

## ANGLO-AMERICAN MAGAZINE.

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## LITERARY AND ARTISTIC CELEBRITIES.

No. VII.

## THOMAS CHATTERTON.

*(Concluded.)*

Before proceeding with the story of our hero, we deem it proper at this point to expiscate, as far as can be done, whether he falls to be regarded as a forger, or a discoverer.

Chatterton's intelligent biographer, the Rev. Dr. Gregory, has been at great pains to make an abstract of all the material evidence which has been led by the advocates of each view of the case. This abstract, though somewhat lengthy, we transfer to our pages, not only on account of its intrinsic interest, but because the work from which it is taken is now rarely to be met with. For the use of the copy before us, we are indebted to our much esteemed friend, the Laird of Bonnie Braes, who boasts of one of the most select and valuable private libraries in Canada West.

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE AUTHENTICITY OF ROWLEY'S POEMS.

*External Evidence.*

"I. The first serious objection which occurs against the authenticity of the poems, is, that Chatterton never could be prevailed upon to produce more than four of the originals, and these extremely short, the whole not containing more than 124 verses. Had such a treasure of ancient poetry fallen into the hands of a young and ingenious person, would he, it is said, have cautiously produced them to the world one by one? Would he not rather have been proud of his good fortune? Would not the communicativeness of youth have induced him to blaze the

discovery abroad, and to call every lover of poetry and antiquity, to a participation of the pleasure? Would not the hope and offers of reward at least have prevented his destroying what, if preserved, would certainly be productive of profit, but the destruction of which could answer no purpose whatever.

"II. The deficiency of proof in favour of Rowley, is strongly aided by the very probable proofs in favour of Chatterton. His abilities were in every respect calculated for such a deception. He had been in the habit of writing verses from his earliest youth, and produced some excellent poetry. He was known to have been conversant with our old English poets and historians, particularly Chaucer. His fondness for heraldry, introduced many books of antiquities to his notice; and even his profession disposed him to these studies, and enabled him with facility to imitate ancient writings. In the *Christmas Games*, which are acknowledged to be his own, there is much of that peculiar learning in British Antiquities, which was necessary to lay the foundation of Rowley's poems; and in his *Essay on Sculpture*, there is much of the same general information with which those compositions abound. The transport and delight, which Chatterton always discovered on reading the poems to Mr. Smith, his sister, and his different friends, could not, it is said, have resulted from the mere pleasure of a discovery: it was the secret, but ardent feeling of his own abilities, and the consciousness that the praises which were bestowed upon them were all his own, which filled him with exultation, and produced those strong emotions which even his habitual reserve on this subject was unable to conceal.