

PREFACE.

THE object of the present Work is to give practical refutation to the popular fallacy that England has no National Music,—a fallacy arising solely from indolence in collecting; for we trust that the present work will show that there is no deficiency in *material*, whatever there may have been in the prospect of *encouragement* to such Collections. It is hoped that such songs as *Chevy Chace*, *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury*, *Robin Hood and the Bishop*, *From Oberon in Fairy-land*, and the numerous fine old Ballads in which England so peculiarly abounds, will be received with additional interest when accompanied by their original tunes, and probably excite a feeling of surprise, that while, within the last century, so many collections of Irish, Scotch, and Welch airs have appeared, in the same period scarcely one Collection of English should have been made.

It has been too much the fashion with us, to pay little attention to our own tunes; and the last importation has been generally the best received; so that want of encouragement has been justly complained of by our native* musicians in all ages, and not less so at the very time when we might have challenged competition with any other nation in Europe. Even the materials of the present work are in some degree drawn from foreign sources, and in particular from two Collections of English Airs, the one printed at Haerlem† in 1626, and the other at Amsterdam‡ in 1634, in which are to be found several Melodies, acquiring additional interest from being mentioned by Shakspeare, by Izaak Walton, &c. and might have been sought for in vain at home.

* By Henry Lawes, (so highly eulogized by Milton), by Matthew Locke, author of the music in *Macbeth*, and numberless others. Lawes set to music the initial words of a Catalogue of Books, and passing them off as a song newly imported, ridiculed the success with which it was received by the public.

† “Neder-Landtsche Gedenck-clank door Adrianum Valerium.” The words are all Dutch, but the tunes are acknowledged by the title, “Engelsche Stemmen.”

‡ “Friesche Lust-hof, door Jan Jansz. Starter.” In this Collection the words are also Dutch, but the tunes have their names in English.

The existence, however, of two such Collections a century before any published Collection of Irish or Scotch, is a proof, that though lightly esteemed by ourselves, English airs must then have been held in considerable estimation abroad; and as public attention has been gradually turning to the old English ballad, since Dr. Percy first led the way,—as Madrigals have been recently revived, and heard with pleasure, and even the national Country-dance has been again introduced at Court,—it is hoped that the present moment may prove auspicious for a publication of this description; more especially since the indifference with which the pursuit has been generally regarded, has caused a difficulty in procuring the necessary works of reference, which would only become greater by farther delay.

It is often difficult to affix periods, or to authenticate tunes, which rest wholly upon the uncertain evidence of tradition; but the antiquity of the airs in this Collection has a firmer basis, being generally accompanied by dates and evidences of publication at least a century old; and old as these authorities are, they, in their time, only chronicled elder things. Thus the “*Beggar’s Opera*,” (1728) and the numerous Ballad operas, which its success engendered, were all made up of “snatches of old tunes.” “*The English Dancing Master*,” with its multiplied editions from 1650 to 1721; “*D’Urfey’s Pills to purge Melancholy*,” and “*Antidote against Melancholy*,” from 1666 to 1720; “*The Musical Miscellany*,” six volumes, 1729; Walsh’s “*British Musical Miscellany*,” in six volumes; Queen Elizabeth’s, Elizabeth Rogers’, and other Virginal Books; the MSS. of Henry the Eighth’s time, the Harleian, and others in the British Museum,* with the already mentioned Collections published at Haerlem and Amsterdam, in 1626 and 1634, have each contributed their quota.

It now only remains to observe, that diligent research has been made to obtain, compare, and select, the best copies of the Melodies; and occasionally different settings of the same air are placed in juxtaposition; so that to meet a diversity of taste, opportunities are afforded of selecting from various sources of equally acknowledged authenticity.

† It is to be hoped that the attention of the Trustees may be soon drawn to the state of the invaluable Library of Music in the British Museum; for whilst the publisher is taxed a copy of every work, it is but just that it should be open to inspection. At present, with the exception of a few works on Theory, which, being almost entirely letter-press, are included with the books, the Music is perfectly inaccessible,—not being catalogued or classed in any manner. No persons can be more attentive or obliging than the attendants in the Reading-room, but in this they are unable to render any assistance. It is not generally known that the manuscripts of the great Henry Purcell and many others are also in the Museum; but they are in the same state as the music, and are not to be seen.

Some Airs are inserted as national favourites, though not strictly national* music, in the sense generally used, as the composers are known : such are, *The Roast Beef of Old England*, *Black-eyed Susan*, *Rule Britannia*, &c. which are always accompanied by the names of the composers. One verse of the words of most of the songs is given between the lines of music, but it has not been thought necessary to divide each syllable to its proper note, because the metre is occasionally so irregular, that if right in one verse it would be wrong in another. A glance at *Robin Hood and the Bishop*, tune LXXI, will sufficiently demonstrate the necessity of this precaution. Sometimes, the words are entirely omitted,† many of the old songs being too coarse for republication ; and in other instances a good melody is either coupled with words not worth printing, or the originals have not been found.

As by far the greater part of the old airs are found without basses, and a good melody, “is not for an age, but for all time,” so occasional deviations have been made from the rigid school of harmony which some would wish to see always accompanying antiquity : the Melodies, however, have been held inviolate. Dr. Crotch, Mr. Macfarren, and Mr. Wade, who have arranged the basses to the airs, (and whose initials are attached to their respective portions) have severally followed their own judgment and taste ; and it is to be hoped that their occasional diversity of style may rather please than disappoint the patrons of the work. Horace remarks “*Difficile est proprie communia dicere*,” and it will probably be equally difficult to harmonize to every person’s taste.

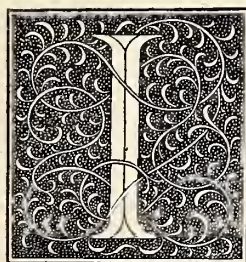
* If that which truly constitutes national music be an affinity between it and the ruling passions or even pastimes of a people, the English have an undoubted claim to distinction ; for while other countries have in their songs been either martial or melancholy, or both, there is in the old English Ballad a certain firmness and solidity of expression which admirably harmonize with the independent spirit and freedom of the national character.

† It was at first intended to publish the tunes entirely without words, but they were found frequently to lose so much by the omission, that the Editor thought it advisable to retain them.

An Essay

ON THE

ANCIENT MINSTRELSY OF ENGLAND.



T was at first intended to limit the present Essay to that which more immediately relates to the *Music* than to the *Poetry* of the old English Minstrelsy;—the latter having been so elaborately treated in the learned researches of Dr. Percy, Mr. Warton, &c. But, at the same time, so intimate a connection exists between the two arts, that occasional deviation will, it is hoped, be held not only excusable, but necessary. The industry and learning already exercised on the subject, leave, we fear, but little chance of adducing any very striking *novelty* in the present undertaking (save the reproduction of many fine old melodies, long since forgotten); but in the absence of that most captivating quality, it is, on the other hand, hoped, that a clear and for the first time (as nearly as possible) chronological view of the various and sometimes conflicting opinions of eminent archæologists, will in some degree atone for the omission, and prove that our chief anxiety has been rather to promulgate ascertained truths, than to exhibit any vain or delusive speculations, however fanciful or ingenious;—and having thus avowed the nature of the present design, its detail will at once be entered into.

The wild and romantic spirit of chivalry which pervades the elder metrical romances, could not have been imparted to this country by the phlegmatic Romans, whose sole ambition being that of conquest, left them but little feeling for the softer passions. Warton very justly observes: “There is no peculiarity which more strongly discriminates the manners of the Greeks and Romans from those of modern times, than that small degree of attention and respect with which those nations treated the fair sex, and the inconsiderable share which they were permitted to take in conversation, and the general commerce of life. For the truth of this observation, we need only appeal to the classic writings: from which it appears that their women were devoted to a state of seclusion and obscurity. One is surprised that barbarians should be greater masters of complaisance than the most polished people that ever existed. No sooner was the Roman empire overthrown, and the Goths had overpowered Europe, than we find the female character assuming an unusual importance and authority, and distinguished with new privileges, in all the European governments established by the northern conquerors. Even amidst the confusions of savage war, and among the almost incredible enormities committed by the Goths at their invasion of the empire, they forbore to offer any violence to the women.”

Orders of Knighthood had been established in Ireland long before the Roman invasion of this country, and institutes of chivalry were common also among the northern nations. Single combat for the sake of some "peerless beauty," and voluntary exposure to all kinds of danger, were the indispensable qualifications of a hero in those uncultivated times; these requisites were subsequently softened and refined—but more of this hereafter.

