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Attributed to Thomas Rowley (1782), by Edmond Malone**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CURSORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE POEMS
ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS ROWLEY (1782) ***

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✱ [asterism]

œ ["oe" ligature]

Ἐκτορος ἀντικρὺ, βαλέειν δὲ ἔϊετο θυμός.

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In addition to the ordinary page numbers, the printed text labeled the recto (odd) pages of the first four leaves of each 8-page signature. These will appear in the margin as A, A2...

For this e-text, footnote markers in the *Cursory Observations* have been changed from simple asterisks * to capital letters A*, and shorter footnotes are displayed as inset sidenotes. Other notes and markers are unchanged. All brackets are in the original.

Errors are shown with mouse-hover popups. In the *Cursory Observations*, the text was left as printed except when the error was unambiguous. In quoted verses, the use of y for þ (th) and z for ʒ (gh) is unchanged.

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EDMOND MALONE

CURSORY
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
P O E M S
ATTRIBUTED TO
THOMAS ROWLEY

(1782)

Introduction by
JAMES M. KUIST

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INTRODUCTION

Edmond Malone's *Cursory Observations* was the most timely publication in the Rowley controversy. His work appeared just as the debate over the authenticity of the poems attributed to a fifteenth-century priest was, after twelve years, entering its most crucial phase.¹ These curious poems had come to the attention of the reading public in 1769, when Thomas Chatterton sent several fragments to the *Town and Country Magazine*. The suicide of the young poet in 1770 made his story of discovering ancient manuscripts all the more intriguing. When Thomas Tyrwhitt published the first collected edition in March of 1777,² speculation about whether the poems were the work of Rowley or Chatterton began in earnest. Malone arrived in London two months later to take up permanent residence, and very likely he soon became in private "a professed anti-Rowleian."³ But during the late 1770's, although anonymous writers filled the periodicals with pronouncements on both sides of the question, there was no urgent need to demonstrate that the poems were spurious. The essay which Tyrwhitt appended to the third edition of Rowley poems in 1778⁴ and Thomas Warton's chapter in his *History of English Poetry*⁵ seemed to show with sufficient authority that the poems could not have been written in the fifteenth century. The Rowleians, however, were diligently preparing their arguments,⁶ and late in 1781 they at last came forward with massive scholarly support for the Rowley story.

On the first of December, Jacob Bryant published his voluminous *Observations upon the Poems of Thomas Rowley: in which the authenticity of those poems is ascertained*.⁷ Some ten days later, Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter and President of the Society of Antiquaries, brought out his own "edition" of the poems, with a commentary providing extensive historical proof of what Bryant "ascertained."⁸ The remarks of Warton and Tyrwhitt suddenly seemed hasty and superficial. Warton had clearly outlined his reasons for skepticism, but he offered to show "the greatest deference to decisions of much higher authority."⁹ Tyrwhitt had also hesitated to be dogmatic. He saw fit to suggest that, since Chatterton had always been equivocal, the authenticity of the poems could be judged only on internal grounds.

Merely to show what might be gleaned from the poems themselves, he examined "part of the internal evidence," the language, and specifically "a part only of this part, viz. . . . words, considered with respect to their significations and inflexions."¹⁰ Thus, when the apparently exhaustive work of Bryant and Milles was published, the Rowleians could well feel that the burden of proof now rested with the other side. Tyrwhitt and Warton had command of the proof they needed, and eventually they won over all but the fanatics.¹¹ But for the moment any answers they could make to Bryant and Milles would seem to be merely defensive. At this hour, the position which they represented needed new support from someone who could bring a fresh perspective into the debate and, if possible, throw the confident Rowleians into confusion. Edmond Malone's observations served precisely these ends.

Malone must have set to work as soon as the books of Bryant and Milles appeared.¹² At any rate, he rushed his essay into print. His friend John Nichols published it, over the signature "Misopiclesus," in the December issue and yearly Supplement of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which went into circulation early in January.¹³ To appear in these numbers, Malone's essay had to be in Nichols' hands not long after the middle of December, for copy was already going to press by then.¹⁴ Doubtless he now put to use many ideas which had occurred to him as the controversy developed. But the origin of the essay was clearly his response, not simply to the poems and the controversy surrounding them, but specifically to what Milles and Bryant had written. His questioning of their competence to settle literary questions is his most basic justification of his own analysis. His refutations of their arguments give substance to every stage of his reasoning. And even though in the *Gentleman's Magazine* the essay is divided into two installments, its continuity and stylistic cohesiveness indicate that Malone wrote it purposefully at a time when his thoughts were unified by a clear provocation.

iii A letter which Malone wrote to Lord Charlemont in Ireland on 8 January 1782 reveals something of the seriousness with which, beneath their merriment, Malone and others regarded the Rowleian manifesto:

The Rowley controversy, about which you enquire, is going on ding-dong. Dr. Milles's quarto and Mr. Bryant's octavos are on my table, ready to be packed in your parcel. They have said everything that could be said on their side of the question, and have staggered some. Warton is preparing an answer, which will be out soon; only a shilling pamphlet. The cautious Tyrwhitt is slower in his operations. He means, I believe, to enter deeply into the business, and it will therefore be some time before we shall see his vindication. I am, you know, a professed anti-Rowleian, and have just sent a little brat into the world to seek his fortune. As I did not choose to sign my name, I preferred, for the sake of a more general perusal, to give my cursory remarks to a magazine, in consequence of which they appear rather awkwardly, one half in that for December and the other in the supplement, which is to be published in a few days. When I can get a perfect copy, I will send it to you, for I flatter myself your partiality to me will incline you to run your eye over it, notwithstanding your leaning to the other side of the question. Tyrwhitt wants me still to make a pamphlet of it, in order to bind up with all the other pieces which that most wonderful youth, Chatterton, has given occasion to.¹⁵

While his little brat was diverting the wide audience of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Malone was busy arranging for it to make a more damaging sally. Tyrwhitt may have asked for a more convenient text; what Malone gave him was a better essay. He seems to have spent the entire month revising his work, for the pamphlet was not ready until early in February. As late as 7 February, writers commenting on the essay referred to and even quoted from the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹⁶ On 4 February, Horace Walpole, writing to thank Malone for sending him a copy of *Cursory Observations*, said that he had been "earnestly wishing" for such a present because Malone's remarks were "far too good to be committed only to the few hours of life of a newspaper."¹⁷

iv The pamphlet was first advertised in the *St. James's Chronicle*, in which developments in the Rowley controversy were usually announced promptly, until No. 3266 (9-12 Feb.). This and all other advertisements of the pamphlet were for the version of Malone's essay which the author sent to Walpole some days earlier: "the second edition, revised and augmented."¹⁸ This phrase on the title-page has led scholars to miss the significance which Malone himself found in the pamphlet. The phrase does not indicate, as bibliographies have heretofore stated, that the pamphlet achieved a second printing. It emphasizes that in the pamphlet Malone revised and expanded considerably the essay which made its first appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Every page in the pamphlet bears evidence of Malone's revision.¹⁹ It was necessary, of course, to reorient the essay, which after the formula of the *Gentleman's Magazine* was addressed to Mr. Urban. At least one passage, which carried a slur upon publishers, may have been changed to suit Mr. Nichols.²⁰ But more indicative of his carefulness are his revisions of words and phrases. "The whole fabrick" of Chatterton's poems became "the beautiful fabrick" (p. 12). The "practice of knitting," which Malone wished to show had not developed as early as the fifteenth century, he now called "the art of knitting" (p. 24). When he found that he had not questioned emphatically enough "the antiquity of these MSS," he added the phrase "not of one, but of all" (p. 31). Malone attended to the more general stylistic aspects of his essay as well as to minute details. If he paused to recompute the number of parchments which could fit into the famous Bristol chests (p. 59), he also changed the simple declarative "I shall" to the more forceful "I will" throughout the essay. Although his verbal revisions cannot be called drastic, they are numerous and are frequently strategic.

v Malone's expansion of his essay, however, was in itself ample reason to call the pamphlet a "new edition." The reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine* might assure readers that "great part of this pamphlet" had already appeared there,²¹ but there were also "great" additions. What Malone came to consider Bryant's "most plausible argument" ("that every author must know his own meaning—that Chatterton did not know the meaning of many words and lines in his book, and therefore was not the author"), he answered in an entirely new passage (pp. 41-45). He observed later that "almost every writer on the subject" subsequently "adopted" this rebuttal.²² Another crucial section (pp. 45-49), in which Malone compares a modernized passage from "Rowley" with a passage from Chatterton's acknowledged poetry translated into Rowleian verse, was also new. This critical technique, which Malone perfected, became a standard one thereafter.²³ Malone added six other passages, none of which is less than half a page in length, as well as five footnotes documenting or elaborating points which he had made in the magazine.²⁴ The most heavily augmented part of the essay is that containing miscellaneous proofs, but Malone bolstered his initial arguments as well. In his comparison of "Rowley's" smooth versification with the work of authentic late-medieval poets—the passage which, as we shall see, Tyrwhitt thought so effective—Malone introduced two further quotations and substituted the first lines from Bradshaw's *Holy Life* for those he had quoted in the magazine.²⁵ Malone's additions to his essay, which taken together amount to some twenty pages (in a pamphlet of sixty-two pages), represent a careful effort to support with an irresistible battery of arguments the main line of attack which he had thrown against the Rowleians.

As his second paragraph and his appeals to "poetical readers" indicate, Malone's fundamental message was that the Rowley poems must be judged as literature and not as historical documents. The poems had, of course, found many appreciative readers. A correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1777 (XLVII, 361-365), for instance, discussed with frank admiration the imagery, pathetic sentiment, accommodation of sound to sense and other aspects of the poems. It was Malone, however, who got to the

heart of the matter in showing that poetry inevitably bears the hallmark of the era in which it is written. Even to appreciate the importance of this fact, he insisted, one must have read the early English poets with perception and taste. In establishing this criterion, Malone delivered his most devastating blow against the Rowleians: all their learned arguments were irrelevant.

Malone's essay helped to awaken some very witty attacks on the Rowleians. Malone himself made use of wit in occasional passages, such as his abuse of Milles for relying on Shakespeare's historical accuracy (pp. 22-24). The cure for Rowleiomania which he prescribed in the concluding passage aroused a good deal of comment. Not all readers were happy that he chose to ridicule respectable scholars,²⁶ and the effectiveness of his humor did not go unquestioned. Burnaby Greene, whose *Strictures* were the only major attempt to discredit Malone, was anxious to show that, although Malone seemed to promise humor, he did not prove to be "a writer abounding in exertions of the risible muscles."²⁷ Among the replies to Greene were some jovial verses in the *St. James's Chronicle* very likely contributed by Malone:

Says Bryant to Burnaby, what do you mean?
The Cause of old Rowley you've ruin'd quite clean.
I had taught Folk to think, by my learned *Farrago*,
That Drydens and Popes wrote three Centuries ago;
Though they stared at my Comments, and sometimes might slumber,
Yet the Truth they might fancy beneath all my Lumber:
But *your* stupid Jargon is seen through *instanter*,
And your Works give the Wits new Subjects for Banter.
Such *cler*-obscure Aid may I meet again never!
For now Milles and I will be laugh'd at for ever.²⁸

Greene's criticisms are frequently absurd, but probably even Malone was ready to acknowledge that humor was not the outstanding feature of the *Cursory Observations*. His purpose was not to satirize but to refute.

Other writers in 1782, however, exerted their risible muscles much more vigorously than Malone did. William Julius Mickle wrote *The Prophecy of Queen Emma; An Ancient Ballad lately discovered, written by Johannes Turgotus, Prior of Durham, in the Reign of William Rufus*, to which he added a long satirical postscript about the discovery of the poem. George Hardinge's *Rowley and Chatterton in the Shades* brilliantly depicts various scenes in the other world after news of the Rowley controversy is carried there. The most hilarious performance of the year—indeed, of the entire controversy—was the *Archaeological Epistle to Dean Milles*, published by John Nichols at the end of March,²⁹ which turned the language of the Rowley poems ingeniously against the two fumbling historians. Such pieces would have appeared whether or not Malone had written the *Cursory Observations*. The general reader was likely to find ridiculous the sober effort to document Rowley's existence. As a contributor to the *St. James's Chronicle* said, "To mistake the Apprentice of a modern Attorney for an ancient Priest, too nearly resembles an Incident in the new Pantomime at Covent-Garden, where a Bailiff, intent on arresting an old Beau, is imposed on by a Monkey dressed in his Clothes, and employed in an awkward Imitation of his Manners."³⁰ But ridicule could hurt the Rowleians only if their confidence had been penetrated already. Malone delivered his strokes two months before any of the others, and the strength of his diversified attack made it possible for the wits to strike home.

