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A
SELECT COLLECTION
OF
ENGLISH SONGS,

WITH THEIR
ORIGINAL AIRS:

AND
A HISTORICAL ESSAY
ON THE
ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF NATIONAL SONG,

BY THE LATE
JOSEPH RITSON, *Esq.*
IN THREE VOLUMES.



THE SECOND EDITION,

WITH
ADDITIONAL SONGS AND OCCASIONAL NOTES.

By THOMAS PARK, F. S. A.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON; LONGMAN, HURST, REES,
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DAVIES; C. LAW; S. BAGSTER; J. BOOKER; BLACK, PARRY, AND
CO.; J. M. RICHARDSON; J. BOOTH; R. PRIESTLEY; R. SCHOLEY;
CRADOCK AND JOY; R. BALDWIN; AND J. MAJOR.

1813.

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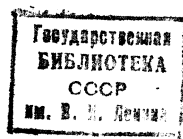
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HAVING been amicably invited, as a kind of relaxation from harder tasks, to superwise a new edition of Ritson's 'Select Collection of English Songs,' I did not long hesitate to accept the invitation. For, in the first place, I considered the work as creditable to its Compiler, from his express desire to guard it from licentiousness: in the next place, I had reason to infer, from personal intercourse, that Ritson would not have been unwilling I should have become his posthumous Editor: thirdly, because in becoming so, I felt disposed to execute my office with requisite impartiality: and fourthly, because that office afforded an opportunity of interposing a few cautionary remarks between the hypercritical asperities of our poetic antiquary, and the milder merits and more accomplished erudition of the late bishop of Dromore.

Being fully aware, however, from what I formerly experienced in conversing with Ritson, and from what I still feel in perusing some of his pages, that between a vindictive critic, whose temper is fastidiously repulsive, and a scholar of polished urbanity, who attracts our cordial regard, it is very difficult to preserve

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a dispassionate medium ; that the mind will be biassed by the magnetism of the heart ; that impetuosity of censure is very apt to arouse an ardour of defence, which a trifling cause of dispute might little warrant, and which it might still less contribute to adjust. Being aware of all this, I have forborne to assume the function of a controversial arbitrator : and in the few remarks occasionally introduced, I have tried to keep within the temperate zone of moral candour. The grave indeed is a powerful assuager of party feeling, and inurbane must be that hand which would scatter seeds of aconite where the willow and the cypress overshadow. Had Ritson himself been the survivor of Dr. Percy, I am disposed to think he might have testified such regret for his unprovoked aggressions, as I once heard him express for his disrespectful treatment of Mr. Warton, who endured "every petulant charge of designed exaggeration" with a complacency most honourable to his fame :

*" For he was arm'd so strong in honesty,
That words pass'd by him as the idle wind."*

But more on this subject, perhaps, at a future time and on a fitter occasion : when, as an editorial advocate, it will become my province to rebut a regular indictment, comprising seventeen counts, against the veracity of our poetical historian.

It only here remains to say, that Mr. Ritson's selection is given entire, in order to prevent any complaint of mutilation ; and that more than a hundred songs

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have been added in the present edition: Some trivial singularities in his mode of orthography have alone been dispensed with, from knowing that he intended to dispense with them himself, had he lived to republish his choice collection of 'Ancient English Songs.' This it was his sanguine hope to do. But, as some of our poets have asked and answered, what is human Hope?

" A garland on Affliction's forehead worn,
Kiss'd in the morning, and at evening torn !"

" Hope is Fortune's lottery ;
Where, for one prize, a hundred blanks there be.
Fond archer, Hope ! who tak'st thy aim so far,
That still, or short or wide, thy arrows are.
Thin, empty cloud ! which the' eye deceives
With shapes that our own fancy gives ;
A cloud, which gilt and painted now appears,
But must drop presently in tears.
Brother of Fear ! more gaily clad,
The merrier fool o' th' two, yet just as mad.
Vain shadow ! which dost vanish quite,
Both at full noon and perfect night."

" Hope humbly then, with trembling pinion soar,
Wait the great teacher Death, and GOD adore !"

T. P.

ERRATA.

VOL. I.

- P. 49. Note—line penult; dele *Dr*.
132. Note—after *adduced* read *from*.
273. For *glories* read *glory's*.
288. Note—dele *s* at the end of *publications*,
and add it to *composition*.

PREFACE.

PUBLICATIONS of this nature are already so numerous that, if a preface had not, on any other account, been necessary, something of the kind would, doubtless, have been required, by way of apology, for adding one more to the number: particularly under so plain and unalluring a title as that with which the present volumes are ushered into the world. Every work, however, should be its own advocate, and so must this, whatever may be here alledged in its favour.