Though the word Minstrel,* used here in a general sense, is strictly of Norman origin, there is abundant proof that "there was an order of men in the middle ages, who subsisted by the arts of *Poetry and Music*, and sang to the harp verses composed by themselves, or others." It seems to be the general opinion of the learned, that they were the successors of the ancient Bards, "who under different names were admired and revered, from the earliest ages, among the people of Gaul, Britain, Ireland, and the North; and indeed by almost all the first inhabitants of Europe, whether of Celtic or Gothic race; but by none more than by our own Teutonic ancestors, particularly by all the Danish tribes. Among these, they were distinguished by the name of *Scalds*, a word which denotes 'smoothers and polishers of language.' The origin of their art was attributed to Odin or Wodin, the father of their Gods; and the professors of it were held in the highest estimation. Their skill was considered as something divine; their persons were deemed sacred; their attendance was solicited by kings: and they were every where loaded with honours and rewards. As these honours were paid to Poetry and Song, from the earliest times, in those countries which our Anglo-Saxon ancestors inhabited before their removal into Britain, we may reasonably conclude that they would not lay aside all their regard for men of this sort, immediately on quitting their German forests. At least, so long as they retained their ancient manners and opinions, they would still hold them in high estimation. But as the Saxons, soon after their establishment in this island, were converted to Christianity, in proportion as literature prevailed among them, this rude admiration would begin to abate, and poetry would no longer be a peculiar profession. Thus the poet and the minstrel early with us became two persons. Poetry was cultivated by men of letters indiscriminately; and many of the most popular rhymes were composed amidst the leisure and retirement of monasteries. But the Minstrels continued a distinct order of men for many ages after the Norman conquest; and got their livelihood by singing verses to the harp,† principally at the houses of the great. There they were still hospitably and respectfully received, and retained many of the honours shown to their predecessors, the bards and scalds. And though as their art declined, many of them only recited the compositions of others, some of them still composed songs themselves, and all of them could probably invent a few stanzas on occasion. I have no doubt

* For brevity's sake, the term Minstrel has been generally adopted in the present essay, although, as will be subsequently seen, it was often applied to different classes of men.

† That the harp was the common musical instrument of the Anglo-Saxons, might be inferred from the word itself, which is not derived from the British, or any other Celtic language, but of genuine Gothic original, and current among every branch of that people, viz. Ang. Sax. *hearpe* and *hearpa*; Iceland. *harpa* and *haurpa*; Dan. and Belg. *harpe*; German, *harpffe* and *harpffa*; Gal. *harpe*; Span. *harpa*; Ital. *arpa*. The Welsh or Cambro-Britons call their harp *teylin*, a word for which no etymon is to be found in their language. In the Erse its name is *crwth*.

The harp was the favourite musical instrument of the Bri-

tons and other Northern nations in the middle ages; as is evident from their laws, and various passages in their history. By the laws of Wales, a harp was one of the three things that were necessary to constitute a gentleman, or a freeman; and none could pretend to that character who had not one of these favourite instruments, or could not play upon it. To prevent slaves from pretending to be gentlemen, it was expressly forbidden to teach, or to permit, them to play upon the harp; and none but the king, the king's musicians, and gentlemen, were allowed to have harps in their possession. A gentleman's harp was not liable to be seized for debt; because the want of it would have degraded him from his rank, and reduced him to that of a slave. The harp was in no less estimation and universal use among the Saxons and Danes.

but most of the old heroic ballads were composed by this order of men." Thus far Percy; and although his opinions excited an angry and ill-natured controversy,* that he did not stand alone, and therefore should not have solely been the object of a rival antiquary's spleen, can be easily proved by the following extract from the accomplished Warton :

"As literature, the certain attendant, as it is the parent, of true religion and civility, gained ground among the Saxons, poetry no longer remained a separate science, and the profession of bard

* It may not be amiss here to quote the opinion of the great and amiable Scott respecting the well-known controversy between Dr. Percy and Mr. Ritson: speaking of the early Romantic fictions, he says:

"When so popular a department of poetry has attained this decided character, it becomes time to enquire who were the composers of these numerous, lengthened, and once (?) admired narratives which are called Metrical Romances, and from whence they drew their authority. Both these subjects of discussion have been the source of great controversy among antiquaries; a class of men who, be it said with their forgiveness, are apt to be both positive and polemical upon the very points which are least susceptible of proof, and which are least valuable if the truth could be ascertained; and which, therefore, we would gladly have seen handled with more diffidence, and better temper, in proportion to their uncertainty.

"The late venerable Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, led the way unwarily to this dire controversy, by ascribing the composition of our ancient heroic songs and metrical legends, in rather too liberal language, to the minstrels, that class of men by whom they were generally recited. This excellent person, to whose memory the lovers of our ancient lyre must always remain so deeply indebted, did not, on publishing his work nearly fifty years ago, see the rigid necessity of observing the utmost and most accurate precision in his transcripts or definitions. The study which he wished to introduce was a new one—it was his object to place it before the public in an engaging and interesting form; and, in consideration of his having obtained this important point, we ought to make every allowance, not only for slight inaccuracies, but for some hasty conclusions, and even exaggerations, with which he was induced to garnish his labour of love. He defined the minstrels, to whose labours he chiefly ascribed the metrical compositions on which he desired to fix the attention of the public, as 'an order of men in the middle ages, who subsisted by the arts of poetry and music, and sung to the harp verses composed by themselves or others.' In a very learned and elegant essay upon the text thus announced, the reverend prelate in a great measure supported the definition which he had laid down, although it may be thought that, in the first editions at least, he has been anxious to view the profession of the minstrels on their fairest and most brilliant side; and to assign to them a higher station in society, than a general review of all the passages connected with them will permit us to give to a class of persons, who either lived a vagrant life, dependent on the precarious taste of the public for a hard-earned maintenance, or, at best, were retained as a part of the menial retinue of some haughty baron, and in a great measure identified with his musical band.

"The late acute, industrious and ingenious Mr. Joseph Ritson, whose severe accuracy was connected with an unhappy eagerness and irritability of temper, took advantage of the exaggerations occasionally to be found in the Bishop's *Account of Ancient Minstrelsy*, and assailed him with terms which are anything but courteous. Without finding an excuse, either in the novelty of the studies in which Percy had led the way, or in the vivacity of imagination which he did not himself share, he proceeded to arraign each trivial inaccuracy as a gross fraud, and every deduction which he considered to be erroneous as a wilful untruth, fit to be stigmatized with the broadest appellation by which falsehood can be distinguished. Yet there is so little room for this extreme loss of temper, that, upon a recent perusal of both those ingenious essays, I was surprised to find that the reverend Editor of the *Reliques*, and the accurate antiquary, have differed so very little, as, in essential facts, they appear to have done. Quotations are, indeed, made by both with no unsparing hand; and hot arguments, and, on one side at least, hard words, are unsparingly employed; while, as is said to happen in theological polemics, the contest grows warmer in proportion as the ground concerning which it is carried on, is narrower and more insignificant. But notwithstanding all this ardour of controversy, their systems in reality do not essentially differ.

"Ritson is chiefly offended at the sweeping conclusion, in which Percy states the minstrels as subsisting by the arts of poetry and music, and reciting to the harp verses composed by themselves and others. He shows very successfully that this definition is considerably too extensive, and that the term minstrel comprehended, of old, not merely those who recited to the harp or other instrument romances and ballads, but others who were distinguished by their skill in instrumental music only; and, moreover, that jugglers, sleight-of-hand performers, dancers, tumblers, and such like subordinate artists, who were introduced to help away the tedious hours in an ancient feudal castle, were also comprehended, under the general term of minstrel. But though he distinctly proves that Percy's definition applied only to one class of the persons termed minstrels, those namely who sung or recited verses, and in many cases of their own composition; the bishop's position remains unassailable, in so far as relates to one general class, and those the most distinguished during the middle ages. All minstrels did not use the harp, and recite or compose romantic poetry; but it cannot be denied that such was the occupation of the most eminent of the order. This Ritson has rather admitted than denied; and the number of quotations which his industry has brought together, rendered such an admission inevitable."

seems gradually to have declined among them : I mean the bard under those appropriated characteristics, and that peculiar appointment, which he sustained among the Scandinavian pagans. Yet their natural love of verse and music still so strongly predominated, that in the place of their old Scalders, a new rank of poets arose, called GLEEMEN,* or Harpers. These probably gave rise to the order of English Minstrels, who flourished till the sixteenth century."

But the circumstance which tended most to revolutionize the Minstrel Art, was the breaking forth of that barbarous but romantic expedition called the Crusade. "The unparalleled emulation with which the nations of Christendom universally embraced this holy (?) cause, the pride with which emperors, kings, barons, earls, bishops, and knights, strove to excel each other on this interesting occasion, not only in prowess and heroism, but in sumptuous equipages, gorgeous banners, armorial cognizances, splendid pavilions, and other expensive articles of a similar nature, diffused a love of war, and a fondness for military pomp. Hence their very diversions became warlike, and the martial enthusiasm of the times appeared in tilts and tournaments. These practices and opinions cooperated with the kindred superstitions of dragons, dwarfs, fairies, giants, and enchanters, which the traditions of the Gothic scalders had already planted ; and produced that extraordinary species of composition which has been called ROMANCE."†

Whether the word *Romance*, or the terms *Romance Language* or *Langage Roman*, had their rise or not from the Roman vulgar language upon which that of the Troubadours was formed, will not be here discussed : so much having been said already on the subject, that but little more could be added, and that little of still less consequence. It is sufficient to remark, that it appears from the best authorities that the word *Romance* is traceable to the vulgar language spoken in the remote provinces of the Roman territories ; and as in course of time the subjects generally treated by the poets or rhymers of this period were tinctured strongly with the marvellous, every thing incredible or fanciful was deemed *romantic* ; and hence the term romance, in opposition to history, or sober narrative of facts.‡

"The Minstrels, or those who aided them in the composition of the Romances, which it was their profession to recite, roused to rivalry by the unceasing demand for their compositions, endeavoured emulously to render them more attractive by subjects of new and varied interest, or by marvellous incidents to which their predecessors were strangers. Much labour has been bestowed, in endeavouring to ascertain the sources from which they drew the embellishments of

* GLEEMEN or harpers. Fabyan, speaking of Blagebride, an ancient British king, famous for his skill in poetry and music, calls him "a conynge musicyan, called of the Britons god of *Gleemen*." The learned Dr. Percy says: "This word *glee* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *glegg* (gligg), *musica*, music, *minstræly*, (Somner.) This is," continues the Doctor, "the common radix, whence arises such a variety of terms and phrases relating to the minstrel art, as affords the strongest internal proof that this profession was extremely common and popular here before the Norman conquest..... The Anglo-Saxon harpers and gleemen were the immediate successors and imitators of the Scandinavian Scalds." We have also the authority of Bede for social and domestic singing to the harp, in the Saxon language, upon this island, at the beginning of the 8th century.

