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Whyte, Samuel

MISCELLANEA NOVA;

CONTAINING,

AMIDST A VARIETY OF OTHER MATTERS
CURIOUS AND INTERESTING,

REMARKS ON BOSWELL'S JOHNSON;

WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS;

AND SOME NEW ANECDOTES OF THAT EXTRAORDINARY
CHARACTER:

A CRITIQUE ON BÜRGER'S LEONORA;

IN WHICH SHE IS CLEARLY PROVED OF ENGLISH
EXTRACTION;

AND AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

ON THE

ART OF READING AND SPEAKING IN PUBLIC,

IN TWO PARTS.

BY S. ^{associat}WHYTE, AND HIS SON, E.-A. WHYTE.

D U B L I N:

Printed by Robert Barchbank,

FOR THE EDITOR,

EDWARD-ATHENRY WHYTE, NO. 75, GRAFTON-STREET;

OF WHOM IT MAY BE HAD, AND OF THE BOOKSELLERS.

1801.



ON THE ORIGIN OF
BÜRGER'S LEONORA,

FROM THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

1799.

The (two) following Letters were addressed to the Editor of a literary journal in London, with whose plan it is inconsistent to insert articles of correspondence: from him they were banded to us for publication. Our desire to oblige the foreign author has prompted us to admit them: yet we consider it as a mere question of curiosity, whether Bürger's Ballad is in any degree a refaccimento: his merit is not diminished by the pre-existence of the story. In the second volume of Poems by Robert Southey, p. 145, may be found an extract from Matthew of Westminster, relating a tale also occurring in Olaus Magnus and in the Nuremberg Chronicle, the catastrophe of which bears an obvious resemblance to the story of Lenore. This incident perhaps has been used by some Minnesinger, and has contributed its sparkles to kindle the imagination of Bürger.

MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR,

ON a short excursion to the Lower Rhine, I happened to stop for dinner at the post-house of *Glandorf*, a small place in the bishoprick of *Osnabruck*.—Besides my fellow-traveller, a gentleman of *Valenciennes*, there was no other company but a young chanoinesse of the abbey of *Essen*, who was going on a visit to her noble parents in the neighbourhood of *Osnabruck*.—Dinner was served, and the post-master, a Mr. *Cordes*,

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joined

joined us, to do the honours of the table rather than to partake of the fare. My Frenchman had soon engaged in a conversation with the lady; and, *tandis qu'il pouvoit su fortune*, I boarded the post-master, in whom I was agreeably surpris'd to meet with a man of learning, astonishingly well versed both in English and German literature. He seem'd pleas'd to hear that the latter had become more than ever familiar to the English reader. I mention'd sundry good translations to him, and when I happen'd to speak of the late elegant edition of *Bürger's Leonora*, he could not refrain from saying, "I wish they had honoured the work with a less fine edition, and not accus'd the author of plagiarism." These words occasion'd a more minute enquiry. He insist'd upon the fable being of Saxon origin, and offer'd to produce an old man, an inhabitant of the place, who would repeat nearly the whole poem in Low Dutch; adding that this man frequently heard it recited in his youth, by people still older than himself, from whom he had learned it. My time would not permit me to stop for the man; but having told Mr. Cordes that I meant to come back by the same road, he had the goodness to promise me his opinion in writing concerning the origin of the fable; which, in fact, I found in readiness when I arriv'd a second time at Glandorf, and herewith I send you a translation of it. You will as a patron of German literature find means of giving it publicity, and thereby remove the error into which the admirers of that truly beautiful Ballad have been led concerning its origin.

Your's, &c.

Hamburg, April 9, 1799.

C. L.

AGREEABLY

AGREEABLY to your kind request I communicate to you with pleasure, in writing all I know, and what I already have told you by word of mouth, concerning Bürger's Leonora, considered as a *popular tale in lower Saxony*. I do so with the greatest satisfaction, as it confirms Bürger's own assertion: that an old Low-Dutch ballad furnished him with the idea of that piece, which assertion you will see stated in the German Mercury—(*der Deutsche Mercur*, sect. 2. and in sect. 4. of Mr. Schlegel) in contradiction to some English antiquarians, who say, that Bürger took his Leonora from a collection of old Ballads, published in London, in three volumes, in 1723, and in which the matter of that Poem is contained in a story, entitled: *The Suffolk Miracle, or a Relation of a young Man, who a Month after his death appeared to his Sweetheart*.

I have often heard the tale repeated by sundry persons of this place; and among others by a man of the age of 75 years. A still greater proof of its being a popular tale of Low Saxon origin, is its being so universally known in those parts; and I heard it several times recited almost in the same manner by my step-mother, who is 71 years old, lives in a place called Rheine, at five German miles distance from hence, in the bishopric of Munster, and assured me, that in her youth she heard it often related by several people. The story runs as follows:

The lover enlists in the army, is killed, appears by night, gently rapping at the door of his sweetheart. She asks, Who's there? "*Dien leef is dar*," is his answer. She opens the door, gets behind him on his horse; they gallop away in the swiftest course. Then the swain says these identical words:

"*De mond, de schint so belle,*

De doden riet so schnelle.

Fiens Leevenken gruvolt di ok?"

"*Wat scholl mi gruweln, du bist ja by mi."*

She

She replies. After they have been galloping for a good while, he makes up to a church-yard—The graves open; horse and rider are swallowed up, and the woman is left behind in darkness and gloom. . . . “*Sapperment! en siboll ebn wual gruocln!*” will the old man add in his peculiar humour.

You see that the progress of the fable is the same as in Bürger's *Leonora*; and this very similarity, nay this wordly familiarity, has with some raised a doubt about Bürger's affection to Schlegel, viz. that he had taken merely a few hints from an old Saxon ballad.

Yet—that I may not injure our poet's known veracity and candour; I must say, that it appears pretty natural to me, that, on hearing the old story related, Bürger immediately conceived the idea of his *Leonora*; and that afterwards, perhaps, after the lapse of many years, he could not himself, distinctly recollect, and, in his statement to his friend, separate from his own fictions what originally belonged to the old tale. Whoever has made it his study to examine similar productions, either taken from or built upon popular sayings, will most certainly be of my opinion in this particular.

