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Geo. Henderson,
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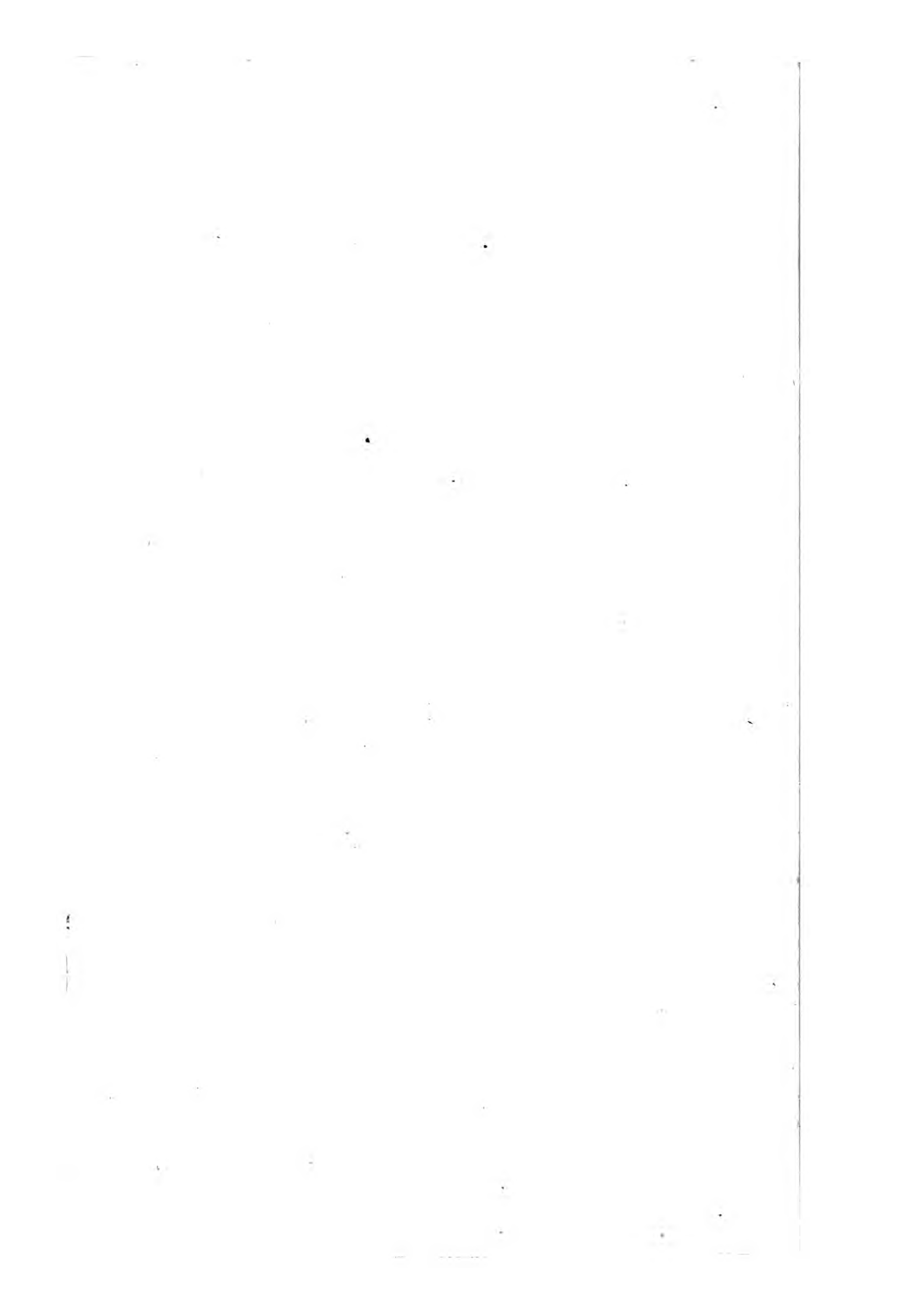
LETTERS

FROM

JOSEPH RITSON, ESQ.

TO

MR GEORGE PATON.



LETTERS

FROM

JOSEPH RITSON, ESQ.

TO

MR. GEORGE PATON.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A CRITIQUE BY JOHN PINKERTON, ESQ.
UPON RITSON'S SCOTISH SONGS.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STEVENSON,
87, PRINCES STREET.

M.DCCC.XXIX.

ONE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

THE following Letters, from the pen of Ritson, and addressed to the late Mr George Paton, of the Custom-House, Edinburgh, are now for the first time printed:—and it is presumed no apology is necessary for laying before the public these interesting remains, of an individual who was so much, and so justly celebrated for his literary attainments.

Mr Paton had, for a long series of years, devoted himself to the study of Scottish antiquities. From his father, who was a bookseller in Edinburgh, he acquired a large collection of books, to which the unremitting industry of a long life enabled him to make large and important additions. Although his means were limited, (his income as a clerk in the Custom-House for many years not exceeding the small pittance of £60,) he was enabled, by frugality, and perhaps by some small sum left him by his father, not only to subsist in a reputable manner, but gradually to increase his valuable library.

He died upon the 6th of March 1807, at an advanced age, and greatly regretted by those who had the pleasure of being acquainted with him. In the Gentleman's Magazine for October the same year, the following notice of his demise occurs:—

“ At Edinburgh, in his 87th year, Mr George Paton; who, notwithstanding he held no higher rank than the place of a clerk in the Custom-House, had a mind and a library enriched with a fund of antiquarian knowledge of North Britain, historical and topographical, confessed by the obligations which all had to his varied stores, and by the peculiar pains which certain of his neighbours took to conceal his death and the destination of his books. Among the many who experienced his friendly aid, none has more gratefully expressed it than the editor of the new edition of the *British Topography*, and of Camden's *Britannia*; in the Preface to the first of which, he speaks of him, as “ having spared no trouble or expense to enlarge the article of Scottish topography; which, in the course of ten years from the first edition, by the indefatigable attention of his very ingenious and communicative friend, Mr George Paton, of the Custom-House, Edinburgh, he was enabled to nearly double.” There is a small portrait of him, a private plate, etched in 1785; when he was “ æt. 64, nat. 1721.” Mr Paton's brother

was minister at Ecclesfechan, where he died lately, possessed also of a valuable library."

The correspondence between Paton and Gough, is preserved in the Advocates' Library, and it affords the most decisive proof of the value of the information given. Of its importance, Gough was fully aware; and the kindly and affectionate tone of his letters, shews, how grateful he felt for the assistance afforded. There is a manly and affectionate sincerity about them much to his credit, and they present a remarkable contrast to the letters from Bishop Percy, who was under equally great obligations to Paton, but who, courtier like, proffered much more than he ever intended to perform; and probably imagined, that the unmeaning compliments he paid him were a sufficient return for the favours conferred.

Paton's communications were not, however, relished by one of the individuals, whose productions were by his means brought in a somewhat unfavourable point of view before the public, in that valuable work, for assisting him in which, Gough had paid him such deserved compliments; as Captain Armstrong, who had engraved some maps of the more southern counties of Scotland, and whose productions had been to a certain extent censured, thought proper to favour the respectable old gentleman with the following most extraordinary epistle:—

Norwich, May 19. 1782.

SIR,

It was not till very lately that Mr Gough's two volumes of British Topography fell into my hands. As he acknowledges himself beholden *to you* for the Scottish anecdotes, I cannot suppress a strong inclination to congratulate the public on the joint labours of *two* gentlemen, remarkable for their depth of understanding and impartial criticisms, which I shall most certainly do (in gratitude for your very liberal account of *my* publications) before I am a twelvemonth older : but, as I am now writing *in confidence*, I still will be more friendly.

The whole work is a stupid, ill-digested, ignorant, and illiberal jumble of scraps and opinions, too contemptible for serious perusal.

It certainly was not the original intention of the compiler of this *Catalogue* of twopenny halfpenny pamphlets and prints to become a *Reviewer* ! By whose advice he has presumed to swell the books with *his* and *your* characters of publications, I know not ; but he owes great obligations to the Monitor for rendering the work a base, libellous, rascally performance, evidently calculated to injure individuals, and impose on the public a surreptitious detail of things, in a manner partly uninteresting, and partly flagitious.

I will not condescend, *at present*, to enter into a refutation of such of the articles as come within my own knowledge, but will rest my opinion *of the whole* by those. I cannot, however, pass over one item, *the Map of Peebleshire*, to which you have tacked some observations totally *false*, as may be proved by the opinions of every gentleman in that county.* For this, and many other invidious assertions to be found in the books, you and the affected Mr Gough deserve more than I have an opportunity at this distance of bestowing. I remain to both personally a stranger; and am, Sir, one who holds you both in proper contempt!

MOSTYN JNO. ARMSTRONG.

Armstrong did not limit his abuse to Paton, but at the same time transmitted the ensuing letter to Gough.

* The offensive passages are as follow: "A Survey, in two sheets, by Armstrong and Son, 1774; a copy from Edgar, the plate lost."—"A Companion to the Map of the County of Peebles, or Tweeddale, published 20th June, 1775, Edin. 8vo. by Armstrong. This was certainly composed by some proprietor in this county, although assumed by Armstrong." Vol. ii. p. 706.

Norwich, May 19. 1782.

SIR,

On a cursory perusal of your Anecdotes of British Topography, in two volumes, I found amongst them so many *errors* and *misrepresentations*, and some of them appear so much the result of *design*, or effect of *ignorance*, that I could not repress those feelings which are natural to one, who, after receiving the most flattering testimonies of public approbation, sees his own works recorded with others as *surreptitious* and *unskilful*. What conclusion must the reader draw from an opinion so injurious to the reputation of an author? Either the *author* or Mr *Gough* has deceived the public! and it behoves each to vindicate or correct his assertions. With that sentiment, I shall take the liberty of selecting from the British Topography, such paragraphs as merit *notice*, with the most candid remarks on each,—such only as truth and justice require. These, Sir, I mean to submit *to the public*.

