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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, 1778

Section XII. Digression to the Scotch poets. William Dunbar. His Thistle and Rose, and Golden Terge. Specimens. Dunbar's comic pieces. Estimate of his genius. Moralities fashionable among the Scotch ...

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

S E C T. VIII. 12.

IT is not the plan of this work to comprehend the Scotch poetry. But when I consider the close and national connection between England and Scotland in the progress of manners and literature, I am sensible I should be guilty of a partial and defective representation of the poetry of the former, was I to omit in my series a few Scotch writers, who have adorned the present period, with a degree of sentiment and spirit, a command of phraseology, and a fertility of imagination, not to be found in any English poet since Chaucer and Lydgate: more especially as they have left striking specimens of allegorical invention, a species of composition which appears to have been for some time almost totally extinguished in England.

The first I shall mention is William Dunbar, a native of Salton in East Lothian, about the year 1470. His most celebrated poems are *THE THISTLE AND THE ROSE*, and *THE GOLDEN TERGE*.

THE THISTLE AND THE ROSE was occasioned by the marriage of James the fourth, king of Scotland, with Margaret Tudor, eldest daughter of Henry the seventh, king of England: an event, in which the whole future political state of both nations was vitally interested, and which ultimately produced the union of the two crowns and kingdoms. It was finished on the ninth day of May in the year 1503, nearly three months before the arrival of the queen in Scotland: whose progress from Richmond to Edinburgh was attended with a greater magnificence of parade, processions, and spectacles, than I ever remember to have seen on any similar occasion*. It may be pertinent to premise, that Mar-

* See a memoir, cited above, in Leland's *COLL.* tom. iii. *APPEND.* edit. 1770. p. 265. It is worthy of particular notice,

Vol. II.

that during this expedition there was in the magnificent suite of the princess a company of players, under the direction of one John

English,

L 1

garet was a singular patroness of the Scotch poetry, now beginning to flourish. Her bounty is thus celebrated by Stewart of Lorne, in a Scotch poem, called *LERGES OF THIS NEW YEIR DAY*, written in the year 1527.

Grit god relief ^b MARGARET our queene!
 For and scho war and scho has bene ^c
 Scho wold be larger of lufray ^d
 Than all the laif that I of mene ^e,
 For lerges ^f of this new-yeir day ^g.

Dunbar's *THISTLE AND ROSE* is opened with the following stanzas, which are remarkable for their descriptive and picturesque beauties.

Quhen ^h Merche was with variand windis past,
 And Apperyll had with her silver shouris
 Tane leif ⁱ of Nature, with ane orient blast,
 And lusty May, that muddir ^k is of flouris
 Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris ^l,

English, who is sometimes called Johannes. "Amonge the faide lordes and the qweene was in order, Johanpes and his compayne, the menstrells of musicke, &c." p. 267. See also, p. 299. 300. 280. 289. In the midst of a most splendid procession, the princefs rode on horse-back behind the king into the city of Edinburgh, p. 287. Afterwards the ceremonies of this stately marriage are described; which yet is not equal, in magnificence and expence, to that of Richard the second with Isabell of France, at Calais, in the year 1397. This last-mentioned marriage is recorded with the most minute circumstances, the dresses of the king and the new queen, the names of the French and English nobility who attended, the presents, one of which is a golden cup studded with jewels, and worth three thousand pounds, given on both sides, the banquets, entertainments, and a variety of other curious particulars, in five large vellum pages, in an antient Register of

Merton priory in Surrey, in old French. MSS. LAUB, E. 54. fol. 105. b. Bibl. Bodl. Oxon. Froissart, who is most commonly prolix in describing pompous ceremonies, might have greatly enriched his account of the same royal wedding, from this valuable and authentic record. See his *CRON.* tom. iv. p. 226. ch. 78. B. penult. Paris, 1574. fol. Or lord Berners's Translation, vol. ii. f. 275. cap. ccxvi. edit. Pinson, 1523. fol.

^b Great god help, &c.

^c If she continues to do as she has done.

^d Bounty. Fr. *L'Offre*.

^e Any other I could speak of.

^f Largess. Bounty.

^g St. x.

^h When. *Qu* has the force of *av*.

ⁱ Taken Leave.

^k Mother.

^l Mattin orisons. From *Horæ* in the missal. So again in the *GOLDEN TERCE*, St. ii. Where he also calls the birds the *chapel-clarkes*

Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt,
Quhois harmony to heir it was delyt :

In bed at morrow fleiping as I lay,
Methocht Aurora, with her cristall ene
In at the window lukit ^m by the day,
And halfit ⁿ me with visage pale and grene;
On quhois hand a lark sang, fro the splene ^o,
“Awak, luvaris ^p, out of your flemering ^q,
“Se how the lusty morrow doth upspring!”

Methocht freshe May befoir my bed upstude,
In weid ^r depaynt of mony diverse hew,
Sober, benygn, and full of mansfuetude,
In bright atteir of flouris forgit new ^s,
Hevinly of color, quhyt, reid, brown, and blew,
Balmit in dew, and gilt with Phebus' bemys;
Quhil al the house illumynit of her lemys ^t.