If even the whole ground-work of the poem were not of Bürger's own invention, it can however not be denied, that it has considerably gained under his hands: *Leonora's* frantic anguish when she does not meet her lover among the returning warriors—the language of comfort of her mother—her contempt of the sacrament, and her incredulity in its virtues, which motives the apparition—are not to be met in the oral tradition.

It appears, that the tale originally passed from mouth to mouth in rhyme and verse, till in progress of time it entirely lost that form.

The explanation of the resemblance of our Tale with the *Suffolk Miracle* I must leave to you. Perhaps it is so old that the Saxons carried it over to England. For my part, I am fully

fully satisfied that Bürger did not take his Poem from any English ballad, but from an old Low-Dutch tale; the more so, as Mr. Schlegel assures us, that Bürger in the study of the old English ballads confined himself almost exclusively to *Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.

Glandorf.

Your's, &c.

J. FRANCIS CORDES.

TO

THE EDITOR OF

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM.

SIR,

IN your Magazine or Register for September last, I observe a Letter, dated Hamburg, April 9th, 1799, and, connected with it, another as from Glandorf, of posterior date, on the Origin of Bürger's Leonora; a subject which had engaged my Father's attention soon after the splendid edition of that Poem made its appearance; and early in the year 1798, his Remarks were committed to press.* The pages containing those Remarks, together with other articles of information, which I find you have elsewhere adopted and converted to use, were upon a general principle, or I misconceived you, with no uncandid or inimical intention, transmitted to your address, some months previous to the publication in question; but, as might easily be perceived on the face of them, they were by no means the whole of the work. As far as they go, they are in themselves for so much complete; but though in the hands
of

* See page 161, passim.

of several select friends in London, Edinburgh, Bath and Liverpool, as well as in Dublin, they have never been offered to the public eye; nor has the work, though in such a state of forwardness, even yet been advertized, owing to an accident, by which a considerable portion of the impression was rendered useless, and certain delays on the part of the Printer, which could not conveniently be obviated. The writer of those Letters, upon which I am about to hazard a few remarks, has, however, with peculiar address, fastened upon my Father's idea, and dexterously contrived a kind of indirect answer to his animadversions, as it were by anticipation; for his critique, in various places, manifestly alluded to, is carefully kept out of sight. This to me, I must confess, carries with it something of unfairness; being by obvious implication an encroachment upon private property, at the same time subjecting you to the imputation of a breach of confidence; public curiosity is in a great degree by that means forestalled, and if profit were the object, that object, so far as the influence of your instructive publication extends, must be ultimately defeated.

Two widely different opinions are started, respecting the matter in contest. To one of them only you have condescended to give publicity, while, contrary to the declared purpose of the British Register, all notice of the other seems studiously suppressed; yet surely if the subject itself was of sufficient importance to merit such distinction, the parties should have at least equal opportunity of speaking for themselves; or if partiality attached to either, in point of nationality as well as priority, the argument in favour of domestic pretensions might have claimed the preference. The opposition, it should seem, is a partnership affair; but on an attentive review of the context, the natural construction is, that the writer of the introductory Epistle, and the accomplished Maitre D'Hotel, the pretended author of the second, are individually

dividually but one and the same person; and notwithstanding his continental exterior, *bona fide*, an Englishman, more concerned for the advancement of German literature, and the reputation of Bürger, than the honour of his own country. This, however unnatural, is a case by no means uncommon with the new-fangled refiners of the present age. I am, thank my stars, one of those who are not ashamed of their country, and would on all honest occasions give my suffrage in her favour. I am, I trust, a friend to humanity, an admirer of genius, and a well-wisher to the propagation of letters; but I am also a lover of truth, and would not even for my country, far less to serve the purposes of a party, peevishly controvert facts, or arrogate distinctions, to which she had not a legitimate claim. These are my principles; I speak as I think, and what I conceive right, I have no hesitation, on proper occasions, to maintain. I think our continental accuser wrong, and therefore oppose him: I think in too fervently adopting the whims and prodigalities of other countries, we are wrong, and therefore condemn it; but I am far from encouraging national reflections, and have assuredly no intention of giving personal offence. One capital disqualification, I am sensible, and with too much reason I fear it is not the only one, I labour under: I was born among you. It is unfortunately a fact, verified by daily experience, that from some unaccountable predilection, peculiar to these islands, when a native and a foreigner enter the lists, the current of prejudice runs, right or wrong, in favour of the latter. Through that channel I have no expectations: It is to the fairness of my deductions, and the equity of my cause, I look for an impartial decision. Such enquiries are not without their importance: conducted with temper and decorum they may contribute to instruction, divested of its formalities, and, at least as well as a Novel or a Fairy Tale, serve to ameliorate the preffure of
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severer occupations. The Writer can speak from experience, and believes he is not singular; but of this in its place.

Your advocate in the case of Leonora, aware of some difficulties in his way, takes his ground with circumspection; but proceeds not incontinently to the point. Like a skilful partizan, he makes his approaches at a distance, and skirmishes under cover of a masked battery. The round-about method of marshalling his forces; the irrelevant matter of the preamble; his apocryphal journey; the finesse of the adventure of the inn; his guarded predilection for a particular hypothesis; and his imposing simplicity of style, all speciously calculated to mislead, betray a suspicion of his materials; and intimate a latent something which he seems unwilling to avow. His visible anxiety for the reputation and uncommon qualifications of "mine Host of the Garter," astonishing to his readers, as partly he acknowledges they appeared to himself, is besides an unfavourable symptom, which adds little to the credit of his relation, and operates untowardly for the interest of his cause.

His positions lead to a twofold object; to prove that the story of Leonora or the Suffolk Miracle, is not of English growth; and to confine the merit of it to Bürger. 'Tis labour thrown away. Weigh the matter attentively; give to both sides their accessories, and let impartiality hold the balance. To dwell upon his weakest arguments is unnecessary, nor need we follow him step by step in the detail. It will be sufficient to shew the futility of the strong, if any can deserve that epithet, where all are nearly of the same stamp, founded wholly upon hearsay, and report at second-hand, without any authentic credentials, or written memorial of ancient date, to support them. I appeal, my most learned adversary! to facts, and without troubling myself unnecessarily with adventitious pleas, out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee.