† Warton. Voltaire was of opinion that the language bearing the name Romance began to be formed in the 9th century, out of Latin and Teutonic ; and that it was the mother of French, Spanish, and Italian. Vide *Essai sur l'Hist.* tom. i. p. 168.

‡ Vide Burney's *Hist.* vol. ii. p. 221 et seq. Though the term *Romance* was especially applied to the compound language of France, in which the Gothic dialect of the Franks, the Celtic of the ancient Gauls, and the classical Latin, formed the ingredients, it was indiscriminately given to the Italian, to the Spanish, and even (in one remarkable instance at least) to the English language. Vide Giraldus Cambrensis on the passage "Aqua illa optima, quæ Scotticæ vocata est FROTH ; Brittanice, WAITE ; Romane vero SCOTTE-WATTRE." See Ritson for more on this subject.

their tales, when the hearers began to be tired of the unvaried recital of battle and tournament which had satisfied the simplicity of a former age. Percy has contended for the Northern *Sagas*, as the unquestionable origin of the Romance of the middle ages; Warton conceived that the *Oriental Fables*, borrowed by those Minstrels who visited Spain, or who in great numbers attended the crusades, gave the principal distinctive colouring to those remarkable compositions;* and a later system, patronised by later authors, has derived them, in a great measure, from the *Fragments of Classical Superstition*, which continued to be preserved after the fall of the Roman Empire. All these systems seem to be inaccurate, in so far as they have been adopted exclusively of each other, and of the general proposition that fables of a nature similar to the romances of chivalry, modified according to manners and state of society, must necessarily be invented in every part of the world, for the same reason that grass grows upon the surface of the soil in every climate and in every country.”†

In furtherance of this last assertion, Burney’s opinion may be cited. He says, that “Songs have at *all times*, and in *all places*, afforded amusement and consolation to mankind; every passion of the human breast has been vented in song;‡ and the most savage as well as civilized inhabitants of the earth have encouraged these effusions. The natives of New Zealand, who seem to live as nearly in a state of nature as any animals that are merely gregarious, have their songs and their *Improvisatori*; and the ancient Greeks, during every period of their history, had their *Scolia* for almost every circumstance and occasion incident to society.”§

That the people of England have in all ages delighted in secular or social music, can be proved by a thousand testimonies. The Scalds and Minstrels were held in great repute for many ages, and it is but fair to infer that the reverence shewn to them arose from the love and esteem in which their art was held. The Romans, on their first invasion of this island, found three orders of priesthood established here from a period long anterior. The first and most influential were the Druids; the second the Bards, whose business it was to celebrate the praises of their heroes in *verses and songs*, which they composed and sang to their harps; and the third were the Eubates, or those who applied themselves to the study of philosophy.

The northern annals abound with pompous accounts of the honours conferred on music by princes who were themselves proficient in the art; for music had become a regal accomplishment, as we find by all the ancient metrical romances and heroic narrations,—and to sing to the harp was necessary to a *perfect prince*, and *complete hero*!||

* The etymon of the word *troubadour* seems to favour Warton’s theory. It evidently comes from the Spanish *trovador* or *trobador*, (the *b* and *v* in that language being interchangeable consonants) which again springs from the obsolete verb *trovare*, to make or invent. In this sense the Greeks called a poet ὁ ποιητής, a *maker* or *inventor*. It must be allowed at the same time that a similar literal peculiarity existed in the old Provençal and Languedocian dialects, in which *troba* or *trova* signified *fiction*.

† Vide Scott’s *Essay on Romance*.

‡ “The traditional tunes of every country seem as natural to the common people, as warbling is to birds in a state of nature.”—Burney.

§ Vide Burney’s *History of Music*, vol. ii. p. 220.

|| Vide Burney, vol. ii. p. 353, where Eustace or Wace, the author of *Le Brut d’Angleterre*, represents Gabbet, one of our kings, as the most able musician of his time—one who

Ev’ry instrument could play,
And in sweetest manner sing,
Chanting forth each kind of lay
To the sound of pipe or string.—Burney’s *Trans.*

The poet concludes by calling him

Dieux des jongliours,
Et dieux de tous les chanteurs, &c.

This corresponds with the terms bestowed upon Blagebride by Fabyan. Vide note supra.

Burney remarks, "that music and poetry, during the infancy of their cultivation in every country, are so closely connected, that it is impossible to speak of one without the other." And a little farther on he says: "We are certain British harpers were famous *long* before the Conquest." And again: "The harp seems for many ages to have been the favourite instrument of the inhabitants of this island, *whether under British, Saxon, Danish, or Norman kings.*"*

Even so early as the first invasion of Britain by the Saxons, an incident is recorded to have happened, which shows that the Minstrel or Bard was well-known among this people; and that their princes themselves could, upon occasion, assume that character. Colgrin, son of that Ella who was elected king or leader of the Saxons, in the room of Hengist,† was shut up in York, and closely besieged by Arthur and his Britons. Baldulph, brother of Colgrin, wanted to gain access to him, and to apprize him of a reinforcement which was coming from Germany. He had no other way to accomplish his design, but by assuming the character of a Minstrel. He therefore shaved his head and beard, and dressing himself in the habit of that profession, took his harp in his hand. In this disguise he walked up and down the trenches without suspicion, playing all the while upon his instrument as a harper. By little and little he advanced near to the walls of the city, and making himself known to the sentinels, was in the night drawn up by a rope.

Our great king Alfred also, who is expressly said to have excelled in music,‡ being desirous to learn the true situation of the Danish army, which had invaded his realm, assumed the dress and character of a Minstrel; when, taking his harp, and one of the most trusty of his friends disguised as a servant, (for in the early times it was not unusual for a Minstrel to have a servant to carry his harp) he went with the utmost security into the Danish camp; and though he could not but be known to be a Saxon by his dialect, the character he had assumed procured him a hospitable reception. He was admitted to entertain the king at table, and staid among them long enough to contrive that assault which afterwards destroyed them. This was in the year 878.§

About sixty years after, a Danish king made use of the same disguise to explore the camp of our king Athelstan. With his harp in his hand, and dressed like a Minstrel, Aulaff,|| king of the Danes, went among the Saxon tents; and, taking his stand by the king's pavilion, began to play,

* *Hist. of Music*, vol. ii. p. 354 et seqq.

† Vide Rapin's *Hist.* (by Tindal, fol. 1732, vol. i. p. 36) who places the incident here related, under the year 495.

‡ Bale positively asserts that Alfred's knowledge of music was perfect; and in Sir J. Spelman we find, that he (Alfred) "provided himself of musitians, not common, or such as knew but the practick part, but men skilful in the art itself, whose skill and service he yet farther improved with his own instruction." That he was an enthusiast in the art is evident from his paraphrase of Bede's description of the sacred poet Cædmon's embarrassment when the harp was presented to him in turn, that he might sing to it, "be hearpan singan;" Bede's words are simply, "Surgebat a mediâ cænâ, et egressus, ad suum domum repedabat:" but Alfred adds, that he arose *for shame*, (aras he for seeome); implying that it was a disgrace to be found ignorant of the art.

§ In 886, according to the annals of the church of Winches-

ter, he founded a professorship at Oxford for the cultivation of music as a *science*; the first who filled the chair was Friar John of St. David's.

|| AULAFF: thus, Dr. Percy argues, should the name of this prince be spelled; asserting that Aulaff is "evidently the genuine northern name Olaff, or Olave, Lat. Olaus." The "more usual form," he admits, is ANLAFF. Warton calls him "a pagan king of the "Hybernians," and quotes a Saxon ode, in which he and his followers "departed in their ships with rudders, to seek through the deep their *Irish* city," &c.; and yet, a few pages after (in Dissert. i.) he says: "Anlaff's dialect must have discovered him to have been a Dane." This, however, is reconcileable to history; for Anlaff had previously fled to Ireland for succour, and, although at this moment in league with the Scotch King Constantine, was probably attended by a great number of Irish; which no doubt caused the author of the Saxon ode to describe him as one of the same country.

and was immediately admitted. There he entertained Athelstan and his lords with his singing and his music, and was at length dismissed with an honourable reward, though his songs must have discovered him to have been a Dane. Athelstan was saved from the consequences of this stratagem by a soldier, who had observed Aulaff bury the money which had been given him, either from some scruple of honour, or motive of superstition. This occasioned a discovery.

