LETTERS TO AN ANTIQUARY

The Literary Correspondence of G.J. Thorkelin (1752-1823)

by

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The thesis consists of an edition of letters selected from the 3-volume collection of manuscript correspondence addressed to the Icelandic scholar and antiquary, G.J. Thorkelin, who visited this country from 1786-91, and who later published, as the result of his research, the edition princeps of the Old English poem, Beowulf. The collection consists of letters written to Thorkelin by his friends, chiefly in England and Scotland, between the years 1780 and 1827. The correspondents represent a wide range of professions and interests, and their letters were carefully preserved by Thorkelin and bound by him in their present form. At some time during the years following Thorkelin's death in 1829, the volumes passed into the hands of David Laing, Librarian of the Signet Library, and formed part of his considerable bequest to the University of Edinburgh in 1878.

The total collection contains approximately 900 letters, of varying degrees of interest. Since a complete edition would neither be possible (within the scope of this thesis) nor, indeed, desirable, the present work has been confined to the letters of six correspondents: Lord Monboddo, judge and philologist; George Dempster, M.P.; Charles Henry Wilson, Irish journalist and miscellaneous writer; John Pinkerton, scholar and antiquary; Dr. John Jamieson, author of The Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language; and Robert Jamieson, ballad collector and friend of Sir Walter Scott.

The letters are preceded by a general introduction, dealing principally with the life and work of Thorkelin and, in particular, with his four-and-a-half years' stay in Great Britain, the period during which his friendships with most of the writers of the letters were formed, and also by introductory essays on the six correspondents.
whose letters have been edited. Three appendices have also been provided. The first is a list of the correspondents who contributed to the three volumes of letters with, where possible, dates of birth and death and any other relevant information which has been discovered, and details of the letters contributed to the collection by each. The second is a list of the letters in numerical order. The third is a brief table of prominent events, public and literary, which took place during the years spent by Thorkelin in this country and in the years immediately preceding his arrival and following his departure. The thesis is also furnished with a selected bibliography and an index.
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The collection of letters from which the present selection has been made is described in the *Report on the Laing Manuscripts*...

in the University of Edinburgh in the following brief entry:

1700-1824. - A collection of 874 letters, chiefly written to Professor Thorkelin, Keeper of the Records at Copenhagen, by his friends in Scotland and elsewhere - dealing with agricultural affairs and matters concerning Iceland, etc. etc. 3 vols. 4to. [III.379.]

The description is misleading in many respects, and it is possible that its inaccuracy may be partly responsible for the lack of attention which the collection has so far received. It has not been entirely neglected; it has been referred to, and extracts have been taken from it, by various writers on the period which it covers. It has, however, never been considered as a collection worthy of attention in its own right, and, indeed, resembles nothing so much as one of the ruins of ancient Rome from which materials have been quarried for the construction of other and later buildings.

If the contents of this collection are set beside the letters of those writers who made the eighteenth century the golden age of the familiar letter, it may well be argued that they have received quite as much attention as they merit. It is not a homogeneous

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collection. Approximately 243 correspondents have contributed to it, many of them writing no more than one brief note each. Many of these are no more than letters of the kind now superseded by the telephone: invitations, regrets, reminders, messages of thanks and other trifles. Several of the others are long letters, dealing with agricultural matters of little interest today except to an historian of agriculture, but reminding us of the agrarian revolutions that were taking place in England and Scotland at the time when they were written. But when these have been discounted, there remain many more letters, long and short, which, whether concerned with matters antiquarian, literary, social or simply everyday, are of real and enduring interest, conveying a vivid unself-conscious picture of life in a certain stratum of society during the years of the French Revolution and the twenty-odd years of war that followed it.

It is indeed one of the most interesting aspects of these letters, and one that divides them sharply from the more artistically satisfactory letters of such men as Walpole, Gray, Burke, Gibbon and the other great letter-writers of the period, that they were all written without the faintest shadow of selfconsciousness. It is generally accepted that Walpole's correspondence represents one of the most deliberate attempts to write letters for publication which English literature has yet known. Burns' "fine writing" is addressed far more to the general reader than to his immediate correspondent. Gray, had he been told while he sat writing to Mason that what he wrote would be carefully preserved and made available to the public eye, might have been displeased, but the consciousness
of the possibility that some at least of his letters would be published after his death must always have been present at the back of his mind. Perhaps in this period it is only in the case of Cowper that we find a great writer expressing in his letters his deepest and most personal emotions, unrestrained by the fear of the judgement of posterity; and even here this unreservedness should perhaps be more properly attributed to his lack of mental balance than to any literary ingenuity. He was well aware of the risks he ran; but the need for an emotional outlet was too great to be denied. His feelings on the subject of the posthumous publication of letters have been made perfectly plain in one of his letters to Matthew Powley:

In the destruction of all other epistles (i.e. than letters of business) I consult the good of my friends; for I account it a point of delicacy not to leave behind me, when I die, such bundles of their communications as I otherwise should, for the inspection of I know not whom; and as I deal with theirs, for the very same reason, I most heartily wish them all to deal with mine. In fact, there seems to be no more reason for perpetuating or preserving what passes the pen in the course of a common correspondence, than what passes the lips in every day's conversation. A thousand folios of the latter are forgotten without any regret; and octavos, at least, of the former are frequently treasured till death, for no use whatever either to ourselves or others. They then, perhaps, go to the grocer's, and serve to amuse such of his customers as can read written hand, as they call it; or now and then, which is fifty times worse, they find their way to the press; a misfortune which never, at least seldom, fails to happen, if the deceased has been so unfortunate as to leave behind him a friend more affectionate to his memory than discreet in his choice of means to honour it. 2)

It is, therefore, only in a collection of this nature that we see the letter-writers of the period going naturally and unselfcon-

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sciously about their business, and it is one of the great merits of the collection that it should be so. The correspondence covers the life of one man from the age of 32 until two years before his death at the age of 77. It is, of course, only one aspect of his life that is revealed; of his childhood and education, his professional career, his family and his friendships in Denmark, we find little. But it is as a portrait of life in England and Scotland as it appeared to a foreign visitor at that time that the collection is principally interesting; and sufficient continuity is provided by the fact that, since all the letters (with the exception of a very few) are written to Thorkelin, each different correspondent reveals a fresh angle on his character, and is seen in a distinct relationship with him. R.W. Ketton-Cremer, in his biography of Walpole, has shown how Walpole selected his principal correspondents with deliberate care, so that each should represent a different facet of his picture of society. In this collection, the same effect has been achieved by chance: the world of scholarship and antiquarianism being strongly represented by (among others) Pinkerton, Douce and Dr. John Jadeson; politics and social gossip by C.H. Wilson; pre-revolutionary stirrings of the Reform movement by Thomas Brand Hollis; agricultural and social reform by Sir John Sinclair and Dempster; and the upper reaches of society by Earl Spencer and the Earl of Buchan, Lord Radow and the Macdonald of the Isles. Naturally these compartments overlap to a certain extent. Pinkerton is as contumacious a Jacobin as Wilson or

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Hollis; Duchan's and Salton's letters are almost exclusively concerned with matters of anti-jurian interest. In period, Nonboda's and Despater's letters remind us of Edinburgh's golden age - the age of Hume and Ferguson, Adam Smith and The Light of Feeling - while those of Robert Jardine carry us forward to the Edinburgh of Scott, Jeffrey, and the period of the great quarterly reviews. The years best represented are those from 1783, when Thorkelin arrived in London, until 1792 when, for various reasons which will be examined later, the exchange of letters slowed down and virtually ceased. This bundle of letters remains as testimony to the place he made for himself in the society of this country in the space of less than five years; and it is time now to look rather more closely at the man whose "tender, generous, honourable character and vast learning" evoked so warm a response in the people he met.

Crímrar Jónsson Thorkelin was born on the 8th October 1732 at Der in Kнутфюрд in the northern part of Iceland. He was thus born a member of a nation once distinguished above all other nations of Scandinavia for its love of liberty, its independence, its laws and its literature. Those days, however, were long past; and by the mid-eighteenth century, Iceland had sunk to a nadir of wretchedness and dependence that has, happily, never been equalled since. After the country had passed, with Norway, under the sovereignty of Denmark in the sixteenth century, her liberties and her independent legislative powers had gradually been eroded; and to the follies and injustices of long-distance government from Copenhagen were added the misfortunes caused by the ravages of nature. For through-
out the eighteenth century the island was overwhelmed by a cata-
clysmic series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, culminating
in the appalling eruption of Skaptarjökull in 1783. By these ex-
plosions of nature, the agriculture of the island was ruined, and
the fish, on which the majority of the population depended for food,
were frequently driven away. The short-sighted commercial policy
of the Danes forbade the Icelanders to trade with any one apart
from the single Danish company which happened to hold the Iceland
trade monopoly at any given time, and, since the natives were de-
pendent upon imports even for the fishing hooks they used, it is
not difficult to perceive the opportunities thus offered for corrup-
tion and abuse. Nicol, in his account of Iceland, has summarized
the situation as it was at the time of Thorarin's birth:

The eighteenth century was ushered in by a frightful pesti-
locence, which swept off at least one-third of the entire popu-
lation, proving particularly destructive among the most
healthy and active. This was the smallpox, which raged with
such virulence in 1707, that, according to the annals, the
deaths in the whole island mounted to 18,000, and in Snee-
field Syssel to 1500, or about as many as the whole inhabi-
tants of the district forty years after, when its ravages
were still visible in the many deserted farms and fishing-
stations. In the middle of the century, the seasons were so
inclement, that vast numbers of the cattle perished for want
of food; and in a famine that followed, nearly 10,000 of
the inhabitants died. 4)

The population were, on the whole, ill-housed, ill-fed, over-worked
and unhealthy. They lived always under the fear of insecurity, the
knowledge that a poor summer or the failure of the Danish trading
vessels to arrive (as happened during the Napoleonic wars) could
completely wipe out their pathetically slender reserves. But in

4 James Nicol, A Historical and Descriptive Account of Iceland,
Greenland and the Faroe Islands (Edinburgh Cabinet Library vol 28),
Edinburgh 1833, p. 183 (quoted in future as Nicol, Iceland).
spite of this anxiety, they retained the memory of their more
glorious past, and clung to it, perhaps, the more fiercely because
the future offered them so little hope. Descent from one of the
ancient families of Iceland was thus particularly valued, and it is
therefore not without importance that Thorkelin should have been
able to trace his ancestry back to one of the most illustrious
figures in Icelandic history, Ósmundr Frodi Sigfusson, to whom in
the eighteenth century the authorship of the Elder Edda was erroneously
attributed. In the nearer past, moreover, his family on both
sides had been people of authority. Both his grandfathers had held
the office of *gæsleðri*, the prefect or administrative officer of
a district; his paternal grandfather, Teitur Þrason (1637-1735) of
Djúpstrandarþing, and his maternal grandfather, Einar Magnússon
(1702-70) of Strændasýsla. Einar’s own father had been Magnús
Bjarnason, *gæsleðri* of Snæfellnesstingi, a contentious man who had
been compelled to retire in 1757 because of drunkennes; and on
Thorkelin’s father’s side it is possible to trace four more holders
of this office, a fairly uncommon record. It will thus be seen that
his family was of some importance in the island, and the fact that
his parents never married does not appear ever to have embarrassed
5 his career. His father, Jón Teitsson (1728–57) played little part

5 The Icelanders’ casual attitude to the marital tie is referred to
by Sir George Steuart Buckenbie in his *Travels in the Island of Ice-
land during the year 1810* (Edinburgh 1811). "Several ladies, whose
virtue could not bear a very strict scrutiny, were pointed out to us.
One was present, who, since her husband had gone to Copenhagen on
business, had lived with another merchant by whom she had had two
children. Another, thinking her husband too old, had placed herself
under the protection of a more youthful husband, and left the
good easy man to brood over his misfortunes, or to find a partner
more suited to his age. These ladies, and others who paid as
in his son's life. After spending some years at the grammar school at Skálholt (where he was reputedly a dull pupil), he went to live with his mother at Reykhólar in Bardastrandarvölsa, where he worked as a falconer. It was presumably during this period that he met Thorkelin's mother, Elín Einaradóttir, and that their child was born. In 1753, however, he left Iceland and enlisted as a private in the Royal Guards in Copenhagen, where he died, apparently of measles, a year later.

Thorkelin was thus abandoned to the care of his mother's family, and it was in the house of his maternal aunt and her husband that he made his home during his childhood. His uncle, Brynjólfur Jónsson, had a farm at Ljórafögr in Dalarnsá; the couple were

little regard to character, were received into company, and treated with as much complaisance and familiarity as the most virtuous. This total disregard to moral character, and the rules of decorum, nay, without breach of candour, be regarded as impeaching the virtue even of those who maintain the appearance of greater strictness in their behaviour. It is no overstrained inference, that their associating with such ladies as those whose conduct has been described, is owing to some fellow feeling, some necessity for keeping secrets which it might be dangerous to divulge. Where no guardian of morals is present; or where there is one, if he winks at such indecorum; if he converses with those who have broken the dearest ties of affection; there may, indeed, be some excuse. Here we saw the bishop himself countenancing vice in its worst shape, and appearing perfectly familiar with persons who, he must have known, bore the worst characters. I was informed, that where a couple are dissatisfied with each other, or when a lady chooses to change her helpmate, the separation is sanctioned without any inquiry into the cause, and new bands solemnly unite those who have most openly slighted their former engagements. Such are the morals of the people of Rokjavik" (p. 95).

For this, as for many other pieces of information concerning the Thorkelin family, I am indebted to Mr. Frederik Thorkelin, last direct descendant of the family, whose help has been invaluable. For details of Thorkelin's remoter ancestry, I am indebted to Mr. Guðmar Sveinsson, Pjöðskjalasafn Islands, Reykjavik.
childless, and appear to have considered Thorkelin entirely as their own son. No doubt they were encouraged to do so by the marriage, during Thorkelin's childhood, of his mother to Jón Sveinsson at Tjaldanes in Dalasýsla, by whom she had five more children. According to Thorkelin's own statement, it was to his foster-parents that he owed his early education; and his accounts of the instruction he received from them confirm the reports of visitors to Iceland of the care with which children in the poorest and remotest families were educated:

Although deprived of all those means of instruction which are thought so necessary in other countries, there are as yet almost none of the Icelanders of the proper age who cannot read and write. Indeed, with the exception of a few superstitions encouraged by their physical circumstances, and but lately expelled from more civilized societies, the mental cultivation of the natives is very high. Education is all conducted at home, parents teaching their children as they themselves were taught before, and the clergyman visiting each family several times in the year, and examining into the progress they have made. The influence of this pastoral superintendence is much increased by the power intrusted to the bishop and inferior clergy, of preventing the marriage of any female who cannot read. 8)

Extracts from a parish register published by Sir George Stewart MacKenzie in his Travels in Iceland reveal how conscientiously the spiritual and physical welfare of his flock was supervised by one

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It is clear from the will made by Thorkelin before he left for England that he was his uncle's sole heir. "As I, by will graciously confirmed on 2nd December 1774, was made sole heir to Mr. Brynicolver Jonsen of Lisaskogur and his spouse, my mother's sister Ima, Thorun Einaradottir, and it might happen that I outlive them, I will that the inheritance which might thus fall to me shall be realized in cash and deposited by the local authority with the district administrative officer, to be used at his discretion for the distribution of grants for useful purposes in Dalasýsla"(Thorkelin Personal Papers, Rigsservet, Copenhagen).

8 Nicol, Iceland, p. 191.
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parish priest at least; and there is no reason to suppose that this concern was in any way extraordinary. Apart from the straightforward instruction which Thorkelin received in reading, writing and religious education, there was another source of information to which he was undoubtedly exposed, which must have considerably influenced his later interests and career. All historians of Iceland refer to the restricted life led by the people, particularly in remote country districts, during the long winter months, when fishing was impossible, and the rudimentary care they were able to give their livestock was the main occupation of the day. But during the evenings,

one of their number, selected for the evening, places himself near the lamp, and reads aloud, generally in a singing monotonous voice, some old saga or history. As the reading proceeds, the master of the house or some of the more intelligent of the circle pass remarks on the more striking incidents of the story, or try the ingenuity of the children by questions. Printed works being scarce, there are many itinerating historians who gain a livelihood by wandering, like the bards of old, from house to house, and reciting their traditional lore. For the same reason, the custom of lending books is very prevalent; the exchanges being usually made at church, where, even in the most incoherent season, a few always contrive to be present. The most interesting works thus obtained are not infrequently copied by those into whose hands they fall, most of the Icelanders writing in a correct and beautiful manner. 10)

It is very probable that Thorkelin was often the reader appointed for the evening himself; during his stay in England, he told one of his English friends that, during the long winter nights,

he used to amuse himself in reading such fragments of the

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9 Sir George Stewart Mackenzie, Travels in the Island of Iceland during ... 1810, Edinburgh 1811, p. 143.

10 Nicol, Iceland, p. 102.
native historians, as had escaped the wrecks of time. Of all those writers Snorro Sturlason, the northern Herodotus, was his favourite. He had read him so often, and with increased pleasure, as he told me more than once, that he had almost every passage by rote. 11)

At the age of twelve, he was sent as a pupil to the house of the priest, Vigfus Orlandsson, to learn Latin; and a year later he was admitted, like his father before him, to the grammar school at Skálholt, one of the two main centres of education on the island. It is possible to make a fairly clear guess at the life he led there. He would probably have been one of forty or fifty boys, most of whom were either wholly or in part maintained by church funds, and who were boarders in the school. When Sir George Steuart Mackenzie visited Iceland in 1810, some years after this school had been amalgamated with the other grammar school of Hólum into the big establishment of Beasedsted in Reykjavik, he found the curriculum to consist of theology, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Icelandic, Danish, history, geography and mathematics. This curriculum was, of course, principally designed to meet the requirements of candidates for the ministry; and it is possible that not all these options were open to Thorkefinn in the 1760s. There is no doubt, however, that the school of Skálholt offered its students a good classical education. Instruction was confined to the eight months from September to May; for in May the brief and precious Icelandic summer began, and all

11 Monthly Magazine, August 1803, p. 37. This memoir of Thorkefinn is unsigned, but there is reason to believe that it may have been written by Charles Henry Wilson (see essay on "Wilson infra"). In many of its assertions, it is misleading and unreliable; but there seems no reason to discount this statement, which agrees so well with what is known to have been the custom of the country and with Thorkefinn's own personal tastes. Thorkefinn himself claimed descent from Snorro Sturlason; but this claim cannot be proved.
the students were required on the land to help in getting in the supply of food which had to last the population through the winter.

In 1770, as one of the best students of the year, he was sent to the Vor Frue School in Copenhagen at the charge of the government, according to the terms of a royal decree in 1759; and he set out for Denmark, according to his own account, with a trunk which, if not filled with silver and gold, "was piled with what was much more precious in the eyes of an indulgent father, a large Bible, a collection of Icelandic manuscripts, and a suit of black cloaths, spun and woven by the young women of his own parish." To begin with, he found himself behind the other boys of his age; but he soon caught up with them, and in 1773 began the study of law at the University of Copenhagen.

His years as a student in Copenhagen must have been penurious in the extreme. He could expect little assistance from his foster-parents, who, like others in their station in Iceland, had enough to do to scratch a meagre living from the soil and the sea for those living under their roof. "Thorkelin, therefore, was dependent entirely upon his scholarship, and he was obliged to supplement it from time to time by various expedients, such as the running of errands. By the good fortune which followed him in his early years, this gave him an introduction to a tea merchant of easy means, Mrs. Christine Sommer, who took a fancy to the young student from Iceland. She helped him in many ways, gave him a room in her house (where he remained until his departure for England in 1783), and, most important of all, put him in the way of meeting some of the most prominent men in the country."

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in Copenhagen at the time. He did not waste the opportunities offered to him. He has been accused in the *Danmark Biografisk Lexikon* of having, "by his ingratiating manners and his diligent attendance managed to acquire influential friends, among them men such as Schøning and Luxdorph, Guldberg and Suhm." But an ingratiating manner and diligent attendance would not alone have won him the favour and friendship of such men as Schøning, Luxdorph, Guldberg and Suhm. The eighteenth century in Denmark was still very much the age of patronage, and there can have been no lack of needy young scholars eager to ingratiate themselves with men who had places in their gift. A great many of these, moreover, would have been Danes, and it should be remembered that a young Icelandic was likely to find the scales weighted against him from the beginning, simply because of his nationality. Nicol, in his description of the education of the Icelanders, records that "few avail themselves of this privilege i.e. of continuing their studies in Copenhagen." Seldom more than four, and in some years none, leave their native land in pursuit of instruction, and those find their foreign accent and peculiar appearance much in the way of turning their information to account.

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Bricks, *Danmark Biografisk Lexikon* (1st ed., Copenhagen 1943), vol. 35, p. 610: "... ved sit indsigende Vassen og sin flittige Opvartning forstod han at vinde formaaende Velvendere, deriblandt Kand Schøning og Luxdorph, Guldberg og Suhm." Gerhard Schøning (1722–90), the Norwegian historian, was one of the founders of the kongelige norske videnskabers selskab at Trondhjem, and succeeded Langebek as head of the State Archives in Copenhagen in 1775. Bolle Willum Luxdorph (1716–83) was President of the Kongl. Danske Videnskab. Selskab and a member of the Arne-Nyghem Commission; he was responsible for the Commission's edition of *Kristenlære* in 1775. Ove Nyegh-Guldberg (1731–1803) was, from 1772–84, the first statesman in Denmark. Peter Frederik Suhm (1728–93) was a friend of Schøning and the most eminent Danish historian of his day. As a member of a noble family, he also held a court appointment as Kønnerjunker.
Thorkelin's success in Copenhagen surely argues not only hard work scholastically, but a considerable degree of both adaptability and charm.

At the end of 1774, he took and passed his first examination in philosophy at the University of Copenhagen and returned to Iceland for a short holiday to visit his family and friends. It was, so far as is known, his last visit to Iceland. On his return, he settled down to the study of law. No doubt he had originally intended to practise in the courts; but various factors, possibly lack of influence in the right circles, and certainly (according to his own account) his weak chest, determined him against such a career. Throughout his legal studies he had maintained his interest in northern antiquities, and he no doubt felt that he would be wise to consider a career in a field where his new and influential friends would be able to help him. He completed his university course in 1776 with the publication of an edition of Old Icelandic Church Law and moved to Borch's Collegium to continue his historical studies under the aegis of Dr. Peder Holm to whom he had been introduced. The publications which appeared during the next few years testified to his activity, and in most of them he was able to combine his legal knowledge with his love of antiquities. None of them can now claim

14 Nicol, Iceland. p. 213.

15 G.J. Thorkelin, Jus Ecclesiasticum vetus sive Thorsae-Ketilliamum constitutum ad Chr. MCMXVII. Cum versione latina, lectionibus vari-atibus, notis, collatione cum Jure canonico, Jursbus ecclesiasticis excolitis, indolaeque vocum, Havn. 1775 and Havn. & Lipsiae 1776.

16 The most important among these were: Jus ecclesiasticum novum sive
anything more than historical interest, but they presented the young author to influential men in the character of a learned and industrious scholar; and, between the reputation which he acquired from them, and the assistance of his friends Schøning, Erichsen (who supervised his first publication for him) and Suhm (who for two years gave him a pension of 150 rixdollars per annum), he received, in 1777, the secretariatship of the Arne-Magnusson Commission.

This commission, of which he retained the secretariatship until his death, figures so prominently in Thorkelin’s correspondence that some explanation of its origin and functions may be in order. Arni Magnusson (or, as he is more generally known, Arne Magnusson) was an Icelander who, like Thorkelin, traced his ancestry from Snorre Sturlason, and whose early career followed much the same pattern. He was born in 1663 and like Thorkelin was brought up mainly by his mother’s family, went to school at Skálholt, was sent from there to the University of Copenhagen and, after taking his degree in 1691, studied at Borch’s Collegium for some years. He is chiefly remembered, not for his career as secretary to the royal archives, librarian to the University library and professor of philosophy and Danish antiquities

Armacum (1775) cum versione latina, notis et glossario, Havn. 1777; Statuta Provincialis, statuta sinodalicia, casus episcopales, casus papales, etc., Havn. 1778; Palaestra, cuilibus historia antiquitatus, Jura, tur publicum quam privatum, Temp Norvegiae illustrare, Havn. 1778; Vaphridismál, elva Oddum Eddae Scandicae una, cum versione latina, notis et glossario, Havn. 1779; end Skilling af Danske Kirke-Love, Copenhagen 1781, which he completed on the death of the previous editor.

17 John Erichsen (or Jón Eríksson), 1722–87, Icelandic scholar, a friend of Guldberg and, from 1781, librarian of det Kongelige Bibliotek. Together with Losdorph and Jón Finnsson, he edited Gammalæra Saga in 1775.
in the University of Copenhagen, but for his indefatigable and unparalleled skill and industry in collecting old Icelandic manuscripts. The seventeenth century throughout Scandinavia was a period of scientific development and a renaissance of interest in Scandinavian history, literature and antiquities; and in a century distinguished by the names of such men as Arngrin Jónsson, Thomas Bartholin, Thormod Torfæus and Peder Gyv, Magnússon holds a prominent and honourable place. At the time when he started his collection, little, if anything, had been printed in Iceland other than religious matter. The great store of early Icelandic literature existed only in manuscripts of greater or lesser degrees of reliability. Magnússon patiently and persistently tracked down manuscripts, not only in Iceland, but in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and even Holland. His correspondence with his friends reveals clearly the trouble and time which he gave to trace a manuscript of which he had possibly heard only a rumour. Nothing was too small for his attention. Odd leaves of manuscripts would be acquired, and found, at a later date, to fit with each other. His years spent in Iceland from 1702-12 as a member of a royal commission appointed to make a survey of the economic and general condition of the island gave him an excellent opportunity to comb all parts of the country with meticulous care. If, on occasion, he found the possessor of a book unwilling to sell, he would obtain permission to have a transcript made of it, and he kept a team of copyists steadily employed on such work. An example of his persistence is the Arna-Magnússon manuscript of Sturlunga Saga (St. 122 b, fol.), one of the primary sources for this important history. An account of his success in tracking it down is given by Professor
Chr. Westergaard-Nielsen:

This manuscript, although very fragmentary, is the chief source of the important Sturlunga saga; it exists now as 30 parchment leaves in all (out of ca. 80 originally), dating from ca. 1400, but no leaf is entire, since the pages of the manuscript were used after 1670 partly as tailors' patterns (thus giving excellent information about the fashions of the day), partly for bookbinding. The remnants of the leaves were collected together by Ærne Magnusson from at least 12 different places in the years 1701-24. 19

The situation will be familiar to all who have read John Bale's preface to Leland's New Year's Gift, and his lament over the dispersal of the monastic libraries, "some to serve theyr isakes, some to secure theyr candalstykkes, and some to rubbe theyr bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and sone sellers, and sone they sent over see to the boke bynders, not in small nombre, but at tymes whole shyppes full, to the wounderynge of the foren nacyons . . ." Magnusson deserves all credit for his preservation of Iceland's manuscripts from the possibility of such fates; and it is only unfortunate that the great Copenhagen fire of 1728 in which so much of his collection was destroyed (a disaster comparable to that which ravaged the Cottonian

19

 Chr. Westergaard-Nielsen, "Ærne Magnusson, hans liv og virke" in Ærne Magnusson 1663-1668, published by Det.kgl. Bibliothek, Copenhagen, 1963: "Dette handskrift, der, skønt meget fragmentarisk, er et hovedhandskrift til den vigtige Sturlunga saga, bestaar nu af i alt 30 pergamentblade (med oprindelig ca. 80) fra ca. 1400, men intet blad er helt, idet handskriffets blade efter ca. 1670 blev benyttet dels til at opmærke (og som sandemne giver de endnu god benked om tidens demoder), dels til bogbind. Resterne af bladene har Ærne Magnusson skuelet sammen fra mindst 12 forskellige steder i aarene 1701-24" (p. 12).

19

John Leland, The laboratory journey and perche of Johan Leylande, for Englanes anti-vitese, seven of hym as a nowe yeares rythe to Kyng Henry the vii in the xxviy yeares of his reyne, with declaracions entered: by Johan Bale, London 1549.
collection in Ashburnham House three years later) should have rendered his achievement less great for today. He did not long survive the destruction of his life's work, and died the following year in 1720. In his will, he left the remains of his library and collection to the University, together with a sum of money, entrusting the administration of the bequest to his friends Hans Gram and Thomas Bartholin, who knew his intentions and could be relied upon to implement them. According to the scheme drawn up by them, the administration of the legacy was entrusted to two trustees. A part of the income from the monetary bequest was set aside to pay for bursaries to one or two Icelandic students, the remainder was to be devoted to the publication of the manuscripts in the collection. In 1760, the legacy was granted a royal charter, and in 1772 its administration was placed in the hands of a larger body, the Arna-Magnússon Commission, which was to consist of the two trustees and four members. Forty-two years after Magnusson's death, the work of publishing the manuscripts at last began with the appearance in 1773 of 20 Kristul Saga, and is carried on to this day.

It was of this Commission that Thorkelin was appointed secretary in 1777, and the post was valuable to him, not only for the sake of the salary attached to it, but also for the fact that it brought him into contact with men of influence and gave him some position in society. In 1780 he was appointed an assistant in the state archives; in 1783 he received the title of Professor Extraordinary at

Kristul-saga, sive Historia religiosa Christianae in Islandicum introductae; nec non Patr et Icelifi Risauri, sive narratio de Icelifo Piscopo; ex manuscriptis Legati Magnullen, cum interpretatione latina [by Luxdorph], notis, chronologia, tabulis genealogice, et indicibus [by Jón Pinnson], etc., Hafniae 1773.
the University of Copenhagen; and in 1734, through the good offices, first of Guldberg, and (after Guldberg’s fall from office in 1734) of Bølow, he was promised the place of State Archivist on the retiral of Kristian Bernhard Voss, who then held it. His Diplomatarium Sveciae Magnae, his most important work to date, was published in 1788.

21. The title of Professor Extraordinarius was of course an honorary one; and although some holders of the title did in fact deliver courses of lectures, there is no evidence that Thorckelin ever did so.

22. Johan Bølow (1751-1829), son of an army officer, begun his career in the army himself, but, with the help of a small inheritance and his own strong character, exchanged his military career for a court appointment. In 1784, he was appointed Marshal to the household of the Crown Prince, and as such, assisted at the removal of Guldberg from power. For many years he remained in high favour at court, and was a consistently generous patron of the arts. A selection of his correspondence with Thorckelin has been printed by Alfred Glahn, "Liccen og Klient" inærbor for Forømmer, Copenhagen 1925, pp. 49-95.

23. It appears that Thorckelin did not rely only on the favour of his Danish friends; his correspondence reveals that he had enlisted the assistance of Morton Eden, envoy extraordinary from England to Copenhagen from 1779-85, in achieving his goal. See Eden’s letter (Lag Collection no. 432) from Dresden, dated 29th August 1784: "In my letter of the 8th Instant I transmitted to you a Copy of my letter to Count Bernstorff of that day’s date; I now take the very earliest opportunity of informing you that I have been favoured with an answer, couched in such terms as give me every reason to believe that we may rely on the Count’s support, whenever the Post may become vacant; He speaks of you in the most flattering manner, & allows that you have the very fairest pretensions to it. If an occasion offers, perhaps it would not be amiss for you to wait upon the Count to thank him for his assurance of protection; but in this you will act as your own discretion may dictate. You have my most unfeigned & ardent wishes for your success, & be assured that I shall be very happy if my endeavours may have in any measure tended to promote it."

The idea of a journey to England to search for documents connected with the Danish invasions of the British Isles does not seem to have occurred to him before 1785. His application to the King for a grant to enable him to make the expedition is dated 20th October 1785, and in this he sets out his reasons for believing that such a journey would be profitable:

In the year 1780 it pleased your Majesty most graciously to appoint me to your State Archives. Long before that and continually since then, manuscripts have been my favourite occupation, and I have laboured upon them with all possible diligence and zeal.

Whilst thus studying and arranging what has hitherto lain untouched, I soon learned that, although rich collections concerning our country's activities in ancient and more recent times are preserved in the said Archives, yet much is still sorely lacking, which can only be found abroad. This is shown by the collections made by Langebek, in so far as concerns Russia, Sweden and the old Danish territories round the Baltic. He travelled for several years at the King's expense in those lands and found a considerable amount.

There is every reason to believe that the same will be found to be the case in the remaining neighbouring countries.

From Great Britain, not a little can be expected. From time immemorial the sciences have flourished there, and constant friendship has bound it closely to your Majesty's most glorious forefathers. The negotiations and letters of our blessed kings from the Middle Ages, of which we do not even possess copies, are preserved in scattered places in Oxford, in Cambridge, in the national museums, in Edinburgh and in Dublin. Unknown treasures are preserved in the cathedral churches. In the Tower, we have Rymer's collection, which includes many Danish transactions; but Sir Joseph Nyloffe states in his Calendar of the ancient Charters of the Tower that not only has much been forgotten and omitted, but also that a lot of mistakes, quite considerable ones, have crept into Rymer's work. The same applies to the historians of the Middle Ages, which are so important to us. Their editions, excepting only Hearne's, are lacking in criticism and comparison and a great deal has been omitted. The learned Dr. James Johnstone, envoy at your Majesty's Court has assured me of this; he has copies in the national museum, the original of Camden's edition of the important Chronicon Hemicum which Langebek followed in Scriptores.
Rerum Danicae: he likewise found that Camden left out everything concerning the Norwegians' right to the Southern Isles which makes up nearly half of it. He has brought this back from his last journey together with two other Irish writers as yet unedited concerning Danish rule in Ireland.

Considering this, and also the royal generosity with which your Majesty encourages the sciences, whereby an Adler, a Hudson, a Birch, a Holdenhaver by turns, and each in his own field, was enabled to show how much still remained, I most humbly venture to lay at your Majesty's feet my most humble petition:

1. That I might most graciously be permitted and commanded to travel for two years through England, Scotland, Ireland and the islands belonging thereto for the purpose of recording and collecting all that exists appertaining to our ancestors' doings, whether in manuscript, antiquities and history; which collection shall be presented at the journey's end to your Majesty's State Archives and great Library.

2. That I might most graciously be granted 500 Rigsdaler yearly from the Fund which your Majesty has appointed ad publicos usus, and furthermore be permitted to enjoy that I am now receiving from the state Archives and the Arna-Bogemann Foundation. 25)


At det samme og ville skee hos vore gylne Haber, er al Aarsag til at troe.

Fra Store Britanien kan icke ventes lidet. Der have fra Udendes Tider Videnskederne floreret, og bestandigt Venskab haver sammenkrævet den med Deres Majestats glorværdigste Forfædre. Vore Ufjæstelige Kongers Underhandlinger og Breve ud i landet alderen, hvorof vi icke engang eye Udkastne, forvares paa adspredte Steder i Oxford, i Cambridge, i Nationalens Museum, i Munborg og i Dublin. Ved Cathedral Kirkerne forvares ubekendte Skatter. Fra Tower har man Rymer's Samling, hvoriblandt findes mange danske Handlinger; men Sir
A grant of 400 rdl. was made for two years on 13th June 1786; which, together with his salary from the Archives and the Arma-Tagmæne Commission, brought his income for the next two years up to 600 rdl. a year. His announcement of his projected travels, however, brought forth a most discouraging response from his friend and patron Guldberg:

Much as I approve your work on the manuscripts, I am little able to take pleasure in the journey which you now intend to make: you intend to go, who are my friend, are of a certain


"Ved at bestræge dette ved Siden af den Kongelige Gavilshed, hvormed Deres Majestæt opgiver Videnskaberne, og hvorved en Adel, en Kæld, en Birn, en Holmenue paa engang, og hver i sit Fag, bleve satte i Stand at vinde, hvormed endnu stad tillabe, indgives rig den allerunderordneste Frihed at nedlegge for Deres Majestæts Fyder min allerunderordneste Begering:


20 At mig til saa kostbar Reise allermeindigst maatte gives 500 Rigsdaler ærlig af den Fond, som Deres Majestæt haver bestemt ad publicos usus, samt desuden tillades at nyde, hvad jeg nu har ved det Geheime Archive og den Arma-Bagmænske Stiftelse."
age, have hopes; hopes which at any day may be fulfilled and may demand your presence. Believe me that these are weighty reasons; but on the other hand, perhaps travelling may gain you reputation; people certainly think so; therefore travel, as far preferably as you have come already, yet my advice concerning your age and your hopes remains always, 

NB. a) that you are not away for more than a year, and b) that you confirm your position at the Archives as securely as you can before you leave town. NB. these two things are very important. 33)

Guldberg no doubt had good reason for giving this caution; it is not unlikely that the promise of the reversion of the post of State Archivist to a young Icelander of limited reputation and no Danish family connections must have caused such envy, malice and uncharitableness. It is quite clear that it gave great offence to J.J. Weber, Registrar at the Archives, who claimed that he had already received a similar promise of succession, and no doubt found ways of making Thorkelin's position uncomfortable. Thorkelin's later letters to his other patron, Bülow, clearly indicate that he had encountered some unpleasantness at the Archives before his departure for England.

Undoubtedly there would be attempts made to weaken his position during his absence; but Bülow proved a staunch friend, and Thorkelin

See Arne Hoff, "In Ministers Otium. Breve fra Ove Hjøgh-Guldberg til professor Grímir Thorkelin" in Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift (1934) 9 Rk., VI, pp. 236-56: "Saa meget som jeg ynder Deres diplomatiske Arbeide, saa lidet kend jeg fane min sid til at finde Saag i den Reise, som De nu aegter at gøre: De aegter at gøre, som er min Ven, som har den Adler, som har det Haab; et Haab, der Dag fra Dag kunde komme til Opfyldelse og da forudrede Deres Nødvendige. Troe mig, at disse Grunde ere vigtige; men paa den enden Side mankee det giver Dai en Ånseelse, at De reiser: Folk tænker visseelig saa; og saa naae De reise, helst saa vidt som De nu derned er kommen, dog bliver altid mit Haad NB. i Deres Adler og ned Deres Haab a) at være kun hyist et Tor borte, b) at forøkke mig endnu nylere Archive, om De paa nogen Maade kom, inden De forlader Byen. NB. Disse to Ting ere meget vigtige" (p. 244).