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We are given to understand, that upon a "more minute enquiry, He," the intelligent postmaster, as he is described,* "insisted upon the fable being of Saxon origin, and offered "to produce an old man," who by the way is not produced, "an inhabitant of the place, who would repeat nearly the "whole poem in Low Dutch; adding, that this man frequently heard it recited in his youth, by people still older "than himself, from whom he had learned it." On the same authority we are likewise previously given to understand, and it is subsequently insisted upon, that the whole poem is Bürger's; and Bürger is comparatively a young man. Here then, in the first instance, the gentleman entangles himself in a dilemma. Either he must give up the claim of Bürger's originality, or his informer's character for veracity and precision: of two evils to choose the least, let us suppose it the latter; then what becomes of his argument? His premises are unfounded, and, the consequence is inevitable, his whole system must fall to the ground. . . . Admitting the antiquity of the fable, and its antiquity I should be loth to impeach, Bürger indisputably has contributed to its restoration; he may have revived, corrected and improved; or as Dryden, Pope and others have Chaucer's Poems, he may have modernized it; that praise is decidedly his due; in that light, he is its Father, and Leonora his Child by adoption; but however dressed, it does not vitiate its descent; Leonora by whatever name or appellation designated, is still the self-same person, one and individual, undeniably the offspring of her original parent.

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* Those who furnish posthorses, &c. for the accommodation of travellers, here with us, poor Islanders! are in familiar and vulgar acceptance, Innkeepers; on the grand tour, where every thing forsooth must be in style, however in fact inferior, they are in the more dignified phrase dubbed Postmasters.

In this awkward predicament your travelling inquisitor suspends the proceedings, and after a convenient interval, of which, as we may well presume, he took care to avail himself, with renovated powers, in character of advocate for Saxony, he returns to the charge, and armed cap-a-pee, fmites our poor antiquarians from Dan to Beertheba, for attempting to fet the faddle on the right horfe. Flying rumour and hearfay is his forte. Neither am I deftitute of proofs in that way, at leaft equally cogent and authentic; and if dates be compared, of a ftill more remote reach. My Father, who is near feventy, learned the ftory from his Nurfe's Husband, whose memory even now is refpected in his village, a village or rather hamlet,* in Lancashire, near the flourifhing town of Prefcot, where he was honourably interred at an advanced time

* Gillor's Green [Thill-Horfe Green?] . . . where he enjoyed a fmall patrimony, whence fometime before his deceafe he removed to a new houfe he had purchafed, direftly oppofite the great window at the Eaft end of St. Peter's Church, Liverpool. He was of the clafs of labouring men:

Let not ambition mock their ufeul toil,
 Their homely joys, and deftiny obfcure;
 Nor grandeur hear with a difdainful fmile,
 The fhort and fimple annals of the poor.

So fings the penfive Gray, and his idea will not be hurt by a little funeral anecdote. . . . On the demife of the venerable old man a quantity of bread and good malt liquor was provided by his widow and fole executrix, of which timely notice was given; and before the coffin was placed upon the hearfe, which conveyed his remains to Prefcot, his native parifh, purfuant to a claufe in his laft will fo ordering, every poor perfon that came forward, man, woman and child, without exception, received a twopenny loaf and a pint of ale. A like portion of bread and ale was diftributed to the poor at Prefcot alfo; when, previous to his interment, the full fervice for the dead was performed by the Rector, the Reverend Mr. *Quin*; and an excellent fermon preached from Heb. ii. v. 22: *By faith Jofeph when he died, made mention of the departing of the Children of Ifrael; and gave commandment concerning his bones. . . .* Such were the worthy beings among whom my Father received his early impreffions!

time of life, when my Father was a young boy. The good old man had it from a relative of his own, a clock-maker of the name of Eccleston, who also was well stricken in years, and always gave it as a tale of former times. It was printed on a single half sheet, procured at a stall in Liverpool, and stitched up with the Seaman's Garland, the lamentable History of Jane Shore, Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer and others, for his winter's evenings' amusement and improvement in reading. Such was the simplicity and taste of that ancient contented neighbourhood! This, though I do not in general esteem hearsay allegations as the most immaculate and decisive, will doubtless carry its due weight in evidence of our story's being of ancient notoriety in England, and at least coeval with, if not prior to its rival of the Continent, which, if not identically the same, is manifestly of a kindred stock. But this, when corroborated by antique vouchers from the press, which cannot be rationally controverted or mistaken, must, I should imagine, obviate every cavil, and finally fettle the dispute.

This I know will scarcely satisfy your persevering correspondent. The gentleman in his travelling capacity, is curious in his researches, that is perfectly in character, and opportunely, it seems, he falls in with a person of consummate intelligence, his communicative Host, not less able than willing to gratify his inquisitive guest, who as we have seen proves a strenuous partizan. He got a hint, no matter how, of a formidable force in array against him, and aware of the insufficiency of his outworks, has recourse to new levies, clearly for the purpose of countermining the assailants. . . . Whose is the tale of Leonora? that is the question. Common fame, according to him, decides it in favour of Saxony; but, setting aside his militia of reporters, who are not wholly free from inconsistencies, the German Mercury (*der Deutsche Mercur*. Sect. 2d, &c.) is appealed to; but how does that mend the matter?