I do not conceive that the nature of your compilation ought to have admitted of any *criticisms* on the merits of topographical publications; and the more especially, unless you had been enabled to do so *in toto*. But it does not appear to me that either your *temper* or *talents* are suited to so arduous a task. I am willing, however, to believe, that you have, in some instances, been prejudiced by *interested* motives,

or *mised* by those persons who afforded assistance ; of which your *Scots* caterer is a damning proof.

I have hitherto deferred writing to you on the subject, as not being resolved in what manner I should communicate the numerous partial and flagitious errors and misrepresentations which I have discovered in every section of your books. This is the only letter I have any intention of directing *to you* ; I shall, therefore, subscribe myself, in thorough contempt of you and your *Scots* friend,

SIR,

Your most humble servant,

MOSTYN JNO. ARMSTRONG.

P.S. I have wrote by this post to Mr Paton at Edinburgh.

Paton was in the middle of a letter to his friend, when Armstrong's philippic came to hand. " While writing this, the inclosed impertinent, ignorant, scurrilous rhapsody was brought me ; forgive my transmitting it for perusal, which be kind enough as return at pleasure. (I) am diffident of resolution, whether such a blundering blockhead of an impostor, shall have any answer made him ; horse-whipping would serve him better than a reply : I wish to have it again, to shew some here who know his &c. &c. He is below notice, and despise him, as he is gene-

rally so here. The joint tricks of father and son being so well known in this place, they could remain no longer with us."

In answer, Gough mentions that, "from the counterpart which Mr Armstrong sent to me (of which I enclose a copy,) that he intended you a like mark of his regard. Silence is the only answer to such dirty impertinence, and his character seems too well known among you. If I do not mistake, I met with the elder when I was in Scotland: he was very full of himself, and his discoveries in surveying. Do you know whence they come, and of what country? He has been possessed of my book a full twelve months, and he got it by exchange of some of his Surveys with Mr T. Payne after some importunity." In reply Paton stated, "I am obliged to you for the return of Armstrong's letter, as likewise for (the) copy of the one he sent you. Nothing else could be looked for from such mean creatures as Father and Son, both whose abilities, conduct, and impositions, are too well known here for them to have made a longer stay with us. I make no doubt of the old man's boastings: these were only ideal, for he never put them in practice. He was in a marching regiment, where he was held in contempt; (he) originated from the neighbourhood of Newcastle upon Tyne; they have assurance enough to barter their impressions, for any articles can be disposed of more readily than their own unmerchantable maps."

As might be anticipated, neither Gough or his friend ever heard any more on the subject: it is probable that upon cooling, the Armstrongs judged it more prudent to be quiescent. However, as Paton was evidently writing under feelings of irritation, the character given by him of these individuals cannot be depended on.

Upon a subsequent occasion, a more formidable, and still more virulent attack was made upon him, by that most unaccountable person, John Pinkerton; who, taking offence at some criticisms which Paton had made upon his works, vomited forth such a torrent of abuse,* as completely eclipsed Captain Armstrong's *more* temperate animadversions.

Among his correspondents were, (besides Gough, Percy, and Ritson,) Dr Robertson, Lord Hailes, Penant, George Chalmers, Captain Grose, Callander of Craigforth, Riddel of Glenriddell, Low, the author of the *Fauna Orcadensis*, and various other individuals equally distinguished for their acquirements. From their letters, which are preserved in the Advocates' Library, a selection might be made fully as interesting as instructive.

His books, probably the most curious and valuable collection of the kind ever exposed to sale in this

* See his letter, privately printed in "*Reliquiæ Scoticæ*," 8vo. Edin. 1827, No. 18.

country, were sold by auction in the year 1809;* and his manuscripts, prints, coins, &c. were subsequently disposed of in a similar manner, the latter sale commenced upon the 2d, and terminated on the 12th December 1811.†

Besides the private print, mentioned in the notice of Mr Paton given in the Obituary of the Gentleman's Magazine, there is an etching by Kay, done sometime in the year 1787.‡ The Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh, of which he was a member, possess a beautiful drawing in chalk of him, by Brown; which, it is much to be regretted, has not, with the other portraits (equally well executed) of the original members of that Society, been engraved.

Although Mr Paton assisted in the publication of various works, it is not believed that he ever produced any thing of his own: there seems, however, good reason to suppose, that, besides the assistance given to Mr Gough in his Topography, he partly, if not wholly, edited the first edition (in one vol.)

* The sale began on Monday, 27th February, and ended on the 25th of March thereafter.

† Priced copies of this and the preceding catalogue are scarce.

‡ There are five figures in the etching,—Mr John Davidson, Lord Henderland, Mr Paton, Lord Monboddo, and Dr Hutton. Paton is represented as a very respectable looking elderly gentleman, both in this and the private print. They are equally scarce.

of the Collection of Scottish Ballads usually ascribed to David Herd. It is evidently in allusion to it, that Bishop Percy, in a letter dated 9th February 1769, returns his "best thanks" for his (Paton's) letter, and for "the very kind and valuable present of *your book*, which is a very desirable addition to my collection of ancient Songs and Poems." He hopes it will succeed, "so that *you* will be excited to give us another volume of the same kind." This is probably the "tantalizing" specimen alluded to by Ritson. The edition of Urquhart of Cromarty's Tracts, printed at Edinburgh in 1774, has erroneously been assigned to him, for in a letter to Gough he pointedly disclaims any concern with the work. It is by no means unlikely that Herd was the editor.

It only remains to notice, that the letters are printed, without variation, from the originals in the Advocates' Library. It is the more necessary to state this, as the adoption of the capital "*I*," so contrary to Ritson's usual practice, might induce a suspicion that liberties had been taken with the text. In the catalogue of songs alone, the small "*i*" occurs.

As so much is said about the Shakspeare forgery in the letters, a few short extracts from the correspondence of Gough and Paton will be found in the Appendix; together with the celebrated Critique upon the Scottish Songs, which there can be little doubt was written by Pinkerton.

LETTERS

FROM

JOSEPH RITSON, ESQ.

TO

MR GEORGE PATON.

I.

Gray's Inn, 15th Nov. 1792.

SIR,

APPLYING to you without ceremony as a lover and promoter of all literary undertakings, particularly such as are any way connected with your native country, I take the liberty to inclose three printed leaves of an intended publication of Scottish Songs, which I shall esteem it a particular favour if you would be pleased to collate carefully with Lord Hyndford's MS.*

* Commonly called the "Bannatyne MS." from its having been compiled by George Bannatyne, a merchant in Edinburgh, to whose indefatigable industry we are indebted for the preservation of the great body of early Scottish Poetry.

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in the Advocates' Library. It is the only piece which escaped me when at Edinburgh, and you will easily find it by the first line in the Index.

The other article I trouble you with is a list of words occurring in Scottish Songs, most of which I neither understand myself, nor can find explained in any Glossary. All of them, however, are probably familiar to you; and I can rely with confidence on the explanations with which you may be pleased to favour me.

Dr Farmer, not having his copy of Sir David Lindsay's Satyres in town, has obligingly promised to send down for it to Cambridge. I shall expect it, of course, in a few days.

The date of your book of Godly Songs is 1621; Mr Brand, chaplain to the Duke of Northumberland, has a perfect copy, of which Mr Chalmers gave me the full title. It is clearly the same edition with yours. I have never heard of a third copy.

I am possessed of a very rare and curious book. It is, "The Seuin Seages Translatit out of Prois in Scottis Meter be Iohne Rolland in

Dalkeith. Imprintit at Edinburgh be Iohne Ros, for Henrie Charteris, M.D.LXXVIII." 8vo. b. l. There is a later edition mentioned by Ames, but I know no one who has it.

You will oblige me very much by saying whether, in the course of your extensive researches, you have ever met with any specimen of the vulgar language of Scotland prior to the year 1250; or what you think that language was, *viz.* whether Gaelic or English. I am,

With great respect,

SIR,

Your very obedient humble servant,

J. RITSON.

P.S. Do you know any thing of Sir Alexander Halket, who he was, or when he lived or died?

II.

*Gray's Inn, 8th Jan. 1793.**

SIR,

I DEFERRED, perhaps improperly, the acknowledgment of your favours of the 8th and

* It is 1792 in the letter, but this is evidently a mistake.

17th ult. till the arrival of the small parcel you mentioned, which I expected some weeks since, but did not receive till yesterday.

I am much obliged both to you and to the gentleman who took the trouble to go through my list of old Scottish words, many of which, I must presume, are become altogether obsolete and unintelligible, or confined, at least, to some remote part of the country, as I cannot assent to every explanation your friend has given; though I shall rest satisfied with what I have done, and neither give you, myself, or any one else, further trouble about the matter. I am very thankful for the reference to Joceline's Life of St Mungo, which I shall immediately see after.

You must cease to consider Lord Hailes as a *most faithful publisher*; as I, who have collated many of his articles with the Bannatyne MS. know the contrary to my cost. I do not, indeed, mean to say that he is so intentionally faithless as Ramsay; but I do say that his transcripts have been very inaccurate, that he has in

numerous instances wilfully altered the original orthography, and not unfrequently misinterpreted the text of the MS. which I suspect he was occasionally unable to read. I am much obliged by your offer of a copy of his Lordship's publication ; but you will permit me to inform you, that I possess not only this, but almost every other volume of Scotch Poetry, ancient or modern, hitherto printed, except your *Godly Songs* ; and am nearly as perfect in Scotch history.