Now if the Saxons had not been accustomed to have Minstrels of their own, Alfred's assuming so new and unusual a character would have excited suspicions among the Danes. On the other hand, if it had not been customary with the Saxons to shew favour and respect to the Danish Scalds, Aulaff would not have ventured himself among them, especially on the eve of a battle. From the uniform procedure of both these kings, we may fairly conclude that the same mode of entertainment prevailed among both people, and that the Minstrel was a privileged character with each.

May it not be farther said, what a devotion to the art of music must have existed in those rude times, to allow the vigilance of war to be lulled into sleep and insecurity, and the enmities of two detesting nations to be forgotten for awhile, in the enjoyment of sweet sounds !

That the Gleeman or Minstrel held a stated and continued office in the court of our Anglo-Saxon kings, can be proved satisfactorily. We have but to turn to the Domesday Book, and find under the head : Gloucestershire, fol. 162, col. 1—"Berdie, Joculator Regis, habet iii villas," &c. That the word Joculator (at this early period) meant Harper or Minstrel, is sufficiently evident from Geoffrey of Monmouth, of whom Dr. Percy observes very justly, "that whatever credit is due to him as a relator of *facts*, he is certainly as good authority as any for the signification of *words*."

It has been already shewn, that the Normans were but a colony from Norway and Denmark, where the Scalds had arrived to the highest pitch of credit before Rollo's expedition into France :* many of those men no doubt accompanied him to his duchy of Normandy, and left behind them successors in their art ; so that when his descendant William invaded this kingdom in the next century, he and his followers were more likely to favour the establishment of the Minstrel profession here, than suppress it : and although they might naturally incline to such of their own countrymen as excelled in the art, and would listen to no other songs but those composed in their own Norman-French, yet as the great mass of the original inhabitants were not extirpated, these could only understand their own native Gleemen or Minstrels ; and accordingly, aping the manners of their more aristocratic invaders, they fostered their compatriot Minstrels with a spirit of emulation, that served to maintain and encourage them and their productions for a considerable period after the invasion. That they continued devoted to their Anglo-Saxon tongue,† notwithstanding the opposition of their aristocratic conquerors, is sufficiently plain.

"Of this," says Percy, "we have proof positive in the old metrical romance of Horn-Child, which, although from the mention of Sarazens, &c. must have been written at least after the first

* Rollo was invested in his new duchy of Normandy A.D. 912. William invaded England A.D. 1066.

† "The dialect of our Alfred, of the ninth century, in his Saxon translation of Boethius and Bede, is more clear and intelligible than the vulgar language, *equally ancient*, of any other country in Europe. For I am acquainted with no

other language, which, like our own, can mount, in a regular and intelligible series, from the dialect now in use to the ninth century : that is, from pure English to pure Saxon, such as was spoken and written by King Alfred, unmixed with Latin, Welch, or Norman."—*Burney's History of Music*, vol. ii. p. 209.

Crusade in 1096, yet, from its Anglo-Saxon language or idiom, can scarce be dated later than within a century after the conquest. This, as appears from its very exordium, was intended to be sung to a popular audience, whether it was composed by or for a Gleeman, or Minstrel. But it carries all the internal marks of being the work of such a composer. It appears of *genuine English* growth; for, after a careful examination, I cannot discover any allusion to French or Norman customs, manners, composition, or phraseology: no quotation, 'as the romance sayeth:' not a name or local reference, which was likely to occur to a French rimeur. The proper names are all of northern extraction. Child *Horn* is the son of *Allof*, (i. e. Olaf or Olave) King of *Sudenne*, (I suppose Sweden) by his queen *Godylde*, or *Godylt*. *Athulf* and *Fykenild* are the names of subjects. *Eylmer*, or *Aylmere*, is king of *Westnesse* (a part of Ireland); *Rymenyld* is his daughter; as *Erminyld* is of another king, *Thurstan*; whose sons are *Athyld* and *Beryld*. *Athelbius* is steward of king *Aylmer*, &c. &c. All these savour only of a northern origin, and the whole piece is exactly such a performance as one would expect from a Gleeman or Minstrel of the north of England, who had derived his art and his ideas from his Scaldic predecessors there. So that this probably is the original from which was translated the old French fragment of *Dan Horn*, in the Harleian MS. 527, mentioned by Tyrwhitt (*Chaucer* iv. 68) and by T. Warton, (*Hist.* i. 38) whose extract from Horn-Child is extremely incorrect."

A similar proof may be had, by a reference to several other old metrical romances, beginning with those mentioned by Chaucer, which still retained their Saxon unadulterated; and shews, that though after the Norman Conquest this country abounded with French romances, or with translations from the French, there is no doubt that the English had also original pieces of their own. That the Normans borrowed some things from our countrymen, appears from the word *Termagant*, which they took up from our Minstrels, and corrupted into *Tervagaunte*, a word which is evidently of Anglo-Saxon derivation, and can only be explained from the elements of that language.*

After the Norman Conquest, the first notice we have relating to the Minstrels is the founding the priory and hospital of St. Bartholomew,† in Smithfield, London, by Royer or Raherus, the King's Minstrel, in the third year of king Henry I. A.D. 1102. This circumstance sufficiently proves that they were then an order of men highly respected and rewarded.

In the reign of king Henry II. in the year 1180, a harper, named Galfrid or Jeffrey, received an annuity from the Abbey of Hide, near Winchester: and, as we have already seen, every harper was expected to sing,‡ this probably was a reward for his music and his songs; "which," says a learned writer, with great probability, "if they were for the solace of the monks there, we may conclude would be in the *English* language."

Minstrelsy flourished with peculiar splendour in the reign of Richard I.§ His romantic temper, and moreover his own proficiency in the art, led him to be not only the patron of chivalry, but also

* The editor of Junius derives it from the Anglo-Saxon *tyr*, very, and *magan*, mighty. Vide Percy, vol. i. p. 190, for an enquiry into this subject.

† Vide the *Monasticon*, tom. ii. p. 166-67, for a curious history of this priory and its founder. Also *Stowe's Survey*. In the *Pleasaunt History of Thomas of Reading*, 4to. 1662, he is likewise mentioned. His monument, in good preservation,

may yet be seen in the parish church of St. Bartholomew, in Smithfield, London.

‡ Vide note, page 6.

§ It is said of William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, chancellor and justiciary of England, who was also the Pope's legate, and a great favourite of Richard I, that he kept a number of poets in his pay, to make songs and poems in his praise.

of those who celebrated its exploits. Some of his poems are still extant. The romantic release of this king from the castle of Durrenstein, on the Danube, by the stratagem and fidelity of his Minstrel Blondel, is a story so well known, that it is needless to repeat it here.

Another circumstance which proves how easily Minstrels could always gain admittance even into enemies' camps and prisons, occurred in this reign. The young heiress of D'Evreux, Earl of Salisbury, "was carried abroad, and secreted by her French relations in Normandy. To discover the place of her concealment, a knight of the Talbot family spent two years in exploring that province, at first under the disguise of a pilgrim; till having found where she was confined, in order to gain admittance he assumed the dress and character of a harper, and being a *jocose* person, exceedingly skilled in 'the Gestes of the Ancients,'—so they called the romances and stories which were the delight of that age—he was gladly received into the family, whence he took an opportunity to carry off the young lady, whom he presented to the king; and he bestowed her on his natural brother William Longspee, (son of fair Rosamond) who became in *her* right Earl of Salisbury.*

Some memorable events, which reflect credit upon the English Minstrels about this period—namely, the reign of king John—may be briefly mentioned. Ranulph, Earl of Chester, being besieged in his castle of Rothelan, (or Rhuydland) sent for help to the Lord De Lacy, Constable of Chester; who, by the aid of the Minstrels *of all* sorts, then met at Chester fair, assembled such a vast number of people, who went forth under the conduct of a gallant youth named Dutton, (his steward and son-in-law) that he intimidated the Welsh so that they "instantly raised the siege, and retired."

For this deed of service to Ranulph, both De Lacy and Dutton had, by respective charters, patronage and authority over the minstrels and others, who, under the descendants of the latter, enjoyed certain privileges and protection for many ages.†

In the same reign of king John, we have an instance of a Minstrel who was also a Soothsayer; and who, "by his skill in drugs and medicated potions, was able to rescue a knight from imprisonment."‡ This is another proof, that in the common term *Minstrel* were frequently united many characters.

In the reign of Henry III. forty shillings and a pipe of wine were given to Richard, harper to the king, as also one pipe of wine to Beatrice his wife. "The title of Magister, or Master," observes Percy, "given to this minstrel, deserves notice, and shows his respectable situation."§

* Vide Percy, from a curious *historiette* in the records of Lacock Nunnery in Wiltshire, which had been founded by Ela, this Countess of Salisbury.