Throughout 1782, the *Cursory Observations* remained at the forefront of the reaction to Milles and Bryant. In March, William Mason wrote Walpole that he understood "a Mr. Malone" was "the proto-antagonist" of the Rowleians.³¹ As late as the August issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* appeared an "Ode, Addressed to Edmond Malone, Esq. on his presuming to examine the learned and unanswerable Arguments urged by Jacob Bryant, Esq. and the Rev. Dr. Milles..."³² Perhaps the fairest contemporary appraisal of Malone's work was given in the June issue of the *Critical Review*. Although the reviewer felt that some of Malone's proofs, such as the anachronism of "knitting white hosen,"³³ were as elusive as those of the antiquaries, he found the method of comparing "Rowley" and other poets illuminating, and the "miscellaneous observations" he considered "frequently important, and often decisive." On the whole, the reviewer said, "Mr. Malone deserves much praise for his very clear and comprehensive view" of the controversy.³⁴

In their replies to Bryant and Milles, both Warton and Tyrwhitt referred appreciatively to the *Cursory Observations*. Warton found that he had duplicated Malone's method of rewriting Chatterton's acknowledged poetry. In a footnote, he said: "The ingenious author of *Cursory Observations on the Poems of Rowley*, has been beforehand with me in this sort of tryal. But mine was made, before I had seen his very sensible and conclusive performance."³⁵ Tyrwhitt went so far as to let Malone speak for him: "From the *Language*, I might go on to examine the *Versification* of these Poems; but I think it sufficient to refer the reader, who may have any doubts upon this point, to the specimens of really ancient poetry, with which the verses of the pretended *Rowley* have lately been very judiciously contrasted. Whoever reads those specimens, if he has an ear, must be convinced, that the authors of them and of the Poems did not live within the same period."³⁶ A century after Tyrwhitt, in a re-examination of the Rowley poems which is in many ways the final word on the subject, W. W. Skeat recommended Tyrwhitt's *Vindication*, the chapter in Warton's *History*, and the *Cursory Observations* as the three contemporary analyses of the poems which a reader should consult.³⁷ The pamphlet is now offered to twentieth-century readers as an illustration of the mature and versatile critical powers of one of the eighteenth-century's great scholars.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. A good general account of the controversy can be found in E. H. W. Meyerstein's *A Life of Thomas Chatterton* (London, 1930). I wish to thank the University of Western Ontario for the grant enabling me to work at the British Museum and Bodleian Library. I am indebted to my colleague Herbert Berry for his useful suggestions.
2. *Poems, supposed to have been written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley and Others, in the Fifteenth Century; the greatest part now first published from the most authentic copies, with an engraved specimen of one of the MSS....* The earliest advertisement that I have seen for this edition is in the *London Chronicle*, No. 3158 (1-4 March 1777).
3. Until Professor James M. Osborn's biography of Malone is ready, Sir James Prior's *Life* (London, 1860) remains standard. Concerning Malone's private opinions about Rowley, see his letter to Charlemont quoted below.
4. A convenient reprinting of this edition is *The Rowley Poems by Thomas Chatterton*, ed. M. E. Hare (Oxford, 1911).
5. II (London, 1778), 139-164—perhaps more accessible in Richard Price's edition of the *History*, II (London, 1840), 338-360.

6. Letters from Francis Woodward to Lord Charlemont on 21 July 1778 and 8 April 1779 give brief accounts of the progress of Milles' research. See the Twelfth Report of the Historical MSS Commission, Appendix X: *The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont* (London, 1891), I, 340-341 and 345.
7. An advertisement in the *St. James's Chronicle*, No. 3233 (24-27 Nov.) says that the *Observations* will be published "Saturday next." An advertisement in No. 3235 (29 Nov.-1 Dec.) says that the *Observations* "this day were published." The latter phrase was often used in consecutive advertisements of a work during this period, but in view of the announcement in No. 3233, it would seem that Bryant's work did appear on 1 Dec.
8. Milles reprinted Tyrwhitt's edition (except for the "Appendix," Tyrwhitt's essay against the authenticity of the poems), correcting the errata and adding a few new pieces. His commentary includes a long answer to Tyrwhitt, a "Preliminary Dissertation," introductions to various poems, and footnotes throughout the text. Since 1782 is the year imprinted on the title-page, bibliographies have always given this as the year of publication. But No. 3239 of the *St. James's Chronicle* (8-11 Dec. 1781) advertises the work as published. A MS note by Joseph Haslewood in a pamphlet at the British Museum (shelf-mark C.39.f.16) mentions his having seen a copy of Milles' work which Richard Gough obtained on 12 Dec. 1781.
9. *History*, ed. Price, II, 340.
10. *Rowley Poems*, ed. Hare, p. 311.
11. See Meyerstein, *Life*, pp. 472-474. Warton's reply, advertised in the *St. James's Chronicle* in No. 3280 (14-16 March 1782) to be published "in a few Days," was *An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley. In which the arguments of the Dean of Exeter, and Mr. Bryant are examined*. Tyrwhitt's reply, first advertised in the *St. James* in No. 3342 (6-8 Aug. 1782), was *A Vindication of the Appendix to the Poems, called Rowley's . . .*
12. The only earlier replies were obscure squibs in the newspapers. See the *St. James's Chronicle*, Nos. 3238 (6-8 Dec., against Bryant), 3240 (11-13 Dec., against Bryant), and 3245 (22-25 Dec., against both).
13. *LI* (1781), 555-559, 609-615. On its publishing schedule during the 18th century, see the *Gentleman's Magazine*, N.S., I (July-Dec., 1856), 9. Neither the magazine nor the pamphlet mentioned Malone's authorship, but his hand in "the new Pamphlet," at least, was soon recognized (see the *St. James's Chronicle*, No. 3268, 14-16 Feb. 1782). One can only speculate whether Malone and Nichols were fellow plotters from the beginning. They seem to have taken interest in each other's work as early as 1779, when Nichols printed for Malone special copies of some early analogues to Shakespeare's plays. See Albert H. Smith, "John Nichols, Printer and Publisher," *The Library*, 5th Ser., XVIII (1963), 182-183. And evidently Nichols had an eye out for anti-Rowleian materials. At his solicitation, Horace Walpole allowed the *Letter to the Editor of the [Chatterton] Miscellanies* (Strawberry Hill, 1779) to be reprinted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1782 (LII, 189-195, 247-250, 300, and 347-348).
14. Nichols' printing operations are described in a pamphlet by David Bond, *Friendship Strikingly exhibited in a New Light* (London, 1781).
15. Charlemont Correspondence, I, 393-394. I wish to thank Professor Osborn for calling my attention to this letter.
16. See the *Gentleman's Magazine*, LII (1782), 14-15, and the *St. James's Chronicle*, Nos. 3257 (19-22 Jan.) and 3264 (5-7 Feb.).
17. *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Paget Toynbee, XII (Oxford, 1904), 152.
18. Concerning Walpole's copy, see *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Yale Ed., ed. W. S. Lewis et al., XVI (New Haven, 1952), 363. I have found no trace of any other version of the pamphlet, and it is doubtful that there was time for one to be published between 8 Jan., when Malone wrote to Charlemont, and 31 Jan., the date of the "Advertisement" printed in the "revised and augmented" edition. We may presume that as editor of the magazine Nichols would not be anxious for another printing of the essay during Jan. to compete with two numbers in which the essay was a principal feature. All copies of the pamphlet which I have been able to locate specify "the second edition, revised and augmented." In my examination of six copies (at the Library of Congress, the Bodleian, and the British Museum), I found variation only in the catchword on p. 32. Although the first word on p. 33 is "comprise" in all copies, the catchword in three copies (Bodleian, and British Museum shelf-marks 687.g.33 and 78.i.9) is "contain," the word Malone used in the magazine.* Since the copies are otherwise identical, repeating distinctive flaws and errors (note, for instance, "written," p. 19), I judge that this discrepancy was seen and corrected at press, and that all copies are of one printing.
* In this edition, the catchword is "comprise".
19. Besides the added paragraphs and footnotes, I have noted 235 separate textual changes. Undoubtedly some deviations in spelling and punctuation were the printer's work. But the number of changes in quoted passages (see especially pp. 16 and 60) and the regularity of changes (like those noted above) which evidently serve a stylistic purpose suggest the author's meticulous revision.
20. In reference to Bryant's *Observations* (advertised at 8s.), Malone had said, "by an unwarrentable artifice of the bookseller, it is divided into two, to furnish a pretence for demanding an uncommon price." Compare with this the statement on p. 2.
21. LII (1782), 128.
22. See Malone's letter of 19 Nov. 1782 in *Charlemont Correspondence*, I, 422.
23. See Meyerstein, *Life*, p. 474, and Warton's comment (n. 35).
24. The other passages are on pp. 19-22, 23, 25, 49-50, 51-57, and 57-58. The new footnotes are on pp. 10, 24-25, 29, 33, and 50.
Links to "other passages" are conjectural.
25. That he had quoted out of Warton's *History* the passages from Hoccleve and Bradshaw, not having other texts readily at hand, indicates Malone's haste to publish the essay originally. He retained the Hoccleve passage (p. 6); his point about Warton's basis of selection is effective. But, perhaps feeling that two such citations weakened the point, he took the trouble to bring the quotation from Bradshaw into conformity with the other examples.
26. The reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine* commented that Malone's "levity" and his ridicule of "respectable characters" could "only reflect on himself"—LII (1782), 128. According to Joseph Haslewood (see n. 8), the magazine's reviewer at this time was Richard Gough, who devoted much of his life to antiquarian studies. For the opposite reaction to Malone's "cure," see the *St. James's Chronicle*, No. 3289 (4-6 April 1782), and the *Critical Review*, LIII (1782), 418.
27. *Strictures Upon a Pamphlet entitled, Cursory Observations on the Poems attributed to Rowley, A Priest of the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1782), p. 3.
28. No. 3311 (25-28 May). In a vol. of clippings at the British Museum relating to the controversy (shelf-mark C.39.h.20), Joseph Haslewood wrote "E. Malone" beneath this poem. Haslewood attributed

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certain other items in the *St. James* at this time to "G. Steevens" and appears to have been reporting first-hand information.

29. Today scholars attribute the *Epistle* to William Mason, whose letters to Walpole certainly imply that he wrote it but was zealous to conceal the fact. See *Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, XXIX (New Haven, 1955), 168-169, 175, 182, 189-190, 199-200; and Philip Gaskell, *The First Editions of William Mason* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 26. The man who published the *Epistle*, however, says confidently, "this admirable Poem, very generally ascribed at the time to Mr. Mason, was written by John Baynes, Esq. and handed to the press by his intimate friend John Watson Reed, Esq." Mason's furtiveness may, of course, have fooled even the publisher. The periodicals of the day bear out at least Nichols' word (contrary to what Gaskell says) that the work was immediately received as Mason's. Besides this pamphlet and Malone's, Nichols printed Tyrwhitt's *Vindication* (for the publishers T. Payne and Son). In a letter to Nichols on 18 March 1782, George Steevens commented, "Your house seems to be the forge from which Anti-Rowleian thunders of every kind are to be issued." For all of the above information, see Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes*, VIII (London, 1815), 113.
30. No. 3257 (19-22 Jan. 1782).
31. *Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. Lewis, XXIX, 195.
32. LII (1782), 379-381.
33. A series of articles on this very topic in Malone's article illustrates how elusive such proofs were. See the *Gentleman's Magazine*, LI (1781), 609; LII (1782), 76, 168, 229, 434, 471; LIII (1783), 38-39, 127.
34. *Critical Review*, LIII (1782), 418-419.
35. *Enquiry*, pp. 92-93.
36. *Vindication*, p. 82. A footnote refers the reader to the *Cursory Observations*.
37. *The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton*, II (London, 1890), xlv.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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CURSORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

P O E M S

ATTRIBUTED TO

THOMAS ROWLEY,

A PRIEST of the Fifteenth Century:

W I T H

SOME REMARKS

On the COMMENTARIES on those
Poems, by the Rev. Dr. JEREMIAH
MILLES, Dean of Exeter, and JACOB
BRYANT, Esq;

A N D

A SALUTARY PROPOSAL

Addressed to the Friends of those Gentlemen.

THE SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND AUGMENTED.

— *Ridentem dicere verum*

Quid vetat?

HOR.