matter? In opposition to records of immemorial existence, a posthumous publication, a chronicle of to day, a common newspaper, is pressed into the service; upon what principle of reasoning, can such an authority defeat the claims of primogeniture, or put down sturdy objectors? Positive assertion, and the same rambling gossip's creed, tricked out in modern print, is but a sort of left-handed defence; a fond repetition of still the same nostrum exhibited in a more convenient vehicle. It furnishes nothing new, nothing more to the purpose, nothing more to be relied on, consequently nothing more convincing or conclusive. Our documents of established antiquity he cannot absolutely resist, but their authority he is anxious to evade. "The Collection of old Ballads published "in London, and in which" as he parsimoniously admits," the matter of that Poem," meaning Leonora, "is contained." Observe! he does slightly advert to; but he recognizes it with manifest constraint, and brings it, *coram nobis*, for the sole purpose of depreciating its validity. In quoting the title of the Poem or Suffolk Miracle, as he slightly gives it, the most striking part, and that most material to the point at issue, is suppressed; I mean the incident of the horse and his preternatural expedition. The omission, we may presume, was intentional, perhaps not, with as many other perhaps as you please; for I have no pleasure in taxing any gentleman with dissimulation; nevertheless, in other respects, he is abundantly minute. He is needlessly particular as to the number of volumes, and hypercritically precise in the chronology of their publication, which he refers to the year 1723. A concession of some importance, which peradventure, unwittingly escaped him; Bürger was born in the year 1748. The inference is plain. My Father, whose object was truth, to afford every unprejudiced reader, a fair opportunity of judging for himself, has given the entire legend of the Suffolk Miracle, verbatim, from the collection, this moment before me, as it stands; and whoever compares that
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and Leonora together, needs no spectacles to perceive a coincidence of circumstances, and a resemblance too close, to admit, without difficulty, the persuasion of its being purely accidental.

But be not surpris'd, gentle Reader! if by the way thou art informed of a fact as yet unhinted at, probably unsuspected. Much has been said of a Collection of old Ballads, in three volumes, printed Anno 1723. Our Critics, who cannot keep counsel, were they true adepts in ancient lore, belike would have told us, no collection of that description in the archives of literature is discoverable; nevertheless, the inference as to Bürger is tenable and fair. There is a small typographical error in the date so assigned, it may be of the press, or possibly owing to one of two incidental causes, unnecessary to particularize: Be that as it may, it is of little consequence, the error is easily rectified; for 1723 read 1727. This is the edition cited by Dr. Percy in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, particularly in the short historical illustration prefixed to the *Dragon of Wantley*, where he acknowledges his obligations for some pertinent observations on that subject, and makes honourable mention of the former editor. Both have enriched their collections with curious prolegomena, at the head of the several ballads respectively adopted, and from this conformity of plan it is not improbable, the Reverend Dr. took the hint from his predecessor. The collection more particularly referred to, appears to have been the first of the kind, and the edition more immediately in contemplation, is expressly the third; another circumstance which your elaborate investigator has adroitly flurred over, willing, as at first view it might appear, to confine the knowledge of that miraculous tale in England to the æra assigned. That there was no such collection in three volumes ever published, antecedent to the edition of 1727 may be safely asserted; it is evident, from the book itself. The two preceding editions extended no farther than

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to a single volume each; even the edition of 1727, which is the third, and now in my hand, is not announced in the title page as one of a set; but was sent into the world, as a single volume also, though in the preface, which is pleasantly and sensibly written, we are led speedily to expect a continuation. Now allowing time for the sale of the two former impressions, which, being adorned with suitable engravings and for those days rather expensive, could hardly have been very rapid, we may reasonably fix the period of the first appearance of those legendary tales in that form, about the beginning of the century. How long before this contested phenomenon had been in circulation in a halfpenny ballad; how long before it had been handed about in manuscript; how long before the story might have passed from father to son by oral tradition; or how long before it might have been in requisition in the nursery

When finally by night
 The village matron, round the blazing hearth,
 Suspends the infant audience with her tales,
 Breathing astonishment:

How long, I say, the Suffolk Miracle in one shape or other, might have been the theme of our rude admiring ancestors, I am not blest with your correspondent's intuitive power over climates, epochs and æras to determine. Let me, however, not detract from his merit. His exertions in the cause, however unimportant, prove his patriotic feelings, supposing him really Saxon, and might fairly put my good friend John Bull to the blush. He leaves no stone unturned to do honour to his *natale solum*, and attach the laurel to his countryman; laudable so far is his intention; in which, if he fails, it affords a fine opportunity of deriding our folly in so unaccountably sacrificing at the shrine of vanity, and lavishing distinctions on exotic adventurers to the prejudice of domestic worth,
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and discouragement of native talents. An English edition, splendid beyond compare, is published of his countryman's Poem, a single ballad, fought after and bought up with avidity at an enormous price;* enormous we may surely call it, when three of the printed copies bring more in the shops, than was paid for the manuscript of Milton's Paradise Lost, which for a length of years, consigned to dusty oblivion, lay mouldering on the shelves uncalled for and unnoticed. But this your worthy postmaster makes a pish at, and the compliment to his countryman is lost in the irritation he feels, at our attempting to claim the privilege of thinking, and what is simply and equitably our right. Such is foreign gratitude! such the reward of British genius!! and such the considerations deemed trivial and unimportant!!! . . . The pre-eminence of foreign genius, ushered forth with signal distinctions, was lavishly asserted; the modest claim of our Suffolk Minstrel was brought forward, but not with insult or illiberality; and however by second sight, or otherwise, your ingenious correspondent got intimation of it, was by him and his abettors unceremoniously disputed. His arguments were incontinently espoused, and favoured with extensive circulation among us; but cold water thrown upon those for domestic desert. Is what was thought of such importance when a Foreigner was in question, then only matter of indifference, when a stigma is attached to our Country, and a Native in the case? Call you this backing your Friends, my Countrymen? I do not wish to ravish one sprig of bays from the temples of Bürger; on the contrary, I respect his talents, and willingly subscribe to his deserts; "that the story has gained considerably under his hand is not denied;" but I contend, that for its reception, and the high estimation it has acquired in England, much is also

* Four Guineas I have heard asked in Dublin for a single copy, and four Guineas I believe was the price usually paid.

also due to his translators, who, in their turn, have pruned away his excrescencies, softened down his asperities, and exhibited him so much to advantage in their versions. A position which I foresee may be ungracious to some, and require something more than a bare *ipse dixit* to make good.

