begun to diminish the veneration for the Latin language: or rather, till the love of novelty, and a better sense of things, had banished the narrow pedantries of monastic erudition, and taught us to cultivate our native tongue. In the mean time it is to be wished, that another change might at least be suffered to take place in the execution of this institution, which is confessedly Gothic, and unaccommodated to modern manners. I mean, that the more than annual return of a composition on a trite argument would be no longer required. I am conscious I say this at a time, when the best of kings affords the most just and copious theme for panegyric: but I speak it at a time, when the department is honourably filled by a poet of taste and genius, which are idly wasted on the most splendid subjects, when imposed by constraint, and perpetually repeated.

To what is here incidentally collected on an article more

xiii. Dedicated to that king. *Le premier livre de la cosmographie*, in verse, *ibid.* 29 B. xii. And a *Psalter*, beautifully written by himself, for the use of the king. In the margin, are short notes in the handwriting, and two exquisite miniatures, of Henry the eighth. *Ibid.* 2 A. xvi.

<sup>u</sup> MS. olim penes Thom. Martin de Palgrave.

<sup>v</sup> MSS. Coll. Nov. Oxon. 287.

<sup>w</sup> Brit. Mus. MSS. Reg. 12 A. x. The copy presented. In paper. There is a

wretched false quantity in the first line,

Induc, honor, cultus, et adole munera flammis.

<sup>y</sup> And a Latin life of saint Andrew. MSS. Cotton. DOMITIAN. A. xviii. 15.

<sup>x</sup> A chronicle of the life and achievements of Henry the seventh to the taking of Perkin Warbeck, MSS. Cotton. DOMITIAN. A. xviii. 15. Other historical commentaries on the reign of that king. *Ibid.* JUL. A. 4. JUL. A. 3.

curious

curious than important, I add an observation, which shews that the practice of other nations in this respect altogether corresponded with that of our own. When we read of the laureated poets of Italy and Germany, we are to remember, that they most commonly received this honour from the state, or some university; seldom, at least not immediately, from the prince: and if we find any of these professedly employed in the department of a court-poet, that they were not, in consequence of that peculiar situation, styled poets laureate. The distinction, at least in general, was previously conferred<sup>a</sup>.

John Scogan is commonly supposed to have been a contemporary of Chaucer, but this is a mistake<sup>b</sup>. He was educated at Oriel college in Oxford: and being an excellent mimic, and of great pleasantry in conversation, became the favourite buffoon of the court of Edward the fourth, in which he passed the greatest part of his life. Bale inaccurately calls Scogan, the JOCLATOR of Edward the fourth: by which word he seems simply to understand the king's JOKER, for he certainly could not mean that Scogan was his majesty's MINSTREL<sup>c</sup>. Andrew Borde, a mad physician and

<sup>a</sup> The reader who requires a full and particular information concerning the first origin of the laureation of poets, and the solemnities with which this ceremony was performed in Italy and Germany, is referred to Selden's *TIT. HON. OP.* tom. p. 457. seq. *VIE DE PETRARQUE*, tom. iii. *Notes, &c.* p. 1. Not. quat. And to a memoir of M. P. Abbé du Resnel, *MÉM. LIT.* x. 507. 4to. I will only add, the form of the creation of three poets laureate by the chancellor of the university of Straburgh, in the year 1621. "I create you, " being placed in a chair of state, crowned " with laurel and ivy, and wearing a ring " of gold, and the same do pronounce and " constitute, POETS LAUREATE, in the " name of the holy Trinity, the father, " son, and holy ghost. Amen."

<sup>b</sup> See Hollinsh. *Chron.* iii. f. 710. It is uncertain whether the poem addressed by

Chaucer to Scogan, was really written by the former, MSS. Fairfax. xvi.

<sup>c</sup> *Script.* xi. 70. By the way, the SERJEANT of the King's Minstrels occurs under this reign: and in a manner, which shews the confidential character of this officer, and his facility of access to the king at all hours and on all occasions. "And " as he [k. Edw. iv.] was in the north " contrary in the month of Septembre, as " he laye in his bedde, one namid Alexander Carlisle, that was *saviaunt of the* " *mystrallis*, cam to him in grete haste, " and bade hym aryse, for he hadde ene " mys cummyng, &c." A REMARKABLE FRAGMENT, etc. [an. ix. Edw. iv.] ad calc. *SPORTTI CHRON.* edit. Hearne. Oxon. 1729. 8vo. Compare Percy's *ESS. MINSTR.* p. 56. Anstis, *ORD. GART.* ii. 303.

a dull

a dull poet in the reign of Henry the eighth, published his *JESTS*, under the title of *SCOGIN'S JESTS*<sup>a</sup>, which are without humour or invention; and give us no very favourable idea of the delicacy of the king and courtiers, who could be exhilarated by the merriments of such a writer. A *MORAL BALADE*, printed in Chaucer's works, addressed to the dukes of Clarence, Bedford, and Gloucester, and sent from a tavern in the Vintry at London, is attributed to Scogan<sup>b</sup>. But our jocular bard evidently mistakes his talents when he attempts to give advice. This piece is the dullest sermon that ever was written in the octave stanza. Bale mentions his *COMEDIES*<sup>c</sup>, which certainly mean nothing dramatic, and are perhaps only his *JESTS* above-mentioned. He seems to have flourished about the year 1480.