MAY then rebukes the poet, for not rising early, according to his annual custom, to celebrate the approach of the spring; especially as the lark has now announced the dawn of day, and his heart in former years had always,

chapel-clarkes of Venus, St. iii. In the COURTE OF LOVE, Chaucer introduces the birds singing a mass in honour of May. Edit. Urr. p. 570. v. 1353. seq.

On May-day, when the larke began to ryse, To MATTINS went the lustie nighingale.

He begins the service with *Domine labia*. The eagle sings the *Venite*. The poppingay *Cæli enarrant*. The peacock *Dominus regnavit*. The owl *Benedicite*. The *Te Deum* is converted into *Te Deum AMORIS*, and sung by the thrush, &c. &c. Skelton, in the BOKE OF PHILIP SPARROW, ridicules the missal, in supposing various parts of it to be sung by birds. p. 226. edit. Lond. 1739, 12mo. Much the same sort of fic-

tion occurs in Sir David Lyndesay's COM-PLAYNT OF THE POPYNGO, edit. ut infr. SIGNAT. B. iii.

Suppose the geis and hennis fuld cry alarum, And we sall serve *secundum usum Sarum*, &c.

^m Looked.

ⁿ Hailed.

^o With good will. Loudly.

^p Lovers.

^q Slumbering.

^r Attire.

^s From Chaucer, MILLER'S TALE, v. 147. p. 25. Urr.

Full brightir was the shining of hir hewe Than in the Towre the noble *forged newe*.

^t Brightness.

L 1 2

— glaid

— — — glaid and blisful bene
Sangis^a to mak undir the levis grene^x.

The poet replies, that the spring of the present year was unpromising and ungenial; unattended with the usual song of birds, and serenity of sky: and that storms and showers, and the loud blasts of the horn of *lord Eolus*, had usurped her mild dominion, and hitherto prevented him from wandering at leisure under the vernal branches. *MAY* rejects his excuse, and with a smile of majesty commands him to arise, and to perform his annual homage to the flowers, the birds, and the sun. They both enter a delicious garden, filled with the richest colours and odours. The sun suddenly appears in all his glory, and is thus described in the luminous language of *Lydgate*.

The purpoure sone, with tendir bemys reid,
In orient bricht as angell did appeir,
Thorow goldin skyis putting up his heid,
Quhois gilt tressis schone so wondir cleir,
That all the world take comfort far and neir^y.

Immediately the birds, like the morning-stars, singing together, hail the unusual appearance of the sun-shine.

And, as the blisful sone of cherarchy^z,
The fowlis sung throw comfort of the licht;
The burddis did with oppin voices cry,
“ O luvaris, so away thow dully nicht,
“ And welcum day that comfortis every wicht.

^a Songs.

^x St. iv. See Chaucer's *KNIGHT'S TALE*, v. 1042. p. 9. Urr.

She was arisin, and all redie dight,
For May will have no sluggardy annight:
The seafon prikkith every gentill herte;

And makith it out of his slepe to ferte,
And sayth, aryse, and do May observaunce,
&c.

^y St. viii.

^z The hierarchy. See *JOB*, ch. xxxviii. v. 7. The morning-stars singing together.
“ Hail

“ Hail May, hail Flora, hail Aurora schene,
 “ Hail princes Nature, hail Venus luvis quene^a.”

NATURE is then introduced, issuing her interdict, that the progress of the spring should be no longer interrupted, and that Neptune and Eolus should cease from disturbing the waters and air.

Dame Nature gaif an inhibitioun thair,
 To fers Neptune, and Eolus the bauld^b;
 Nocht to perturb the wattir nor the air;
 And that no schouris^c nor blastis cawld
 Effray suld^d floris, nor fowlis on the fauld;
 Scho bad eke Juno goddes of the sky
 That scho the hevin suld amene and dry^e.

This preparation and suspense are judicious and ingenious; as they give dignity to the subject of the poem, awaken our curiosity, and introduce many poetical circumstances. NATURE immediately commands every bird, beast, and flower, to appear in her presence; and, as they had been used to do every May-morning, to acknowledge her universal sovereignty. She sends the roe to bring the beasts, the swallow to collect the birds, and the yarrow^f to summon the flowers. They are assembled before her in an instant. The lion advances first, whose figure is drawn with great force and expression.

^a St. ix.

^b Bold.

^c Read *Scho-u-ris*.

^d Should hurt.

^e St. x.

^f The yarrow is *Achillea*, or *Millefolium*, commonly called *Sneefwort*. There is no reason for selecting this plant to go on a

message to the flowers; but that its name has been supposed to be derived from *Arrow*, being held a remedy for healing wounds inflicted by that weapon. The poet, to apologise for his boldness in personifying a plant, has added, “ full craftely conjurit scho.” St. xii.

This

This awfull beist full terrible was of cheir,
 Persing of luke, and stout of countenance,
 Ryght strong of corps, of fassoun fair but feir^g,
 Lusty of shaip, lycht of deliverance,
 Reid of his cullour as the ruby glance,
 In field of gold he stude full mychtely
 With floure de lucis firculit^h lustelyⁱ.