Vide infra pp. 70-71.
himself obviously thought that the risk involved in leaving his position undefended was counterbalanced by the reputation he would derive from his journey and the advantage he would gain from being absent from the unpleasant atmosphere of the Archives until he returned as Keeper.

Immediately on receiving confirmation of his grant, therefore, he set about putting his affairs in order. On the 28th June 1766, he was given a receipt by Voss for the keys and manuscripts in the Archives for which he was responsible; on 1st July he received his passport, signed by Bernstorff himself. Since journeys in the eighteenth century, even from Denmark to England, were not undertaken without a certain degree of risk, he also providently made his will, leaving his books and manuscripts to be sold for the ultimate benefit of the Anna-Hagman Foundation, but laying down that his "faithful benefactress, Lucie Christine Sommer, as a small token of my unlimited confidence in her generosity which I have proved over sixteen years, shall enjoy, use, and keep for her own" a life interest in the income derived from them. He also provided that his mother and aunt, Thorell Cinossdottir, should be provided for from this income in the event of their ever requiring assistance; a curious provision, since according to the records, his mother at least had died some seven years previously. He was also explicitly provided with letters of in-

23 "Dag hved Rentemnes Drug angaaer, vil jeg og fastbestemmer, at min troefascade Velgfrinde Madrine Christine Sommer til en liden Pryve paa min undskrenkede Tillid til hennes i 16 Aar prævede Ædelmodighed, skal til egen sin Bestyrelse nyde bruge og beholde samt ..." (Thorkelin Personal Papers in Rigskrediet, Copenhagen).

20 According to information obtained from Pjóðskjalasafn Islands, Thun Cinossdottir died in 1779.
roduction to men of rank and position in England and Scotland. Morton Eden, the former British envoy to Copenhagen, could give him letters to his brother, Lord Auckland, and his brother-in-law, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Dr. James Johnstone, chaplain to the British embassy and himself an antiquary of some reputation, could put him in touch with men of learning in England who would be able to help him in his research. He had corresponded with the eccentric Earl of Buchan, founder of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, in his capacity as Secretary of the Arne-Nagman Commission since 1780, and was already an honorary member of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries. Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, a member of Parliament who had visited Copenhagen during the first half of 1786, had met Thorkelin and had been interested in him. Thomas Bugge, the eminent astronomer, gave him a letter of introduction to Sir Joseph Banks who, by virtue of his position as President of the Royal Society and his own personal eminence, held a position of unparalleled influence in London and was particularly disposed to take a friendly interest in Icelanders. Thus provided, he left Copenhagen at 8.30 a.m. on 17th July 1786, arrived in Whinmore at 6 o'clock the same evening, and took a passage (for a fare of 8 guineas) on an English vessel, the Nestor, bound for London under the command of Captain Ralph Richardson.

For an account of Thorkelin's stay and travels in England, we are dependent upon two main sources of information; the letters

In his Anecdotes of Olave the Black (Copenhagen 1780), Johnstone acknowledges the help of "a worthy and ingenious native of Iceland" whose "extreme delicacy, however, prevents the editor from even having the satisfaction of mentioning his name." It is not impossible that this may have been Thorkelin.
written to him by his friends which are now preserved in the Laing
Collection and the so-called diary left by him which is now lodged
among his other personal papers in the Royal Archives in Copenhagen.
Of the two sources the former must be regarded as being the more re-
liable; for the diary is clearly not a diary in the normal sense of
being a daily record of his movements, made at the time when they
were taking place. Not only are considerable periods of time com-
pletely unaccounted for (this has been known to occur in properly-
kept diaries) but it seems that large portions of it were written
from memory, and sometimes an imperfect memory, a considerable time
after the events which are described. Thus, in referring to his
letters of introduction, he speaks of Morton Eden as Lord Henley, a
title which he did not receive until 1789; and Francis Humberstone
MacKenzie is spoken of in 1788 as Lord Seaforth, which he was not
until 1797. Similarly, the diary states that he arrived in London
(having been prevented by contrary winds from leaving Elsinore until
20th July) on 7th August, but was delayed on board by the customs
until the 25th; while the records of the British Museum seem to in-
dicate that he was working there on the 10th August. It is thus
necessary to check the information in the diary carefully whenever

31 Letters from this Collection will in future be referred to simply
by their numbers; e.g. letter no. 242 indicates Laing Collection
letter no. 242. Roman numerals (e.g. letter no. VI) indicate letters
included in this edition.

32 This document is quoted in future as Diary.

33 It should be noted, however, that Thorkelin's first letter to
Bulow from London appears to confirm his date of arrival as the
25th August.
possible against the evidence provided by the letters in the Leign Collection and elsewhere. The diary itself varies from the most minute detail on some occasions (e.g. 1/- for breakfast at Lichfield, 1/3d for a three-course lunch at Nantwich) to brief, inadequate and sometimes inaccurate accounts of his activities.

It seems not unlikely, therefore, that the diary, partly made up of notes and jottings made at the time, partly of recollections set down some time after his return to Denmark, may represent material put together (probably later than 1800) to serve as a basis for an autobiographical sketch which was never actually written.

iii

The England in which Thorkelin arrived in August 1786 could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as a hotbed of literary activity. A glance at the chronological table (Appendix C) at the end of the letters will reveal how little, comparatively speaking, was being produced at this time. The age of Johnson was over; Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott were schoolboys, and the younger generation of the great romantics had not yet been born. Crabbe had relapsed into the twenty-odd years of silence that divided his earlier work from his later, and the publication of Burns' Kilmarnock edition must be considered the most interesting literary event of 1786. That Thorkelin found on his arrival in London, from the point of view of literature, was not so much the peace of the Augustans as the atmosphere of a chapel of rest. In other respects, however, matters were more cheerful. Education in the chartered institutions such as the universities and the grammar schools was at a low
ebb, but this was to some extent compensated by the more enterprising curricula which were being offered by the new Dissenting academies, particularly at Daventry and later at Hackney, where more stress was laid on the preparation of students for life in a new industrial age than on the niceties of a classical education. The work of such men as Joseph Priestley, Professor Joseph Black, Dollond and Herschel had conferred lasting lustre on the study of science in England. In the field of exploration, James Cook's prestige and reputation were internationally so high that, on the outbreak of the American War of Independence, he was voluntarily declared a neutral by both French and American decrees, and his ships were exempted from hostilities. Countries, such as France and America, which were either questioning the value of ancient political institutions, or hammering out new ones, were united in looking to the English constitution of 1689 as the model of order, liberty and tolerance. Philanthropy in the late eighteenth century, although generally underrated by succeeding generations, was beginning to walk hand in hand with religion, to the increasing benefit of the labouring classes, and Alberforce was already planning the opening moves of his great campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. But, even in the field of literature, the period was in one respect extremely propitious for the arrival of a young scholar, Icelandic by birth and Danish by education. In 1760, Macpherson had published his controversial Ossianic fragments, and, encouraged by their success, Percy produced in 1763 his Five Pieces of Ruic Poetry, translated from the Islandic Language.

Percy's choice of pieces is important, since for many years afterwards, writers on Old Norse literature were to confine themselves
epologetic method of introducing them to the public may to some extent have nullified the impression which they might have made. The study of northern antiquities had been carried on in England for well over a hundred years, but it had lain almost entirely in the hands of historians, philologists and antiquaries. Notwithstanding the approbation accorded to the death-song of Ragnar Lodbrok by Sir William Temple, in his essay, Of Heroic Virtue, it was not generally supposed that polite taste could find anything to admire in the fragments of Scandinavian literature which were then generally available. "That the study of ancient northern literature hath its important uses has often been evinced by able writers," wrote Percy in his preface.

"That it is not dry or unmanly, this little work it is hoped will demonstrate: Its aim at least is to show, that if those kind of studies are not always employed on works of taste or classic elegance, they serve at least to unlock the treasures of native genius; they present us with frequent sallies of bold imagination, and constantly afford matter for philosophical reflection by showing the workings of the human mind in its almost original state of nature." This should have been a recommendation to a generation devoted to the cult of the noble savage; but not even the lure of the human mind in its original state of nature would have served to popularize the poems thus

almost exclusively to the themes selected by him. His five poems were: 1) The Incantation of Hervor, which he took from Hickes' Thesaurus; 2) The Dying Ode of Ragnar Lodbrok, from Norn's Literature Runica; 3) The Ransom of Till the Scald, also taken from Norn; 4) The Funeral Song of Hoon, from Peringskold's edition of Heimskringla; and 5) The Complaint of Harold, from Mallet's Introduction à l'Histoire de Danemark. Since Percy knew no Old Norse, his translations were admittedly made from the Latin and French versions of these pieces already published and then collated with the originals for him by Lye.
trepidly introduced to the public, had not Gray, working independently on a scheme for a history of English poetry which he later abandoned, produced, by way of illustration, his two Norse odes, The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odin. The two poems must, from the evidence of Gray's letters, have been composed about 1761; but they were not published until 1768, three years after Percy's Reliques had given further impetus to the study of ancient ballad literature in particular and the romantic movement in general. Their success was immediate, although one or two fastidious voices were raised in dissent:

Gray has added to his poems three ancient odes from Norway and Sweden [wrote Wordsworth to Montagu on 12th March 1768]. The subjects of the two first are grand and picturesque, and are in his genuine vein in then; but they are not interesting, and do not, like his other poems, touch any passion... The can dare through what horrors a Runic savage arrived at all the joys and glories they could conceive, the supreme felicity of boozing ale out of the skull of an enemy in Odin's hall? 35

The general public, however, had no such quibbles. The bloodthirsty, courageous Viking, contemptuous of pain and death and merciless to his enemies, caught and fired the imagination of readers, and it was to be well over half a century before any other idea of Old Norse literature or life than that embodied by Ragnar Lodbrok was to find general acceptance. So propitious was the atmosphere that Percy, emboldened by Gray's success and that of his own Reliques, was encouraged to produce his translation of the book which had had a large share in his own introduction to northern antiquities: Mallet's In-

35 "Alnole's Letters, ed. Paget Toynbee (Oxford 1903-25), viii, 175. See also letter XXIX. from Robert Jameson, note 21 for an account of the origin of the mistake leading to the eighteenth century conception of Vikings drinking from the skulls of their enemies."
Introduction à l'Histoire du Danemarq. This appeared anonymously in 1770 under the title of Northern Antiquities; or, a Description of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Laws of the Ancient Danes, and other Northern Nations; including those of our own Saxon Ancestors. With a Translation of the Edda, or System of Runic Mythology, and other pieces from the Ancient Islandic Tongue. The publication of this work was important in various ways. In the first place, it marked the general acceptance by the public of a fact which had been available to them since the publication of Richard Verstegen's Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in 1699; namely, that the English language was closely related to the languages of Scandinavia, that it had, in its early stages, resembled them even more closely, and that this relationship was not necessarily a matter for shame. It may be significant that the state visit of the King of Denmark to England in 1768 had thrown society into confusion, and created a prejudice in favour of things Scandinavian in general and Danish in particular.

Secondly, it made accessible for the first time in English a considerable body of Old Norse literature which previously would have had to be sought in the ponderous Latin tomes of antiquaries. The second volume of Northern Antiquities is devoted almost exclusively to translations; and these include the elder Edda, of which Percy gives both his own English version and the Latin translation made by the Swede Corson (1746-50) for purposes of comparison, and a selection.

See, for example, a review in the Gentleman's Magazine (September 1768) of an account of Denmark Ancient and Modern which, according to the reviewer, "seems to be a superficial, injudicious, hasty production founded upon the hope that the King of Denmark's being now in England will render any book about Denmark popular."
of what he called "Odes and other Ancient Poems", including Krekenál, the story of Harold the Valiant and the Bullogium of Hasso, the histories of Charles and Grymar, and of Hildmar, the son of Hacro, King of Blundland. Moreover, the first volume of the book contained accounts of the Gothic and Runic alphabets, the origin of runes, a description of the system of Scandinavian verse and an analysis of the Viking intrepidity in the face of death, mostly taken from Bartholin's De可以用Continentis a Doria Acuto Centilibus Hortis. Northern antiquities, in short, could be regarded as a complete handbook to Old Norse verse and mythology; and the public, seeking the ancient, the unusual and the picturesque, and surprised by the mythology of Olympus, fell on it eagerly. From this time forward, productions, however late, on the themes of Norse mythology were sure of a favourable reception in England. The chronological table published by P.B. Farley in his Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement clearly reveals the sudden and dramatic increase in literary productions directly inspired by Scandinavian themes after the year 1770. As Southey was to write in the Quarterly Review in 1827, on looking back to the last decades of the previous century,

Cupid and the Lunes will keep their place in verse as long as there are rymers in the world; but the other heathen gods and goddesses were grown stale: angels and demons had been found poor substitutes by those who had tried to introduce them; and the existing race of poets seemed very well disposed to transfer their devotion to the gods and heroes of Valhalla. 33}

Moreover, it was not in literature alone that interest in the

Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature vol. ix, Boston 1903.

Quarterly Review, No. LXIX, January 1827; review of William Taylor
northern nations of Europe was being awakened. De la Peyrère's
Relation de l'Islande, first published in 1683, had been translated
into English in 1704; de la Martinière's Voyage des Pays Septentri-
onaux (1671) had already appeared in English in 1674. Lord Koles-
worth's Account of Denmark as it was in the year 1692 was published
in 1694, and ran into many editions, and William Coxe's Travels into
Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark, first published in 1784-90,
proved by its popularity that interest in Scandinavia was by no means
exhausted. Then, after the shattering experience of the Lisbon
earthquake in 1755, curiosity in such natural phenomena became wide-
spread, interest in Iceland, that little-known country on the edge of
the world, which throughout the eighteenth century had been devast-
ated by a series of volcanic eruptions that had reduced the inhabi-
tants to the extremity of misery, became greatly intensified. It
was undoubtedly his scientific interest in volcanoes that determined
the young Joseph Banks, balked of his second expedition with Cook, to
make a voyage of discovery to Iceland instead. The eruption of
Hecla in 1703, although not so appalling as that of Skaptarjökull was
to be in 1783, had been sufficiently violent and well-publicized to
have excited his interest. He set sail in July 1772 with an expedi-
tion which included the botanist, Dr. Solander, Dr. James Lind, Cook's
former companion, as astronomer, the Swede Uno von Trol, later to be
Archbishop of Upsala, and three draughtsmen and, on arrival in Iceland,
established himself in style in some disused Danish warehouses at
Hafnarfjord, where he had landed. The lavish entertainments which

of Nordich's Collective works of the late Dr. Jevons, pp. 204-05.
he gave, his own considerable charm and the genuine interest and
sympathy which he manifested to the people of Iceland won him their
immediate affection; and he returned to England with a rich collec-
tion of books and manuscripts, many geological specimens and an
abiding interest in the Icelanders which he was to keep (to their
advantage) for the remainder of his life. The mere fact of such an
expedition having been undertaken by a man of Banks' fortune and emi-
nence stimulated further interest in Iceland. The books and MSS.
which he brought back with him were presented to the British Museum
and the publication in due course of von Trolle's Letters from Ice-
land (it appeared in English in 1730) was greeted with interest and
curiosity.

It was thus in an atmosphere of general approbation of all
things Scandinavian that Thorkein arrived in England, and this back-
ground of interest must be kept in mind in reading the letters which
passed between him and his English and Scottish friends both during
his stay in England and after his return to Denmark. Writers and
antiquaries welcomed the opportunity of enlarging their knowledge of
Old Norse literature and history, and of acquiring more books on the
subject. Merchants were interested in the possibility of reopening

39 It is an interesting sidelight on the success of such collectors as
Arne Magnusson that Banks and his friends had great difficulty in
finding MSS. during their visit. Von Trolle complains that MSS. had
"almost all been drawn out of the country; so exceedingly scarce
they are become, that, notwithstanding the pains I took during the
whole time of my stay there, I got sight of only four or five Ice-
landic manuscripts. . . . There are no ancient manuscripts, Ice-landic
sagas or historical traditions or accounts, to be met with, the island
having been entirely stripped of them, owing to the zeal and industry
of the antiquarians and others who formerly resorted in numbers to
this country for the sole end of collecting them" (Letters from Ice-
land, pp. 15-16).
trade links with Iceland, and were to be encouraged to do so by Denmark's partial repeal in 1786 of the trade monopoly which had been rigidly enforced until that time. Men such as Dryster and Banks found their interest engaged by the wretched condition of the people and the straits to which natural disaster and the short-sighted policy of the Danes had reduced them. In Thorkelin himself there was nothing to alienate the initial goodwill with which he was received. He had already acquired a certain reputation as a scholar, he travelled under the aegis and at the expense of the Danish King and government, he was known to be the successor to the highest position in the Danish State Archives, and he was, by his own account, of excellent family in Iceland. As far as more personal qualities were concerned, it seems safe to say that his manners were pleasing and agreeable, and he quickly acquired a good knowledge of English, of which he must already have known at least the rudiments. There is no well-authenticated portrait of Thorkelin in existence; the only one which is reputed to be of him, and which, if authentic, must have been painted about the time of his visit to England, shows a man of approximately 30 to 40 years of age, with light-brown hair and a good-natured, not unattractive face. But a more definite and reliable impression of his personality can be gleaned from the reactions of the friends he

See also Dryster's letter to Thorkelin no. VI, note 4 in connection with the abuses of the Icelandic trade monopoly.

It is quite likely that one or more portraits of Thorkelin and probably of his wife also may have existed, and have been destroyed when his house was burned during the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 (vide infra p. 110). Enquiry at the Rigsarkivet and the Arne-Jag- man Commission has not brought to light any official portrait of him which was painted during his period of office in these establishments.
made during his stay. "Upon my honest word," wrote Sir Herbert Croft, "I never made any person's acquaintance with more satisfaction to myself. If you think only half as well of me, as I think of you, I do not stand low in your estimation." And George Despater, with whom he was on terms of the closest intimacy, and whose opinion cannot be lightly disregarded, corroborates this in a letter which has already been quoted: "This world is greatly too wide. I would wish all who like one another, were obliged to settle in the same Parish, or if possible in the same Street; and for your habitation, I would assign the next Door, if not the same House with ourselves. Yet for as much as your Temper, your manners, your honourable Character, & your vast Learning were delightfull to me, and to all your Friends, yet nevertheless it may be my hard fate never to see you again." Of such a tribute, Thorkelin might well have said, namum est laudari a laudatis.

Examination of the various letters written by Thorkelin himself may make it difficult, if not impossible, to credit such praises. By the standards of the twentieth century, and even in comparison with many of the letters of the eighteenth century, they appear fulsome, servile and even sometimes grovelling. It must in fairness be remembered, however, that, however good Thorkelin's English was, he wrote to his English friends in a language not his own; and it should also be borne in mind that eighteenth century distinctions in rank demanded a very different treatment than to what would generally

42  Letter no. 183.

43  Letter no. XIII.
be considered acceptable now. Modern taste is frequently offended, for example, by some of the passages in Scott's letters to the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch. Thorkelin has been accused of cultivating the friendship of men of rank and position for his own personal advantage; it would be more charitable and possibly more accurate to say that he took an honest and ingenious pleasure in his acquaintance with such people, and that there is no reason to believe that his pleasure in the relationship was not reciprocated. Lord David Cecil, in his *Life of Cowper*, has drawn a character-sketch of William Hayley which instantly brings Thorkelin to mind:

His longings to be an ornament to the race inspired in him a hero-worship of anyone who was; and he had always to get to know such men. With such effect that he became the intimate friend of Romney, Flaxman, Blake, Gibbon and Howard. The strange thing is that they should have liked him. But his admiration, though, like everything else about him, rather silly, was, also like everything else about him, sincere. And no one dislikes sincere admiration. Besides, all his virtues, his enthusiasm and generosity and disinterestedness, went to make him a good friend; he was always ready to listen, to appreciate, even to give practical help. 44

It should be noticed that Thorkelin was, like Hayley, a good friend. Whatever his motives may have been for cultivating the friendship of a man like Guldberg when he was at the height of his power, it is significant that it obviously never occurred to him to sever the connection when the former minister was no longer able to be of use to him; it was to Thorkelin that Guldberg turned in his exile at Aarhus for help in settling up his affairs in Copenhagen, in getting his library catalogued, in getting his books published. And Thorkelin's notion in naming his fourth son after Guldberg as late as 1797 must

surely indicate that the friendship between them had meant more to him than merely an opportunity for personal advancement. Never, at any time, does Thorkelin give the impression of finding it other than a privilege to help his friends with books, with information or with hospitality. The letters in the Laing Collection are, not a record of a tuft-hunter's progress through a foreign country, but evidence of the genuine liking and affection which he inspired.

iv

It would be impossible to reconstruct a detailed picture of Thorkelin's four-and-a-half year stay in Great Britain, and no useful purpose would be served by a lengthy narrative describing in detail his daily activities. It is desirable, however, to indicate briefly the rough outlines of how he spent his time, since this necessarily has some bearing on the letters which were written to him during his stay. Fortunately the diary, inadequate though it is, and the letters between them make it possible for us to know roughly what he did and where he went. As we have already seen, he arrived in London, according to his own account, on the 7th August 1786, and, according to the regulations of the day, his ship took on board two customs officers at Gravesend. The resultant formalities are described by Thorkelin in a letter to Bullow, written the day after he was finally released from their clutches, and was able to establish himself in lodgings in London:

After having endured at sea all the hardships which angry Neptune could provide, I came on the 7th last to huge, enormous London, and believed that all was over; however, here I found the worst of all. At Gravesend, there came on board two customs officers, and again below Greenwich the ship was searched by the General Inspector. They the customs officers remained immovable in the ship until it
was entirely unloaded, and watched closely that nothing was carried to land from cases, barrels and the like, except to the royal customs house. I and my baggage also had to go there, where everything is called German or French. I was closely examined, clothes, books and each separate paper taken up and shaken and laid down, according to the nature of the circumstances, in the greatest disorder. Now I thought at last to receive them; but was mistaken and was kept waiting no less a time than till the 25th. Then I was told that I must pay 25 8 6d, the half being the duty on the books and manuscripts, the remainder being simply perquisites for a vast number of officers. The handwritten books and things are and ought to be free, and yet I had to pay duty on them which is done in a peculiar way. They have to be valued by the owner, and the valuations confirmed by oath according to the English fashion which is that, while the oaths are recited in the so-called Council, the swearer holds a Bible, and kisses it at the conclusion. Strange, I thought, that these people should curse the Catholics, and yet follow their habits. Before I paid the duty, I went daily to the Custom House to ask that I might receive my baggage without further hindrance or imposition than the customs regulations prescribe. But all in vain. 49)

The lodgings which Thornell found, on his release by the customs


"Pår end jeg betalte Tolden, indfand jeg mig Daglig paa Toldboden og hav om at faae mit Ty, uden videre Hinder eller paaleg, end som Toldordringen paalegger. Men alting forgives."
officers, were with Mrs. Katharine Wood at 5, Brownlow Street, near Drury Lane; and he seems at once to have established the same friendly relations with this landlady which he had enjoyed with Mrs. Sommer in Copenhagen. He remained with her for the whole of his stay in London, and by the time he left, he appears to have been considered rather as one of the family than as a lodger. He was unable immediately to present most of his letters of introduction, since he found that almost everyone to whom they were addressed had left London for the summer; although by the 2nd September, he had managed to establish contact with John Pinkerton in a memorable letter which is quoted later on p. 201. On the 17th September, he made an expedition with the Hon. John Cochrane to Windsor, where he was presented to George III and Queen Charlotte, by whom he was received with great kindness. The King told him that his private library at Buckingham House would be open to him at any time, but regretted that it contained so little in the way of Danish books. According to Thorkelin's own account, the King also asked for his help in supplying this deficiency, and commissioned him to obtain a selection of Danish literature on his behalf; there does not seem to be any documentary evidence for this, but there is no particular reason to disbelieve the story. There are, in several of the Laing letters, references to Danish books ordered obviously in fairly large quantities through the agency of George Nicol, the King's Bookseller; there are also two

40 The fifth son of the 8th Earl of Dundonald; see also letter no. III, note 5. Cochrane's obituary will be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, lxxi (1801), p. 1059.
letters from the King's librarian, Mr. Barnard, which clearly imply that, if Thorkelin were not actually commissioned to obtain the books, he was at least advising Barnard on the subject. It seems likely that these letters, taken together with British Museum MSS. Kings 338-339, may be taken to indicate that Thorkelin was in fact invited to help Barnard with Scandinavian books in this way, and that he did so. It is hardly necessary to add that his prestige would undoubtedly be much enhanced by such a commission, and that he would thus be brought into contact with such men as George Nicol, who had considerable influence in literary London at that time.

While he was at Windsor, Thorkelin also took the opportunity of meeting Dr. Lind, who had accompanied Banks on his expedition to Ice-

See letter no. VIII, note 1.

MS. Kings 338: Catalogue of that portion of the library of Grin Jonassen Thorkelin, the Danish antiquary (d. 1820), which was acquired for the library of King George III and is now in the British Museum, etc.

MS. Kings 389: A Catalogue consisting of 2035 books, relative to the Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic literature and philology, written by the natives and published within the borders of Scandina-
via, collected by Grin Jonassen Thorkelin, many of which are now in the British Museum.

These descriptions clearly date from after Thorkelin's death in 1820, and after the amalgamation of the King's Library with the Br-
tish Museum collection in 1823. By the time these entries were com-
piled, Thorkelin, Barnard and George III were all dead, and it would hardly be surprising if some slight inaccuracies had crept into the catalogue. The second of these items is in fact a carefully-drawn-up catalogue of books in Thorkelin's hand, with translations of the Scandinavian titles into English, and divided into sections by sub-
ject; in short, precisely the kind of list which he might have made if he had in fact been commissioned, as he claimed, to supply the library with Scandinavian books. The first is a list of those items from the list which were actually acquired.

Dr. James Lind (1736-1812) was at this time physician to the Royal
land; and he happened to do so at the same time as Sophie de la Roche; an energetic and dedicated German tourist who happened to be visiting London with her son in 1786. In her diary, she has left one of the few outside impressions of Thorkelin that survive from this period:

Accident took us to Mr. Lind's just as a young scholar from Iceland had called on him, who spoke so warmly of his native land that we concluded: it is quite evident that Iceland glows with internal fire! He wants to make his beloved country, which is almost as large as England, better known; and our astonishment was obvious as he told us about the six hundred original writings by different scholars, and the printing press of ancient times in Iceland, at the same time showing us a prayer-book in which the capitals were German and the small letters Latin. 50)

Thorkelin seems to have joined forces with Sophie and her companions on the following day for an expedition to Eton:

A fine, happy morning! With La Fite, Mr. Lind, Thorkelin //i.e. Thorkelin//, my son and Hurter to Eton . . . Our excellent Icelander displayed his knowledge of ancient tongues, for he was able to read manuscripts quite foreign to the librarians. He does credit to his native land, which he prides so highly, and to the sovereign who allows him to travel. An old genealogical tree, written on a long narrow parchment roll, showed traces of his mother tongue, in the Danish associations reigning formerly in England. He spoke Icelandic and wrote some down for us; it seemed softer to me than my own language, and more no-

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Household at Windsor. His private practice seems to have been small; "with his love of Eastern wonders and his taste for tricks, conundrums and queer things, people were afraid of his trying experiments with their constitutions and thought him a better conjuror than a physician," explained Fanny Burney. Shelley, when a pupil at Eton, was devoted to him and wrote later that he owed Lind far more than he owed his own father: "I shall never forget our long talks, when he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance, and the purest wisdom." He later commemorated him as the old hermit in The Revolt of Islam and as Zonora in Prince Athanace.

50 Sophie in London 1786, being the diary of Sophie v. la Roche, translated from the German with an Introductory Essay by Clare Williams, London 1933, p. 189.
ludicrous than English. 51)

Little of particular interest is known of Thorkelin's next few months in London. He worked fairly assiduously at the British Museum (and complained to Bilow of the difficulties and expenses incurred in doing so). He visited the King's Library, by which he was much impressed, and he also visited the Lying-In Hospital, opposite his lodgings, presumably on the invitation of the senior Physician, Dr. Maxwell Gartshore, to whom he had been given an introduction by Sir John Sinclair. He gravitated naturally towards the small, compact and very flourishing Scandinavian community which was settled around the Danish Church built at the end of the seventeenth century by Gaius Gabriel Cibber in Welldocose Square. Most of the members of this community were timber merchants, and one of the most prominent of them was John Collet, founder of the Scandinavian Society of London, of which Thorkelin promptly became a member. "The object is noble, and the result is excellent," he noted. "Three nations used to live in London unknown to each other, each avoiding the other. Now they are united by a bond of affection and they will seek to extend beneficent knowledge by printed papers." In 1787

51. Ibid., p. 100

52. His complaints include the deficiencies of the catalogues, the difficulty of gaining admittance and the cost of transcripts: "Udskrifter lade tillalte uden ved Betraktne, som desfor kræve uhyrte priser, et kort diplom koster kun en heel Gwinea" (Cohn, op. cit., p. 58).

he was elected an honorary member of the Society of Antiquaries; and, in the intervals of work, he found time to fit in a number of social engagements, such as the famous conversaciones held by Sir Joseph Banks at his house in Soho Square.

It is in May 1787 that we find the first reference to a tour which was to prove one of the most fruitful of any which he made during his stay in Britain. How he first met George Dempster cannot be stated with complete certainty, but it is very likely that he owed this introduction also to Sir John Sinclair. However it

trykte Skrifter at Udvide velgjørende Kendskaber." John Collet (1750-1810) was an intelligent and well-educated man who, before settling down to a business career, had studied on the Continent and at Oxford. He settled in London in 1780, and in 1783 entered into partnership with his countryman, Andreas Crean, as timber importers. He returned to his birthplace, Christiania, in 1792, but his Society continued under the aegis of Georg Pilf, the Danish consul. See Harold Faber, Danske og Norske i London og flere Kirker, Copenhagen 1915.

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John Galt’s description of these occasions in The Argyllshire Leaters was published more than twenty years later, but presumably the nature of these gatherings had not changed radically since Thorkelin had attended them: "Banks gives, I suppose officially, a public breakfast weekly, and opens his house for conversations on the Sundays. I found, at his breakfasts, tea and coffee, with hot rolls, and men of celebrity afraid to speak. At the conversations there was something even worse. A few plausible, talking fellows created a buzz in the room; and the merits of some paltry nick-nack of mechanism or science was discussed. The party consisted, undoubtedly, of the most eminent men of their respective lines in the world; but they were each and all so apprehensive of having their ideas purloined that they took the most guarded care never to speak of anything that they deemed of the slightest consequence, or to hazard an opinion that might be called in question. The men who either wishes to augment his knowledge, or to pass his time agreeably, will never expose himself to a repetition of the fastidious exhibitions of engineers and artists who have their talents at market. But such things are among the curiosities of London." Despite this jaundiced description from his friend, Galt’s young men did attend one of the conversations, and found that "ninety-nine out of the hundred in the world would deem an evening spent at the conversations of Sir Joseph Banks a very high intellectual treat” (Collected Works of John Galt, Edinburgh 1936, II, p. 172).
ome about, the acquaintance had progressed so far by 27th May that we find Dempster writing to Thorkelin to thank him for his present of a copy of Snorre Sturlason's history, and inviting him to breakfast, "that we may concert finally our time & manner of travelling. I have undertaken to witness the laying the Foundation Stone of a New Town or two in the Western Coasts of that Kingdom, which will enable me to shew you the whole kingdom to more advantage than I could have done otherwise." The background of this expedition to Scotland by Dempster and other members of the Fishery Society is described in greater detail in the introductory essay on Dempster. All that need be stressed here is the advantage which Thorkelin would derive from being escorted round the Highlands and Islands by a party including men of rank and distinction, and involving visits to the Duke of Argyll at Inveraray, to Lord Gower at Dunrobin, to Sir John Sinclair at Thurso and to Dempster himself at his houses at Skibo and Dumichen. He accepted the offer with alacrity, and set off on June 7th in a post-chaise which he shared with Isaac Hawksine-Browne, M.P. Their route took him through Birmingham, Bolton, Halifax, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Linlithgow, Stirling and Dunkeld, all of which were briefly inspected, and he arrived at Inveraray, where the party was to spend two or three days, on the 25th June. The Fishery Society's principal object was to inspect the various sites on which it was proposed that new towns and fishing stations should be built, and to lay the foundation stones of Tobermory and Ullapool; no doubt Thorkelin assisted at these ceremonies.
But he also managed to include most of the regulation sights of the western Highlands, including Fingal's Cave, Iona, Staffa, Skye, North and South Uist, Harris and Lewis. Painstaking little letters which afterwards followed him around Scotland (and presumably at some stage caught up with him) from various obliging Highland ministers indicate how conscientiously he applied himself to his pursuit of Cezingian antiquities during his excursion. After five or six weeks of such travelling, he seems to have been taken ill, and went to Dempster's house at Skibo to recuperate; consequently, he missed the visit to Lord Cower at Dumrobin, although in the diary he implies that he did in fact stay there. The first firm dates which enable us to trace his subsequent movements are the charters by which he was admitted freeman of Wick, Dornoch, St. Andrews and Dundee, and created an honorary LL.D. of the University of St. Andrews. The Wick charter is dated 10th September, and the Dornoch charter, the 20th September. The St. Andrews charter is dated 6th October, from which it may be inferred that by this time he had joined up with Dempster again at Dunlichien, where he made a short stay. It was here that Dempster introduced him to his friend, the Secessionist minister of

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See Dempster's letter of August 17th, 1787 (no. 221): "Dear Professor, I send Seth to enquire how you do, & I hope he will bring me news of the Leg being much better. There are great regrets by Lord Cower & Lady Sutherland [Gower's wife] that it has prevented you coming to Dunroben Castle, where all the manuscripts will be open to you. A great antiquarian from Rome is expected here soon, Lord Cower longs to make you acquainted with him. Mr. Szipes is his name...

Should your Leg still give you pain bid Mrs. Houston send for the Dr. she spoke of who has more skill I suspect than us all put together. Farewell By Dear Professor Your sincere Friend George Dempster." It is possible that Thorkelin made a separate visit to Dumrobin after Dempster and his party had left it to continue their tour.
Forfar, Dr. John Jamieson, with whom Thorkelin had a conversation on the subject of the Scottish language which was to prove particularly fruitful for Jamieson. From Dunnichen he appears to have gone to Edinburgh, where he had a letter of introduction to Adam Smith, and where he collected a fresh batch of letters of introduction from the Earl of Buchan, and thence to Glasgow; but he did not accept a pressing invitation from Dempster's close friend, Sir Adam Ferguson, to visit him at Kilkerran. In November, he set off south for London, making the journey this time apparently on horseback, and was back at work in the British Museum by the 7th December, pursued by enquiries from Dempster as to how much he had got for the "Northern Horse" and instructions as to where he could retrieve a shirt left at Dunnichen.

The year 1783 passed without major incident. Thorkelin's original intention had been to accompany Francis Humberstone Mackenzie, a member of parliament and the hereditary chief of the Clan Mackenzie, on an expedition to Iceland. The preparations for the voyage were nearly complete, and permission from the Danish government had arrived for the expedition to be made, when it was found necessary to postpone it on account of what Thorkelin cryptically

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See the letter from Professor Hugh Cleghorn (no. 102) dated 30th October 1797 to Adam Smith: "My Dear Sir Dr. Thorklin of the University of Copenhagen is extremely desirous of being introduced to you. He is to pass a few days in Edimur & from the little I have seen of him he appears to possess good information & agreeable manners.

"General Melville & Mr. Dempster thoroughly recommended him to the attention of this place. And he regretted he had not brought letters for you from London. I find Ed. Buchan is his only acquaintance in Edimur. & he told me he meant to ask his Lordship to carry him to you. I have presumed to give him this letter. I am sure you will not find him troublesome."
describes as "disturbances in the North in which England seemed to want to take a powerful part." It must be presumed that these disturbances were in Iceland, but it is not known of what precise nature they were. It is certain that, by reason of the eruption of Skeptarjökull in 1783, the population of Iceland had reached a level of poverty, famine and disease hitherto undreamed of, and that conditions on the island had become so horrifying that the Danish government had at last been obliged to take some kind of action to ameliorate the state of affairs. There seems even to have been

See Diary: "Uroelighedene i Norden hvorunder England syntes at ville tage en kraftig Deel, gjorde det til Island forehavende Besøg til intet."