† Even so late as the reign of Elizabeth, when this profession had fallen into such discredit, that it was considered in law a nuisance, the minstrels under the jurisdiction of the family of Dutton are expressly excepted out of all acts of Parliament made for their suppression; and have continued to be so excepted ever since. Vide a statute of Eliz. anno 39, cap. iv.

entitled an Act for punishment of rogues, vagabonds, &c.; also a renewal of the same clauses in the last act. on this subject passed in the reign of George III. The ceremonies attending the exercise of this jurisdiction are described by Dugdale, (Bar. i. p. 101) and, from him, by Percy.

‡ Vide *Leland's Collectanea*, vol. i. p. 261, et seq. for the Narrative of the Gestes of Guarine (or Warren) and his sons, which he "excerptid owte of an olde Englisch boke yn ryme."

§ Vide Burney's *Hist.* vol. ii. p. 353.

Prince Edward, (afterwards Edward I.) in his crusade to the Holy Land in 1271, was attended by his harper or Minstrel, who (after the Prince had wrested the poisoned knife out of the hands of a Sarazen that attempted his life, and killed him with his own weapon) ran to his assistance, and seizing a tripod* or trestle, struck the assassin on the head, and beat out his brains. Though the Prince censured him for striking the dead man, yet his being so near to Edward proves that he held an office of trust and honour; and, as Percy remarks, "his affectionate zeal should have induced Edward to treat his brethren the Welsh bards with more lenity."†

In the year 1306, when Edward conferred the honour of knighthood upon his son, and many others of the young nobility, a multitude of Minstrels‡ were introduced, to invite and induce the new knights to make some military vow.

In the year 1309, seventy shillings were expended on Minstrels, who accompanied their songs with the harp, at the feast of the installation of Ralph, abbot of St. Augustin's, at Canterbury.§

In the succeeding reign of Edward II. it seems that the minstrel profession fell somewhat into disrepute, owing to many dissolute persons assuming its character; causing, at the same time, so much public annoyance, that it required a royal decree to put an end to the grievance,|| which was issued in the year 1315. In the year following, however, we find that the fraternity had not been deprived of their liberty of entering at will even to the royal presence. They wore a particular dress,¶ and certain ornaments, which procured them immediate access to the greatest personages on the most solemn occasions. Of this the following remarkable and well-attested fact is a

* The original of Walter Hemmingford runs thus: "et apprehendit unus eorum tripodem, scilicet *Cithareda suus*, &c."

† There are conflicting opinions on this subject. The Hon. Daines Barrington, who wrote the History of the Gwedir Family, in *Miscellanies*, (1781, 4to.) could find no instances of severity against the Welsh, in the laws, &c. of this monarch. See his observations on the Statutes, 4to. 4th edit. &c. See Gray's ode, "Ruin seize thee, ruthless king," and Percy's Essay.

‡ "Minstrellorum multitudo," &c. vide Nic. Trivetii Annal. Oxon. 1719, 8vo. p.342.

§ Warton, vol. i. p. 89.

|| Vide Hearne's *Append. ad Lelandi Collect.* vol. vi. p. 36.

¶ The following description of an ancient minstrel's dress and appearance, put on for the amusement of Queen Elizabeth, when she was entertained at Killingworth (Kenilworth) Castle, in 1575, by the Earl of Leicester, may not be deemed out of place here.

"A person very meet seemed he for the purpose, of a xlv years old, apparelled partly as he would himself. His cap off; his head seemly rounded tonsterwise [this Percy supposes to be "tonsure-wise," after the manner of the monks]: fair kembered, that with a sponge daintily dipt in a little capon's grease was finely smoothed, to make it shine like a mallard's wing. His beard smugly shaven: and yet his shirt after the new trink, with ruffs fair starched, sleeked and glistening like a pair of new shoes, marshalled in good order with a setting stick, and strut, that every ruff stood up like a wafer. A side

[i. e. long] gown of Kendal green, after the freshness of the year now, gathered at the neck with a narrow gorget, fastened afore with a white clasp, and a keeper close up to the chin; but easily, for heat to undo when he list. Seemly begirt in a red caddis girdle; from that a pair of capped Sheffield knives hanging a' two sides. Out of his bosom drawn forth a lappet of his napkin, [i. e. handkerchief] edged with a blue lace, and marked with a true love, a heart, and a D for Damian, for he was but a batchelor yet.

"His gown had side [long] sleeves down to mid-leg, slit from the shoulder to the hand, and lined with white cotton. His doublet, sleeves of black worsted: upon them a pair of poynets† [perhaps points?] of tawney chamlet laced along the wrist with blue threaden points, a wealt towards the hand of fustian-a-napes. A pair of pumps on his feet, with a cross cut at the toes for corns: not new indeed, yet cleanly blackt with soot, and shining as a shoing horn.

"About his neck a red ribband suitable to his girdle. His harp in good grace dependent before him. His wrest [i. e. the key or screw with which he tuned his harp] tyed to a green lace and hanging by. Under the gorget of his gown a fair flaggon chain (pewter for) silver, as a Squire Minstrel of Middlesex, that travelled the country this summer season, unto fairs and worshipful men's houses. From his chain hung a scutcheon, with metal and colour, resplendent upon his breast, of the ancient arms of Islington."—Percy.

† By poynets are more probably meant *cuffs*.

sufficient proof: "When Edward II. this year (1316) solemnized the feast of Pentecost, and sat at table in the great hall of Westminster, attended by the peers of the realm, a certain woman, dressed in the habit of a Minstrel, riding on a great horse, trapped in the Minstrel fashion, entered the hall, and going round the several tables, acting the part of a Minstrel, at length mounted the steps to the royal table, on which she deposited a letter. Having done this, she turned her horse, and, saluting all the company, she departed." When the letter was read, it was found to contain some severe animadversions on the king's conduct, at which he was much offended. The door-keepers being called, and threatened for admitting such a woman, readily replied, "that it never was the custom of the king's palace to deny admission to Minstrels, especially on such high solemnities and feast days."

Stowe,* in giving an estimate of the yearly expenses of the Earl of Lancaster about this time, assigns a very considerable sum for the dresses of the Minstrels. That they received vast quantities of money and costly habiliments from the nobles, we learn upon all hands; and also that they occasionally amassed wealth, as will appear from the subjoined fact. On a column in St. Mary's Church, at Beverley, in Yorkshire, is the following inscription: "This pillar made the Mynstrylls." Its capital is decorated with five men in short coats, and one of them holds an instrument like a lute.†

If we take into account that a shilling in those days was worth ten at the present, we shall find that the pecuniary rewards of the Minstrels were enormous. At the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I. to John, Earl of Holland, every king's Minstrel received forty shillings. In the fourth of Edward II. Perrot de la Laund, Minstrel to Lord Hugh de Nevill, received twenty shillings for performing his minstrelsy before the king. In the same year, Janino le Cheveretter, who is called Le Tregettour, was paid at one time forty shillings, and at another twenty shillings, for the same service; and John le Mendlesheur, the boy of Robert le Fole, twenty shillings; the same sum was also given to John le Boteller, the boy of Perrot Duzedeys, for his performances; and again, Perrot Duzedeys, Roger the Trumpeter, and Janino le Nakerer, all of them King's Minstrels, received from the king *sixty* shillings for the like service. In the eighth year of Edward III. license was granted to Barbor the Bagpiper to visit the schools abroad, with thirty shillings to bear his expenses; also the like to Morlan the Bagpiper, with forty shillings. In the fourteenth year of Henry VII. five pounds were paid to three "*stryng-mynstrels*, for wages;" also fifteen shillings to one "*stryng-mynstrel*, for a moneth's wages;" and again to "a straunge taberer, sixty-six shillings and eight pence." Thus it is plain in what esteem and value they were held; but their general character does not appear to have been over-prudent. However, we may deduce this supposition from the foregoing largesses, that the superior Minstrels or harpers were rewarded still more munificently, and were a higher order of men.

In the fourth year of king Richard II. John of Gaunt erected at Tutbury, in Staffordshire, a *Court of Minstrels*,‡ similar to that annually kept at Chester; and which, like a court-leet or court-baron, had a legal jurisdiction, with full power to receive suit and service from the men of this profession within five neighbouring counties, to enact laws, and determine their

* *Survey of London*, edit. of 1618, p. 134.

† Vide accounts of Berdic and Raher, ut supra, pp. 7 & 8.

‡ Ritson attempted to turn this "Court of Minstrels" into ridicule; attributing their convocation to the charms of a bull-

bait: but the barbarous diversion of bull-running was no part of the original institution, &c. as is fully proved by the Rev. Dr. Pegge, in *Archæologia*, vol. ii. No. xiii. p. 86.

controversies ; and to apprehend and arrest such of them as should refuse to appear at the said court annually held on the 16th of August. For this they had a charter, by which they were empowered to appoint a King of the Minstrels, with four officers to preside over them. These were every year elected with great ceremony ; the whole form of which, as observed in 1680, is described by Dr. Plot.

In the year 1338, when Adam de Orleton, bishop of Winchester, visited his cathedral priory of St. Swithin in that city, a Minstrel named Herbert was introduced, who sung the *Song of Colbrond*, a Danish giant, and the tale of *Queen Emma delivered from the plough-shares*, (or trial by fire) in the hall of the prior Alexander de Herriard.