L O N D O N

Printed for J. NICHOLS, and sold by J. WALTER, Charing Cross;
R. FAULDER, New Bond street; J. SEWELL, Cornhill;
and E. NEWBERY, Ludgate street.
M.DCC.LXXXII.

[Price One Shilling and Six-Pence]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Observations having met with a more favourable reception than so hasty an Essay had any title to claim, I have endeavoured to render them less imperfect by a revisal, and by adding such new remarks as a more attentive examination of a very copious subject has suggested.

In the discussion of any other question, I should have treated the gentlemen whose arguments I have endeavoured to confute, with that ceremonious respect to which Literature is entitled from all her sons. "A commentator (as the most judicious critick of the present age has observed) should be grave;" but the cause of Rowley, and the mode in which it has been supported, are "too risible for any common power of face."

January 31, 1782.

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

P O E M S

ATTRIBUTED TO

THOMAS ROWLEY.

NEVER surely was the course marked out by our great Satirist—*And write about it, Goddess, and about it*—more strictly followed, than in the compositions which the present *Rowleiomania* has produced. Mercy upon us! Two octavo volumes and a huge quarto, to prove the forgeries of an attorney's clerk at Bristol in 1769, the productions of a priest in the fifteenth century!—Fortunate Chatterton! What the warmest wishes of the admirers of the greatest Genius that England ever produced have not yet effected, a magnificent and accurate edition of his works, with notes and engravings, the product of thy fertile brain has now obtained.—It is almost needless to say, that I allude to two new publications by Mr. Bryant, and the Dean of Exeter; in the *modest* title of one of which, *the authenticity* of the poems attributed to Thomas Rowley is said to be *ascertained*; the other gentleman indeed does not go so far—he only *considers and defends their antiquity*.—Many persons, no doubt, will be deterred by [the size of these works](#) from reading them. It is not, however, so great as they may imagine; for Mr. Bryant's book is in fact only a moderate octavo, though by dextrous management it has been divided into two volumes, to furnish an excuse (as it should seem) for demanding an uncommon price. Bulky, however, as these works are, I have just perused them, and entreat the indulgence of those who think the discussion of a much controverted literary point worth attention, while I lay before them some observations on this inexhaustible subject.

And, first, I beg leave to lay it down as a fixed principle, that the authenticity or spuriousness of the poems attributed to Rowley cannot be decided by any person who has not a *taste* for English poetry, and a moderate, at least, if not a critical, knowledge of the compositions of most of our poets from the time of Chaucer to that of Pope. Such a one alone is, in my opinion, a competent judge of this matter; and were a jury of twelve such persons empaneled to try the question, I have not the smallest doubt what would be their almost instantaneous decision. Without this critical knowledge and taste, all the Saxon literature that can be employed on this subject (though these learned gentlemen should pour out waggon instead of cart-loads of it,) will only puzzle and perplex, instead of illustrating, the point in dispute. Whether they are furnished with any portion of this critical taste, I shall now examine. But that I may not bewilder either my readers or myself, I will confine my observation to these four points. 1. The verification of the poems attributed to Rowley. 2. The imitations of modern authours that are found in them. 3. The anachronisms with which they abound. 4. The hand-writing of the Mss.—the parchments, &c.

I. It is very obvious, that the first and principal objection to the antiquity of these poems is the smoothness of the versification. A series of more than three thousand lines, however disfigured by old spelling, flowing for the most part as smoothly as any of Pope's—is a difficult matter to be got over. Accordingly the learned Mythologist, Mr. Bryant, has laboured hard to prove, either, that other poets of the fifteenth century have written as smoothly, or, if you will not allow him this, that Rowley was a prodigy, and wrote better than all his contemporaries; and that this is not at all incredible, it happening very frequently. And how, think you, gentle reader, he proves his first point? He produces some verses from Spenser, written about the year 1571; some from Sir John Cheke, written in 1553; and others from Sir H. Lea, master of the Armoury to queen Elizabeth. These having not the smallest relation to the present question, I shall take no notice of them. He then cites some verses of blind Harry, (who knows not blind Harry?) written in the time of King Edward IV.; and some from *the Pilgrimage of the Soul*, printed by Caxton in 1483. I will

not encumber my page by transcribing them; and will only observe, that they do not at all prove the point for which they are adduced, being by no means harmonious. But were these few verses ever so smooth, they would not serve to decide the matter in controversy. The question is not, whether in Chaucer, or any other ancient English poet, we can find a *dozen* lines as smooth as

“Wincing she was, as is a jolly colt,
“Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt—”

but whether we can find *three thousand* lines as smooth as these; containing the same rythm, the very collocation and combination of words used in the eighteenth century.

Let us bring this matter to a very fair test. Any quotation from particular parts of old poetry is liable to suspicion, and may be thought to be selected by the advocates on one side as remarkably harmonious, or by those on the other as uncommonly rugged and uncouth. I will therefore transcribe the first four lines of as many ancient poems as are now lying before me; and I request that they may be compared with the opening of *the Battle of Hastings*, N^o 1, the piece which happens to stand first in the new quarto edition of Chatterton’s works.

Divested of its old spelling, which is only calculated to mislead the reader, and to assist the intended imposition, it begins thus:

“O Christ, it is a grief for me to tell
“How many a noble earl and val’rous knight
“In fighting for king Harold nobly fell,
“All slain in Hastings’ field, in bloody fight.”

Or, as Chatterton himself acknowledged this to be a forgery, perhaps it will be more proper to quote the beginning of *the Battle of Hastings*, N^o 2, which he asserted to be a genuine, ancient composition:

“O Truth! immortal daughter of the skies,
“Too little known to writers of these days,
“Teach me, fair saint, thy passing worth to prize,
“To blame a friend, and give a foeman praise.”

The first four lines of *the Vision of Pierce Plowman*, by William (or Robert) Langland, who flourished about the year 1350, are as follows: [I quote from the edition printed in 1561.]

“In a summer season, when set was the sunne,
“I shope me into shroubs, as I a shepe were,
“In habit as an hermet, unholye of werkes,
“Went wide in the werlde, wonders to here.”

Chaucer, who died in 1400, opens thus: [Tyrwhitt’s edit. 1775.]

“Whanne that April with his shoures sote
“The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
“And bathed every veine in swiche licour,
“Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour—.”

The *Confessio Amantis* of Gower, who died in 1402, begins thus: [Berthelette’s edit. 1532.]

“I maye not stretche uppe to the heven
“Myn honde, ne set al in even
“This worlde, whiche ever is in balaunce,
“It stant not in my suffisaunce—.”

Of Occleve’s translation of Egidius *de Regimine principum*, not having it before me, I cannot transcribe the first lines. But here are the first that Mr. Warton has quoted from that poet, and he probably did not choose the worst. I should add, that Occleve wrote in the reign of King Henry V., about the year 1420:

“Aristotle, most famous filosofre,
“His epistles to Alisaunder sent,
“Whos sentence is wel bet then golde in cofre,
“And more holsum, grounded in trewe entent—.”

The following is the first stanza of *the Letter of Cupide*, written by the same authour, and printed in Thynne’s edition of Chaucer, 1561:

“Cupide, unto whose commaundement
“The gentill kinrede of goddes on hie
“And people infernall ben obedient,
“And al mortal folke serven busely,
“Of the goddesse sonne Cythera onely,
“To al tho that to our deite
“Ben subjectes, hertely greting sende we.”

Of John Lydgate’s *Historie of Troye*, which was finished about the year 1420, this is the beginning: [edit. 1555.]

“O myghty Mars, that with thy sterne lyght
“In armys hast the power and the myght,
“And named arte from easte tyl occident

"The myghty lorde, the god armipotent,
"That with the shinging of thy stremes rede
"By influence dost the brydell lede
"Of chivalrie, as soveraygne and patron—."

The Hystorie of King Boccus and Sydracke, &c. printed in 1510, and written by Hugh Campeden in the reign of Henry VI. i.e. some time between the year 1423 and 1461, begins thus:

"Men may finde in olde bookes,
"Who soo yat in them lookes,
"That men may mooche here,
"And yerefore yff yat yee wolle lere—."

Of Thomas Chestre's poems, entitled *Sir Launfale*, written about the same time, these are the first lines:

"Le douzty Artours dawes
"That held Engelond in good lawe,
"Ther fell a wondyr cas
"Of a ley that was ysette—."

The first lines that I have met with of Hardyng's *Chronicle of England unto the reigne of king Edward the Fourth, in verse*, [composed about the year 1470, and printed in 1543, 4to] are as follows:

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"Truly I heard Robert Irelyffe say,
"Clarke of the Greené Cloth, and that to the houshold
"Came every daye, forth most part alway,
"Ten thousand folke, by his messes told—."

The following is the only specimen that I have seen of *The Ordinal*, a poem written by Thomas Norton, a native of Bristol, in the reign of King Edward IV.

"Wherefore he would set up in highth
"That bridge, for a wonderful sight,
"With pinnacles guilt, shinyng as goulde,
"A glorious thing for men to behoulde."

The poem on *Hawking, Hunting, and Armoury*, written by Julian Barnes in the reign of the same monarch, (about 1481,) begins thus:

"My dere sones, where ye fare, by frith, or by fell,
"Take good hede in this tyme, how Tristram woll tell,
"How many maner bestes of venery there were,
"Listenes now to our dame, and ye shullen here."

The only extract that I have met with from William of Naffyngton's *Treatise on the Trinitie*, translated from John of Waldenby, about the year 1480, runs thus:

"I warne you first at the begynnyng,
"That I will make no vaine carpyng,
"Of dedes of armes, ne of amours,
"As does Mynstrellis and Gestours—."

9

I cannot adhere to the method that I have in general observed, by quoting the first lines of *the Moral Proverbes of Christyne* of Pyse, translated in metre by earl Rivers, and printed by Caxton in the seventeenth year of Edward IV. (1478), not having a copy of that scarce book. However, as this is the era of the pretended Rowley, I cannot forbear to transcribe the last stanza of that poem, as I find it cited in an account of this accomplished nobleman's works:

C

"Of these saynges Christyne was the auctresse,
"Which in makyn had such intelligence,
"That thereof she was mireur and maistresse;
"Her werkes testifie the experience;
"In French language was written this sentence;
"And thus englished doth hit reherse
"Antoin Widevylle therle Ryvers."

The first stanza of *the Holy Lyfe of Saynt Werburge*, written by Henry Bradshaw, about the year 1500, and printed in 1521, is this:

"When Phebus had ronne his cours in sagittari,
"And Capricorne entred a sygne retrograt,
"Amyddes Decembre, the ayre colde and frosty,
"And pale Lucyna the erthe dyd illuminat,
"I rose up shortly fro my cubycle preparat,
"Aboute mydnyght, and cast in myne intent
"How I myght spende the tyme conveyent."

Stephen Hawes's celebrated poem, entitled *the Passetyme of pleasure, or the Historie of Graunde Amour and La bell Pucell*, &c. (written about the year 1506, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1517,) being now before me, I am enabled to transcribe the first lines:

"When Phebus entred was in Geminy,
 "Shinyng above, in his fayre golden sphere,
 "And horned Dyane, then but one degre
 "In the crabbe had entred, fayre and cleare—."

Of the *Example of Virtue*^{A*}, written by the same authour, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1530, this is the first stanza:

"In September, in fallynge of the lefe,
 "Whan Phebus made his inclynacyon,
 "And all the whete gadred was in the shefe,
 "By radyaunt hete and operacyon,
 "When the vyrgyn had full dominacyon,
 "And Dyane entred was one degre
 "Into the sygne of Gemyne—"

A* This very rare poem escaped the researches of the learned and ingenious Mr. Warton, who doubted whether it had ever been printed. See his *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, vol. II. p. 211.

The first piece of Skelton, most of whose poems were written between 1509 and 1529, begins thus:

"Arrestynge my sight towarde the zodiake
 "The signes xii for to beholde a farre,
 "When Mars retrogaunt reversed his backe,
 "Lorde of the yere in his orbicular—."