Perhaps, indeed, if the above circumstance be viewed in a proper light, we shall find that the multiplicity of similar compilations afford rather an argument for, than an objection to, an additional undertaking, upon an improved plan. There is not, it may be fairly asserted, any one language in the world possessed of a greater variety of beautiful and elegant pieces of lyric poetry than our own. But, so long as these beauties, this elegance, continued to be scattered abroad, suppressed, and (if one may be allowed the expression) buried alive, in a multitude of collections, consisting chiefly of compositions of the lowest, and most despicable nature; one or more

being annually hashed up (*crambe repetita*) by needy retainers to the press, and the most modern being, always, infinitely the worst; (much of the one, and many of the other being, likewise, interspersed through books of a quite different cast, some of which are very voluminous, and others very scarce,) the greater part of this inestimable possession must, of course, remain altogether unknown to the generality of readers. For who, let his desires and his convenience be what they may, will think it worth his while to peruse, much less to purchase, two or three hundred volumes, merely because each of them may happen to contain a couple of excellent songs? Every one who wishes to possess a pearl, is not content to seek it in an ocean of mud.

Entirely, then, to remove every objection to which the subject is, at present, open; to exhibit all the most admired, and intrinsically excellent specimens of lyric poetry in the English language at one view; to promote real instructive entertainment; to satisfy the critical taste of the judicious; to indulge the nobler feelings of the pensive; and to afford innocent mirth to the gay; has been the complex object of the present publication. How far it will answer these different purposes, must be submitted to time, and the judgment, taste, and candour of its various readers.

The compiler is, however, aware that a late elegant collection, under the title of “*Essays on Song-writing*,”*

* [Prefixed by Dr. Aikin to a ‘Collection of such English songs as are most eminent for poetical merit;’ published in 1772, and again in 1774. The Essays were four in number; on song-writing in general; on ballads and pastoral songs; on passionate and descriptive songs; on ingenious and witty songs. In lieu of these detached prefixes to the several divisions of the work, a single essay on song

may be mentioned as an exception to every charge brought against preceding publications; and it, certainly, is very far from being his intention to involve that work in the general reprobation. Neither, indeed, will the comparatively small number of songs which the ingenious compiler has, according to his own profession, been able to select, (chiefly, perhaps, to illustrate his discourses on the subject, and introduce the original compositions,) be upon examination found, unless in a very remote degree, to interfere with, or by any means to lessen the propriety of the present attempt.

In explaining the nature and methodical disposition of these volumes, it may not be impertinent to premise, that, as the collection, under the general title of *SONGS*, consists not only of pieces strictly and properly so called, but likewise, (though in great disproportion as to number,) of *BALLADS*, or mere narrative compositions, the word *SONG* will, in the course of this prefacc, be almost every where used in its confined sense; inclusive, however, of a few modern and sentimental ballads, which no reader of taste, it is believed, will be inclined to think out of place. Of the *SONGS*, therefore, in this sense, and as forming the bulk of the work, we are now to speak.

The plan which has been adopted with regard to these, is a division or arrangement under the three heads or

writing, the result of maturer judgment, was substituted in 1810; when the doctor, under almost compulsory circumstances, that are explained in an advertisement, was induced to put forth a remodelled impression of his book, which bears the new title of ‘*Vocal Poetry, or a select collection of English songs.*’]

classes of LOVE, DRINKING, and MISCELLANEOUS SONGS. This, perhaps, is too natural an idea to be a novel one; but it does not appear to have been practised more than once or twice, and even then without either judgment or attention, and in compilations which have been long buried in oblivion. It would have required a very small share of sagacity in the editor, to have puzzled and surprised his readers with a new, fanciful, and intricate arrangement of his materials under a multiplicity of descriptions. By such ingenious contrivances, he might possibly have received the credit of trouble which he never took, and of difficulties which he never encountered; but how far his ingenuity would have benefited his readers, is a doubt which he does not find altogether so easy to solve. The general distribution which has been preferred was, it is confessed, simple and ready; but the interior order and disposition of the contents of each department is peculiar to the present volumes, and required more accuracy and attention than will, perhaps, be immediately conceived, or it is here meant to describe.

The FIRST and principal division, which forms the subject matter for the whole of the present volume, is entirely confined to such pieces as are generally comprehended within the appellation and idea of LOVE-SONGS. This part is subdivided into many inferior portions or classes, displaying or describing that sublime and noble,—that, sometimes, calm and delightful,—but more frequently violent, unfortunate, and dreadful passion, in all its various appearances, and with all its different effects, consequences, and connections. These objects are not, indeed, (and neither necessity nor propriety seemed to

PREFACE.

