HENION

The Rise of the Ballad
in the Eighteenth Century

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THE RISE OF THE BALLAD IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

LORA ATKINS HENION
A. B. UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1907

THESIS

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1911
I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Lora Atkics Henion

ENTITLED

The Rise of the Ballad in the Eighteenth Century

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF

Master of Arts.

Stuart Sherman

In Charge of Major Work

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Final Examination

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Chapter I.

Ballad Characteristics and Collections.

In order to understand the reasons for the revival of interest in the ballad during the eighteenth century, it will be necessary to know something of the history of the ballad, and the reasons why, at the present time, so far as English-speaking nations are concerned, ballad-making is a lost art.

According to Professor Kittredge’s definition, "A ballad is a song that tells a story, or - to take the other point of view - a story told in song. More formally, it is a short narrative poem adapted for singing, simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into stanzas, and characterized by complete impersonality as far as the author or singer is concerned." Gummere says that all agree that the ballad is a narrative song usually preserved by oral tradition of the people. As the ballad is the expression and outcome of a homogeneous and unlettered community, we find ballads lingering longest in the country, for homogeneous conditions are first broken by cities. As they are particularly strong in primitive agricultural life, "it is in communities of this sort, remote, islanded in the sea of civilization, that most of the traditional ballads have been found."

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There is no direct trace of authorship, for the ballad does not give utterance to the feelings or mood of the singer, a fact which distinguishes the ballad from the purely lyrical poem. Not only is there lack of this personal element, but there are many traces that seem to indicate a communal composition: that is, the repetition of words and phrases, the use of chorus, refrain, singing, dancing, and improvisation. Another characteristic in addition to that of impersonality of the author is the diction, which is spontaneous, simple, and close to actual life. Certain phrases and figurative expressions, such as simple similes and metaphors, seem common to nearly all ballads. Examples which might be multiplied indefinitely, are: "the red, red blood"; "the good grey steed"; "milk white hand"; "twelve month and a day"; "He's ta'en out the little pen-knife" (to slay his enemy).

Morley in his Introduction to Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome says of ballad characteristics, "In a ballad there are no complexities. It is a tale to be chanted to the people, with ease in its rhythm, action in every line, and through its whole plan a stirring incident shown clearly from one point of view. It is a tale well told, without any pauses for a nice adjustment of opinion, but appealing simply and directly to a feeling common to us all."

With simplicity of diction, we find simplicity of plot, and a direct method of beginning the narrative. This latter characteristic is commented on by Johnson
in criticizing one of Gray's odes which has an abrupt beginning. "His ode has been celebrated for its abruptness and plunging into the subject all at once. But such arts as these have no merit, unless when they are original. We admire them only once, and this abruptness has nothing new in it. We have had it often before. Nay, we have had it in the old song of Johnny Armstrong:

'Is there ever a man in all Scotland
From the highest estate to the lowest degree,' etc.

And then, Sir,

'Yes, there is a man in Westmoreland,
And Johnny Armstrong they do him call.'

There now, you plunge at once into the subject".¹

The ballad singer expected an unhesitating belief for all his statements. If fifteen stalwart knaves are slain by one knight, single handed, the singer never goes out of his way to prove the possibility of such an achievement by appealing to the exploits of some other equally brave manslayer.

Another frequent characteristic is the incremental repetition which appears in many forms. The most common are the question repeated along with the answer, or a stanza repeating the preceding stanza for a word or two. This differs from the refrain, which may be sung after every stanza of the ballad. In addition to these forms we have the chorus, which is a whole stanza

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repeated after every stanza in the ballad; the burden, which is sung or hummed by the crowd while the foresinger brings in the new stanzas; and the typical ballad molds or petrified situations.

As the ballad seems to be the work originally of a singing, dancing throng made up of all the people, the composition was the possession of the whole people, and was transmitted orally. As long as all the people, from the laborer to the king, were on the same plane intellectually, the ballad lived. Naturally, education has not been the friend of folk poetry, for as soon as the people learned to read and write, they became less vitally interested in the transmission of these traditional tales, and finally, when their sophistication became complete, the power to transmit was lost. We know that ballads were transmitted orally, some of them for hundreds of years, as is shown by those which have been taken down in our own day from oral tradition.

We may ask, when did the ballad-making cease? Gummere says, "Scott, who was saturated with ballads and ballad lore, was the last of English poets who could write in an impersonal and communal way. After him always, as mostly before him, the subjective and sentimental note came in even where severest objectivity is supposed to reign".¹ The making of ballads is a closed account; that is, the conditions of modern life forbid the old

¹ Gummere: The Beginnings of Poetry, page 156
communal expression. True, if we go among the so called "illiterate" class, we will still find the ballads being sung or recited, but ballad-making is a lost art. The ballad of The Cruel Brother is used by Professor Child to show by what class the ballads have been orally preserved. In 1776, David Herd recorded it in his manuscript as he had heard it from a Scottish peasant, while as late as 1860 it was furnished to Professor Child as a version still current in County Meath, Ireland. All of the Scottish version (six in number) of The Two Brothers were obtained within the first third of the nineteenth century, and since then no others have been heard of, but the ballad has been obtained within recent years from the singing of poor children in American cities. I know a high school boy, the child of an illiterate Irish woman, who after reading "English and Scottish Ballads," informed me that he knew others, evidently variants of some he had read, which his mother had sung to him, and which had been sung in her family for generations. Goldsmith, in his essays, speaks of the effect upon him of the singing of Johnny Armstrong and Barbara Allen as sung by their old dairy-maid.

As soon as the ballad becomes crystallized into the printed word, it seems to disappear from among the common people. As to the time in which ballads have

1. The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. Edited by Francis James Child. (Boston, 1882, 10 vols.) vol. 1, p. 141-161
been reduced to writing, by taking the list in Volume X of Professor Child's collection which gives in chronological order the sources from which he derived his texts, we find that only about eleven ballads were extant in manuscripts older than the seventeenth century. In this century, various miscellanies preserve a number of texts, and there are also a number of broadsides. The Percy Manuscript which is especially important, was written about 1650; but the greatest number of collections is found in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The ballad seldom has a date for composition that may be definitely ascertained. The reason for this is obvious. The ballad was not composed at one time, anymore than by one author. As it was orally transmitted, it was natural for changes to be made, and not until it was printed, did it cease to change.

A word should be said regarding the broadside. It usually consisted of a single large sheet, printed on one side only, and often without division into columns. As representing an outburst of popular feeling, it was most commonly employed during the Civil War, and seems to have reached its culminating point in the time of James II. From that period, with the increase in the number of newspapers and the liberty of the press, it gradually died out, though still numerous even under the Georges. Some seemingly true ballads have been printed in the form of broadsides. These printed broadsides are

Definition of broadside from Universal Encyclopedia.
liable to accidents which shorten their existence, and we therefore owe much to the collectors who have saved some of them from destruction.

"Cottagers pasted broadside ballads on their walls, and sometimes collected them into bundles. Motherwell had heard that in some parts of Stirlingshire a collier's library consists of four books,—the Confession of Faith, the Bible, Sir William Wallace, and a bundle of ballads. When ballads were intended for the exclusive use of the ordinary ballad buyers they were printed in black letter, a type that was thus retained for more than a century after it had gone out of use for other purposes. The black letter literature seems to have been collected by antiquaries, rather than by ballad lovers who desired it for its power or beauty.

In the eighteenth century, we find many so-called ballads which will not stand the tests by which we know the real or "minstrel" ballads, as Percy calls them. The professional ballad writer gives a reason for everything—

Robert Burton, the author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," was one of the earliest collectors of broadsides. John Selden made a considerable collection of broadside ballads, which passed at his death to Pepys; the diarist had 1800 English ballads, which bound in five folio volumes, are now in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge. One of the most famous collections is that known by the name of the Duke of Roxburghe, and now in the British Museum, gathered chiefly by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, and including 2048 broadsides bound in three volumes. In 1898, Lord Crawford had at Haigh Hall, something like 19,000.

he states, and in consequence, fills his work with redundancies. Extravagant details, exaggeration, prosaic elements, over refinement, sophistication, sentimentality, designs on the reader, and the appending of a moral, are the elements not found in the true ballad.

Dr. Johnson's definition of the word ballad in his dictionary is, a song. One of his quotations is taken from Watts to the effect that "ballad once signified a solemn and sacred song, as well as trivial, when Solomon's song was called the ballad of ballads." The word came to mean, also, any song that was on the lips of the people. It is in this sense that we find Horace Walpole's letters full of "ballads" written about political and social affairs. Bishop Percy explained the difference between the two classes of ballads in his Essay on the ancient Minstrels, but unfortunately did not bear the distinction in mind when he altered some of the ballads, and in these changes has superimposed the redundancies and formalities of his century upon the simplicity of the earlier centuries.

Knowing, then, the characteristics of true ballads, why do we find this revival of interest in the eighteenth century, and why, conversely, had interest died out in the sixteenth and seventeenth? By again referring to the list of sources from which Professor Child obtained the material for his wonderful collection, we find that the

Harleian and Percy manuscripts, and the collection in York Minster Library, were the only ones of any importance from 1550 to 1708. From 1708 to 1803, at which latter date Scott collected the minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, there were forty collections of ballads besides twenty-one books of garlands and stall-copies. The time in the eighteenth century when these miscellanies and manuscripts were published was largely in the second half of the century. One volume of English and Scotch songs, has the probable date of 1730; Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy, ran through four editions from 1699 to 1720; a collection of Old Ballads, 3 vols. 1723, 1725; Allan Ramsay's The Evergreen, 1724, and The Tea-Table Miscellany, 3 vols., 1729, 1733, 1740, 1750, 1763; Thomson's Orpheus Caledonius, 1725, 1733; and the separate ballads of Waters, and Edom of Gordon, printed in Glasgow in 1755, are all the volumes which precede Bishop Percy's work. Following the Reliques, there were fifteen stall copies or garlands. David Herd's collections of Ancient and Modern Scotch Songs, 1769, 1776; John Pinkerton's Scottish Ballads, 1781, 1783; James Johnson's Six Hundred Scots Songs, 1787-1803; and Joseph Ritson's collections, 1783, 1784, 1790, 1792, 1793, bring us to 1803 when we reach the culmination of ballad collecting in Scott's work.