This is an elegant and ingenious mode of blazoning the Scottish arms, which are a lion with a border, or tressure, adorned with flower de luces. We should remember, that heraldry was now a science of high importance and esteem. NATURE lifting up his *clavis cleir*, or shining claws, and suffering him to rest on her knee, crowns him with a radiant diadem of precious stones, and creates him the king of beasts: at the same time she enjoins him to exercise justice with mercy, and not to suffer his subjects of the smallest size or degree, to be oppressed by those of superiour strength and dignity. This part of NATURE'S charge to the lion, is closed with the following beautiful stroke, which indicates the moral tenderness of the poet's heart.

And lat no bowgle with his busteous^k hornis
 The meik pluch ox^l oppres for all hys pryd,
 Bot in the yok go peciable him besyd^m.

She next crowns the eagle king of fowls; and sharpening his talons like darts of steel, orders him to govern great and small, the wren or the peacock, with an uniform and equal impartiality. I need not point out to my reader the political lessons couched under these commands. NATURE now calls the flowers; and observing the thistle to be surrounded

^g Fierce.
^h Encircled.
ⁱ St. xiv.

^k Boisterous. Strong.
^l Plough-ox.
^m St. xvi.

with

with a bush of spears, and therefore qualified for war, gives him a crown of rubies, and says, "In field go forth and fend the laif". The poet continues elegantly to picture other parts of the royal arms; in ordering the thistle, who is now king of vegetables, to prefer all herbs, or flowers, of rare virtue, and rich odour: nor ever to permit the nettle to associate with the flour de lys, nor any ignoble weed to be ranked in competition with the lily. In the next stanza, where NATURE directs the thistle to honour the rose above all other flowers, exclusive of the heraldic meaning, our author with much address insinuates to king James the fourth an exhortation to conjugal fidelity, drawn from the high birth, beauty, and amiable accomplishments, of the royal bride the princess Margaret^o.

Nor hald no udir flower in sic denty^p
 As the fresche ROSE, of cullour reid and quhyt;
 For gif thou dois^q, hurt is thyne honesty,
 Considering that no flour is so perfyte,
 So full of vertew, pleafans, and delyt,
 So ful of blisfull angelick bewty,
 Imperial birth, honour, and dignite^r.

NATURE then addresses the rose, whom she calls, "O lusty daughter most benyng," and whose lineage she exalts above that of the lily. This was a preference of Tudor to Valois.

^p Defend the rest.

^o Among the pageants exhibited at Edinburgh in honour of the nuptials, she was complimented with the following curious mixture of classical and scriptural history. "Ny to that crofs was a scarfawt [scaffold] made, where was represented Paris and the three Deesses, with Mer-cure that gaff hym the apyll of gold for to gyffe to the most fayre of the Thre, which he gave to Venus. In the scarfawt was also represented the Salutacion

of Gabriell to the Virgyne in saying "Ave gratia, and sens after [next,] the sollempnizacion of the very maryage betwix the said Vierge [Virginia] and Joseph." Leland, COLL. iii. APPEND. p. 289. ut supr. Not to mention the great impropriety, which they did not perceive, of applying such a part of scripture.

^p Dainty. Price.

^q If thou dost.

^r St. xxi.

She

She crowns the rose with *clarified* gems, the lustre of which illumines all the land. The rose is hailed queen by the flowers. Last, her praises are sung by the universal chorus of birds, the sound of which awakens the poet from his delightful dream. The fairy scene is vanished, and he calls to the muse to perpetuate in verse the wonders of the splendid vision.

Although much fine invention and sublime fabling are displayed in the allegorical visions of our old poets, yet this mode of composition, by dealing only in imaginary personages, and by excluding real characters and human actions, necessarily fails in that chief source of entertainment which we seek in antient poetry, the representation of antient manners.

Another general observation, immediately resulting from the subject of this poem, may be here added, which illustrates the present and future state of the Scotch poetry. The marriage of a princess of England with a king of Scotland, from the new communication and intercourse opened between the two courts and kingdoms by such a connection, must have greatly contributed to polish the rude manners, and to improve the language, literature, and arts, of Scotland.

The design of Dunbar's *GOLDEN TERGE*, is to shew the gradual and imperceptible influence of love, when too far indulged, over reason. The discerning reader will observe, that the cast of this poem is tinged with the morality and imagery of the *ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE*, and the *FLOURE AND LEAFE*, of Chaucer.

The poet walks forth at the dawn of a bright day. The effects of the rising sun on a vernal landscape, with its accompaniments, are thus delineated in the manner of Lydgate, yet with more strength, distinctness, and exuberance of ornament.

Richte

Richte as the starre of day began to schyne,
 When gone to bed was Vesper and Lucyne,
 I raise, and by a rofier^a did me rest:
 Upsprang the golden candle matutyne,
 With cleir depurit^b bemys chryftallyne,
 Glading the mirry fowlis in thair nest:
 Or Phebus was in purpou kaip^c revest,
 Upsprang the lark, the hevenis menstral syne^d,
 In May intill a morrow mirthfullest.

Full angelyk the birdis fang thair houris,
 Within their courtings^e grene, within thair bouris
 Apparrellit quahaite and reid with blumys sweit:
 Ennamelit was the feild with all cullouris,
 The perlit droppis schuke as in silver schouris^f,
 While al in balme did branche and levis fleit
 Depairt from Phebus, did Aurora greit,
 Hir chryftall teiris I saw hing on the flouris,
 Quhilk he for lufe all drank up with his heit.