I am now satisfied that no one can tell me from good authority what was the vulgar language of the south of Scotland in the 12th century. I, however, entirely concur with you in *opinion*, that it was the English Saxon. Did I mention to you that I had got a genuine Scotch song of the year 1289 ?

The Gaelic MS. mentioned by your friend to be in the Advocates' Library, I suppose I saw. I know nothing of Gaelic ; but the character, I perceive, is Irish, and the writing, as I conjecture, of the last century ; at any rate, not of Ro-

bert Bruce's time. I should be glad of a faithful translation of that part of the MS. in which the author speaks of himself, his age, or country; as I am anxious to be convinced of a Gaelic MS.

Your edition of the "Seven Sages"* seem equally rare with the two former. I mentioned it to Mr Chalmers, who means to favour the public with the exact account of the origin and progress of Scottish typography, by way of preface, as I conceive, to his Life of Ruddiman.

I observed, in consequence of a query in your first letter, that John Knox is in an old book, in my possession, intitled "Ane Disputation concerning the controuersit headis of religion, &c." Paris 1581, generally stiled "Schir John Kmnox;" and you will find, I presume, that he was a secular priest, who had taken his degree

* Probably the one described as follows in Paton's wretchedly got up sale catalogue 2555. "Rolland's Seven Sages, Scots metter, black letter, 1631. The Eclogs of the Poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan, 1572. The Diuel Conquered. Tobacco, a Poem, 1651." In one volume 12mo.

of M. A. at the University : a character to which I believe the Pope's knighthood was confined.

There is a collection of "Ancient Songs" lately published by Johnson in St Paul's Church Yard, in which Dr Percy's Theory of the old English Minstrels is criticised, and perhaps confuted : I am sorry I have not a copy of it for your acceptance. I wish, however, you would please to inform me how I can send you any thing of this kind sooner or easier, than you can procure it by means of the booksellers in Edinburgh.

I am sorry that Dr Farmer has not been able to find the volume of tracts containing "Sir D. Lindsay's Satire." He supposes it to have been lent to Mr Malone, to whom Mr Steevens had promised to make immediate application. But perhaps you have already learned that Pinkerton has lately published these Satires from a (very incorrect) copy of the Hyndford MS. together with the various readings of the printed edition; published under the name of G. Nichols, for C. Dilly, in the Poultry, 3 vols. crown 8vo. price 9s. He has had the impudence and dis-

honesty to insert in this collection a curious old MS. poem in my possession, of which a friend of his had some years since surreptitiously obtained a copy, and which on that friend's application from him, I positively refused my leave to print. He, or some one for him, (Mr Cardonnel, I presume) has had the use of the old volume of tracts in the Advocates' Library.

I have been able to meet with no further intelligence about Sir Alexander Halket. He is said to be the author of *Gilderoy*, and I strongly suspect him to have had a principal hand in the forgery of *Hardyknute*, which is all that I know of him.

I am sorry to find that business should press so hard upon you at a time of life which should be devoted to ease and indulgence; and the more so, as it deprives the public of all benefit from the exertion of those talents and that knowledge of men and books of which they have had so tantalizing a specimen. I am,

SIR,

Very sincerely and respectfully yours,

J. RITSON.

P.S. When you call in at Mr Laing's shop, please to tell him that I have not yet received the parcel of books from his catalogue.

III.

Gray's Inn, 5th March 1794.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been extremely mortified to learn, that the parcel which I delivered directed for you, to George Robertson, in the beginning of last year, and which he professes to have sent by a person belonging to Kirkaldie, has entirely miscarried. It contained the supplement to your defective copy of Sir David Lindsay's Satyre, and some other papers, I believe of less moment. I would have found other means of conveyance, but concluded from the circumstance of your friendship with Mr Robertson, that I could not consult either expedition or security better than by entrusting it to him. I have called repeatedly at his shop to learn the name of the man, but am never able to find him at home. We must therefore, I fear, give the parcel up for lost.

Though, as I am persuaded I have already told you, I do not much admire Lord Hailes' judgment in the selection he made from your Godly Ballads, I am not the less obliged to you for the copy I received, and which has sufficient merit as coming from a gentleman of whose friendship and favour I shall be always very proud.

I shall beg your acceptance shortly of a small collection of Scottish Songs, with which I have certainly taken some pains, though I cannot boast that the result is altogether successful or satisfactory. You will perceive, however, by a note at the end of the work, that I have been fortunate enough to ascertain the exact date of Sir D. Lindsay's Satyre, which appears to have been originally represented before the king and queen at Linlithgow, on the 6th of January 1539. Any corrections, improvements, or observations will be duly regarded.

The impression of another little volume, of which I believe I shewed you a fragment, entitled "The Caledonian Muse," which had engaged my attention for a great many years, and

was at last got nearly ready for publication, has been lately destroyed by a fire in the printer's house ; so that I neither possess, nor can procure, one single copy. *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

You will have heard, I presume, that Winton's Chronicle by a Mr Macpherson, is in great forwardness. It is to surpass, in point of correctness and typography, any thing that has hitherto appeared. But I confess the specimen I have seen betrayed symptoms of licentiousness and affectation, which I can neither approve of nor account for.

Pinkerton seems busy in his intended History of Scotland. Whether it is to be the same with that advertised under the name of Robert Heron,* I cannot learn. His treatment of the

* Pinkerton brought out his "Letters on Literature" under the fictitious name of "Robert Heron." It singularly happened that a "Robert Heron," a man of some literary acquirements, did then exist, and that he was about to publish a History of Scotland. Pinkerton was also at the time engaged in his History of the Stewarts, and thus the puzzle which perplexed Ritson arose. Of the unfortunate fate of the real Robert Heron, a very interesting account will be found in Murray's valuable, but undeservedly neglected, literary History of Galloway.

“Celtic savages” is to be speedily resented in print by the Reverend John Lane Buchanan, nominal author of “Travels in the Western Hebrides,” who seems, in fact, to be as very a Celt as his antagonist could possibly wish for. I am sorry to find so good a cause in the hands of such an incompetent advocate.

I indulge myself at present with the hopes of seeing you in the course of the ensuing summer: and in the mean while, request you to believe me,

DEAR SIR,

Your sincere friend and faithful

Obedient servant,

J. RITSON.

IV.

Gray's Inn, 19th Jan. 1795.

DEAR SIR,

The receipt of your obliging favour, (which the expectation of a cover prevented by immediately acknowledging,) gave me great pleasure. I am sorry to have been deprived of the still greater pleasure of a personal interview; but can assure

you, that the circumstances which conspired to defeat my proposed visit to "the good town" did not include a want of inclination.

I shall be highly gratified with a perusal of the fragments of Scottish Songs collected by Mr Herd,* which may be sent by the mail, under

* David Herd is known as the editor of a curious, and now somewhat rare collection of Scots Songs, of which the first edition in one volume appeared in the year 1769, and the second edition in two volumes in the year 1776. In the preparation of this work, Herd derived considerable assistance from his friend George Paton. He was a clerk in the office of Mr David Russell, accountant in Edinburgh; and although generally termed a writer, is understood never to have entered with any of the corporations. He was a quiet, well meaning, and industrious man, without any pretence, and did not deserve the character of an "illiterate and injudicious compiler," which Mr Pinkerton was pleased to bestow upon him. See Pinkerton's letters to Paton, *Reliquæ Scotiæ*, No. 18. Edin. 8vo. 1828. David could say bitter things too, as the following excerpt from a letter of his to Paton, relative to the edition of the Wallace printed by the Morisons at Perth (3 vols. 12mo.) will testify.

"My Lord Buchan has caused the editor put at the beginning, a picture of a brozy fat mendicant, aged 50 years at least, and this he calls the Young Hero Wallace, who was cut off in his 29th year!

"On a former occasion he made them give the figure of an idiotical distorted monster, under the denomination of that accomplished Prince, James the I.

cover to Mr Chalmers, to whom either yourself or Mr Laing may possibly have other matters to communicate; and shall be returned with equal safety, and probably by the same conveyance.* I feel myself much indebted and

“ They ought to have returned both to wipe his Lordship’s
b_____

“ *Thursday, 9th Dec. 1790.*”

* There seems to have been some delay, on the part of Paton, in transmitting the ballads, which Herd did not seem pleased with, as upon the 3d January he addresses the following letter to his friend.

“ I have not been abroad much in the evenings this week to call upon you, owing to the slipperiness of the streets; and therefore send you inclosed the last old song to be forwarded with the former parcel to Mr Ritson.

“ By his last letter to you, I see he is anxious for these. I do not altogether approve of this method of long hanging up a gentleman upon the tenter hooks of expectation, for a few fragments, as it is enhancing their value more, than he may afterwards think them worth.

“ I do not want any of them to be returned to me; he is extremely welcome to make what he pleases of them, and if any thing further in that line falls in my way afterwards, I shall give it to you to be transmitted. Mr Laing will forward your packet by the mail coach—we have experienced what it is to trust private hands. The last almanac I sent to Mr Syme by an officer who was to leave it at Newcastle for him, but (he) never thought more of it till he arrived at Plymouth.” Ritson was not disappointed with the communications, as will be seen from his next letter.

obliged, both to Mr Herd and yourself, for this proof of your attention and liberality. My little collection, I fear, was scarcely worth your acceptance, as there can be very few things in it which you were not already acquainted with. Could I, indeed, have made it convenient to have passed a summer or two in the south of Scotland, I might perhaps have been able to render it more gratifying to curiosity.