The prevailing spirit of the eighteenth century was classical, and thus it was not an age for enthusiasm in ballads. The generalizing tendency led into ethical and didactic verse, and hence, little lyrical verse was written. This would naturally be
true, for the song, either in the lyric or ballad was primitive and spontaneous. Beers says, "Whatever else the poets of Pope's time could do, they could not sing."\(^1\) Their phraseology, also, would not be suitable for ballads, for they had "substituted generalities and second-hand allusions" for simple phrasing. We have said, too, that the ballads lingered among the common people. When we remember the profound contempt of the classicists for the unconventional, for the country or outward nature, for the life of remote times and places, we may readily understand why the ballad, except for its value to the antiquary, was lost sight of until about the middle of the eighteenth century. \(^2\) Beers says, "Outside of Chaucer, and except among antiquarians and professional scholars, there was no remembrance of the whole corpus poetarum of the English Middle Age; none of the metrical romances, rhymed chronicles, saints' legends, miracle plays, minstrel ballads, of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. The significant circumstance about the attitude of the century toward the medieval period was, not its ignorance, but its incuriosity".

Macaulay says, "As it is agreeable to general experience that at a certain stage in the progress of society, ballad-poetry should flourish, so is it also agreeable to general experience, that, at a subsequent stage in the progress of society, ballad-poetry should be undervalued and neglected. The phraseology of the old minstrels becomes

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2. Ibid. pp. 64, 65.
obsolete. Their versification, which, having received its laws only from the ear abounds in irregularities, seems licentious and uncouth. Their simplicity appears beggarly when compared with the quaint forms and gaudy colorings of such artists as Cowley and Gongora. The ancient lays, unjustly despised by the learned and polite, linger for a time in the memory of the vulgar and are at length too often irretrievably lost. We cannot wonder that the ballads of Rome should have altogether disappeared, when we remember how very narrowly, in spite of the invention of printing, those of our own country and those of Spain escaped the same fate. There is, indeed, little doubt that oblivion covers many English songs equal to any that were published by Bishop Percy. Eighty years ago, England possessed only one tattered copy of Childe Waters and Sir Cauline, and Spain only one tattered copy of the noble poem of The Cid. The snuff of a candle, or a mischievous dog, might, in a moment, have deprived the world forever of any of those fine compositions."

Why, then, was there a revival of interest in the ballad? It was a natural part of the revolt against the classicism of the early part of the century - a part of the regeneration of English style due to the imitation of Spenser and Milton, and the aroused interest in the Gothic manners and the Celtic literature. With the ballad revival, as with any movement which reverts to the past for its inspiration, antiquaries usually lead the way.

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Pope shows his attitude toward this research in *Imitations of Horace*:

"Authors, like coins, grow dear as they grow old;
It is the rust we value, not the gold.

Chaucer's worst ribaldry is learned by rote,
And beastly Skelton heads of houses quote:
One likes no language but the Faery queen;
A Scot will fight for Christ's Kirk o' the Green.\(^a\)

... and each true Briton is to Ben so civil,
He swears the Muses not him at the Devil."\(^b\)

Paul Mallet's *Introduction to the History of Denmark* (1755); Macpherson's *Ossian* (1762); Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762); Evan's *Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764); and Tyrwhitt's edition of Chaucer (1775-1778); were some of the sources of inspiration. The decade from 1760 to 1770 is an important one, and the most important title is *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our Earlier Poets*, published in three volumes in 1765.

Thomas Percy was born in 1729 at Bridgenorth in Shropshire. His father and grandfather were grocers, spelling their name Piercy. Percy received his B. A. and M. A. degrees at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1750 and 1753, respectively; and shortly after, was presented by his

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\(^a\) A Scotch ballad.

\(^b\) A tavern.
college with the living of Easton Mundit, in the county of Northampton. In this poor cure he remained for twenty-five years. In 1756, his income was increased by the gift of the rectory of Wilby, an adjacent parish, and in 1759 he married Anne Gutteridge, who was his beloved companion for forty-seven years.

In 1761, Percy commenced his literary career by the publication of a Chinese novel in four volumes, which he translated from the Portuguese. In 1762, he published Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese. In 1763, were published Five Pieces of Runic Poetry - Translated from the Icelandic Language, and in the following year appeared A New Translation of the Song of Solomon. Dr. Johnson paid a long promised visit to the vicarage in the summer of 1764. At this time Percy must have been full of anxiety about his reliques which were shortly to be published. Shenstone was the first to suggest the subject of this book. He had seen the folio manuscript which Percy possessed, and felt that the latter was the man best fitted to edit the ballads.¹

In February, 1765, appeared the first edition of the Reliques, which gave Percy a name, and obtained him the patronage of the great. He became chaplain and secretary

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¹. In his Preface, Bishop Percy says, "The plan of the work was settled in concert with the late elegant Mr. Shenstone, who was to have borne a joint share in it, had not death unhappily prevented him. Edition of Percy's Reliques, Preface, page XV. Edited by J. V. Prichard, London, 1900."
to the Duke of Northumberland, and later was appointed chaplain to George III. In 1770, appeared his translation of Mallet's Northern Antiquities. The mythology of the Eddas was thus first made known to English readers, and in his introduction to Mallet's work he clearly pointed out the essential differences between the Teutonic and Celtic races. In 1778, Percy obtained the Deanery of Carlisle, and four years later was appointed to the bishopric of Dromore. In 1771, he had printed The Hermit of Warkworth, which exhibited his continued interest in ballads. Soon after his wife's death, which occurred in 1806, he became totally blind. In 1811, he died, at the age of eighty-three, having outlived nearly all his contemporaries.

The source of Percy's Reliques was a manuscript, a small book which had lost some of its pages both at the beginning and end. Percy found it lying on the floor under a bureau in the home of Humphrey Pitt in Shropshire. The paper was being used by the maids for lighting the fire. He begged it of Mr. Pitt, and in process of its being bound, the binder pared off some of the top and bottom lines in different parts of the volume. This manuscript, which seems to have been copied in the seventeenth century, was the basis for the Reliques.

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Bishop Percy's dedication will show the spirit with which he gave the Reliques to the world. The work was dedicated to the Countess of Northumberland. In it he says: "Those writers who solicit the protection of the noble and the great, are often exposed to censure by the impropriety of their addresses: a remark that will, perhaps, be too readily applied to him, who, having nothing better to offer than the rude songs of ancient minstrels, aspires to the patronage of the Countess of Northumberland, and hopes that the barbarous productions of unpolished ages can obtain approbation." And again, "Those poems are presented, not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, showing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages.--------No active or comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity. It is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilized, grossness refined and ignorance instructed.------By such bonds was the infancy of genius nurtured and advanced, by such were the minds of unlettered warriors softened and enlarged, by such was the memory of illustrious actions preserved and propagated."

We feel that he has taken rather an apologetic attitude, but we can understand it, for he was doubtful of the reception the work was likely to obtain, thus culling the contents of his volumes "the barbarous productions of unpolished ages." He spared no pains to illustrate his poetry by dissertations upon ancient minstrels, and also
by additional verses when he felt they added to the interest in the poem. He backed his own opinion of the interest in the ballads by believing in the interest of Dr. Johnson and his friends. But as Wordsworth says, "The compilation was ill suited to the then existing taste of city society; and Dr. Johnson, with the little senate to which he gave laws, was not sparing in his exertions to make it an object of ridicule. The critic triumphed, the legendary writers were undeservedly disregarded, and as deservedly their ill imitated models sank in this country into temporary neglect." Dr. Johnson made parodies of the ballad style, and Warburton sneered at the compiler as the man "who wrote about the Chinese."

On the other hand, the impetus given to the collection of old ballads is shown in the rapid succession of volumes of the same character. Nearly all of these were devoted to the publication of Scottish ballads exclusively. In 1769, David Herd, who had spent most of his life in an accountant's office in Edinburgh, published The Ancient and Modern Scots Songs, Heroic Ballads, etc., now first collected into one body from the various Miscellanies wherein they formerly lay dispersed, containing a great number of Original Songs, from manuscripts never before published; a work which was enlarged into two volumes in 1776. He was a most successful and faithful collector, and not being a poet, did not change and supplement the ballads found.