For mirth of May, with skippis and with hoppis,
 The birdis fang upon the tendir croppis^g,
 With curious notes, as Venus' chapell-clarkes:
 The rofis reid, now spreiding of their knoppis^h,
 Were powderitⁱ bricht with heavenly beryl-droppis,
 Throw bemys reid lemyng as ruby sparks;
 The skyis rang with schoutyng of the larks,
 The purpou hevin owreskalit in silver floppis^j
 Owregilt the treis, branchis, levis and barks.

- ^a Rose-tree.
^b Purified.
^c Cape. Ere Phebus was dressed in his purple robe.
^d Then.
^e Curtains.
^f The pearled drops fell from the trees
 like silver showers.
^g Branches.
^h Knobs. Buds.
ⁱ Besprinkled. An heraldic term. See OBSERVATIONS ON THE FAIRY QUEEN, ii. p. 158. seq.
^j Covered with streaks, *slips*, of silver.

Down thurch the ryfs^d ane revir ran with stremis
 So lustely upoun the lykand^e lemis,
 That all the lake as lamp did leme of licht,
 Quhilk shaddowit all about with twynklyng glemis^f;
 The bewis^g baithit war in secound bemis,
 Through the reflex of Phebus visage bricht
 On every fide the egè raise on hicht^h :
 The bank was grene, the son was ful of bemis,
 The streimeirs cleir as starres in frostie nicht.

The crystall cleir, the sapheir firmament,
 The ruby skyies of the reid orient,
 Kestⁱ beryl bemis on emerault bewis grene,
 The rosy garth^k, depaynt, and redolent,
 With purpoure, asure, gold, and gowlis^l gent,
 Arrayit was, by dame Flora the quene,
 Sa nobilly, that joy was for to sene:
 The rocke^m, agane the river resplendent,
 As low illuminate all the levis scheneⁿ.

^d Through the bushes, the trees. Rice, or *Ris*, is properly a long branch. This word is still used in the west of England. Chaucer, MILLER'S TALE, v. 215. p. 26. Urr. edit.

And thereupon he had a fair surplice
 As white as is the blofome on the *rice*.

[See supr. vol. i. p. 428.] So in a Scotch poem by Alexander Scott, written 1562. ANTIEN SCOTTISH POEMS, Edinb. 1770. p. 194.

Welcumoure rubent rois [rose] upon the *rice*.

So also Lydgate, in his poem called LONDON LICKPENNY, MSS. Harl. 367.

Hot pefcode own [one] began to crye,
 Straberys rype, and *cherryes in the ryse*.

That is, as he passed through London streets, they cried, hot peafe, ripe strawberries, and cherryes on a *beugh*, or twig.

^o Pleasant.

^f The water blazed like a lamp, and

threw about it shadowy gleams of twinkling light.

^e Boughs.

^h The high-raised edges, or bank.

ⁱ Cast.

^k Garden.

^l Gules. The heraldic term for red.

^m The rock, glittering with the reflection of the river, illuminated as with fire all the bright leaves. *Low* is flame.

ⁿ St. i. seq. Compare Chaucer's Morning, in the KNIGHT'S TALE, v. 1493. p. 12. Urr.

The mery lark, messengere of the day,
 Salewith in her song the morowe gray;
 And fyrie Phebus ryfing up so bright
 That all the orient laughith at the sight,
 And with his stremis dryith in the greves
 The silver dropis hanging in the leves.

It is feldom that we find Chaucer indulging his genius to an absurd excess in florid descriptions. The fame cannot be said of Lydgate.

Our

Our author, lulled by the music of the birds, and the murmuring of the water, falls asleep on the flowers, which he calls *Flora's mantill*. In a vision, he sees a ship approach, whose sails are like the *bleffom upon the spray*, and whose masts are of gold bright as the *star of day*^o. She glides swiftly through a chrystal bay; and lands in the blooming meadows, among the green rushes and reeds, an hundred ladies clad in rich but loose attire. They are cloathed in green kirtles; their golden tresses, tied only with glittering threads, flow to the ground; and their snowy bosoms are unveiled.

Als fresche as flours that in the May upspreids
 In kirtills grene, withoutin kell^p or bands
 Their bricht hair hung glittering on the strand
 In tressis cleir, wpyit^q with golden threidis;
 With pawpys^r whyt, and middills small as wands^s.

In this brilliant assembly, the poet sees NATURE, *dame Venus quene*, the *fresche AURORA*, May, *lady Flora schene*, Juno, Latona, Proserpine, Diana goddesses of the chase and *woodis grene*, *lady Clio*, Minerva, Fortune, and Lucina. These *michty quenes* are crowned with diadems, glittering like the morning-star. They enter a garden. May, the queen of mirthful *months*, is supported between her sisters April and

^o In our old poetry and the romances, we frequently read of ships superbly decorated. This was taken from real life. Proffart, speaking of the French fleet in 1387, prepared for the invasion of England under the reign of Richard the second, says, that the ships were painted with the arms of the commanders and gilt, with banners, pennons, and standards, of silk: and that the masts were painted from top to bottom, glittering with gold. The ship of lord Guy of Tremoyll was so sumptuously garnished, that the painting and colours cost 2000 French franks, more than 222 pounds

of English currency at that time. See Grafton's CHRON. p. 364. At his second expedition into France, in 1417, king Henry the fifth was in a ship, whose sails were of purple silk most richly embroidered with gold. Speed's CHRON. B. ix. p. 636. edit. 1611. Many other instances might be brought from antient miniatures and illuminations.

