

PREFACE.

IN offering this trifle to the public, I am fully aware that the historical, as well as the descriptive parts, are in many respects incorrect—such as “Alexandria’s heights,” &c. ; but I never meant that it should be relied on as an authentic account of that great battle. And it would be an impossible task, to write a poem with no other materials than the ungarnished truths : it would at once sink into prose. Poetry has always been understood as the imaginative breathings of Romance ; and the same train of thoughts have been handed down from age to age. Thus it is with Shakspeare’s “Troilus and Cressida :” the poet borrowed half from Homer, and the rest he invented. And scarcely one third of Homer himself can be relied on.

The reader’s good sense, therefore, will pardon these little flights ; in the following pages, which if seen in prose would call forth ridicule. But very few have at command the smooth numbers with which the inimitable Pope could—in euphonous verse, and in the most prose-like manner—relate a circumstance, declare his feelings, or describe a scene. A poet is compelled to write beyond what he intends : a prose writer can stop where he pleases. The former has to open his intentions in metre—the first line, perhaps, is descriptive enough, but the next *must* be drawn out, to accord with the preceding ; and thus it often happens the sense is confused. Neither can he end abruptly—he must come to a poetical conclusion, which is very difficult, particularly if the theme is beginning to run short—but is not, however, so hard, or fatiguing to the mind as the opening of a poem. And thus it is that in the best poetry, ill-natured critics will discover something to censure (Shakspeare’s ‘Adamant’ alone excepted.) Now take away the erroneous parts of the “Battle of the

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