Two didactic poets on chemistry appeared in this reign, John Norton and George Ripley. Norton was a native of Bristol<sup>d</sup>, and the most skillful alchemist of his age<sup>e</sup>. His poem is called the *ORDINAL*, or a manual of the chemical art<sup>f</sup>. It was presented to Nevil archbishop of York, who was a great patron of the hermetic philosophers<sup>g</sup>; which were lately grown so numerous in England, as to occasion

<sup>a</sup> It is from these pieces we learn that he was of Oriel college: for he speaks of retiring, with that society, to the hospital of saint Bartholomew, while the plague was at Oxford. These *JESTS* are sixty in number. *Pr.* Pref. "There is nothing better sides." *Pr.* "On a time in Lent." They were reprinted about the restoration. 4to.

<sup>b</sup> It may yet be doubted whether it belongs to Scogan; as it must have been written before the year 1447, and the writer complains of the approach of old age. col. i. v. 10. It was first printed, under Scogan's name, by Caxton, in the *COLLECTION OF CHAUCER'S and LYDGATE'S POEMS*. The little piece, printed as Chaucer's, [Urr. ed. p. 548.] called *FLEE FROM THE PRESSE*, is expressly given to

Scogan, and called *PROVERBIUM JOANIS SKOGAN*, MSS. C. C. C. Oxon. 203. xi. 70.

<sup>c</sup> He speaks of the wife of William Canning, who will occur again below, five times mayor of Bristol, and the founder of saint Mary of Radcliffe church there. *ORDINAL*, p. 34.

<sup>d</sup> Printed by Ashmole, in his *THEATRUM CHEMICUM* Lond. 1652. 8vo. p. 6. It was finished A. D. 1477. *ORDIN.* p. 106. It was translated into Latin by Michael Maier, M. D. Francof. 1618. 4to. Norton wrote other chemical pieces.

<sup>e</sup> See *ORDIN.* p. 9. 10. Norton declares, that he learned his art in forty days, at twenty-eight years of age. *Ibid.* p. 33. 88.

<sup>f</sup> Ashmole, ubi supr. p. 455. *Notes*.

an act of parliament against the transmutation of metals. Norton's reason for treating his subject in English rhyme, was to circulate the principles of a science of the most consummate utility among the unlearned<sup>1</sup>. This poem is totally void of every poetical elegance. The only wonder which it relates, belonging to an art, so fertile in striking inventions, and contributing to enrich the store-house of Arabian romance with so many magnificent imageries, is that of an alchemist, who projected a bridge of gold over the river Thames near London, crowned with pinnacles of gold, which being studded with carbuncles, diffused a blaze of light in the dark<sup>m</sup>. I will add a few lines only, as a specimen of his versification.

Wherefore he would set up in high  
That bridge, for a wonderfull sight,  
With pinnacles gilt, shining as goulde,  
A glorious thing for men to behoulde.  
Then he remembered of the newe,  
Howe greater fame shulde him pursewe,  
If he mought make that bridge so brighte,  
That it mought shine alsoe by night:  
And so continewe and not breake,  
Then all the londe of him would speake, &c<sup>n</sup>.

Norton's heroes in the occult sciences are Bacon, Albertus Magnus, and Raymond Lully, to whose specious promises of supplying the coinage of England with inexhaustible mines of philosophical gold, king Edward the third became an illustrious dupe<sup>o</sup>.

George Ripley, Norton's cotemporary, was accomplished

<sup>1</sup> Pag. 106.

<sup>m</sup> Pag. 26.

<sup>n</sup> Pag. 26.