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In 1777, appeared the first edition of Thomas Evans's collection of *Old Ballads, Historical and Narrative*, in two volumes. A second edition in four volumes was edited in 1810 by the son of the original compiler. The *Quarterly Review, May 1810*, gives a long review of this second edition. It is of value not only for its criticism of the Evans publication, but also for the praise of the *Reliques*, and an apology for the Percy additions. In part it is as follows:

"The reviewer of minstrel poetry in Scotland was the venerable Bishop of Dromore, who published his elegant collection of heroic ballads, songs, and pieces of early poets. The arrangement of the specimens was so managed as to exhibit the gradation of language, the progress of popular opinions, the manners and customs of former ages, and the obscure passages of our earlier classical poets. To bring Philosophy from heaven to dwell among men, it was necessary to divest her of some of her more awful attributes, to array her doctrines in familiar language and render them evident by popular illustration. But Dr. Percy had a different course to pursue when conducting Legendary Lore from stalls and kitchens and cottage chimneys, or at best from the dust, moths, and mold of the Pepysean or Pearsonian collections, to be an inmate of the drawing room and study. The attempt was entirely new, and the difficulties attending it arose from the fastidious taste of an age which was accustomed to receive nothing under the denomination of poetry un-
recommended by flowing numbers and elaborate expression. To soften these difficulties, Dr. Percy availed himself, to a considerable extent, of his own poetical talent, to alter, amend, and decorate the rude popular rhymes which, if given to the public with scrupulous fidelity would probably have been rejected with contempt and disgust. It was not then so much the question whether an ancient poem was authentic according to the letter, as whether it was or could be rendered worth reading.--------His avowal of alterations, additions, and conjectural emendations, at the bottom of each page, would have only led his readers to infer that his originals were good for nothing; not to mention that a great many of these additions derived their merit from being supposedly ancient. In short, a certain conformity with the general taste was necessary to introduce a certain relish for the subject; accuracy and minute investigation of the original state of the ballads was likely to follow, and did follow as soon as the public ear had been won by the more elegant edition of Percy.--------Mr. Evans availed himself of the taste which they excited, by publishing the collection of which his son has now given us the second edition. The ballads themselves are such as the more cautious taste of Dr. Percy had left unpublished, either because their rude structure was incapable of decoration, or because they were so well known as to render decoration unadvisable. The principal source from which they are taken is a small publication entitled A Collection of Old Ballads corrected from the best and most ancient copies extant.
Mr. Evans in revising has omitted a number of sing-song imitations of the ancient ballad. He has also omitted the contributions which his father levied upon Goldsmith, Gray, and other eminent moderns, whose works are in everyone's hand. By this exclusion he has made room for a selection of genuine ancient poetry, compiled by his own industry, from the hoarded treasures of black letter ballads. These veterans are, generally speaking, more respectable for their antiquity than for anything else. Percy, Ellis, and other editors had long ago anticipated Mr. Evans's labors, and left him but the refuse of the market."

Joseph Ritson (1752-1803), was a zealous student of English literature and history, and especially of ballad poetry. He prepared a long series of anthologies of popular poetry and was one of the earliest collectors of local verse. Proof of this is shown by his *Garner Surton's Garland* (1783); the *Bishopric Garland, or Durham Minstrel* (1784); the *Yorkshire Garland* (York, 1788); the *North Country Chorister* (Durham, 1792); *The Northumbrian Garland, or Newcastle Nightingale* (Newcastle, 1793). His *Select Collections of English Songs* (3 vols., 1783); *Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry from Authentic Manuscripts and old printed copies adorned with Cuts* (1791); *Ancient Songs from the time of King Henry the Third to the Revolution* (1787-1792),

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Sources for Ritson were *Dictionary of National Biography;* vol. 17 Percy Society; Scott's *introduction to Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.*
contained prefatory essays on English minstrels, and ancient English music. They also contained attacks on Bishop Percy for having so many forged or garbled versions of ballads. In the introduction of the last named collection, we find Ritson commenting on Percy as follows:

"Dr. Percy had the good fortune to meet with an ancient folio manuscript which contains near 200 poems, songs, metrical romances, etc."

"The above manuscript is certainly the most singular thing of the kind that was ever known to exist. How could such a multifarious collection possibly have been formed so late as the year 1650, of compositions prior to Chaucer, most of which had never been printed, is scarcely to be conceived by those conversant in ancient MSS., a similar instance perhaps not to be found in any library public or private." (Here follow instances of insertions in ballads.) "Many other instances might be noticed where the learned collector has preferred his ingenuity to his fidelity, without the least intimation to the reader."¹

Scott in his introductory remarks on Popular Poetry in Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border says of Ritson's criticism of Percy that it was due to his extreme attachment to the severity of truth, and the contentions of the two men regarding minstrelsy were like the opinions regard-

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ing the gold and silver shield - both were right. As to Percy's so-called forgeries, Scott would say with the writer in the Quarterly Review, that Percy's object was not to secure the words of the old ballads, but to "fix the consideration of general readers on ancient poetry. Percy avowedly indulged in such alterations and improvements upon his materials as might adapt them to the taste of an age not otherwise disposed to bestow its attention on them."*

From a general point of view, while we may deplore the severity of Kitson's prejudices, we must give him credit for his competent work in collecting and editing ballads. We may call him the pioneer in ballad study, for he was painstaking and accurate in his work. Unlike Percy, he did not add original verses to fragments, but gave them just as he found them. His exhaustive work on Robin Hood, shows his methods. It contains every extant allusion to Robin Hood, from history, poetry, proverbs, or any other source - all collected and explained with what Scott calls "superstitious scrupulosity."

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2. Scott's Introduction. p. 38-39. *The Editor, T. F. Henderson makes the following interesting comment: "By the method of Dr. Percy, many ancient fragments became hopelessly sophisticated."

3. Robin Hood, a Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads now extant relating to that celebrated English Outlaw. (1795, 2 vols.)

The next ballad collector of importance was John Pinkerton, whose Scottish Tragic Ballads (London, 1781), and Select Scottish Ballads (2 vols., London, 1783), gave Ritson another opportunity for searching out imitations. Scott says some of Pinkerton's ballads "smell of the lamp", for they are the work of a scholar rather than an ancient minstrel. In the "Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1784, in a criticism signed "Anti-Scott", we find Ritson denouncing Pinkerton. The ballads are taken in order, and tested. "Of I wish I were where Helen lies,' this single line alone is genuine. And yet have you the affectation or assurance to censure Ramsay, who not only was a much better poet, but, though a poor barber, had infinitely more taste and judgment in Scottish poetry than yourself, for exercising a much slighter degree of the same liberty." 3

In 1787 was commenced the Scots Musical Museum by James Johnson. Johnson was a music-seller and engraver in Edinburgh, and the work was really projected by William Tytler, Dr. Blacklock, and Samuel Clark. The first volume was partly printed when Burns became acquainted with the object of the work. He then entered "into the scheme with enthusiasm, and besides "begging, and borrowing" old songs, wrote many himself.

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1. Ibid. p. 44.


The century was rounded out by the publication of Sir Walter Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Edinburgh, 1802. The popularity was almost as immediate as that of its great precursor, Percy's Reliques. Scott first met with the Reliques shortly after he had finished his high school work in Edinburgh. He tells of his delight in the reading, and the fact that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, he forgot the hour of dinner, being so entranced with the book. "To read and remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my school fellows with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy." The depth of the impression thus produced was shown in his zeal for collecting old versions. As early as 1792 he commenced his annual "raids" of Liddesdale for the collection of songs, tunes, and even antique articles. Scott said to James Ballantyne, the printer, "I have been for years collecting old Border ballads, and I think I could, with little trouble, put together such a selection from them as might make a neat little volume to sell for four or five shillings." The work, as it finally appeared, was not a "little volume", but in the present edition is four volumes. Two volumes appeared in 1802; a third followed in 1803; and in the course of subsequent editions, the arrangement of the ballads underwent various changes, and numerous additions were made to the notes. In 1830, Scott drew up the Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry, and an Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad.
Scott's treatment of ballad versions was similar to that of Percy's, in that the version of a ballad as it appears in the *Minstrelsy* was often the result of combination and arrangement of other versions, or the correcting and improvement of one version by the introduction of phrases, and even stanzas of his own. His editor says that he acquired a marvellous mastery of current ballad phraseology, and the excellence of his versions greatly exceeds that of most other ballad editors.

By again consulting Professor Child's bibliography, we find that there were thirty-seven ballad collections from 1301 to 1830, and one hundred and two from 1830 to the time of the making of the collection in 1895. The impetus given to the collecting of ballads seems to have produced an influence which is far reaching. The knowledge of ballad material has been a wonderful help in the study of folklore in England and Scotland; and this impulse has affected not only England and America, but from the time of the Percy collection has revived an interest in folk-poetry among scholars of Europe as well. In addition to stimulating research, the ballad interest has aided in bringing about a love for simpler, more unconventional poetry, perhaps, even as Wordsworth says, "The poetry of England has been absolutely redeemed by it."

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Chapter II

Ballad Criticism in the 18th Century.

Gummere, in his *Beginnings of Poetry*, says that as late as 1775, a German professor would have been insulted by the mere idea of any attention to the poetry of the people. Englishmen, to be sure, began long before this to collect the ballads, to print them, and even to write about them in a shame-faced way; Ambrose Phillips, or whoever made the collection begun in 1723, is very bold in his first volume; he 'will enter upon the praise of ballads and show their antiquity'; in the second volume he weakens, and will 'say as little upon the subject as possibly' he can; while in the third volume he actually apologizes for the 'ludicrous manner' in which he wrote the other two prefaces."

As we have stated, the revival in ballad interest did not begin until the second half of the century, and we would, the pseudo-classicists to consider the ballad literature as not worthy of any notice; or else, if interesting, to find traces in them of classicism. Pope's comment on the antiquarian research has been spoken of. In his *Memoirs of P. R. Clerk of this Parish*, he makes the clerk say: "Even when I was at school, my mistress did ever extol me above the rest or the youth, in that I had a laudable voice. And it was furthermore observed, that I took a kindly affection unto that black letter in which our Bibles are printed. Yea, often did I exercise myself in singing godly ballads, such as The Lady and Death, The Children in the Wood, and--

Gummere: The Beginnings of Poetry.
Chevy Chase; and not, like other children, in lewd and trivial ditties." The entire memoir is satirical in tone, and we can read into it the pharasaical tone of the clerk, and Pope's lack of regard for the clerk's "godly ballads."