The reader has now before him specimens of ancient poetry, during a period of near two hundred years; that is, for a century before the pretended Thomas Rowley is said to have written, and for near a century afterwards. They are for the most part taken from the commencement of the works of the several authours; so that there can be no suspicion of their having been selected, on account of their uncouthness, to prove a particular point. I know not whether I flatter myself; but by making these short extracts, I imagine that I have thrown more light upon the subject now under consideration, than if I had transcribed twenty pages of Junius, and as many of Skinner's *Etymologicon*, or Doomsday-book. Poetical readers may now decide the question for themselves; and I believe they will very speedily determine, that the lines which have been quoted from Chatterton's poems were not written at any one of the eras abovementioned, and will be clearly of opinion with Mr. Walpole, (whose unpublished pamphlet on this subject, printed at Strawberry Hill, shows him to be as amiable as he is lively and ingenious,) that this wonderful youth has indeed "copied ancient language, but ancient style he has never been able to imitate:" not for want of genius, for he was perhaps the second poetical genius that England has produced, but because he attempted something too arduous for human abilities to perform. My objection is not to single words, to lines or half-lines of these compositions (for here the advocates for their authenticity always shift their ground, and plead, that any particular exceptionable word or passage was the interpolation of Chatterton); but it is to their whole structure, style, and rythm. Many of the stones which this ingenious boy employed in his building, it must be acknowledged, are as old as those at Stone-henge; but the beautiful fabrick that he has raised is tied together by modern cement, and is covered with a stucco of no older date than that of Mess. Wyat and Adams.

To be more particular: In what poet of the time of Edward IV., or for a century afterwards, will the Dean of Exeter find what we frequently meet with in the *Battle of Hastings*, N^o 1, and N^o 2, at the conclusion of speeches—"Thus he;"—"Thus Leofwine;"—"He said; and as," &c? In none I am confident. This latter is a form of expression in heroick poetry, that Pope has frequently made use of in his Homer (from whence Chatterton undoubtedly copied it), and was sometimes employed by Dryden and Cowley; but I believe it will not be easy to trace it to Harrington or Spenser; most assuredly it cannot be traced up to the fifteenth century.—In what English poem of that age will he find similies dressed in the modern garb with which Chatterton has clothed them throughout these pieces?—"As when a flight of cranes, &c.—So prone," &c.—"As when a drove of wolves, &c. So fought," &c. &c.—If the reverend Antiquarian can find this kind of phraseology in any one poet of the time of King Edward IV., or even for fifty years afterwards, I will acknowledge the antiquity of every line contained in his quarto volume. Most assuredly neither he nor his colleague can produce any such instance. Even in the latter end of the *sixteenth* century, (a large bound from 1460,) poetical comparisons, of the kind here alluded to, were *generally* expressed either thus—"Look how the crown that Ariadne wore, &c. So," &c. "Look how a comet at the first appearing, &c. So did the blazing of my blush," &c. "Look how the world's poor people are amazed, &c. So," &c.—Or thus: "Even as an empty eagle sharpe by fast, &c.—Even so," &c.—"Like as a taper burning in the darke, &c. So," &c.—Such is the general style of the latter end of the sixteenth century; though sometimes (but very rarely) the form that Chatterton has used was also employed by Spenser and others. In the preceding century, if I am not much mistaken, it was wholly unknown.

But I have perhaps dwelled too long on this point. Every poetical reader will find instances of modern phraseology in almost every page of these spurious productions. I will only add, before I quit the subject of style, that it is observable, that throughout these poems we never find a **noun in the plural number** joined with a verb in the singular; an offence against grammar which every ancient poet, from the time of Chaucer to that of Shakespeare, has frequently committed, and from which Rowley, if such a poet had existed, would certainly not have been exempted.

With respect to the stanza that Chatterton has employed in his two poems on the *Battle of Hastings*, Mr. Bryant and the Dean of Exeter seem to think that they stand on sure ground, and

14 confidently quote Gascoigne, to prove that such a stanza was known to our old English poets. "The greatest part of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (says the latter gentleman, p. 30), and his *Legend of Good Women*, are in the decasyllabick couplet; but *in general* Lidgate's, Occleve's, Rowley's, Spenser's, and a great part of Chaucer's poetry, is written in stanzas of seven, eight, or nine decasyllabick lines; to which Rowley generally adds a tenth, and closes it with an *Alexandrine*. All these may be ranked under the title of RITHME ROYAL; of which Gascoigne, in his INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENGLISH VERSE, has given the following description: "Rithme Royal is a verse of ten syllables, and seven such verses make a staffe, whereof the first and third do answer across in the terminations and rime; the second, fourth, and fifth, do likewise answer eche other in terminations; and the two last combine and shut up the sentence: this hath been called Rithme Royal, and surely it is a royal kind of verse, serving best for grave discourses." I leave it to the reverend Antiquarian to reconcile the contradictory assertions with which the passage I have now quoted sets out; and shall only observe, that we have here a great parade of authority, but nothing like a proof of the existence of such a stanza as Chatterton has used, in the time of K. Edward IV.; and at last the Commentator is obliged to have recourse to this flimzy kind of reasoning: "The different number of lines contained in the stanza makes no material alteration in the structure of this verse, the stanza always concluding with a couplet: in that of six lines, the four first rime alternately; in that of nine, wherein Spenser has composed his *Fairy Queen*, the sixth line rimes to the final couplet, and the seventh to the fifth: Rowley having added another line to the stanza, the eighth rimes with the sixth."—The upshot of the whole is, that Rowley himself, or rather Chatterton, is at last the only authority to show that such a stanza was employed at the time mentioned. And it is just with this kind of circular proof that we are amused, when any very singular fact is mentioned in Chatterton's verses: "This fact, say the learned Commentators, is also minutely described by Rowley in the *YELLOW ROLL*, which wonderfully confirms the authenticity of these poems;" i.e. one forgery of Chatterton in prose, wonderfully supports and authenticates another forgery of his in rhyme.—To prevent the Dean from giving himself any farther trouble in searching for authorities to prove that the stanza of the *Battle of Hastings* (consisting of two quatrains rhyming alternately, and a couplet,) was known to our early writers, I beg leave to inform him, that it was not used till near three centuries after the time of the supposed Rowley; having been, if I remember right, first employed by Prior, who considered it as an improvement on that of Spenser.

16 II. The second point that I proposed to consider is, the imitations of Pope's Homer, Shakspeare, Dryden, Rowe, &c. with which these pieces abound. And here the cautious conduct of Chatterton's new commentator is very remarkable. All the similies that poor Chatterton borrowed from Pope's or Chapman's Homer, to embellish his *Battle of Hastings*, are exhibited boldly; but then "they were all clearly copied from the original of the Grecian Bard," in whom we are taught, that Rowley was better read than any other man, during the preceding or subsequent century: but in the tragedy of *Ella*, and other pieces, where we in almost every page meet with lines and half-lines of Shakspeare, Dryden, &c. the reverend Antiquarian is less liberal of his illustrations. Indeed when the fraud is so manifest as not to be concealed, the passage is produced. Thus in *Ella* we meet

"My love is dead,
"Gone to her death-bed,
"All under the willow tree—"

and here we are told, "the burthen of this roundelay very much resembles that in *Hamlet*:"

"And will he not come again?
"And will he not come again?
"No, no, he is dead;
"Go to thy death-bed,
"He never will come again."

But when we meet—"Why thou art all that pointelle can bewreen"—evidently from Rowe—"Is she not more than painting can express?"—the editor is very prudently silent.

So also in the *Battle of Hastings* we find

"In agonies and pain he then did lie,
"While life and death strove for the mastery—"

clearly from Shakspeare:

"That Death and Nature do contend about them,
"Whether they live or die."

So also in *Ella*:

"Fen-vapours blast thy every manly power!"

taken from the same author:

"As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
"With raven's feather from unwholesome fen,
"Light on you both!" [*Tempest*.]
"Ye fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
"To fall and blast &c." [*King Lear*.]

Thus again in *Ella*:

"O thou, whate'er thy name, or Zabalus or Queede,
"Come steel my sable spright, for fremde and doleful deed—"

from the *Dunciad*:

"O thou, whatever title please thine ear,
"Dean, Drapier, &c."

But in all these, and twenty other places, not a word is said by the editor.—I am ashamed of taking up the time of my readers in discussing such points as these. Such plain and direct imitations as Chatterton's, could scarcely impose on a boy of fifteen at Westminster School.

18

In the *Battle of Hastings* we meet

"His noble soul came rushing from the wound—"

from Dryden's Virgil—

"And the disdainful soul came rushing through the wound—B*"

B* It is observable, that this is the last line of the translation of the Æneid.

and in Sir Charles Bawdin,

"And tears began to flow;" 1

Dryden's very words in *Alexander's Feast*. But it was hardly possible, says the learned Commentator, for these thoughts to be expressed in any other words. Indeed! I suppose five or six different modes of expressing the latter thought will occur to every reader.

Can it be believed, that every one of the lines I have now quoted, this gentleman maintains to have been written by a poet of the fifteenth century (for all that Chatterton ever did, according to his system, was supplying lacunæ, if there were any in the Mss., or modernizing a few antiquated phrases)? He argues indeed very rightly, that the *whole* of these poems must have been written by *one* person. "Two poets, (he observes, p. 81.) so distant in their æra [as Rowley and Chatterton], so different from each other in their age and disposition, could not have united their labours [he *means*, their labours could not unite or coalesce] in the same poem to any effect, without such apparent difference in their style, language, and sentiments, as would have defeated Chatterton's intent of imposing his works on the public, as the original and entire composition of Rowley."—Most readers, I suppose, will more readily agree with his premises than his conclusion. Every part of these poems was undoubtedly written by one person; but that person was not Rowley, but Chatterton.

19

D2

What reason have we to doubt, that he who imitated all the English poets with whom he was acquainted, likewise borrowed his Homerick images from the versions of Chapman and Pope; in the latter of which he found these allusions dressed out in all the splendid ornaments of the eighteenth century?

In the new commentary, indeed, on the *Battle of Hastings*, we are told again and again, that many of the similies which the poet has copied from Homer, contain circumstances that are found in the Greek, but omitted in Mr. Pope's translation. "Here therefore we have a certain proof that the authour of these poems could read Homer in the original C*." But the youngest gownsman at Oxford or Cambridge will inform the reverend critick, that this is a *non sequitur*; for the poet might have had the assistance of *other* translations, besides those of Pope; the English prose version from that of Madame Dacier, the translations by Chapman and by Hobbes. Nor yet will it follow from his having *occasionally* consulted *these* versions, that he was *not at all indebted to Pope*; as this gentleman endeavours to persuade us in p. 82. and 106. He availed himself, without doubt, of them all. Whenever the Commentator can show a single thought in these imitations of the Grecian Bard, that is found in the original, and not in *any* of those translations, I will readily acknowledge that *the Battle of Hastings*, and all the other pieces contained in his quarto volume, were written by Rowley, or Turgot, or Alfred the Great, or Merlin, or whatever other existent or non-existent ancient he or Mr. Bryant shall choose to ascribe them to. Most assuredly no such instance can be pointed out.

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21

C* To show how very weak and inconclusive the arguments of Chatterton's new Editor are on this head, I shall cite but one passage, from which the reader may form a judgment of all the other illustrations with which he has decorated the *Battle of Hastings*:

20

—"Siere de Broque an arrowe longe lett *flie*,
Intending Herewaldus to have sleyne;
It *miss'd*, but hytte Edardus on the eye,
And at his pole came out with horrid payne."

So Homer (says the Commentator):

—οἷστον ἀπὸ νευρῆφιιν ἰαλλεν
Ἐκτορος ἀντικρὺ, βαλέειν δὲ ἐΐετο θυμός·
καὶ τοῦ μέν ῥ' ἀφάμαρθ' ὁ δ' ἀμόμουνα Γοργυθίωνα
Υἶον ἐὼν Πριάμοιο, κατὰ στῆθος βάλεν ἰφ̄.

Il. Θ. v. 300.

"He said, and twang'd the string, the weapon *flies*
"At *Hector's* breast, and sings along the skies;
"He *miss'd* the mark, but pierc'd Gorgythio's heart."

POPE, B. viii. v. 365.

"The imitation here seems to be very apparent, but it is the imitation of Homer, and not of Pope; both Homer and Rowley express the intention of the archer, which is dropped by the translator of the Greek poet." Chatterton's *Poems*, quarto, p. 83. Edit. Milles.

To my apprehension, the intention of the archer is very clearly expressed in Pope's lines; but it is

unnecessary to contest that point, for lo! thus has old Chapman translated the same passage:

“This said, another arrow forth from his stiffe string he sent
“At Hector, *whom he long’d to wound*; but still amisse it went;
“His shaft smit faire Gorgythion.”

Of such reasoning is the new Commentary on Chatterton’s poems composed.

22

I do not however rest the matter here. What are we to conclude, if in Chatterton’s imitations of Homer, we discover some circumstances that exist in Pope’s translation, of which but very faint traces appear in the original Greek? Such, I believe, may be found. It is observable, that in all the similies we meet with many of the very rhymes that Pope has used. Will this Commentator contend, that the learned Rowley not only understood Homer, at a time when his contemporaries had scarcely heard of his name, but also foresaw in the reign of Edward IV. those additional graces with which Mr. Pope would embellish him three hundred years afterwards?