The German is not yet a language generally in vogue, of course competent judges of Bürger in his native uniform, are not extremely numerous among us; yet judges, more or less, we have among us, and to help out the quorum, we may call upon the translators, a description of writers, who, if not enthusiastically partial to their archetypes, are, for obvious reasons, not wont to under-rate them; or damp the ardour of curiosity, by depreciating works, which must necessarily have cost them time and pains in preparing for general reception. The Laureat, who, for the gratification of his countrymen, has rendered Leonora into the vernacular tongue, modestly speaking of the task he has so laudably performed, thus admonishes his readers: . . . " This is a translation " line by line, and as near the original, as the restraint of " versification and the idiom and genius of the different lan- " guages would admit; a closer version would in some places " have been ridiculous, and in others profane." . . . Again : " This little Poem, from the singularity of the incidents, and " the wild horror of the images, is certainly an object of " curiosity; but is by no means held up as a pattern for imi- " tation." By the way, the claim of merit, whatever it may be, for singularity of incident and wild horror of imagery was anticipated by our Suffolk Minstrel, but could not be perceived, it seems, till seen through a foreign medium. . . . Mr. Spence whose fervid youth, aiding and happily aided by the sister art, indulges greater freedom and a bolder touch; and Mr. Stanley, who with a Critic's skill and Poet's fire, improves the canvas, and gives it an effect peculiarly his own, upon the whole

whole concur in sentiment with the Laureat. It was said of Pope's Iliad, and not unworthily was it said :

That future ages shall with wonder seek
Who 'twas translated Homer into Greek.

Without going into the question of comparative excellence, at which the bigots to antiquity would shake their heads, it must be acknowledged, the author of the couplet, in a few words, gives us an advantageous idea of English genius, and for the purpose there can be no harm in taking the compliment literally; no disparagement then to your paragon of Saxony, or offence to her sanguine admirers, I would say to the English Leonora, take which version you will :

————— *mutato nomine de te*
Fabula narratur.

Whether this be, or be not, a case pertinently adduced, or *ceteris paribus*, apposite to the point, is submitted to the judges; but let him not boast of his impartiality who construes it a reflection on Bürger.

Our foreignized competitors, I am aware, will give no credit for this. All or none is their motto. They will rather compromise the claims of Bürger's originality, and sacrifice the cause of their justly-admired Favourite, than yield a single jot of it to their rivals. Will do it, did I say? they have done it; I have proved it; the letter proves itself. Waving the pretensions of Bürger, fresh ground is broken; England or Saxony, that is now the question. The contest becomes national, and at all events, to wrest the story from the Britons, and for ever to annihilate their faucy pretensions, your champion of the North is at no loss. In a single line he gives them the coup de grace; with a stroke of his pen he damns

E c them

them . . . no ancient memorial or written monument has he in his power to confront them; in the lapse of ages ink is discharged; parchment perishes, and stone and mortar crumbles into dust. He goes roundly to work. Conjecture, pure conjecture is his dernier resort, and in that he is veritably without parallel. Thirteen hundred years to him are but as yesterday. With the speed of Pacolet's flying horse, or ghostly William's ghostly Charger, whip, spur and away, he hurries us back to the predatory times of Hengist and Horfa. . . . There his hopes rest at the fated goal. There he fixes the period of this wonderful story's importation into Britain. . . . We have been led a wondrous dance, Sirs! Let us breathe.

Must we then tamely acquiesce, and with tacit submission, authorize the delusion? If so, what similar depredations may not in future be attempted. Adieu then to Robin Hood. Sherwood Forest may be found in the purlieus of Glandorf, and Birnham wood be brought to Dunfinane. Chevy-chace we must relinquish, and the Babes in the Wood must again be abandoned, unfortunately contained in the same volume with the Suffolk Miracle. . . . Well-a-day! what a doleful catastrophe must ensue! What a sad revolution among the feathered choirs! Poor Robin-red-breasts, the pathetic incident of your covering the deserted innocents painfully with leaves will no more be remembered; stripped of your ancient palladium, your little lives, wont to be held sacred in Britain, will be exposed; you will be treated as vulgar birds; your curious nests of moss will be rifled. In the bleak frosty glooms of December no more shall ye place confidence in man; enter fearless the rural cot, and hopping beneath the rustic board, pick up the crumbs there in safety; every prowling urchin will persecute you, and the epicure, refining upon gluttony, will twist your glossy necks, and have you spitted for the table. . . . For pity's sake suspend the tale of woe; it must not, shall not be; rest, gentle birds! secure; no lurking foe
awaits

awaits you. This all is supposition, chimerical and groundless, and almost as far-fetched as his of Saxony, who in his zeal for the antiquity of the story of the Suffolk Miracle, alias the Dutch Ballad, alias Leonora, tells us, "perhaps it is so old that the Saxons carried it over to England," meaning as has been observed at the invasion of Hengist and Horfa. A bold assertion to be sure, and assertion, qualified with a perhaps, is all we have for it. We want proof more relative than this. . . . Well! conjectures cost nothing, and guarded with a perhaps, are as free to us as to the Postmaster, and for any thing that has as yet appeared, it may be English or Welsh, or perhaps Irish as well as Saxon.

The bards of Great Britain were a numerous and highly favoured tribe, who wanted neither invention to frame, nor skill to adapt to their harps, a tale so well suited to the temper and taste of the chivalrous times of King Arthur; and none better calculated in its turn, for the entertainment of his illustrious court, and his gallant knights of the round table. It was a subject that could not fail of being popular; thus the Saxon invaders, who frequently must have heard it from the itinerant minstrels of those days, picked it up and carried it back with them to their own country; and a pretty tale it was for the fugitives to cover the disgrace of their defeats, and conciliate the good will of their Desdemonas in their forests at home, who little scrupulous would indulge female curiosity, "and with a greedy ear devour up their discourse." That it could not possibly originate with them is proved from internal evidence. We perceive in it traces of local manners and customs, with a variety of other particulars essential to the fable, without which it could not have existed, and therefore must have been in its primary concoction, a constituent part. The peculiar style of the machinery, the preternatural incidents and scope of the plot altogether, furnish demonstration incontrovertible. The Saxons of those times and long after,