If the Duke of Roxburgh's edition of the "Godly Songs" bear the date of 1600, I should suppose it to be either the *first* or *second*; as I believe your own was printed in 1621. The date, indeed, is unluckily cut off, but Mr Chalmers supplied me with the full title of a copy in the possession of Mr Brand, a clergyman, (Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries,) which agreed in every respect with that of yours. I should certainly be glad enough to see the Duke's book, but have no opportunity of gaining access to it. If I may take the liberty to refer you to my "Historical Essay," (pp. xxxvii li), you will perceive upon what grounds I con-

clude the author of "The Complaint of Scotlande," and the author of the "Godly Songs," to be one and the same person, and also how much I am indebted to your friendship for the discovery. I am persuaded that Sir James Inglis's title to the former of those works, is merely founded upon a mistake of Dr Mackenzie, or of some person he had consulted. That Lord Oxford's copy of the book, (whatever is become of it,) actually possessed the title, and that the author's name appeared thereby to be "Vedderburne," seems evident from Osburne's Catalogue.* But I perceive, on dipping into the new edition of "Ames' *History of Printing*," that you have already handled the matter with your usual accuracy and research.

In the Faculty Library, as I learn from their printed catalogue, is some old Scottish poetry by

* As to this, see Leyden's Introduction to the Complaynt of Scotland; Herd's Letter in the Scots Magazine for January 1802; and Strictures thereon in the Number for July. After all the discussion on the subject, the matter just remains where it was, and will do so, until a copy with the title-page turns up.

James Gray, of which I shall esteem it a very particular favour if you can procure me some account. I have never been able to hear any thing of the old volume of Tracts, which is a severe disappointment. Mr Fraser Tytler, who promised me to look after it, is probably dissatisfied with the manner in which I have thought myself obliged to differ from his father; but which is no other, I believe, than he himself differed from Hume and Robertson. *Magis amica veritas* was his motto, and is mine.

I am very much afraid that Mr Chalmers undertakes so many literary adventures at once, he will never be able to achieve them either with satisfaction to his judgment, or with safety to his health. I have not learned what progress he has made in "the Life of Allan Ramsay;" but I find he is, likewise, engaged upon that of Thomison, as well as on the lives of all the political and commercial writers of Great Britain; and not the less occupied, at the same time, in a work of still greater magnitude and importance,—a sort of *Villare Scoticum*, upon a most extensive, and,

so far as I am capable of judgeing, most excellent plan : * which will, unquestionably, prove of the greatest utility to Scotch history,—of much greater indeed than any thing that has hitherto appeared : his object being to amass the utmost possible quantity of facts, verified by the best possible authoritys. He has lately favoured me with your engraved portrait, upon which you may be assured I set no small value.

I shall be glad if you will inform me who was the editor of Montrose's Memoirs, published in 1756. I had understood him to be the late Lord Hailes,† which I now fancy a mistake, as his Lordship's character seems to savour too much of the virulency of whiggism for an admirer of Montrose.

Our friend Pinkerton, I am told, to complete the infamy of his character, has turned critical

* An allusion to Chalmers' most valuable collection of materials relative to Scotland, published under the name of "Caledonia."

† This notion had originated probably from the circumstance of his Lordship's having printed (privately) a specimen of an intended Life of Montrose.

reviewer; a situation of course, which admits neither truth nor honesty. He will therefore have the pleasure of thundering his own damnation upon the heads of others, among whom, I suppose, he will take care, not to forget,

DEAR SIR,

Your very sincere friend and
Humble servant,

J. RITSON.

V.

Gray's Inn, 19th May 1795.

DEAR SIR,

You will both accept yourself, and have the goodness to present to Mr Herd, my sincerest acknowledgements for his very valuable collection of Scottish Ballads, many of which are particularly curious, and such as I had never before seen or heard of. As this gentleman is peculiarly conversant with the subject, I have taken the liberty, on the other side, to submit to his perusal a list of Scottish Songs which I have hitherto been unable to meet with, some of which he will probably recollect, and be able to say

where they are to be found. I suppose I either possess, or have seen about as many more, the merits of which appear insufficient to rescue them from oblivion. But, all together, the number is prodigious! From the falsehood, impudence, and scurrility of *The Critical Review*, I conclude that Pinkerton is one of its principal authors, and particularly *the gentleman* to whom I and my little publication are so much obliged. You will think me too revengeful when I wish he were compelled to subscribe his name to his criticisms.* The Shakspeare papers, of which you have heard so much, and which I have carefully examined, are, I can assure you, a parcel of forgeries, studiously and ably calculated to deceive the public: the imposition being, in point of art and foresight, beyond any thing of the kind that has been witnessed since the days of *Annius Viterbiensis*: So that we may soon hope to

* This curious critique will be found in the Appendix. Certainly, after the unprovoked and scurrilous attack by Ritson upon Pinkerton in the Introductory Essay to the Scots Songs, it was not surprising that the latter should retaliate.

match you in the number of literary impostors.
I am,

DEAR SIR,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I have at last recovered the tune to which
“ the Banks of Helicon,” and “ the Cherrie and
the Slae,” were originally sung. Though lost in
Scotland, and never perhaps known in England,
it has been preserved in Wales by the name of
“ Glyn Helicon.” Lord Hailes and Mr Tyt-
ler would have been glad of this discovery.

LIST OF SONGS REFERRED TO.

Alack and well aday.
Allan Water ; My love Annie's wondrous bonny.
An auld man and a hand'ul o' siller.
And you meet a lass that's gay.
An Middleton be walking.
Annie and Colin.
An she come near me.
As I came in by Falkland Fair.
As I stood on the Pier of Leith.
Auld lang syne : And drink a cup of kindness,
For auld lang syne.

Be constant still.
 Because i was a bonny lad.
 Bessy Bell and Mary Gray. (*Original.*)
 Boatman.
 Come ben and kiss me, man.
 Come kiss with me, come clap with me.
 Cutty spoon and tree laddle.
 Dear Billy, wilt thou go to battle?
 Donald, gird my cogie.
 Duncan's complaint.
 For our lang biding here. (*Original.*)
 For the love of Jean.
 Four-and-twenty Highland-men.
 Fie upon Carnegie.
 Had i the wate she bad me.
 Hallow-even.
 Hey, Tammy Brandy.
 Her answer it was mum.
 Hey how, the lang saddle.
 Hey the Lochart Lee man.
 Highland laddie. (*Original.*)
 Highland lassie, lovely thing.
 How can i be sad on my wedding-day.
 I am asleep, do not waken me.
 I canna winn hame to Eppie, I trow.
 I fix'd my fancy on her.
 I have lost my marrow.
 I loo'd a bonny lady.

I'll gae nae mair to your town.
 I'll gar ye be fain to follow me.
 I'll love no more.
 I'll never leave thee.
 I'll never see him more.
 I'll thro' the moor for a' that.
 I wish my love were in a mire.
 If you had been where i have been.
 In her cap she wore a feather.
 I'se ne'er rue i lov'd thee.
 Its i would have my gown made.
 Kate of Aberdeen. (*Original.*)
 Kilt thy coat, Maggy.
 Lochaber no more. (*Original.*)
 Lye still, good-man, and take another nap.
 My ain kind deary o:
 And tho' the night be ne'er sae dark,
 And I be wat and wearie o,
 I'll hap thee in my petticoat,
 My ain kind dearie o.
 My dear, come play me o'er again.
 My love, alas! is dead and gone.
 My wife she dang me.
 O an i were marry'd.
 O, dear mother, what shall i do?
 O, Jean, i love thee.
 O'er Bogie.
 O'er the hills and far awa'. (*Original.*)

One evening as i lost my way.
 Open the door to three.
 Peggy, I must love thee. (*Original.*)
 Polwarth on the green. (*Original.*)
 Saw ye my Peggy?
 Sour plums of Gallashiels.
 Steer her up and had her gawn.
 Stormont's ghost.
 The ale-wife and her barrel.
 The auld gaud aver.
 The auld maid of Fife.
 The barber and his bason.
 The bonny lass of Aberdeen.
 The bonnyest lass in a' the world.
 The bonnyest lass in our town.
 The bursting sigh.
 The Corby and the Pyet.
 The Earl of Murray's bonny thing.
 The gallant shoemaker.
 The gleed Earl of Kelly.
 The Gordons has the guiding on't.
 The King of France, he run a race.
 The Lady of the flowery field.
 The man has got his mare again.
 The milking-pail.
 The minister's wife has learnt a sang.
 The old Stewarts back again.
 The old witch of Ochiltree.

The voice of my love.
 The vows of endless love.
 The widows shall have spouses.
 The winding of the stream.
 The winter it is past.
 The [old] wawking of the fauld.
 There are few good fellows when Jamie's away.
 There's three good fellows down in yon glen.
 This Logan water is so deep.
 Thro' the wood, laddie. (*Original.*)
 Under the green-wood tree.
 Up in the morning early.
 Up the reel of Bogie.
 Up with the Souters of Selkirk, and down with
 the Earl of Hume.
 Was ye at the bridal?
 Wate ye how the play began.
 We'll a' to Kelso go.
 We're a' Mar's men.
 Well a day.
 What have i done for want of wit?
 What the devil ails you?
 When the king came o'er the water.
 Where shall our good man lye?
 Widow, are ye wawking?
 Will ye go to Sheriff-muir?
 Will ye lend me your loom, lass?
 Willy's the lad for me.

Woe is me, what maun i do?
 Woe's my heart that we should sunder. (*Original.*)
 Ye'll ay be welcome back again.
 Ye took your packs
 Upon your backs,
 Ye wadna stay,
 Ye ran away.