III. The Anachronisms come next under our consideration. Of these also the modern-antique compositions which we are now examining, afford a very plentiful supply; and not a little has been the labour of the reverend Commentator to do away their force. The first that I have happened to light upon is in the tragedy of *Ella*, p. 212:

“She said, as her white hands white hosen were knitting.
“What pleasure it is to be married!”

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It is certain that the art of knitting stockings was unknown in the time of king Edward IV., the era of the pretended Rowley. This difficulty, therefore, was by all means to be gotten over. And whom of all men, think you, courteous reader, this sagacious editor has chosen as an authority to ascertain the high antiquity of this practice? No other than our great poet Shakspeare; who was born in 1564, and died in 1616. Poor Shakspeare, who gave to all the countries in the world, and to all preceding eras, the customs of his own age and country, he is the authour that is chosen for this purpose! “If this Scotch art (says the Commentator) was so far advanced in a foreign country in the beginning of the sixteenth century, can there be a doubt of its being known in England half a century earlier? At least the art of knitting, and weaving bone-lace, was *more ancient* than queen Elizabeth’s time; for Shakspeare speaks of *old* and *antick* songs, which

“The spinsters and the *knitters* in the sun,
“And the free maids that *weave their thread with bone*,
“Did use to chaunt.”

Twelfth Night, Act II. Sc. 4.

[It might be sufficient](#) to observe, that the old songs which were chaunted by the spinsters and knitters of Shakspeare’s days, do not very clearly ascertain the antiquity of the *operation* on which they were employed; for I apprehend, though the art of knitting had not been invented till 1564, when the poet was born, the practisers of it might yet the very next day after it was known, sing ballads that were written a hundred years before.—In order, however, to give some colour to the forced inference that the commentator has endeavoured to extract from this passage, he has misquoted it; for Shakspeare does not say, as he has been represented, that the spinsters of old time *did* use to chaunt these songs: his words are,

“O fellow, come, the song we had last night;
“Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain:
“The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
“And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
“*Do* use to chaunt it.”

24

These lines, it must be acknowledged, prove that the art was *as old* as the time of Shakspeare, but not one hour *more ancient*; nor would they answer the Commentator’s purpose, even if they had been uttered by Portia in *Julius Cæsar*, by the Egyptian queen in *Antony and Cleopatra*, or by Nestor in *Troilus and Cressida*; for, as I have already observed, our great poet gave to all preceding times the customs of his own age.—If the learned editor should hereafter have occasion to prove, that *Dick* and *Hob* were common names at Rome, and that it was an usual practice of the populace there, two thousand years ago, to throw up their caps in the air, when they were merry, or wished to do honour to their leaders, I recommend the play of *Coriolanus* to his notice, where he will find proofs to this purpose, all equally satisfactory with that which he has produced from *Twelfth Night*, to show the antiquity of the art of knitting stockings in England.

25

Many of the poems and prose works attributed to Rowley, exhibit [anachronisms](#) similar to that now mentioned. Bristol is called a city, though it was not one till long after the death of king Edward IV. Cannyng is spoken of as possessing a *Cabinet* of coins and other curiosities ^{D*}, a century at least before any Englishman ever thought of forming such a collection. *Drawings*, in the modern and technical sense of delineations on paper or vellum, with chalks or Indian ink, are mentioned a hundred and fifty years before the word was ever used with that signification. *Manuscripts* are noticed as rarities, with the idea at present annexed to them; and eagerly sought after and purchased by Rowley, at a time when printed books were not known, and when all the literature of the times was to be found in manuscripts alone. All these anachronisms *decisively* prove the spuriousness of these compositions. Other anachronisms may be traced in the poems before us, but they are of less weight, being more properly poetical deviations from *costume*. However I will briefly mention them. Tilts and tournaments are mentioned at a period when they were unknown. *God and my Right* is the word used by duke William in *the Battle of Hastings*,

26

E

though it was first used by king Richard I. after the victory at Grizors; and hatchments and armorial bearings, which were first seen at the time of the Croisades, are introduced in other places with equal impropriety.

D* Chatterton in his description of Cannyng's love of the arts, &c. seems often to have had Mr. Walpole in his eye; which was very natural, that gentleman being probably the first person who was at once a man of literature and rank, of whose character he had any knowledge.—Thus, Mr. W. having a very curious collection of pictures, prints, &c. Cannyng too must be furnished with a cabinet of coins and other rarities; and there being a private printing-press at Strawberry-Hill, (the only one perhaps in England,) the Bristol Mayor must likewise have one. It is in one of his letters that has not yet been printed, that Chatterton mentions his having read an account in the Rowley Mss. of Cannyng's intention to set up a *printing-press* at Westbury! This merchant died in 1474; during the greater part of his life printing was unknown; and even at the time of his death there was but one printing-press in this kingdom, namely, that set up by Caxton, in the Almonry of Westminster Abbey, about the year 1471.

25

One of Chatterton's earliest fictions was an ode or short poem of two or three stanzas in *alternate rhyme*, on the death of that monarch, which he sent to Mr. Walpole, informing him at the same time, that it had been found at Bristol with many other ancient poems. This, however, either C. or his friends thought proper afterwards to suppress. It is not, I believe, generally known, that this is the era which was originally fixed upon by this wonderful youth for his forgeries, though afterwards, as appears from Mr. Walpole's pamphlet already mentioned, having been informed that no such metres as he exhibited as ancient, were known in the age of Richard I., he thought proper to shift the era of his productions. It is remarkable, that one line yet remains in these poems, evidently written on the first idea:

"Richard of lion's heart to fight *is* gone."

27 "It is very improbable, as the same gentleman observes, that Rowley, writing in the reign of Henry VI., or Edward IV., as is now pretended, or in that of Henry IV., as was assigned by the credulous, before they had digested their system, should incidentally, in a poem on another subject, say, *now* is Richard &c." Chatterton, having stored his mind with images and customs suited to the times he meant originally for the era of his fictitious ancient, introduced them as well as he could in subsequent compositions. One other singular circumstance, which I learn from the same very respectable authority, I cannot omit mentioning. Among the Mss. that Chatterton pretended to have discovered in the celebrated chest at Bristol was a painter's bill E*, of which, like the rest,

E2

he produced only a copy. Great was the triumph of his advocates. Here was an undoubted relick of antiquity! And so indeed it was; for it was faithfully copied from the first volume of the *Anecdotes of Painting*, printed some years before; and had been originally transcribed by Vertue from some old parchments in the church of St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol

E* This fraud having been detected, we hear no more of it; but in the room of it has been substituted *A List of skylde Payncters and Carvellers*, which is now said to have been found along with the other Mss. and to be in the possession of Mr. Barret, of Bristol.

28 (a person, by the by, who was indefatigable in the pursuit of every thing that related to our ancient poets, and who certainly at the same time would have discovered some traces of the pretended Rowley, if any of his poetry had been lodged in that repository). Can there be a doubt, that he who was convicted of having forged this paper, and owned that he wrote the first *Battle of Hastings*, and the *Account of the ceremonies observed at the opening of the Old Bridge*, was the authour of all the rest also? Were he charged in a court of justice with having forged various notes, and clear evidence given of the fact, corroborated by the additional testimony of his having on a former occasion fabricated a Will of a very ancient date, would a jury hesitate to find him guilty, because two purblind old women should be brought into court, and swear that the Will urged against him had such an ancient appearance, the hand-writing and language by which the bequests were made was so old, and the parchment so yellow, that they could not but believe it to be a genuine deed of a preceding century?—But I have insensibly wandered from the subject of Anachronisms. So much, however, has been already said by others on this point, that I will now hasten to the last matter which I meant to consider, *viz.* the Mss. themselves, which are said to have contained these wonderful curiosities.

29 IV. And on this head we are told by Mr. B. that the hand-writing, indeed, is not that of any particular age, but that it is very difficult to know precisely the era of a Ms., especially when of great antiquity; that our kings wrote very different hands, and many of them such, that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other; and that the diminutive size of the parchments on which these poems were written, (of which, I think, the largest that these Commentators talk of is eight inches and a half long, and four and a half broad F*,) was owing to the great scarcity of parchment in former times, on which account the lines often appear in continuation, without regard to the termination of the verse.

F* At the bottom of each sheet of old deeds (of which there were many in the Bristol chest) there is usually a blank space of about four or five inches in breadth. C. therefore found these slips of discoloured parchment at hand.

Most of these assertions are mere *gratis dicta*, without any foundation in truth. I am not very well acquainted with the ancient Mss. of the fourteenth or fifteenth century: but I have now before me a very fair Ms. of the latter end of the sixteenth century, in which the characters are as regular and uniform as possible. If twenty Mss. were produced to me, some of that era, and others of eras prior and subsequent to it, I would undertake to point out the hand-writing of the age of queen Elizabeth, which is that of the Ms. I speak of, from all the rest; and I make no doubt that persons who are conversant with the hand-writing of preceding centuries, could with equal precision ascertain the age of more ancient Mss. than any that I am possessed of. But the truth is, (as any one may see, who accurately examines

30 the *fac simile* exhibited originally by Mr. Tyrwhitt in his edition of these poems, and now again by the Dean of Exeter in the new edition of them,) that Chatterton could not, accurately and for any continuance, copy the hand-writing of the fifteenth century; nor do the Mss. that he produced exhibit the hand-writing of *any* century whatever. He had a turn for drawing and emblazoning; and he found, without doubt, some ancient deeds in his father's old chest. These he copied to the best of his power; but the hand-writing usually found in deeds is very different from the current hand-writing of the same age, and from that employed in transcribing poems. To copy even these deeds to any great extent, would have been dangerous, and have subjected him to detection. Hence it was, that he never produced any parchment so large as a leaf of common folio.—What we are told of the great scarcity of parchment formerly, is too ridiculous to be answered. Who has not seen the various beautiful Mss. of the works of Gower and Chaucer, in several publick and private libraries, on parchment and on vellum, a small part of any one of which would have been sufficient to contain all the poems of Rowley, in the manner in which they are pretended to have been written?—But any speculation on this point is but waste of time. If such a man as Rowley had existed, who could troul off whole verses of Shakspeare, Dryden, and Pope, in the middle of the fifteenth century, he would have had half the parchment in the kingdom at his command; statues would have been erected to him as the greatest prodigy that the world had ever seen; and in a few years afterwards, when printing came to be practised, the presses of Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde would have groaned with his productions.

31 Much stress is laid upon Chatterton's having been seen frequently writing, with old crumpled parchments before him. No doubt of the fact. How else could he have imitated old hands in *any* manner, or have been able to form even the few pretended originals that he did produce? But to whom did he ever show these old Mss. when he was transcribing them? To whom did he ever say —“Such and such characters denote such letters, and the verse that I now show you in this old parchment is of this import?” Whom did he call upon, knowing in ancient hands, (and such undoubtedly he might have found,) to establish, by the testimony of his own eyes, the antiquity, not of one, but of all these Mss? If an ingenuous youth (as Mr. W. justly observes), “enamoured of poetry, had really found a large quantity of old poems, what would he have done? Produced them cautiously, and one by one, studied them, and copied their style, and exhibited sometimes a genuine, and sometimes a fictitious piece? or blazed the discovery abroad, and called in every lover of poetry and antiquity to participation of the treasure? The characters of imposture are on every part of the story; and were it true, it would still remain one of those improbable wonders, which we have no reason for believing.”

32 What has been said already concerning forged compositions, cannot be too often repeated. If these Mss. or any part of them exist, why are they not deposited in the British Museum, or some publick library, for the examination of the curious? Till they are produced, we have a right to use the language that Voltaire tells us was used to the Abbé Nodot. “Show us your Ms. of Petronius, which you say was found at Belgrade, or consent that nobody shall believe you. It is as false that you have the genuine satire of Petronius in your hands, as it is false that that ancient satire was the work of a consul, and a picture of Nero's conduct. Desist from attempting to deceive the learned; you can only deceive the vulgar.”