The fondness of the English (even the most illiterate) to hear tales and rhymes, is much dwelt on by Rob. de Bruune, in 1330. All rhymes were then sung to the harp : even *Troilus and Cresseide*, though almost as long as the *Æneid*, was to be “redde, or else songe.”

It may not be amiss to remark here, that no poets of any other country have made such frequent and enthusiastic mention of minstrelsy, as the English. There is not an old poem but abounds with the praises of music. All our old poets, and Chaucer particularly, seem to have received great pleasure from the music of their time, whatever it was ; and never lose an opportunity of describing its beauties and effects.

In Adam Davy, (or Davie) a poet in the time of Edward II. we find the following lines :

“Mery is the blast of the stynoure,
Mery is the touching of the harpoure.”

It is worthy of remark, that in his poem of “The Life of Alexander,” occurs the well-known rhyme, and which, Warton says, “is perhaps the true reading :”

“Mery swithe it is in halle,
When the *berdes waveth all*.”

And in another place we have :

“Mery it is in halle to here the harpe ;
The mynstrelles synge, the jogelours carpe.”

In the celebrated poem called the VISION OF PIERCE PLOWMAN, by Robert Longlande, a secular priest, and a fellow of Oriel College, in Oxford, about 1350, we find the following reproachful and eccentric lines, against some who were ignorant of the Minstrel Art :

“They can (know) no more minstrelsy ne musyke men to glad,
Than Mundie the milner, of *multa fecit Deus* !”

And farther on the following lines :

“Than^(a) was I as fayne,^(b) as foule^(c) of fayr morow,
And glader then^(d) the gleman^(e) that gold hath to gyfte.”

It were useless to quote all the numerous and respectful allusions made to the music of his time by Chaucer, “the most illustrious ornament of the reign of Edward III. and of his successor

(a) Then. (b) Cheerful. (c) Bird. (d) Than. It is somewhat singular we have reversed the ancient spellings of | the adverb *then* and the conjunction *than*. (e) Harper or minstrel.

Richard II." or by his friend and contemporary John Gower; a reference to their works *passim* will satisfactorily prove how highly the love of song was held in this country at the time. A few, however, of the more interesting ones will probably prove acceptable to the reader. In Chaucer's description of the 'Squire, he tells us not only that

"Singing he was, or *floyting* (fluting) all the day;"

But

"He coudè songès *make*, and well endite,
Juste (fence) and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write."

Of his mendicant friar he says :

"And certainly he hadde a mery note,
Wel coude he *singe*, and plaien on the rote."*

Again :

"In his *harping*, when that he had *songe*,
His eyen twinkeled in his head aright,
As don the starrès in a frosty night."

The poor Scholar Nicholas, in the *Miller's Tale*, was an excellent singer and performer on the psaltry; and we learn that the parish clerk, in the same tale,

"Could playen songès on a small ribible."†

In the *Pardoner's Tale*, we have perhaps the first mention of the lute :‡

"Whereas with harpès, *lutès*, and giternes,
They dance and play," &c.

That *organs* were very general in our abbeys and cathedrals, is plain from the description of *Chaunticlere*, in his *Nonnes Priestes* tale :

"His vois was merrier than the mery *orgon*,
On massè days that in the churches gon."

In the contention between *The Cuckow and the Nightingale*, and *The Flower and the Leaf*, there are many beautiful passages concerning music. In Gower, Lydgate, Spenser, *passim*. The elder poets only are mentioned here, to shew how much the art of minstrelsy was beloved at an early period in this land.

The MINSTRELS were sometimes distinguished from the HARPERS.§ In the year 1374, six Minstrels and four Harpers, partly belonging to the royal household in Winchester Castle, and partly to the Bishop of Winchester, on the anniversary of Alwine the Bishop, performed their

* The Rote is the 'Lyra Mendicorum' of Kircher, the 'Vielle' of the French, and the English Hurdy-gurdy.

† 'Ribible' is by Mr. Urry, in his Glossary to Chaucer, from Speght, a former editor, rendered a fiddle or gittern. It seems that Rebeb is a Moorish word, signifying an instrument with two strings, played on with a bow. The Moors brought it into Spain, whence it passed into Italy, and obtained the appellation of Ribeca; from whence the English *rebec*, which

Phillips, and others after him, render "a fiddle with three strings."—*Sir J. Hawkins*, vol. ii. p. 86.

‡ Vin. Galilei bears testimony that the lute was the invention of the English, and the best instruments of the kind were made by them: also that their music was worthy the excellence of their workmanship.—*Il Fronimo*, Venice, 1583.

§ Vide the prologue to Nassyngton's translation of a theological tract by John of Waldenby, entitled "A Treatise on the Trinity and Unity, &c."

minstrelsies, during dinner, in the hall of the Convent of St. Swithin at Winchester. But generally speaking, *Minstrel* was the common and inclusive term for men of "very different arts and talents." They were, however, called Harpers by the English rhymists; but the Norman name of Minstrel was much more commonly used. It is very certain, that sometimes the poet, the songster, and the musician, were united in the same person.*

On this subject, Ritson observes: "That there were individuals formerly, who made it their business to wander up and down the country chanting romances, and singing songs and ballads to the harp, fiddle, or more humble and less artificial instrument, cannot be doubted. *These men were, in all probability, comprehended within the general term of Minstrels*, but are by no means to be exclusively distinguished by that title. It may be easily imagined that many of these people, though entirely destitute of education, and probably unable either to write or read, possessed *the talent of inventing* historical or legendary songs, which would sometimes have merit; but it is to be observed, that all the minstrel songs which have found their way to us, are merely narrative; nothing of passion, sentiment, or even description, being to be discovered among them." How differently thought Sir Philip Sydney and Ben Jonson!

At the coronation of Henry V. which took place in Westminster Hall, we are told that the number of harpers in the hall was innumerable, who undoubtedly accompanied their instruments with heroic rhymes. The king, however, was no great encourager of the popular minstrelsy,† which seems at this time to have flourished in the highest degree of perfection.‡ When he entered the city of London in triumph after the battle of Agincourt, the gates and streets were hung with tapestry, representing the histories of ancient heroes; and children were placed in artificial turrets, singing verses. But Henry, disgusted at these secular vanities, commanded, by a formal edict, that for the future no songs should be recited by the harpers or others, in praise of the recent victory. This prohibition had no other effect than that of displaying Henry's humility, perhaps its principal and real design. Among many others, a minstrel-piece soon appeared, evidently adapted to the harp, on the SEYGE OF HARFLETT, and the BATTALLYE OF AGYNKOURTE.§ It was written about the year 1417, two years after the battle.

* See Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 178.

† Holingshed tells us that the king would not suffer "any ditties to be made and sung by Minstrels, of his glorious victory; for that he would whollie have the praise and thanks altogether given to God." Holinshead translated this passage from Thos. de Elmham's "Vita et Gesta Henrici V, (Edit. Hearnii, 1727, p. 72) which, had it been considered duly by Ritson, might have in some degree checked his anger against Dr. Percy, who very convincingly remarks: "As in his version Holingshed attributes the *making* as well as *singing* ditties to Minstrels, it is plain he knew *that men of this profession had been accustomed to do both.*"

‡ In a description of Minstrelsy given by John Lydgate in the beginning of the 15th century, we find the following variety of vocal and instrumental music:

— "Al maner Mynstralcy,
That any man can specifye.
Ffor there were Rotys of Almayne,
And eke of Arragon, and Spayne.

Songes, Stamples, and eke Daunces;
Divers plente of plesaunces:
And many unkouth notys new
Of swiche folke as lovid treue.
And instrumentys that did excelle,
Many moe than I kan telle.
Harpys, Fythales, and eke Rotys
Well according to her [their] notys,
Lutys, Ribibles, and Geternes,
More for estatys, than tavernes:
Orga[n]s, Cytolis, Monachordys.
There were Trumpes, and Trumpettes,
Lowde Shall[m]ys, and Doucettes."

§ Of this song Dr. Burney remarks, "Indeed, specimens of musical compositions at such an early period are so scarce, and this in particular seems so much to belong to my subject, that a History of English Music would be deficient without it."—Vide note, vol. ii. p. 383.

The band which attended this monarch to France consisted of ten clarions, and many other instruments, and played an hour every morning, and another every evening, at the king's headquarters: so that it would seem military music began to be much in vogue at this period. We find that an express order was given for his *Minstrels* also, fifteen in number, to attend him; eighteen are afterwards mentioned, to each of whom he allowed twelve pence a day, when that sum must have been of more than ten times the value it is at present.

At the feast of Pentecost, which he celebrated in 1416, having the Emperor and the Duke of Holland for his guests, he ordered rich gowns for sixteen of his Minstrels. And having before his death orally granted an annuity of one hundred shillings to each of his Minstrels, the grant was confirmed in the first year of his son, king Henry VII. A.D. 1423, and payment ordered out of the Exchequer.