N. B. The tunes to most of these songs are still preserved.*

* This list of songs was printed in the Scots Magazine for January 1802, with the following notice prefixed: "The editors of the Scots Magazine having been favoured with the following list of desiderata in Scottish Song, by that eminent and accurate antiquarian J. Ritson, Esq. beg leave to call the attention of their countrymen more particularly to this subject. They have the utmost reason to believe, that many, perhaps the majority, of the songs here enumerated, are still preserved by tradition, and float in the occasional recitation of the Scottish Lowlanders; at least it is absolutely certain that many beautiful verses, if not complete songs, have been preserved in this manner. That these should at least be corrected (collected?) and arranged, must be the ardent wish not only of every Scotsman, but of every person who possesses a taste for nature and simplicity. The history of Scottish song, though equally interesting and curious, from the total neglect in which it remained for a very long period, has become a subject of very difficult discussion, and can only be illustrated by an appeal to facts. As the opportunities of illustration are constantly diminishing, the editors of the Scots Magazine cannot resist the temptation

Gray's Inn, July 21st, 1795.

DEAR SIR,

I had prepared a letter for you, with which I intended to have troubled Mr Laing, who pro-

of availing themselves of this occasion, to invite the communications of every person who can repeat Scottish songs, or who may have an opportunity of transcribing the fleeting records of tradition. An opportunity lost may never again occur; and within these last twenty years, numerous opportunities of recovering beautiful monuments of Scottish song have certainly been lost. At the same time, they cannot help suggesting the propriety, or rather necessity, that there is for every person pledging his veracity for the accuracy of his communications; while they recollect the obloquy that the national character has incurred from a few instances of literary imposition, which the authors probably intended rather as experiments on the critical taste of the times, than experimental deceptions of the understanding."

Notwithstanding of this appeal, little was then done towards the recovery of the remains of the popular poetry of the country. Subsequently, by the activity and industry of a few individuals, many of the songs enumerated in Ritson's list, were obtained, besides a number he had never heard of; and, let it be remembered, that, in addition to the many other obligations conferred on Scottish literature by Sir Walter Scott, he it was, who first successfully excited his countrymen to collect and preserve the rude, but expressive lays of their forefathers, by the publication of his *Border Minstrelsy*; and that he has since uniformly encouraged and promoted every undertaking which had such an end for its object.

mised, if I did not misunderstand him, to favour me with a call before he left town. Since, however, he has thought proper to take French (rather than Scotch) leave, I am under the necessity of re-writing my letter, as it ran to a couple of sheets, and one finds it difficult under the late regulations, and at this time of year, to procure a cover.

Mr Chalmers, whose character and conduct intitle him to every possible instance of attention and civility, was in possession of Mr Herd's MSS. before the receipt of your last favour.

I don't know how I expressed myself respecting the long list I took the liberty of communicating ; but, in fact, it was a *list of songs*,—and not of *tunes*, as you seem to imagine. However, it was not meant, in any point of view, to give you the trouble you appear to have taken about it.

The Shakspeare papers, which have of late been so much the subject of conversation, are in the possession of Mr Samuel Ireland, of Norfolk Street, in the Strand, who has long

distinguished himself as an amateur and collector of the works of Hogarth, as well as by several literary publications. He himself informed me, that they were discovered by his son, among some old writings, in the chambers of a gentleman in the Temple, whose name he was not at liberty to mention. I am since told that he has not only considerably augmented the collections which I saw, by the addition of playhouse accounts and tracts from Shakspear's library, but has likewise occasionally varied the relation of his becoming possessed of it. However, as I had not the slightest doubt as to the fabrication or forgery of every thing he shewed me, my curiosity was never tempted to repeat the visit.*

* The immediate detection of this forgery, is a decisive proof—if indeed any proof on the subject were necessary—of the soundness, generally speaking, of Ritson's judgement. That which had perplexed individuals of the first literary eminence, and to expose which Malone had written a goodly octavo volume, containing numerous reasons, (one half of which were wrong,) was instantly detected by this singular man, upon a cursory inspection. Young Ireland's account of the interview is too interesting to be omitted.

“ The sharp physiognomy, the piercing eye, and the silent scrutiny of Mr Ritson, filled me with a dread I had never be-

I take the whole scheme to have been executed within these three or four years; since the publication, that is, of Malone's edition of Shakspeare; and by, or under the direction of, some person of genius and talents, which ought to have been better employed. It appeared to me, at the time, that Ireland himself was the dupe of this imposture; but whether he be still ignorant of its real nature and design, I cannot be quite so positive. The things I saw were deeds, letters, verses, drawings, conundrums, &c. &c. together with the entire play of *K. Lear*; every article of which it would be a very easy matter to demonstrate, as well by intrinsic as by external evidence, to be a recent and palpable forgery. The most remarkable circumstance,

fore experienced. His questionings were laconic, but always to the purpose. No studied flow of words could draw him from his purpose; he was not to be hoodwinked; and, after satisfying his curiosity, he departed from Mr Samuel Ireland's house without delivering any opinion, or committing himself in the smallest circumstance. In fine, I do as firmly believe that Mr Ritson went away fully assured that the papers were spurious, as that I have existence at this moment."—*Confessions of William Henry Ireland*, p. 227.

perhaps, in this iniquitous business, and that which is, apparently, best calculated to promote its success, is—that the parchment and seals are indisputably ancient and authentic ; so that the original writing must have been entirely effaced. This effect, however, can be, and doubtless has been produced by a chemical preparation, (well known, it seems, to forgers of notes,) which removes every vestige of ink, without the slightest injury to the substance on which it has been used. With respect to the anachronisms and inconsistencies which here and there occur, some (if not all) of them have, probably, been introduced for the express purpose of being one day or other triumphantly brought forward, by the impostor himself, as demonstrative proofs of the ignorance and gullibility of the Shakspeare connoisseurs. The success of the subscription (four guineas) is not, I understand, such as to induce Mr Ireland to give his treasures to the public, for the present.*

* For an account of this extraordinary forgery, see Ireland's Confessions—one of the most amusing books ever written.

I observe, with pleasure, what Mr Herd has remarked upon the confusion made by Pinkerton of the two *Pennecuiks*. He has, with equal ignorance, confounded the two Hamiltons (of Bangour and Gilbertfield.) But, indeed, his blunders are venial, when compared with the more criminal parts of his literary and moral character.

Do you possess, or did you ever meet with, “The Taill of *Rauf Coilzear*, printed at Sanct Androis be R. Lekprevik, 1572?”* You, at least, recollect the title in Ames: and the hero, whoever he was, (for I cannot comprehend how he harbret King Charles,) is mentioned by Dunbar, (Ancient Scottish Poems, Edin. 1770,)

“Kyne of Rauf Colyard and Johne the reif.”

Lord Hailes, by the way, in his note upon this line, supposes “*Johne the reif*” to mean

* There is a copy, supposed unique, in the Advocates' Library. It has been reprinted by Mr David Laing in his valuable “Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland.” Edin. 1822, 4to.

Johnny Armstrong; which cannot be: since, besides that the poem itself is in all probability older than Armstrong's time, he is likewise named, along with this same Rauf Coilzear, in Bishop Douglas's *Palice of Honour*, written before 1518:

“ I saw *Raf Coilzear*, with his thravin brow,
Craibit *Johne the reif*, and auld *Cowkewpis Sow*.”

Johne the reif, in fact, is John the reve, (or bailif,) the subject of a very ancient popular poem, of which Dr Percy, who has it in his folio MS. long since promised the publication. *Cowkewpis-sow* is another old poem in the Hyndford MS.* As for Rauf Coilzear, there was perhaps, a still earlier edition of his story than Lekprevik's, it being mentioned in Wedderburn's *Complainte*, 1549.

I am sorry to learn the death of poor Smellie, whose name reminds me of a whimsical anecdote.

* Colkelbie sow was for the first time printed in Mr Laing's work before mentioned, under the editorial care of Robert Pitcairn, Esq. a gentleman to whom the public is infinitely indebted for the publication, now going on, of all that is important in the Justiciary record.

dote. In the course of a conversation, one evening, at the *Tripe Club*,* (when I was last in Edinburgh,) upon the aversion which the people in Scotland had formerly borne to the family at present on the throne, Smellie remarked, as an equally strong and singular instance, that they had given the royal name, *Geordie*, to a *sir-reverence*: now, on looking casually over “the works of Captain Alexander Ratcliffe,” printed in 1696, but apparently written some years before, I find that this illustrious name had been thus lamentably degraded before the present family was heard of; from which, of course, as a loyal subject, I am anxious to remove so dirty an imputation. The passage I allude to is the following, in the Epistle from Paris to Helen :

The warty fist between your breast does seem
Like a *brow*: *George* dropt in a bowl of cream.†