Beside the marks of forgery already pointed out, these poems bear yet another badge of fraud, which has not, I believe, been noticed by any critick. Chatterton's verses have been shown to be too smooth and harmonious to be genuine compositions of antiquity: they are liable at the same time to the very opposite objection; they are too old for the era to which they are ascribed. This sounds like a paradox; yet it will be found to be true. The versification is too modern; the language often too ancient. It is not the language of any particular period of antiquity, but of *two entire* centuries.—This is easily accounted for. Chatterton had no other means of writing old language, but by applying to glossaries and dictionaries, and these comprise all the antiquated words of preceding times; many provincial words used perhaps by a northern poet, and entirely unknown to a southern inhabitant; many words also, used in a singular sense by our ancient bards, and perhaps by them only once. Chatterton drawing his stores from such a copious source, his verses must necessarily contain words of various and widely-distant periods. It is highly probable, for this reason, that many of his lines would not have been understood by one who lived in the fifteenth century.—That the diction of these poems is often too obsolete for the era to which they are allotted G*, appears clearly from hence; many of them are much more difficult to a reader of this day, without a glossary, than any one of the metrical compositions of the age of Edward IV. Let any person, who is not very profoundly skilled in the language of our elder poets, read a few pages of any of the poems of the age of that king, from whence I have already given short extracts, without any glossary or assistance whatsoever; he will doubtless meet sometimes with words he does not understand, but he will find much fewer difficulties of this kind, than while he is perusing the poems attributed to Rowley. The language of the latter, without a perpetual comment, would in most places be unintelligible to a common reader. He might, indeed, from the context, *guess* at something like the meaning; but the lines, I am confident, will be found, on examination, to contain twenty times more obsolete and obscure words than any one poem of the age of king Edward IV, now extant.

33 F
34 G* Mr. Bryant seems to have been aware of this objection, and thus endeavours to obviate it. “Indeed in some places the language seems more obsolete than could be expected for the time of king Edward the Fourth; and the reason is, that some of the poems, however new modelled, were prior to that æra. For *Rowley himself* [i.e. Chatterton] tells us that he borrowed from Turgot; and we have reason to think that *he* likewise copied from Chedder.” This same Chedder, he acquaints us in a note, was “a poet mentioned in *the* Mss., [that is, in Chatterton's Mss., for I believe his name is not to be found elsewhere.] who is supposed to have flourished about the year 1330. He is said [by Chatterton] to have had some *maumeries* at the *comitatus* the city.” *Observations*, p. 553. I wonder

the learned commentator did not likewise inform us, from the same *unquestionable authority*, what wight *Maistre* Chedder copied.

Before I conclude, I cannot omit to take notice of two or three particulars on which the Dean of Exeter and Mr. Bryant much rely. The former, in his Dissertation on *Ella*, says, "Whatever claim might have been made in favour of Chatterton as the author [of *the Battle of Hastings*], founded either on his own unsupported and improbable assertion, or on the supposed possibility of his writing these two poems, assisted by Mr. Pope's translation [of Homer], no plea of this kind can be urged with regard to any other poem in the collection, and least of all to the dramattick works, or the tragedy of *Ella*; which required not only an elevation of poetic genius far superior to that possessed by Chatterton, but also such moral and mental qualifications as never entered into any part of his character or conduct, and which could not possibly be acquired by a youth of his age and inexperience." "Where (we are triumphantly asked) could he learn the nice rules of the Interlude, by the introduction of a chorus, and the application of their songs to the moral and virtuous object of the performance?"—Where?—from Mr. Mason's *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, in which he found a perfect model of the Greek drama, and which doubtless he had read. But *ELLA* "inculcates the precepts of morality;" and Chatterton, it is urged, was idle and dissolute, and therefore could not have been the authour of it. Has then the reverend editor never heard of instances of the purest system of morality being powerfully enforced from the pulpit by those who in their own lives have not been always found to adhere rigidly to the rules that they laid down for the conduct of others? Perhaps not; but I suppose many instances of this kind will occur to every reader. The world would be pure indeed, if speculative and practical morality were one and the same thing. "That knowledge of times, of men, and manners," without which, it is said, *Ella* could not have been written, I find no difficulty in believing to have been possessed by this very extraordinary youth. Did he not, when he came to London, instead of being dazzled and confounded by the various new objects that surrounded him, become in a short time, by that almost intuitive faculty which accompanies genius, so well acquainted with all the reigning topicks of discourse, with the manners and different pursuits of various classes of men, with the state of parties, &c. as to pour out from the press a multitude of compositions on almost every subject that could exercise the pen of the oldest and most experienced writer^{H*}? He who could do this, could compose the tragedy of *ELLA* †: (a name, by the by, that he probably found in Dr. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, Vol. I. p. xxiv.)

H* The following notices, which Mr. Walpole has preserved, are too curious to be omitted. They will give the reader a full idea of the professed authorship of Chatterton. In a list of pieces written by him, but never published, are the following:

5. "TO LORD NORTH. A Letter signed the MODERATOR, and dated May 26, 1770, beginning thus: "My Lord—It gives me a painful pleasure, &c.—This (says Mr. W.) is an encomium on administration for rejecting the Lord Mayor Beckford's Remonstrance.

6. *A Letter to Lord Mayor Beckford*, signed PROBUS, dated May 26, 1770.—This is a violent abuse of Government for rejecting the Remonstrance, and begins thus: "When the endeavours of a spirited people to free themselves from an insupportable slavery" —. On the back of this essay, which is directed to Chatterton's friend, Cary, is this indorsement:

"Accepted by Bingley—set for and thrown out of *The North Briton*, 21 June, on account of the Lord Mayor's death.

Lost by his death on this Essay	1 11 6
Gained in Elegies	2 2 0
——— in Essays	3 3 0
Am glad he is dead by	3 13 6"

† Chatterton wrote also "a *Monks Tragedy*," which, if his forgeries had met with a more favourable reception than they did, he would doubtless have produced as an ancient composition. With the ardour of true genius, he wandered to the untrodden paths of the little Isle of Man for a subject, and aspired

*petere inde coronam,
Unde prius nulli velarint tempora Musæ.*

Almost every part of the Dissertation on this tragedy is as open to observation as that now mentioned. It is not true, as is asserted, (p. 175.) that the *rythmical tales*, before called *tragedies*, first assumed a regular dramattick form in the time of king Edward IV. These melancholy tales went under the name of tragedies for above a century afterwards. Many of the pieces of Drayton were called *tragedies* in the time of Queen Elizabeth, though he is not known to have ever written a single drama. But without staying to point out all the mistakes of the reverend critick on this subject, I recommend to those readers who wish to form a decided opinion on these poems, the same test for the tragedy of *Ella* that I have already suggested for the *Battle of Hastings*. If they are not furnished with any of our dramattick pieces in the original editions, let them only cast their eyes on those ancient interludes which take up the greater part of Mr. Hawkins's first volume of *The Origin of the English Drama* (the earliest of them composed in 1512); and I believe they will not hesitate to pronounce *Ella* a modern composition. The dramas which are yet extant (if they can deserve that name), composed between the years 1540 and 1570, are such wretched stuff, that nothing but antiquarian curiosity can endure to read a page of them. Yet the period I speak of is near a century after the era of the pretended Rowley.

The argument of Mr. B. on this subject is too curious to be omitted: "I am sensible (says he, in his *Observations*, p. 166,) that the plays mentioned above [the Chester Mysteries] seem to have been confined to religious subjects.—But though the monks of the times confined themselves to these subjects, it does not follow that people of more learning and genius were limited in the same manner. As plays certainly existed, the plan might sometimes be varied; and the transition from sacred history to profane, was very natural and easy. Many generous attempts may have been

made towards the improvement of the rude drama, and the introduction of compositions on a better model: but the ignorance of the monks, and the depraved taste of the times, may have prevented such writings being either countenanced or preserved. It may be said, that we have no examples of any compositions of this sort. But this is begging the question; *while we have the plays of Ælla and Godwin before us. The former is particularly transmitted to us as Rowley's K*.* I believe no reader will be at a loss to determine, who it is that in this case *begs the question*. Here we have another remarkable instance of that kind of circular proof of which I have already taken notice.

K* In the same manner argues the learned pewterer of Bristol, Mr. George Catcott. These poems are certainly genuine, "for Rowley himself mentions them in the YELLOW ROLL." See his letter in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. XLVIII. p. 348.

In the multitude of topicks agitated by these commentators, I had almost forgot one, much relied upon by the last-mentioned gentleman. It is the name of *Widdeville*, which, we are informed, (p. 317.) is written in all the old chronicles *Woodville*; and the question is triumphantly asked, "how could Chatterton, in his *Memoirs of Cannyngge*, [*Miscell.* p. 119.] vary from all these chronicles?—Where could he have found the name of *Widdeville* except in one of those manuscripts to which we are so much beholden?" If the learned commentator's book should arrive at a second edition, I recommend it to him to cancel this page (as well as a former, in which he appears not to have known that "*happy man be his dole!*" is a common expression in Shakspeare, and for his ignorance of which he is forced to make an awkward apology in his Appendix); and beg leave to inform him, that Chatterton found the name of *Widdeville* in a very modern, though now scarce, book, the *Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England*^{L*}, by Mr. Walpole, every one of whose works most assuredly Chatterton had read.

L* See the first volume of that entertaining work, p. 67; art. *Antony Widwille, Earl Rivers*.

The names of the combatants in *the Battle of Hastings*, an enumeration of which takes up one third of this commentator's work, and which, he tells us, are only to be found in Doomsday-book and other ancient records that Chatterton could not have seen, have been already shown by others to be almost all mentioned in Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, and the *Chronicles* of Holinshed and Stowe. And what difficulty is there in supposing that the names not mentioned in any printed work (if any such there are) were found in the old deeds that he undoubtedly examined, and which were more likely to furnish him with a catalogue of names than any other ancient muniment whatsoever? It is highly probable also, that in the same chest which contained these deeds, he found some old Diary of events relating to Bristol, written by a mayor or alderman of the fifteenth century, that furnished him with some account of Rowley and Cannyngge, and with those circumstances which the commentators say are only to traced in William de Wircester. The practice of keeping diaries was at that time very general, and continued to be much in use to the middle of the last century. This, it must be owned, is a mere hypothesis, but by no means an improbable one.

I cannot dismiss this gentleman without taking notice of a position which he has laid down, and is indeed the basis of almost all the arguments that he has urged to prove the authenticity of the Bristol Mss. It is this; that as every authour must know his own meaning, and as Chatterton has sometimes given wrong interpretations of words that are found in the poems attributed to Rowley, he could not be the authour of those poems.

If Chatterton had originally written these poems, in the form in which they now appear, this argument might in a doubtful question have some weight. But although I have as high an opinion of his abilities as perhaps any person whatsoever, and do indeed believe him to have been the greatest genius that England has produced since the days of Shakspeare, I am not ready to acknowledge that he was endued with any miraculous powers. Devoted as he was from his infancy to the study of antiquities, he could not have been so conversant with ancient language, or have had all the words necessary to be used so present to his mind, as to write antiquated poetry of any considerable length, off hand. He, without doubt, wrote his verses in plain English, and afterwards embroidered them with such old words as would suit the sense and metre. With these he furnished himself, sometimes probably from memory, and sometimes from glossaries; and annexed such interpretations as he found or made. When he could not readily find a word that would suit his metre, he invented one ^{M*}. If then his old words afford some sense, and yet are sometimes interpreted wrong, nothing more follows than that his glossaries were imperfect, or his knowledge inaccurate; (still however he might have had a confused, though not complete, idea of their import:) if, as the commentator asserts, the words that he has explained not only suit the places in which they stand, but are often more apposite than he imagined, and have a latent and significant meaning, that never occurred to him, this will only show, that a man's book is sometimes wiser than himself; a truth of which we have every day so many striking instances, that it was scarcely necessary for this learned antiquarian to have exhibited a new proof of it.

M* In Chatterton's poems many words occur, that were undoubtedly coined by him; as *mole, dolce, droke, glytted, aluste, &c.* All these his new editor has inserted in a very curious performance which he is pleased to call a Glossary, *with such interpretations at the context supplied*, without even attempting to support them either by analogy or the authority of our ancient writers.

Let it be considered too, that the glossary and the text were not always written at the same time; that Chatterton might not always remember the precise sense in which he had used antiquated words; and from a confused recollection, or from the want of the very same books that he had consulted while he was writing his poems, might add sometimes a false, and sometimes an imperfect, interpretation.—This is not a mere hypothesis; for in one instance we know that the comment was written at some interval of time after the text. "The glossary of the poem entitled

the English Metamorphosis (Mr. Tyrwhitt informs us) was written down by C. extemporally, without the assistance of any book, at the desire and in the presence of Mr. Barrett."

I have here given this objection all the force that it can claim, and more perhaps than it deserves; for I doubt much whether in Chatterton's whole volume six instances can be pointed out, where he has annexed false interpretations to words that appear when rightly understood to suit the context, and to convey a clear meaning: and these mistakes, if even there are so many as have been mentioned, are very easily accounted for from the causes now assigned.