The Rambler for November, 1751, gives an account of a club of antiquaries, and shows, on the part of Johnson, a similar contempt for antiquarian research that was directed toward other than classical sources. "Cantilenus turned all his thoughts upon old ballads, for he considered them as the genuine records of the national taste. He offered to show me a copy of The Children in the Wood, which he firmly believed to be of the first edition, and by the help of which, the text might be freed from several corruptions, if this age of barbarity had any claim on such favours from him."

While Addison was classical in his attitude toward ballads, in thinking that he could trace resemblances to the writers of antiquity, he recognized the inherent value in the ballads. Two of the Spectator papers are given up entirely to the analysis of ballads. In No. 70, in discussing the "Gothic manner in writing," which he says "will please a reader of plain common sense," ballads are given as a type of poetry, which, "while it is the delight of the common people, cannot fail to please all such readers as are not unqualified for the entertainment of their affectation or ignorance. The old song of Chevy-Chase is the favourite ballad of the common people of England; and Ben Jonson used to say, he had rather have been the author

of it than of all his works. Sir Philip Sidney, in his Discourse of Poetry, speaks of it in the following words: 'I never heard the old song of Piercy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung by some blind Crowder with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?' For my own part, I am so professed an admirer of this antiquated song, that I shall give my reader a critic upon it, without any other apology for so doing.

The greatest modern critics have laid it down as a rule, that an heroic poem should be founded upon some important precept of morality, adapted to the constitution of the country in which the poet writes." Homer and Virgil are then used as illustrations of the poets' attempts to write about discords of princes in order to bring harmony.

"At the time the poem we are now treating was written, the dissensions of the barons, who were then so many petty princes, ran very high, whether they quarrelled among themselves or with the neighbors, and produced unspeakable calamities to the country; the poet, to deter men from such unnatural contentions describes a bloody battle and dreadful scene of death, occasioned by the mutual feuds which reigned in the families of an English and Scotch nobleman. That he designed this for the instruction of his poem, we may learn from his four last lines, in which, after the example of the modern tragedian, he draws from it a precept for the benefit of his readers.
'God save the King, and bless the Land,  
In Plenty, Joy, and Peace;  
And grant henceforth, that foul debate  
Twixt noblemen may cease.'

The next point observed by the greatest heroic poets has been to celebrate persons and actions which do honour to their country. The poet before us, has not only found out an hero in his own country, but raises the reputation of it by several beautiful incidents. The English are the first to take the field, and the last to quit it. The English bring only fifteen hundred to the battle, the Scotch two thousand. The English keep the field with fifty-three; the Scotch retire with fifty-five: all the rest on each side being slain in battle. But the most remarkable circumstance of this kind, is the different manner in which the Scotch and English kings receive the news of this fight, and of the great men's deaths who commanded it." Then follow six stanzas of the poem in illustration.

"At the same time that our poet shows a laudable partiality to his country-men, he represents the Scots after a manner not unbecoming so bold and brave a people." Earl Douglas is then described. "His sentiments and actions are every way suitable to an hero. One of us two, says he, must die: I am an Earl as well as yourself, so that you can have no pretence for refusing the combat: However, says he, 'tis pity, and indeed would be a sin, that so many innocent men should perish for our sakes; rather let you and I end our quarrel in single fight." Three stanzas are quoted, giving the agreement.
"When these brave men had distinguished themselves in the battle and in single combat with each other, in the midst of a generous parley full of heroic sentiments, the Scotch Earl falls; and with his dying words encourages his men to revenge his death, representing to them as the most bitter circumstance of it, that his rival saw him fall." The two stanzas relating his death are then given, in which he calls his men "merry men all." Addiston then adds, "'Merry men,' in the language of those times is no more than a cheerful word for companions and fellow soldiers." The editor then adds a parallel passage in Virgil's Aeneid, where Camilla, a woman warrior, instead of weeping over her last agonies, considers ("like the hero of whom we are now speaking") how the battle should be continued after her death.

"Turnus did not die in so heroic a manner; tho' our poet seems to have had his eye upon Turnus's speech in the last verse, 'Lord Percy sees my fall.' Earl Percy's lamentation over his enemy is generous, beautiful, and passionate. I must only caution the reader not to let the simplicity or the style, which one may well pardon in so old a poet, prejudice him against the greatness of the thought." Then given the two stanzas telling the farewell of Percy over Douglas.

"That beautiful line, 'Taking the dead man by the hand,' will put the reader in mind of Aeneas's behavior towards Lavinia, whom he himself had slain as he came to the aid of his aged father."
continues the criticism of Chevy Chase. "In my last Monday's paper I gave some general instances of those beautiful strokes which please the reader in the old song of Chevy Chase. I shall here, according to my promise, be more particular, and show that the sentiments in that ballad are extremely natural and poetical, and full of the majestic simplicity which we admire in the greatest of the ancient poets: for which reason I shall quote several passages of it, in which the thought is altogether the same with what we meet in several passages of the Aeneid; not that I would infer from thence that the poet (whoever he was) proposed to himself any imitation of those passages but that he was directed to them in general by the same kind of poetical genius, and by the same copyings after nature.

"Had this old song been filled with epigrammatical turns and points of wit, it might perhaps have pleased the wrong taste of some readers; but it would never have become the delight of the common people, nor have warmed the heart of Sir Philip Sidney like the sound of a trumpet; it is only nature that can have this effect, and please those tastes which are the most prejudiced or the most refined. I must however beg leave to differ from so great an authority as that of Sir Philip Sidney, in the judgment which he has passed as to the rude style and evil apparel of this antiquated song, for there are several parts in it where not only the thought but the language is majestic, and the numbers sonorous; at least the apparel is much
more gorgeous than many of the poets make use of it in Queen Elizabeth's time, as the reader will see in several of the following quotations.

What can be greater than either the thought or the expression in that stanza,

'To drive the deer with hound and horn
Earl Piercy took his way;
The child may rue that was unborn
The hunting or that day.'

This way of considering the misfortunes which this battle would bring upon posterity, not only on those who were born immediately after the battle and lost their fathers in it, but on those also who perished in future battles which took their rise from the quarrel or the two Earls, is wonderfully beautiful and conformable to the way of thinking among the ancient poets." Two similar lines from Horace are given.

"What can be more sounding and poetical, or resemble more the majestic simplicity or the ancients than the following stanzas?" (Five stanzas follow.)

"The country of the Scotch warriors described in these two last verses, has a fine romantic situation, and affords a couple or smooth words for verse. If the reader compares the foregoing Latin verses, he will see how much they are written in the spirit of Virgil." The lines are then given, and also four verses from the ballad telling of the slaying of Earl Douglas.

"Aeneas was wounded after the same manner by an unknown hand in the midst or a parley. But of all the descriptive parts of this song, there are none more beautiful
than the four following stanzas, which have a great force and spirit in them, and are filled with very natural circumstances. The thought in the third stanza

'Against Sir Hugh Montgomery
So right his shaft he set,
The grey-goose wing that was thereon,
In his heart-clood was wet.'

One may observe likewise, that in the catalogue of the slain the author has followed the example of the greatest ancient poets, not only in giving a long list of the dead, but by diversifying it with little characters of particular persons." As an example he quotes,

"Sir Charles Murrel of Ratcliff too
His sister's son was he,
Sir David Lamb so well esteem'd,
Yet saved could not be."

"The familiar sound in these names destroys the majesty of the description; for this reason I do not mention this part of the poem but to show the natural cast of thought which appears in it, as the two last verses look almost like a translation of Virgil.

In the catalogue of the English who fell, Witherington's behavior is in the same manner particularized very artfully, as the reader is prepared for it by that account which is given by him in the beginning of the battle; though I am satisfied your little buffoon readers (who have seen that passage ridiculed in Hudibras) will not be able to take the beauty of it: for which reason I dar not so much as quote it.

'Then stept a gallant squire forth,
Witherington was his name
Who said, I would not have it told
To Henry our king for shame,
That e'er my Captain fought on foot,
And I stood looking on.'
We meet with the same heroic sentiment in Virgil.

What can be more natural or more moving, than the circumstances in which he describes the behaviours of those women who had lost their husbands on this fatal day?

Thus we see how the thoughts of this poem which naturally arise from the subject, are always simple, and sometimes exquisitely noble; that the language is often very sounding, and that the whole is written with a true poetical spirit.

If this song had been written in the Gothic manner which is the delight of all our little wits, whether writers or readers, it would not have hit the taste of so many ages, and have pleased the readers of all ranks and conditions. I shall only beg pardon for such a profusion of Latin quotations; which I should not have made use of, but that I feared my own judgment would have looked too singular on such a subject had not I supported it by the practice and authority of Virgil."

Again, in the Spectator Number 85, for Thursday, June 7, another ballad is discussed. "I can't for my heart, leave a room before I have thoroughly studied the walls of it, and examined the several printed papers which are usually pasted upon them. The last piece that I met with upon this occasion, gave me a most exquisite pleasure. My reader will not think I am serious when I acquaint him that the piece I am going to speak of was the old ballad of the Two Children in the Wood, which is one of the darling songs of the common people, and

1. Addison's Works.
has been the delight of most Englishmen in some part of their age.

This song is a plain simple copy of Nature, destitute of all the helps and ornaments of art. The tale of it is a pretty tragical story; and pleases for no other reason, but because it is a copy of nature. There is even a despicable simplicity in the verse; and yet, because the sentiments appear genuine and unaffected, they are able to move the mind of the most polite reader with inward melttings of humanity and compassion. The incidents grow out of the subject and are such as are the most proper to excite pity. For which reason the whole narration has something in it very moving; notwithstanding the author of it (whoever he was) has delivered it in such an abject a phrase and poorness of expression, that the quoting any part of it would look like a design of turning it into ridicule. But though the language is mean, the thoughts, as I have before said, from one end to the other are natural; and therefore cannot fail to please those who notwithstanding they are judges of language, have a true and unprejudiced taste or nature. The condition, speech, and behavior of the dying parents, with the age, innocence, and distress of the children, are set forth in such tender circumstances that it is impossible for a reader of common humanity not to be affected with them. As for the circumstance of the robin-redbreast, it is indeed a little poetical ornament; and to show the genuine of the author amidst all his simplicity, it is just the same kind of fiction which one of the greatest
or the Latin poets has made use of upon a parallel occasion; I mean that passage in Horace where he describes himself when he was a child, fallen asleep in a desert wood, and covered with leaves by the turtles that took pity on him.