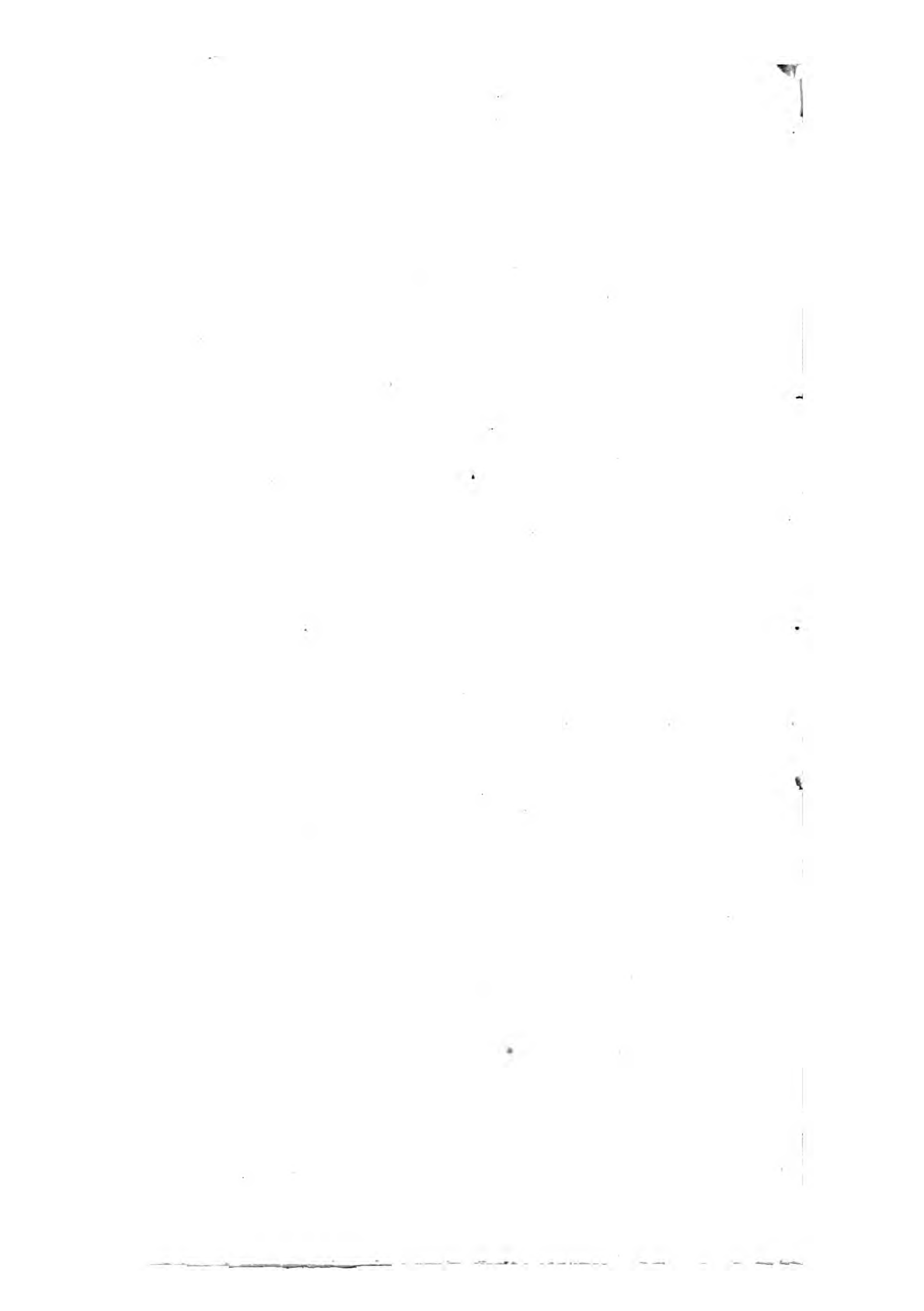
* Of which the late Alexander Campbell, the editor of Albyn's Anthology, and author of a (very imperfect) History of Scottish Poetry, &c. Neil the printer, and other citizens of Edinburgh, were members.

† Radcliffe's Ovid Travestie, in which these lines occur, had

The actual origin of this curious appellation is now, perhaps, impossible to ascertain. *A propos*, who is, or is to be, the new Secretary to your Antiquarian Society, and do they intend to publish a second volume of their Transactions? Adieu, my dear Sir: May you live a thousand years!

J. RITSON.

been printed separately many years before. The second edition, "Enlarged with Ten Epistles never before printed," appeared in 1681, London, 8vo. His Miscellaneous Poems were published the ensuing year. The following is the title of the volume: "The Ramble, an Anti-heroick Poem, together with some Terrestrial Hymns and Carnal Ejaculations, by Alexander Radcliffe, of Gray's Inn, Esq. *Semel insanivimus Omnes*. London, printed for the author, and are to be sold by Walter Davis, in Amen Corner, 1682." It is dedicated to James Lord Annesley. From the "Bookseller's Preface to his Customers," it would seem that Lord Rochester was generally supposed to have been the author of the "Ramble;" and this supposition probably arose from the extreme indecency of the poem, which, though possessing considerable humour and point, is dreadfully gross.



APPENDIX.

No. I.

*Scotish Songs. 2 vols. 12mo. 10s. boards. Johnson, 1794.**

WHEN the editor of these volumes published his 'Select Collection of English Songs,' and his 'Ancient Songs,' he attacked Dr Percy with the most shameful and disgusting virulence; and even, as we are informed, proceeded so far as to term the learned and respectable Prelate a *lying priest*, in a letter written purposely for his inspection. All this, gentle reader, was because the Doctor, in his early years, had published that valuable collection, the 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' in which he had sometimes corrected a word, or added a supplement, to the originals.

We are told by travellers, that some of the Tartar nations are accustomed, when they kill an enemy, to make a drum of his skin, on which they beat tattoos of double terror. And never was wild Cossack, or French democrat, more redoubtable than our present hero, whose books are mere drums of the skins of his enemies; that is, of all who have unluckily fore-

* Critical Review, January 1795, p. 49.

stalled any of his *important* pursuits. Beware, ye editors of Robin Hood, or Tom Thumb ! Rash men, look to your skins ! Ye humble ballad-mongers, hire alarmists, for the Tartars are coming !

The present drum is made of the skin of John Pinkerton, peace to his manes ! *tympanizatur in pace*. Pinkerton, originally a ballad-monger, was somewhat of a drummer in his own time ; and his ghost, we presume, will listen with delight even to the sound of his own skin.

To drop the metaphor, ere it grow stale, it is impossible to be serious, when we see a writer so weak as to burst into impotent rage, and even fall into convulsions, at a change of a letter or word in an old ballad : and nothing can be more puerile than to imagine that there is no room for a new publication till the former ones be cut down. Mr Ritson might have published collections of English or Scottish poetry, without assailing any former editor ; and his industry and exactness would have attracted estimation. He might, in justice and candour, have praised former editors for what they did, instead of indulging that malignity, which disgusts the reader of books of amusement, and is only acceptable to a few perverse spirits, who rejoice to see authors make themselves little by fighting like game cocks ; and, while they seem to applaud their own cock, are laughing at him in their sleeves.

This collection is neatly printed, and is accompanied with the music. But we had higher expectations from the editor's powers of research on such topics, than we here find realized. Most of the pieces are trivial and common: and we rose from the work, not only without the gratification of novelty, but with disgust at the editor's prejudices, and want of taste and discrimination.

Prefixed are a Preface, and an Historical Essay on Scottish Song; and we shall with them begin our remarks, and leave the reader to judge how far this editor has a title to assume such a ludicrous despotism in his present department, which he thus enters upon, as the Byzantine emperors commenced their decrees with *Nostra Divinitas*.

“It may be naturally supposed that a publication of this nature would have been rendered more perfect by a native of North Britain. Without discussing this question, the editor has only to observe, that diligent enquiry, extensive reading, and unwearyed assiduity, added to the strictest integrity, and most disinterested views, have possibly tended to lessen the disadvantages of an English birth; and that he is persuaded the present collection, such as it is, will not suffer by comparison with any thing of the kind hitherto published in either country.”

Who would not imagine, from this self-importance, that some solemn affair were in hand? What must be the power of that mind which can descant with such dignity on a ballad? To us, who are accustom-

ed to treat trifles as trifles, it recalls the remembrance of a venerable old man who once appeared at a fair, shaking a child's rattle, and gravely stroking his beard at every pause.

The remarks on the Celtic language among the Galwegians, p. xiii. of the Essay, proceed on erroneous suppositions, the editor having ventured beyond his little pale. The wild Scots of Galloway, who spoke Irish, were a colony permitted to settle there in the fifteenth century, while a constant intercourse, and mutual aid, prevailed between Scotland and the north of Ireland. They are unmentioned before that time ; and have nothing to do with the old Galwegians. The other arguments are equally futile, and beneath notice. Nor can greater ignorance be evinced than in the imagination, p. xv. that the Celts had ever peopled Scandinavia ; where, as every antiquary knows, not a Celtic word, nor monument, remains. The *Duan*, p. xix. is written in Irish, as was the genealogy of Alexander III. though all know that English was the common language of the Scottish court at that time. The bard addresses the people of Albany, or Scotland, in general, not the Celts only, as our editor implies in his note.

With similar *learning* he misquotes the Scaligeriana, to shew that James V. was *camard*, or flat-nosed ; while Joseph Scaliger is speaking of his con-

temporary James VI. who was flat-nosed and ugly, as all his portraits shew. Joseph was hardly born when James V. died; and this Monarch added to a most graceful countenance an aquiline nose, as appears not only from the old engraved portraits, but from that lately published, from an ancient painting, in the Portraits of Illustrious Persons of Scotland. As Mr Ritson deals much in trifles, it is surprizing that he is not accurate in his trifles; but we hope that, by pointing out such strange errors, we shall teach him a most useful lesson, MODESTY, the sense of his own faults, and a consequent lenity for those of others.