Perhaps it may be urged, that when I talk of the manner in which these poems were composed, I am myself guilty of the fault with which I have charged others, that of assuming the very point in controversy; and the observation would be just, if there were not many collateral and decisive circumstances, by which Chatterton is clearly proved to have written them. All these concurring to show that he forged these pieces, an investigation of the *manner* in which he forged them, cannot by any fair reasoning be construed into an assumption of the question in dispute.

44 Great stress is also laid by this commentator on some variations being found in the copies of these poems that were produced by Chatterton at different times; or, to use his own words, "there is often a material variation between the copy and the original, which never could have happened if he had been the author of both N*. He must have known his own writing, and would not have deviated from his own purpose."—Thus in one copy of *the Song to Ella*, which C. gave to Mr. Barrett, these lines were found:

"Or seest the hatched steed,
"Ifrayning o'er the mead."

N* So that an authour cannot revise or correct his works without forfeiting his title!—According to this doctrine, Garth was the authour of only the *first* copy of *the Dispensary*, and all the subsequent editions published in his life-time, in every one of which there were material variations, must be attributed to some other hand.

45 Being called upon for the original, he the next day produced a parchment, containing the same poem, in which he had written *yprauncing*, instead of *ifrayning*; but by some artifice he had obscured the Ms. so much, to give it an ancient appearance, that Mr. B. could not make out the word without the use of galls.—What follows from all this, but that C. found on examination that there was no such word as *ifrayning*, and that he substituted another in its place? In the same poem he at one time wrote *locks—burlie—brasting—and kennest*; at another, *hairs—valiant—bursting—and hearest*. Variations of this kind he could have produced without end.—These commentators deceive themselves, and use a language that for a moment may deceive others, by talking of one reading being found in the *copy*, and another in the *original*, when in fact all the Mss. that C. produced were equally originals. What he called originals indeed, were probably in general more perfect than what he called copies; because the former were always produced after the other, and were in truth nothing more than second editions of the same pieces O*.

O* "*Bie*," which he wrote inadvertently in the tragedy of *ELLA*, instead of "*mie*," (on which Mr. B. has given us a learned dissertation)—"*Bie* thanks I ever onne you wylle bestowe"—is such a mistake as every man in the hurry of writing is subject to. *By* had probably occurred just before, or was to begin some subsequent line that he was then forming in his mind. Even the slow and laborious Mr. Capel, who was employed near forty years in preparing and printing an edition of Shakspeare, in a Catalogue which he presented to a publick library at Cambridge, and which he probably had revised for many months before he gave it out of his hands, has written "*Bloody Bloody*," as the title of one of Fletcher's Plays, instead of "*Bloody Brother*."

46 The inequality of the poems which Chatterton owned as his own compositions, when compared with those ascribed to Rowley, has been much insisted upon. But this matter has been greatly exaggerated. Some of the worst lines in Chatterton's *Miscellanies* have been selected by Mr. Bryant to prove the point contended for; but in fact they contain the same even and flowing versification as the others, and *in general* display the some premature abilities Pt.—The truth is, the readers of these pieces are deceived insensibly on this subject. While they are perusing the poems of the fictitious Rowley, they constantly compare them with the poetry of the fifteenth century; and are ready every moment to exclaim, how much he surpasses all his contemporaries.

47 While the verses that Chatterton acknowledged as his own, are passing under their eyes, they still recollect that they are the productions of a boy of seventeen; and are slow to allow them even that merit which they undoubtedly possess. "They are ingenious, but puerile; flowing, but not sufficiently correct."—The best way of convincing the antiquarian reader of the merit of these compositions, would be to disfigure them with old spelling; as perhaps the most complete confutation of the advocates for the authenticity of what are called Rowley's poems would be to exhibit an edition of them in modern orthography.—Let us only apply this very simple test,—"handy-dandy let them change places," and I believe it would puzzle even the President of the Society of Antiquaries himself to determine, "which is the justice, and which is the thief;" which is the pretended ancient, and which the acknowledged modern.

Pt The observations on this subject, of the ingenious authour of the accurate account of Chatterton, in a book entitled *Love and Madness*, are too pertinent to be here omitted. "It may be asked why Chatterton's own *Miscellanies* are inferior to Rowley? Let me ask another question: *Are they inferior?* Genius, abilities, we may bring into the world with us; these rare ingredients may be mixed up in our compositions by the hand of Nature. But Nature herself cannot create a human being possessed of a complete knowledge of our world almost the moment he is born into it. Is the knowledge of the world which his *Miscellanies* contain, no proof of his astonishing quickness in seizing every thing he chose? Is it remembered when, and at what age, Chatterton for the first time quitted Bristol, and how few weeks he lived afterwards? Chatterton's Letters and *Miscellanies*, and every thing which the warmest advocate for Rowley will not deny to have been Chatterton's, exhibit an insight into men, manners, and things, for the want of which, in their writings, authors who have died old men, with more opportunities to know the world, (who could have less than Chatterton?) have been thought to make amends by other merits."—"In London (as the same writer observes)

was to be learned that which even genius cannot teach, the knowledge of life. Extemporaneous bread was to be earned more suddenly than even Chatterton could write poems for Rowley; and, in consequence of his employments, as he tells his mother, publick places were to be visited, and mankind to be frequented."—Hence, after "he left Bristol, we see but one more of Rowley's poems, *The Ballad of Charitie*, and that a very short one."

Of this double transformation I subjoin a short specimen; which is not selected on account of any extraordinary spirit in the lines that precede, or uncommon harmony in those that follow, but chosen (agreeably to the rule that has been observed in all the former quotations) merely because the *African Eclogue* happens to be the *first* poetical piece inserted in Chatterton's acknowledged *Miscellanies*.

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I. CHATTERTON *in Masquerade*.

NARVA AND MORED: AN AFRICAN ECLOGUE.

[From Chatterton's *Miscellanies*, p. 56.]

"Recyte the loves of Narva and Mored,
"The preeste of Chalmas trypell ydolle sayde.
"Hie fro the grounde the youthful heretogs^a sprunge,
"Loude on the concave shelle the launces runge:
"In al the mysterke^b maizes of the daunce
"The youths of Bannies brennyng^c sandes advaunce;
"Whiles the mole^d vyrgin brokkyng^e lookes behinde,
"And rydes uponne the penyons of the winde;
"Astighes^f the mountaines borne^g, and measures rounde
"The steepie cliffes of Chalmas hallie^h grounde."

^a *Warriors*.

^b *mystick*. ^c *burning*.

^d used by Chatterton for
soft or tender. ^e *panting*.

^f *ascends*. ^g *brow*, or
summit. ^h *holy*.

II. CHATTERTON *Unmasked*.

ECLOGUE THE FIRST.

[From Rowley's Poems, quarto, p. 391.]

"When England smoking from her deadly wound,
"From her gall'd neck did twitch the chain away,
"Seeing her lawful sons fall all around,
"(Mighty they fell, 'twas Honour led the fray,)
"Then in a dale, by eve's dark surcoat gray,
"Two lonely shepherds did abruptly fly,
"(The rustling leaf does their white hearts affray,)
"And with the owlet trembled and did cry:
"First Robert Neatherd his sore bosom struck,
"Then fell upon the ground, and thus he spoke."

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H

If however, after all, a little inferiority should be found in Chatterton's acknowledged productions, it may be easily accounted for. Enjoin a young poet to write verses on any subject, and after he has finished his exercise, show him how Shakspeare, Dryden, and Pope, have treated the same subject. Let him then write a second copy of verses, still on the same theme. This latter will probably be a *Cento* from the works of the authours that he has just perused. The one will have the merit of originality; the other a finer polish and more glowing imagery. This is exactly Chatterton's case. The verses that he wrote for Rowley are *perhaps* better than his others, because they contain the thoughts of our best poets often in their own words. The versification is equally good in both. Let it be remembered too, that the former were composed at his leisure in a period of near a year and a half; the latter in about four months, and many of them to gain bread for the day that was passing over him.

After his arrival in *London*, if his forgeries had met with any success, he would undoubtedly have produced ancient poetry without end; but perceiving that the gentleman in whom he expected to find at once a dupe and a patron, was too clear-sighted to be deceived by such evident fictions, and that he could earn a livelihood by his talents, without fabricating old Mss. in order to gain a few shillings from Mess. Barrett and Catcott, he deserted his original plan, and we hear little more of Rowley's verses.

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With regard to the time in which the poems attributed to this priest were produced, which it is urged was much too short for Chatterton to have been the inventor of them, it is indeed astonishing that this youth should have been able to compose, in about eighteen months, three thousand seven hundred verses, on various subjects; but it would have been still more astonishing, if he had transcribed in that time the same number of lines, written on parchment, in a very ancient hand, in the close and indistinct manner, in which these poems are pretended to have been written, and defaced and obliterated in many places ^{Q*}:—unless he had been endued with the faculty of a celebrated solicitor, who being desired a few years ago in the House of Lords to read an old deed, excused himself by saying

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^{Q*} Let those who may be surprised at this assertion, recollect the wonderful inventive faculties of Chatterton, and the various

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that it was *illegible*, informing their lordships at the same time that he would make out a fair *copy* of it against the next day. Chatterton, I believe, understood better how to make fair copies of illegible parchments, than to read any ancient manuscript whatsoever.

It is *amusing* enough to observe the miserable shifts to which his new editor is forced to have recourse, when he is obliged to run full tilt against matters of fact.—Thus Chatterton, we find, owned that he was the authour of the first *Battle of Hastings*; but we are not to believe his declaration, says Mr. Thistlethwaite, whose doctrine on this subject the reverend commentator has adopted. “Chatterton thought himself not sufficiently rewarded by his Bristol patrons, in proportion to what his communications deserved.” He pretended, therefore, “on Mr. Barrett’s repeated solicitations for the original [*of the Battle of Hastings*], that he himself wrote that poem for a friend; thinking, *perhaps*, that if he parted with the original poem, he might not be properly rewarded for the loss of it, ^{R*}—As if there was no other way for him to avoid being deprived of a valuable ancient Ms. but by saying that it was a forgery, and that he wrote it himself!—What, however, did he do immediately afterwards? No doubt, he avoided getting into the same difficulty a second time, and subjecting himself again to the same importunity from his ungenerous Bristol patrons, by showing them no more of these rarities? Nothing less. The very same day that he acknowledged this forgery, he informed Mr. Barrett that he had another poem, the copy of an original by Rowley; and at a *considerable interval of time* (which indeed was requisite for writing his new piece) he produced *another* BATTLE OF HASTINGS, much longer than the former; a fair copy from an undoubted original.—He was again, without doubt, pressed by Mr. B. to show the original Ms. of this also; and, according to Mr. Thistlethwaite’s system, he ought again to have asserted that *this* poem likewise was a forgery; and so afterwards of every copy that he produced.—Can any person that considers this transaction for a moment entertain a doubt that all these poems were his own invention?

^{R*} Chatterton’s Poems, quarto, edit. Milles, p. 458.

It was not without good reason that the editor was solicitous to disprove Chatterton’s frank confession, respecting this poem; for he perceived clearly that the style, the colouring, and images, are nearly the same in this, and the second poem with the same title, and that every reader of any discernment must see at the first glance, that he who wrote the first *Battle of Hastings* was the authour of all the other poems ascribed to Rowley.—It is observable that Chatterton in *the Battle of Hastings*, N^o 2, frequently imitates himself, or repeats the same images a second time. Thus in the first poem with this title we meet

—“he dying gryp’d the recer’s limbe;
The recer then beganne to flynge and kicke,
And toste the erlie farr off to the grounde:
The erlie’s squier then a swerde did sticke
Into his harte, a dedlie ghastlie wounde;
And downe he felle upon the crymson pleine,
Upon Chatillion’s soulless corse of claie.”

In the second *Battle of Hastings* are these lines:

“But as he drewe his bowe devoid of arte,
“So it came down upon Troyvillain’s horse;
“Deep thro hys hatchments wente the pointed floe;
“Now here, now there, with rage bleedinge he rounde doth goe.
“Nor does he hede his mastres known commands,
“Tyll, growen furiose by his bloudie wounde,
“Erect upon his hynder feete he staundes,
“And throwes hys mastre far off to the grounde.”

Can any one for a moment doubt that these verses were all written by the same person?—The circumstance of the wounded horse’s falling on his rider, in the *first* of these similies, is taken directly from Dryden’s Virgil, *Æn.* X. v. 1283.—Chatterton’s new editor has artfully contrasted this passage of Dryden with the *second* simile, where that circumstance is *not* mentioned.