The effects of this eruption, differing only in degree from the earlier ones of the century, are described in Nicol's Iceland. His account is based on that given in Magnus Stephenson's Island i den 18de Aarhundrede (Copenhagen 1803): "The destructive effects of this volcano were not confined to its immediate vicinity, vast quantities of sand and ashes being scattered over the restless parts of the country, and some were conveyed to the Faroe Islands, a distance of nearly 300 miles. The noxious vapours that for many months infected the air were equally pernicious to man and beast, and covered the whole island with a dense fog which obscured the sun, and was perceptible even in England and Holland. The steam rising from the crater, or exhaled from the boiling waters, was condensed in the cooler regions of the atmosphere, and descended in floods, that deluged the fields, and consolidated the ashes into a thick black crust. A fall of snow in the middle of June, and frequent showers of hailstones of unusual magnitude, accompanied with tremendous thunder-storms tearing up huge fragments of rock and rolling them down into the plains, completed the scene of desolation. The grass and other plants withered, and became so brittle that the weight of a man's foot reduced them to powder; and even where the pastures seemed to have recovered, the cattle refused to touch them, dying of actual starvation in the midst of the most luxurious herbage. Small unknown insects covered many of the fields, whilst other portions of the soil formerly the most fertile were changed by the ashes into marshy wastes overgrown with moss and equinote. A disease resembling scurvy in its most malignant type attacked both men and cattle, occasioned in the former no doubt by the want of food, and the miserable, often disgusting, nature of that which alone they could obtain. Many lived on the bodies of those animals which had perished from hunger or disease, whilst others had recourse to boil-
a move, in 1789, to evacuate the entire population of Iceland and resettle them on the heaths of Jutland; nothing concrete, however, seems to have been done to implement this. The necessity for drastic measures may be better understood if it is considered that the number of sheep on the island had fallen from 236,000 in 1783 to 49,000 in 1784; the number of cattle from 30,100 in 1770 to 9,800 in 1784; and the number of horses from 32,000 in 1780 to 8,600 in 1784. It is not impossible that there had been a move in England at this time to take some part in relieving the distresses of the Icelanders, possibly even to the extent of annexing the island to the British crown. It is known that such a step was fairly openly discussed before 1800 and again in 1807; but on both these occasions, England was acting under what was felt by the British government to be Danish provocation. It seems unlikely that such a move would have been made at a time when the two countries were at peace. It is perfectly possible, however, that discussion of Icelandic affairs among private citizens might have come to the ears of the Danish ambassador and thus to the Danish government; and if such discussion had taken place, for example, in the house of a man so influential and so highly respected in Iceland as Sir Joseph Banks, it might well be felt that it would be wiser to exclude all British citizens (and especially one who was a member of parliament) from Iceland until the period of unrest there were safely over. Whatever

ed skins, or substances still more nauseous and unwholesome. The numerous earthquakes, with the ashes and other matter thrown into the sea, caused the fish to desert many parts of the coast, whilst the fishermen seldom daring to leave the land, enveloped in thick clouds during most of the summer, were thus deprived of their usual stock of winter provisions" (pp. 41-42).
the reasons, the expedition was cancelled; and instead, Thorkelin amused himself, during the summer months, by making another visit to Scotland, confining himself, on this occasion, to the eastern coast. There is no definite proof that he revisited Dummichen on this trip; indeed the two letters written to him by Dempster in August 1783 seem to imply that there had not been any communication between them for some months. But he did stay with the Earl of Fife and became extremely interested in the Scottish salmon fisheries, and the problems of transporting the fish to markets in London and the continent. His social life this year must also have been interesting; for in March, Dr. James Anderson sent him an introduction to Jeremy Bentham, and in April he was invited by Thomas Brand Hollis, a kind, though slightly ridiculous republican enthusiast, to a dinner party at which he was to meet the two most eminent dissenters of the day, Dr. Richard Price and Dr. Joseph Priestley. On the literary side, too, there is evidence that he had not been idle. 1783 was the year in which the question of the abolition of the slave trade was first brought by Wilberforce before the House of Commons, though when the time came for him to give evidence on the subject before the Privy Council, he was prevented by illness from doing so. But his deputy (no less a person than the Prime Minister himself) did no disservice to his cause, and 1783 was marked by a rash of pamphlet publications on the subject, in which Thorkelin also took part. His contribution, an anonymous "Essay on the Slave Trade," was published in February 1783, and it is likely that he actually began to write it in 1787, probably about the time that the foundation of the Abolition Society brought the subject into the public eye and made it
On the essay's completion, it was sent by Isaac Hawkins-Drowne (with whom Thorkelin had shared a post-chaise to Scotland the previous year) to a friend of his named Woodhouse, who replied as follows:

I am greatly obliged to you for communicating to me the very learned and judicious letter on the slave trade, which does me and my plan so much honour. I am astonished that a person so little accustomed to our language should write so well in it. I have corrected the inaccuracies as you desired - at the 16th page, I have taken the liberty of making some transpositions with a view of rendering more clear the deductions of the benevolent & learned Author. I have omitted the observations on the modern state of religion as apprehending with you, that it will be taken in bad part. This has occasioned me to transcribe that part anew.

I entirely agree with you that it should be published - it will be a very acceptable present to those who are fond of history and a very useful one to the zealots for the plan of abolition.

In spite of this revision of the text by Woodhouse, the various foreign idioms in the pamphlet as it now stands imply that it is principally the work of Thorkelin himself, and as such it is a striking testimony to his progress in the English language in the space of less than two years. In subject and tone, it may be considered as typical of the moderate liberal movement. The origin of slavery in ancient nations and the history of its development are described; and its chief justification in primitive times, both in

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For a detailed account of the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, see Frank J. Klingberg's The Anti-Slavery Movement in England (New Haven 1923) and Averil Hackett-Crane's The Last Years of the English Slave Trade, 1730-1807 (London 1941). This latter work, however, concentrates chiefly on the progress of the movement in Liverpool.

Letter no. 103.
Scandinavia and in Greece and Rome is found in its having offered an alternative to death for most prisoners of war. In short, Thorke- lin concludes,

from the preceding extracts it appears, that Slavery is a necessary evil attending upon nations in a state of uncivilization and barbarism; and that very great efforts, for a continued length of time, are required to extirpate it. Europe would never have attempted, much less have effected, the happy alteration that has universally taken place within her borders, unless she had first received the humane doctrines of Christianity. This however was the work of centuries, and of men who sacrificed their own ease to the good of mankind. And we may reasonably conclude that without the knowledge of true morality, and of that philanthropy which is best taught by the Gospels, without a settled life employed in agriculture and arts, in science and manufactures, it is impossible for the inhabitants of the Gold Coast to live free from those evils which introduce slavery, or that is worse, the horrid murders of their captives by the sword or the fire, to glut revenge, or appease superstition. It will not be an easy matter for all the states of Europe to agree in passing a general law for the abolition of the Slave Trade; but it will be still more difficult to prevent the African shores from reeking with the blood of young and old taken captive by an enemy, who, when the Slave Trade has ceased, will have no other effectual method of securing his dreaded foes. 62)

Thorkelin's recommendations, therefore, are that slavery should be continued, for the benefit of the African peoples, but under very much stricter surveillance; that, while in a state of slavery, they should be instructed in morality and religion and prepared for their eventual emancipation; and, to foster their independence, that they should be paid small wages for their labour. After a certain num-

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G.J. Thorkelin, An Essay on the Slave Trade, London 1783, pp. 23-29. The British Museum copy of this pamphlet has the following inscription written inside the title-page in an unidentified hand:

"This Pamphlet was written by Crize Johnson Thorkelin, professor of Northern Antiquities in the Danish Academy, when he had been only about three months in England. The title page has been altered since the first publication, and now is: An Essay on the Slave trade among the Ancients, particularly the Northern Nations." Thus it seems likely that the pamphlet went into a second edition; I have not, however, been able to trace any copies of this.
ber of years, the slaves were to be declared free; and in the meantime, the rights of the master over his slaves were to be drastically limited. Such recommendations sound very inadequate in modern ears; but it seems safe to say that to Thorkelin's contemporaries, they would have appeared liberal and reasonable, and we know that this is indeed how they were considered by George Dempster, himself a man of humane and enlightened views. The pamphlet seems to have won universal acclamation, principally from Dempster, from Woodhouse, and from Dr. James Anderson, whose consent was forwarded to Thorkelin by Dempster, and who gave high praise to an "Elegant little Treatise published at London by Nicol 1783 entitled an Essay on the Slave Trade, which for concise perspicuity of historical induction deserves a conspicuous rank among the productions of the present Times."

Thorkelin's second literary publication of 1788, which was also published by John Nichols, was entitled Fragments of English and Irish History in the Ninth and Tenth Century . . . translated from the original Icelandic, and illustrated with some notes. It is of little value in itself, except as illustrating the new appetite for Old Norse literature and history which could make a publication of this kind a reasonable commercial proposition. It consists of a series of extracts from various sagas and records, all of which are concerned with transactions of various kinds between the Scandina-

Letter no. 220. As late as 1800, Dempster was writing to George Wolff, the Danish Consul in London, to ask him for a further supply of copies of the pamphlet - "two copies of it bound a half a dozen stitched" (no. 240). The pamphlet is noticed by Ralph Griffith in the Monthly Review, May 1788, 78, 430, at the request of Samuel Ayscough, having been asked by Thorkelin to send it to him for that purpose (letter no. 23).
vians and the inhabitants of the British Isles. Thus the extract from the Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok (as we have seen, one of the most popular Viking heroes of the time in England, and certainly the best-known) deals with his death in the snake-pit at the hands of the English; the extract from Laxdela Saga is the passage which contains the account of the purchase of the Irish slave, Helkorka, by Hooloald from Cilli the merchant. Four out of the five extracts are accompanied by English translations, a further indication that interest in such literature was passing out of the hands of the antiquarians and into those of the general reading public who preferred an English to a Latin translation; although for the Ragnar Lodbrok extract, Thorkelin has also supplied a Latin version and notes.

The English translation of this extract has been provided by John Pinkerton (working presumably from Thorkelin's Latin, since there is no evidence that he was proficient in Old Norse); the other English translations must, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, be ascribed to Thorkelin himself. The book is chiefly significant in adding to the body of Old Norse literature available in English translation three more rather scrappy morsels; and, though there is no indication that the extract from Laxdela Saga was sufficiently interesting to draw public attention to one of the most outstanding achievements of Old Norse literature, the work as a whole was obviously popular enough for Nichols to include it in due course in his Bibliotheca Norsewica, and it is quoted as a source of information by several antiquarian writers of distinction.

The Fragments of English and Irish History seem to have appeared in August; but by the time they were published, Thorkelin was
occupied with plans for a new book which, in the event, never reached the printer. This was to be an edition of the Laws of Iceland, with an English translation, and Thorkelin collaborated with Dr. Gillian Thomson over the preparation of it. It was probably Dempster who had introduced him to Thomson; and it may well have been Dempster who proposed the joint undertaking. There can certainly be no doubt as to his enthusiasm for the project. "In my opinion," he wrote to Thorkelin in November 1737, "the work should be in Letters from you interspersed with some accounts of Iceland historical, Natural and Oeconomical. There are 10,000 people in this Island all Geping for accounts of distant Nations, as Fishes do for food. But with plenty of money to purchase it. You'll put some money in your Pocket & the Doctors, and add to your Literary Reputation & to him." But in a letter of 14th November, Thorkelin's proposed co-adjutor expressed himself a little more warily on the probable success of the publication:

It had been agreed on between yourself and me, after dinner at the Hon. Mr. Cochran & Mr. Dempster, that a Translation with Commentaries on the Laws of Iceland, should be a joint work of yours & mine; and that we should divide Expenses & profits: for it was proposed to Secure ourselves against Loss by a Subscription.

I mentioned this Agreement and Design to our Mutual Friend Mr. Nicholl whom we had fixed on for our publisher, and who, if there really be such a Thing in Nature, is an Honest Bookseller, as well as a very fine Fellow, and accomplished Gentleman. Fie from grasping at any contingent Advantage to be derived from the Sale of the Book, as others of his profession would have done, he dissuaded me from the Risque of such an Undertaking, reasoning in this Manner:

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64 For a note on Dr. Thomson, see Letter III, note 5.

65 Letter no. III.
Neither the Laws of Saxony nor the Laws of Wales, Countries related to ourselves still more nearly perhaps than any others, had any Sale: Why then risk a Translation & publication of the Laws of Iceland? This Argument appeared to me to be so Sound, that though I had made some progress in the Translation, & made notes of Illustration, I hesitated concerning the adventure till I should consult you. In opposition to Mr. Nicholl's Argument you observe, which I did not know, that neither the Saxon, nor the Welsh Laws were published in English. This is an important Difference: and there is a Case more Similar to our Undertaking, in the Gentoo Laws 66) concerning the Sale of which we must enquire at Mr. Nicholl. —

I have time being my only fortune, it is not in my power to run any considerable risk, especially as I have been at great expense, about a work now in the press, Memoirs of the Late War in Asia &c. — As to Subscriptions, it is uphill & tedious work: and there is no time for delay.

But you generously offer to be satisfied with one third of the profits, and to waive all demands for any until I be satisfied: The Honour of your Nation, and the Advancement of Letters being your object. I have perfect confidence in the Justice & Liberality of your Intentions. Still, there is a small risk for paper, print, & advertising: and, for the first of these an immediate advance. Might I then be permitted to submit it to you, whether & how far you might choose to participate in that advance, which at present, I cannot afford to make? I am sure you will do what ever is reasonable & just: and, therefore, without waiting for an answer to this question, I hesitate not to say that I will immediately resume our project. . . ." 67)

Thorkelin's "reasonable and just" reply to this proposal that he should pay all the advance expenses of a work and at the same time waive all share in the possible profits for an indefinite number of years has unfortunately not been preserved. Discussion of the project continued in a somewhat desultory way over the next two years. The collaborators got as far as drawing up a memorandum entitled


67 Letter no. 800.
"Heads of the Laws of Iceland," publishing a prospectus and canvassing for subscribers; but the project eventually foundered, as might have been foreseen, on the rock of expense. The many letters which passed between the two men do not suggest a completely harmonious relationship, and it may be that the partnership was eventually dissolved with mutual feelings of relief, although they remained on friendly terms. The response of possible subscribers, too, did not justify Dampier's first optimistic forecast. "I regret exceedingly that I have not been enabled to obtain any subscriptions to the Proposals," wrote Lord Saltoun on 24th January 1739. "Having been from private matters much confined at home since I left London, I have not had it in my power to see any person I could think of asking to subscribe to a work of so peculiar a kind, & not generally adapted to Country Gentlemen's reading."

Dampier became slightly alarmed at the scope of the book which his friends clearly envisaged. "I am quite incapable of forming a Judgement of the success of a work that is to cost Two Guineas," he wrote on 3rd August 1733. "People think twice before they subscribe for such a sum. My Idea was of some publications relative to the ancient constitution & present state of Iceland that would cost less money. This might serve to excite the attention of the Public to that Country especially if our common Friend Dr. Thomson would lend his aid to dress up the Article of its Language and Literature in an interesting manner. After that a new Icelandic Grammar and a neat..."

68 Letter no. 703/7. The memorandum is in Thomson's handwriting.

69 Letter no. 720.
Icelandic Dictionary would have good sale, & then might come the
Laws & regulating Orders of the Assembly in the Original with a
Translation. Then some of the Historians in the same Form."

Eventually, after long and sometimes acrimonious correspondence be-
tween the two colleagues, the printer, clearly despairing of print-
ing the book itself, sent in his bill for the printing of the pros-
ppectus in November 1789; and it may safely be assumed that this put
an end to whatever hopes of a publication had lingered on until
then.

In 1769, the question of another Icelandic expedition was dis-
cussed, to be undertaken this time by John Stanley, later Lord Stan-
ley of Alderley. Once again, Thorkelin was invited to accompany
then; and it is understandable that, in travelling to a country so
little known as Iceland, both Stanley and Mackenzie should have
wished for the company and advice of an Islander. Thorkelin seems
to have been eager to accept the invitation, and wrote to Denmark
for permission to discontinue his research for the time being in
order to accompany Stanley. But the necessary leave of absence did
not arrive, and Thorkelin, terrified of taking a step through which
he might forfeit the handsome allowance which he was receiving,
wrote to Stanley (who by this time had already joined his ship at
Leith) to withdraw his acceptance. The expedition, therefore,

Letter no. VI.

Letter no. 819 from Thomson to Thorkelin. The relationship be-
tween the two men remained friendly until 1792 (see p. 204 infra),
and Thomson seems to have been instrumental in getting Thorkelin ad-
mitted to the Sublime Degree of Arch Lason (see letter no. 559*) of
which he appears also to have been a member. See his letter no. 809
in which he asks Thorkelin’s aid for a brother-lassen, "Mohamed Aben-
 Ally, a Turkish merchant from Cairo."
sailed without him; and Thorkelin was left to make, belatedly, the expedition to Ireland and the Isle of Man which had been included in his original plan of research.

Although there are fewer letters relating to the Irish expedition in the Laing Collection than there are to the earlier Scottish one, the account of this journey in the diary is one of the most detailed parts of it. He left London on a Sunday in July (he does not give the precise date), apparently by private coach; an expensive way of travelling, especially when it is remembered that by this time Palmer's new mail-coach service was operating between London and Holyhead. He travelled by way of Lichfield (where he records that seems to have been a standard complaint among travellers of his day, that his breakfast, costing 1/-, was brought after a

Extracts from Stanley's journal, printed in The Early Married Life of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley, ed. J.H. Adamee, London 1899, confirm that he "had to suffer much disappointment from persons, who at first were all eagerness to go with us, changing their minds", but do not mention Thorkelin by name. Among the deserters specified are Henry Beaufoy, H.P. and Dr. James Home, who had also hoped to accompany MacKenzie on his voyage, and who had taken a prominent part in the preparation for both expeditions. A member of Stanley's party recorded in his journal that, when their expedition arrived in Iceland a year after MacKenzie's should have reached it, their ship was visited by Count Levitschuan, the Governor, "to inquire who we were. Count Bernstorff had written to the Governor informing him that a Mr. MacKenzie was soon to visit Iceland, but a second letter had stated that the visit was delayed" (Adamee, op. cit., pp. 72-73).

His original grant, which had been for two years, had expired in 1768; and he made an application for a year's extension in November 1768 through Count Bernstorff on the grounds a) that his plan of research had been retarded by plans for the expedition to Iceland with MacKenzie, which had eventually been cancelled; b) that because of this delay, he had been unable to visit Ireland in 1768, since, by the time the expedition had been abandoned, the Irish libraries had closed for the summer; and c) that he had found more documents to be transcribed than he had expected. A year's extension of his grant was made in December 1768 by the King, to expire June 1769 (Fonden ad Usus Publicos, pp. 124-25).
twenty-minute delay when the coach was ready to set forward again, and "where dirt in rooms and food exceeded even that I saw in the worst inn in Scotland"), Nantwich ("a very nice town, paid 1/3d for a very good meal of three courses") and Chester to Holyhead.

At Holyhead, where he arrived on the following Wednesday, he went on board the packet on Wednesday evening, passed the voyage in "the most uncomfortable society of three Irish officers, one being Mr. Forster, a brother of the Parliament man; never have I heard a man swear more or use more indecent words and expressions;" and was thankfully deposited on shore in Dublin Bay on Thursday evening.

The picture of Thorkelin which has emerged should make it unnecessary to state that he had not neglected to provide himself with suitable introductions before setting out for Ireland, and he lost no time in presenting them. The most important of these was a note from Lord Raglan, in which Thorkelin was recommended to the hospit-

**Diary:** "Frokost i Litchfield i et overnaade alet Vertshus, hvor Urenlighed i Værelserne og i Nøden overvik endog hvad jeg naa i det slesteppe Vertshus i Scotland. Betalte 1 sh. for Frokost, som blev bragt ind efter 20 minutter, da Vognen og Hestene vare færdige."

**Ibid.:** "Mandag ude i Liddag i Nantwich, on ret ærg By, betalde 1 sh. 3d for meget godt maaltid of 3 retter."

He spent Monday night in Chester at the White Lion Inn and inspected the town on the Tuesday. His brief description of it concludes with the interesting information that during the reign of Charles II, the town's public brothels had been under municipal protection, and had been painted white, so that they might be more easily distinguished from ordinary houses, which were generally painted black and white.

**Diary:** ". . . det ubehagelige Selskab af tre irske Officerer, den ene Mr. Forstør, en Broder til Parliamentcheren. Aldig har jeg høft Land sørge mere, eller bruge Ord og Talemande være uansprædige."
able care of his father, the Earl of Noire, and it is clear that Lady Noire interpreted her son's request in the most liberal way.

Her house was one of the centres of political and literary activity in Dublin; and through her, Thorkelin was presented to many of the most prominent men in Ireland at the time - Lord Fitzgibbon, Lord Charlemont, William Burton Conyngham, Teller of the Exchequer of Ireland, Charles Vallancey the eccentric antiquarian and Miss Charlotte Brooke, daughter of the writer Henry Brooke and herself the editor of *Reliques of Irish Poetry*. The most notable exception from his Irish visiting list is a name which might have been expected to head it: that of Thomas Percy, the author of the *Reliques*, and translator of *Northern Antiquities*, and by this time Bishop of Dromore. That attempts had been made to bring the two men together is proved by a letter from Percy to Pinkerton, which is printed by Nichols in his *Illustrations of Literature*:

"As I shall not see Dublin before the meeting of our Parliament, I fear I shall not have it in my power to see Mr. Professor Thorkelin, if he should visit our metropolis before the time above mentioned; unless he honour me with a visit here, which will make me particularly happy; but, as I should be glad to be of service to him in any of his literary researches, if I were apprised of his arrival there, and favoured with his address, I would endeavour to procure him access to the libraries and manuscripts, &c."

At this point in the diary, Rawdon is referred to as Marquis of Hastings, a title he did not receive until 1817, during his appointment as Governor-General of Bengal. It was his daughter, Lady Flora Hastings, who was to be the subject of the Bedchamber Scandal of 1839 which embarrassed the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne and did much to diminish the early popularity of Queen Victoria. Thorkelin had been acquainted with Rawdon since early in 1786, before his arrival in England, and had dedicated to him his *Fragments of English and Irish History*. His mother, Lady Noire, later became Countess of Huntingdon in her own right on the death of her brother.
and procure all the civilities to be shown him in my power.

There is no evidence of any further contact between Percy and Thorkelin. It is almost inconceivable that Thorkelin should not have followed up such civilities from a man as eminent as Percy and so well able to assist him in his own line of research, and the conclusion is reluctantly forced upon the reader that Pinkerton, either out of malice or from genuine forgetfulness, may have neglected to pass on the message. This is regrettable, for an account of a conversation between Thorkelin and Percy would have been well worth reading, and correspondence between them might have been even more interesting. But even without this, it is clear that Thorkelin's time in Dublin was well filled. He must have spent a considerable portion of his time in Trinity College library, where he made transcripts of manuscripts relating to Danish affairs. But he also called on the Archbishop of Dublin, dined several times with the Moiras, attended the Chancellor's Court, dined at Conyngham's house in company with the Chancellor, Lord Newhaven, the Attorney General and others, and found time to escort Lady Charlotte Rawdon to see a conjuror. He paid visits to Donegal, where he found various archeological remains of interest, and to Dundalk; and arrived at his next port of call, the Isle of Man, on the 15th August.

He remained here for less than a week, during which time he made the acquaintance of Peter John Heywood, for many years Deenster

of the island, and father of the Peter Heywood who, in this very year, was one of the officers confined on board by the mutinous crew of the Bounty; and he also called on Colonel Richard Townley, an antiquarian then resident in the island, who has left us an account of the occasion in his Journal:

18th August: A very late visit was paid me last night by a Manchester gentleman, who desired to introduce to me a Danish stranger, Mr. Thorkelin, professor of natural history and antiquities, at Copenhagen; who came here, by the express order of his Danish Majesty, to investigate what remains were to be now met with, demonstrative of the Danish power and dominion formerly within the island. He addressed me with great politeness, and requested me to favour him with what discoveries I had been able to make in that line, and point out to him where they were to be met with: - saying, he was informed (by some gentlemen) that I had not only been very curious in that way, but also very industrious, in making researches as to the antiquities of the island in general; and especially those that respected their country. I remarked to him all the discoveries that I had been able to make, on the subject of his enquiries, and where; at the same time assuring him, that all knowledge of that kind must be very imperfect, and, in a great measure, conjectural; as there were but very few written records to assist strangers, in their wished investigations, or (in any degree) to elucidate the subject. He most civilly thanked me, for the trifling information I was able to give him; saying, he was very sensible of the difficulties I had pointed out to him. 80)

Townley breakfasted with Thorkelin and his unidentified companion the following morning, and, it must be presumed, accompanied them on their explorations. On the 20th August, he records regretfully in a slightly less heavily italicized entry that

the Danish gentleman has left the island, without being able to make any new discoveries. Indeed his stay was too short to allow those strict and minute explorings, from which (with his perfect knowledge of the Runio characters)

some very valuable discoveries might have been expected; such as would have rewarded the toil of so very long a journey. He told me a gentleman at Castletown had ob-
ligeably presented him with three or four, Danish medals, found in that neighbourhood, amongst them one of Carinte. 81)

It is, indeed, far from clear why Thorkelin, after expecting such interesting discoveries in the Isle of Man, devoted a bare four days to its exploration. There is no entry in his diary to ex-
plain his brief stay there; but whatever the reason, it must be ad-
mittedit his failure to remain long enough on the island to carry out any kind of serious research there might well lay him open to charges of negligence. Townley did what he could for him in abs-
sentia by sending after him on the 30th August a long (and rather dull) letter, giving further scraps of information which he thought might be interesting to him. The most likely explanation, how-
ever, of this curious lack of interest in the antiquities of the Isle of Man might be that Townley (and presumably also Thorkelin himself) had considerably overestimated "his perfect knowledge of the Runic characters." This is to some extent confirmed by the correspon-
dence which passed at this time between the two eminent antiquarians, George Paton and Richard Cough. In reply to a letter from Cough, telling him that Thorkelin had been asked to give an opinion on the Ruthwell Cross inscriptions, Paton writes:

I do join you in condemning the confined spirit that rages in the breasts of the Danish antiquarians, their illiberal publications in their own language is highly censurable, did your sentiments warn their breasts a more universal regard must of consequence be paid to their discoveries; due res-

81  
Ibid., I, p. 158.

82  
Letter no. 624/5.
peat ought to be paid by every one to their native country, yet it should be moderated with a similar or proper regard for antiquities &c. that may occur to learned persons in a distant country from their own. Mr. Thorkelin's temper of mind seems not to be altered by the very great & general complaisance that has been shown to him for his knowledge since he came to Britain: I am sorry to learn that he is selfishly confined in his humour to deny assistance in deciphering the Ruthwell Rune Inscription; this really is unpardonable, when he has collected every monument that is any how connected with his native country & to carry off all his sketches &c. home with him & not leave us here any help of discovery, I humbly of opinion, his conduct is ungrateful, full deserving some public censure, being a kind of robbery. 83)

On the 22nd April 1760, Gough wrote to Paton that "Mr. Thorkelin is still engaged in making collections from our libraries, but very shy of communicating them or his thoughts on them" and Paton regretted "that the northern antiquarian Mr. Thorkelin should continue so selfish amongst so many generous communicators to his hidden merit."

Such coyness is extremely uncharacteristic of Thorkelin, and it is much more likely that it was due to an inability, rather than a disinclination, to give assistance.

Thorkelin's only publication in 1769 was his edition of a commentary by Rowe Moree, purporting to prove that Alfric the Grammari

83 National Library of Scotland, Adv. Ms. 29.5.7, vol. II, letter dated 1st June 1769. The letter is in answer to Gough's letter of 16th May, in which he writes, "Mr. Cordier's beautiful drawing of Ruthwell stone is engraving by the Society of Antiquaries. . . . I have shewn it to Mr. Thorkelin but he deems it of no very high antiquity, & indeed with a true national partiality he seems to think no runes monuments out of his own country of any consequence. He has seen most in G. Britain a pays less regard to them than I expected. . . . The Danes are indefatigable in their researches into antiquity; but they publish their observations in their own language which to the most of Europe is an unknown tongue. It wd. be more liberal to write in Latin - at least in one column" (NLS, Adv. Ms. 29.5.6, vol. II).

84 NLS., Adv. Ms. 29.5.6, vol. II and 29.5.7, vol. II.
and...bot of Eynsham was identical with the later Alfric, Archbishop of Canterbury. Lores' work was begun in 1734, in collaboration with Ballard, Francis Rise and Lye, its chief object being to refute Henry Marton's Dissertation of 1691; it was never published during his lifetime, and after his death his manuscript was bought by Thomas Astle, who, in due course, lent it to Thorkelin. The Gentleman's Magazine exaggerated in asserting that this essay "exactly ascertains the controverted history of this prelate." As J.A.W. Bennett has pointed out, Lores' method of argument was simply "to insert the known facts about Alfric the writer at those points in the biography of the Archbishop where they could be made to fit; when they cannot be disposed of so easily he relates them to Alfric's Data, than he confuses with the real author of the homilies, though he gets as far as assigning him to Eynsham. The book is of value now mainly as showing the standards of Anglo-Saxon scholarship in Lores' day." Not only in Lores' day; Thorkelin has reproduced without criticism or question this dull, long-winded and clearly unreliable commentary for the sake (as he tells us) of a holy man whose reputation has been tarnished by malicious and scandalously artful men. Apart from a brief preface, he has added nothing to

Edward Rowe Lores (1731-78), antiquary and typographical expert. In 1773 he purchased the important collection of printing materials belonging to John James, and in 1778 produced his best-known work, his Dissertation upon English Typographical Founders and Foundries. His books, i.e., engravings and printing types are now distributed between the Bodleian and the British Museum.


Horses' work except a Latin translation of the documents which were printed as an appendix. In fact, why he should have wished to publish it at all must be left to the imagination of the reader.

The only possible reason which presents itself is that it was important to him to have something which he could dedicate appropriately to the present Archbishop of Canterbury, the brother-in-law of his own early friend and patron, Morton Eden, and himself an acquaintance from whom he possibly hoped for further and substantial benefits.

His grant from Denmark officially expired in June 1789, and there had been no talk of its being renewed for a further period. From June onwards — indeed all the time that he was travelling in Ireland and the Isle of Man — Thorkelin must have been living off the savings of the previous three years. He was clearly anxious not to return to Denmark, or at least not to return while Voas was still alive and in good health. Early in 1789, before he had applied for and received the first extension of his allowance and leave, he had already been investigating the possibilities of a permanent settlement in England. There had been some talk of the possible resignation of Joseph Planta, at that time keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum; Pinkerton, on hearing the rumour, immediately applied through Walpole to Sir Joseph Banks, one of the trustees of the Museum, for his interest in obtaining the post, only to be informed

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89 Joseph Planta (1744-1827) became in 1799 principal librarian at the British Museum and retained the position until his death.
by Banks that he was "positively engaged to Mr. Thorkelin, should 90
Mr. Planta resign;" but Planta did not resign, and neither Pink-
erston nor Thorkelin was appointed. Such posts, owing to the system
of administration of the time, were to all intents and purposes in
the gift of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and it may not be unduly
imaginative to read into this dedication of a work which should have
made no part of Thorkelin's official studies in England a prudent
desire to insure for the future in case a similar opportunity were
to present itself.

In 1790 such an opportunity did present itself. The year had
opened badly for Thorkelin, who had been confined to his room for
some weeks, nursing an injured toe, and consoling his solitude by
reading Marcus Aurelius. On his recovery, he left London for a
tour of the West Country. While he was out of town, Dr. Charles
Voide, assistant librarian in the department of printed books at the
British Museum and an acquaintance of Thorkelin's was stricken by an
apoplexy at a conversazione in the house of Sir Joseph Banks and died
on the 9th May. Instantly Thorkelin's friends exerted themselves
to obtain the vacant position for him. Planta wrote to him the

90 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, ed. Dawson Turner, London 1830,
I, p. 150, letter dated 11th February 1790.

91 See letter no. 97 from Thomas Brand Hollis, dated 17th January 1790:
"I shall not permit you longer to neglect this foot of yours - for
you have gone directly contrary to almost all my principles of
Physick for tho' I am less acquainted with surgery yet in those cases
my practice is cleanliness warmth & rest preserving the skin entire
as long as possible till nature discovers its proper relief by sepa-
rating ... I will see you soon, read it. Aurelius and be happy." Thorkelin's study of the philosopher clearly made a lasting impression
on him; his sixth son was christened Marcus Aurelius and, understand-
dably, died a few days later.
day after Biddle’s death to give him the earliest possible news of this new opening; and his devoted landlady, Mrs. Wood, forwarded the letter to him the same day with the following note:

Sir — There was a Letter brought for you this morning from the Museum; the Contents of which I have since learnt from Mr. Brand Hollis was to inform you with the death of Dr. Biddle, he was at Sir Joseph Banks on Saturday and died yesterday. Dr. Bill. and the rest of your Friends desire you will lose no time in returning, he has been to several Gentlemen in your favor and advises you immediately to write to his Grace the Arch Bishop of Canterbury.

Thorkelin returned to London instantly on receiving these letters, and it is clear from his subsequent correspondence that the vacant post was in due course offered to him. On 18th May, he wrote to Dillow from London, telling him of this opportunity, asking his advice and protesting his continued desire to serve his country in every way open to him. Dr. Solander, he pointed out, had conferred lasting lustre upon Sweden by the work he had done in England; and, in any case, if he accepted the British Museum post, he would hold it only until the promised position in the State Archives became vacant, for “I have altogether given up hope of Dr. Justice R[ead].”

Planta’s note clearly indicates that before Biddle’s unexpected death, he had already been doing that he could to obtain temporary employment for Thorkelin in the Museum. “Though I have nothing decisive yet to say concerning my Application to our Trustees,” he wrote, “the Matter still resting with the Chancellor who is almost as inaccessible as the Dalai Lama, and though I have to say may in the end unhinge my plan, I think myself however bound to apprise you upon a presumption that a permanent settlement in our establishment may be more eligible to you than a temporary one, that a vacancy has just now happened by the sudden death of Dr. Biddle who was taken ill last Saturday evening at Sir Joseph Banks, was brought home speechless and expired early yesterday morning” (no. 675, dated 10th May).

Letter no. 800, dated 10th May 1790.
Vosses death," he adds ingeniously. Three days later, before his first letter could possibly have reached Billo, he wrote again to tell him that he had after all resolved against accepting the post, that he would continue to trust for the future to the goodness of his Prince and country, and that he was packing his bags in the expectation of leaving London within fourteen days. But, he adds (and from this it is clear how genuinely he dreaded the idea of a return to the archives under its present administration), allow me only to say that I desire to maintain myself abroad, so long as His Justice Raad Voss remains in the service of the State Archives, and until my presence shall become necessary. - However unwilling I am to offend a venerable old man, whose whole life has been devoted to the service of the state, I am equally unwilling to place myself even remotely on a par with or subordinate to Mr. Weber, a man who would have harmed me, if you had not prevented it. 95)

Once again he was reprieved. "Just as I had made my preparations to return to the land of my fathers, in consequence of your gracious letter and the resolution which I communicated to you in my letter of the 17th May last," he wrote to Billo shortly afterwards, "I received the agreeable news from Hr. Count Wedel Jarlsberg [the Danish ambassador] that H.H. the King and H.R.H. the Crown Prince have been most graciously pleased to allow me to remain a year longer in England; from which it must follow that you have 94

Claim, op. cit., pp. 76-78.

95

Ibid., p. 77: "Hildad mig ellers at sige, at jeg ønsker at op- holde mig uden Lands, saa længe Hr Justice Raad Voss forestæser Go- heime archivarier i tiesten, og indtil min nerverelse skulle blive nødvendig - Saa ugifte jeg ønsker at støde en erverdig genmel ment, hvis hele Liv hver været opført til Statens Tieneste - saa ugifte ville jeg staa i endog den ringeste Lighed eller subordination ved Hr Weber, et menneske, som ville have skadet mig, om ikke De havde afvent det."
entered into what concerns me in the most forcible manner." His present means of support and his future career being thus assured, he had nothing further to do but to pass his last year in Great Britain in as pleasing and profitable a way as he could contrive. For reasons which are far from clear, he decided that his last major expedition should once again be to Scotland. He spent approximately six weeks in Aberdeen and its environs; but his activities, of which a fairly full record survives, did not appear to include any research into Scandinavian antiquities. His experiences and reflections during this time were made the subject of a series of articles in the General Advertiser, under the title, "The Northern Traveller", which took the form of letters from the traveller to a friend, and appeared at irregular intervals between 20th September and 18th October 1780. The articles are interesting in presenting a picture of Aberdeen in the late eighteenth century, and also in giving an account of the activities of the press-gang, who boarded Thorkelin's ship outside Aberdeen, and "searched for men among the passengers with the same eagerness, that a gang of revenue officers would search for their


97 Thorkelin actually reached Aberdeen by sea on 16th July, and returned to London on the 27th August. I have not been able to trace any copies of the General Advertiser in which these articles appeared in this country; but Thorkelin's own copies are in the Royal Library, Copenhagen, along with cuttings of other articles written by him during his time in England.
Obviously his experiences at the hands of the Inland Revenue on his first arrival in England still rankled. On disembarking at Aberdeen, however, he not about the object of his expedition, which appears to have been no more than to "examine the state and improvement of the country." So far as Aberdeen itself was concerned, his observations on the whole were favourable: he was landed at the New Inn, which he found

a very handsome building, erected at the expense of the Freemason's Lodge. It contains every accommodation that an erection of this kind ought. Whilst dinner was preparing, I stepped into the coffee-room, in which I found a treat - the best newspapers from London, Edinburgh, and the commercial towns of Great Britain. The dinner was excellent, and the wine, I assure you, stood in need of no bush. The dinner cost an entire shilling, and in London I am sure it would have cost five times that sum, 100.

His pious repinings on the abuse of the Highlanders by their chieftains are not of any particular interest, but his description of the social life of Aberdeen and his ecasties over the charms of its ladies are quite amusing, as is his account of the University. On the whole, however, Thorkelin's English style is not so distinguished

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98 *General Advertiser*, 20.9.1790, p. 3. Cf. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond's article, "The Navy" in Johnson's *Dictionary* (ed. A.S. Turberville, Oxford 1933, i, p. 43): "They haunted the seaport towns, they lay in wait in the approaches by road, they cruised in 'tenders', to intercept the home-going merchant ship, either off the harbour mouth or even farther out at sea. The season in the outward-bound ship was insane, though he might be snapped up at the other end of his voyage, to feed the foreign squadron, but the wrecked fellow returning from a voyage, however long his absence, might be wrenched from his ship when in sight of the very shore of England, to be embarked, without seeing his home, for service abroad, in the East Indies or the West, in the Mediterranean or off Brest, from whence he might not return for years - if at all."