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require, or even allow, that they should be,) pointed out in the different pages where they occur; but the attentive reader will easily perceive, on the slightest inspection, the particular subject of each class. And they who may choose to consider the above mode rather a fatigue than a pleasure, are here informed, that the subjects peculiar to *Class I.* are diffidence, admiration, respect, plaintive tenderness, misplaced passion, jealousy, rage, despair, frenzy, and death: that in *Class II.* love is treated as a passion; with praise, contempt, reproach, satire, and ridicule: that *Class III.* exhibits the upbraidings, quarrels, reconciliations, indifference, levity, and inconstancy of lovers; and is closed by a few pieces, in which their misfortunes or most serious situations are attempted to be thrown into burlesque: that *Class IV.* is devoted, solely, to professions of love from the fair sex;—the moral to be drawn from the ill consequences of this passion being cherished in such tender bosoms, by the fatal instances of those unhappy fair ones who have suffered it to overcome their prudence, will be too obvious,—as it is too melancholy,—to escape observation, or to need enforcing:—that *Class V.* turns entirely upon the chaste delights of mutual affection, and terminates with some beautiful representations of connubial felicity, and a few, not impertinent, admonitions to its bright creators. This arrangement, (which is as comprehensive as it is particular, and will, it is hoped, be found to have been executed with all the care and attention so new and difficult a project could require,) the editor wholly submits to the taste and judgment of his fair readers; who, he trusts, will receive the highest and most refined amusement, not without considerable instruction, from every part of the volume;

which, certainly, contains a much greater number and variety of elegant and beautiful compositions on the above interesting subject, than were ever attempted to be brought together in any former collection, or than it would be even possible for them elsewhere to meet with.

The SECOND PART, or first division of the other volume, comprises a small quantity of Anacreontics, *i. e.* Bacchanalian, or, with the reader's permission, (and the title is not only more simple, but more general and proper) DRINKING-SONGS; * *chansons à boire*; most of which may be reasonably allowed to have merit in their way: but the editor will candidly own that he was not sorry to find every endeavour used to enlarge this part of the collection with credit, (and he may, probably, as it is, have been too indulgent) prove altogether fruitless: a circumstance, perhaps, which will, some time or other, be considered as not a little to the honour of the English muse.

The THIRD and last division is composed of such pieces as do not fall within either of the above descriptions, and contains several truly valuable lyric compositions, both ancient and modern, on a variety of subjects. It will be regretted that the number could not be rendered more considerable.

Although no subdivision appeared necessary, or was, indeed, admissible, or even practicable, in these two last parts; the reader may yet perceive an attention to, and propriety in the arrangement and disposition of each, with which, it is presumed, he will not have reason to be displeased.

* [Dr. Aikin, in his late republication, has more happily characterized these under the term CONVIVIAL SONGS.]

Throughout the whole of the first volume, the utmost care, the most scrupulous anxiety has been shewn, to exclude every composition, however celebrated, or however excellent, of which the slightest expression, or the most distant allusion could have tinged the cheek of Delicacy, or offended the purity of the chastest ear. This abomination, so grossly perceptible in, almost, every preceding collection, and even where editors have disclaimed its countenance, or professed its removal, is here, it may be safely averred, for the first time, *reformed altogether*; the remotest inclination to such an offence being scarcely to be discovered, even in that quarter in which licentiousness has been so long suffered, nay expected, to reign without controul, and was, of course, with the greater difficulty restrained,—amongst the Bacchanalian songs : where, however, the editor is persuaded, no one of his fair readers, for whose perusal this part of the collection is, certainly, neither calculated nor intended, will seek to detect it. A former editor, a gentleman of taste and sentiment, has termed an execution of his duty in this respect, “a disagreeable piece of severity;”* the present editor, however, far from having experienced any pangs of remorse on the occasion, wishes he could have had reason to glory in being the instrument of destruction to the whole species of those insidious and infernal productions.

Curs'd be their verse, and blasted all their bays,
Whose sensual lure th' unconscious ear betrays;
Wounds the young breast, ere virtue spreads her shield;
And takes, not wins, the scarce-disputed field!

* [See the Preface to Dr. Aikin's first edition of his Songs.]

Though specious rhetoric each loose thought refine,
Though music charm in every labour'd line,
The dangerous verse, to full perfection grown,
Bavius might blush, and Quarles disdain to own.*

Most, if not all, of the pieces which form the three divisions already enumerated, will be found more accurately printed than in any former compilation; having been selected from the best editions of the works of their respective authors, and other approved and authentic publications, or corrected by a careful collation of numerous copies. There is another advantage, which the present collection possesses unrivalled; and that is, the great number of names of the real authors of the songs, prefixed to their respective performances.

By those who, in reading the present collection, shall happen to remark the careful omission of all Scottish songs, it may be expected that the editor should give some reasons why no pieces of that denomination, (many of which are universally allowed to possess the highest degree of poetical merit,) have been inserted. It might, perhaps, be sufficient, on this occasion, to plead the words of the title, which only promises *ENGLISH* Songs; but the editor is not, however, without a further, and, he would willingly hope, a more satisfactory apology; which is, an intention to present the public, at some future opportunity, with a much better and more perfect collection† of songs *entirely* *SCOTTISH*, than any that has been hitherto attempted: he must, therefore, intreat the patience of such of his readers as are disappointed by, or may happen to complain of, the present omission, till

* W. Whitehead. [See the 'Danger of writing Verse,' a poem.]

† [This appeared in 1794, in two volumes, with musical airs.]