I have heard that the late Lord Dorset ... had a numerous collection of old English ballads and took a particular pleasure in the reading of them. I can affirm the same of Mr. Dryden; and know several of the most refined writers of our present age, who are of the same humour.

As for the little conceited wits of the age, who can only show their judgment by finding fault; they cannot be supposed to admire these productions which have nothing to recommend them but the beauties of nature, when they do not know how to relish even those compositions that with all the beauties of nature, have also the additional advantage of art."

Spectator Number 179, for September twenty-fifth, has a slight reference to The Children in the Wood, for in a letter describing a whistling contest, one of the contestants "contracted his mouth with so much gravity, and, that he might dispose his mind to be more serious than ordinary, begun the tune of the Children in the Wood and went through part of it with great success."

These criticisms on the part of Addison indicate, first, his own Catholicity of taste as compared with the majority of his contemporaries; second, his classicism, as
shown by his tendency to compare the best passages with those in Horace and Virgil; third, his understanding of the attitude of the writers of his day. This last characteristic is seen in his references to "conceited wits of the age" who "do not know how to relish even those compositions that, with all the beauties of nature, have also the additional advantages of art," and also to the fact that if Chevy Chase "had been written in the Gothic manner," it would have been the "delight of all our little wits." The half-apologetic way in which he asks pardon for his frequent use of Latin quotations because he feared that his own judgment would have looked singular on such a subject had he not supported it by the authority of Virgil, seems a very natural one, particularly when we know the criticism Addison brought upon himself by these numbers of the Spectator.

Johnson, in his Life of Addison, says: "Addison descended now and then to lower disquisitions; and by a serious display of the beauties of Chevy Chase exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaff, who bestowed a like pompous character on Tom Thumb; and to the contempt of Dennis, who, considering the fundamental position that Chevy Chase pleases because it is natural, observes that there is a way of deviating from nature by bombast or tumour, which soars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk, by affectation, which forsakes nature in quest of something unsuitable; and by imbecility, which degrades nature by faintness and diminution, by ob-
souring its appearances, and weakening its effects.

In *Chevy Chase* there is not much of bombast or affectation; but there is chill and lifeless imbecility. The story cannot possibly be told in a manner that shall make less 1 impression on the mind."

John Dennis, in a letter to H--C-- Esq., Of Simplicity in Poetical Compositions, in Remarks on the 70th Spectator, says: "By your last of the 26th. you desire to know my opinion of the notable Critick upon Chevy Chase in the Spectator or the 21st and that of the 25th or this instant; that is, you desire to know whether I believe the author or those two papers to be in jest or in earnest. To which I answer, that he is neither in jest nor in earnest; not in earnest, because he does not believe what he says; nor in jest, because he does strenuously endeavor to convince the reader of the excellence of that old dogrel. His design is to see how far he can lead his reader by the nose." In reference to Addison's statement regarding Sidney's and Jonson's love for ballads, Dennis says, "I am so very well convinced of the solid judgment of Ben Johnson, that if Ben ever talked at that rate, (which I will not absolutely pretend to deny, tho' I very much doubt it) he only did it to laugh and to ridicule some of the sottish admirers of that obsolete song. As for Sir Philip Sidney, do but observe the expression which that noble gentleman uses; he tells us not that his heart was moved by the song of Piercy and

Douglas as often as he read it, or heard it read, but as often as he heard it sung, nay, tho' it was sung by an old crowder. I shrewdly suspect that there were some martial notes in this old Gothick tune, which very much contributed to the working that effect upon Sir Philip Sidney. But instead of affirming that Sir Philip Sidney had gone too far, he pretends to insinuate that he falls too short; for the Spectator vindicates the very expression of Chevy Chase, in which one thing, I must confess, he does seem to me to come something near to a jest, and to make a fine ironical ridicule upon Sir Philip Sidney. But be these things as they will, besides that through the whole course of this criticism I have and shall oppose greater authorities to these, I shall confound them by invincible reason, before which no authority could even stand; and by showing the nature of poetry, and what it is that constitutes the difference between that and prose, shall make it appear that the writer of this old song, in spite of the applause or so many ages, never knew what poetry was."

Using Horace, Boileau, and Rapin as authorities of criticism, Dennis says that unless the writing has "greatness and magnificence" in expression, "ardor and vehemence," and a "fine, a graceful, and a delicate air," we may not call it poetry. "Now what one of these great qualities has the old ballad of Chevy Chase? Of all the lines which the captain has quoted, 'tis remarkable, that there is but one which has anything like a figure in it.
Now tho' the subject of that song is noble, yet there being nothing figurative in it, 'tis plain by consequence that there is nothing great, nothing noble in it; no magnificence, no vehemence, no painting, no poetry. To compare any of the passages in it to Virgil is ridiculous, and a man may as well compare a dead man to a living." Then he compares a passage from Chevy Chase with one from Virgil. "What is there in the first but what is vile and trivial? What ploughman, what tinker, is not capable of saying the like? But that of Virgil is so bold, so figurative, so pompous, so harmonious, that a man must be Virgil himself to say it."

A comparison is then made to bring out the difference between Sternhold's 148th Psalm and the Hymn of Milton in the Fifth Book of Paradise Lost. "Since then there is no manner of resemblance between the hymn and the version, which seem to have several things in common, what shadow of likeness can there be between Virgil and English dogrel, where there is nothing common between them, nor ground-work, nor figure, nor harmony; the dogrel being utterly destitute both of figure and harmony, and consequently void, of the great qualities which distinguish poetry from prose."

Johnson, in the lines given above from his Life of Addison, mentions Wagstaffe's ridicule of Addison.

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Isaac Disraeli says of this, "Wagstaffe's Miscellaneous Works, 1726, have been collected into a volume. His Comment upon the History of Tom Thumb, ridicules Addison's on the old ballad of Chevy Chase. Wagstaffe tells us he has found 'in the library of a school-boy among other undiscovered valuable authors, one more proper to adorn the shelves of Bodley or the Vatican than to be confined to the obscurity of a private study.' This little Homer is the chanter of Tom Thumb. He performs his office of a 'true commentator,' proving the congenial spirit of the poet of Thumb with that of the poet of Aeneas. Addison got himself ridiculed for that fine natural taste, which felt all the witchery of our ballad-Enniuses, whose beauties, had Virgil lived with Addison, he would have inlaid into his mosaic. The bigotry of classical taste, which is not always accompanied by a natural one, and rests securely on prescribed opinions and traditional excellence, long contemned our vernacular genius, spurning at the minstrelsy of the nation. Johnson's ridicule or Percy's Reliques had its hour, but the more poetical mind or Scott has brought us back to home feelings, to domestic manners, and eternal nature."

We may feel that Disraeli's criticism of the classical critics of the eighteenth century is extreme, but we realize from the temerity of Wagstaffe, and the --o000--

The Calamities and Quarrels of Authors, by Isaac Disraeli. 2 vols. New York, 1870. Footnote, pp. 269, 270 to essay on Political Criticism on Literary Compositions.
positive statements of Dennis, that Addison was venturing into a new field of criticism when he analyzed and admired the ballads of Chevy Chase and the Babes in the Woods.

The Tragedy of Jane Shore written by Nicholas Rowe in 1714, gives us one of the earliest eighteenth century appreciations of ballads. In the Prologue, a part of which Bishop Percy used for the introduction to his Reliques, Rowe says:

"Tonight, if you have brought your good old taste,
We'll treat you with a downright English feast.
A tale, which told long since in homely wise,
Hath never failed of melting gentle eyes:
Let no nice sir despise our hapless dame
Because recording ballads chaunted her name;
Those venerable ancient song-enditers Soared many a pitch above our modern writers:
They caterwaul'd in no romantick ditty,
Sighing for Phillis's or Chloe's pity,
Justly they drew the fair, and spoke her plain,
And sung her by her Christian name - 'twas Jane.
Our numbers may be more refined than those,
But what we've gained in verse, we've lost in prose.
Their words no shuffling, double-meaning knew,
Their speech was homely, but their hearts were true."

We would know this was written for the Englishman of the age of Pope and Dryden, by the reference to the high-sounding names of Phillis and Chloe, and to the polished verse form of the day; but the criticism regarding the

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The ballad of Jane Shore is No. XXVI, Book II, vol. 2 in the Reliques.
sacrificing of truth for form, and polish for true-heartedness, seem to us to be in the true Romantic spirit.

Another poet of the early eighteenth century who refers to ballads is John Gay. In the *Shepherd's Week*, ballad singing is made a natural part of the merriment which ends the week. One of the shepherds is asked to sing.