99 *General Advertiser*, 20.9.1790, p. 3.

100 *General Advertiser*, 24.9.1790, p. 3.
as to make these articles very interesting reading. Much more interesting are the letters written to Thorkelin by various Aberdonians whom he met during his visit, and on which much of these articles is based. Of these, particular mention should be made of the long letter written by Patrick Copland, professor of Natural Philosophy in Marischal College, which not only describes in detail his collection of mechanical models and apparatus, but also gives an account of what must have been one of the earliest series of extra-mural lectures given specifically for the benefit of the working classes:

That I might render these Models more extensively usefull, I have given, for these five winters past, a private popular course of Lectures, independent of my public academic course. The chief intention of it is, to point out the application of the principles of Natural Philosophy to practice. On account of those for whose use it is chiefly intended, mathematical reasoning is excluded, & the Principles only illustrated by experiments, & reasonings deduced from them; for which purpose we are now provided with a complete apparatus in all the different branches, independent of the Models. The Course consists of about 70 Lectures, from 1 to 2 hours each, according as I see the attention of my hearers continued. It has been attended by a much greater number of Mechanics, (such as Mill wrights, Watchmakers, Carpenters Joiners, Smiths &c) besides Merchants & private Gentlemen in Town, than I could have hoped for, and I am happy to think, from the increasing taste, which I see arising for this Branch of Science, that the liberal views of the Board of Trustees, will not be entirely frustrated. Several improvements having been already made, & a Machine for washing Thread at our Bleachfields, by which the Labour of several men is saved, invented by Students attending my Classes. 101)

From Aberdeen, Thorkelin went on to pay visits to Sir Archibald Grant at Nornysk, to Captain Leslie at Summerhill and to Lord Forbes at Putachie. He returned to London at the end of August, and, for the rest of the year, was chiefly occupied in completing his work in

101 Letter no. 167/8. Mention should also be made of letters from Rev. John Bethune on the course of academical education in the University and from Captain Samuel on the customs and superstitions of Aberdeenshire (nos. 42 and 729).
the British Museum, writing his articles on his northern travels, and in putting together a series of earlier articles on the Crown Prince of Denmark in the shape of a small book entitled A Sketch of the Character of H.R.H. the Prince of Denmark, which was published early in 1791. On 11th January 1791, Voss at last died. Thorkelin, by virtue of the written promise given him by Colding before his fall, and confirmed by the following administration, succeeded immediately to his place, and was at once recalled from England to take up his duties. He sailed for Denmark towards the end of April, his luggage much encumbered by the spoils of the past four and a half years, including transcripts, books, manuscripts, geological specimens and some human skeletons.

Since Thorkelin's present-day reputation as a scholar rests principally upon the work he did while he was in England and the uses to which he put it after his return to Denmark, it may not be inappropriate at this point to consider the achievements of his four-and-a-half years research. On the whole, these were generally pronounced by his contemporaries to be disappointing. He had made, and brought back, many transcripts, some of which can still be seen in the Royal Library, Copenhagen. But between 1791 and 1815 the only evidence of his industry to appear in print was a short pamphlet entitled Bevill, at de Ireke, ved Ostmannernes Ækomst til Irland i det 8de Aprthårde, fortieen en udmærket Kong blandt de meest oplyste Folk i Europe paa de Tider, written on the occasion of his election to the Videnskabernes Selskab in 1792, and published in Det Kongl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskabs Skrifter, Ny Sæling, IV, 550. It
was felt by Thorkelin's contemporaries that this was little enough
to show for the amount of time and money he had enjoyed in England,
and they can scarcely be blamed for such an opinion. They could
not be expected to know that he had not, in fact, been idle during
his stay in England. The list of manuscripts consulted by him in
the British Museum alone is truly formidable. But nothing in Thor-
kelin's career is more striking than the speed and frequency with
which he rushed into print in his youth before his English journey,
compared with his almost heretical silence after his return to Den-
mark. Johan Steenstrup has remarked that, although the Icelanders
seem to be born with a greater inclination and facility for scholar-
ship than other men, they are frequently afflicted by a sort of lit-
erary sterility, and gives Thorkelin as an example of this:

During the five years he spent in England, he was re-
ceived with great hospitality and all the collections were
open to him; he returned home with many notes, manuscripts,
and books. Now the fruits of his work might be expected,
especially as his work as Keeper of the State Archives
sorely prevented him from studying, provided that he kept
the archives in good order. But no scholarly work came
from his hand. 102)

His expedition to England, however, would have been considered worth
while by posterity had he done no more than bring back his transcripts
of Beowulf; and, since it is for his work in this connection that he
is chiefly remembered today, it may be useful here to consider brief-

102  
Joh. C. M. R. Steenstrup, Historienskrivningen i Danmark i det 10de
Aarhundrede, Copenhagen 1889, p. 77: "I de fem Aar ... han op-
holdt sig derovre, blev han modtaget med stor Gjestfrilighed, og alle
Schlinger stode ham alme; han vendte hjem med mange Opgivelser,
Manuscripter og Boger. Nu kunde han vente Frugterne af hans Pr-
bejde, tilmed da hans Gjerning som Gehejmearkivar (1701-1829) rørte
hindrede ham i at granske, om han end holdt Avidet i god Orden.
Men intet videnskabeligt Skrift kom til at foreligge fra hans
Haand."
ly his merit and achievement as the pioneer of Beowulf studies.

The history of the manuscript of the poem (so far as it is known at all) is well known and requires no elaboration here. That happened to it between the year 1563, when Laurence Howell wrote his name in it, and the time when it passed into the collection of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton is likely to remain, like the song the sirens sang, a matter for conjecture. It is first mentioned in Humphrey Wanley's Catalogue of northern books in English libraries, in the third volume of Hickes' Thesaurus, where 11. 1-19 and 55-73 are transcribed.

It must remain a matter for regret that Wanley does not appear to have been sufficiently interested in the poem to transcribe it completely, since he had the opportunity of doing so before the manuscript was damaged in the fire at Ashburnham House in 1751, which, like the Copenhagen fire of 1723 which devastated the collection of Arne Magnussen, ravaged the Cotton library. The passages which he did copy are thus of great value; and his description of the poem, although inaccurate, is of interest, since it was its very inaccuracy that was to catch the attention of later Danish scholars. He refers to it as a fine example of Anglo-Saxon poetry, in which are described the exploits of Beowulf, "quidam Danus, ex regia Scyldingorum stirpe ortus... contra Sueciae regulos." Wanley's error, so unusual in a scholar of his calibre, was caused by the accidental displacement of one leaf in the manuscript; without this, it is doubtful if patriotic Danes would have paid much attention to the poem. Certainly

103

Antiquae literaturae septentrionalis liber alter, seu Humphredi Penleii liberorum vet. septentrionalium, qui in Anglia bibilothecia extant... catalaurus historico-criticus, in Hickes' Linguarum Vet-

orvm Septentrionalium Thesaurus (Oxford 1705).
it was Tanley's description which inspired Langebek and Suhm with an ardent desire to inspect it, and which Thorkelin had in the forefront of his mind on his arrival in England. He reached London, as we have seen, by the end of August; and the Reading Room Register of the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum shows that he had examined the manuscript as early as the 3rd October. The only known reference to the poem during this time in England is in a letter to Bulow of the 3rd November 1783, in which he refers to "an unknown Anglo-Saxon manuscript, containing a collection of songs about the exploits of the Danish kings in the 3rd century, which is considerably increased by the good Saxo." It is to Thorkelin's credit that he was the first to realize that the hero of the poem was not in fact a Dane: "Diei supra venerabilis Hickeii judicium de supra carminis nostris claudicoare. Illius heros solus est Beowulfus, editus sene Regibus, eternum Sayylingus erat ex Regis Svea filin. Bella quidum esset, sed omnium pro suis Gothia et corus acidis." It is thus surprising to find that his title-page, when his edition was at last issued in 1815, still describes the poem as De Donorum Rebus Gestis Secul. III & IV. Poema Danicum dialecto Anglosaxonico. His reasons for emphasizing the Danish aspects of the work are readily understandable, and, indeed, he deserves a certain amount of credit for contriving to pass off a poem with a hero

104 Clemn, op. cit., p. 57: "et uberdemt Angloiaks, inbeholdende Sening af Sange om de Danske Konges Bedrifter i det 3de Aarhunderede, og hvor ved den gode Saxo foryges icke lidet."

105 G.J. Thorkelin, De Donorum Rebus Gestis, preface, p. xiv. This work is quoted in future as Thorkelin.
of Swedish ancestry in Denmark in the year after Denmark had been forced to cede Norway to Sweden by the treaty of Kiel.

The importance of the two Thorkelin transcripts to Beowulf studies is such that a closer look at the circumstances under which they were made may perhaps be justified. It is generally accepted that, of the two transcripts, only one was made by Thorkelin himself, the other being made presumably on his instructions by a professional copyist. It is also generally assumed, not without some reason, that the two were made within a few months of each other, and that Transcript A (that which was not made by Thorkelin) is the earlier of the two. The chief reason for believing this has been stated by Professor Kemp Malone in his Preface to the facsimile edition of the two copies:

Of the two Thorkelin transcripts, A seems to be the earlier, though presumably by a few months or weeks only. Its priority is to be inferred from differences between A and B attributable to a progressive deterioration of the Cotton codex. Thus, the top line of fol. 130 recto 106] once ended with the word sceadu. In the Cotton text as we now have it, only seen is left; B has soen; A has the whole word. It would seem to follow that when A was made the manuscript was in a better state than it was in when B made his copy. One may indeed conjecture that it was A’s handling of the manuscript which brought about further crumbling and left B with less of the text than A had had before him. Nor is this an isolated case. Of the parallels which might be brought forward I will give only one. The second line of fol. 163 recto once ended with meg for, if one may judge by the A text, but B ends this line with meg, and the Cotton text now has only m, the rest of meg having crumbled away since B made his copy. 107)

106 Actually on f. 133 recto.

This deduction is given added weight by the self-evident fact that the scribe who copied the A transcript was completely ignorant of Old English. His transcript is thus the nearest thing to a photographic copy which could be obtained in the eighteenth century; he copied, so far as he was able, what he saw before him without understanding it and consequently without any temptation to alter or emend it. He must be regarded, therefore, as an unbiased and impartial witness. Thorkelin, on the other hand, however imperfect his knowledge of Old English, clearly understood at least part of what he was working on. The order in which the two transcripts were made is not a matter of fundamental importance; however, in the light of what is known of Thorkelin's timetable in England, one or two facts emerge which at first sight appear to contradict the generally-held view as to which was the earlier.

It has already been seen that Cotton Vittellius A XV was one of the earliest manuscripts which Thorkelin examined. If we accept the evidence of his letter to Bülow that he arrived in London at the end of August, this would mean that he first looked at it little more than a month after his arrival. Until he had seen it himself, it is obviously very unlikely that he would go to the considerable expense of having it professionally copied. After October 3rd (the date on which he first examined it), it would appear from the evidence of the Reading Room Register that no-one, except for Thorkelin himself, handled the manuscript between 1783 when he arrived in London and 1791 when he left it. Indeed it shows that even Thorkelin himself only had it out in his own name for a maximum of four days;
and it may well be open to doubt whether it was in his power to make his own copy in that time. It is not, of course, possible to say categorically that no-one else could have used it during those years; but it should be noted that, in general, even the use of manuscripts by Museum staff (e.g. Planta, Pencoak and Southgate) was entered in the Register; Samuel Ayscough's name appears almost daily. It should also be noted that, on the only other occasion when one would expect to find that this particular manuscript had been consulted, the Register confirms that it was. It thus seems unlikely that it should have been used for so many days as would be necessary for a professional copyist to make a transcript of a poem of over 3000 lines in an unfamiliar language and that there should be no indication anywhere that it had been issued to him.

The negative evidence of the Reading Room Register in this case is confirmed by the equally negative evidence of the Laing collection of letters and by Thorkelin's letters to Dillen. It is, of course, perfectly possible that he might have had a transcript made in 1766 or 1767 without any correspondence passing on the subject; that is certain in that there is no reference anywhere in his correspondence at this time to any such commission. Nor is it easy to imagine any reason why at this stage he should have asked for a copy to be made.

him on 3rd October 1766 and returned on the 4th; it was issued to him again on 16th October and returned the same day; and it was finally issued to him on 23rd May 1769 and again returned the same day.

109 That is, when Sharon Turner was writing his History of the Anglo-Saxons. He consulted the Cotton manuscript on at least four occasions between 1800 and 1803 and, on the last occasion, kept it out from 13th July 1803 until 6th September.
The Beowulf manuscript was to him at that time simply one of the many MS's, which he examined and transcribed, and he would have had no particular reason for taking a precaution in its case which he did not take in the case of others, particularly in view of the high price charged for making transcripts. If, therefore, it is accepted that he would not have had the manuscript copied before he had seen it himself, and does not appear to have had it done during his time in England, we are forced to the conclusion that the A transcript may have been made considerably later than the B transcript, and probably after 8th September 1903, when the Reading Room Register ends. The most likely date that suggests itself is after 1907, when Thorkelin's first draft of his edition with all his notes were destroyed in the bombardment of Copenhagen. Nothing could be more likely than that, on beginning his work all over again, he should have asked for a new transcript against which to check his own.

The evidence of the title-pages of the two transcripts (both of them handwritten by Thorkelin) is not of any great assistance here, since both were clearly originally made for Thorkelin's own B copy.

The title-page of the B transcript reads:


The title-page of A reads:

Poëma Anglo-Saxonicae de Rebus gestis Deorum ex Membrana Bibliothecae Cottonianæ Vitellius A in Musæo Brittanico, fecit exscripti Londoni, A.D. MDCCCLXXII. Grinus Johannis Thorkelin, LL.D.

Here the paper has been cut, so that the lower half of the page is
missing; but the top of letters on the line below the cut are still visible. The words "fecit es scribi" have obviously been altered from "exscriptit" and the paper is slightly torn where the final "t" has been erased. The paper of the title-page is different to the paper of the transcript itself. It would be typical of what is known of Thorkelin's unmethodical habits that he should have taken the trouble to alter "exscriptit" to "fecit es scribi" but have forgotten to alter the year in which he caused the copy to be made. It is equally typical that he should take the trouble to alter an old title-page rather than write a new one. Of the two pages, it looks as though the handwriting of the B title-page is that of an older man; the writing of A is steadier, more regular and more carefully done. If Thorkelin ordered and obtained a new transcript in 1807, it is possible that he transferred to it the page from his own old copy, duly amended, and then made a new title-page for B. The difference in the handwriting would then be explicable.

None of these circumstances will serve to explain how the A copyist could have copied in 1807 words which were apparently illegible to Thorkelin when he made his transcript many years earlier. The only reasonable answer to this is the conventional one, that A was in fact made earlier than B. It may yet be that some factor will emerge which will serve to clarify these seemingly contradictory arguments.

Of the merits of the two transcripts, little need be said, since both have been examined in minute detail in Keré Malone's fac-simile edition of them. Their importance is inestimable, in view of the further deterioration of the Cotton text since they were
made. The A copyist, as has been said, knew nothing of what he was transcribing, but set down each word as he read it, copying the old insular hand with increasing skill as he went on and concerning himself not at all with whether it made sense or not. Thorkelin, on the other hand, did know some Old English; probably not as much as he thought he did, but possibly more than he has been given credit for. He would therefore have been much more conscious, while he was working on it, of the errors and contradictions of what Kemble was later to describe as "unhappily among the most corrupt of all the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and corrupt they all are without exception."

His work on Beowulf has tended too often to be judged by the edition of 1815, rather than by the transcript of 1780/37. It is difficult for the most lenient critic to find much merit in the text of the printed edition; from Grundtvig in 1820 to Thorpe in 1855, a unanimous vote of no confidence has been passed on the devoted labours of the first editor. Yet even Grundtvig has admitted the general accuracy of Thorkelin's own transcript (which indeed he used for his own translation and later edition). Many of the errors of the 1815 edition are so gross and extraordinary, especially when compared with either of the transcripts, that they can only be explained by


They were copied and corrected by Rask for Grundtvig's use.
the hypotheses of extraordinary carelessness on the part of the
printer and a total absence of any proofreading on the part of Thorkelín; and much of the translation reveals a sufficient absence of
comprehension of the text to justify Thorpe in his complaint
forty years later. One is indeed compelled to suspect that in
some places Thorkelín, baffled by the corruptions of the text and
the limitations of his own knowledge of the language, was obliged to
content himself with a word-by-word translation, without any attempt
to make sense of the resultant Latin version.

The deficiencies of the edition can best be illustrated by re-
ference to the text and to the two transcripts. High among Thork-
elín's many obstacles must be ranked his ignorance of the system of
prosody and alliteration on which the verse was based, since this
made it difficult for him to separate the lines correctly. He was
not alone in this. "The best Saxon scholars," pronounced Sharon
Turner in 1855, "have confessed that the versification of the vernac-
ular poetry of our ancestors was modelled by rules which we have not
explored. Our ignorance of the principles of their verse still con-
tinues, and therefore all that can be done on this topic is to give

"... it was not till the year 1815, or a hundred and ten years
after the notice given by Manley, that an edition of the entire poem,
by the learned Icelandic, G.J. Thorkelín, appeared at Copenhagen, ex-
hibiting a text formed according to his ideas of Anglo-Saxon, and
accompanied by his Latin translation, both the one and the other stand-
ing equally in need of an Oedipus" (Beowulf, Oxford 1855, p. xlv).
 Cf. Grundtvig's earlier criticism: "Now, though the transcript on
the whole was accurately done, yet the printed text is so erroneous,
that it can only be excelled by the translation; and the edition,
therefore, reflects disgrace rather than credit on the country where
it appeared" (Bibliotheca Anglo-Saxonica - Prospectus and Proposals
of a subscription for the publication of the most valuable Anglo-
Saxon manuscripts illustrative of the early poetry and literature
of our language, etc., London 1850.
some specimens of the different forms which have survived to us."

William Litfield, in 1774, had confessed to similar ignorance:

"The verses," says Dr. Ellis, who appears to have examined the observations of preceding critics, "are not distinguished from prose, either by a determinate number of syllables, or by rhyme; or indeed by any other apparent test, except the studied occurrence of the same letter three times in each line, a contrivance which we should not suspect of producing much harmony. This measure is referred by Dr. Percy to one of the hundred and thirty-six different kinds of meter, which Mænulis has discovered among the Icelandic poets."

Litfield here quotes from Ellis's Specimens of the Early English Poets, a copy of which was certainly at one time in Thorkelin's possession, but the hint that the alliterating letter should occur three times in each line of verse seems to have been ignored by Thorkelin and by later editors of Old English verse. The text of Thorkelin's edition is printed in half-lines - like the Icelandic poetry he knew, but also like the earlier specimens of Old English verse printed by Hickes in his Thesaurus - a habit which was to persist in later editions of Beowulf until Geism's edition of 1857. He was also hindered by the absence of punctuation in the text, and by the arbitrary behaviour of the scribes of the Cotton codex in separating syllables of words and in running two or more words together, as, for example,

in section XI of the poem, where the MS. reads:

nynte pat he gedalde or pon dag cuome, atal agloca eru gehygloca lifedl lice pa hin slumpen wenst fylle wenne pces (gwyrd pagen. he maaste man na cymes pioegan ofer pa night.

The reading in brackets is supplied from the two transcripts; it is now illegible in the original. This passage is rendered by Klaeber:

nynte pat he gedalde, or pon dag cuome, atal agloca eru gehygloca lifedl lice, pa hin slumpen wenst fylle wen. He was pat wyrd pagen, pat he maaste manna cymes pioegan ofer pa night. 115)

Thorkelin gives this passage:


This short extract illustrates to some extent both the merits and the defects of Thorkelin's edition. On the credit side, he has, in the majority of cases disentangled the words and half-lines from the confusion of the Cotton text. His error in not separating "wen" from "me" is very pardonable. His printing of "pagen" as one word is less excusable, in that this is one of the instances which he himself quoted to illustrate this very difficulty. The punctua-

115 Fr. Klaeber, Beowulf and the Fight at Himmlburg, Boston 1950, 3rd edition revised, I, 75-36. This edition is quoted in future as Klaeber. All line references are to this edition.

tion of the passage has also caused him some difficulty. He had clearly realized that the point after "pagen" in the l13. was incorrect, and he chose to end his first sentence at "lice". This has placed him in the position of having to make a further break after "wone" where the sense clearly demands it. He has therefore inserted a semicolon in his translation after "spen", although this does not appear in his Old English text. His final full stop after "niht" is correct. As regards sense, his translation is reasonably accurate as far as "lice". In the next sentence he wrongly translates "alimpen" by the verb alfulcere, to shine, glitter. It is not a word which he would have been likely to have known in this form, since its use is mainly poetical, but he might perhaps have been expected to deduce its meaning from the quite common "limpan" or "go-limpan". In his last sentence, he converts a negative statement - "he wes not wyrd pa gen" - into the positive "wes wyrd pagen", an error which is to some extent justified by the fact that Grendel does in fact slaughter one of the sleeping guards only a few lines further on. Most of his textual errors can be traced to one or other of the transcripts (e.g. "gelmalces" is found in B, "meneate" in A), but "night" for "niht" is an example of the gratuitous carelessness which is found on every page of the edition, for it has been perfectly clearly transcribed correctly in both A and B. It is also an

It is interesting to note that he translates "lice" specifically as "dead body", presumably on the analogy of the Danish lig, corpse, and possibly remembering English lychgates. The word is glossed by Klaeber as "body (generally living)". Bosworth and Toller give it as "body, living or dead"; in this context, it clearly indicates a living body.

It would be tedious to give an extensive list of examples of this
example of a kind of error which may be described as an Anglicization of the text and which occurs fairly frequently — "night" for "niht", "night" for "niht", the contraction for "end" always expanded as "end".

Thorkelin's comprehension of the text, as well as his reproduction of it, was not consistently good throughout, and for obvious reasons. In the passage from which the lines quoted above are taken, describing Grendel's coming to Heorot and his fight with Beowulf, the action is clear and uncomplicated. There are no digressions, the Cotton text is reasonably clear and Thorkelin evidently found little difficulty in following the straightforward narrative. The extent of his ability to understand the language is more severely tested in other places — for example, in section XXXII, beginning at l. 2231b. Here the poet breaks off abruptly after describing Beowulf's triumphant return to the Geats and skips over fifty years to embark on the final episode of the dragon-fight. The description (very corrupt in the MS.) of the rousing of the dragon by a fugitive serf is succeeded by an account of the original hiding of the treasure by the last survivor. The condition of the Cotton text here is less good than in the passage quoted from Section XI above, but it is

type of error; but sec, for example, within the space of 40-odd lines, "gywem" for "gyjem" (64b), "гермэйд" for "герумэйд" (65a), "op pe" for "odd pe" (66b), "гевес" for "гевэс" (66b), "geoшоm" for "геонум" (72a), "pis" for "his" (79a), "лэнэ" for "лэнэ" (83b), "эндэпэ" for "эннэдэ" (83a), "нэнг" for "нэнг" (95a), "ге-буге" for "гебуге" (93b), "гедилом" for "гедилом" (98a) and "ворвак метод" for "ворвак метод" (107b). In all these cases, the correct reading has been clearly recorded in both A and B. Thorkelin's substitution of ё for ё is consistent, if unjustified, and has therefore not been counted as an error; nor has his use of "end" for "end".
comparatively clear. It is given by Klaeber as follows:

Par was mylca fela
in dan eord(hu)se argestroes,
swa hy on geardagum gescena nathwyla,
cornelafe edelen cynnes,
parchyagenede per gehydde, 2235
dore naðman. xelle his deal forman
erwan sulm, ond se on ða gen
leodan augde, se ðær lenest hwearf,
weard winedgar, wende þæs yclum,
pæt he lylal fec longgestreona 2240
bræcan woste. Beorh eallgearo
umode on wonge untaryhtum neæe,
nixe be miste, neorcerefreñu fæst;
par on imen her eorlgestreona
hringa byrde hordgrœne dal,
fætan goldes, fec worda æst:
'Heald pu nu, bruse, nu healeð ne mostan,
corla shte! Hæst, hyt er on de
goðe bægæton; gæðedæ forman,
feorhbeald friæne fyra gehynelne 2250
leodan minna para de plis /lit/ ofgeaf,
gesænan ealdeoror. Neð, hwa sceorod wege
bile fe(o)r(m)æ femæ wæge,
drængæt deore; ðæg(u) ðælor æ/on/æca.
Seal se heorda helm (hyr)stædegolde,
fætan bealælæ; feormynæ swæfæ,
pæ de beadgræman bylan sceoldeon;
ge mylyce seo herepæd, slio et hilde gebæd
ofær bæðæ gebætnæ hite irena,
broææd æfter beorne. Ne ræg byman hring 2230
æfter vifgræman vidre ferœn,
halelum be halfe. Hæa hearnæ wæn,
gescena gealœsæces, ne god hafoc
gæða æl ænægo, ne se swæftæ nearh
burnætede bætæð. Bealœsælæ hafað 2255
fæla feorhgarum ford onæædæl'
Swa giscææmd gæðææ wænæ
æn æfter eallæm, umbilcæ hwa(sæ)
dæges ond nihtæs, ðæ set dealfæ wyld
hrum æt hearton. Nordgrœmes fænd
caled unhæcæðæ openæ stanæn,
ææðe ðæ byrænænde biægar sæcel,
næææd ni[hæ]dræææ, nihtæs fleægoæ
fyre befængææ; hyne folðæænd
(ælææ ændææ)deðææ. Ne gæææææscææ 2275
(ho)r(don)æ hræcææ, par he helææægold
wææææ ænæææ ænæææ fænd; ne byæææ hæææ æææ æææ sel.

The same passage is given by Thorkelin as follows:

Pa was mylca fela Ibi erunt tales multi
In ista terra . . . .
Ile . . . . . . opus
Its in mundo
Mondum nemo satit,
ulis absca reliquis
 Nobilis : regemid
 Acceps referat.
In conditit choros,
Thesauros arces.
Rumore aboluit
Ut ante dictum est.
Et pristituto tangere
Gentis nobiliss.
Mens longissi.
Piebat adalis fieabilis.
Legens ibi, state,
Vos juvenes nactus est
Locum, opibus
Ubi valuit.
Auris orans: paratem
Inhabitavit in planis.
Apyram: fluientis vicinam,
Novam: juxta promontorium
Augustum: arce limam
Illus intus
Tulit: coros thesauros
Symolumum custos.
Porti: exercitui portas
Vasorum aureorum
Dedit. Ligitur dic:
Tene munere mollis,
Armis: gydae fortium max-
Brevior, opes, . . . . . . . . .
Vas olim tibi
Dii decoreverunt.
Bella: morte sultat
Vitam: alate auro
Vitam: aureo
Cordis: moeae.
Vt cadaver ibi reliquere,
Videsabant beatas
Jubilantium imaginem.
Iussu: cedebam donce
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Plena: luvore.
Rotatoria: vasa caro
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Fortis: protector
. . . . . . auris
Pecula: subactus
Sunt: sensus septus fuit,
Ubi: militare larve

In pop. eorp . . . .
Se . . . . or gestrea
Ine ha on gaerda
Ine gaien nad
Maige borne life
Spelen opum
Men lygena.
Her gebako deore
Nedem calle.
Nie deap formum
Arken malin.
Und di eapagen
Leoda dudge
Se per longest hweard
Hec aine geoor.
Venice per yldan
Het he lytel frc
Long gestrea
giuran route
Beorth cel gearo
Tunode on worne
Inter your ned
Mune be mane
Becro emfum fest.
Per on irem
Her ceor gestrea
trengi lynda
Herd frynde tal
Petten golden
Neu for pa sweep
Hold pu nu hriuse
Tuu halcape nestan
Tora ehte
Hunt id ar on pc
Gode begenet.
Op deap formum
Peorh bealo frene
Tyrena geluglane
Leoda hlima
Pa nu pu pis of good
Gesamn cele
Lrama hwa
Acdead wege opppe
Pe . . . . . . .
Feted wege
Anyne fat oro
gug . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Tilor soco uccals e
Se harda heli
. . . . . . . sted golde
Petum beecallen
Peor nynd awfuit
Ia pe beadagrimen
Bywam scoldon,
Geslode neo herceg?
Sio et hliche gebad
Ofir benda gebra
Mite irena broonge
After wyftunan
Pide ferman
Hello num be heal dines
Kear von wyn gansen

Induerent illi,

Vos exercitus Dux
Ad pugniam evocavit, ut
Per alyceorum fragoren
Moru ferri excidium,
Pro balii autore,
Riplum inferrent
Virilis per aivvidos nervos
Grine lividiss. Pausis exul-
tans

Melodieus nescius accipiter
Ultra votum castigavit
Cadaver alacri rostro.
Urbes vassatae.
Pernicii luca
Multas animas ad sedes
Aetorum misit.
Die noceus animus
Olim tener ingenset,
Unus gilave
Infelix ubique
Die et nocte,
Donec mortis estu
Obruta corda
Jundi goudia evencrivant,
Veteris originis sedes
petendo.

Nudus necessitate Draco
Nocte volat
Igni illaveatun.
Cum terricola

Poste

Ibi paganum idolum
Custodit animis prorectus.
Non est illa creatura.

The passage is concluded with the note, "Hic locus incidit, quae

XV versibus respondet absentibus." In fact, Chorkolin continues
guie correctly with the next line in the MS., beginning "Swa se peod
sceapu. . . . " and the meaning of this note remains obscure.

The most superficial comparison of this passage with the origi-

nal and with the two transcripts will immediately reveal a very con-
siderable decline in accuracy from earlier and more straightforward
parts of the Poem. The number of errors of the type already men-

tioned which must be attributed to sheer carelessness is about 100 per cent greater than in a passage of equal length in section XI. 

Examples are "ge" for "par", "sylca" for "sylora", "nim" for "nimia", "ecd gesrona" for "erclogstreona", "scoldon" for "scole-
don" and "swefat" for "swefat". All these, and many more, are clearly and correctly recorded in both transcripts. Moreover, in two places there are omissions of a whole line, both of which could have been correctly supplied from one or other of the transcripts: in l. 2250, the words "after beorne. No mag byrmen bring", which are not found in the printed version, are not only present, but have been underlined in B, presumably by Thorckelin himself to draw attention to the fact that they had been omitted by the transcriptor of A. Similarly, in l. 2271, the words "open stanen se be byrmen biorges" are omitted in A and in the printed edition, although they are recorded by B as "open stanen se be byrmen biorges" - a reasonably accurate version of the Cotton MS., although the "1" of "biorges" is still quite clear in the original. In case it should be thought that Thorckelin systematically omitted all words or phrases which had been skipped in one transcript, it may be noted that l. 2250 is totally omitted by B, but is supplied in the printed edition from the A version.

It will also be noted that Thorckelin has given much less care to the division of the lines. In a large number of cases he appears to have made no attempt to find an alliterative pattern; in others, as for example where he has produced "Swa he on gearda / gan gumen
nat / sylca . . ." out of "swa hy on gearda/gu gumen nathyle . . ." (l.5.), he has achieved some sort of alliteration at the expense of
twisting the sense of the whole sentence. In l. 2254, where admittedly the right hand edge of the page had crumbled away by the time the transcripts were made, he has turned the MS. reading of "ellar seoc ecales hearda helm" (transcribed thus in both A and B) into the gibberish of "Ellor seoc ecalse e / Se hearda helm". It is understandable that at this point he has given up any attempt at translation.

As far as the translation of this passage in general is concerned, it is not difficult to see that only the vaguest idea of the original is conveyed by the Latin. Here, if anywhere, Thorpe's request for an Oedipus in understandable. It should, however, be borne in mind how great were the difficulties which Thorkelin confronted. Very little in the way of Old English verse had been published at all prior to 1815; if one excepts the fragments of verse included by Hkes in his Theaurus, Juni's publication of the Oed-

mon poems in 1655, and Lye's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, based on a vocabulary left by Junius; ... there was nothing available to help him to deal with the special problems posed by a poetical, as opposed to a prose text. In one sense, he should have been better equipped to understand those then many English scholars of the day. As an Icelander, he had been accustomed from childhood to verse written in a metre based on stress and alliteration, and he was also accustomed to the use of kennings in poetry, and it is on his knowledge of Ice-

113 Francis Junius, Oedoniae Iongobardiae Poeticae Generis et praeclarum Secre nardin Historiarum, abhinc annos M.LXX. Anglo-

Saxonicae conscripta & nunc primum edita ... 1614.

landic poetry that he chiefly relied in finding meanings for the many synonyms and kennings which he would not have found elsewhere in the then known corpus of Old English literature. Sometimes his dependence upon Icelandic analogies led him very much astray, as when he twice in the above passage translates the simple negative "ne" as *endwen* (cf. Icel. níx, corpse). Unfortunately no general glossary was included with the printed text. There is, however, a brief index of poetical synonyms, which is interesting as revealing something of his methods and sources. The section headed *Hvíts*, for example, gives as synonyms for ship "Hht", "Bat", "Botm", "Brin-deor", "Coeol", "Draaca", "Esaf", "Floodes-eht", "Fyrgen-beam", "Hron-fixas", "Hid", "Hrec-fat", "Hrec", "Hrec-deor", "Hnaa", "Hbat", "Hdeor", "H-dreaca", "H-genga", "H-wađu", "Hccep", "Hcic-Hit", "Hjum-wađu", "Hlabor", "Hag-meare", "Huđu". Of these, he has assumed "Hht" (property, power) to be analogous to the Icel. *Hik*, oak or tree, which was indeed used as a kenning for a ship, and he has assumed "Fyrgen-beam", a mountain tree, and "Floodes-eht" to have been used in the same way. "Bat", "Coeol", "Hnaa", "Hbat", "H-genga", "H-wađu", "Hccep" and "wađu" are all correctly given as synonyms for ship. "Hid" is his misreading of "Hindhbebbende" (I. 245), shield-bearers, and "Hind" does not appear in the list of synonyms for shield. He does not quote any instances of either "Draaca" or "Hag-meare" being used in the sense of ship, nor does he give any reason for his belief that "Hlabor" (child) and "Esaf" (strength) could be so understood. "Meare" he claims to be similar to the Icel. *nær*, which was used for both sea and for horse and, as a kenning for ship, would presumably be a mixture of the two. In "Hron-fixas" he derives the
second element of the word from the same source as Icel. nuke or fox, apparently oblivious of its closer relationship to Icel. rieker, or fish, and translates the whole as understøvner. For "brin-deer", "here-deer", "æ-deer", and "æ-drææ", he has given the correct meaning, and is mistaken only in assuring these ferre merin to have been ships. He has omitted from his list "brexting", "bundenstefna", "bringedstefna", "sundenstefna" and "yfilda", all of which occur.

It is easy, however, to place too heavy an emphasis on the undoubtedly faults of Thorkelin's edition, and it is certainly unjust to say, as Grøndvig did, that it reflects disgrace rather than credit on the country of its origin. That the text was published at all by a man, however imperfectly, could only reflect credit on Denmark. No English antiquary had shown the slightest interest in it. It should be remembered that he was obliged to deal with a notoriously corrupt text in a badly damaged manuscript and with very few of the tools of the trade which later scholars have had at their disposal.

"I find the work more difficult than I had expected," he wrote to Bøllow on 10th January 1807. "I understand Anglo-Saxon prose, but the poetry, like the Icelandic, uses a different language, different turns of phrase and processes of thought." Nonetheless it should not be necessary to point out that to Thorkelin and to him alone be-

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"På det finder jeg allere yngre, end jeg havde ventet. Angelen præs I præst, jeg, men Pæden syrer, som det islænske, at forskelligt spræg, Vænings og Tønkers Cæur" (Jens Christoffersen, "Thverlede Forvalt" kon til Danmark - G.J. Thorkelin, Johan Bøllow og N.P.S. Grundtvig" (see Bibliography for origin of this untrased article).
longs the credit of recognising the merit of the poem and getting it into print. Without his work, it might have lain another fifty years gathering dust in the British Museum. His edition, mostly because of its sheer inadequacy, directly inspired Grimútvig's translation, published in 1820, and Kemble's edition of 1833, which was the first scholarly edition of the text. There is no evidence that Sharon Turner's translation of extracts of the poem, which appeared in his History of the Nyle Saxona in 1805, caused any particular interest, and there is every reason to guess that his attention was drawn to the poem, partly by Varley's description, but partly also by Thorkelin's work on it which, by the time his History appeared, was fairly widely known, although the Thorkelin edition was not to appear until 1815.

The extent to which Thorkelin influenced the English and Scots with whom he came in contact during his years in Britain cannot, except in one or two cases, be accurately assessed. Of these cases, the most obvious one is that of John Jamieson. Without Thorkelin, it is fairly safe to say, there would have been no etymological dictionary of the Scottish language. The theories he contributed to it are now the least interesting part of the work; but the inspiration that produced it at all at that particular moment was of in-calculable value, since every year that passed before work began on it increased the likelihood of many dialectal words being lost or forgotten. It can be a matter for guesswork only to what extent Thorkelin, in his capacity/Icelandic ambassador extraordinary, may have influenced men like Sir Joseph Banks and George Darroter and, through the former, may even have been partly responsible for later
schemes for the annexation of Iceland by the British crown. His involvement in such schemes may well have been accidental; for in general there can be no doubt as to his loyalty to the Danish monarchy. But it is interesting that, in a bundle of papers collected by John Cochrane in 1801, relating to the possible annexation of the island, there is a paper contributed by Thorkelin containing information about sulphur deposits. Reference has already been made to the extent to which interest in Scandinavia and Old Norse literature increased in England in the years following the publication of Percy's *Northern Antiquities* in 1770. How much this may have been accelerated by Thorkelin's unsung efforts to publicize the literature of his native country and the merits of the Danish government cannot be definitely known, but it would be in the highest degree surprising if the steady stream of articles and publications which came from his pen between the years 1783 and 1791 should not have had some effect on the ideas of that section of the people with whom he came in contact. The letters of Pinkerton and Wilson included in this selection sufficiently indicate to what extent both these men relied on him for Danish news, both political and literary, for their periodicals during the years after he returned to Copenhagen. His scholarly output on his return to Denmark may have been small, but the salary paid to him during his years in England would have been justified by his work as unofficial cultural attaché and information officer for Danish affairs had he in fact done nothing else.

