

ness all that elegance, firmness of contexture, strength and brilliancy, which did not appear in our poetry before the middle of the present century.

“II. There appears in these poems none of that learning, which peculiarly marks all the compositions of the fifteenth century. Our old poets are perpetually confounding Gothic and classical allusions; Ovid and St. Austin are sometimes cited in the same line. A studious ecclesiastic of that period would give us a variety of useless authorities from Aristotle, from Boethius, and from the Fathers: and the whole would be interspersed with allusions to another kind of reading, viz., the old romances; the round table, with Sir Launcelot, and Sir Tristram and Charlemagne, would have been constantly cited. Poems from such an author, would also have occasionally exhibited prolix devotional episodes, mingled with texts of Scripture, and addressed to the saints and blessed Virgin; instead of apostrophes to such allegorical divinities as Truth and Content, and others of Pagan original.

“As to the historical allusions which are really found in these poems, it is asserted, that they are only such as might be supplied by books which are easily obtained, such as Hollingshead and Fox, Fuller’s Church History, Geofry of Monmouth, and others of a similar nature; and that general reading has been mistaken for profound erudition.

“III. Some Anachronisms have also been pointed out in the manuscripts of Rowley. Thus the art of *knitting stockings* is alluded to in the tragedy of *Ælla*; whereas it is a well-established fact, that the art was utterly unknown in the reign of Edward IV. Bristol is called a city, though it was not such till long after the death of that monarch. Canynge is said to have possessed a *cabinet* of coins, *drawings*, &c., though these words were not then in use; and *manuscripts* are spoken of as rarities, at a time when there was scarcely any other books; when, in truth a printed book must have been a much greater curiosity.

“IV. The metre of the old English poetry is said to be totally different from that of Rowley. The stanza in which the majority of these poems are written, consists of ten lines, the two first, of quatrains, which rhyme alternately, and it closes with an alexandrine; no example of which occurs in Chaucer, Lydgate or Gower. Spenser extended the old octave stanza to nine

lines, closing with an Alexandrine, to which Prior added a tenth. Above all, the extraordinary instance of an English Pindaric in the fifteenth century, is ridiculed by Mr. Warton, which novelty (he says) ‘was reserved for the capricious ambition of Cowley’s muse.’ That Rowley should ever have seen the original model of this irregular style of composition, is utterly improbable, since Pindar was one of the last classics that emerged at the restoration of literature.

“To this head may be referred the extraordinary *smoothness of the verse*, which is utterly unparalleled in any poet for more than a century after the supposed age of Rowley; the accent or cadence, which is always modern; and the perfection and harmony of the rhyme.

“V. While the composition, metre, &c., are wholly modern, the language is asserted to be too ancient for the date of the poems. It is not the language of any particular period, but of two entire centuries. The diction and versification are at perpetual variance. The author appears to have borrowed all his ancient language, not from the usage of common life, but from Speght, Skinner and other lexicographers, and to have copied their mistakes. He has even introduced words which never made a part of the English language, and which are evidently the coinage of fancy, analogy, or mistake.

“VI. Notwithstanding this affectation of ancient language, it is added, that the tinsel of modern phraseology may in too many instances be detected. Thus such phrases as *Purilitie*; *before his optics*; *blameless tongue*; the *authoure of the piece*; *vessel wreckt upon the tragic sand*; the *proto-sleyne man*, &c., could not be the language of the fifteenth century. We find also a number of modern formularies and combinations, e. g. ‘*Systers in sorrow*; *poynant arrows typp’t with destinie*; *Oh, Goddess*; *Ah, what avaulde*; *Awaie, awaie!* (which is the cant of modern tragedy) *Oh, thou, whate’er thie name*; with a number of compound epithets, and other almost certain marks of modern composition.

“VII. To these may be added some passages which appear to be imitations of modern poets. Many of those, which have been cited to convict Chatterton of plagiarism, are, it must be confessed, such obvious thoughts, that they might be adopted by a person who had never seen the modern publications in which they appear; but