were,

were, to a man, Pagans, and could have no conception of a subject, that smells so powerfully of the cloister. They burned their dead, and could have no idea of spirits "doomed for a certain time to walk the night." The votaries of Woden, Thor and Freia had no churches and church-yards for cemeteries; and the business of their undertakers, if of that vocation any they had, was to collect faggots, not to provide coffins or winding-sheets, nor have I heard they used either palls, scarfs or hatbands. The place of Sexton, like many snug places among ourselves, must have been a mere sinecure; bells were unknown in the wilds of Saxony; even rappers, that grievous tax on the indolence and ease of High Life below Stairs, was a subsequent contrivance; the sounding horn announced the coming guest; yet all, save one, are mentioned or necessarily implied in the progress of the story. Arthur and his Britons were Christians, and simplicity, enthusiasm and credulity, the popular characteristics. Every circumstance of this miraculous legend, impressed with congenial features, marks the offspring of superstition and monkish imposture; and if authority were wanting, that of Jeffrey of Monmouth, I presume, would be rejected; but Gildas, some five or six hundred years, a religious of elder repute, in his account of Miracles, has recorded not a few, upon which that of Suffolk might easily enough be grafted. Hence, admitting its positive antiquity as presumed by the ingenious Host, a presumption which may perhaps be erroneous, and on which I by no means insist, it could not be of Saxon, but clearly of British extraction. That the Suffolk Miracle, and the Saxon Leonora, notwithstanding some modern touches, have many traits in common he partially allows; but in throwing it so far back, however inconsistently, if we can guess at his meaning, he would transfer the charge of plagiarism, and insinuate that the Suffolk Minstrel was rather indebted to Bürger than Bürger in any wise obligated to our Suffolk Minstrel.

Having

Having thus far accomplished his desultory task, the learned Host or Postmaster as the text has it, in the fulness of self-complacency, contemplating his imaginary triumph, thus to a trial of skill in the person of his inquisitive guest, challenges the troop of sceptical readers. "The explanation of the resemblance of our tale," as he will needs have it, "to the Suffolk Miracle I must leave to you." . . . This my Father has some time ago done to his hand, as clearly stated in his Observations already referred to, which, as also before hinted, the gentleman somehow, or I am strangely mistaken, previously got a peep at, and aided by an odd concurrence of circumstances, has been at considerable pains to defeat. His own opinion of the matter in the sweeping clause, I have just been considering, upon his own principles, by a parity of reasoning in his own way, I think I have fairly confuted. A few things still remain, but ere we proceed to bould this matter to the bran, some apology. . . . Stay, stay, somewhat peevishly interrupts Mr. Dapperwit, this is too long; so on another occasion, says old Polonius in the Play, and apropos, the same answer may serve both; but seriously, to make the most of your hint, Signor Dapperwit, enough, perhaps too much has been said on a subject which after all must remain for ever problematical. Enough and too much indeed, with a fastidious shrug, rejoins your modern Stagyrte, it puts one in mind of a good thing formerly said on the disputes about two rival cat-gut scrapers:

Strange all this difference should be,
'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee!

Yea, verily, and it might put thee in mind too of poor Chatterton, against whom, ill-fated youth! the doughty corps of wits rose up in fell array, and badgered to the death!

Did

Did he want merit? No,* he wanted bread; and in addition to the crime of poverty, he was an Englishman, and the harmless plagiarist of a name. Bürger, a foreigner, perfonally or through the indifcreet zeal of his admirers, we ftill, under

* We are fupported on this queftion, take it in the rough: . . . "Johnfon faid of Chatterton: this is the moft extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written fuch things!" Bofwell's Johnfon, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 412. Senfible how poor a figure virtue makes when laquied by pale poverty, and to his miffortune, as in the event it proved, fenfible of the influence of a name, as a forlorn hope, this friendlefs youth facrificed at the ftirine of Apollo, under the appellation of one Rowley, a Monk, of another century; who, whatever it might contribute to the honour of his memory, could fuffer no injury from the affumption. Yet furely the action, conftrued as you may, was not without precedent. Are not all who fhelter themfelves under feigned fignatures, a praftice notoriously common; all who publifh narratives founded on facts, that never had exiftence but in the writer's imagination; all who exhibit as tranflations, compofitions in no other language extant; all who produce epiftolary correpondences from the clofets of celebrated characters never concealed but in the archives of their own pericraniums; all who prefent tours that were never made but in their own apartments; all who write letters to themfelves in the name of others, and indulge the public with their answers, for fpecial purpofes which it might not be over-modeft or convenient to avow; in effect, is not every anonymous writer, paragraphift, effayift, pamphleteer, or bookmaker, allowing all their merit, availing himfelf of a mask, and perhaps with lefs excufable incitements on a footing in that refpect with Chatterton? Yet they in peace enjoy the plenteous harveft of their labours; and he, as the vileft criminal is, fubjected to mercilefs perfecution. It is frefh within the memory of many now living, that one of thofe celebrated muficians mentioned in the text, would in common for his morning's whet, fwallow more than would have regaled that deferted young genius for a week, and would do alderman-like juftice to a Lord Mayor's feaft an hour after. Chatterton, with the flender pittance he could procure by his pen, enjoyed one only luxury, the luxury of now and then contributing his mite to the relief of a deftitute mother and his fifter, but even of that melancholy gratification unremitting cruelty fpeedily deprived them. In the fulfilment of the pious duty, finking under the gripe of oppreffion, to fatisfy the cravings of hunger, at the age of eighteen he had recourfe to the bottle. Merciful God! 'twas artenic!

under correction, are disposed to think, appropriator of the honours of an entire poem; widely different too was the case with your reputed catgut scrapers; who can be strangers to the name and merit of Handel and Bononcini? they too were foreigners, who enjoyed their consequence and fared sumptuously every day: yet, candidly to speak, the sarcasm however misapplied has a seasoning of wit; but witticism is not orthodox; nor the dogma of an individual the go-cart for a world. The satirical genius to whom that epigrammatic fally is in general, though erroneously attributed,* was of so singular a temperament touching that delightful art, that he has been known to declare, the scraping of a cutler's grind-stone, or the hideous din of a pair of intriguing caterwaulers squalling their midnight duets was to his ears as agreeable as the finest concerto on the organ executed by the finger of Handel, in which predicament, Sir Critic! perhaps thou standest in regard to the subjects of present enquiry; but are you all, my Countrymen! thus stoically constituted? Prejudice apart, are not

* The elegant translator of Pliny, in a very classical Collection of Original Letters under the assumed appellation of Sir Thomas Fitzosborne. . . . Alas, poor Chatterton! what greater was thy fault? . . . attributes this little *Jue d'Esprit* to Swift, and gives the two lines here cited, as the whole of it, upon which he founds a delicate ironical disquisition on the abuse of Verbal Criticism: (letter 63) but that ingenious gentleman is mistaken as to the author. The Dean of St. Patrick's, though much in his manner, had no title to it whatever. The original is in six lines, and was written by Mr. Byrom of Manchester; the curious Reader will find it in a Collection of his Poems well worth the perusal; it runs as follows:

EPIGRAM ON THE FEUDS BETWEEN THE ADMIRERS OF
HANDEL AND BONONCINI.