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*National Library of Iceland, Lent. 634. It is perfectly possible that Thorkelin may not have known for what purpose Cochrane wanted the information. I am indebted to R. W. Benedikts of the Reykjavik University of Iceland for bringing this collection of papers to my notice.*
We have already seen that Thorkelin sailed for Denmark in April 1791; and, in view of the convulsions which had shaken Europe during his absence, it is hardly surprising that he should have found the political climate in Copenhagen altered from what it had been when he left for England. During the period of his residence in Britain, Europe as it was in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century had vanished for ever, and a new Europe was emerging, with very different political and social ideals. By 1791 most of the nations of western Europe had sufficiently recovered from the cataclysmic effects of the French and Polish revolutions to consider their positions in relation to the new form of government in France. King Louis was still sitting, somewhat uneasily, on his throne, but his brothers were intriguing at Coblenz and the rumours of war between Austria, Prussia and France were widespread. The Crown Prince of Denmark was later to become an ardent disciple of Napoleon; but in 1791 both he and his first minister Bernstorff were bitterly opposed to the revolutionary movement. The official attitude of Denmark, however, was one of rigid neutrality in the dogfight which was brewing. Neutrality was indeed the traditional Danish policy in Europe; but in this particular instance, Bernstorff was likely to be as much influenced by the trade benefits which might accrue to Denmark from such a policy as by any other consideration. England, however, perhaps by virtue of its more isolated geographical position, seemed less pessimistic about the prospects of immediate war than the other major European countries were at this date. Pitt's major overseas preoccupation in 1791 was with Britain's intervention in the Austro-
Turkish war; and, as late as 1792, he was still prepared to predict fifteen years of peace for Europe. At the time when Thorkelin left England, the reactionary movement, which was to reach its climax in the state trials of 1793, had barely begun; hopes were still entertained that the French King's acceptance of a constitution based, presumably, on the English constitution of 1689 would restore order to his country without the necessity for extreme measures. Public discussion of events in France, therefore, still proceeded in an atmosphere unchecked by reaction or the need for discretion, and it is fairly clear from his correspondence that Thorkelin had moved in a circle notable for its radical (in some cases even Jacobinical) views. The letters of Pinkerton and C.H. Wilson sufficiently reveal their sympathies. Wilson's are, if anything, the more extreme of the two, and there can be little doubt that, both as a good journalist and convinced radical, he participated with enthusiasm in the various manifestations of the revolutionary movement headed by Paine. Thomas Christie, with whom Thorkelin had corresponded, was later to be employed by the National Assembly of France on the polyglot translation of the new Constitution. Sir Brooke Boothby, with whom Thorkelin was acquainted, was an intimate friend of Rousseau whose character he was later to defend against Burke. Thomas Brand Hollis, one of his closest friends in England, had been a notorious republican ever since the war of Mexican Independence, and wrote cheerfully to Thorkelin in 1789 to remark that "most days bring good news of some revolution for the interests of mankind." None of these

Letter no. 93.
people, it must be presumed, would have communicated their views so frankly to Thorkelin if they had not been convinced that he shared, at least to some degree, their sentiments on the matter. Whether or not rumours of the company which he had been keeping had preceded him back to Copenhagen is not known. That does seem certain is that on his return to Denmark he found himself in trouble.

The first hint of this comes in a letter from Thorkelin to his former landlady and friend, Mrs. Katherine Wood, written not long after his arrival in Copenhagen:

In deed I am at present as near the point, the favourite object of my wishes, as I was two months ago. In the mean time, I am blamed by my absent, yet sincere friends, for not having settled in England. At least Mr. Blen, the Brother in law to his Grace of Canterbury, can not get the riddle resolved, how I possibly could decline the honourable offers made me by the Archbishop. Nay some people here are busy upbraiding me for being too partial to England plague me with their questions about those motives, which determined me to leave a Country, I love from my own choice and gratitude, and where they say I have resided long enough to forget Denmark. Though I am conscious with myself of little deserving such unfriendly reflections, and I may venture with safety to appeal to you and other of my friends about the love I bore my country and my Prince, yet I am not very averse from thinking, that I have acted wrong. Now for my zeal and patriotism shall prove the source of my misfortune time only will unravel. If I have erred, I erred upon principles, the most virtuous, and the most congenial to my feelings. Then matters gain a favourable turn, and I meet with the wished for success, which I hope is not far off, I will not fail, to impart it directly to you as a friend, who always had my wellfar at heart. 119)

Thorkelin here appears to attribute the hostility he encountered on his return to the length of time he had stayed in England, and to the offer of a post at the British Museum. It is possible that no

119 Letter no. 603. This is, of course, the draft of Thorkelin's letter; but even for a draft, the English is remarkably uneven and may indicate that it was written under the stress of emotion.
more than this was involved, but these appear trivial reasons for the government's failure to confirm him in his new post at the Archives until September 1792 - nearly eighteen months after his return. A letter from Harry Haughton, another of Thorkelin's London friends, indicates that at one point, it had been thought that the delay in establishing him might be even longer:

You are I perceive not yet established in yr. new post of ye Privy Archives nor like to be yet these 2 years, this seems very odd & proves that they move very slow indeed in yr. Country, it is however to be hoped you reap some of ye Perquisites in so long an interval, as it is a Post of great Trust, it is ye more honourable on this acct. altho' attended with some cautious Ceremonies, they could not have confided it to any one I am persuaded who will discharge it with more honour & Ability ... 120)

In the end it appears that both Bllow and Norton Eden (by this time envoy in Dresden) were obliged, at Thorkelin's request, to intervene on his behalf to clear his name; and Thorkelin was at last able to take up his appointment. Part of the delay was no doubt due to the cumbersome procedure involved in handing over the Archives to him; but it is significant that, from the date when Thorkelin was finally established in office, his correspondence with those who had been his closest friends in England virtually ceases. For the abrupt conclusion of his correspondence with Pinkerton, personal misunderstandings may very likely have been responsible. For the sudden ending of his correspondence with Milson, Haughton, Dempster and many others, there must be some other explanation; and the most plausible one which presents itself is that, for reasons which are never made explicit, he felt that it would be wiser to cut down his
English contacts to the minimum. In 1792 he seems to have received altogether fourteen letters from friends in Great Britain, many of them full of political and social gossip. In 1793, he apparently received five, of which only two are from people who had hitherto been among his closest friends and correspondents. In 1794 he received two, one of which is merely a letter of introduction. By 1795, it is clear that communication between him and his English and Scots friends had virtually ceased, with the exception of occasional notes from Sir John Sinclair, a man sufficiently thick-skinned to be impervious to any hint less brutal than a direct request to stop writing. Since it is only in very rare cases that Thorkelin's own letters have been traced, it is difficult in most cases to ascertain who was the last person to write. There are indications, however, that it was in general Thorkelin who dropped his end of the correspondence; it was certainly so, as we shall see, in the case of Pinkerton. By 1793 Britain's involvement in the European war presumably made the carriage of foreign letters, even to a neutral country, much more difficult, and communication was further embarrassed by the British habit of stopping and searching ships sailing under the Danish flag. Thus matters rested, until Robert Jamieson stopped in Copenhagen in 1803 on his journey to Riga, and went to pay a call on Thorkelin; and so became the channel through which news of old and new friends was again to be transmitted.

vii.

The remainder of Thorkelin's life is, on the whole, irrelevant to the study of the Laing letters, and can therefore be suffi-
cient to mention briefly only those episodes in it which have any
bearing on the selection of those letters now under consideration.
His life, on the whole, once he had finally settled down at the Ar-
chives, was peaceful and uneventful. Having attained the summit of
his ambitions, he made little further exertion in his professional
career, and his period of office in the Archives was not marked by
any major innovations or reforms. In his old age he was to reveal
a marked reluctance to admit any assistant who might be supposed to
offer a challenge to his authority, and it was not until 1823, when
his health was very much decayed, that he chose as his second-in-
command a young countryman of his own, Finn Magnusson, in whose early
career he had taken much interest, and in whom he was to find a de-
voted and loyal assistant.

His first step, however, on settling down in Copenhagen, was to
marry, and he displayed, in his choice of a wife, the same forethought
and prudence which marked the rest of his early career. His bride
was a widow nearly ten years his junior, the relict of a wealthy
brewer, Paul Christensen Lydsteen; and, while it would be unjust
to suggest that the marriage was not one of sincere affection on both
sides, there can be little doubt that the brewery and other sub-
stantial property which she brought with her, if it did not quite
provide them with "riches beyond the dreams of avarice", at least
made a very acceptable addition to the moderate salary with which
Thorkelin's exertions at the Archives were rewarded. It was in her
house (22 Nyhavn) that the couple made their first home after their
marriage on 11th April 1792, and it was here that their first son was
born on 2nd August 1793, and named after his father's friend and
patron, Johan Bulow. Five more sons were born, but Thorkelin’s early luck appeared to have run out there his children were concerned. Three of the children, Johan, Christian and Marcus Aurelius, died in infancy. Of the other three, only the second, Frederik Stephen, survived his father. Andreas Georg Deapster, named in 1798 after his father’s old friend in Scotland, became a copyist in his father’s office in the Archives, and died in 1825, according to Verlauff, of drink. The remaining son, Ove Ludvig, named for his father’s early patron, Ipsch-Guldberg, proved the black sheep of the family, and his end is shrouded in mystery. Again according to Verlauff, he died in gaol in Rio de Janeiro in 1809.

To lose three children in early childhood out of a total of six was not, however, by eighteenth century standards an uncommonly high average, and until 1807 life in the Thorkelin household seems to have been prosperous, happy and comfortable. In 1804 or 1805, the house in Nyhavn was sold, and the family moved to 103 Rosengaarden, a house which had apparently been inherited by Mrs. Thorkelin. Unfortunately, much of the profits from the sale of the house was left invested in the brewery, a step which no doubt seemed prudent at the time, but which was to have unfortunate results. It was presumably in the house in Rosengaarden that Robert Jamieson was received by Thorkelin in 1805 "as if I had been his old and intimate friend. It seemed to

[121]

E.O. Verlauff, Forinarhier af mit Liv, Copenhagen 1910, p. 122: "... havde han 3 Sønner, af hvilke den ældste tog juridisk Examen, blev Kasperjunker og Auditeur; den næste fik Faderen ansat som Copyist ved Gehejmarchivet; den forfaldt til Drik og døde tidlig..." This addiction may have been an inheritance from Thorkelin’s great-grandfather, Magnús Björnsson, who was obliged to resign his appointment as sýnssiðarmand on account of his drunkariness (see p. 7 suðra).
do his heart good to hear all about his old friends and acquaintances in Scotland & in London, & to meet with one who had even a desire to acquire a knowledge of the literary antiquities of the North."

It was also presumably during this period of peace and affluence that he acted as patron to young men such as Magnusson and Verlauff, who later testified in his memoirs that "he was a kind, helpful and charitable man, who in his better days kept a hospitable house. He did me many a kindness and favour and I had many agreeable and cheerful hours with him and his very kind wife, for which I owe much gratitude to his memory."

Bernstorff's policy of strict neutrality had carried Denmark successfully and prosperously through the troubled years following the entry of Britain into the war in 1793. But Bernstorff's death in 1797, and the English policy (already referred to) of interfering with neutral Danish vessels trading to French ports led to a series of petty incidents which culminated in Denmark's participation in the League of the Amazed Neutrality of the North and, consequently, in the Battle of Copenhagen. It was at this time that the first cautious moves were made by the British Government, through Sir Joseph Banks, towards the annexation of Iceland by way of retaliation; but the

122 Letter of 10th November 1805 to Sir Walter Scott, National Library of Scotland Ms. 3875, f. 116r.

123 Verlauff, op. cit., p. 123: "For øvrigt, var han en velvillig, tjenestlig og godgjørende mand, der i sine bedre Dage førte et glest- milde Huan. Han viste mig megen Gedig og Yndest, og jeg har i hans or hans hirtelig gode Kones Kreds hæft mange behagelige og op- rantrende Tider, hvorfor jeg skylder hans Kinde megen Griednægtlighed."

124 For an account of the negotiations which were carried on between
assassination of the Czar Paul and the subsequent collapse of the
League made it possible for Denmark to reestablish peaceful relations
with Great Britain. Thus matters remained for the next six years,
until rumours reached Goring of the signing of the treaty of Tilsit
by Napoleon and the new Czar Alexander of Russia, and of plans by the
two signatories to compel Denmark, Sweden and Portugal, by fair means
or foul, to declare themselves on the side of France and to close
their ports to British shipping. The rumours of the Tilsit agree-
ment were no doubt swiftly confirmed. Further rumours, that the
Danish fleet was re-arming, and that Danish territory was being in-
vaded by French troops with the connivance of the Danish government,
were less well-founded, but Goring had not waited for this to be-
come clear before taking drastic action. Envos were immediately
sent to the Danish Crown Prince at Kiel to demand that the Dano-Nor-
wegian fleet be delivered up to England for the duration of the war;
and, on the Crown Prince’s not unnatural return to Copenhagen to dis-
cuss the matter with his ministers before returning an answer, he
found an English fleet anchoring in the Sound with obviously hostile
intent. Goring’s position was admittedly difficult. Whether the
French seized the Danish fleet with or without Danish connivance,
England could ill afford to allow the enemy to obtain this very con-
siderable advantage at a point when England’s command of the sea was
her greatest asset. The fact that, by the time the English fleet

Banks and the British Government concerning the annexation of Iceland
in 1801 and 1807, see Halldór Hermannson, Sir Joseph Banks and Ice-
land (Icelandic, vol. XVIII), Ithaca 1929; and California State
Library (Sutro Branch), New Source Material on Sir Joseph Banks and
Iceland, San Francisco, March 1941.
reached Copenhagen, Bernadotte, in command of the French forces, was threatening Jutland from the south, could only serve to confirm the English impression that Napoleon did not intend to wait for a favourable answer before occupying Denmark and seizing her ships. The British demand for the handing over of the Danish navy (then lying peacefully in Copenhagen) was formally and indignantly rejected by the Danish Government; and on the 3rd September, the British began a three-day shelling of the city which completely alienated the Danish nation and drove them precipitately into the arms of the French. The damage caused was appalling. According to the Danish reports, more than 1,000 houses and public buildings were destroyed, including the University and Vor Frue Kirke, the foremost church in the city. The British reports put the numbers lower, for obvious reasons; but nothing could disguise the fact that dreadful damage had been done on totally inadequate grounds to a neutral and hitherto peacefully-disposed nation.

At the end of this period wrote an English reporter of the bombardment, three hundred and five houses were burnt to the ground and one church. Many a wealthy man was now reduced to beggary, and the finest storehouses in the world had been a prey to the flames. The prospect of the future was dreadful. Had the bombardment recommenced the next day, all would have been lost, and the total destruction of Copenhagen, and all that it contains, must have been its unavoidable consequences.

On the 7th September, the aged General Peyman, in whose hands the defence of the city had been placed, was forced to capitulate. A message from the Crown Prince, urging that the Danish ships be burnt rather than delivered to the enemy, was intercepted; and the Danish

123

*An Authentic Account of the Siege of Copenhagen by the British in the year 1807*, London 1807.
fleets was handed over to the British.

The action of the British government scarcely aroused more horror in Denmark than it did in England. The gain in ships from a hitherto friendly nation was denounced by Lord Grey as an inadequate compensation for the loss of national character and the emity of every other power in Europe "which, I fear, must be the result of this act of violence and injustice." Thorkelin's old acquaintance, the historian William Roscoe, expressed his views in a blunt letter to Wilberforce:

I have not the presumption to arrogate to myself a superior delicacy of feeling on such a subject; far less would I assume the airs of a moralist, carrying his ideas to an extreme inconsistent with the nature of human affairs; but, if ever there was a crime that bore upon its forehead its very name in burning characters, and which posterity will regard with peculiar horror, it is that which perpetrated the enormities at Copenhagen. Nor will it long escape notice, that this transaction was, if possible, still more impolitic than it was unjust. 123)

The British Government soon proved the accuracy of Roscoe's prediction. In return to Canning's second offer of alliance or a return to the former neutrality, Denmark, threatened by France in the south and deprived by Britain of her only means of defence, could return only one answer. On 31st October, she signed the treaty of Fontainebleau with France, and five days later declared war on Britain. A declaration by the Danes of their reasons for doing so was printed in London in French and English and circulated there:

... The English government, after having by a shameful

123 quoted in Henry Roscoe's Life of William Roscoe, London 1833, I, pp. 423-25. The bombardment was also denounced by Roscoe in his pamphlet, Considerations on the Causes, Objects, and Consequences of the present War, etc., 1808.
supineness betrayed the interests of its allies, who were engaged in a struggle as important as the issue of it was uncertain, has suddenly developed all its power to surprise and attack a neutral and peaceful state, against which it had not even the shadow of complaint. The execution of the plan of invading Denmark, united with Great Britain by bonds as antient as they were sacred, has been prepared with as much secrecy as promptitude. Denmark saw the British forces approach her shores without even a suspicion that they were to be employed against herself. The island of Zealand was surrounded, the capital threatened, and the Danish territory insulted and violated, before the court of London had, by a single word, declared its hostile intentions. This hostility, however, soon became evident. But Europe will with difficulty believe what it is about to learn. A project the basest, the most violent, and atrocious, that has ever been conceived, is found to have originated alone in a pretended information, or rather in the vague report of an attempt which, according to the English ministry, was about to be made to inveigle Denmark into engagements hostile to Great Britain. . . . Denmark does not deceive herself as to the danger or losses with which this war threatens her. Attacked in the most unexpected and dishonourable manner, exposed in an isolated province nearly cut off from all means of defence, and forced into an unequal contest, she cannot flatter herself with escaping a very material injury. Unblemished honour still remains for her to defend, as well as that esteem which she flatters herself she had deserved from the powers of Europe by her upright conduct; and she discovers more glory in the resistance of one who sinks beneath superior force than in the easy triumph of those who abuse it. 127

A later generation, which has witnessed the shelling of the French fleet at Lorient in the second World War under very similar conditions, may perhaps feel that Canning was justified in the extreme action he took. However this may be, his action was not viewed sympathetically by the great majority of the British people, and the bombardment of Copenhagen elicited a number of spontaneous letters of condolence to Thorkelin from his British friends. For Thorkelin had suffered severely at the hands of the English. His brev...
ery was among the first buildings to be destroyed, and, in the course of the bombardment, the whole Rosengaarden quarter burned to ashes, including his house, his library, his large and valuable collection of paintings and furniture, and, above all, his first edition and translation of Beowulf, then just ready for the press. The only consolation which could remain to him was his choice of the Helligaardskirke for a safe-deposit for the archives during the bombardment, as a result of which they survived in safety. He had been offered either this church or the Vor Frue Kirke by the Danish Chancery, and Vor Frue Kirke was totally destroyed. Once he had removed the archives to safety, there was nothing further he could do but sit out the bombardment with his family in the cellars of the Danish Chancery. The loss of his Copenhagen property was not the only financial blow he suffered at this time. Since his return to Denmark, he had engaged in trade with Iceland, and, in the course of this, had lent a considerable sum of money to help an unfortunate family in Iceland. The ship which, with its cargo, was to cover the debt was taken by the English off Kronborg on the return voyage to Copenhagen; and although the captain of the vessel managed to free himself, the value of the ship and cargo were lost to Thorkelin.

The Thorkelins found temporary living accommodation, but were obliged to move in the following January to make room for the Duke of Augustenborg. Finally they settled at 18 Vimmelskift. Keen——

See Dempster's letter to Pinkerton of 8th June 1813: "Poor Thorkelin's library! I am glad he has survived it. He has preserved a great share of it in his brains. That little treatise on the Slave Trade had more sense and learning in a few pages than were contained in all the declamations that subject produced" (Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, II, p. 409).
while Thorkelin, harassed by financial difficulties and distressed by ill-health, began again on his edition of Beowulf, encouraged by the kindness of Bålow, who sent him what books he could find to make up the loss he had suffered in the bombardment. In the disturbed days of war, the work went on slowly, and it was not until May 1815 that Thorkelin was able to write to Bålow:

The epic of the Scyldings goes off to you today, sine me mensa aequo enmiae, to Sanderumgaard [Bålow's estate]. I venture to hope that the property's noble owner will give it the grande entrée, for as soon as it becomes known, your Excellency's protection will support it in the learned world like Rome's tower . . . 129

He had indeed cause to be grateful to Bålow, who had borne the entire cost of the edition, amounting to 1853 rigdollars instead of the 400 originally estimated. This was partly due to the State bankruptcy of 1814 and the consequent inflation which made it difficult for many families to eat hot meals oftener than twice a week.

It was also undoubtedly due to Bålow that Thorkelin was indebted for an audience with the king (formerly the Crown Prince whom he had so much admired), during which he presented a copy of Beowulf to him and was complimented, with Bålow, on its production. The honour moved him deeply, but seems to have been too much for his enfeebled health; and he was obliged to spend two days confined to bed as a result.

In the meantime he received more disagreeable cause to retire to bed in a state of prostration. The publication of Beowulf had been eagerly anticipated by many people, among them the young pastor

129 Christoffersen, op. cit., p. 28: "Saldænflæden afgeæer i Dig sine me, mens aequo emiæ til Sanderum Gaard. Jeg før havebe, at Stedets male hæft vil unde dem 'grande entrée', thi saa smert det bliver bekendt, skal Derses Excellences Kyndling kneiæ i den Larde Verden, non Roma Torn . . . ."
Grundtvig, who was later to make his own not inconsiderable contribution to Beowulf studies. In his Nordens Mytologie in 1803, he remarked in a footnote that "only about the Volsungs and the Niflungs [Ojuldrings] do we have any really Norse poems, but undoubtedly wonderful light will be shed on these and on the Scyldings and Scyldings when Mr. Justitsraad Thorkelin gives himself a glorious memorial (and may it be soon) by publishing the Anglo-Saxon poem on which he is working, and thereby satisfies the growing longing which burns in all friends of the Old Norse." The poem in due course appeared; and Grundtvig found that Thorkelin's memorial was much less glorious than he had expected. His own knowledge of Old English was limited (he claimed only to have studied it for fourteen days) but it was sufficient for him to be able to discover many inaccuracies in both text and translation, and he did not hesitate to make the most of these in a review of the publication which appeared in three numbers of Københavns sildere. The first two instalments of this review were unsigned, but the final part was printed over Grundtvig's name. That his criticism was justified, no one can deny; but the terms in which he expressed his criticism were bitterly hurtful to the sick and elderly editor, and even Grundtvig himself later acknowledged that in his personal abuse of Thorkelin he had gone too far.

Nordens Mytologie, Copenhagen 1808, p. 150, footnote: "Det er fyr beæret, at Vi kam om Volsunger og Niugler (Gjukunger) have egenlig nordiske Digte, men sanvel over disse som over Skjoldunger og Skifinger vil udentvivl opgaa et herligt Iys, naar Mr. Justitsraad Thorkelin (og gid dog smart!) ratter sig et glansfuldt Mindereverke ved at udgive det angelsaksiske Digt, Han har under Haand, og derved tillfredsstiller den voksende Lengsel, der brænder hos gamle Nordens Vermer."

1815, nos. 60-63.
Thorkelin claimed, and with some justice, that it was easy for Grundtvig to criticize after another man had performed the really difficult task of deciphering the text. "I would have been quite ready to be corrected courteously by a man of taste and established learning," he wrote to Dihløv on 11th August 1815. "But these qualities are foreign to Mr. Grundtvig. Vulgar rudeness and coarseness are his weapons, and his ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon language is as great as his shamelessness is overflowing." Bitter correspondence passed between the two men; and the final outcome was that Grundtvig undertook to produce a Danish translation of the entire poem in which the numerous errors of Thorkelin's Latin translation would be fully exposed. Dihløv, in a fine spirit of impartiality, promised to finance this publication also;

"That will happen to Pastor Grundtvig's edition in poetry and prose in Danish I do not yet know he wrote to Thorkelin in September 1815. He has written to me about it, and I have replied that I will contribute to it, and likewise gave him my opinion about you and what I expect from him in that respect. I will pass on to you in due course any correspondence I may have with him, so that you can read it as my friend and brother in the matter. I will never, with my own good will, treat anyone in any other way than I would wish them to treat me. I know that Mr. Grundtvig is to be handled with great caution."

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Tid., p. 50: "Hvad der bliver af Pastor Grundtvigs poetiske og prosaiske Udgave, paa Danisk, af det Angelsaxiske Old-Nydel ved jeg endnu ikke, han har tilskrevet mig derom, og jeg har svaret ham, at jeg ville bidrage dertil, og tillige sagt han min Meening om Dem, og hvad jeg i saa Henseende ventede af ham. Brevvedlingen skal jeg til sin Tid neddele til Clemenslaedning til Dem som min Ven og
Bjöwulfs drapa was accepted with enthusiasm by Grundtvig, who immediately threw himself into the work of justifying his claims. He had estimated that the task would take him six months; in the event it was to be five years before his translation appeared, and it is impossible to deny that, so far as an understanding of the poem is concerned, it is indeed an advance on Thorkelin's Latin translation. He gave his version the title of Bjöwulfs Drapa, "The Song of Beowulf", and thus for the first time associated the poem with the name of its hero. In recognizing the superiority of his translation (the first ever into a modern language) to Thorkelin's, it is only just also to record the advantages he enjoyed. As Thorkelin himself pointed out, the difficult textual work had already been done by him, and his transcripts were available for Grundtvig's use. In the second place, Grundtvig, by pure good luck, was able to secure the help of Rasmus Rask, the young and brilliant philologist, who had just returned to Denmark from a visit to Iceland, and who worked with him on the first part of the translation. The two men agreed to bring out a new edition of the poem at a later date, but the plan came to nothing, and by the time Grundtvig's independent edition appeared in 1861, Rask had been in his grave for nearly thirty years. But it was as a result of their joint work on the poem that Rask produced his Anglo-Saxon Grammar in 1817, and this, an enormous ad-

Ord:Dr: Jeg vil aldrig - med min gode Villie - behandle andre underledes, end jeg vilde de skulle behandle mig. Jeg veed, at Mr. G. maa behandles med mogen Vorsomhed."
vance on any grammar of the language that had yet appeared, gave
Grundtvig an additional advantage.

The whole controversy clearly had a serious effect on Thorkelin's
health, and in January 1816 he was once again very ill. Later in
the year, he was somewhat restored by the presentation to him by
the King of a fine brooch set with diamonds on the occasion of a
State visit to the Privy Archives; and this mark of royal favour
slightly raised his depressed spirits. In the meantime, he was
gradually acquiring a new circle of English friends and correspon-
dents. Robert Jamieson had maintained a constant and voluminous
correspondence with him since his first introduction to him in 1805.
The exchange of letters had been interrupted by the war, but with
the coming of peace in 1814, the letters began again. Jamieson by
this time was back in Edinburgh and employed at the Register House,
and besides bringing Thorkelin news of those who remained of his
former friends, such as Dempster, Sir Adam Ferguson and the Earl of
Duchan (now settling into his eccentric old age), his letters brought
Thorkelin into touch with new literary names. The most prominent
of these was Sir Walter Scott; and through Jamieson, Thorkelin re-
ceived copies of Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border and other
publications, and returned the compliment with an elegantly-inscribed
copy of Beowulf, now in the National Library of Scotland. It has
been a matter for some surprise that no letters seem to have passed
between Scott and Thorkelin, and the existence of this inscribed
copy of Beowulf has been taken to indicate that such letters did in-
deed exist at some stage, and have either been lost or removed from
the remainder of Thorkelin's letters. Close examination of the
correspondence between Thorkelin and Jamieson and between Scott and Jamieson, however, reveals that it is perfectly possible that no letters ever were exchanged between Scott and Thorkelin, since all known transactions between the two men were made through the agency of Jamieson. In addition to his correspondence with Jamieson, Thorkelin renewed some old acquaintances; 1819 brought him letters from Joseph Planta and the antiquary Francis Douce, and 1821 brought him the acquaintance of a young merchant from Liverpool, John Daulby, whose eminent uncle, the historian William Roscoe, Thorkelin had met many years ago. Apart from his correspondence with his friends in Great Britain, moreover, he acquired a small circle of English friends actually in Copenhagen, most of them diplomatic. There was Thomas Reynolds, an Irish informer, whose unpopularity at home had become such that Castlereagh had hastily appointed him consul in Iceland to get him out of the country. Reynolds left England unwillingly, and in the event never seems to have got further than Copenhagen, where he lived until he contrived to get his consular salary converted into a cash payment which enabled him to settle in Paris. There was Henry Uwins Addington, nephew of the Prime Minister, who came to Copenhagen as Secretary of Legation and Chargé d'Affaires in 1821, and borrowed Scott's novels from Thorkelin as they came out. Most important of all, there was Augustus John Foster, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Copenhagen from 1814 until 1824, who cut his own throat in a fit of insanity in 1843, and whose brief, amusing notes do much to increase the interest of Thorkelin's correspondence between 1815 and 1826. They met first through the agency of Ballow, when Thorkelin took the occasion of presenting to him a copy of Rec
wulf, and the friendship clearly became a close one. The subject of the letters ranges from the melting of the ice on the Greenland coast to the engravings of Rae Wilson ("where the Plains look like dirty Tables & the Houses & Hills like lumps of sugar"), from Thorwaldsen's sculpture to the Romantic poets ("for myself I have never had patience to read them & think if you put the Morning Sun, Tops of Hills, Old Ruins, Jackdaws & Foxes together you will be able to produce something just as good - provided you read it out with a melancholy tune and fancy it all Gospel and a picture of the manners of the North"), and from Virgil to aDEFAULTING bookbinder "who has not yet sent his Valedictory for the Books that he undertook to bind. Do you know of another less magnificent, but more effective bookman?" He took a great interest in Thorkelin's declining health, and sent him presents - a good warm rug for his feet from Mrs. Foster, "as you have been so frequently ill this winter & she fears it is the Marble Pavement which is too cold for you at your Office"; a "Bottle of our strongest Salts" which "would almost raise the Dead and may therefore prove useful to the Living"; "a few bottles of Mucceandeline, which are what I have nearest to Nectar." Nothing was too trifling to interest him or catch his attention: "Having observed your hand to tremble the other day allow me to send you a couple of the Magnum Bonum Razors which I beg you to accept as they are considered as very useful in steadying the Hand." This was a far cry from the family of James Craufurd, who had held the office of Secretary of Legation and Chargé d'Affaires from 1793-96, and who had applied to Thorkelin for help in every domestic crisis, whether it were a question of the sale of a carpet or the purchase of a kitchen
Jack, a financial loan to a brother, Lieutenant William Craufurd in
the Queen's Dragoon Guards, or the hiring of a nursery-maid. Such
requests no doubt arose out of Thorkelin's not inconsiderable acti-
vities as an amateur dealer in second-hand articles, and Verlauff
attributed to this interest his failure to produce any scholarly work
after his return from England:

After Thorkelin's marriage in 1792, he gave up nearly all
his work and laboured instead at increasing his fortune.
He traded especially in Icelandic goods; and he attended
not only book sales but furniture auctions, to the indigna-
tion of the second-hand dealers; he was known as "the
dealers' guild-master". 135)

The reduction of his income after the war probably made it more than
ever imperative for him to pursue such lucrative side-lines, and it
was no doubt the pressure of his financial embarrassments that made
him willing to consider the sale of the library he had built up after
the loss of his first collection in 1807. In 1819 David Laing, a
young bookseller from Edinburgh, came to call on him with an intro-
duction from Professor John Leslie, whom Thorkelin had entertained
in Copenhagen twenty years before. Laing, at this time a young man
of twenty-six, was on a book-buying tour on behalf of his father,
and his chief object in Copenhagen was to visit Dr. Holdenhawer at
the Royal Library; but the chance of securing Thorkelin's library
was clearly not one to be missed, and he bought the books for the
sum of £150, Thorkelin generously throwing in with them a hundred

135 Verlauff, op. cit., p. 122: "Etter Thorkelins Afteskeb 1792 op-
gav han menten al Virksomhed og arbeidede dermed paa at foryge sin
Forrue. Han drev Handel, især med italienske Varer; ogsaa ind-
fandt han sig ikke blot paa Baguctions, men med sin Kone tillige
paa Lebelauctioner, til Forargelse for Marchandiserne; men kaldte
hen 'Marchandisernes Oldernend.'"
copies of *Prosul* which were still left on his hands. Laing later resold the collection to the Advocates' Library, where it made the foundation of what is now the National Library of Scotland's collection of Scandinavian books, and in 1824, Sir John Sinclair (whose steady trickle of letters, like Tennyson's brook, went on for ever) added a postscript to an otherwise uninteresting note, begging Thorkelin to visit Edinburgh again, "to have the pleasure of inspecting what is called 'The Thorkelin Room' in the Advocates Library".

But Thorkelin never visited Great Britain again. In the same year that Sinclair wrote to press him, he lost his wife, and it is

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Edinburgh University Library, MS. La. IV, 18: "Dear Sir In answer to the letter, with which you have honoured me this Day, I have only to say, that I entirely agree your proposals, relative to your Purchase of my Library. Accordingly, I bind myself to deliver my whole collection of Books, (those in the English language only excepted) a long with the Catalogue there of drawn through, signed and sealed with our seals, to your Agent duly empowered to receive the books, to pack them, & to transmit them to you, at your own expense. Last over, one hundred copies of the AngloSaxon Poem de Rebus Danicis which I published in the year 1815 4to, shall be given and delivered as part of the value of the sum of One hundred and fifty pound Sterling offered by you for my Library, and for which, Bill of Exchange drawn on your father William Laing Esqre is to be issued payable one month after sight. I have the honour to be my dear Sir, your faithfull Servant G. Thorkelin." The letter is dated Copenhagen, 15th October 1819.

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Cf. Three Reports by the Keeper of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh 1827, 1st Report: "The small apartment under the vestibule of the new library has been neatly fitted up, and now contains a valuable collection of books, lately purchased. This collection, which was chiefly formed by Dr. Thorkelin of Copenhagen, comprehends many rare works illustrating the history, literature, and jurisprudence of the northern nations. In this country at least, it may be considered as unrivalled; and it might not perhaps be advisable to disperse such a collection, even by distributing the books into different apartments. They are already placed on the shelves, though we have not yet had leisure to enter them in the catalogue." Cf. Sir John Sinclair's letter no. 750b.
obvious that he felt her death a very heavy affliction. Two years later came the death of the only one of his sons who appears in any degree to have shared his tastes - Anders Georg Dempster, who had worked with his father in the archives. The marriage of his only surviving son, Frederik Stephen, had proved unhappy, and he and his wife had separated in 1822 after the birth of a son, Grim Cecil. In 1823 or 1824 Thorkelin appears to have suffered some injury from a bad fall, as a result of which he found himself crippled in his last years, and unable to get to the archives. The main work there was done by Finn Magnusson, who sent Thorkelin the material he was working on to his home. He died there on the night of the 3rd-4th March 1829, and was buried in the Assistens Kirkegaard.

By a short will made only the day before his death, he left to his servant, Christina Maria Schmidt a sum of money and her bed, complete with hangings, bedclothes and two pairs of linen sheets, in acknowledgement of "her untiring care and attention during the many years of my illness." His library (the third which he had

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This is referred to once or twice in letters from John Daulby, who seemed to consider himself in some way the cause of the accident. See, for example, letter no. 100a: "I never cease to be anxious on this subject [i.e. Thorkelin's health] as in some degree I always consider myself as the innocent cause of much of your suffering owing to that terrible accident at my house" (letter dated 10th January 1824).

See A.D. Jorgensen, Udigt over de Danske Rigsdagsarkivers Historie, Copenhagen 1834, p. 95: "I de sidste år kom Thorkelin ikke mere i ædvet; der siges, at et fald beryvede ham evnen til at gaa; han holdt sig hjemme; stadig sysselset med sine registranter, som Magnusson sendte hans skiftervis."
built up during his life) was sold by public auction on the 9th
April 1829. But nowhere in his testamentary dispositions is there
any mention of what was to become of his collection of letters, and
the question of how they reached Edinburgh has caused a certain
amount of speculation. The only obvious fact was that at some time
they had come into the hands of David Laing, and had been left by
him, together with many other manuscripts of considerable value, to
Edinburgh University. It has been assumed that these letters were
included in the bargain that was made between Laing and Thorkelin in
1819, when Laing bought from him his second library; but this
theory is obviously untenable, since a large number of the letters
in the collection were written to Thorkelin between the years 1819
and 1820. Among Thorkelin's papers in the Provincial Archives in
Copenhagen is a statement signed by Finn Magnussen, Thorkelin's
assistant and successor at the Royal Archives, in which he refers
to the existence of six quarto volumes of letters; there must, in
fact, have been seven volumes, three of English correspondence and
four of Danish, which are now in the Royal Archives. The statement
gives no clue as to what happened to the volumes after Thorkelin's
death, but it is in the highest degree probable that they remained
in Magnussen's possession, along with many other Thorkelin manuscripts.
The four volumes of Danish letters were presented to the Royal Archives
in 1857 by F. Jørgen Ussing, and it is assumed that they passed into
his hands from Magnussen's. Conclusive proof that the English vol-
umes also passed through Magnussen's hands is provided by a small

"... at da Pigen Christina Læra ridt har i min langvarige Syg-
dom vist mig ufortrædene Ombu og Pleie. ..."
volume of miscellaneous manuscripts relating to Celtic antiquities which was sold by Magnusson to the British Museum in 1837 and which contains a long letter dated 3rd September 1737, addressed to Thorkelin, care of the Earl of Buchan, from the Rev. John Buchanan, minister in Harris. This, on investigation, proved to be the enclosure mentioned in Buchan's letter to George Dempster, dated 12th October 1737: "I now send enclosed," he writes, "a letter and memoir relating to some Danish forts in Harris which I received from the Rev. Mr. Buchanan by Post yesterday for Professor Thorkelin. The dress of the letter & memoir is rustic but the intelligence they contain is curious." The enclosures are missing from the Laing Collection, and there can be no doubt that this document is what Buchan forwarded. The volume also contains a letter written by Peter John Heywood, and dated from the Isle of Mann on the 25th October 1739 which, although it has no heading nor address, was probably also written to Thorkelin and probably also belongs by right in the Laing Collection. It seems clear, therefore, that Magnusson's statement in the Provincial Archives included the three Laing volumes, and that at some stage the Buchanan letter, the Heywood letter and possibly others were removed from these volumes and placed by Magnusson in other collections. It is also a reasonable assumption that Magnusson, towards the end of his life, when much embarrassed

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British Museum add. MSS. 123. 11,225. This volume is included under the heading "Thorkeliniana" in the catalogue of the MSS. sold by Magnusson to the Museum, Bals. MSS. 123. 11,261. This section of the catalogue makes it clear that several of Thorkelin's MSS. passed into Magnusson's keeping after his death.