^p Caul.
^q Bound.
^r Paps.
^s St. vii.

June: as she walks up and down the garden, the birds begin to sing, and NATURE gives her a gorgeous robe adorned with every colour under heaven.

Thair sawe I NATURE present till ' her a gown
Riche to beholde, and noble of renoune,
Of everie hew that undir the hevin has bene
Depaint and braid " by gud proportioun ".

The vegetable tribes then do their obeisance to NATURE, in these polished and elegant verses.

And every blome on branche, and eik on bank,
Opnit, and spred thair balmy levis dank,
Full law inclyneand to thair queen full cleir,
Whom for their noble nuriffing thay thank *.

Immediately another court, or groupe, appears. Here Cupid the king presides :

— — — a bow in hand ay bent,
And dreadfull arrowis groundin scherp and squhair.
Thair sawe I Mars the god armipotent
Awefull and stirnè, strong and corpulent.
Thair sawe I crabit ' Saturne, auld and hair ",
His look was lyk for to perturb the air.
Thair was Mercurius, wise and eloquent,
Of retorik that fund " the floris fair ".

These are attended with other pagan divinities, Janus, Priapus, Eolus, Bacchus the *glader of the table*, and Pluto. They are all arrayed in green; and singing amorous ditties to the

' To her.
" Broad.
" St. x.
" St. xi.

' Crabbed.
" Hoar.
" Found.
" St. xiii.

harp and lute, invite the ladies to dance. The poet quits his ambush under the trees, and pressing forward to gain a more perfect view of this tempting spectacle, is espied by Venus. She bids her *keen archers* arrest the intruder. Her attendants, a groupe of fair ladies, instantly drop their green mantles, and each discovers a huge bow. They form themselves in battle-array, and advance against the poet.

And first of all, with bow in hand ay bent,
 Came dame BEAUTY, richt as scho wald me schent;
 Syne followit all her damosalls in feir,
 With many divers awfull instrument^c;
 Into the prais FAIR HAVING^d with her went;
 Syne^e PORTRATOR, PLESANCE, and lusty CHEIR,
 Than came RESSOUN, with Schield of gold so cleir,
 In plait of mail, as Mars armipotent,
 Defendit me that noble^f chevellier^g.

BEAUTY is assisted by *tender YOUTH* with her *virgins ying*, GREEN INNOCENCE, MODESTY, and OBEDIENCE: but their resistance was but feeble against the golden target of REASON. WOMANHOOD then leads on PATIENCE, DISCRETION, STEDFASTNESS, BENIGNE LOOK, MYLDE CHEIR, and HONEST BUSINESS.

Bot RESSOUN bare the Terge with sic constance,
 Thair scharp essay might do me no deirance^h,
 For all thair prais and awfullⁱ ordinance^k.

The attack is renewed by DIGNITY, RENOWN, RICHES, NOBILITY, and HONOUR. These, after displaying their *high* banner, and shooting a cloud of arrows, are soon obliged to

^c Formidable weapons.

^d Behaviour.

^e Next.

^f Warrior.

^g St. xvii.

^h Injury.

ⁱ Weapons.

^k St. xix.

retreat.

retreat. Venus, perceiving the rout, orders DISSEMBLANCE to make an attempt to pierce the Golden Shield. DISSEMBLANCE, or DISSIMULATION, chuses for her archers, PRESENCE, FAIR CALLING, and CHERISHING. These bring back BEAUTY to the charge. A new and obstinate conflict ensues.

Thik was the schott of grindin arrowis kene,
 Bot RESSOUN, with the Schield of Gold so schene,
 Weirly¹ defendit quhosoeir affayit:
 The awfull schour he manly did sustene^m.

At length PRESENCE, by whom the poet understands that irresistible incentive accruing to the passion of love by society, by being often admitted to the company of the beloved object, throws a magical powder into the eyes of REASON; who is suddenly deprived of all his powers, and reels like a drunken man. Immediately the poet receives a deadly wound, and is taken prisoner by BEAUTY; who now assumes a more engaging air, as the clear eye of REASON is growing dim by intoxication. DISSIMULATION then tries all her arts on the poet: FAIR CALLING smiles upon him: CHERISHING soothes him with soft speeches: NEW ACQUAINTANCE embraces him awhile, but soon takes her leave, and is never seen afterwards. At last DANGER delivers him to the custody of GRIEF.

By this time, "God Eolus his bugle blew." The leaves are torn with the blast: in a moment the pageant disappears, and nothing remains but the forest, the birds, the banks, and the brook". In the twinkling of an eye they return to the ship; and unfurling the sails, and stemming the sea with a rapid course, celebrate their triumph with a discharge of ordinance. This was now a new topic for poetical description. The smoke rises to the firmament, and the roar is re-echoed by the rocks, with a sound as if the rain-bow had been broken.