Little respecting minstrelsy occurs in the reign of Henry VI. with the exception of a commission to impress boys or youths, to supply vacancies by death among the King's Minstrels. We are informed by Rymer, that they were required to be of fair proportion in feature and limbs, as well as acquainted with the Minstrel art.

It will not perhaps be deemed impertinent to observe, that about this period the Minstrels were often more amply paid than the clergy. In this age, as in more enlightened times, the people loved better to be pleased than instructed. During many of the years of Henry VI. particularly in the year 1430, at the annual feast of the fraternity of the HOLIE CROSSE, at Abingdon, a town in Berkshire, twelve priests each received four pence for singing a dirge: and the same number of Minstrels were rewarded each with two shillings and four pence, besides diet and horse-meat. Some of these Minstrels came only from Maydenhithe, or Maidenhead, a town at no great distance, in the same county. In the year 1441, eight priests were hired from Coventry, to assist in celebrating a yearly obit in the church of the neighbouring priory of Maxtoke; as were six Minstrels, called MIMI, belonging to the family of Lord Clinton, who lived in the adjoining Castle of Maxtoke, to sing, harp, and play, in the hall of the monastery, during the extraordinary refecton allowed to the monks on that anniversary. Two shillings were given to the priests, and four to the Minstrels: and the latter† are said to have supped in *camera picta*, or the painted chamber of the convent, with the sub-prior, on which occasion the chamberlain furnished eight massy tapers of wax.

* Vide Percy's *Essay*, p. 40, and, for particulars, Rymer, tom. ix. 336, and x. 287.

† Tom. xi. 375.

‡ Warton seems to have committed a slight error in this passage: for it is evident from the authority he cites (*Ex computis Prioris Priorat. de Maxtoke*) that there were different grades of Minstrels at this anniversary: the first-mentioned sum of 4s. was bestowed on the "*sex mimis Domini Clynton cantantibus, citharisantibus, et ludentibus, in aula in dicta Pietantia.*" There is afterwards another gift mentioned (though the sum is obliterated) in reference to the "*mimis cenantibus in camera picta cum supprior, eodem tempore.*" These latter

must have been a different and more highly-honoured party than the former; and indeed, Warton says in another place, (vol. i. p. 90) "Here we may observe, that the Minstrels of the nobility, in whose families they were constantly retained, travelled about the county to the neighbouring monasteries; and that *they generally received better gratuities for these occasional performances than the others.*" We read in the old romance of Launfel—

'They had menstralles of moche honours,
Fydeler, sytolers, and trompoters.'

Here there is a clear distinction between '*menstralles of moche honours*' and the '*fydeler, sytolers, &c.*'

In the reign of Edward IV. "the *first* mention," says Warton, "of the King's Poet, under the appellation of LAUREATE, occurs. John Kay was appointed poet laureate to that monarch." But there must be some mistake here, for Robert Baston, a poet whom it is said Edward II. took with him to the siege of Striveling (or Stirling) Castle, in Scotland, is stiled by Bale "LAUREATUS *apud Oxonienses*."

In addition to an office entitled King of the Minstrels,* which we read of as far back as Edward I., the term SERJEANT of the King's Minstrels also occurs under this reign : in a manner, too, which shews the confidential character of this officer, and his facility of access to the king, at all hours and on all occasions. "And as he (king Edward IV.) was in the north contray in the moneth of Septembre, as he laye in his bedde, one named Alexander Carlisle, that was *sarjaunt of the mynstrallis*, cam to him in grete haste, and bade hym aryse, for he hadde enemys cummyng," &c.† This occurred in 1469, when the king granted, or rather confirmed, the Charter for the Fraternity or perpetual Guild of the Brothers and Sisters of the Minstrel profession ; and yet this Carlisle is not one of the eight Minstrels to whom that Charter was directed.‡

"It is remarkable," says Percy, "that Walter Haliday, whose name occurs as Marshal in the foregoing charter, had been retained in the service of the two preceding monarchs, Kings Henry V. and VI. Nor is this the first time he is mentioned as Marshall of the King's Minstrels ; for in the third year of this reign, 1464, he had a grant from king Edward of ten marks per annum during life, directed to him with that title."

It is now time to speak of Church Music, which about this period was cultivated with much care and diligence ; not merely practised as an art, but the theory of it studied as a science. It was one of the four sciences which constituted the *quadrivium*§ of the schools ; and was studied with *greater attention* than any of the other three—which were, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. A considerable number of the youth who were educated for the church, made music their principal study at the universities, in order to obtain the academical honours of bachelors and doctors of music ; because those who obtained these honours were almost certain of preferment. Thomas Saintwix, doctor of music, for example, was appointed provost of King's College, in Cambridge, by its founder Henry VI. A.D. 1463.

Harmony (or Counterpoint) was now commonly superadded to the melody or plain chant of the ancient church. The honour of this invention is ascribed to the English by John Tinctor,|| one of the best writers on music in this period. "Of which new art," says he, "as I may call it, viz.

* The title of royalty was not confined to the King's chief Minstrel : it was also bestowed upon the regent of other companies of musicians.

† Vide Warton, vol. iii. p. 134.

‡ Vide Rymer xi. 642. This charter was renewed by King Henry VIII, in 1520, to John Gilman, his then Marshal, and to seven others his Minstrels. Ibid. xiii. 705.

§ For evidence that music, during the Middle Ages, was always ranked among the liberal arts, see Burney, vol. ii. p. 62, and 402-3.

|| John Tinctor, born at Nivelles, in Brabant, flourished about 1474.

The name of this person is differently spelled by different authors : Gaffurius, in his *Practica Musica*, lib. ii. cap. vii. cites him by the name of Donstable ; Sir J. Hawkins styles him John of Dunstable, so called from the town of that name in the county of Bedford, which latter way seems to be correct, as Johannes Nucius, in his *Præceptiones Musicae Poeticæ*, distinctly says "*Dunxtapli Anglus à quo primum figuralem musicam inventam tradunt.*"

Counterpoint, the fountain and origin is said to have been among the English, of whom Dunstable was the chief or head." In these words, the invention of Counterpoint is ascribed to the English, but not to Dunstable, who is only said to have been at the head of English musicians, (up to that time) of which there is sufficient evidence still remaining. John Dunstable, famous for his superior skill in music and astronomy, flourished in the former part of the fifteenth century, and died in London, A.D. 1458, or according to some, A.D. 1455. The learned Sir J. Hawkins says: "Musical composition must certainly be as ancient as the invention of characters to denote it; nay, it may be conjectured that Counterpoint was known and practised before the time spoken of;* but as to figurate music, we are at a loss for evidence of its existence before the time of Dunstable;—and, in truth, it is the invention of figurative music only that is ascribed to him by Nucius."

That *Counterpoint* existed at a much earlier period in this country than is generally known, can be easily proved; inasmuch as that to England belongs *by far* the oldest extant MS. of music in parts,—namely, the canon entitled "*Sumer is i cumen in*," preserved in the Harleian library in the British Museum, No. 978. Of this extremely curious MS. Mr. Wanley, the learned compiler of the Harleian MS. (who was "as good a musician as he was judicious collector") has remarked only that it is the most ancient he had ever seen.† Sir John Hawkins, arguing from the circumstance of our being "at a loss for evidence of the existence of figurate music before the time of Dunstable," assigns the date of its production to be the middle of the fifteenth century; but the language, the characters employed in it, and the manuscript itself, are evidently of a much earlier period. Dr. Burney, whilst appearing to coincide in Sir John Hawkins' opinion, remarks first, that "the words are of a much higher date;" and again, in quoting an ancient Treatise "of the Cordis of Music,"‡ by Lyonel Power, in which the author concludes his precepts by the following decided injunction: "Two perfyte accordes of one nature may not be sung together in no degree of descant," (which is a prohibition of fifths and eighths in succession.) He says, "this law seems to have been so much unknown or disregarded by the composer of the canon in question, that the violation of a rule so earnestly recommended by theorists, and religiously observed by practitioners ever since the laws of harmony were established, excites a suspicion that the composition is *much more ancient than has been imagined*." And in another place: "Indeed, from the northern pronunciation of the words which the rhymes require, and the inartificial counterpoint, I am sometimes inclined to imagine this canon, with the difference of additional parts and a second drone bass of later times, to have been the production of the Northumbrians, who, according to Giraldus Cambrensis,|| used a

* That is, the early part of the 15th century. Bishop Bale (in the "2de parte, or Contynuacyon of the English Votaryes," fol. 13) distinctly asserts that about the year 963, "Osbernus, a monke of Canterbury, practised newe poynts of musyk; and his example in Italy folowed GUIDO ARETINUS." That Guido was not the inventor of so much as is generally ascribed to him, is sufficiently evident from many passages in his own writings. "He does not," says Burney, "*expressly claim* any of the inventions; and his expressions are ambiguous, even where he seems to speak as an inventor: it is always '*nos ponimus*,' '*nostris notis*,' '*nostram disciplinam*.' Sometimes this seems to be only the dignified egotism of an author, and sometimes it seems literal. One of the additions to the scale of the ancients he seems, however, clearly to disclaim. The account

is that he added the Greek *gamma* at the bottom of the scale; but in this treatise (the 'Micrologus') his account of the notes begins thus: 'In primis ponitur ΓGræcum à modernis adjectum.'