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Letter no. 151.
for money, sold Thorkelin's letters to Laing, with whom he was certain in touch, and who would undoubtedly have been interested in the possibility of acquiring them. The actual details of the transaction will probably never now be known, and it is equally unlikely that it will ever be clear how Hagnussen acquired the letters and the other Thorkelin manuscripts which he later sold. It is quite possible that they were a gift to him from Thorkelin, who was known to be much attached to the younger man. They had many interests in common, and Hagnussen was probably personally acquainted with several of the correspondents.

viii

It is unlikely that any future biographer of Thorkelin will claim greatness for his subject. Whatever part Thorkelin took in matters of importance was clearly accidental; it was accidental that he copied the Beowulf manuscript at a critical point in its history, and that he was interested in it for the wrong reasons. It was accidental that his outdated etymological theories were responsible for the production of the first important Dictionary of the Scottish Language. It was accidental that his chance gift of a book of Danish ballads to Robert Jardineon helped to bring about the discovery of the close relationship between the ballads of Scotland and Denmark and open the way for the great comparative studies of Grundtvig and Child. In nothing that he did can he be given credit for the perception and initiative which might entitle him to be considered as anything more than a passive instrument. Nonetheless the student of his life and correspondence cannot fail to become aware of certain qualities in him which give him a small claim to
consideration. As a catalyst he was (for so unremarkable a man) extraordinarily efficacious. If he lacked the ability to achieve great work himself, he certainly did not lack the ability to inspire it in others. And, like a match set to a trail of gunpowder, his own work and enthusiasm occasionally produced unexpected and far-reaching results. "It is perhaps far-fetched to claim him as the ultimate inspirer of Rask's Old English Grammar; but if Grundtvig and Rask had not sat down at that particular time to correct his faulty edition of Beowulf, it is perfectly possible that the grammar might never have been written in Rask's short lifetime. His enthusiasm in inspiring the work of others was equalled by his enthusiasm in friendship. His loyalty to and affection for his friends is proved time after time - in his relations with statesmen like Goldbergh and Bulow, before and after their falls from favour; in his gratitude to his early benefactress, Mrs. Sommer; in his last thought for the servant who had looked after him. He inspired affection in most of the people with whom he came in contact in the day-to-day routine of living, in which it is almost impossible to conceal such characteristics as selfishness, meanness or ingratitude. The letters of his London landlady, the warm messages to him from all her children, indicate to what extent he won their confidence and liking during the years he lived with them. In most ways he was not a naive man, and throughout most of his life he revealed a businesslike ability to provide for the future and secure his career; but he frequently revealed, particularly in personal contacts, a certain naiveté and simplicity of mind which made it impossible for him to foresee malice, spite and unkindness. In all his friendships, he
displays an open and receptive mind, a willingness to be pleased, a
certainty that the relationship will be interesting and rewarding,
and an ability to admire whatever qualities might be most admirable
in those with whom he came in contact. It was this naiveté which
made the hostility and abuse of Grundtvig almost incomprehensible to
him; and it can easily be imagined that a man of his temperament
would experience during the shelling of his city and the destruction
of his property by the nation with which he had formed such warm ties
of friendship. It is one of the greatest possible tributes to his
character that, after this experience, he was able to forgive if not
to forget what he and his country had suffered at the hands of his
former friends; and the English and Scots with whom he came in con-
tact during his life might well say, as Robert Jameson said in 1806,
that: "it is not every one that has a Thorkelin for his friend."

The correspondents whose letters have been chosen for inclusion
here have not been singled out as the greatest or the noblest of the
men whom Thorkelin met. They have been picked to give some indica-
tion of the breadth of interests which the volumes of letters cover,
and the subjects which interested them vary from archeology to agri-
culture and from revolutions to Eskimo culture. In the following
brief essays, an attempt has been made to show what each of them has
contributed to the complete picture which is presented by the Being
Collection.
Of a man so various, ambitious and capricious in his intellectual interests as James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, it is difficult to write with that compactness that a study of this sort requires. His oddities and his eccentric scholarship have, however, been written of by many historians, friendly and unfriendly, and his excursions into philosophy have been dealt with by competent authorities. His correspondence with Throckmorton was prompted by his obsessive interest in his theories about the origins and nature of language, and this introduction may properly be restricted principally to a consideration of Monboddo as revealed in these letters. His theories were indeed extraordinary, and astounded polite society in Edinburgh and London for many years. Horace Walpole and Johnson scoffed at them, although Johnson, after meeting him at his own house, admitted that "he would have pardoned him for a few paradoxes, when he found that he had so much that was good; but that, from his appearance in London, he thought him all paradox; which would not do." Lord Kames, his elder brother on the Bench as in letters, would beg him sarcastically

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1 The family name appears to have been spelt indifferently "Burnet" or "Burnett", and in the majority of catalogues and reference works which I have consulted, it has appeared as "Burnet". Since, however, Monboddo invariably spells it "Burnett" in his own letters, I have retained this spelling throughout for the sake of consistency, except in quotation.

to go before him into a room, "so that I may see your tail, my lord!"

At a period when Edinburgh was well-provided with wits and eccentrics, particularly in Parliament House, Monboddo was by any standards an outstanding example. Practically all that we know of him from his own contemporaries are anecdotes, some amusing, some apocryphal, all of them lively and entertaining, reflecting different facets of his robust and full-blooded personality. We read of his philosophical theories, his "air-baths", his refusal to enter carriages or sedan-chairs, his practice of anointing himself with aromatic oils of his own concoction, and regret bitterly that none of his contemporaries should have written a proper biography of him. In an essay of this scope, it is impossible to do justice to all the accounts we have of him. We must turn with regret from Gillies' picture of the elderly judge, marching out into his fields on the first night of his vacation, lantern in hand, to inspect the progress of his turnips, and

3 H.G. Crahan, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, London 1901, p. 191; an allusion to Monboddo's theory that men were descended from apes.

4 He considered it the height of effeminacy for a man to be carried anywhere cooped up in a "box". When leaving Parliament House on particularly wet days, he would occasionally summon a chair, place his wig in it, and walk home beside it.

5 In Robert Kerr's Memoirs of the Life, Writings and Correspondence of William Smellie (Edinburgh 1811), there is an interesting account of Monboddo, which includes the information that Smellie had at one time intended to write a memoir of him. It is much to be regretted that he did not, since the two men were on terms of close friendship for many years.

6 R.P. Gillies, Memoirs of a Literary Veteran (London 1851), I, p. 47. This work is quoted in future as Gillies.
from Boswell's stories of the various encounters between Johnson and the man who has been unkindly (and unjustly) described as his Elzevir edition. His life was a long one, and his presence in Thorkelin's list of correspondents is particularly interesting as it connects him with the Edinburgh of an earlier day, the Edinburgh of David Hume (whom Lenboddo detested) and the Select Society, where he supported his "paradoxical tenets by an inexhaustible fund of talent and argument." Since, however, he was acquainted with Thorkelin only in the last ten years of his life, little of this earlier part of his career is relevant to a discussion of the correspondence between the two men.

The principal events of his long life have been admirably told by William Knight in his book Lord Lenboddo and some of his Contemporaries; use is made in this work of papers and information belonging to the present representatives of the Burnett family which had not previously been printed, and the book does not seem to have been superseded by any later study of Lenboddo. It is unnecessary, therefore, to do more than summarize briefly here the course of his early career. He was born the son of a country laird in Kincar-

7 Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. Hill and Powell, II, p. 189, note 2. The remark was made by Samuel Foote.

8 Dugald Stewart, Life of Dr. Robertson (Edinburgh 1801), Appendix, note A.

9 Published London 1900. This work is quoted in future as Knight.

10 A part of these papers are at present on temporary deposit in the National Library of Scotland (P.D. 325).
Dinshail, whose estate probably never exceeded 1200 acres, and whose ancestral mansion has been described as a "gloomy and very old house at the foot of the Grampians." His schooling followed the normal pattern of his day, beginning under a private tutor, continuing at the parish school of Laurencekirk (there, however, he was taught by no less a scholar than Thomas Ruddiman), and being completed at King's College, Aberdeen, where he was sent in his 14th year, and where he laid the foundations of that love of philosophy and classical learning for which he was later to be so notorious. His legal training, at Edinburgh, Göttingen and Leyden, was equally orthodox; and in later life he was inclined, according to John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, to find fault with "the modern style of breeding Scottish lawyers at home, where they consorted chiefly together, and had no opportunity of rubbing off their rough corners by conversing with strangers of figure and fashion." He returned to Edinburgh in September 1730, and took lodgings in the West Bow, just in time to be an unwilling and horrified spectator of the Porteous Riots.

He was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in February 1737, and gradually acquired a respectable practice at the Bar. Even as a young man, he seems to have been something of a peculiarist; and Ramsay relates that "his dress and discourse were in those days so

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11 Gillies, I, p. 43. His recollection of Lamboé is reinforced by Boswell, who describes it as "a wretched place, wild and naked, with a poor old house, though, if I recollect right, there are two turrets, which mark an old baron's residence" (Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, p. 77).

12 John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century, Edinburgh and London 1887, I, p. 351. This work is quoted in future as Ramsay.
much out of the common road, that it would have been surprising if he had been much in favour with the practitioners of the law. But though not much employed for a number of years, his pleadings and law papers, in a style perfectly his own, were allowed to be close, manly and persuasive, taking a clear and comprehensive view of the matter in debate. The case which brought him fame and a seat in the Court of Session was the famous Douglas Cause, which concerned the vast inheritance of the Duke of Douglas. There were several claimants, but the issue was eventually narrowed down to the Duke of Hamilton, and the surviving son of Lady Jane Stewart, sister of the late Duke of Douglas, concerning the legitimacy of whose birth there was considerable doubt. Burnett, by this time a man of 53, was chief pleader on the Douglas side. It is perhaps not entirely a coincidence that he claimed kinship with the Douglases through his grandmother's family, and pointed out the Douglas arms on his house with great pride to Johnson in 1775. There can at least be no doubt that the Douglas claimant was well served by his counsel. Burnett went to France three times to search for evidence in favour of his client, where the French lawyers briefed in the case were much im-

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13 Ramsay, p. 352

14 Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, p. 77. It is said that, "the reason before the Douglas Cause was decided, the Duchess of Queensberry sent him a fine haunch of venison, to eat which he invited a number of the judges and other friends; but when set on the table, it stank so much that it was instantly removed. Some days after, Mr. Davidson, meeting him in the Parliament House, said: 'Lionboddo, this is a pretty use to make of the Duchess's venison and your vine. It is flat bribery and corruption.' 'Master Davidson,' answered he, 'I confess much corruption, but no bribery'" (Ramsay, p. 355, footnote).
pressed by his determination and pertinacity. His efforts were rewarded, for although the Court of Session gave decision against the Douglas claimant (on the casting vote of the Lord President), the decision was reversed in the House of Lords. In February 1767, largely through the influence of the Duke of Queensberry (who had retained him during the Douglas Cause), he was made Lord of Session; so that he actually heard the decision of the Douglas Cause, in which he had pleaded, as a Senator.

Of his official career, little more need be said. That he was a sound lawyer, a learned and upright judge, seems never to have been in doubt, although Ramsay accused him of subordinating his legal work to his literary interests:

Unfortunately for his fame and utility as a public man, he commenced author soon after he was made a Lord of Session. Bookmaking became his ruling passion, without a rival, almost to the day of his death; and, of course, his professional duty was only a secondary object, sometimes better and sometimes worse performed. It was observed that he paid more attention to the Inner House business than to that of the Outer House, where he tried various methods of shortening business, which did not meet with approbation. 15)

The only valid foundation for this accusation seems to be the fact that Honsbolddo did refuse a seat in the Court of Justiciary, on the grounds that its duties would curtail his vacations and interfere with his private study; his attempts to shorten the law's delays in the Outer House by substituting hearings for lengthy pleadings can only be regarded as evidence of the sound common-sense which he generally displayed in legal matters and, indeed, in all matters not directly affected by his various crotchets. The same quality of

15 Ramsay, p. 332.
same common-sense is shown in some correspondence between him and his friend Allen Ramsey, the portrait painter, which reveals him in a professional and very pleasing character. Ramsey had consulted him on a legal wrangle arising from the building of his house in Ramsey Garden. Burnett's reply, dated 6th April 1758, was as follows:

Dear Sir, I have now considered your Case, which has been fully laid before me by your Agent, Mr. LawrenceCraigie. And I am to give you my Opinion, not in the formal way of Memorial and Queries, but in the way of a Letter to a Friend, and that you may not imagine I have considered your Business slightingly or superficially, as we Lawyers are suspected of doing then we give our Opinions gratis. I let you know that I have taken your money. So that I am bound by Duty as well as Inclination to give you my best Advice upon the naturest Deliberation. And I hope you will not think my Advice the worse, or that I deserve my Fees the less, because I am to give you my positive Opinion against a Law-suit for which I think you have not the least Ground . . .

He then gives with great fullness his reasons for his opinions, and concludes,

Thus my dear Sir I have given you my advice both as a Lawyer and a Friend, and rather more as a Friend than a Lawyer; because I positively advise you against a Law Suit which I am positive you cannot succeed in, and besides losing it you may get the Character of a bad Neighbour, & a Man troublesome in Business, which I am sure you would not choose.

I am very glad to hear of your Success in your Art; and that we have an Artist belonging to our Country who does not disown it, nor is unmindful of his Friends & other Concerns in it. I expect to have the pleasure to see you here again & to pass some more agreeable Evenings with you. Mean time I am Dr. Sir Your most obedient humble Servt. Jan. Burnett. 10

It is time now to turn from Horbodde's personal and professional life to consider the work on which his contemporary notoriety and present fame chiefly rest, namely, his Origin and Progress of

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National Library of Scotland, Ms. 3417, f. 36.
Language. In a letter of 31st December 1773 to his friend James Harris, he informs him of the book's forthcoming publication and outlines his scheme for it:

... I am going to publish something, upon a subject which I believe I mentioned to you, in the beginning of our correspondence, I mean The History of Man.

I have not taken in the whole of that plan, which I found too extensive both for my abilities and the time I had to bestow upon it; but only a part of it, though a considerable part, viz. The History of Language, upon which my thoughts have been turned for a good many years. I had collected a great deal of material upon the subject, but without any design of publication, until they grew very bulky; and being written, like the Cibyl's prophecies, upon loose leaves, which my children sometimes stole, I thought the best way of preserving them, and making a fair copy of them, was to employ a printer for an exemplum.

The book will be entitled Of the Origin and Progress of Language, and you will have a copy of the first volume of it pretty early in the Spring. As I thought I could not give a philosophical account of the origin of Language without accounting for the origin of our Ideas, this has led me deeper into Philosophy than I ever proposed to have gone in my work I was to give the public. ... As the origin of Language has naturally led me to inquire into the state of our nature before we had the use of Language, I have spent a great part of the book upon that subject, which I thought a very curious as well as a new subject of inquiry; and in that state I believe I shall be thought by many to have sunk our nature too low. For though nobody has a higher idea than I of Human Nature, when it is improved by the arts of Life, and exalted by Science and Philosophy, I cannot conceive it - before the invention of Language - to have been in a state much superior to that of the brute. 19)

Published London 1773-1792.

James Harris (1709-80), M.P. and successively Lord of the Admiralty and Lord of the Treasury. He was appointed in 1774 Secretary and Controller to Queen Charlotte. He was a fine classical scholar and is perhaps best known for his Horae; or, A philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Dracon (London 1750), a work to which Hamobbis frequently acknowledged his indebtedness. His son James was created Earl of Halesbury in 1800.

Knight, pp. 71-73
This novel idea of the evolution of Man did indeed cause grave
offence to many. By 1773, the complacency of the peace of the
Augustans was cracking, but not to the extent that a gentleman was
prepared with equanimity to contemplate his kinship with an ape.
He might have said, with Congreve, "I never cared for seeing things
that force me to entertain low thoughts of my Nature. I do not
know how it is with others, but I confess freely to you, I could
never look long upon a monkey without very mortifying reflections."
Nor did the reading public care for Monboddo's main thesis, that
language, instead of being a divine gift, and thus one of the chief
distinctions between Man and beast, was not natural to Man, and had
been slowly and painfully developed over a long period from savage
cries and grunts to its present perfect condition. The judgement
of posterity, moreover, has not been much kinder to Monboddo than

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Cf. Monboddo's letter to Sir John Pringle of 16th June 1773:
"And suppose my reader should hold it to be clearly revealed that
it was originally bestowed by God upon our first parents, - the con-
trary of which I am far from asserting - and, if he will not agree
with me in the supposition that this gift of God, like many other of
his gifts, may have been lost in consequence of the Fall - at least
that it may have no happened in some one country of the Earth, - he
may however allow that it is a curious speculation, and I think not
attended with any bad consequences to religion or morality, to en-
quire how Language - supposed to have been possibly invented - might
actually have been invented, if the Revelation from Heaven had not
made it unnecessary.

"As to the fact whether Moses has actually said that men was en-
dowed by God Almighty with the faculty of speech, I am really not a
competent Judge, as I do not understand the original. But, so far
as I can judge from the Greek or English translation, it is certain-
ly not said expressly. Nor are there any circumstances in the
Narrative, from which I think it can be necessarily inferred. And
I should think it more natural to believe that the first man, as he
was endowed with superior faculties, did invent this art, as well as
the art of tilling the ground, which was his occupation in his state
of bliss" [Knight, pp. 53-54]. It is surprising to consider that
this very moderate degree of scepticism was responsible for the accu-
sations of atheism made against Monboddo.
that of his contemporaries:

There is no need, however, to give the good men credit for originality. His picture of the primitive man is, as he owns, the same as that which Rousseau had painted in his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality. Monboddo is original only in presenting the primitive men with tails. To "anticipate" truth is not to be a discoverer, any more than a dreamer has foresight because his dream comes true. Erasmus Darwin suggested, in his Lives of the Plants, that species are modified by adaptation of individuals to suit their wants, but this "anticipation" was only a fancy with him, the merit lay with his grandson Charles, when he eventually proved it a fact. In Monboddo's case, as he anticipates the modern anthropologist, he is only one of those foolish people who are wise before their time. 21)

This is far from being a fair assessment of Monboddo's position. It is undeniable that he was too credulous a listener to travellers' tales, that he had not the advantage of being able to travel to test out his theories on the spot, and that, so far as can be ascertained, he never actually met a live orang outang. His deductions were based on the work of others who had observed the animal alive, and had dissected it when dead; and it may therefore be argued that his reliance upon their information that its organs, especially the organs of speech, were in all respects identical with human organs, deserves no more credit for discrimination than his acceptance of stories of men with tails and other pieces of fabulous information that came in his way. But his conclusions were not based entirely upon the anatomy of the orang outang, and were supported as strongly by his observation of the deaf and dumb in Edinburgh as by the reports he received of savage nations on the other side of the world.

His account of the activities of his friend, Mr. Braidwood, in teach-

ing deaf-mutes to speak is among the most interesting part of the
book, and must be one of the earliest descriptions of therapeutic
work of this kind.

As to the humanity of the Orang-outanga, and the story
of men with tails / he wrote to Sir John Pringle /, I
think neither the one nor the other is necessarily con-
"ected with my system; and if I am in an error, I have
only followed Linnaeus, and I think I have given a better
reason than he has done for the Orang-Outang belonging to
us, I mean, his use of a stick. From which, and many
other circumstances, it appears to me evident that he is
much above the simian race, to which I think you very
rightly disclaim the relation of brother, though I think
that race is of kin to us, though not so nearly related.

... If ever my book comes to a second edition, which
you seem to think it deserves, I shall certainly correct
that too strong expression about the exact conformity of
the anatomy of the Orang-Outang with that of a man. I
had my information upon that point from M. Jussieu at Paris,
who either did not know, or did not think it worth his while
to inform me of those differences, which Dr. Tisson has
observed betwixt the anatomy of the Orang-Outang, and ours. 23)

Unfortunately, when the second edition of the first volume of the
Origin and Progress of Language appeared in 1774, it was discovered
that such corrections as he had made tended in the opposite direc-
tion; and, far from retracting his assertion of the identical
anatomy of the orang-outang and a man, he inserted a fresh batch of
travellers' tales, by which he proved the animal's natural feelings
of modesty, humanity, honour and affection, its ability to acquire
excellent table-manners, to act as a lady's servant and to play "the
pipe, harp and other instruments of music." It is the Orang-outang
of the second edition, not the first, that has been unforgettably en-

23 See particularly Origin and Progress of Language, vol. I (2nd ed.),
p. 102 for an account of Braidwood's methods.

23 Knight, pp. 94-95.
shrined in the character of Sir Gran Hart-ton, Bart., M.P. in Pe-
cock's novel, Melincourt; and if Konboddo had done no more than
inspire the portrait of this chivalrous, delightful and mercifully
tacturn baronet, we should have cause for gratitude to him.

It is important, however, in considering Konboddo's linguistic
theories not to be distracted by the extraneous elements and deco-
rations. The orang-outang is one such piece of decoration; as we
have seen, he did not himself believe it to be a necessary part of
his hypothesis. It is interesting that, even in the more fanciful
second edition of Volume I, he passed straight on from his account
of the orang-outang who lived several years at Versailles, "per-
formed many little offices to the lady with whom he lived" and died
of drinking spirits to his more prosaic observation of the diffi-
culties encountered by a foreigner learning a strange language:

Further, to show the difficulty of pronunciation, the fact
is most certain, that those who have become accustomed to
speak all their lives, cannot, without the greatest labour
and pains, learn to pronounce sounds that they have not
been accustomed to. Thus a Frenchman that has not been
taught English early in his youth, can hardly ever learn
to pronounce the aspirated t, that is, the th; and an
Englishman cannot pronounce the aspirated k, or x of the
Greeks, which we in Scotland pronounce with the greatest
case.

Thomas Love Peacock, Melincourt, London 1817. The orang-outang,
although the most obvious of Peacock's borrowings from Konboddo, is
far from being the only one in this novel. Almost the whole of
the character of Mr. Sylvan Forrester, with his theories of the de-
generation of the human race, his love of ancient books and his
scorn of the efficacy of modern civilized men, is taken from Kon-
boddo's writings. The only point at which they part company is on
the question of the abolition of the slave trade, for which Forrester
campaigns, but which Konboddo opposed, since slavery had been a re-
cognized institution in the ancient world. The surprising thing is
that Peacock should have managed to distil the frigid insipidity of
Mr. Forrester out of the robust and eccentric individuality of
Konboddo.
that is much more basic to the proper understanding of The Origin and Progress of Language is what he himself did consider to be important: his observation of deaf-mutes in Edinburgh, his conversations with the savage girl, Mademoiselle le Blanc, whom he had met in Paris, his study of the grammar of the various Indian tribes discovered in America (and of the Greenland language), the fact of his basing his comparative study of languages on simple words, common to all peoples — what he called radical or primitive words:

If it be further asked, what names were first invented? My answer is, The names of the objects that they were most conversant with, and had most frequent occasion to name. Thus we see the Hurons first gave names to trees, and to those animals that they hunted or tamed. 23)

If Honboddo had lived another hundred years to see the discovery of the Altamira cave paintings, and the later finds in the Dordogne at Lascaux, Font de Gaume and Combarelles, he would undoubtedly have been much excited by this additional proof that, when Ice-age man discovered the art of painting, what he painted were antelopes, wolves and hinds, bisons and bulls; the creatures which were most familiar to him in his primitive existence. Elsewhere, he speaks with approval of the method of Sir Charles Wilkins in comparing Sanskrit and Greek:

He has collected about seventy words, in which the two languages agree, with such variations as must be in different dialects of the same language; and many of these

23 Part from the many references to these conversations both in The Origin and Progress of Language and Ancient Metaphysics, see also in Account of a Savage Girl (1733): the British Museum copy of this interesting and anonymous pamphlet has a handwritten foreword by Honboddo himself.

are words that must have been original in all languages, such as the names of numbers, the names of relations such as that of father, mother, and brother — and the names of members of the human body, and particularly the foot, the name for which is precisely the same with the Greek word. 27)

It is by such means as this that he arrives at the conclusion which he states at the end of the first (and best) volume of The Origin and Progress of Language:

I cannot therefore carry the propagation of language further than I have done. I think it probable, that all the languages spoken in Europe, all Asia, if you will, and some part of Africa, are dialects of one parent language, which probably was invented in Egypt. But I am not warranted to go further, either by the reason of the thing, by historical facts, or by anything I can discover in the languages themselves. Some, I know, are very fond of the system of an universal language; but when they come to prove it by facts, and by the languages themselves, I think they fail very much. 28)

In such passages as this, we hear the voice of the Edinburgh lawyer, soberly and dispassionately considering the evidence laid before him, not that of the eccentric crank depicted by Boswell in his Life of Johnson. His conclusion is in itself sufficiently striking when one considers that he had not, when he wrote these words, made any study of Sanskrit. When he did, under the aegis of Charles Wilkins, he found his previous ideas still further confirmed.

It would be unwise to make any too extravagant claims for Montoddo as a founder of linguistic science. It was not possible for him, as it was for instance for Rask, to spend several years of his life travelling the world to observe languages and test his

27 Knight, p. 269 (letter to Sir William Jones of 20th June 1789).
theories scientifically; his age, and the demands of the Court of
Session obliged him to confine his studies to Edinburgh and London,
nor indeed did he ever pretend to regard them as more than the diver-
sions of his leisure hours. The glory of laying the foundations of
modern linguistics properly belongs to such men as Rask and Grimm,
who earned it by years of patient study. Hou holdc can claim credit
for a certain number of inspired guesses which have been confirmed
by later research. One of his most surprising conclusions in The
Origin and Progress of Language is one which, from his correspondence
with Thorkelin on the subject of the Greenland language, we should
never have supposed him to have reached sixteen years earlier, name-
ly, the idea that a highly complicated inflectional system in a
language is not necessarily a sign of its age or perfection:

From this account of the language of the Abinaquois I
am disposed to conjecture, that in the progress of language,
which I imagine has been very long, there has been invented
a language too artificial, such as this of the Abinaquois,
and such as it is said the Armenian language is, before a
language of complete art was formed, which is always as
simple as the nature of the thing will permit. First
there was a language altogether rude and barbarous, such as
we have described; then was formed a language of art; but
by very slow degrees, as we have also seen. Before the art
was completed, there was an intermediate stage of a language,
too intricate and complex in its structure. And in this
respect I imagine the invention of language resembles the
invention of machines. At first a machine is contrived
very clumsily, and answering very ill the purpose for which it
is intended; then art falls to work with it, and makes it
better; but so complex, and with so many springs and move-
ments, that it is not easily used. But art still proceed-
ing, and observing the defects and inconveniences, at last
devises a way of simplifying the machine, and making it
perform its operations with as few powers and movements as
possible; and this is what I call the perfection of art.
To this perfection the language of the Abinaquois is not
yet arrived: but I cannot doubt, that if the Abinaquois
were to cultivate arts and sciences as much as the antient
Greeks did, and among other arts the art of language, they
would come at last to simplify their language and make it
perhaps as perfect as the Greek. 29)

The perfection of the Greeks was one of Monboddo's most ob-
seSSive eccentricities, and it proved a stumbling-block to him in
almost every branch of science that he studied. It was his settled
and unalterable conviction that civilization had reached its highest
acme of perfection in classical Greece, and that mankind had, since
then, steadily and persistently degenerated, physically and mentally.
He has been accused of inconsistency in this as in direct opposition
to his theory of the evolution of mankind from an ape; but there
appears to be no inconsistency in his argument that man had evolved
from a brute, reached the height of his capabilities at a certain
point, and from that point, declined. For Latin as a language, he
had scant respect, and although he allowed that the Roman historians
were worth reading, laid it down in his system of education that they
should only be read in Greek. Even in the theatre, of which he
was a dedicated attender, his passion clouded his judgment. He
was much attached to Home's play, Douglas, of which he is said never
to have missed a performance; but his reasons for his preference
reveal all too clearly his obsession:

And I must think it very unfortunate for the English taste
of Poetry that Shakespeare has been set up as a standard;
as I think it is unfortunate for their Philosophy that Mr.
Locke has been considered as a model in that way, and re-
verenced in England as Socrates and Plato were in Greece.
If Shakespeare had formed himself, as I have said all young

29
Origin and Progress of Language, I, pp. 293-95. Compare the
point of view of Dr. John Jamieson as expressed in his letter to
Thorkelin of 23rd June 1783 (no. V), especially note 5.

30
A Letter upon Education, described by Knight (pp. 277-78) but
not published.
Poets ought to do, upon the study of Aristotle's rules, and had joined the practice of the great ancient masters from which those rules were drawn, we should have seen him at least aim at what is most perfect in tragedy, namely a discovery. And it is an ill sign of our taste in dramatic writing that so few discoveries are to be found in our English plays. There is however one in a late play, I mean the tragedy of Oedipus, which I think is most happily executed, and exceeds anything of the kind I know, either ancient or modern, without excepting even the famous discovery in the Oedipus Tyrannus mentioned by Aristotle as a model of the kind. 31)

The writings and practices of the ancients constituted his main example in life; by them he shaped his daily routine, and in particular the evening suppers for which he was so famous in Edinburgh, and which were remembered so nostalgically by Scott in Guy Mannering:

The Burnet, whose taste for the evening meal of the ancients, is quoted by Mr. Pleydell, was the celebrated metaphysician and excellent man Lord Ramsden, whose coœnas will not soon be forgotten by those who have shared his classic hospitality. As a Scottish Judge, he took the designation of his family estate. His philosophy, as is well known, was of a fanciful and somewhat fantastic character; but his learning was deep, and he was possessed of a singular power of eloquence, which reminded the hearer of the os rotundum of the Grove or Academs. Enthusiastically partial to classic habits, his entertainments were always given in the evening, when there was a circulation of excellent Bordeaux, in flanks garnished with roses, which were also strewed on the table after the manner of Horace. The best society, whether in respect of rank or literary distinction, was always to be found in St. John's Street, Canongate. The conversation of the excellent old man, his high gentleman-like and chivalrous spirit, the learning and wit with which he defended his fanciful paradoxes, and the kind and liberal spirit of his hospitality, must render these noctes coœnasque dear to all who, like the author (though then young) had the honour of sitting at his board. 32)

31 Knight, p. 65 (letter of 28th September 1759 to James Harris).

32 Guy Mannering, note L. This account is confirmed by that of A.F. Tytler in his Life of Lord Kames: "His conversation, too, had a rose and flavour peculiarly its own; it was nervous, sententious, and tinctured with genuine wit. His apothegms, (or, as his fav-
His prejudice in favour of the ancients was unshakeable; and he would have concurred heartily with Dr. Folliot's reproof: "Modem Athens, sir! The assumption is a personal affront to every man who has a Sophocles in his library. I will thank you for an anchovy."

His correspondence with Chorkelin is of particular interest, since it occupies two years during his most productive literary period. His Origin and Progress of Language, as we have seen, was published between the years 1773 and 1792; his Ancient Metaphysics, also in six volumes, spanned the years between 1779 and 1799, the year of his death. Either might well have been considered a remarkable achievement for a man of his age. Taken together, they are a proof of mental and physical vigour and stamina which goes far to disprove his own theory of the degeneration of man. The same keen intellectual curiosity is seen in these letters, in matters of language and in matters of prosody on which subject, it should not be forgotten, he was no inconsiderable contributor to the body of theoretical writing that was produced by the 18th century; although here again, his natural contentiousness was frustrated by his refusal to recognise any merit in vernacular writers. The tone throughout these letters is very much de haut en bas - not altogether surprisingly, perhaps, from a man of Hombdoo's age and eminence to

ourite Greeks would call then, Gnomai) were singularly terse and forcible; and the grave manner in which he often conveyed the keenest irony, and the eloquence with which he supported his paradoxical theories, afforded the highest amusement to those truly Attic banquets, which will be long remembered by all who had the pleasure of partaking in them" (Memoirs of Henry Home, Lord Kames, Edinburgh 1807, I, p. 181).

T.L. Peacock, Crotchet Castle, (London 1831), chap. 2.
a young foreigner, although one is inclined to feel, on reading his peremptory request to Thorkelin to send him his Catalogue of /ristotile "in a frank which you will get from some member of either House of Parliament", that he might well have done for him what he did for Dr. Price: "I have sent you two franks, in case you should not have a member of Parliament at hand." But this is a small quibble in the face of so much that is admirable. It is impossible not to be impressed by so magnificent a disregard for public opinion as that invariably shown by Lombeado in all his various crotchets; for in everything he did and wrote, he was, as Gillies admiringly recorded, "most fervently and instantly sincere."

His death, at the age of eighty-five, was conventionally recorded in the Gentleman's Magazine of June 1799, with the addition of some not very remarkable verses, beginning

If wisdom, learning, worth, demand a tear,
Deep o'er the dust of great Lombeado here.

Nearly a century later, however, a more fitting epitaph was written for him by Lord Heeves, his successor on the bench of the Court of Session and in philological research:

'Tis strange how men and things revive
Though laid beneath the sod, 0!
I sometimes think I see alive
Our good old friend Lombeado!
His views, when forth at first they came,
Appeared a trifle odd, 0!
But now we've notions much the same;
We're back to old Lombeado! 33)

34 Knight, p. 114.

35 Gillies, I, p. 50.

36 Knight, p. 19.
The first statesman of celebrity whom I personally was acquainted with was George Dempster of Dumfriesshire celebrated in his time," wrote Sir Walter Scott in his Journal. When he wrote it, it was 1829—only eleven years after Dempster's death—and already Dempster was little more than a name to his own countrymen.

The almost total eclipse of the reputation of a man who would have required no introduction in any part of Scotland in the second half of the 18th century and who indeed was sufficiently well-known in Parliamentary circles in London surely calls for explanation. Reference to biographical dictionaries and to Dempster's own obituary notices produces information which is startling in its formality, its inadequacy and very often its inaccuracy. Sir James Ferguson of Kilkerran, in his edition of the letters of Dempster to his ancestor, Sir Adam Ferguson, has ascribed this curious silence to the fact that, when Dempster died at the age of 86, he had outlived all his close acquaintances and indeed most of his intimate family, and the fact that Scott could speak of him in this manner barely more than a decade after his death to some extent supports this point of view. The

1 Sir Walter Scott, Journal, ed. W.E.K. Anderson, Oxford 1972, p. 537. I have been supplied with page references for this and all future quotations from the Journal by Mr. Anderson, whose kindness I have much pleasure in acknowledging.

2 Sir James Ferguson, Letters of George Dempster to Sir Adam Ferguson, 1756–1813 with some account of his life, London 1934. This work is quoted in future as Ferguson, and is the nearest approach to a proper biography of Dempster that has yet appeared.
fact that Dempster resigned his seat in Parliament and virtually re-
tired from public life nearly thirty years before his death, spending
his old age on his estates in Scotland, may well be significant in
accounting for the extraordinarily quick eclipse of his reputation.
The size of the impact which he made on the consciousness of his own
generation can best be estimated now by, for example, casual refer-
ces to him in the poems of Burns who, in his *Mistletoe* to J. — 
Smith, sets him beside the first statesman of the day:

A title, Dempster merits it;
A garter gle to 'Willie Pitt . . . 3)

Boswell's *Commonplace Book* gives some amusing anecdotes connected
with him, and Sir John Sinclair speaks warmly of him in his *Corres-
pondence and Reminiscences*:

He was an excellent scholar, — well acquainted with several
important modern languages, — conversant in all the prin-
cipal branches of modern science, — and, to crown the
whole, he was justly entitled to be considered both an
accomplished gentleman, and a benevolent man. He had a
peculiar felicity in expressing his thoughts in writing;
and when speaking on any interesting subject, his manner,
tone of voice, fervour, sincerity, and the cadence with
which he seemed to be animated, operated like a charm, and
gained on every heart. He spoke without the least premed-
itation, and was always listened to with attention and de-
light. 4)

As he was listened to by his contemporaries with attention and de-
light, so, after the lapse of nearly two centuries, his letters can

3  Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1933,
I, p. 162. It should be remembered that when Burns first published
this poem in the Kilmarnock edition, he was a young man, with little
experience outside his own native county of Ayr; which makes his
knowledge of Dempster's reputation more significant.