Of his candour in this Essay, we shall select the following specimen :

‘ In the year 1719, the celebrated poem or ballad of Hardy-knute first appeared at Edinburgh, as “ a fragment,” in a folio pamphlet of 12 pages. That it is of no greater antiquity, must be perfectly clear, from every species of evidence, intrinsic or extrinsic, and the only means of reconciling the seemingly opposite accounts of its birth, is to conclude it the illegitimate offspring of Mrs Wardlaw, by Sir John Bruce. The two stanzas beginning “ Aryse, zoung knight,” the three beginning “ Now with his ferss and stalwart train,” the two beginning “ Sair bleids my leige,” the six beginning “ Quhair lyke a fyre,” and the three last, are not in the first edition, (which was reprinted in four leaves, 8vo.) but originally appeared in the Ever-green; in which many different readings are given, and Ramsay, to confirm the authenticity of the whole, has every where changed the initial *y* to *z*. That a composition abounding with evident

imitations of, and direct allusions to modern and familiar poetry, in short, that a palpable and bungling forgery, without the slightest resemblance of any thing ancient or original, should have passed either in England or Scotland, for a genuine relique of antiquity, would appear almost incredible and miraculous, if there were not subsequent instances of a similar delusion. Why the Scottish literati should be more particularly addicted to literary imposition than those of any other country, might be a curious subject of investigation for their new Royal Society. Dr Johnson, indeed, is of opinion, that "a Scotchman must be a very sturdy moralist, who does not love Scotland better than truth; he will always love it," he says, "better than inquiry: and, if falsehood flatters his vanity, will not be very diligent to detect it." He is speaking of another forgery,—the Poems of Ossian. However this may be, the fact is incontestable; and the forgeries of Hector Boethius, David Chalmers, George Buchanan, Thomas Dempster, Sir John Bruce, William Lauder, Archibald Bower, James Macpherson, and John Pinkerton, stamp a disgrace upon the national character, which ages of exceptionless integrity will be required to remove; an æra, however, which, if one may judge from the detestation in which the most infamous and despicable of these impostors is universally held, has already commenced.'

The confusion of ideas in this paragraph is wonderful. Of the forgeries of David Chalmers we know nothing. Buchanan, we suppose, is arraigned as the forger of Mary's letters, a charge only believed by bigots; and, if they were forged, Maitland of Lethington was certainly the man. Bruce and Pinkerton *forged* old ballads; and the latter has long ago pointed out all his forgeries in that way, which

strike us as being as innocent as the *Impostures Innocentes* of Picart. At our author's reflections our northern neighbours will only smile; but we must be pardoned for exposing his ignorance. There is, in fact, no country in Europe, but has produced as many literary impostors as Scotland. In Italy, they have swarmed; witness the works of Annius of Viterbo, of Inghiramius, of numerous writers of the fifteenth century; it is even doubtful if Quintus Curtius be not a forgery of that period. In France, let the false Turpin, Hunibaldus, &c. &c. be mentioned. In Spain, the forgeries of History, the false Idatius, Julianus, Dexter, Braulo, Heleca, Eustrandus, &c. &c. amount to more than twenty, as the reader may see on consulting the *Bibliotheca Hispanica* of Antoninus. Even in England, Leland, Bale, and Pitts, (with Bishop Tanner their blind follower,) are as eminent forgers in their way as Thomas Dempster; and Chatterton may vie with Macpherson: not to mention Sir Thomas Elliot, the forger of the Commentaries of Alexander Severus, &c. &c.

As to the extension our editor gives to the idea of forgery, it only shews a want of judgment and discrimination. According to this saint in trouble, Mr Addison, in his tales in the *Spectator*, from oriental MSS.; Mr Pope, in his *Anecdotes of the Court of Pharamond*, from a MS. in the same work; Montes-

quieu, in his Persian Letters, (for brevity we pass many known instances,) are *criminal forgers*. A little mind, never itself warmed by genius, nor sensible to its impressions, may thus judge; but the public is a jury of more liberality and candour.

The repeated attacks, in text and notes, on Pinkerton's youthful productions, the *Select Scottish Ballads, &c.* we pass in silence, for they are too *savoury* for our pages. But we must express our surprise, that so keen an author has hit no blot, but has shot his arrows at random. Without metaphor, no error is pointed out, but only general invectives, bestowed with such surprising fecundity and grace, as to remind us of a *gentleman* mentioned in scripture, 'who was angry because his time was but short.'

As the most favourable specimen of the Essay, we shall select the concluding part, on the musical instruments used in Scotland, after premising, that the *chorus* is a bag-pipe, as shewn by Mr Ledwich in his *Antiquities of Ireland*; but we are fatigued with pointing out minute errors and imperfections; and only request the reader to believe that we are not insensible of the others in this extract.*

In proceeding to the Poems, which being mostly known to our readers, will hardly admit of extracts,

* It was judged unnecessary to give the quotation, which is very long; the reader is therefore referred to the passage commencing "A few words should," &c. in the Preface to the Songs.

we must premise, that our editor has spared no pains to reject any improvement, and to restore them to error and imperfection: a zeal eminently laudable, in an age when reformation is thought as dangerous as it is to get rid of the gout. We have no opinion of our author's general learning; but must whisper in his ear that it is profanation, nay, (in his saintly scale of *crimes*) it is *blasphemy*, for any editor to publish any classic, except in fac simile of the MS. Hold you, Mr Heyne, you sacrilegious professor! And Virgil too! An old author! None of your improvements and conjectures! All must be fac simile. No other simile will go down. Here are Tom Hearne and John Ritson, Tom O Nokes and John O Styles.—But copper-plates will be too expensive, Sirs, for printing my Virgil.—O true, Mr Professor, copper is expensive, though brass be not. But do give us a little touch of the black letter, you understand: and by all means supply not a word, a syllable; give us all the contractions, all the sweet contractions, not a pot-hook can be spared.

‘Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?’

For such, in solemn truth, is the state of this mighty question; and for the practice of every editor in Europe, does Mr Ritson publicly call respectable men, *impostors*, *forgers*, and *lyars*.

The notes are few, and sometimes erroneous, as for instance, the *apparition* to Col. Gardiner. By

the preservation of all the Jacobite songs, (read not Jacobin) the editor has, as on other occasions, evinced his fondness for their principles. The following we select as an antidote, and as short.

‘ YE JACOBITES BY NAME.

‘ Ye Jacobites by name, give an ear, give an ear ;
 Ye Jacobites by name, give an ear ;
 Ye Jacobites by name,
 Your faults I will proclaim,
 Your doctrines I maun blame,
 You shall hear.

What is right, and what is wrang, by the law, by the law ?
 What is right, and what is wrang, by the law ?
 What is right, and what is wrang ?
 A short sword, and a lang,
 A weak arm, and a strang
 For to draw.

What makes heroic strife, fam’d afar, fam’d afar ?
 What makes heroic strife, fam’d afar ?
 What makes heroic strife ?
 To whet the assassin’s knife,
 Or hunt a parent’s life
 Wi’ bludie war.

Then let your schemes alone, in the state, in the state ;
 Then let your schemes alone, in the state ;
 Then let your schemes alone,
 Adore the rising sun,
 And leave a man undone
 To his fate.’

We forbear any further extracts, as the pieces are already known ; and shall only add a few remarks on the glossary.

Bansters, are not men who bind sheaves, but blustering fellows, swearers ; to *ban*, is to curse.

Bardies, are not little bards, but auld bardies, old bearded men.

Blinks, Mr Ritson cannot interpret, though in the preceding line he gives its preterit *blinkit*, glanced. ‘ The blythe blinks in her eye,’ is, ‘ Joy sparkles in her eye.’

Brag, is boast, scold.

Bridal, from *bride-ale* ! So burial is from bury-ale, and ceremonial, from ceremony-ale.

Broom, heath ! a mere provincialism in some parts of England. Broom, is broom, *genista*.

Brok, unknown, is badger.

Bughting, ewe-milking ! It is putting them into bughts, or folds, whether milked or not.

Ha-house and pantry, are strangely confounded with *but and ben*. Hall and pantry are different from kitchen and parlour.

Byde, not endure ; but remain.

Carl, is not old man, but churl, and is applied to old and young.

Cess, is city-tax.

Chapped stocks, unknown, are cabbage stocks chopped with butter.

Cock, strut.

Gluse, to play at the glove, is to tilt at a glove.

Gowff'd, is laughed.

Heezy, a fall.

Kyrtle, is not upper-petticoat, but our modern gown, a waist and petticoat. A kyrtle and mantle completed a woman's dress.

Limmer, was formerly rogue ; nor is it now whore, but slut.

The interpretation of *luk my head*, is ridiculous ; the original word was doubtless, *lute*, *lout*, bow.

Mazer, is fine earthen ware, probably made at Masieres in Champagne.

Paw is French, *pas*, *passe* ; as in English paw-tricks are *pas*, *pas*, *not* to be done.

Shyre, is sheer. *Slaited*, is slided, glided.

Tait, small quantity, sticking together as a lock of hair, or of wool.

Touk of drum, tuck of drum.

Turs, to *turse*, is to bundle. *Weers*, is worse.

We have passed other instances of wrong interpretation, or of the want of it, as these may convince our readers that Mr Ritson is little versed in the Scotch dialect, though he aspire to be a superlative judge of every production in it. He may at present regard us as his enemies ; but as soon as he abandons his petulant and dashing manner, which must in time be disgusting to himself, he will esteem us his best friends, for pointing out this worm in the bud.

And as soon as he shall begin to write like a scholar and a gentleman, with accuracy and modesty, we shall be the first to applaud his new career.

No. II.

Extracts from the Letters of R. Gough, Esq. to Mr George Paton, as to Ireland's Forgery.

Mr Paton had written as follows to Mr Gough :—
 “What are the general sentiments of the public with regard to the late discoveries of the Shakspear MSS? Whether genuine or not? Are any small editions in 12mo. of them printed for common use? This would be of rapid sale to the proprietor, who, it is presumed, is Mr Ireland. I should be glad to learn who he is, and his character and particulars of the MSS. the hints handed here are so various, they meet with suspicious credit: there will be a flood of controversy on the subject.”

Custom-house, Edin. 12th Jan. 1796.

The subjoined extracts give Mr Gough's communications on the subject.

1.

“The new discovered Shakspear MSS. find little credit with the good judges of the subject. Mr Ire-

E

land, the Editor, *threatens* every body who speaks against his discoveries, and even the newspapers if they make extracts. I leave you to judge on what grounds his credit stands. He will be warmly, and to purpose, attacked by our Shakspear champions, and that ere long. No small edition will be published; for the high subscription to the larger will hardly reimburse him.