<sup>o</sup> Ashmol. ubi supr. p. 443. 467. And

Camden's REM. p. 242. edit. 1674. By the way, Raymond Lully is said to have died at eighty years of age, in the year 1315. Whart. APP. Cave, cap. p. 6.

in many parts of erudition; and still maintains his reputation as a learned chemist of the lower ages. He was a canon regular of the monastery of Bridlington in Yorkshire, a great traveller<sup>8</sup>, and studied both in France and Italy. At his return from abroad, pope Innocent the eighth absolved him from the observance of the rules of his order, that he might prosecute his studies with more convenience and freedom. But his convent not concurring with this very liberal indulgence, he turned Carmelite at faint Botolph's in Lincolnshire, and died an anchorite in that fraternity in the year 1490<sup>9</sup>. His chemical poems are nothing more than the doctrines of alchemy cloathed in plain language, and a very rugged versification. The capital performance is *THE COMPOUND OF ALCHEMIE*, written in the year 1471<sup>1</sup>. It is in the octave metre, and dedicated to Edward the fourth<sup>1</sup>. Ripley has left a few other compositions on his favourite science, printed by Ashmole, who was an enthusiast in this abused species of philosophy<sup>1</sup>. One of them,

<sup>8</sup> Ashmole says, that Ripley, during his long stay at Rhodes, gave the knights of Malta 100,000 l. annually, towards maintaining the war against the Turks. *Ubi supr.* p. 458. Ashmole could not have made this incredible assertion, without supposing a circumstance equally incredible, that Ripley was in actual possession of the Philosopher's Stone.

<sup>9</sup> *Ashmol.* p. 455. seq. Bale, viii. 49. *Pitf.* p. 677.

<sup>1</sup> *Ashmol. THEATR. CHEM.* p. 193. It was first printed in 1591. 4to. Reprinted by Ashmole, *THEATR. CHEM.* ut *supr.* p. 107. It has been thrice translated into Latin, *Ashm. ut supr.* p. 465. See *Ibid.* p. 108. 110. 122. Most of Ripley's Latin works were printed by Lud. Combachius, *Cassel.* 1609. 12mo.

<sup>1</sup> He mentions the abbey church at Westminster as unfinished. *Pag.* 154. *ft.* 27. *P.* 156. and *ft.* 34.

<sup>1</sup> Ashmole conjectures, that an English chemical piece in the octave stanza, which he has printed, called *HERMES'S BIRD*, no unpoetical fiction, was translated from Raymond Lully, by Cremer, abbot of

Westminster, a great chemist: and adds, that Cremer brought Lully into England, and introduced him to the notice of Edward the third, about the year 1334. *Ashmol. ut supr.* p. 213. 467. The writer of *HERMES'S BIRD*, however, appears by the versification and language, to have lived at least an hundred years after that period. He informs us, that he made the translation "owte of the Frensche." *Ibid.* p. 214. Ashmole mentions a curious picture of the *GRAND MYSTERIES OF THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*, which abbot Cremer ordered to be painted in Westminster abbey, upon an arch where the waxen kings and queens are placed: but that it was obliterated with a plaisterer's brush by the puritans in Oliver's time. He also mentions a large and beautiful window, behind the pulpit in the neighbouring church of saint Margaret, painted with the same subject, and destroyed by the same ignorant zealots, who mistook these innocent hieroglyphics for some story in a popish legend. *Ashmol. ibid.* 211. 466. 467. Compare *Widmore's Hist. WESTMINSTER-ABBEY.* p. 174. seq. edit. 1751. 4to.

the MEDULLA, written in 1476, is dedicated to archbishop Nevil<sup>u</sup>. These pieces have no other merit, than that of serving to develope the history of chemistry in England. They certainly contributed nothing to the state of our poetry<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>u</sup> Ashm. p. 389. See also p. 374. seq.

<sup>v</sup> It will be sufficient to throw some of the obscurer rhymers of this period into the Notes. Osbern Bokenham wrote or translated metrical lives of the saints, about 1445. See supr. vol. i. p. 14. Notes. Gilbert Banester wrote in English verse the *Miracle of saint Thomas*, in the year 1467. CCCC. MSS. Q. viii. See supr. vol. i. p. 75. Notes. And Lel. COLLECTAN. tom. i. (p. ii.) pag. 510. edit. 1770. Wydville earl of Rivers, already mentioned, translated into English distichs, *The morale Proverbs of Crystyne of Pysse*, printed by Caxton, 1477. They consist of two sheets in folio. This is a couplet;

Little vailleth good example to see  
For him that wole not the contrarie flee.

This nobleman's only original piece is a *Balet* of four stanzas, preserved by Rouse, a contemporary historian, Ross. Hist. p. 213. edit. Hearn. apud Leland. Itin. tom. x. edit. Oxon. 1745. I refer also the NORBROWNE MAYDE to this period. See Capel's PROLUSSIONS, p. 23. seq. edit. 1760. And Percy's ANC. BALL. vol. ii. p. 26. seq. edit. 1767. Of the same date is perhaps the DELECTABLE HISTORIE of king Edward the fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth, &c. &c. See Percy, ubi supr. p. 81. Hearne affirms, that in this piece there are some "romantic assertions: —otherwise 'tis a book of *value*, and "more authority is to be given to it than "is given to poetical books of LATE "YEARS." Hearne's Leland, ut supr. vol. ii. p. 103.