"No sonnor gan he raise his tuneful song,  
But lads and lasses round about him throng.  
Not ballad-singer plac'd above the crowd  
Sings with a note so shrilling sweet and loud."  
After singing of "nature's laws" and "fairs and shows,"  
"Then sad he sung 'The Children in the Wood:'  
(Ah, barbarous uncle, stained with innocent blood)  
How blackberries they plucked in desarts wild;  
And fearless at the glittering faulchion smiled;  
Their little corpse the robin-red-breasts found,  
And strowed with pious bill the leaves around.  
(Ah, gentle birds: if this verse lasts so long,  
Your names shall live forever in my song.)  
For 'Buxom Joan' he sung the doubtfull strife,  
How the sly sailor made the maid a wife.  
To louder strains he raised his voice,  
to tell  
What woeful wars in 'Chevy-Chace' befell,  
When 'Percy drove the deer with hound and horn,  
Wars to be wept by children yet unborn!  
Ah, Witherington, more years thy life had crown'd,  
If thou hadst never heard the horn or hound:  
Yet shall the quire, who fought on bloody stumps,  
By future bards be wailed in doleful dumps.  
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Then he was seized with a religious qualm,  
And on a sudden sung the hundredth psalm.  
He sung of 'Taffey Welch,' and 'Sawney Scot,'  
'Lilly-bullero' and the 'Irish Trot.'  
Why should I tell of 'Bateman' or of 'Shore'.  
Of 'Wantley's Dragon' slain by valiant Moore,  
The 'Bower of Rosamond' or 'Robin Hood,'  
And how the 'grass now grows where Troytown stood'?  
His carols ceased; the listening maids and swains  
Seem still to hear some sort imperfect strains."  
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There seems to be no effort on the part of Gay to give the ballads literary value, but to create a feeling of sympathy for the story told in them.

From these early criticisms until the second half of the century, there is little said regarding ballads. The correspondence of Horace Walpole, the writer of Gothic romances, antiquarian, and man of fashion, is interesting, for either by his silence or by his frequent mention of ballads, we may know his attitude, and that of his friends.

In March, 1765, he writes to a friend regarding the *Reliques*. "I can acquaint you with a delightful publication of this winter, *A Collection of Old Ballads and Poetry*, in three volumes, many from Pepys's collection at Cambridge. There were three such published between thirty and forty years ago, but very carelessly, and wanting many of this set: indeed, there were others of a looser sort, which the present editor, who is also a clergyman, thought it "decent to omit."

The rest of his references to ballads are just incidental, showing his familiarity with the story told, but no particular delight in them. In a letter to Gray, written from Paris in 1766, he says, "Like Queen Elinor in the ballad, I sunk at Charing-Cross, and have risen in the 2 Fauxbourg St. Germain." Another letter written in the same

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month to George Montagu shows his knowledge of the Robin Hood story. "Methinks you would make an excellent Robin Hood reformer, with little John your brother. How you would carol Mr. Percy's old ballads under the green-wood tree! I had rather have you in my merry Sherwood than at Greatworth, and should delight in your picture drawn as a bold forester, in a green frock......Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the bubble of old people, make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint lone."

Walpole's references to Chevy Chase are more numerous than to any other ballad. January, 1771, in a letter to Horace Mann regarding political conditions, he writes: "There seems to be a pestilence amongst our politicians. They go off by wholesale........(Many are mentioned). Alderman Sawbridge is dying, and, in short, Lord Chatham, like Widdrington in 'Chevy Chase', is left almost alone to fight it out upon his stumps." May, 1777, in a letter to Rev. William Mason, he says, "The condemnation of Gray's letters is Scotch taste: The whole nation hitherto has been void of wit and humour, and ever incapable of relishing it..... The Scots like to wound with another man's dagger, You will only smile at their impotence. I wish they could only stab with their pens:-

'The grey-goose quill that is thereon, In no man's blood will be wet.'"

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1. Ibid. vo. 2. To George Montagu, January 1766.
The last two lines are an adaptation of two lines in Chevy Chase.

Again in 1780, he parodies the same two lines, "What you have sent me would wash out any stain. All the perfumes of Arabia do sweeten your little hand, the grey goose quill that is therein, in his heart's blood is wet."

In a letter to the countess of Upper Ossory in 1782, writing while one finger was disabled, he says, "I am as persevering as Widdrington in 'Chevy Chase' who fought with his stumps, for I am now undertaking to write you without a finger, Madam."

In 1786, referring to a quarrel between two of his friends, one of whom resorted to print, he says, "Anstey, who does not hate a squabble in print, as he has more than once shown, discharged shaft upon shaft against the poor veteran, and-

'The grey goose-quill that was thereon
In his heart's blood was wet;'
for he died of the volley, as even a goose-quill will do the feat."

Still another reference which may refer to old ballads or to new-made ones, shows a rather contemptuous attitude. "Mr. Fitzpatrick has been here two hours....I sent him home with his pocket stuffed with books, but such

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2. Ibid. Vol. XI. p. 308
as he may read when his servant is curling his hair. One was a collection of ballads in Queen Anne’s time! I hope they will put him in tune." I think we feel that Walpole had an acquaintance with ballads, but aside from this interest in the Percy collection due to his antiquarian tendencies, he did not think of the ballads as literature.

Tickell was not a ballad critic, but seems to have obtained ballad inspiration, enough to call forth comment from both Gray and Goldsmith, thus giving us the views of the two on ballad style. Gray in his letters, says of Tickell’s writing, "Tickell has added to this a great poverty of sense, and a string of transitions that hardly become a school-boy. However, I forgive him for the sake of his ballad, which I always thought the prettiest in the world." This was the ballad of Colin and Lucy, of which Goldsmith says, "Through all Tickell’s works there is a strain of ballad-thinking, if I may so express it; and in this professed ballad he seems to have surpassed himself. It is, perhaps, the best in our language in this way."

Gray was an admirer of ballad poetry. In a letter to Rev. William Mason he says, "I wish you were here, for I am tired of writing such stuff, and besides I have got the old Scotch ballad (Child Maurice) on which ‘Douglas’ was founded; it is divine, and as long as from here to

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1. Ibid. Vol. XII. To Countess of Upper Ossory, July, 1774.
Aston. Have you never seen it? Aristotle's best rules are observed in it in a manner that shows the author never had heard of Aristotle. You may read it two-thirds through without guessing what it is about; and yet, when you come to the end, it is impossible not to understand the whole story. I send you the two first verses." Here follow fifteen lines of the poem. In his Essay on Rhyme, Gray speaks of reading the M.S. collection of Percy, but makes no comment on it. From these comments, we feel that he was a lover of ballads, not of artificial ballad-making, but of the folk ballad.

We have spoken before of Goldsmith's criticism of Tickell's Colin and Lucy. He himself introduces a ballad into the Vicar of Wakefield. This one is not an original one, but is partially a paraphrase of the Gentle Herdsman, Tell to Me, found in the Reliques. In the conversation which precedes the reading of this ballad, there has been a difference of opinion regarding the relative merits of classical poetry and that of England. Sophia has read Gay's Henry and Emma "an hundred times with new rapture!" while George, who had been to Oxford, insisted that the description is much inferior to that of Ovid, for the Roman poet understands the use of contrast better. Mr. Burchell, who seems to give an opinion that might be Goldsmith's, says that both Ovid and Gay have contributed to introduce a false taste into their respective countries, by loading all their lines with epithets. "English poetry is nothing at present but a combination of luxuriant images, without plot or connection.

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I have made this remark only to have an opportunity of introducing to this company a ballad, which, whatever be its other defects, is, I think, free from those I have mentioned."

The vicar speaks of the neighbors whom they had after their removal to the country, and the kind of amuse-
ments indulged in. "These harmless people had several
ways of being good company; while one played, the other
would sing some soothing ballad, "Johnny Armstrong's Last
Good Night, or the Cruelty of Barbara Allen."

These two ballads were evidently favorites with Goldsmith,
for in his essay on Happiness of Temper, he says, "My
present enjoyments may be more refined, but they are in-
finitely less pleasing. The pleasure the best actor gives,
can no way compare to that I have received from a country
way who imitated a Quaker's sermon. The music of the finest
singer is dissonance to what I felt when our old dairy-
maid sung me into tears with Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-
night, or the Cruelty of Barbara Allen." Again, "Every
country has its traditions, which, either too minute or not
sufficiently authentic to receive historical sanction, are
handed down among the vulgar, and serve at once to instruct
them. Of this number, the adventures of Robin Hood, the
hunting of Chevy Chase, and the bravery of Johnny Armstrong
among the English, are instances." While he appreciates

Ginn and Company, Boston, 1900, Chapter VIII, pp. 40-46.
2. Ibid. Chapter IV, p. 21.
Tickell's ballad style, it seems as if he felt that to
be moved by ballads was rather a childish thing, one
which would be natural in the ignorant or in children,
but not in a citizen of the world.

This same notion of the effect of ballad singing
on the common people is brought out in Burke's treatise
On the Sublime and Beautiful. "Among the common sort of
people, I never could perceive that painting had much in-
fluence on their passions. It is true that the best sorts
of poetry are not much understood in that sphere. But
it is most certain that their passions are very strongly
roused by a fanatic preacher, or by the ballads of Chevy-
Chase, or The Children in the Wood, and by other little
popular poems and tales that are current in that rank of
life. I do not know of any paintings, bad or good, that
produce the same effect. So that poetry, with all its
obscenity, has a more general, as well as a more powerful
dominion over the 1 passions, than the other art."

John Scott, a minor English poet living from 1730
to 1783, writes an ode called An Apology, in which one
person advocates a following of earlier English models, while
the poet reeks that anything not written on classical lines
will not ensare.

"Pastoral, and elegy, and ode:
Who hopes by these applause to gain,
Believe me, friend, may hope in vain-
These classic things are not the mode;
Our taste polite, so much refin'd,
Demands a strain of different kind.

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"'Go, court the muse or Chevy Chase
To tell in Sternhold's simple rhimes
Some tale of ancient English times;
Or try to win rude satire's grace,
That scold, who dirt around her throws,
And many a random stain bestows.