Enfield, Jan. 16. 1796.

2.

I shall use Mr Constable's leave to send your parcels occasionally; and in one of them, Mr Malone's complete detection of Mr Ireland's Shakspear MSS. compared with which the lesser pamphlets are but candles to the sun. The Play of Vortigern was performed at Drury Lane by some of our best actors last Saturday; but not so well received as to be encouraged to a second edition. Mr Malone's book came out two days before.

Enfield, April 5. 1796.

3.

Mr Ireland has published a very menacing advertisement, that he is preparing with all convenient speed an answer to Mr Malone's *malevolent* attack. It has been insinuated in some newspapers, that his son has convened a circle of literati, and is ready to

make oath that his father did not forge the MSS. but was imposed on, and will leave no steps unpursued to detect the impostor. It was certainly very extraordinary that the possessor of such valuable papers should have any reasons for concealing himself; nor could reason of such silence be easily found.

Enfield, April 21. 1796.

4.

Mr Ireland has repeatedly advertised that he has *been deceived*; and his son as repeatedly, that if his father was deceived, it was through his means, being first deceived. The great bubble is therefore burst, and probably no further notice will be taken of it on either side.

Enfield, July 2. 1796.

5.

Mr Ireland has completely cried down his son; and it is said is preparing a vindication of himself: but the public are tired of the forgery, by which their pockets have suffered more than by any former literary forgery. If you get a sight of the Monthly Review for July, you will see a complete detection.

Enfield, Aug. 26. 1796.

6.

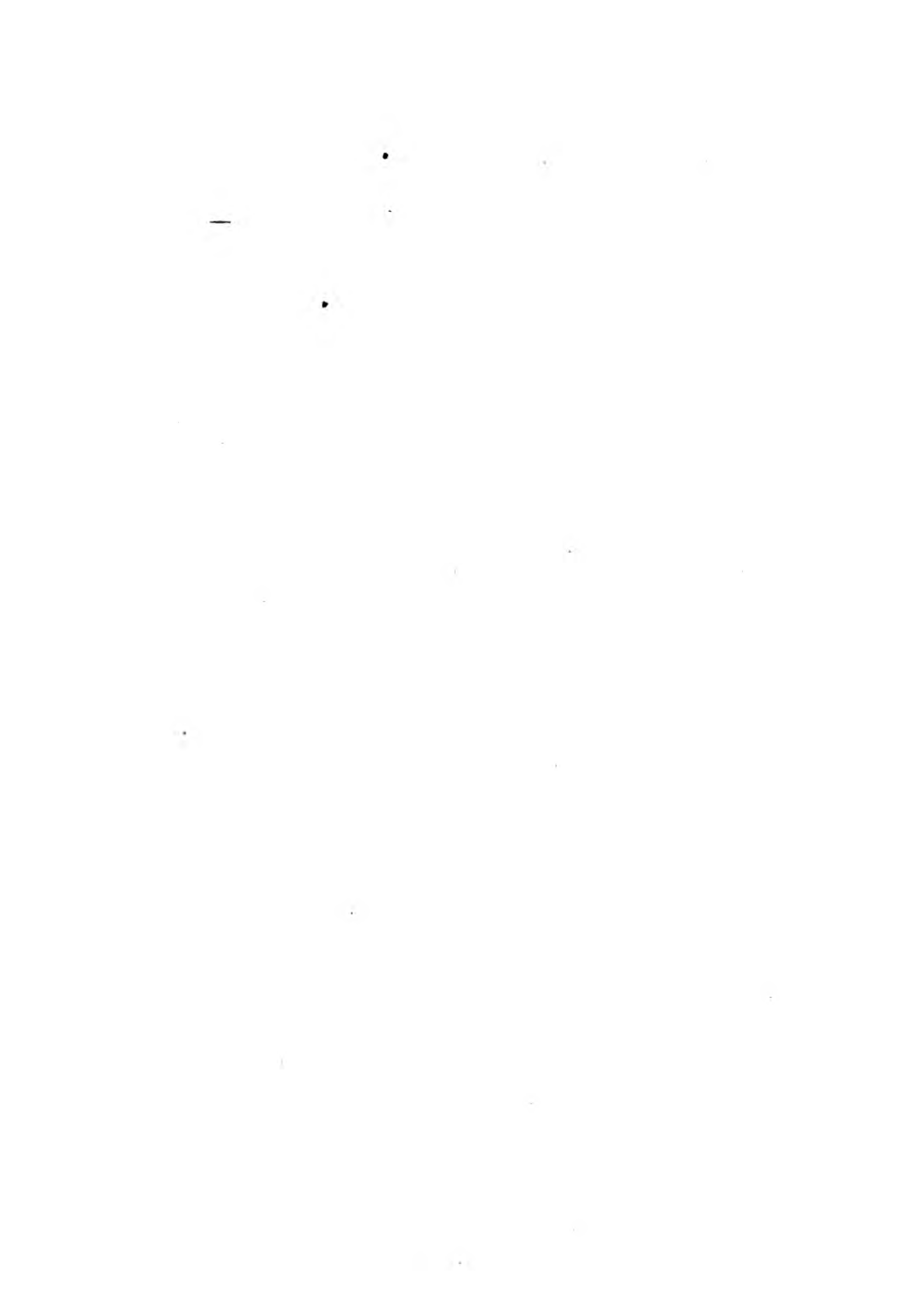
Mr Ireland announces a regular defence of his

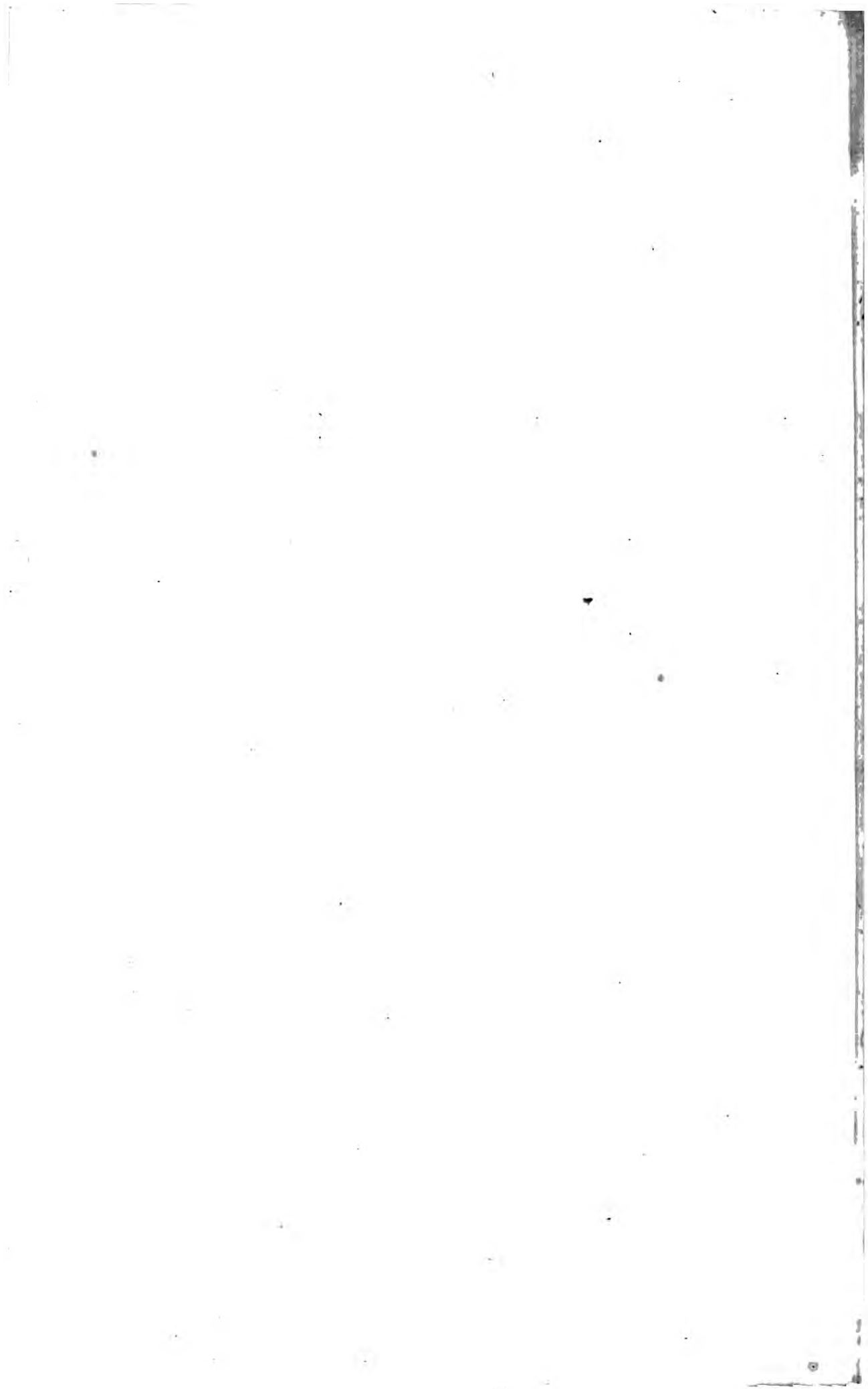
conduct, though his son has concealed himself in Wales, and sold the famous library from whence his forgery was fabricated to Messrs Whites for their ensuing catalogue. Mr Chalmers has taken up the pen against Mr Malone's mode of proceeding, more than in defence of Mr Ireland, who is again extremely hurt by being brought on the stage in a new play in the character of a forger of antiquities."

Enfield, Nov. 18. 1796.

THE END.

W. AITKEN, PRINTER.





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