4  Sir John Sinclair, *Correspondence and Reminiscences*, 2 vols., Lon-
don 1831, I, p. 358-59.
still be read, with pleasure and with deep satisfaction. The subjects
which chiefly engaged his pen—agricultural reforms, politics, par-
liamentary business—are now of little interest except to the his-
torien or antiquarian, but the warmth and sincerity with which he
wrote, his deep interest in the affairs of his correspondent; the
goodness and humanity which are manifest in every topic he discussed,
the easy charm of his style make his letters as delightful today as
his conversation clearly was to those who knew him. Most of his
achievements, of their very nature, were ephemeral, although in the
agricultural reforms which he carried out on his estates, his fair-
ness and his deep concern for the welfare and security of his tenants
may with advantage be contrasted with the more ruthless methods of
such "improvers" as the Sutherlands. To obtain any idea of the
charm, the vitality, the intelligence and the benevolence of his char-
acter, it is necessary to turn to the very small collection of his
letters that has survived, and to the lamentably slender accounts of
those men who knew him well. It is deeply to be regretted that no
sufficiently talented biographer survived him, who might have succeed-
ed in distilling the essence of his personality and conversation, the
flavour of which is entirely lacking in his official obituaries.

One potential biographer did indeed propose himself. Charles
5
Rogers records in his autobiography that his father, the Rev. James
Rogers, then Assistant Minister of Monifieth, near Dundee, hinted to
Dempster in 1818 that he would be pleased to undertake this office
for him, and also tells us of Dempster's response to this offer.

5 Charles Rogers, Leaves from my Autobiography, London 1876, p. 25.
"You joke about the life of an individual," he wrote, "to whom nothing but oblivion belongs: 'Vidi et, quem dedecret cursum fortuna, peregi.'" It seems to have been shortly after this episode that he set about the destruction of all his private letters and papers, among which there must have been many of great interest, including Throckmorton's letters; the loss of James Rogers' biography may be less regretted. It is, however, on the recollections of his father that Charles Rogers' account of Darpster was based; and as it is by far the best-known of all contemporary (or near-contemporary) descriptions, it is unfortunate that so much of what he tells us is so obviously unreliable. In his introductory memoir in Boswelliana, he summed up Darpster's life and character in the following paragraph:

Mr. Darpster's religious views, together with his personal history and his acquaintance with Boswell, may be finally disposed of. Grandson of George Darpster, merchant and banker at Dundee, he succeeded to several important estates, which his ancestor had acquired by granting extensive loans on mortgages to the former proprietors. Born in 1755, he studied at the University of Edinburgh, and in that city formed the intimacy of Dr. William Robertson, Alexander Carlyle, John Home, and other eminent clergymen. Under their auspices he sat as a lay member in the General Assembly; and in that court he opposed his friends by seconding the injunction of the House passed in 1757, forbidding the clergy to countenance Theatricals. 7) Becoming acquainted with David Hume, he renounced Presbyterianism, and embraced infidelity. He abandoned the Scottish Bar to which he had been called, and became candidate for the Parliamentary representation of the Fife and Forfar burghs. By a narrow majority he secured his seat, but he was convicted of bribery and the election was annulled. To accomplish his end he had sold two fine estates, and expended nearly

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£15,000. On presenting himself to the constituents the second time he was returned under less exceptional circumstances. He retained his seat from 1762 till 1790. He would join no political party, probably owing to an uncertainty of judgment, which was partly an inheritance, two of his ancestors being deposed and afterwards restored to the ministry for certain changes in their civil and ecclesiastical opinions. According to Boswell he early cherished republican sentiments; latterly he resisted the revolutionary ferment created by the French Directory. By the general public he was esteemed a patriot, and was provincially known as "Honest George". The poet Burns held that he should have been emboled. He supported some liberal measures, and certain important services are associated with his name. He denounced the conflict with the American colonies, opposed the sovereignty exercised by the East India Company, sought to remove all restraints from the national commerce, and advocated the abolition of sinecures. On retiring from Parliament, he devoted himself to the promotion of agriculture and manufactures in North Britain. He established an agricultural society on his estates. He improved the conditions of the Scottish fisheries, and discovered a method of preserving salmon for the London market. He was much respected on his estate, was benevolent to the poor, and exercised a generous hospitality. He did not attend church on the plea of feeble health, but he associated with the clergy of his neighbourhood, and to his household spoke reverently of religion. In some twenty of his letters, written at intervals during a period of twenty five years preceding his decease, the writer has on a close examination been unable to detect any remark savouring of scepticism. Yet it is nearly certain that he cherished to the close of a long life the blighting infidelity of David Hume. 8)

As a general outline, this is no doubt adequate enough, but it is an uninteresting and unrevealing account, and contains certain inaccuracies which require correction. Despater was in fact born in 1732, the eldest son of the proprietor of Dunnichen and of at least two other estates in Angus. Dunnichen, the only one of these which he retained until his death, has now been identified with the site of the Battle of Nechtan's Mare, the great Plotish victory over the Northumbrians in A.D. 685. Despater himself was unaware of

this, although it was his draining of Durnich-Hess just below his house which brought to light the beautifully-carved Pictish symbol stone which now stands in the garden of Durnich-Hess House. He was educated first at Dundee Grammar School and St. Andrews University (where he distinguished himself by winning the Archery Medal in 1750), and afterwards at Edinburgh University where he studied for the Bar, although it does not appear that he ever had the intention of practising. It was in 1754 while he was in Edinburgh that his father died, leaving him at the age of 22 in possession of a handsome fortune in a city whose intellectual and social life was at that time unrivalled throughout Europe. He did not waste his opportunities. He was among the earliest members of Allan Ramsay's Select Society (and afterwards of the Poker Club which succeeded it) where he mingled with the most brilliant members of Edinburgh society. In 1755 he was admitted a member of the Faculty of Advocates, and in the following year, set forth light-heartedly with his friend Adam Ferguson, eldest surviving son of Lord Kilkerran, to make the grand tour. Dempster's part in it was all too short, for they had gone no further than the Low Countries when Dempster was forced to return to Edinburgh by news of his sister's illness.

In 1760, having put his estates in order, he turned his atten-

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9 See his explanation of the name in Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, Edinburgh 1791, I, p. 419: "Dun, a Gaelic word, invariably applied in Scotland to hills on which some Castle, or a place of strength, has stood; Ichen is unknown, but probably a proper name."

10 Isabel Henderson, The Picts, London 1967, p. 218. Finkerton, in his Inquiry into the History of Scotland (2nd ed., p. x) confirms that it was discovered by Dempster and describes it accurately as being engraved with a mirror and a comb.
tion to politics, and was elected in 1761, member for the group of burghs which included Forfar, Perth, St. Andrews, Dundee and Cupar (Fife). The letter in which he announced to the previous holder of the seat, Thomas Leslie, his intention of opposing him, is typical:

SIR - The I have not the honour to be personally known to you, yet I think it my duty to let you know that I intend to stand Candidate against next General Elections for that District of Burroughs which you at present represent in Parliament. The first Public Declaration I have made of my Intentions was yesterday in this town [Dundee].

I leave it to others to tell you how little you have to apprehend from so young and so inconsiderable an Opponent as me; but I beg leave to assure you myself that I regret very heartily that our interests should stand in competition, and I beg you'll believe that the little Opposition I make shall be conducted with that politeness and moderation, which one Gentleman owes another and which in particular I owe to a man of your rank & Distinction. I have the honour to be Sir your most obedient and most humble Servant George Dempster. 11)

Dempster's "little Opposition" cost him £10,000 and embarrassed him financially for many years to come; but there appears to be no foundation for Rogers' assertion that the election was annulled on account of a charge of bribery. Electioneering techniques of the eighteenth century were notoriously corrupt, and the fact that Dempster, after his campaign, found himself so badly in debt that it took him some years to straighten out his affairs indicates that he was not above using the accepted methods of the time. But if he secured his seat by the use of the only method then understood, there seems no reason to suppose that his campaign was any more corrupt than that of other contemporary politicians, and the mere fact of his spending so much money suggests that it was probably a good deal less so.

11 British Museum K3. 32,911, f. 172.
His election in 1760 (not 1780, as implied by the D.N.B.) as Provost of St. Andrews, a position which he held until 1776, shows fairly clearly that to one at least of the burgs in his group he was a welcome representative, and he continued to sit as a member for the same constituency (with one brief interruption in 1763–69) until he finally retired from Parliament in 1789. Rogers' allegations of bribery seem to have arisen from charges made against him at the general election of 1768 by Robert Haddo, a defeated and astringent rival, who had been put up by Clive to oppose Dempster, and to discredit him if possible by accusations of corruption, in consequence of Dempster's opposition to Clive's policies in the East India Company. The ruse was not successful; Dempster had in fact made use of bribery, but only in order to out-bribe Clive, as was generally known. The charges made against him, after a long and complicated legal wrangle, were finally dismissed by the Court of Justiciary as vague and uncertain as to the place made and circumstances of the crime libelled, and that the Pannell upon a Charge so vague and uncertain cannot be committed to the knowledge of an Assize. 12

Once elected in 1761, he took his seat in Parliament on the Whig side, and very soon gave evidence of that independence of mind for which he was in later life to be so famous. His maiden speech was made on 13th November 1761, and was of sufficient quality for Lord George Sackville to report that the "new Scotch Member" seemed to have "abilities sufficient to make him an object. In short, he promises well, and though he diverted the House by a becoming ignorance

12 Register House, Edinburgh, Justiciary Books of Adjournal, Series D, vol. 32, 1st August 1768. For a more detailed account of this election and the events following it, see Fergusson, pp. 65–69.
of its forms; yet he proved that he neither wanted language, manner, 13
nor matter. This opinion appears to have been shared by Sir
Harry Erskine, who lost no time in securing so promising a new-
comer for Bute's party:

After showing him the necessity of attaching himself to some
person or body of men, and entering on your Lordship's char-
acter, I asked him if he had made any connexion with any
other person ... he declared he had not. I advised
him if he meant to attach himself to you to tell you so
... he said he chose to do it in writing ... as an
evidence to produce against him if he should act contrary
to his professions. 14)

A year later, however, he broke with Bute over a question concerning
the Scottish militia, and joined the Rockingham party. During Rock-
ingham's brief period of office, he was rewarded with the only polit-
tical office he ever held, the comparatively poorly-paid secretary-
ship of the Order of the Thistle; and in due course he followed
Rockingham into opposition. Not even the possibility of losing his
directorship of the East India Company tempted him to waver in his
allegiance. In Indian matters, he allied himself with the party of
Lawrence Sullivan, who opposed Clive and the Government policies.
Then, however, Sullivan transferred his allegiance in the House of
Commons to Pitt, Dempster refused to follow his example.

Dempster thought as I do about Sullivan's coalition I wrote
Burke to Rockingham on this occasion. He told me that
it should make no difference in his line in India House;
that there he would stand as firmly by him as he would con-
tinue to oppose his new friends in Parliament. That his
political connexion was with your Lordship and would al-
ways be so; but that if Mr. Sullivan should find that

13 Historical Manuscripts Commission, Stopford-Sackville, i, 17.
quoted in Namier and Brooke, The House of Commons 1754-1790, London

14 Letter to Bute, 28th November 1761, quoted in Namier and Brooke,
op. cit., II, p. 314.
course of conduct prejudicial to his interests in Leaden- 
hall Street, that he would give an hour's notice disqualify 
for the directorship. This was what I expected from 
Dempster... not to sacrifice one duty to another; but 
to keep both if possible - if not, to put it out of his 
power to violate the principle. 15)

It is surprising, therefore, to find that Dempster acquired the char- 
acter of a floating voter, although this was probably due more to the 
value he set on freedom of conscience and personal principle than to 
any uncertainty of political purpose. Dr. Jamieson, the lexicogra- 
pher, told in his later years of a visit to London during which he 
chanced to meet at dinner a Whig M.P. to whom he remarked that Demp- 
ster was a peculiar favourite with his countrymen on account of his 
patriotic spirit. The Doctor relates,

To my astonishment, he replied with much frigidity of 
manner, "We do not like him much here." "May I ask," 
subjoined I, "for what reason?" "May," said he, "be- 
cause we are never sure what side he is to vote on." 16)

Dempster himself, writing to Sir Adam Ferguson in 1775, confirms 
that this point of view was not wholly unjustified:

I have long thought what I have no doubt you are by this 
time convinced of - that unless one preserves a little 
freedom and independency in Parliament to act in every 
question and to vote agreeably to the suggestions of one's 
own mind, a seat in Parliament is a seat on thorns and 
rusty nails. 17)

In later years, looking back after his retirement from the peace of 
Dunmichen to his time in Parliament, he wrote ruefully to the same

15 Letter of 9th November 1769, quoted in Nairn and Brooke, on. cit., 
II, p. 315.

16 Alexander Lawson, Portrait Gallery of Forfar Notables, Aberdeen 
1893, p. 31.

17 Ferguson, p. 84.
correspondent:

I am done with Parliament after a service of thirty years neither suited to my fortune nor genius, where I was never metaphysician enough to settle to my own satisfaction the bounds of the several duties a member owes to his king — his country — to purity or Puritanism rather and to party — and to myself and those who depended upon my protection, nor indeed to anything — but went on floundering like a blind horse in a deep road and a long journey. 19)

He was too severe upon himself. In the *Annual Register* of 1791, a report of the institution of the Fishery Society gave an opportunity for an anonymous writer to pay tribute to Dempster's conduct throughout the tenure of his seat in Parliament:

... he maintained the most uniform and noble consistency and propriety of conduct. Disregarding and even rejecting the offers of personal advantages, he kept a steady eye on what he conceived to be the public good; and this he constantly pursued, "with firm but pliant virtue," yielding some points in order to gain others. Though oftener found in the ranks of the opposition than in the train of the ministry, he never opposed, and was never accused or suspected of opposing government from any factious, or otherwise unworthy motives. No man was more forward than Sir John Dempster to applaud the measures of administration when they appeared to deserve applause or to strengthen their hands when they seemed well employed. It appears by the accounts that we have of the debates in the House of Commons, that, immediately after the close of the late ruinous war, Mr. D. in a review of the state of the nation, proposed various expedients for restoring and improving our finances. He was the first who suggested the idea in the House of Commons, of appropriating 1,000,000 a year towards the reduction of the national debt. He recommended a review of our revenues, and the adoption of a system less burdensome to commerce and troublesome to our traders; and called the attention of the nation to the state of our British fisheries. ... Mr. Dempster was not more distinguished by the incorruptible integrity of his public conduct than the suavity of his manners, and the benevolence of the whole of his deportment and conduct in the intercourses of private life. And it was by the excellence of his moral character that he was enabled, though not devoted to any party, to render a very great number of services to individuals, as well as some of
no small importance to the public. He possessed good sense and general knowledge, and expressed his sentiments in an easy, fluent, modest, and gentleman-like manner. But in respect of talents and accomplishments, he had in the British Senate many equals, and none superiors. To what cause then was it owing, that he was always heard with singular and almost unrivalled attention? The expression of his countenance and the tone of his voice announced the sincerity and sensibility of his heart. His character gave weight to his opinions, and credit to his professions. Professors of rhetoric, by the example of Mr. Dempster, may illustrate the connection between eloquence and virtue. 19)

Among the most illuminating and copious sources of information about Dempster at this period are the journals of James Boswell, with whom, in spite of an eight-year difference in age, he was on terms of close friendship. The charm and wit of Dempster made his company as agreeable to Boswell as his calm good sense and sanity were necessary to Boswell’s very different temperament, and there is evidence to show how much the younger, more volatile and mercurial man depended upon the advice and stability of Dempster.

No man knows the scene of human life better than you do. At least, no man gives me such clear views of it. Therefore, pray assist me [he wrote to him in 1789] ... an advice from you to a friend is singularly excellent for two reasons. First, because it is always at least ingenious; and secondly, because you are not a bit angry though he does not follow it. 30)

During the early years of Dempster’s attendance at Parliament, his name occurs frequently in Boswell’s pages as his companion on long walks, as his collaborator in various schemes and as the recipient of many confidences, many of them more than somewhat unsavoury. It is to Boswell’s observation that we are indebted for a picture of

19

Annual Register, 1781, pp. 219-20.

30

Dampster's lodgings on a morning when he had called and found him not at home:

We called together at Dampster's, who was gone abroad and had left his dining-room in perfect Scotch confusion. Colonel Campbell had some bottle, and I made him dictate; and partly from his dictation, partly from my own observation, I wrote down the following inventory of a Scotch heretick of Parliament's dining-room furniture: Upon one table a stone basin with dirty water; a china saucer, as Campbell called it, or water-bottle with water in it; a case of razors; a shaving-brush, shaving-box and soap-ball, a strap, and a tin jug for warming water in. Upon one chair a pair of ruffles, dirty. Upon another chair a pair of white stockings and a pair of black ditto, a stock, a clothes-brush, a towel, and a shaving-cloth, dirty. Upon the arms of two chairs placed close together a flannel waistcoat without sleeves. Upon another chair a dirty shirt. Upon another ditto four combs, a pair of scissors, and a stick of pomatum. Upon the carpet a large piece of blue and white check spread out, a sofa-cushion, two shoes at a considerable distance from each other, a flannel powdering-gown, a pair of slippers. Upon the chimney-piece innumerable packets of letters and covers to be franked, a book, a pamphlet, some newspapers, and a snuff-box. Hanging upon brass nails two hats, a sword and belt, a belt without a sword. Standing in a corner a very long cane with a gold head. 21)

Boswell's growing intimacy with Johnson, however, seems to have been a powerful factor in the gradual cooling of his friendship with Dampster. The "infidelity" of which Rogers complained is certainly discernible in many of Dampster's early letters and utterances, and seems not to have given any offence to Boswell at that time.

Pray indulge your sceptical turn. He wrote to Boswell in 1763. You are already convinced of the insignificance and uncertainty of things. By scepticism you will soon discover that some things are less insignificant and uncertain than others. Believe me, dear Boswell, Revelation is nonsense. God never manifested himself but by his works. Disbelieve whatever the clergy have invented to enfeeble and debase mankind and to corroborate themselves. My study is to be perfectly moral while I live and im-

different then I did. 22)

Only a few years later, however, we find Boswell complaining that although Derpster is "a most agreeable man" with "fine sense, sweet dispositions and the true manners of a gentleman", "his sceptical notions give him a freedom and ease which in a companion is very pleasing, although to a man whose mind is possessed with serious thoughts of futurity, it is rather hurtful to find them considered so lightly." Johnson, whose mind was always much possessed with such thoughts, certainly did not care for the company of men who treated them lightly, and he made no secret of his disapproval of Derpster and of his principles, especially after a dinner party to which Boswell had rashly invited both his Mentor and his old friend. During the evening Derpster defended the doctrines of Hume and Rousseau, and Boswell recorded with satisfaction that Johnson scored his usual dialectic triumphs. It is probable, however, that the honours had been divided more evenly than Boswell cared to admit, for next morning, when he called upon Johnson, Johnson told him that he did not like Derpster. He said he had not met with any man of a long time who had given him such general displeasure. That he was totally unfixed in his principles, and wanted to puzzle other people. I told him that Derpster’s principles were poisoned by David Hume, but that he was a good, benevolent sort of man. "Sir," said Mr. Johnson, "I can lay but little stress upon that instinctive, that constitutional, goodness that is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very good member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and so, as goodness in most eligible then there is not some strong enticement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing.


no harm. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him. And even now, I should not trust Mr. Despater with young ladies, for there is always a temptation. 24)

Despater's verdict on Johnson was more liberal. On finding Boswell one morning suffering badly from a hang-over after sitting up late with the doctor the previous night, he consoled him, "One had better be pained at eighteen than not keep company with such a man."

It is beyond the scope of this brief introduction to enter in detail into Despater's parliamentary activities and interests during his years as M.P., but one of his most important projects must be mentioned, since it has some bearing on the letters included in this selection. His interest, always quickly stimulated both by agricultural or economic ineptitude and by the misery or misfortunes of any section of the Scottish people, had been aroused as early as 1784 by the poverty and apathy of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Indeed by that time it was becoming clear to the country as a whole that the social and economic problems of the Highlands could no longer be ignored, and the foundation in 1784 of the Highland Society was one of the earliest indications of a serious attempt to relieve them. In 1785 Despater made a journey to the Western Isles to inspect conditions for himself, and wrote buoyantly to Sir John before setting forth: "As to our fisheries, I trust I have formed a few clear ideas respecting them. The seas abound with fish, the Highlands with industrious and good people. It will be

24 Ibid., p. 317.

the business of the legislature to bring these two to meet." He certainly made it his business during the following years, and it was not his fault that the fish and the highlanders, upon introduction, found that they disliked the acquaintance. It was largely through his agency that a joint stock company was formed in 1788, bearing the impressive title, The British Society for extending the fisheries, and Improving the Sea-Coasts of this kingdom, but more commonly known simply as the Fishery Society. The aims of the Society included

the building of free towns, villages, harbours, quays, piers, and fishing-stations in the highlands and islands of north Britain, which will greatly contribute to the improvement of fisheries, agriculture, manufactures, and other useful objects of industry in that part of the kingdom, in which the dispersed situation of the inhabitants had hitherto proved a great impediment to their active exertions; and... their being collected into fishing-towns and villages, would be the means of forming a nursery of hardy seamen for his Majesty's navy and the defence of the kingdom. 27)

The Society was offered land for the building of its centres by various Scottish landlords, and especially by the Duke of Argyle, a prominent founder-member of the Society and first president of the Highland Society of Scotland. By 1788 the Society had acquired 1500 acres at Ullapool, 2500 acres at Tobermory and negotiations for further purchases were in progress. As we may see from Dempster's letters to Chalkelin, building had already begun at Ullapool at least.

The experiment began with every promise of success, but the

23 Fergusson, p. 133.

27 Annual Register, 1781, pp. 219-20, quoting from the Act of Parliament which incorporated the Society.
Society's prosperity was short-lived. There were various causes for the downfall of its schemes, not the least of them being the highlanders' incredible dislike of fishing, but the most crippling blow to strike it was the financial crisis caused by the outbreak of war with France in 1793. The loss to the members of the Society, among whom were both Dempster and his half-brother, John Hamilton Dempster, was enormous. There are indications, however, that even without this final blow, the Society might have found itself in difficulties, and the minister who wrote the account of Tobermory for the Statistical Account of Scotland put his finger on the most important reason:

... an universal complaint prevails among the inhabitants of the dearness of the rent, which the Society exact from their ground there. It is not to be wondered at, that the gentlemen, who have the direction of the Society's affairs, and who, perhaps, only know the highlands from the cursory observations of a short tour made by themselves, or others, in the finest summer weather, are apt to form too favourable an opinion of the general value of land in this part of the kingdom. 28)

In 1787, however, when the prospects of the Fishery Society were at their sunniest, a commission was dispatched by it from London to inspect various sites where it was proposed that new towns should be established, and to lay the foundation stones of one or two of them. This was no doubt the visitation to which the writer of the account of Tobermory referred. Thorkelin arrived in London in August 1788 and had been introduced to Dempster, probably by Sir John Sinclair; and the first surviving letter which Dempster wrote to him (no. 231, dated 27th May 1797) makes it clear that Dempster had pro-

posed his accompanying the expedition, "which will enable me to show you the whole kingdom to more advantage than I could have done otherwise." On the 7th June the expedition left London, and the weeks which the commission spent touring the coasts and islands of Scotland provided Thorkelin with a host of new and influential acquaintances, and laid the foundations of a firm friendship between Dempster and himself. For more than a year, while Dempster remained at Durnichen, they corresponded regularly, Dempster writing at least once a month and sometimes twice. During Dempster's months in London during the winter of 1788-89 (his last winter as an M.P.), Thorkelin was a frequent visitor at his house in Queen's Row, Knightsbridge; and when Dempster returned to Scotland, the correspondence continued, though now at a slackening rate. It does not appear that Thorkelin revisited Durnichen on either of his later trips to Scotland, but the correspondence was maintained until his departure for Denmark in 1791, after which it lapsed almost completely. But that both men retained warm memories of each other is indicated by the fact that Thorkelin named his third surviving son Georg Dempster, and by the cordial, if belated, exchange of letters between them in 1806-07.

The common interests which drew them together were wide and varied. Dempster's main interests were agricultural, and Thorkelin had been brought up on a farm, in a country at that time as poor and infertile as the districts of Scotland for which Dempster worked so hard. Thorkelin was primarily an antiquarian and a philologist, and Dempster had strong antiquarian interests (even his entry on Durnichen in Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* is sprinkled
with explanations of such feudal terms as ‘bomage’ and ‘thirlage’); and also had sufficient mental energy, in spite of all the other projects he had on hand, to embark on a study of the Scandinavian languages at the age of 61, on being presented by Thorkelin, after his return to Denmark, with ‘almost every thing valuable in Icelandic literature – Snorri’s History of Norway, the Edda, the Icelandic Societies transactions. In return I promised him to apply to the acquisition of that language, he having provided me also with a grammar and dictionary.”

Dempster was a politician, and Thorkelin was very full of the various reforms (particularly the emancipation of

“Thirlage – when the proprietor of a barony or estate builds a corn-mill on it, he obliges all his tenants to employ that mill, and no other, and to pay sometimes nearly double what the corn might be ground for another mill. As this servitude tends to make millers careless and saucy, it will without doubt soon be universally abolished.

“Bomage – is an obligation, on the part of the tenant, to cut down the proprietor’s corn. This duty he must perform when called on. It sometimes happens, that, by cutting down the proprietor’s crop, he loses the opportunity of cutting down his own” (I, pp. 432, 433).

Dempster to Ferguson, Ferguson p. 259. One of the books sent by Thorkelin to Dempster was the 1774 edition of Landnámabók, which had a curious history. It turned up in Copenhagen in December 1809, and was found to have the following note written on its fly-leaf:

‘This volume lent at one time by George Dempster Esq. of Dumfriesshire, to his friend Dr. Jamieson the well known author of the Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, who resided in Forfar between the years 1788 and 1796, and overlooked by him after Mr. Dempster’s death in 1813, passed at the sale of Dr. Jamieson’s library, into other hands. – I have, with the aid of Mr. Braidwood, Bookseller, had the satisfaction of recovering it, and after the lapse of some 60 years, of replacing it in the Dumfriesshire library. George Dempster 1872.” At some stage, presumably after the death of this later George Dempster, the book was sold again, and, after further wanderings, has now been bought back by Mr. Frederik Thorkelin of Copenhagen, great great grandson of the original donor, to whom I am indebted for this information. The book was originally inscribed, in Thorkelin’s writing, “Viro Per illustro Georgio Dempstero” and has further been annotated in Dempster’s hand, “from Professor Thorkelin.”
the peasants) which were then being carried out in Denmark; and finally Thorkelin was an Icelanders, and Dempster shared to the full the contemporary British interest in the little-known island which had recently excited so much curiosity. His letters reveal an informed and most humane interest in the sufferings to which the Icelanders were exposed, and there is perhaps even a note of gentle rebuke to be discerned in Letter XIII, addressed as it is to an Islander who was in receipt of a handsome salary from an administration largely responsible for the distressed condition of his own fellow-countrymen. In short, for two men born into such different spheres of life, they discovered a surprising number of common interests; and that these were strengthened by genuinely warm feelings of attachment cannot, after a study of Dempster’s letters, be doubted. No greater compliment or benefit can have been conferred on Thorkelin during his visit to Great Britain than the friendship of a man of Dempster’s calibre.

Dempster retired from Parliament in 1760; and the remainder of his life was spent in Scotland, principally in improving his own estates, watching the growth of his new villages, superintending the education of his nephew and heir, and experimenting with ideas for centrally heating Dumlichen House with “baked air”. The letters of his latter years reveal an increasing loneliness as he lost, one by one, those members of his family who meant most to him,—his wife, his only surviving brother and sister-in-law, their only child, and finally his niece whom, after the death of his beloved nephew, he had made his heiress. “At our ages,” he wrote to Fergusson after his wife’s death, “we are so familiarized with the loss of friends
and relations, that we might grow as callous as sextons and grave
diggers, but we do not." He continued his early habit of spending
some months every winter in St. Andrews, and Robert Chambers gives
an amusing picture (slightly reminiscent of the practice of Mr.
"birdhouse") of the "route-coach" which Deupster would send round the
town in the evenings to pick up the various old ladies who played
whist with him. He died at Dunnichen on 13th February 1813.

Thorkelin's correspondence contains a total of thirty letters
from Deupster, and it is possible to include only a small proportion
of these here. Some are merely brief notes of invitation or apology,
others are detailed and lengthy tracts on matters of purely agri-
cultural interest, and these have been excluded. In annotating
the letters which have been selected, reference has been made as
frequently as possible to matters of interest which it has not been
possible to include.

31
Ferrusson, p. 325.

32
It has been claimed, somewhat obscurely, by George Eliot that "the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history." On the assumption that this dictum applies equally to men, we should expect to find that the life of Charles Henry Wilson was an exceptionally happy one, for certainly it is a life of which practically nothing is known. That facts are available to us all combine to produce a picture the reverse of promising for happiness: obscure birth, education and opportunities limited by poverty, an undistinguished and inimical career and talents restricted by external circumstance and by inborn indolence — such disadvantages might well be supposed, in the harsh, virile, jungle life of eighteenth century London to postulate an existence "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." On the evidence of the letters written by Wilson to Thorkelin, we are forced to the conclusion that this was far from being the case. Although clearly written in material circumstances sufficiently adverse to have clouded completely a mind like that of Robert Jamieson, anxious, irritable and insecure, they reveal in Wilson an irrepresible insouciance and effervescence of spirits, an endless curiosity, a lively and optimistic mind and a resilient constitution. Like Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia, in a situation of parallel adversity, he might have said, "I am still of my mad humour to be merry."

The little that is known of the life of Wilson is soon told. He was born, probably in 1758, the third son of a clergyman, William
Wilson, of the parish of Lecy (or Lene), West Meath. It seems fairly clear, both from the way in which he refers to the Irish Catholics in his letters, and from the fact that he had obviously envisaged a career at the Bar, that he was born of a Protestant family; indeed, he could hardly have been the son of a clergyman, had he not been. Otherwise, nothing is known of his early life. His name does not appear on the list of graduates of Trinity College, Dublin, and we may perhaps be justified in assuming that poverty prevented him from being sent there, although he would have had to be very poor to be poorer than Goldsmith was as a student. How he earned his livelihood as a young man is a matter for conjecture. His first known publications appeared in 1782, when he was twenty-six. The first, which is also one of the few which were published under his name, was *A Compleat Collection of the Resolutions of the Volunteers, Grand Juries, &c. of Ireland*, which followed the celebrated *Resolves of the First Dunganon Diet*. To which is prefixed *A Train of Historical Facts relative to the Kingdom, from the Invasion of Henry II dom, with the History of Volunteering*. Only one volume of this was ever published, which was perhaps symptomatic of his future career. The book is dedicated to Henry Grattan, and is by no means a discreditable effort, but it reveals little personal information about the writer, beyond the fact that he was then living at 15 Mountrath Street, Dublin, and that he was probably, though not necessarily, a member of the Volunteers himself. His second publication in 1782 was a small volume entitled *Poems*, translated from the

Irish Language into the English. After this, there is complete silence until the Register of Admissions to the Middle Temple records the admission on 9th November 1783 of Charles Henry Wilson, but does not state that he was later called to the Bar.

His study of the law appears to have been desultory, but he probably found (as others of his countrymen, notably Burke, had done before him) that the vicinity of the Temple to Fleet Street suggested easier and more attractive ways of making ends meet to a young man who had already dallied in letters. Although, as we will see from his letters to Thorkelin, he was still hoping to be called as late as December 1791, he must have started writing as a hack journalist soon after his arrival in London; and some of the newspaper cuttings preserved by Thorkelin from his stay in London have been annotated by him "by Mr. Wilson." We know that at some stage "he was several years editor of "The Gazetteer"" and, although we do not know during which years he held this post, one of Thorkelin's cuttings of 1791 comes from this paper, and perhaps supports the hypothesis that he was editing the Gazetteer during the time when these letters were written. Two of his fellow-countrymen have referred to his for-
tunes in London. In 1783 Joseph O. Walker mentions him as "a neglected genius, now struggling with adversity in London;" and James Hardiman later describes him as "a youth of promising genius, who afterwards repaired to the great theatre of Irish talent and Irish disappointment, London; where in essaying

\[ \text{"To climb}
\]

\[ \text{the steep where Fasse's proud temple shines afar,"}
\]

he sunk, like most of his countrymen, unnoticed and unknown." It is interesting that both of these writers, considering Wilson from the viewpoint of his translations of Irish verse, speak of his undoubtedly talented; but they give a misleading and unnecessarily depressing picture of his existence in London. The letters he wrote to Chorkalin do not suggest neglected genius "by poverty oppressed."

They suggest rather a man of an alert and inquiring mind, of literary tastes, enjoying the company of a congenial circle of literary friends and more than ready to experience as fully as possible the stimulating political and social life of London in the 1780's. Editors of newspapers at the end of the eighteenth century were not necessarily indigent hacks. There is ample evidence to show that, if a London

\[ \text{if Wilson were not editing the paper, he was at least writing for it. See for example the description of the burning of the Irish House of Commons, quoted in note 12 of his letter of 6th March 1782 (no. XXI), which bears a strong resemblance to Wilson's style. Unfortunately, then as now, the journalistic jargon tended to conceal personal idiosyncrasies of style, and makes the identification of contributors largely a matter of guesswork.}
\]


6 \textit{James Hardiman, Irish Minstrelsy, London 1831, p. 171}
newspaper were not receiving a subsidy from the Administration to represent the government point of view, it was probably receiving one from the opposition or even from foreign sources. Of such subsidies, the major part almost certainly made its way into the editor's pocket. There can seldom have been a period when literary men, who were prepared to place their talents at the disposal of a political party, could find more scope for employment. The fact that Wilson so rarely put his name to his compositions may well mean that the work which we can attribute with certainty to him may well represent only the tip of the iceberg of his total output. That he was poor and unknown when he first arrived in London is perfectly credible, and the early careers of men like Burke and Goldsmith illustrate only too clearly how unfriendly London could be to young Irishmen of narrow means, literary ambitions and no expectations; but his letters to Thorkelin, written probably only five or six years after his arrival in London, give the impression of a man who, while not in comfortable or secure financial circumstances, was certainly not prevented by straitened means from enjoying the pleasures of society or ordering expensive books from Denmark. The career of Sir James Mackintosh, of whom Wilson speaks with such admiration in his letters, and who entered Gray's Inn as a penniless law student only four years after Wilson was admitted to the Middle Temple, is an illu-

For an analysis of the background of political journalism at this period, see Arthur Aspinall, Politics and the Press 1780-1850, London 1949.

8 A.S. Collins (The Profession of Letters, 1730-1832, London 1925) has recorded that in 1770 Arthur Young earned as much as £167 by writing for the press, and in 1773 was paid five guineas a week for acting as Parliamentary Reporter to the Morning Post (p. 24).
stration of what could be achieved by a man with ambition in the path which both chose to follow. Ambition, however, seems to have been the quality which Wilson pre-eminentely lacked. "Born to no fortune, he ran his career of life without doing more than to provide for the day which was passing over him, a fate not uncommon to men entering the world under the same circumstances, and possessing similar endowments, joined to a strong relish for social intercourse," wrote his obituarist. He seems to have been a sufferer from some sort of seeds, not the sullen slothful sin of the Middle Ages, but the light-er heedless and indifferent indolence, which lacks the staying-power to complete work begun, or to achieve the goals which ambition visualizes. It is always tempting to consider an only novel, written in the first person, as being at least partly autobiographical, especially where the known information about the author is as sketchy as in the case of Wilson. But after making every reservation which is required by our inability to cross-check the evidence, it must be admitted that the character of Charles North as sketched by his father in that very Shandyish novel of Wilson's, The Wandering Islander, bears a fair resemblance to what we can deduce of the character of the writer of these letters:

As to Charles, I know not what to think of him; one day I am filled with hopes that he will make a figure, and the next day, he sinks in imagination to a cypher; he is full of spirits, but on occasions he can be serious; he is generally the first to tell me there is a beggar at the door, and to conduct him to the kitchen, without waiting for an answer. - I am glad to find he has no dislike to history, and yet what satisfaction in that? ... The poets are his favourites, but I hope he will never be one himself. He is no plodder, I could never get him yet to hunt a word through a dictionary; if he does not hit on a thing immediately, he will not be at the pains to look after it. The chap has some taste, he is fonder of Pantagruel than
he is of water-gruel. I cannot say that ever I saw him strike a durb criminal out of wantonness, or rob a bird's nest . . .

and, if this parallel be allowed, it is tempting to wonder how close a self-portrait in North's description of himself - "fair, rather choleric, but easily appeased - and a little more into the bargain, rather the tallest of the middle size, with a nose tolerably well-proportioned, and an ear attuned to almost every species of music, except matrimonial . . . ."

The remainder of Wilson's life, after May 1792 when these letters stop, can be charted only by the milestones of his various publications. None of them, unfortunately, is of a nature to cast any light on the author, and one may indeed go so far as to say that he seems to have gone to considerable lengths to preserve his professional anonymity. This may simply have been a habit inculcated by the occupational hazards attaching to the profession of a journalist during the troubled, reactionary years of the 1790's, and it is possible to make too much of it. Nor were most of his works

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9 The Wandering Islander, I, pp. 54-55 (see also letter no. XV, note 3).

10 Ibid., p. 55. It may even be that the description of the Danish visitor (II, p. 163) was inspired by Thorkelin: "I never met with a youth of more amiable manners, in conversation a wit, in philosophy a sage, and in religion a saint - do not think I mean one of your kalendered saints, that spent the one half of his time in committing sins, and the other half in bewailing them. He had left his native country in pursuit of knowledge [sic] - His stay was short, and we were all sorry for it - as he was obliged to return to Denmark in a limited time."