Some say, compared to Bononcini,
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;
Others aver, that he to Handel,
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle:
Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee!

not ninety-nine out of a hundred of the elaborate discussions hourly obtruded from the press, every whit as unimportant, save to the paper-trade, and of as trifling a nature on the scale of amusement, as the burthen of an old song? Addison, who bore no contemptible sway in the republic of letters, and is allowed withal to have had pretty tolerable notions of the *utile dulce*, affords some pertinent instances of his predilection for ancient ballads. Who will say that his comments on Chevy-chace, and eke of the Children in the Wood, are not proofs of a better taste and a more innocent way of amusing himself, as well as his readers, than if the time had been lavished in treading the dark mazes of nefarious politics; diffeminating scandal, or propagating false doctrines, heresy and schism? the fashionable occupation, the opprobrium and the bane of this our *enlightened* and *philosophising* age! Dr. Johnson does not condemn the conduct of the Author of the Spectators, and the same venerated Censor, who was never an advocate for trifling, in express terms, sanctions the tenour of our present lucubrations. These are his words: "What is borrowed is not to be enjoyed as our own; and it is the business of critical justice to give every bird of the Muses his proper feather." Why then to our story, and "if I were as tedious as a king I could find in my heart to bestow it all on your worship."

Our opponent throws down the gauntlet, and marshals me the way that I should go. Like the flame of an expiring taper, after burning to the snuff, with intermitting gleams, still hovering o'er the socket, he hankers after Bürger; at intervals he quits him, at intervals returns; quits, returns again and quits; once more! he barely twinkles; this effort is his last. Alas! poor Ghost, go on I'll follow thee. . . . "For my part," so voucheth the learned Host, still hankering after Bürger, "I am fully satisfied" who doubts it; but are your readers satisfied? "that Bürger did not take his Poem from
" any

“ any English Ballad, but from an old low Dutch Tale ;
 “ the more so as Mr. Schlegel assures us, that Bürger in
 “ the study of the old English Ballads, confined himself al-
 “ most exclusively to Percy’s Reliques of Ancient Poetry.”
 Is not this on one side half giving up the question and beg-
 ging it on the other ? Begging is no crime, and seeing it
 is the fashion, let us follow the example, and as the song
 says, ‘ a begging we will go.’ “ Confined himself almost
 exclusively to Percy’s Reliques,” was the phrase, and a
 saving phrase it is ; yet, tho’ a general rule, like other
 general rules, it plainly admits of exceptions. Would not
 a man fond of reading, if occasion offered, be tempted to
 transgress it ? I am sure I should, and so, or I mistake my
 man, would Bürger ; a single trespass would sufficiently
 answer the end ; and surely it is more than probable the
 temptation was not wanting. Would not the same curiosity
 that led him to enquire for Percy’s Reliques, wherein our
 collection is so honourably noticed, in all likelihood excite
 a desire to peruse others of a like kind, for which there is
 no good reason to suppose he had far to seek ? The book in
 question, antecedent to Percy’s, had gone through three
 editions, we may suppose numerous ones, and then was in
 circulation. It was known even in the remotest quarters
 of Ireland : ‘ *Et pernitus toto divisos orbe Hibernos.*’ The
 copy I have was purchased in the town of Cavan by an
 Irish Divine *, and was not the only one, nor confined to a
 corner. There subsists an affinity of old between the in-
 habitants of the two countries, I mean Saxony and Eng-
 F f land,

* The Rev. John Jermyn :—his great-grand-daughter, the wife
 of John Parry, bookseller, Anglesea-street, had the book from her
 mother, who, as well as her father Mr. James Shore, a respecta-
 ble citizen of Dublin, remembers the Suffolk Miracle, handed
 down from her reverend grandfure as a popular old story about the
 vicinage, in his childhood ; the good couple full of years are still
 living. The volume alluded to, containing this, together with a
 number of other rare pieces, sold originally new for about three
 shillings. I saw within these few days a copy of *Leonora* alone,
 in no very extraordinary binding, rated at 13l. 13s. !!

land, and that renovated, strengthened and cemented by the addition of royal ties. This would naturally create in the minds of the Saxon Literati a predilection for our history. Ballads are the brief chronicles of the times, and it is evident, such chronicles are in request among them, and our language an object of pursuit; how else came Percy to be so well known and understood on that side the ocean? The same causes that operated in favour of our right-reverend literary antiquarian, would likewise operate in favour of others in the same line, and by what means soever his collection obtained a footing there, upon the same principle, by fair deduction, we may conclude to a certainty, his predecessor's, which is chiefly of the historical class, was the harbinger; procured the passport, and ultimately pointed out the way. These matters duly taken into consideration, your ingenious Host might have spared his exultations; his riddle needs no Oedipus; but it leads to a useful caution, and involves a difficulty, for which possibly he may not be prepared. Beware of mistaken zeal! no enemy does more mischief than an indiscreet friend. Admitting the existence of that same Dutch Ballad, on which such stress is laid, and knew they any other for their purpose it would not have been put under a bushel *, it is yet to be proved, that that same Dutch Ballad itself is not a plagiarism; borrowed, and somewhat disguised, perhaps to conceal the fact, from the English; consequently on our opponent's own principles, Leonora a copy at second hand; in other words an imitation of an imitation; which, without forcing the premises, affords a second, and by no means an improbable solution of the resemblance of the German Leonora to *Our original* Suffolk Miracle. . . . FIAT JUSTITIA.