¹ Warily.^m St. xxiii.^a St. xxvi.

And

And as I did awak of this swowning °,
 The joyfull fowls merrily did sing
 For mirth of Phebus tendir bemis schene.
 Sweit was the vapours, soft the morrowing,
 Hailsum the vaill ° depaynt with flours ying,
 The air intemperit sober and amene;
 In whit and red was al the erd besene,
 Throw Naturis nobill fresch ennameling
 In mirthfull May of every moneth quene °.

Our author then breaks out into a laboured encomium on Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. This I chuse to recite at large, as it shews the peculiar distinction antiently paid to those fathers of verse; and the high ideas which now prevailed, even in Scotland, of the improvements introduced by their writings into the British poetry, language, and literature.

O reverend CHAUSER, rose of rhetouris all,
 As in our tonge ane flour ° imperial
 That raise in Britain ever, quha reidis richt †,
 Tho beiris of makin ° the triumphs royall,
 The fresche enamilit termes celestiall:
 This mater couth haif illuminit full bricht ‡;
 Was thou nocht of our English all the licht,
 Surmounting every tounge terrestriall
 As far as Mayis morrow dois midnycht.

O moral GOWER, and LYDGATE laureat,
 Your suggarit * tonguis, and † lippis aureat,

° Dream.

† Vale.

‡ St. xxviii.

° Other instances occur in the elder Scotch poets. See *supr.* p. 125.

° One flower.

† Ever rose, or sprung, in Britain, whoſe reads right.

° Thou bearest of poets.

° This subject would have appeared to some advantage, had not, &c.

* Sugared.

† Lips.

Bene:

Bene till our ^a eris cause of gret delyte;
 Your angelic mouth most mellifuate
 Our rude language has cleir illumynat,
 And has owregilt our speiche, that imperfyte
 Stude, or your goldin pennis schup to wryt ^a,
 This yle befoir was bair and diffolat ^b
 Of rhetorik, or lusty fresche ^c indyte ^d.

This panegyric, and the poem, is closed with an apology, couched in elegant metaphors, for his own comparative humility of style. He addressees the poem, which he calls a *litill quair*.

O know quhat thou of rhetorik has spent;
 Of hir lusty rofis redolent
 Is nane into thy garland sett on hicht ^e.
 O schame ^f thairfor, and draw thè out of sicht!
 Rude is thy weid ^g, destitute, bair, and rent,
 Weill aucht thou be affeirrit of the licht ^h!

Dunbar's DAUNCE has very great merit in the comic style of painting. It exhibits a groupe of figures touched with the capricious but spirited pencil of Callot. On the eve of Lent, a general day of confession, the poet in a dream sees a display of heaven and hell. Mahomet ⁱ, or the devil, commands a dance to be performed by a select party of fiends; particularly by those, who in the other world had never

^a To our ears.
^a Ere your golden pens were shaped to write.
^b Bare and desolate.
^c Elegant composition.
^d ST. xxx.
^e No fresh and fragrant roses of rhetoric are placed on high in thy garland.
^f Be ashamed.
^g Weed. Drefs.

^h ST. xxxi.
ⁱ Mahon. Sometimes written Mahoun, or Mahound. See Mat. Parif. p. 289. ad ann. 1236. And Du Fresne, Lat. Gloss. V. MAHUM. The christians in the crusades were accustomed to hear the Saracens swear by their prophet Mahomet: which thence became in Europe another name for the devil.

made confession to the priest, and had consequently never received absolution. Immediately the SEVEN DEADLY SINS appear; and present a mask, or mummery, with the newest gambols just imported from France^k. The first is PRIDE, who properly takes place of all the rest, as by *that SIN fell the angels*. He is described in the fashionable and gallant dress of those times: in a bonnet and gown, his hair thrown back, his cap awry, and his gown affectedly flowing to his feet in large folds.

Let se, quoth he^l, now quha beginis?
 With that the fowll Deadly Sinnis
 Begouth to leip attanis^m.
 And first of all in dance was PRYD,
 With hair wyld bak, bonet on syde,
 Lyk to make vaistie wanis;
 And round about him as a quheillⁿ,
 Hang all in rumpillis^o to the heill,
 His kethat^p for the nanis^q.
 Many proud trumpour^r with him trippit,
 Throw skaldan^s fyr ay as they skippit
 They girnd with hyddous^t granis^v.

Several *holy harlots* follow, attended by monks, who make great sport for the devils^w.

^k The original is *garmountis*. In the Memoir, cited above, concerning the progress of the princess Margaret into Scotland, we have the following passage. "The lord of Northumberland made his *devoir*, at the departyng, of *gambades* and *lepps*, [leaps,] as did likewise the lord Scrop the father, and many others that returned agayne, in *takyng ther congie*." p. 281. [See Notes, *supr.* p. 253.]

^l Mahomet.

^m Began to dance at once.

ⁿ Wheel.

^o Rumples.

Vol. II.

^p Cafaque, Caslock.

^q Nonce. Designedly.