"'Or dull trite thoughts in songs combine,
And bid the tuneful accents fall,
To wake the echoes of Vauxhall;
Or tow'rs the stage they thoughts incline
And furnish some half-pilfered play,
To shine the meteor of the day.

"'O, No - though such the crowd amuse,
And peals of noisy praise procure;
Will they the critic eye endure,
And pass the ordeal of reviews?
And who is he for whom they'll gain
A niche in fame's immortal fane?"

Johnson's word on ballads may be taken more or
less as that of all the literary coterie of which he was the
leader. Burke, we have seen, realized the attitude of the
common people towards ballads, as did Goldsmith. Boswell
says, "The conversation having turned on modern imitations
of ancient ballads, and some one having praised their sim-
plicity, he treated them with that ridicule which he
always displayed when that subject was mentioned." In
discussing the ballad of Hardyknute, about whose author-
ship people were in some doubt, Johnson said, "The ballad
or Hardyknute has no great merit, if it be really ancient.
People talk of nature. But mere obvious nature may be
exhibited with very little power or mind."

   Vol. 1, p. 483.
In regard to the directness in the beginning of ballads, we have spoken of his criticism of Gray's ode, and the comparison of it with the ballad of Johnny Armstrong. Boswell speaks of Johnson's conversation concerning it, and Johnson himself in his Life of Gray says, "The ode (The Bard) is finished before the ear has learned its measures, and consequently before it can receive pleasure from their consonance and recurrence. Of the first stanza the abrupt beginning has been celebrated; but technical beauties can give praise only to the inventor. It is in the power of any man to rush abruptly upon his subject, that has read the ballad of Johnny Armstrong.

Is there ever a man in all Scotland."

In a letter to Bennet Langton, he says, "I was last night at the Club. Dr. Percy has written a long ballad in many fits, it is pretty enough." This emphasizing of the word fits gives it a sarcastic twist, for the doctor was fond of poking fun at his friend Percy and at ballads. George Steevens relates an instance of this ridicule of Percy.

"When Dr. Percy first published his collection of ancient English ballads, perhaps he was too lavish in commendation or the beautiful simplicity and poetic merit he supposed himself to discover in them. This circumstance provoked Johnson to observe one evening at Miss Reynolds's tea-table, that he could rhyme as well, and as elegantly, in common narrative and conversation. 'For instance,' says he,

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1. Ibid. Vol. 1, p.269.
'As with my hat upon my head
I walked along the Strand,
I there did meet another man
With his hat in his hand.

Or, to render such poetry subservient to my own immediate use

'I therefore pray thee, Kenny dear,
That thou wilt give to me,
With cream and sugar softened well,
Another dish or tea.

'Nor fear that I, my gentle maid,
Shall long detain the cup
When once unto the bottom I
Have drunk the liquor up.

'Yet hear, alas! this mournful truth,
Nor hear it with a groan;
Thou canst not make the tea so fast
As I can gulp it down.'

And thus he proceeded through several more stanzas, till the reverend critic cried out for quarter. Such ridicule, however, was unmerited.'

Mr. Cradock also speaks of this parody, but says it was on a stanza in the Hermit of Warkworth. "It was urged that Johnson only meant to attack the metre; but he certainly turned the whole poem into ridicule. Almost the last time that I ever saw Johnson, he said to me,

'Notwithstanding all the pains that Dr. Farmer and I took to serve Dr. Percy, in regard to his Ancient Ballads, he has left town for Ireland without taking leave of either of us.'"

Mrs. Piozzi, in her reminiscences, speaks of Johnson's habit of parodying poems, particularly Percy's

1. Ibid. Vol. IX. Part V. pp. 193, 194.
Hermit of Warkworth.

"The tender infant, meek and mild,
Fell down upon the stone;
The nurse took up the squealing child,
But still the child squealed on."

And also

"Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
Wearing out life's evening gray;
Strike thy bosom, sage! and tell
What is bliss, and which the way?

Thus I spoke, and speaking; sigh'd,-
Scarce repressed the starting tear,-
When the hoary sage replied,
Come, my lad, and drink some beer."

There was, to him, a lack of sonorous, high
sounding words and polished form in the ballad, and the
absence of these seemed to make for insipidity.

We have spoken of Percy's Reliques. Percy's
editorial method would seem to be a part of the ballad
criticism. He finds it necessary in his preface to say,
"The names of so many men of learning and character the
editor hopes will serve as an amulet, to guard him from
every unfavourable censure for having bestowed any attention
on a parcel of Old Ballads. It was at the request of many
of these gentlemen, and of others eminent for their genius
and taste, that this little work was undertaken." He also
says that it has been the work of his "idle hours", evidently
fearing that his readers might think it beneath his ministerial
dignity to edit these "barbarous productions."

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1. Ibid. Vol. IX, Part I. Anecdotes of Johnson by Mrs.
Piozzi, p. 23.

p. XVII.
The Bishop did not hesitate to enlarge any ballad that seemed to need completion, or to revise any stanzas that were already in existence. He excuses himself by saying that "the old copies were often so defective or corrupted, that a scrupulous adherence to their wretched readings would only have exhibited unintelligible nonsense; when, by a few slight corrections or additions, a most beautiful or interesting sense hath started forth,.....and the Editor must plead guilty to the charge of concealing his own share in the amendments." He has supplied so many stanzas in some of the ballads, that we should hesitate to call them folk ballads. On the other hand, he realized the "pleasing simplicity and many artless graces" in these old ballads and was one of the leaders in the van of which Wordsworth and Scott were later proud of being members.

One of the results of the essay on The Ancient Minstrel written by Percy, was Beattie's poem of The Minstrel, the first part of which was published in 1773. The pleasure that Edwin received from hearing the old stories sung, is given us in the following stanzas:

"Ah me! neglected on the lonesome plain,  
As yet poor Edwin never knew your lore,  
Save when against the winter's drenching rain,  
And driving snow, the cottage shut the door,  
Then, as instructed by tradition hear  
Her legend when the beldam 'gan impart,  
Or chant the old heroic ditty o'er,  
Wonder and joy ran thrilling to his heart;  
Much he the tule admired, but more the tuneful art.  

Various and strange was the long-winded tale;  
And halls, and knights, and feats of arms displayed;  

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1. Ibid. p.XII.
Or merry swains who quaff the nut-brown ale,
And sing enamored of the nut-brown maid,
The moonlight revel of the fairy glade;
Or hags, that suckle an infernal brood,
And ply in caves the unutterable trade,
Midst fiends and spectres quench the moon
in blood,
Yell in the midnight storm, or ride the
infuriate flood.

But when to horror his amazement rose
A gentler strain the beldam would rehearse,
A tale of rural life, a tale of woes,
The orphan babes, and guardian uncle fierce.
O cruel! Will no pang of pity pierce
That heart by lust of lucre sear’d to stone?
For sure, if aught of virtue last, or verse,
To latest times shall tender souls bemoan
Those hopeless orphan babes by these fell arts
undone.

Behold, with berries smeared, with brambles
torn,
The babes, now famished lay them down to die;
Amidst the howl or darksome woods forlorn,
Folded in one another’s arms they lie;
Nor friend, nor stranger, hears their dying
cry;
'For from the town the man returns no more.'
But thou, who Heaven’s just vengeance dar’st defy
This deed with fruitless tears shalt soon deplore,
When death lays waste the house, and flames
consume thy store.

A stifled smile of stern vindictive joy
Brightened one moment Edwin’s starting tear,—
'But why should gold man’s feeble mind decoy
And innocence thus die by gloom severe?'

A part of another stanza gives also the habit
of ballad singing to a group of rustics:

"Nor was this ancient dame a roe to mirth,
Her ballad, jest, and riddle’s quaint device,
Oft cheer'd the shepherds round their social
hearth."

Cowper, in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Unwin,
gives a definition and an appreciation of the ballad. "The
ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this

p. 14,15. stanzas 43-47, and 52.
country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps to some of the very best odes that the Greek and Latin languages have to boast of."

This seems to me to be the first praise of ballads that does not contain any reservations regarding their rudeness or their lack of appeal to the classicist. In fact, they are compared on equal terms with the Greek and Latin odes.

In direct contrast to this warm Commendation by Cowper, is the coldly classical criticism by Vicesimus Knox, in his Essays, Moral and Literary, published in 1787. He discusses the antiquarian spirit which was formerly confined to interest in ancient manners, records, and buildings, but which had "extended to those poetical compositions which were popular among our forefathers, but which have gradually sunk into oblivion through the decay of language, and the prevalence of a correct and polished taste. Books printed in the black letter are sought for by the English antiquary with the same avidity with which he peruses a monumental inscription, or treasures up a Saxon bit of money. The popular ballad composed by some illiterate minstrel, and which has been handed down by tradition for several centuries, is rescued from the hands of the vulgar to obtain a place in the collection of the man of taste. Verses, which, a few

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years past were thought worthy the attention of children only, or of the lowest and rudest orders, are now admired for that artless simplicity, which once obtained the name of coarseness and vulgarity.

It must be confessed that this species of antiquarianism is better calculated for the public in general than any other.... The genuine beauties of poetry are capable of being relished by those who are perfectly regardless whether or not it was printed in black letter, and written by Rowley or by Chatterton. Every lover of poetry is pleased with the judicious selection of Percy, though he gives himself little concern about dates. The antiquary may perhaps admire the oldest and the worst piece in the collection, only because it is old. The common reader, however, does often partake with the antiquarian in the pleasure resulting from labour bestowed in research after poetry.