I might here amuse my readers with a comparative analysis of the Suffolk Miracle, and the Poem of Leonora; discriminate the features of resemblance, and show how and in what particulars, the one is an improvement on the other. I might pursue the same course with our different translations of Leonora, four of which are in possession of the

* Under a bushel . . . *Our English Critics*, vid. Poëse. p. 215.

the Public, and comparing them with each other, and with the original, point out their several beauties, and not derogating from the merits of Bürger, shew wherein his translators have the pre-eminence—But, to borrow a phrase of classical extraction : . . .

Gentlemen! I have done.

E.-A. W.

P. S. Our English Critics, somehow hurt as it should seem at our developement of this poetical mystery, have endeavoured to help out the foreign writer by a reference to Southey [v. p. 189.] We have read the extract referred to, but honestly confess we do not clearly perceive the "obvious resemblance" between a withered, superannuated Beldam, roused out of her Grave by her quondam coadjutor the Devil, and a virtuous young Spinster, in a moment of ecstacy, submitting to a voluntary elopement with her spouse apparent. Our Suffolk Miracle is not merely resemblance; it is Identity. If what Matthew of Westminster relates be in reality to the purpose, so far is it from militating against our argument, it is manifestly in its favour. Matthew of Westminster takes precedence of Olaus Magnus and the Nuremberg Chronicle. The æra of his tale he has not left involved in affected obscurity, or sheltered under an ambiguous perhaps. The time of action, if action it may be called, is expressly stated, and, literally from the text, the extract bears date A. D. 852 †. The Author is confessedly of Westminster, and Westminster is in England; the scene lies in Berkeley, and Berkeley is in England; some remote indications*

* . . . "Infinite me defunctam in corio cervino, ac deinde in Carcophago lapideo supponite." . . . Factumque est ut præceperat illis, etc. . . . Dæmon ergo gestu videbatur arroganti ad Sepulchrum accedens, et nomen mulieris modicum ingeminans, surgere imperavit, etc.

† A. D. 852. Circa dies istos. Mulier quædam malefica, in villâ quas Berkeleyia dicitur degens, gulæ amatrix ac petulantis, flagitiis modum usque in senium et auguriis non ponens, usque ad mortem impudica permanfit, etc.

Vide Extr. Mat. West. Southey's Poems, vol. 2, p. 143.

tions of local manners and customs are moreover discernible, and these too are characteristic of the pristine manners and customs in England: Ergo; It is, upon record, of immemorial antiquity, an English Story; which, as I take it, perfectly coincides with our idea of the Suffolk Miracle. Finally, in regard to the said Matthew of Westminster's tale, admitting for the sake of argument, its "obvious resemblance to the Story of Lenore," as by our foreign Author's Critical Friends is suggested, in every conceivable point of relation to the matters in question, it affords supplementary and corroborating proof of Lenore's English Extraction. On the other hand, supposing our English Minister to have modeled his Piece from the relation of his countryman Matthew of Westminster, which is much to be doubted, considering how essentially in almost every point they differ, it must have appeared in the shape of the Suffolk Miracle a century at least before the celebrated writer of Lenore could hold a pen, or even the Minnesinger who perhaps used the incident that contributed its sparkles in the Low-Dutch Ballad, to which, if it bears not an obvious resemblance, it might prove on examination as nearly akin. Robert Southey, a favourite English Poet of the present day, has of late revived the Tale of the odious old Harridan, and the Extract to be found in the 2d vol. of his Poems was, we may lawfully presume, to oblige the foreign Author [of Saxony] especially referred to, conjointly with Olaus Magnus and the Nuremberg Chronicle; but the Suffolk Miracle, to which, not only in the catastrophe but in the most material incidents and purport of the Fable throughout, the tale of Lenore bears a decided and still more obvious and striking resemblance, tho' furnished ready to their hand, is wholly overlooked, and consigned to oblivion; yet in what respect the reference tends to strengthen or throw light on the foreign Author's argument is not quite so obvious as Mr. Cordes and his Friends may imagine. We beg leave, in our turn, to refer to Olaus Magnus, their own Historian, in whose works, printed at Antwerp, it is true the Tale also occurs; cited almost verbatim as we find it related by his Precursor in the wonderful, Matthew of Westminster: But it is not because it incidentally occurs in the multifarious

pages of a Northern Historiographer that it is therefore originally a Northern Story, as by fair implication they would have it understood. Matthew of Westminster, a learned Benedictine Monk, Historian and Chronologer in the 14th century, died A. D. 1380. Olaus Magnus, the good Archbishop of Upsal, Primate of Sweden and Gothland, about the middle of the 16th century, a native also of that country, takes up the Story and expressly declares it, "Angliæ," of England; *The far-famed Staple of Romance.* The work of our learned Benedictine first printed in London, was republished some time after at Frankfurt. This goes to prove, even to demonstration, that the Northern Bards, or Scalds as they are called, for Instruction in British Lore were not trusting to "Percy's Reliques." From incontrovertible authority, their own national archives, (not forgetting the Nuremberg Chronicle) open to the inspection of the curious, we learn, our old British Chronicles, fraught with the *Legendary Tales of other Times*, were a plenteous source of resonant Erudition and Winter Evenings' Amusement upon the Continent, throughout Germany, and the Scandinavian Regions even to utmost Thulé. We cannot therefore subscribe to Mr. Cordes' extravagant Hypothesis, ushered in with a perhaps, for the explanation of the Resemblance of the German Lenoré and our Suffolk Miracle. "The Tale perhaps is" not "so old as that the Saxons carried it over to England," but on the contrary, an old Story indisputably, a very popular old Story carried, however circuitously, from England into Saxony; a position irrefragably founded, as above shewn, on the settled usage of their most admired Annalists. Thus, if other proofs were wanting, the Resemblance, or rather Identity of Bürger's Tale and the Suffolk Miracle, so decidedly its Predecessor, is in direct opposition to the forced assumption of Mr. J. Francis Cordes, naturally, clearly and satisfactorily accounted for. Whatever Changes or Modifications it may have undergone it is a genuine English Story, conclusively the Archetype of the German Lenoré, and in its original native, plain and simple Dress entitled to a place among "THE TALES OF WONDER." 'Tis wonderful the Compiler of that extraordinary Collection left it out!