^r Deceiver. See Spenser's *SIR TROMPART*. Or perhaps an empty fellow, a rattle. Or Trompour may be *trumpeter*, as in Chaucer's *KNIGHT'S TALE*, v. 2673. See Chaucer's *CANTERBURY TALES*, with the *NOTES* of the very judicious and ingenious editor. Lond. 1775. vol. iv. p. 231.

^s Scalding.

^t They grinned hideously.

^v *Str.* ii.

^w *Str.* iii.

Heilie Harlottis in hawtain wyis^x,
 Come in with mony findrie gyis^y,
 But yet luche nevir^z Mahoun:
 Quhill priestis cum with bair schevin^a nekks,
 That all the feynds lewche^b, and maid gekks^c,
Black-belly, and Bawfy-brown.

Black-belly and Bawfy-brown are the names of popular spirits in Scotland. The latter is perhaps our ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW, known in Scotland by the name of BROWNIE.

ANGER is drawn with great force, and his accompaniments are boldly feigned. His hand is always upon his knife, and he is followed, in pairs, by boasters, threateners, and quarrelsome persons, all armed for battle, and perpetually wounding one another^d.

Than YRE come in with sturt^e and fryfe;
 His hand was ay upon his knyfe,
 He brandeist lyk a beir:
 Bostaris, braggarists, and barganeris,
 Efter hym passit in pairis,
 All bodin in feir of weir^f:
 In jakkis, fryppis, and bonnettis of steil^g,
 Thair leggis wer cheyned to the heill^h,
 Frawart was thair affeirⁱ;

^x Haughty guise.

^y Gambols.

^z Never laughed.

^a While priests came with bare-shaven.

^b Laughed.

^c Signs of derision.

^d St. iv.

^e Disturbance. Affray.

^f Literally, "All arrayed in feature of war." *Bodin*, and *feir of war*, are in the Scotch statute-book. Sir David Lyndesay thus speaks of the state of Scotland during the minority of James the fifth. COM-PLAYNT OF THE POPYNGO. SIGNAT.

B. iii. edit. ut infr.

Oppressioun did sa loud his bougill blaw,
 That none durst ride but into *feir of weir*.

That is, *without being armed for battle*.

^g In short jackets, plates, or slips, and bonnets of steel. Short coats of mail and helmets.

^h Either, chained together. Or, their legs armed with iron, perhaps iron net-work, down to the heel.

ⁱ Their business was untoward. Or else, their look *forward*, fierce. *Feir* is feature.

Sum

Sum upon uder with brands beft^k,
 Sum jagit utheris to the heft^l
 With knyvis that fcheirp coud fcheir^m.

ENVY is equal to the reft. Under this SIN our author takes occaſion to lament, with an honeſt indignation, that the courts of princes ſhould ſtill give admittance and encouragement to the whiſperers of idle and injurious reportsⁿ.

Next in the dance followit INVY,
 Fild full of feid^o and felony,
 Hid malyce and diſpyte;
 For pryvie haterit^p that tratour trymlit^q,
 Him followit mony freik diſſymlit^r,
 With feynit wordis quhyte.
 And flattereris into mens facis,
 And back-byttaris^s of fundry racis,
 To ley^t that had delyte.
 With rownaris^u of fals leſingis^v :
 Allace! that courtis of noble kingis
 Of tham can nevir be quyte^w!

AVARICE is uſhered in by a troop of extortioners, and other miſcreants, patroniſed by the magician Warloch, or the demon of the covetous; who vomit on each other torrents of melted gold, blazing like wild-fire: and as they are emptied at every diſcharge, the devils replenish their throats with freſh ſupplies of the ſame liquefied metal^y.

^k Some ſtruck others, their companions,
 with ſwords.

^l Wounded others to the quick. To the
 haft.

^m Cut ſharp.

ⁿ St. v.

^o Enmity.

^p Hatred.

^q Trembled.

^r Diſſembling gallant.

^s Backbiters.

^t Lye.

^u Rounders, whiſperers. To *round in the ear*, or ſimply to *round*, was to whiſper in the ear.

^v Falſities.

^w Free.

^y St. vi.

SLOTH does not join the dance till he is called twice: and his companions are so slow of motion, that they cannot keep up with the rest, unless they are roused from their lethargy by being sometimes warmed with a glimpse of hell-fire^z.

Syne SWIRNES, at the seccound bidding,
Come lyk a fow out of a midding^a,
Full slepy was his grunyie^b.
Mony sweir bumbard belly-huddroun^c,
Mony flute daw and slepy duddroun^d,
Him servit ay with founyie^e.
He drew tham forth intill a chenye^f,
And Belliall, with a brydill reynie^g,
Evir lascht on the lunyie^h.
In daunce thay wer so slow of feit
Thay gaif tham in the fyre a heit
And maid tham quicker of conyieⁱ.

LUST enters, neighing like a horse^k, and is led by IDLENESS. When his associates mingle in the dance, their visages burn red like the turkis-stone^l. The remainder of the stanza, although highly characteristical, is too obscene to be transcribed. But this gave no offence. Their manners were too indelicate to be shocked at any indecency. I do not mean that these manners had lost their delicacy, but that they had not yet acquired the sensibility arising from civilisation. In one of the Scotch interludes of this age, written by a fashionable court-poet, among other ridiculous obscenities, the trying on of a Spanish padlock in public makes a part of theatrical representation.