In perusing the antiquated pages of our English bards, we sometimes find a passage which has comparative merit, and which shines with the greater lustre, because it is surrounded with deformity. While we consider the rude state of literature, the want of models, the depraved state of readers, we are struck with the least appearance of beauty. We are flattered with an idea of our own penetration, in discovering excellencies which have escaped the notice of the world. We take up the volume with a previous determination to prove that it contains valuable matter. We select a few lines from a long work, and by a
little critical refinement, prove that they are wonderfully excellent.

Rowe has said, that the old English bards and minstrels soared many a height above their followers; and it is true, that those old ballads, which are in the mouths of peasants on both sides the Tweed, have something in them irresistibly captivating. Vulgar, coarse, inelegant, they yet touch the heart. Many of them, when read as the writers intended, are musical. They have pleased the ear of a whole people, and therefore, in spite of the cold feelings of the critic, must be pronounced beautiful. Addison first gained them the notice of scholars, by his praise of Chevy-Chase. He illustrated their beauties by comparing them with the classics. This indeed drew the attention of the classical reader; but it may be questioned, whether it would not be a better method to view them as originals; and in order to procure them a general reception, appeal to the genuine feelings of nature. For, in truth, when compared, as compositions, with the correct works of Virgil or Horace, the barbarous language in which they are written, makes them appear to disadvantage.

Notwithstanding the incontrovertible merit of many of our ancient relics of poetry, I believe it may be doubted whether any one of them would be tolerated as the production of a modern poet. As a good imitation of the ancient manner, it would find its admirers; but, considered independently as an original, it would be thought a careless, vulgar, inartificial composition. There are
few who do not read Percy's own piece, and those of other late writers, with more pleasure than the oldest ballad in the collection of that ingenious writer."

Mention must be made in any discussion of eighteenth century criticism, of the work of Thomas Warton. His History of English Poetry from the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Century gives a careful treatment of ballads and romances. In sections II and VII, we have a description of the satirical and political ballads of the thirteenth century. The ballad of The Nut-Browne Mayde is commented on, and Prior's paraphrase as given in Henry and Emma is criticized because of his attempts to soften the sternness of the man, and his use of expressions such as "beauteous Emma," and the "ambrosial plenty of her flowing ringlets."

The objection on the part of Warton is to the artificiality of the imitation of the old ballad. In passing, we may say that Johnson also objected to Prior's poem, but for a very different reason. He thought it a "dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither esteem for the man, nor tenderness for the woman. The example of Emma, who resolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt should drive him, deserves no imitation." One would infer that the old ballad without even the so-called value of

artificial polished phrasing, would have pleased him still less.

The novelists of the eighteenth century, with few exceptions, make no references to ballads. In reading Miss Birney's works one is struck by the frequency of the characters saying, "As Pope has so well said," and then following with a couplet or more. If the characters show any poetic ability it is in the direction of odes and sonnets. Neither in Richardson's novels nor his correspondence is there any mention of ballads. Madame D'Arblay's letters do not speak of ballads, nor of the Reliques, although she knew Bishop Percy.

Lewis, in his novel, The Monk, has some of his characters sing ballads, but they are artificial in tone. The titles such as Alonzo the Brave, and Fair Imogene, and The Galland Durandarte who Died at Roncevalles, indicate the romance rather than the ballad.

As we have seen, the correspondence of the century shows us the real attitude of the writers regarding the literary life of the time. Henry Crabb Robinson's diary and letters give us the life of a man who numbered many of the literary men of the last of the eighteenth and the first of the nineteenth centuries among his correspondents. "When very young," he says, "my mother delighted me by

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1. Miss Birney's Camilla, Evelina.
2. Richardson's Correspondence by Anna Barbauld, 6 vols. London, 1804.
singing a ballad which must be in some of the popular collections. It was about a rich young lady who lived in Reading and fell in love with a poor lawyer. Of course, it ends happily. I used to delight in this story. Children's moral feelings are not more delicate than those of the people or their poets." This early reading of ballads is also shown by his statement that his first notions of Popery were taken from a ballad called Mordecai the Jew. In his diary for August, 1811, he speaks of reading Scott's introduction to the Minstrelsy and thinks the note on Fairies is a shallow and unsatisfactory one. "The subject is so interesting that nothing can be altogether unattractive that treats of it. Scott's collection, Volume II, contains much that is valuable and beautiful. Tamla is one of the best poems. It has the levity and grace of a genuine fairy fiction and at the same time there is a tone of earnestness which suits a legend of popular belief. In Thomas the Rhymer, the enigmatic lines which speak of our national and distinctive character and glory ought to become popular:

'The waters worship shall his race
Likewise the waves of the farthest sea,
For they shall ride over ocean wide,
With hempen bridles, and horse of tree.'"

There is nothing said of ballads, either in the way of allusions or discussion, in his letters. These references given would indicate a love of ballads due rather to the recitation of them in his childhood. The

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lines praised in *Thomas the Khymer* seem to have made their appeal to his patriotism instead of to his appreciation of their literary value.

The century ended with the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge. In the preface to the Second edition Wordsworth says, "I hope the reader will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to poetry in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:-

'I put my hat upon my head
And walked into the Strand,
And there I met another man
Whose hat was in his hand.'

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly admired stanzas of the *Babes in the Woods*.

'The pretty babes with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and down,
But nevermore they saw the man
Approaching from the town.'

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most impassioned conversation; there are words in both, for example, 'the strand' and 'the town', connected with none but the most familiar ideas, yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the matter expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible.

The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair
parallelism, is not to say this is a bad kind of poetry, or this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can lead to anything interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state or feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the reader." Later in this preface, Wordsworth speaks of the value of the Reliques. "Next in importance to the Seasons of Thomson, though at considerable distance from that work in order of time, come the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry - collected, new - modelled, and in many instances, (if such a contradiction in terms may be used) composed by the editor, Dr. Percy, this work did not steal silently into the world, as is evident from the number of legendary tales that appeared not long after its publication, and had been modelled, as the authors persuaded themselves, after the old ballad." Then follows the criticism on the lack of enthusiasm by English critics over the Reliques, and the translations and imitations by Bürger and other German writers. Wordsworth acknowledges his indebtedness to the Reliques, saying, "I do not think there is an able writer of verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the Reliques. I know it is so with my friends, and for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own."

Coleridge, in a letter to Wordsworth, criticizes Lewis's The Monk, and says that the ballad-songs had great excellence because of their naturalness and congruity with the language of his own times, "in the same way that the writer of Sir Cauline was the language of his times. This I think, a rare merit: \(^1\) at least, I find I cannot attain this innocent nakedness, except by assumption." I take it that by "innocent nakedness" he means the lack of artificiality and adornment.

We know that Wordsworth's idea in the Lyrical Ballads was to show that the simple things in life might be the most poetical, and in his preface he gives us his literary creed. He was in sympathy with the poetry of the people because of its sincerity and simplicity.

On the other hand, Scott loved the ballad for the story it had to tell. Macaulay says Scott was the great restorer of our ballad-poetry. He of course did it by ballad collection, ballad criticism, and ballad imitation. "He united to the fire of a great poet the minute curiosity and diligence of a great antiquary."

In the Minstrelsy, we have the results of Scott's many "expeditions" in order to get from the mouths of the people these folk songs. His methods of editing the ballads were similar to those of Percy, for he did not hesitate occasionally to change or add to the spoken version. He handled his texts more faithfully, however, for he seemed

\(^2\) Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome. Introduction.
instinctively to seize the primitive diction and imagery from among a score of versions. His critical work for the Edinburgh Review shows his predilection for medievalism, and includes reviews of Ellis's Specimens of Ancient English Poetry, Sibbald's Chronicle of Scottish Poetry, Evans's Old Ballads, and various works on romance.

In his Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry, Scott discusses the deterioration of ballads due to the methods of transmission. "Taking into consideration the various indirect channels by which the popular poetry has been transmitted to their posterity, it is nothing surprising that it should reach us in a mutilated and degraded state, and that it should little correspond with the ideas we are apt to form of the first productions of national genius; nay, it is more to be wondered at that we possess so many ballads of considerable merit than that the much greater number of them which must have once existed should have perished before our time."

Scott, in his desire to "retrieve from oblivion as much of our ancient poetry as there is now any possibility of doing," aided in making the old ballads popular, and also in making the ballad form a literary form. Much might be said of the real ballad feeling shown by Scott in Jack o' Hazeldean or by Coleridge in The Ancient Mariner, but we would be looking forward to the nineteenth century with its wealth of poetry due to ballad influence.

We might speak also of the later critical study of ballads, which has become a very important branch of
the large body of criticism. The establishment of ballad and folk lore societies and the amount of material about folk songs and ballads, shows us that the half apologetic attitude of the eighteenth century has given way to an enthusiastic appreciation.

In these two chapters we have shown what the characteristics of the ballad are, thus eliminating from the discussion any other than the folk ballad. A brief survey of the various miscellanies and collections during the eighteenth century showed that the greatest number, due evidently to an awakening interest in the subject, were published during the latter part of the century.

It would be impossible to say at what time in the century there was a beginning of ballad criticism. The consensus of opinion gives Addison credit for the first, most daring criticism; and from the time of the praise of Chevy Chase in the Spectator, there was a gradual and general change of front regarding the rudeness of the ballad and its literary merit. True, there were extremely conservative estimates even to the end of the century. There were two streams, one diminishing, one increasing, in the century: the receding tide being classical; the increasing being romantic. Many smaller streams, all having their source in a clear sparkling spring of Nature's own making, far from cities and artificiality, helped to swell the rising tide. One of the clearest of these was the ballad stream, which with the love of medievalism, orientalism, emotionalism, and unconventionality, gives us the mighty waters in whose waves have bathed Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.


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