Again:—We have the positive testimony of Mr. John Ruddall, a native and inhabitant of Bristol, who was well acquainted with Chatterton, when he was a clerk to Mr. Lambert, that *the Account of the ceremonies observed at the opening of the Old Bridge*, published in Farley’s Journal, Oct. 1. 1768, and said to be *taken from an ancient Ms.*, was a forgery of Chatterton’s, and acknowledged by him to be such. Mr. Ruddall’s account of this transaction is so material, that I will transcribe it from the Dean of Exeter’s new work, which perhaps many of my readers may not have seen:—“During that time, [while C. was clerk to Mr. L.] Chatterton frequently called upon him at his master’s house, and soon after he had printed the account of the bridge in the Bristol paper, told Mr. Ruddall, that he was the author of it; but *it occurring to him afterwards*, that he might be called upon to produce the original, he brought to him one day a piece of parchment about the size of a half-sheet of fool’s-cap paper: Mr. Ruddall does not think that any thing was written on it when produced by Chatterton, but he saw him write several words, if not lines, in a character which Mr. Ruddall did not understand, which he says was totally unlike English, and as he apprehends was meant by Chatterton to imitate or represent the original from which this account was printed. He cannot determine precisely how much Chatterton wrote in this manner, but says, that the time he spent in that visit did not exceed three quarters of an hour: the size of the parchment, however, (even supposing it to have been filled with writing) will in some measure ascertain the quantity which it contained. He says also, that when Chatterton had written on the parchment, he held it over the candle, to give it the appearance of antiquity,

compositions, both in prose and verse, which he produced after his arrival in London, in the short space of four months; not to mention the numerous pieces, which he is known to have written in the same period, and which have not yet been collected—Let them likewise examine any one of the defaced Mss. of the fifteenth century, in the Cotton Library, and see in what time they can transcribe a dozen lines from it.

which changed the colour of the ink, and made the parchment appear black and a little contracted S*."

S* See the new edition of Chatterton's poems, quarto, p. 436, 437.

Such is the account of one of Chatterton's intimate friends.

And how is this decisive proof of his abilities to imitate ancient English handwriting, and his exercise of those abilities, evaded? Why truly, we are told, "the *contraction of the parchment* is no discriminating mark of antiquity; the *blackness* given by smoke appears upon trial to be very different from the *yellow tinge* which parchment acquires by age; and *the ink does not change its colour*, as Mr. Ruddall seems to apprehend." So, because these arts are not always *completely successful*, and would not deceive a very skilful antiquary, we are to conclude, that Chatterton did not forge a paper which he acknowledged to have forged, and did not in the presence of Mr. Ruddall cover a piece of parchment with ancient characters for the purpose of imposition, though the fact is clearly ascertained by the testimony of that gentleman!—The reverend commentator argues on this occasion much in the same manner, as a well-known versifier of the present century, the facetious Ned Ward (and he too published a quarto volume of poems). Some biographer, in an account of the lives of the English poets, had said that "he was an ingenious writer, considering his low birth and mode of life, he having for some time kept a publick house in the City." "Never was a greater or more impudent calumny (replied the provoked rhymer); it is very well known to every body, that my publick house is not in the City, but in *Moorfields*."—In the name of common sense, of what consequence is it, whether in fact *all* ancient parchments are *shrivelled*; whether smoke will give ink a *yellow* appearance or not. It is sufficient, that Chatterton *thought* this was the case; that he made the *attempt* in the presence of a credible witness, to whom he *acknowledged* the purpose for which the manœuvre was done. We are asked indeed, why he did not prepare his pretended original before he published the copy. To this another question is the best answer. Why is not fraud always uniform and consistent, and armed at all points? Happily for mankind it scarcely ever is. Perhaps (as Mr. Ruddall's account seems to state the matter) he did not think at first that he should be called upon for the original: perhaps he was limited in a point of time, and could not fabricate it by the day that the new bridge was opened at Bristol.—But there is no end of such speculations. Facts are clear and incontrovertible. Whatever might have been the cause of his delay, it is not denied that he acknowledged this forgery to his friend Mr. Ruddall; conjuring him at the same time not to reveal the secret imparted to him. If this had been a mere frolick, what need of this earnest injunction of secrecy?—His friend scrupulously kept his word till the year 1779, when, as the Dean of Exeter informs us, "on the prospect of procuring a gratuity of ten pounds for Chatterton's mother, from a gentleman who sought for information concerning her son's history, he thought so material a benefit to the family would fully justify him for divulging a secret, by which no person living could be a sufferer."

I will not stay to take notice of the impotent attempts that Chatterton's new commentators have made to overturn the very satisfactory and conclusive reasoning of Mr. Tyrwhitt's Appendix to the former edition of the fictitious Rowley's Poems. That most learned and judicious critick wants not the assistance of my feeble pen: *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis*— If he should come into the field himself (as I hope he will), he will soon silence the Anglo-Saxon batteries of his opponents.

The principal arguments that have been urged in support of the antiquity of the poems attributed to Rowley, have now, if I mistake not, been fairly stated and examined T*. On a review of the whole, I trust the reader will agree with me in opinion, that there is not the smallest reason for believing a single line of them to have been written by any other person than Thomas Chatterton; and that, instead of the towering motto which has been affixed to the new and splendid edition of the works of that most ingenious youth—*Renascentur quæ jam cecidere*—the words of Claudian would have been more "germane to the matter:"

———*tolluntur in altum,*
Ut lapsu graviore ruant.

Having, I fear, trespassed too long on the patience of my readers, in the discussion of a question that to many may appear of no great importance, I will only add the following serious and well-intended proposal. I do humbly recommend, that a committee of the friends of the reverend antiquarian, Dr. Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter, and the learned mythologist, Jacob Bryant, Esq., may immediately meet;—that they may, as soon as possible, convey the said Dr. M. and Mr. B. together with Mr. George Catcott, pewterer, and Mr. William Barrett, surgeon, of Bristol, and Dr. Glynn of Cambridge, to the room over the north porch of Redcliffe church, and that on the door of the said room six padlocks may be fixed:—that in order to wean these gentlemen by degrees from the delusion under which they labour, and to furnish them with some amusement, they may be supplied with proper instruments to measure the length, breadth, and depth, of the empty chests now in the said room, and thereby to ascertain how many thousand diminutive pieces of parchment, all eight inches and a half by four and a half, might have been contained in those chests; [according to my calculation, 1,464,578;—but I cannot pretend to be exact:] that for the sustenance of these gentlemen, a large peck loaf may be placed in a *maund* basket in the said room, having been previously prepared and left in a damp place, so as to become mouldy, and the words and figures *Thomas Flour, Bristol, 1769*,

T* I take this opportunity of acknowledging an error into which I have fallen in a former page (13), where it is said, that no instances are found in these poems of a noun in the plural number being joined to a verb in the singular. On a more careful examination I observe that C. was aware of this mark of antiquity, and that his works exhibit a few examples of this disregard to grammar. He has however sprinkled them too sparingly. Had these poems been written in the fifteenth century, Priscian's head would have been broken in almost every page, and I should not have searched for these grammatical inaccuracies in vain.

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being first impressed in common letters on the upper crust of the said loaf, and on the under side thereof, in Gothick Characters, *Thomas Wheateley*, 1464 (which Thomas Wheateley Mr. Barrett, if he carefully examines Rowley's PURPLE ROLL ^{V*}, will find was an *aucnyent* baker, and "*did use to bake daiely for Maister Canynge twelve manchettes of chete breade, and foure douzenne of marchpanes;*" and which custom of impressing the names of bakers upon bread, I can prove to be as ancient as the time of king Edward IV., from Doomsday-book, William de Wircestre, Shakspeare, and other good antiquarians, as also from the Green and Yellow Rolls, now in Mr. B's custody) ^{X†}:—that a proper quantity of water may be conveyed into the forementioned room in one of Mr. Catcott's deepest and most ancient pewter plates, together with an ewer of Wedgwood's ware, made after the oldest and most uncouth pattern that has yet been discovered at Herculaneum;—that Dr. Glynn, if he shall be thought to be sufficiently composed (of which great doubts are entertained), be appointed to cut a certain portion of the said bread for the daily food of these gentlemen and himself; and that, in order to sooth in some measure their unhappy fancies, he may be requested, in cutting the said loaf, to use the valuable knife of Mr. Shiercliffe (now in the custody of the said Dr. G), the history ^{Y‡} of which has so much illustrated, and so clearly evinced the antiquity of the poems attributed to Thomas Rowley. And if in a fortnight after these gentlemen have been so confined, they shall be found to be entirely re-established in their health, and perfectly composed, I recommend that the six locks may be struck off, and that they all may be suffered to return again to their usual employments.

^{V*} ROWLEY'S *Purple Roll*, Mr. Bryant very gravely tells us, it yet extant in manuscript in his *own hand-writing*. "It is (he adds) in *two parts*; *one* of the said parts written by Thomas Rowley, and *the other* by Thomas Chatterton."

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^{X†} A learned friend, who, by the favour of Mr. Barrett, has perused the YELLOW ROLL, informs me, that Rowley, in a treatise dated 1451, and addressed "to the dygne Maister Canynge," with the quaint title, DE RE FRUMENTARIA, (chap. XIII. *Concernynge Horse-hoeing Husbandrie, and the Dryll-Ploughe*) has this remarkable passage: "Me thynketh ytt were a prettie devyce yffe this practyce of oure bakerres were extended further. I mervaille moche, our *scriveynes* and *amanuenses* doe not gette lytel letters cutt in wood, or caste in yron, and thanne followynge by the eye, or with a fescue, everyche letter of the boke thei meane to copie, fix the sayde wooden or yron letters meetelie disposed in a frame or chase; thanne daube the frame over with somme atramentous stuffe, and layinge a thynne piece of moistened parchment or paper on these letters, presse it doune with somme smoothe stone or other heavie weight: by the whiche goodlye devyce a manie hundreth copies of eche boke might be wroughte off in a few daies, insteade of employing the even and hondes of poore clerkes for several monthes with greate attentyon and travaile." [Introduction, Note 19.](#)

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This great man, we have already seen, had an idea of many of the useful arts of life some years before they were practised. Here he appears to have had a confused notion of that noble invention, the printing-press. To prevent misconstruction, I should add, that *boke* in the above passage means *manuscript*, no other books being then known; In other parts of his works, *as represented by Chatterton*, he speaks of Mss. as contradistinguished from books; but in all those places it is reasonable to suppose some interpolation by Chatterton, and *those who choose it*, may read *book* instead of *manuscript*; by which this trivial objection to the authenticity of these pieces will be removed, and these otherwise discordant passages rendered perfectly uniform and consistent.

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This valuable relic shows with how little reason the late Mr. Tull claimed the merit of inventing that useful instrument of husbandry, the drill-plough.

I make no apology for anticipating Mr. Barret on this subject; as in fact these short extracts will only make the publick still more desirous to see his long-expected *History of Bristol*, which I am happy to hear is in great forwardness, and will, I am told, contain a full account of the YELLOW ROLL, and an exact inventory of *Maistre William Cannynges* Cabinet of coins, medals, and drawings, (among the latter of which are enumerated many, highly finished, by Apelles, Raphael, Rowley, Rembrant, and Vandyck) together with several other matters equally curious.—It is hoped that this gentleman will gratify the publick with an accurate engraving from a drawing by Rowley, representing the ancient Castle of Bristol, together with the square tower ycleped the DONGEON, which cannot fail to afford great satisfaction to the purchasers of his book, as it will exhibit a species of architecture hitherto unknown in this country; this tower (as we learn from unquestionable authority, that of the Dean of Exeter himself,) "*being remarkably decorated [on paper] with images, ornaments, tracery work, and crosses within circles, in a style not usually seen in these buildings.*"—Chatterton, *as soon as ever he heard that Mr. Barrett was engaged in writing a History of Bristol*, very obligingly searched among the Rowley papers, and a few days afterwards furnished him with a neat *copy* of this ancient drawing.

^{Y‡} This very curious and interesting history may be found in Mr. Bryant's *Observations*, &c. p. 512. The learned commentator seems to have had the great father of poetry in his eye, who is equally minute in his account of the sceptre of Achilles. See *Il. A. v.* 234. He cannot, however, on this account be justly charged with plagiarism; these co-incidences frequently happening. Thus Rowley in the 15th century, and Dryden in the 17th, having each occasion to say that a man wept, use the same four identical words—"Tears began to flow."

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**“ And the disdainful foul came rushing through the
wound—*”**

and in Sir Charles Bawdin,

**“ And tears began to flow ;” Dryden's very
words in *Alexander's Feast*. But it was hardly pos-**

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