^z St. vii.

^a Danghill.

^b Snout. Visage.

^c Lazy, drunken sloven.

^d Slothful, idle, spectre.

^e Attended on him with care.

^f Into a chain.

^g A bridle-rein. Thong of leather.

^h Lashed them on the loins.

ⁱ Apprehension.

^k "Berand like a bagit horse." The French *baguette* need not be explained.

^l St. viii.

GLUTTONY brings up the rear; whose insatiable rout are incessantly calling out for meat and drink, and although they are drenched by the devils with draughts of melted lead, they still ask for more.

Than the fowll monster GLUTTONY,
 Of wame^m unafiable and gredy,
 To daunce syn did him drefs:
 Him followit mony fowll drunckhart,
 With can and collop, copⁿ and quart,
 In surfett and excess.
 Full many a waiftles wally-drag^o,
 With waimis^p unweildable did furth wag,
 In creische^q that did increfs:
 Drink, ay thay cryit with mony a gaip^r,
 The feyns gave them hait leid to lap^s
 Thair lovery^t was na les^u.

At this infernal dance no minstrels plaid. No GLEEMAN, or minstrel, ever went to hell; except one who committed murder, and was admitted to an inheritance in hell *by brief of richt*, that is, *per breve de recto*^m. This circumstance seems an allusion to some real fact.

The concluding stanza is entirely a satire on the highlanders. Dunbar, as I have already observed, was born in Lothian, a county of the Saxons. The mutual antipathy between the Scottish Saxons and the Highlanders was excessive, and is not yet quite eradicated. Mahoun, or Mahomet, having a desire to see a highland pageant, a fiend is commissioned to fetch Macfadyan; an unmeaning name, chosen for its harshness. As soon as the infernal messenger begins

^m Womb. Belly.
ⁿ Cup.
^o Out-cast.
^p Wombs. Bellies.
^q Fat.

^r Gape.
^s Hot lead to drink, to lap.
^t Desire. Appetite.
^u St. ix.
^v St. x.

to publish his summons, he gathers about him a prodigious crowd of *Ersche men*; who soon took up great room in hell. These loquacious *termagants* began to chatter like rooks and ravens, in their own barbarous language: and the devil is so stunned with their horrid yell, that he throws them down to his deepest abyss, and smothers them with smoke.

Than cryd Mahoun for a heleand padyane,
Syn ran a feynd to fetch Makfadayne
Far northwart in a nuke^{*}:
Be he the correnoth had done schout^γ,
Ersche men so gadderit him about,
In hell grit rume thay tuke:
Thae turmagantis^z with tag and tatter
Full loud in Ersche begout to clatter,
And rowp^α lyk revin and ruke.
The devil sa devit^β wes with thair yell
That in the deepest pot of hell
He smorit them with smoke^c.

I have been prolix in my citations and explanations of this poem, because I am of opinion, that the imagination of

^{*} Nook.

^γ As soon as he had made the cry of distress, what the French call a *Paiée*. Some suppose, that the *correnoth*, or *corynoch*, is a highland tune. In MAK-GREGOR'S TESTAMENT, [MS. infr. citat.] the author speaks of being out-lawed by the CORRINOCH, v. 51.

The loud CORRINOCH then did me exile,
Throw Lorne, Argyle, Monteith, and Brai-
dalbane, &c.

That is, The *Hue and Cry*. I presume, what this writer, in another place, calls the KING'S-HORN, is the same thing, v. 382.

Quhen I have beine aft at the KINGIS
HORNE.

^z Perhaps the poet does not mean the common idea annexed to *termagant*. The context seems to shew, that he alludes to a species of wild-fowl, well known in the highlands, and called in the Scotch statute-book *termigant*. Thus he compares the highlanders to a flock of their country birds. For many illustrations of this poem, I am obliged to the learned and elegant editor of ANTIEN SCOTTISH POEMS, lately published from Lord Hyndford's manuscript: and to whom I recommend a task, for which he is well qualified, The History of Scotch Poetry.

^α Chattered hoarsely.

^β Deafened.

^c ST, xi.

Dunbar

Dunbar is not less suited to satirical than to sublime allegory: and that he is the first poet who has appeared with any degree of spirit in this way of writing since Pierce Plowman. His THISTLE AND ROSE, and GOLDEN TERGE, are generally and justly mentioned as his capital works: but the natural complexion of his genius is of the moral and didactic cast. The measure of this poem is partly that of Sir THOPAS in Chaucer: and hence we may gather by the way, that Sir THOPAS was antiently viewed in the light of a ludicrous composition. It is certain that the pageants and interludes of Dunbar's age must have quickened his invention to form those grotesque groupes. The exhibition of MORALITIES was now in high vogue among the Scotch. A Morality was played at the marriage of James the fourth and the princess Margaret^d. Mummeries, which they call GYSARTS, composed of moral personifications, are still known in Scotland: and even till the beginning of this century, especially among the festivities of Christmas, itinerant maskers were admitted into the houses of the Scotch nobility.

^d MEMOIR, *ut supr.* p. 300.

SECT.