† "Exemplar esse omnium quæ adhuc mihi videre contigit, antiquissimum."

‡ To be found in a volume of MS. Tracts, neatly written on vellum, which before the Reformation appertained to the Monastery of Waltham Holy-Cross, in Essex, as appears by a rubric inscription on the first leaf.

|| "The Britons," says he, "do not sing in unison, like the inhabitants of other countries; but in many different parts. So that when a company of singers among the common people meets to sing, as is usual in this country, as many different

kind of natural symphonious harmony." It has been remarked already, that "Musical composition must certainly *be as ancient as the inventions of characters to denote it*;" in like manner, a peculiar usage of an art must be still older than the description given of it. Now Giraldus wrote in the twelfth century; so that "a *natural* symphonious harmony existed previously."

Ritson, referring to Sir John Hawkins' opinion, says: "The MS. is evidently of much higher antiquity, and may, with the utmost probability, be referred to as early a period (at least) as the year 1250;" and Warton couples it with other poems, which, "from their style and antiquity, *must* have been written in the time of Edward I." (13th century.) But whatever may be the precise date, it unquestionably deserves particular attention, as being not only the first example of Counterpoint in six parts, as well as of Canon, Fugue, or Catch, but also the first English song, with or without music, that can now be produced.*

The Minstrels and their compositions seem to have fallen into utter contempt, about the time of Henry VIII. There is a piteous picture of their condition, in the person of Richard Sheale, which it is impossible to read without compassion, if we consider that to him we are indebted for the preservation of the celebrated heroic ballad of *Chevy Chase*, at which Sir Philip Sidney's heart was wont to beat, "as at the sound of a trumpet;"† and of which Ben Jonson declared he would rather have been the author, than of all he had ever written. This luckless Minstrel had been robbed on Dunsmore Heath, and, shame to tell, he was unable to persuade the public that a son of the Muses had ever been possessed of sixty pounds, which he averred he had lost on the occasion. The account he gives of the effect upon his spirits is melancholy, and yet ridiculous enough:

"After my robbery my memory was so decayde,
That I could neather syne nor talke, my wytts wer so dismayde.
My audacitie was gone, and all my myrry tawke,
Ther ys sum heare have sene me as myrry as a hawke;
But nowe I am so trublyde with phansis in my mynde,
That I cannot play the myrry knave, according to my kynde.
Yet to tak thought, I perseve, ys not the next waye
To bring me out of det, my creditors to paye.

parts are heard as there are performers, who all at length unite in consonance, with organic sweetness. In the northern parts of Great Britain, beyond the Humber, on the borders of Yorkshire, the inhabitants use the same kind of symphonious harmony; except that they only sing in two parts, the one murmuring in the base, and the other warbling in the acute or treble. Nor do these two nations practice this kind of singing so much by art as habit, which has rendered it so natural to them, that neither in Wales, where they sing in many parts, nor in the North of England, where they sing in two parts, is a simple melody ever well sung. And, what is still more wonderful; their children, as soon as they attempt using their voices, sing in the same manner. But as not *all* the English sing in this manner, but those only of the North, I believe they had this art at first, like their language, from the Danes and Norwegians, who used frequently to invade and to occupy, for a long time together, those parts of the island."

* The Doctor furnishes a curious note upon the subject. He says: "Such are the antiquity, language, and versification of

the burlesque metrical Romance called THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM, that it seems no very wild conjecture to imagine it possible that this very canon, which requires *six performers*, may have been alluded to at the close of the last stanza:

'Mekyl mirth was them among;
In every corner of the hous
Was melody delycyous
For to here precyus
Of *six meny*s song.'

That is, a song for six voices. So Shakspeare uses 'three-man song-men' in his *Winter's Tale*, Act iii. scene 3, to denote men that could sing in parts.

† "I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet: and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evill apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivill age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare!"—*Sir Philip Sidney's Defence of Poetry.*

I may well say that I hade but evil hape,
 For to lose about threscore pounds at a clape.
 The losse of my mony did not greve me so sore,
 But the talke of the pyple dyde greve me moch mor.
 Sum sayde I was not robde, I was but a lyeing knave.
 In dede, to say the truthe, that ys ryght well knowene,
 That I never had somoche mony of myn owene,
 But I had frendds in London, whos namys I can declare,
 That at all tyme wolde lende me cc, lbs. worth of ware,
 And sum agayn such frendship I founde,
 That thei wold lend me in mony nyn or ten pownde.
 The occasion why I cam in det I shall make relacion,
 My wyff in dede ys a sylk woman be her occupacion,
 And lynen cloths most chefly was her greatyste trayd,
 And at faris and merkytts she solde sale-ware that she made ;
 As shertts, smockys, partlytts, hede clothes, and othar thinggs,
 As sylk thredd, and eggyngs, skirrts, bandds, and strings."—

From the "Chant of Richard Sheale," British Bibliographer, No. 13, p. 101.

Elsewhere Sheale hints that he had trusted to his harp, and to the well-known poverty attached to those who used that instrument, to bear him safe through Dunsmore Heath. From this time, the poor degraded Minstrels seem literally to have merited the character imposed on them by the satirist Dr. Bull, and quoted with such glee by Ritson, whose enmity against Dr. Percy seems to have extended itself against the race :

"When Jesus went to Jairus' house,
 (Whose daughter was about to dye)
 He turn'd the minstrels out of doors,
 Among the rascal company :
 Beggars they are with one consent,
 And rogues by Act of Parliament."

But though the old Minstrelsy was on the wane, secular music continued rapidly to improve. A new style sprang up, and was welcomed on all hands.

At the coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn, in 1553, a choir of boys and men stood on the leads of St. Martin's Church, and sang, not spiritual hymns, but *new ballads*, in praise of Her Majesty.

Henry VIII. was not only a great patron of music, but a composer himself, having studied the art very seriously in his youth, according to Lord Herbert of Cherbury ; who tells us, in his life, that "his education was accurate, being destined to the Archbishoprick of Canterbury, during the life of his elder brother Arthur."

Hollinshed, speaking of this Prince's favourite progresses or movements from one seat to another, says : "From thence the whole Court removed to Windsor, then beginning his progresse, and exercising himselfe dailie in shooting, singing, dansing, wressling, casting of the barre, plaieing at the recorders, flute, virginals, in *setting of songs and making of ballades*."*

* Vide Chron. iii. 806.

In the reign of Edward VI. Christopher Tye, a doctor of music at Cambridge in 1545, and musical preceptor to the Prince, and probably to his sisters the princesses Mary and Elizabeth, set fourteen chapters of the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES to music, and dedicated them to Edward, who used to sing them to his lute. They were also sung for a time in the Chapel Royal, but they never became popular. Although this musical whim of the Doctor does not strictly appertain to Minstrelsy, yet the circumstance of the young Prince singing a long sacred narrative to the lute is worthy of notice, and exhibits him as a religious troubadour, who would only celebrate the *Gestes* or deeds of holy men.

The first DRINKING-BALLAD of any merit in our language, "*I cannot eate but lyttel meate,*" appeared in this reign, in the year 1551. It occurs in the comedy of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, which production was also the first of its kind.

There is nothing very particular in the next reign (of Mary) to chronicle respecting the Minstrels, with the exception that the fraternity continued gradually to decay. But as the old ones wore out, a new race of ballad writers succeeded, an inferior sort of minor poets, who wrote *new* songs to *old* tunes, in such abundance, that there seemed to be no necessity for composers. This circumstance, however, only proves the estimation in which the *old* airs were held.

We come now to the age of Elizabeth,—a period at which we must take leave of the genuine old Minstrelsy. At the close of the sixteenth century, its professors had fallen so much in public favour, that in the thirty-ninth year of Elizabeth, an act was passed by which "Minstrels, wandering abroad" were held to be "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars," and were decreed to be punished as such. This act seems to have put an end to the profession of the Minstrels, who so long had basked in the sunshine of prosperity. The name, however, remained, and was applied to itinerant fiddlers and other musicians, whose miserable state is thus described by Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, printed in 1589: "Ballads and small popular musickes sung by these *cantabanqui* upon benches and barreles' heads, where they have none other audience than boyes or countrye fellowes that passe by them in the streete, or else by blind harpers, or such like taverne minstrels, that give a fit of mirth for a groat; and their matters being for the most part stories of old time, as the Tale of Sir Topas, Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwick, Adam Bell and Clymme of the Clough, and such other old romances or historical rhimes, *made purposely for* the recreation of the common people at Christmas dinners and brideales, and in tavernes and alehouses, and such other places of base resort."

Having thus chronicled the rise, progress, and decline of the Minstrel Art in this country, we shall only, in conclusion, make use of the words of Henry Lawes: "We should not think Music any stranger to this island, since our ancestors tell us that the Britons had musicians before they had books; and the Romans that invaded us (who were not too forward to magnifie other nations) confesse what power the Druids and Bards had over the people's affections, by recording in songs the deeds of heroick spirits, their very laws and religion being sung in *tunes*, and so (without letters) transmitted to posterity; wherein it seems they were so dexterous, *that their neighbours out of Gaul came hither to learn it.*"