11 The only scrap of information I have been able to glean from any of them is a crumb contained in the foreword to Polyanthes (1804): the fact that a serious illness had disrupted the original plan of the book and caused it to be published in a disorganized form.
of a type to promote immortality for the author. Wilson obviously
held with Johnson that no-one but a blockhead ever wrote except for
money, and the bulk of his works are mere pot-boilers - The Beauties
12 13 14 15.
of Burke, Brookiana, Polyanthes, The Lyrtle and Vine. All
these, and others, appeared in the years between 1799 and 1803. It
is also possible that he may have been responsible for the memoir of
16 Thorkelin which appeared in the Monthly Magazine in August 1803.
O'Gasside claims for him two publications in 1809 and 1811 but what
these were must be a matter of conjecture, for his promised "brief bio-
graphy and a catalogue of the biographical, critical, dramatic, romantic,
and miscellaneous publications - original and translated - prose and

12 The Beauties of the late Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, selected from the
writings, etc. of that extraordinary man, alphabetically arranged
... to which is prefixed a Sketch of the Life, with some original
Anecdotes of Mr. Burke, 2 vols., London 1793.

13 Brookiana. [A Collection of anecdotes, illustrative of the life
and opinions of Henry Brooke, with a portrait and quotations from his
writings], 2 vol., London 1804.

14 The Polyanthes; or, a Collection of Interesting Fragments, in Prose
and Verse: Consisting of original Anecdotes, Biographical Sketches,

15 The Lyrtle and Vine; or complete Vocal Library ... With an essay
on Sining and Song-Writing: to which is added, Biographical Anec-
dotes of the most celebrated Song-Writers, London [1802].

16 The main evidence in support of this hypothesis is a letter from
Thorkelin to the anonymous author dated June 6, 1789, which concludes:
"I hope you won't forget the translation of the Irish poem, as liter-
al as you please." Wilson would be the most likely of any of Thorke-
lin's friends to be able to supply him with such a translation. The
memoir itself is grossly inaccurate and self-contradictory; but it
in a curious circumstance that in the same month of the same year
another briefer memoir should have appeared in the Gentleman's Maga-
rine, unsigned but reputedly by Richard Couch. It would be inter-
esting to know what prompted these two tributes in 1803.
verse — anonymous and otherwise of this talented Irishman" was never written. He died in London on the 13th May, 1808; and the Gentleman's Magazine published an obituary which, in length and personal feeling, seems quite out of proportion to his humble place in society, and which, since it is almost the only contemporary source of information about his life, is quoted here in full:

In his 53rd year, Charles Henry Wilson, esq., late of the Middle Temple. He was several years Editor of "The Cosmear;" and there are few daily or periodical publications of any standing which have not been occasionally indebted to his contributions. He was author of the "Wandering Islander", "Polyanthus", "Brookiana", " Beauties of Burke" and many more original productions, compilations, and translations, to none of which would he suffer his name to be prefixed. His attainments were universal. He was deeply versed in the antiquities and literature of the Gothic, Scandinavian, and Celtic nations. With an inexhaustible fund of learning, he was "a fellow of infinite jest — of most excellent fancy." His wit and humour, as many of our readers must have had opportunities of knowing, were truly original. The facetious jester, the Joe Miller wit, in vain attempted to enter the lists with him; he was speedily distanced by a single, or an expression which never could enter the imagination of his rival, but so ludicrously apposite to the subject in hand, as never to fail to "set the table in a roar." He was a native of the North of Ireland, and migrated to the Metropolis upwards of twenty years ago. Born to no fortune, he ran his career of life without doing more than to provide for the day which was passing over him, a fate not uncommon to men entering the world under the same circumstances, and possessing similar endowments, joined to a strong relish for social enjoyment. 18)

His correspondence with Thorkelin covers a year from July 1791 to May 1792, ending at roughly the same time as the correspondence with Pinkerton, but for reasons much more inexplicable. The letters need no introduction or advocate other than themselves. They pro-

17 Séamus O'Cassadie, op. cit. (see note 2 supra).

vide a fascinating picture of London life and gossip at a time of enormous public interest and importance, when Pitt, Fox and Burke were bestriding the parliamentary world like colossi, when London was full of political clubs and societies and when accepted ideas and institutions were being turned inside out by inquiring minds. The first letter is written nine months after the publication of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and two months after the dramatic scene in the House of Commons in which Burke crossed from the Opposition to the Government benches and ended his long friendship and alliance with Fox. The *Reflections* had been directly inspired by an address delivered to the Revolution Society by the aged and much-respected Dissenter, Dr. Richard Price, at a celebration on 4th November 1789 of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The address was published in 1790 under the title, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*; and in it Price not unnaturally pointed to the French who were then emulating the principles of the English Revolution, and carrying them to yet more glorious extremes. There is evidence that, even before November 1789, Burke had been made uneasy by the events in France, and the proceedings of the Revolution Society (largely composed of Dissenters) formed his anxiety to a pitch which seemed to most of his contemporaries totally unjustified. The modern reader of Burke's impassioned rhetoric is inclined to forget at precisely what stage of the Revolution it was written. It was begun only a few months after Fox had hailed it as "how much the greatest event... that ever happened, in the world! and how much the best!"; at the period when Burns, Cooper, Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge all had their imaginations fired by the spectacle of an
intolerable tyranny overthrown:

Then France in wrath her giant limbs upraised
And, with the oath which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot, and said she would be free.

It has to be remembered that when Burke wrote his famous passage on the sufferings of the French Queen, she had undergone no worse indignity than her enforced journey from Versailles to the Tuileries under the escort of the Paris mob; that, when Wilson's letters were being written, the details of a constitutional monarchy were being worked out by the Constituent National Assembly, under the influence of moderates like Mirabeau and Lafayette; and that the names of Robespierre, Danton and Bonaparte had not yet become familiar to the public on either side of the Channel. The Reflections burst like a bombshell on a people who had hitherto contemplated the upheaval in France with a bland security, not unmixed with satisfaction that the nation, which had played so treacherous a part to Britain during the American War of Independence, was now reaping the whirlwind.

Pitt himself, convinced that France could be of little consequence in European affairs for some time to come, was preparing to intervene in the Turko-Russian war, and, as late as 1792, prophesied fifteen years of peace. In the House of Commons, Burke's prophecies were received with almost equal incredulity on either side of the Chamber, and his increasing intemperance in defending his views in debate lent support to the conviction that his book was the product of a diseased mind; a conviction for which there seems to have been some foundation. By the general public, however, the Reflections were enthusiastically received, and to a large proportion of people, it brought instant conviction. It is perhaps not an exaggeration
to say that the publication of the book marked the beginning of the panic-stricken reactionary movement which reached its climax in the years 1793-94 and which delayed the movement for Parliamentary reform by nearly half a century. To it may logically be ascribed responsibility for the mob which yelled "Church and King" while it sacked and burned Priestley's meeting-house and library in Birmingham.

Never was there, I suppose, a work so valuable in its kind, or that displayed powers of so extraordinary a nature / wrote Burke's friend, William Hindman in his Diary/. It is a work that may seem capable of overturning the National Assembly, and turning the stream of opinion throughout Europe. One would think, that the author of such a work, would be called to the government of his country, by the combined voice of every man in it. That shall be said of the state of things when it is remembered that the writer is a man decried, persecuted and proscribed; not being much valued, even by his own party, and by half the nation considered as little better than an ingenious madman. (9)

This, then, was the background against which Wilson's correspondence with Throckmorton begins; and through his letters it is possible to follow the events which Burke's publication had provoked - the attack on Priestley's house, the rise of Paine, the foundation of the reforming societies in the provinces, the flood of pamphlets published on both sides of the dispute. The letters themselves are rambling, discursive, disconnected and prejudiced, the overflow of an intense interest in what the writer was seeing and hearing around him; and the only rule they follow is that laid down by Wilson himself; "Heaven bless you, there are as many rules for letter-writing, as there are cures for the tooth-ache - but as I neither eat, drink, walk, talk, nor speak by rule, I do not see that I should write by it."


20 The Wandering Isländer, I, p. 50.
The true Ishmael among archæologists of that day was John Pinkerton, who seldom praised others, and of whom no one seems to have a good word to say. Neither shall I enter on his defence."

In this way Thomas Constable begins his brief notice of Pinkerton (barely a page in length) in Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents, and his verdict has not been seriously challenged by the majority of Pinkerton's contemporaries or by any later writers. Few, indeed, of the latter have bestowed much attention on Pinkerton at all; but whether this neglect is due to the range and volume of his writings or to the atrebiulous quality of his temper cannot easily be determined. His literary output does indeed wear a forbidding aspect, both in quality and in quantity, and the intending critic may well view with dismay a series of publications ranging from old Scottish poetry, through numismatology, hagiology, iconography, history and geography to petrology and orthography, with excursions into the fields of original verse and drama. If he has been overlooked by present-day writers, however, he had at least little cause to complain of neglect in his own day; and although his reputation as the current terrible of the antiquarian world (probably to some extent cultivated) may account for much of his notoriety, there can be no doubt that, by a large section of the literary public, I

Published Edinburgh 1873, I, p. 504. This work is quoted in future as Constable. Constable's father, the publisher, referred to him more simply as "that hound Pinkerton" (Ibid., I, p. 359).
he was regarded as a scholar and a man of letters of some considerable standing. Gibbon welcomed the prospect of having him as editor of his projected series of early English chronicles, and, in the draft of his Prospectus, wrote of him in terms as fair and moderate as they were warm and friendly:

The age of Herculean diligence, which could devour and digest whole libraries, is passed away; and I sat down in hopeless deponentcy till I should be able to find a person endowed with proper qualifications, and ready to employ several years of his life in assiduous labor, without any splendid prospect of emolument or fame.

The man is at length found; and I now renew the proposal in a higher tone of confidence. The name of this editor is Mr. John Pinkerton; but, as that name may provoke some resentments and revive some prejudices, it is incumbent on me, for his reputation, to explain my sentiments without reserve; and I have the satisfaction of knowing that he will not be displeased with the freedom and sincerity of a friend. The impulse of a vigorous mind urged him, at an early age, to write and to print, before his taste and judgment had attained to their maturity. His ignorance of the world, the love of paradox, and the warmth of his temper, betrayed him into some improprieties; and these juvenile follies, which candor will excuse, he is the first to condemn, and will perhaps be the last to forget...

As soon as he was informed, by Mr. Nicol the bookseller, of my wishes and choice, he advanced to meet me with the generous ardor of a volunteer, conscious of his strength, desirous of exercise, and careless of reward; we have discussed, in several conversations, every material point that relates to the general plan and arrangement of the work; and I can only complain of his excessive docility to the opinions of a man much less skilled in the subject than himself. Should it be objected that such a work will surpass the powers of a single man, and that industry is best promoted by a division of labour, I must answer, that Mr. Pinkerton seems one of the children of those heroes whose race is almost extinct; that hard assiduous study is the sole amusement of his independent leisure; that his warm inclination will be quickened by the sense of a duty resting solely on himself; and that he is now in the vigor of age and health. 2)

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2 This prospectus was printed after Gibbon's death in Lord Sheffield's collected edition of his miscellaneous prose works (London 1796), vol. II, p. 707. It is also printed in part in Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence (see note 6 below) from which this extract has been
It is perhaps fortunate that Gibbon's death, a year later, prevented his revising his first, favourable estimate of Pinkerton's character; for there can be no doubt that friendship with Pinkerton was always liable to severe strain. His correspondence reveals a score of friendships, with Lord Hales and Lord Buchan, with Sir Joseph Banks, George Chalmers, George Paton and many others, broken off rudely for the pettiest of reasons, and sometimes, as far as can be seen, for no reason at all. That he was himself aware of his faults of temper cannot be doubted. "Being a homo umbratilis, of a hypochondriaco, unsocial disposition," he described himself to the much-tried Buchan, who annotated the letter, "Homo umbratilis — se ipse dixit. It is his best apology."

It is not to be supposed that a man of Pinkerton's contemporary notoriety should have lived and died unchronicled, and we have indeed a certain amount of information concerning his life and work. Of considerable importance among contemporary accounts of him is that of John Nichols, who knew him well; it was printed originally as an obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine, and later expanded in Illustrations of Literature. Of even greater importance, however, are his letters, collected by Dawson Turner, and published after his death under the title of The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton.

3 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 276.


ton Edgar. In his preface to this book, Turner says that "the letters which form the greater part of the present volumes were selected by Mr. Pinkerton himself for the purpose of publication." Eight years later, however, in a letter to Pinkerton's son-in-law, Charles Buchanan Pearson, he gives a rather fuller version of this statement:

I should be very glad indeed to afford Mrs. Pearson any information regarding her father; but indeed I know nothing beyond what is contained in the letters I possess. I made many inquiries, as you well naturally imagine, at the time of my publication; & the result led me to believe that very little more in connection with him is in existence. I was offered a few more letters & some scraps of literary composition; but the latter so confused & disjointed as to be unintelligible; & the others of no importance. I therefore declined the purchase.

The letters in my possession are bound in 4 volumes, & are in number about 750. Of some few, very few, I have only copies. I should think, but I speak quite /word illegible/ that I printed about the half of what are in my library. Whatever is of a private nature I carefully left; & some of them are of a very private description; so much so, that it is difficult to imagine how they could have been preserved. The history of these I understand to be, that Mr. Pinkerton, finding himself under pecuniary pressures towards the end of his life, offered them to the person of whom I bought them for £200, & finally parted with them for a much smaller sum. The object with both parties was, that they should afford materials for the Biography of one of our most eminent literary characters; for such Mr. Pinkerton assuredly was. Had he lived, I can easily believe that they would have been worked up into a very interesting, & it might have been, instructive book. But, on his death, the purchaser was frightened at the idea of attempting to arrange such a mass of confusion; & so they fell into my hands. 8

6 Published London 1830; quoted hereafter as Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence.

7 Charles Buchanan Pearson (1807-81), eldest son of Hugh Nicholas Pearson, dean of Salisbury and himself rector of Knebworth, Herts., and a close friend of the first Lord Lytton. He married Harriet (or Henrietta) Pinkerton.

8 Letter dated 9th February 1833, National Library of Scotland,
That because of the letters after Turner's death is not known; he himself assumed that they would be sold, "but whether collectively, or in the form of individual letters, will depend upon my representatives." It is not impossible that Mrs. Pearson, or some other member of Pinkerton's family, may have bought them, in order that the more private letters should not fall into the hands of strangers. It is slightly regrettable, however, that Turner's discretion prevented him from including in his selection any of these intimate letters. That he printed is of great interest, but chiefly in connection with Pinkerton's profession as a historian and men of letters. Little emerges from them regarding his private life, except that can be gleaned from odd remarks; and the correspondence, which starts in December 1779, ends abruptly in January 1815, leaving the last eleven years of Pinkerton's tempestuous life in the oblivion to which Turner no doubt thought it should be consigned. The main mile-stones of his career, however, are adequately chronicled; and it may therefore be thought sufficient to give only a brief sketch of his life here.

John Pinkerton was born in Edinburgh in 1753, the son of a James Pinkerton who, having made an independence in Somersetshire as a dealer in hair ("an article, as wigs were generally worn, then much in request"), had returned to his native country in 1755.

15S. 1709, f. 153.

9 Ibid.

Little is known about James Pinkerton, but it may be assumed from Nichols (who almost certainly derived his information from Pinkerton himself) that he was of a morose and unsociable disposition. He was, Nichols tells us, a hypochondriac, like his son; and we are also told that his unexplained dislike of University education led him to keep his son at home in a sort of solitary confinement, without proper tuition, from the age of twelve until he apprenticed him to a Mr. Aytoun, a writer to the Signet, probably in 1775. James Pinkerton died in 1780, almost at the same time as Aytoun, with whom Pinkerton's apprenticeship was not yet quite completed; and, released, as it were, from a double bondage, he visited London and, "having previously contrasted a slight bibliomaniac, the extent and variety of the booksellers' catalogues are said to have proved a motive for his taking up his residence in the metropolis as a literary man, and eschewing Scots law." His way of life at this time is described in a letter to a friend, a Mr. John Young, who, since he is described as a writer, may have been a companion of Pinkerton's during his apprenticeship:

Dear Sir. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to hear from old acquaintances and you may guess of course that your letter was very agreeable to me - I thought however the letter came from Ireland till I looked at the name for you desire me to write you if I be alive or not. . . . Thy letter catechizeth me with regard to my own doings and to Tytler's Poetical remains - the remains might remain where they were for me for they afford me little pleasure. By own doings afford me still less - because

11 See letter from Pinkerton to Harvey Napier dated 23rd January 1818, British Museum Add. 132. 34,612, f. 172.

in fact I have nothing to do at all but to do nothing. However I set off next week for Cambridge to copy old Scottish 13. of curious poetry which I propose to publish - many of then capital pieces by Gavin Douglas and other old rogues with bonnets and whiskers.

With regard to that office I now enjoy I cannot conceive your meaning except you intended to affront me by supposing me a conspirator against the constitution of my country for I know of no others persons who now get offices - I should have thought you dreaming of Tully de officiis too did I not know that you are a good peaceable sort of lad enough and do not trouble your head about other peoples affairs, whether men or women - For my part I have no office but a small income of about £300 a year out of which I keep a house and a girl and two servants - Office enough in all conscience for a reasonable man! As long as I can live independent let knives and slaves have power.

Let me hear from you once a year upon All saints day, for I have great respect for the martyrology and believe me yours J. Pinkerton. By address will be as above for these 14 years if I live for I have a lease of the house; but as I have no lease of life if I dye I shall let you know where to direct for me. 13)

£300 a year must indeed have been a very comfortable income for a single man of literary tastes living in London - though perhaps it scarcely justified the pretensions which Pinkerton gave himself on the strength of it. "Your lordship will perceive I write with the freedom that one gentleman of independent fortune should use with another, when disputing about trifles," he wrote to Lord Hailes, at the end of a long and peevish letter, complaining of Hailes' criticisms of Hardymanute. At all events, by 1784 he had settled down in his house in Knightsbridge and had plunged into literary activity.


14 George Paton lived most of his life, and collected his library, on a salary of £50 a year.

15 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 33.
His poetic career had indeed started before his arrival in London, with his composition of *Craigmillar Castle*, which he sent to Beattie with a request for permission to dedicate it to him. Beattie, while thanking him for the compliment, advised him against attempting publication at that stage. "When you have kept it by you a week or two, I fancy you will not think it correct enough as yet to appear in public. Young poets are very apt to publish their pieces immediately on writing them out; but they ought always to keep them for a year, or at least for several months, and revise them from time to time," This kind advice was wasted, however, and *Craigmillar Castle* was published in 1776 with the dedication to Beattie. In London, he continued at first with original verse, and produced in 1781 a volume entitled simply *Rimes*. This was followed in the same year by *Scottish Tragic Ballads, or Hardyknight*. An Heroic Ballad, now first published complete; with the other more approved Scottish Ballads, etc. . . . to which are prefixed Two Dissertations I. On the Oral Tradition of Poetry. II On the Tragic Ballad. With

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Ibid., I, p. 2, letter dated 13th December 1775.

17

The history of *Hardyknight* is a curious one. It was first published incomplete by James Watson (Edinburgh 1719) and reprinted by Allan Ramsay in *The Evergreen* in 1724. See however S.B. Hustvedt, *Balled Criticism in Scandinavia and Great Britain during the Eighteenth Century*, Scandinavian Monographs vol. II, American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York 1916: "It is now generally conceded to have been written by Lady Wardlaw, who tricked it out in antique phraseology, and permitted it to come into circulation through her brother, Sir John Hope Bruce, whose story of the discovery of the original vellum, in an old vault at Dumbarton, received quite general credence. That it deceived the public in its own day, and for years afterward, was due to the uncertain state of general knowledge of the older language and literature, to the ripe antiquity of the subject - the defeat of a Norse invader by the Scottish hero and his sons, - and to the forcible and really poetic, though frag-
this publication, Pinkerton embarked on his career as the stormy petrel of antiquarian studies; for the second part of *Hardyknute*, instead of being cleaned from reciters of ballads in Lanarkshire as he claimed, had in fact been written by himself. As early as 1778, he had written to Dr. Percy, offering him the "needy-discovered" second part of this ballad for his then projected fourth volume of the *Reliques*, but Percy seems to have had some reservations about this discovery: "I must be no ingenious as to confess that I think the second part of Hardyknute hardly equal to the first: perhaps a further inquiry among the reciters in Lanarkshire may produce some improvements. However, with your permission, I shall certainly insert it and the other new pieces, whenever I give an additional volume." In July 1779, however, he wrote again, "I hardly foresee when [new duties and new avocations] will give room to the intentions, which some time since I hinted to you; so that I think it would be far better, if you would resume your original design of printing your second part of Hardyknute, with such other poems as have occurred to you of that kind, in a little elegant miscellany of your own." *Scottish Epic Ballads* accordingly appeared, and a few months later, "William Porden, the architect," wrote to Pinkerton's *Literary Correspondence*, I, p. 6, letter dated 25th March 1778.

Porden's character of the poem" (p. 83). In this incomplete form, it became extremely popular, was much admired by Gray and by Thomas Porden, and was frequently reprinted throughout the century.

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Tbid., I, p. 15, letter dated 2nd July 1779.

20

"William Porden (1755-1823), architect of Eaton Hall, Cheshire."
He has, however, going to be more impertinent still. I have read the tale, I read over again the second part of _Nero_ and I must inform you that I have made up my mind with respect to the author of it. I know not whether you will value a compliment paid to your genius at the expense of your literary art; but certainly that genius sheds a splendor upon some passages which betray you. "21"

The notice which the volume attracted from Ritson was less complimentary:

"Nero_ and Part I. This ballad has been substantially proved an artful and impudent forgery: but whether Mr. Breckley were the author or the sickle, is of very little consequence: the bantling is certainly malicious. There is not, I readily acknowledge, any great degree of criminality in reprinting a fine and popular ballad; even though, from a defect in judgment, or a sturdy adherence to what Dr. Johnson might call Scotch morality, you did not believe, or thought proper to deny, its true origin. But what excuse can you have for the publication of a second part, or continuation of this poetical fraud? Not ignorance surely? No; the composition must be altogether your own. Neither the lady, nor the common people of Lanarkshire [sic], from whom you pretend to have recovered most of the stanzas, will deprive you of the honour of its production. The poetry is too artificial, too contemptible; the forgery too evident. 22"

Pinkerton did not acknowledge his authorship until the publication, four years later, of _Ancient Scotch Poems_ (1786); and by that time, the character of a literary forger was so firmly attached to him that neither John Nichols, writing in 1833, nor Robert Chambers, in 1834, could persuade themselves that even the poems contained in _Ancient Scotch Poems_, transcribed from the Nairn MSS., in Cambridge, were not equally impostures. "In his correspondence he __________________

21 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 25, letter dated 5th April 1782.

22 Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 54, p. 312 (article signed "Anti-Scot").
sometimes alludes to the deceit with very admirable coolness. The forgery was one of the most audacious recorded in the annals of transcribing. Time, place, and circumstances were all minutely stated—there was no mystery," wrote Chambers of these poems of long and respectable pedigree.

To give individual accounts of all the various books which Pinkerton produced during the next twenty years would far exceed the scope of this introduction; in my case, the more valuable of them have been superseded by later scholars and the others would hardly repay detailed examination. It is necessary, however, to mention one or two of them a little more fully, since they are useful in any attempt to trace the course of his career; and the first which should be considered in this connection is his Essay on Medals, which gained him an introduction to Horace Walpole, and began the friendship between them which ended only with Walpole's death. No more unlikely friendship could be imagined. Pinkerton's laborious intellect would appear at first sight to be as much opposed to Walpole's lighter and more dilettante approach to literature, as his acrid and tortuous temperament was alien to Walpole's more genial nature, and indeed it is obvious from their correspondence that the bond between

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then was often much strained.

I greatly admire your penetration, and read with wonder your clear discovery of the kingdom of Strathclyde [wrote Walpole, of Pinkerton's Inquiry into the History of Scotland, etc.]; but, though I bow to you, as I would to the founder of an empire, I confess I do not care a straw about your subjects, with whom I am no more acquainted than with the ancient inhabitants of Ceylon. Your origin of the Picts is most able; but then I cannot remember them with any precise discrimination from any other Hyperborean nation; and all the barbarous names at the end of the first volume, and the gibberish in the Appendix, was to me as unintelligible as if I repeated the Ascadabra. . . . 25)

Such remarks clearly much affronted Pinkerton, as may be deduced from Walpole's next two letters of retraction and apology, in the second of which he makes most honourable amends:

It is my true opinion that your understanding is one of the strongest, most racy, and clearest I ever knew; and, as I hold my own to be of a very inferior kind, and know it to be incapable of sound, deep application, I should have been very foolish, if I had attempted to sneer at you or your pursuits. 29)

Such expressions perhaps partly explain the friendship; although it may still be thought strange that Walpole's admiration for Pinkerton's intellect should have been strong enough to enable him to support for more than ten years his touchiness, his self-assertiveness and his frequent demands for assistance.

Almost all Pinkerton's most important works were produced within ten years of his settling in London, and his output during these years is indeed impressive. But while these works greatly increased his scholarly reputation, the majority of them also embroiled him in

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one way or another in fresh controversy. In his *Letters of Literature* (1785), he attacked with all the assurance of youth many established classical and modern authors, including Virgil, and followed this up by propounding a scheme for the improvement of English orthography by forming plurals with a’s rather than with e’s. The book was produced under the pseudonym of Robert Heron, Heron having been his mother’s maiden name; but unfortunately the ill-effects of the work were felt by another young writer named Robert Heron, who claimed, perhaps with justification, that his career had been irreparably damaged by the review which the book received. This was followed by *Antient Scotish Poets*, one of his most valuable contributions to scholarship; but here he alienated many of his former friends.

27 Of. Cooper’s lines on *Letters of Literature*, quoted by Nichols in *Illustrations of Literature*, VIII, p. 99:

The Genius of the Augustan age
His head among Time’s ruins rear’d,
And, bursting with heroic rage,
Then literary Heron appeared,

"Thou hast," he cried, "like him of old,
Who set the Ephesian dome on fire,
By being scandalously bold,
Attain’d the mark of thy desire.

"And for traducing Virgil’s name,
Shall share his merited reward,
A perpetuity of fame,
That rots, and stinks, and is abhor’d."

28 *Antient Scotish Poets*, never before in print. But now published from the MS. Collections of Sir Richard Maitland, of Lethington, Knight, Lord Privy Seal of Scotland, and a Senator of the College of Justice. Containing pieces written from about 1420 till 1506, with large notes, and a Glossary. Prefixed are an Essay on the origin of Scotish Poetry. A list of all the Scotish Poets, with brief remarks, and an appendix, containing, among other articles, an account of the contents of the *Maitland and Barnatyne* 1st, 2 vols., London 1708.
and supporters by his strictures on the Old Testament. "It surprised me not a little to see you, in your Essay, declare war against the Old Testament, but that you say will do little harm; for it is plain that you have not studied the subject sufficiently...", wrote Lord Hailes. "I have only to beg that, in your future publications, my name may not be mentioned as a correspondent of yours; at least, while you can perceive no difference between Jehovah and the Deities of barbarous nations; or between the religion of the Jews and that of the Hottentots." His _Enquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the Reign of Malcolm III_, in which he developed the theory, first introduced in his _Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths_, of the congenital inferiority of the Celtic peoples, aroused a positive storm of indignation both in Scotland and in England, not without reason. Ritson, who, in his earlier controversy with Pinkerton over _Hardyknute_, had signed himself "Anti-Scot", this time took the field on the side of the Highlanders:

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Pinkerton's _Literary Correspondence_, I, p. 107, letter dated 23rd December 1755. See also Percy's letters to Pinkerton of 23rd March 1789 and 16th January 1788 (Ibid., I, pp. 117 and 176), and Dampier's letter to Thorletto of 27th March 1788 (no. IV), note 2.

—in _Enquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the reign of Malcolm III or the year 1039_, London 1789. It is this to which Thorletto refers in the following letters as Pinkerton's "Introduction to the Scottish History." A second 2-volume edition, with corrections and additions, incorporating the _Dissertation_ (see note 31 infra), was published in Edinburgh in 1814.

_Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths_, London 1787. See also letter no. II from Dr. Jamieson to Thorletto, dated 12th October 1787, note 4.
To suppose a particular people, who, in genius and virtue, are inferior to none upon earth, intended by nature "as a nodal race between beasts and men," and seriously propose methods "to get rid of the breed", argues a being of "a nodal race" between devil and man. The author has been thought to be possessed with an incubus; he would seem also to have been engendered by one. 32)

Pinkerton's labours, however, while adding considerably to his reputation, appear to have done little to augment his income. He did not remain at his house in Knightsbridge for the fourteen years he had expected; it will be observed that all save the first and the last of his letters to Thorkelin were written from an address in Kentish Town, to which he appears to have moved in late 1789. It is possible that this move was made for reasons of economy. In 1783, he applied to Walpole for help in obtaining an appointment at the British Museum, and Walpole in turn approached Sir Joseph Banks, one of the Trustees of the Museum. Banks, however, replied that he was "positively engaged to Sir Thorkelin, should Sir Planta resign"; but, as we have seen, Planta did not resign, and both applicants were disappointed. The following year he wrote to Despater, asking his advice on how to obtain some sinecure or annuity, but Despater was unable to help him, although he offered him such advice and comfort as were in his power to give;

I know no vendible sinecures which yield anything like nine per cent. for money. Those about St. James's hardly give five; and in Scotland I do not know of any that are avowedly vendible, except some in Mr. Dundas's disposal, which are all offices of fatigue and attendance in the attorney line. . . . Then a man can give little assistance, he is proportionately ready to give advice. To


33 See pp. 67-68 supra.
The expense of housekeeping, however moderately kept, is, I know by experience, excessive in London and worse in its neighbourhood. You are unmarried. Rather than leave Great Britain and London, the best kingdom, and the best residence for a learned man . . . I should be tempted to become a lodger and boarder in London, some where near the museum. I remember the present Professor Ferguson 34) boarding and lodging most comfortably on a first floor at 18s. per week. Our friend, Thorkelin, I presume, lives on very easy terms in London; and to a man so spiritually employed as you, bodily considerations are not of much consequence. 33)

Dushe nor, however, was obviously unaware of Pinkerton's less spiritual employments, which may well have accounted for some of his financial difficulties. Although he did not marry until 1795, he was at this time (and must have been for some years) living with a woman who is erroneously referred to in Thorkelin's letters as Mrs. Pinkerton. At least three children were born of this association, 33 the youngest, a son, in November 1791; the daughters must have been considerably older, since Pinkerton speaks, in May 1792, of sending the eldest to France for her education. He may have done this as a consequence of his ending his relationship with her mother, which he must have done at about this time; for in 1793 he married

34 Possibly Professor Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), formerly professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University, and, in 1789, professor of mathematics.

35 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 239, letter dated 25th November 1789.

33 See letter no. XVII from Pinkerton to Thorkelin, dated 29th November 1791: "Mrs. Pinkerton has made me a present of a fine little boy."

37 See letters XXII and XXIV from Pinkerton to Thorkelin. Nothing is known of what became of these children in later life.
Henrietta Burgess, sister of the future Bishop of Salisbury. He described this step in a letter to Buchan as being due to "domestic disquiet, which have forced me to change my former mode of life, and to enter into the holy state of matrimony." A year later he wrote again to Buchan to tell him that "my health and spirits, thank Heaven, have never in my life been so good as within these two years, and my finances increase with what little reputation I can pretend to; nor has my marriage to a quiet, good wife, with some money, been without its share in contributing to my health and finances." By 1802, however, the couple were already living apart, although still on friendly terms, and this arrangement continued until at least 1805, when Mrs. Pinkerton living at Odihna, Hants, where her father was a tradesman, and Pinkerton inhabiting bachelor's quarters in London. The marriage eventually ended in a divorce, the reasons for which are described by Pinkerton several years later in a letter to Macvey

33 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 354, letter dated 23rd September 1793.


40 See Pinkerton's letter to his wife dated 7th October 1805:
"Dear Henrietta, I am very glad that you are so good a mother and so fond of our dear children whom I beg you to kiss me again and again. At present every day is precious till the printers be set a going and I have two new editions and a new work all in the press at once. The pay to my amanuensis runs on and I know not how to escape to Odihna. Be assured that I shall take the first opportunity."

"You are a giddy goose and should read my letters before you answer them. There are all my keys you gypsy? The small key of the inner cabinet and the two keys of the mineral cabinets? Tell me at once if they be lost that I may employ a smith. Write directly on this for the cabinets are nothing without keys. I suppose they were all in my secretary." (National Library of Scotland, MS. 1709, f. 104).
Such a topic leads to confession and I beg you still contrive to inform Mr. Brandtate bookmaker Brown’s Square that whoever told him that I was not married to the lady I introduced to his family was a lying and malicious scoundrel. We were married according to her church that of England though she, her father, mother, and uncle (who is rich) knew well and long that the divorce begun by my first wife on account of my infidelity was not completed. I regarded this divorce as an insult after a separation of ten years on account of her bad temper and a still worse sister (an old maid who must forsooth live in my house and at my expense to please madam and make a domestic hall) so in wrath married another bitch of the modern hot-bed race quite unfit for the society of men of sense or spirit. That divorce was begun and completed for what I know at the expense of her brother Bishop of St. David’s that I might not interfere in the affairs of my two daughters who will be rich by housekeepers by two uncles. Now this very Bishop was the man that married me and led me to marry his sister by splendid promises never performed. So much for Christianity. A former woman I left on account of her bad conduct and drunkenness which led her to insult my friends particularly Mrs. Kerble (mother of Mrs. Siddons) by whose advice I became awake and shook off the disgraceful yoke. I have nothing on my conscience having always been the dupe and never the deceiver.

This letter sheds no very creditable light on Pinkerton’s character, and explains Dawson Turner’s guarded remark that “the irregularities of his conduct diminished the comfort of his union, and tended greatly to cause him to lose his rank in society.” It also implies

Harvey Napier (1776-1847), F.R.S., at this time Librarian to the Writers of the Signet. Later editor of the Edinburgh Review and a clerk of session.

Sarah Ward, the wife of Roger Kerble (1721-1802) whom she married in 1753, and mother of Sarah (Siddons), John, Charles and Stephen Kerble. She came herself of a theatrical family; her father was manager of a company in Birmingham.


Pinkerton’s Literary Correspondence, I, p. viii.
that his motives in entering into the marriage were at least partly financial, and it is clear that his income from now on became increasingly straitened. Constable's son, David, reported to his father in April 1812 that Pinkerton was selling part of his library; and later that year, "broke in health and annoyed by a variety of circumstances, but particularly by the embarrassed state of his pecuniary affairs, I had removed from London to Edinburgh, there to take up his residence." His first enterprise, on settling there, was to supervise the production of his play, The Heiress of Strathern, or The Rash Marriage. From his earliest years in London, he had been interested in writing for the theatre, and his correspondence with Walpole is full of allusions to earlier dramatic attempts on which he sought his friend's comments. The Heiress of Strathern, however, was the first which actually reached the stage, and it was performed in March 1813 with an epilogue written by R.P. Gillies and a cast which included Daniel Terry and Mr. and Mrs. Siddons, although Henry Siddons had previously assured Pinkerton that "it was quite beyond the capability of a company out of London. It wd. be impossible any there else to get the characters, particularly the female parts . . ." Scott had also read the

45 Constable, II, p. 111.

43 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, II, p. 403.


49 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, II, p. 403, letter dated 1st
play beforehand, and wrote to Pinkerton in warm and complimentary
terms; but to Jocama Balilie, he expressed himself with more re-
serve on the subject:

Mr. Pinkerton, the historian, has a play coming out at
Edinburgh; it is by no means bad poetry, yet I think it
will not be popular; the people come and go, and speak
very notable things in good blank verse, but there is no
very strong interest excited; the plot also is disagree-
able, and liable to the objections (though in a less degree)
which have been urged against the mysterious mother; it
is to be acted on Wednesday; I will let you know its fate.
P. with whom I am in good habits, showed the k3., but I
referred him, with such praise as I could conscientiously
bestow, to the players and the public. I don't know why
one should take the task of devising a man's play out of
the hands of the proper tribunal. 50)

The play, however, never achieved the dignity of a second performance;
it was hissed off the boards on the first night, although Siddons

December 1812.

49 My dear Sir, I return your manuscript which I have perused twice
with great pleasure. It contains that every person would have ex-
pected from the author, an accurate and interesting description of
the manners of the times when his plot is laid; & also that I at
least could have further expected (as being intimately acquainted
with your early poetical efforts) much beautiful & appropriate poet-
icalliction . . . If the piece should ever be brought on the
stage abbreviation would be probably recommended; which might be
easily managed as some of the earlier scenes however interesting
in themselves add nothing to the progress of the action. It strikes
me also that as the fatal discovery determines the sentimental in-
terest of the play and leaves no outlet of happiness for the lovers
the audience might feel the succeeding scenes though full of bustle
& interest of action rather misplaced. These my dear Sir are faults
(if faults they be) which will never strike the reader who goes over
the play with attention but are merely calculated I should think to
exharrays the representation. On this subject however some person
of good poetical taste & experienced in theatrical matters would be
the surest critic for they acquire by observation a degree of test
which cannot be supplied by anything but experience . . . " (National
Library of Scotland, MS. 1709, p. 140; letter dated "Castle Street
15 January 1813/4").

50 Lockhart's Life of Scott, London 1895, p. 236.
assured the author that "no possible exertion was spared on the part of the performers. Several poetical passages were most highly applauded; but, when the audience discovered the circumstance of the brother and sister, they grew outrageous, and would hardly suffer Mr. Tarry to conclude the play." After this disappointment, Pinkerton departed to the country, to soothe his wounded feelings by a series of lengthy visits to his friends and acquaintances; he wrote to Blackwood in July 1813 from Despster's house at Lunnichen, telling him proudly that he had passed "near a month at Lord Leven's, Lord Kelly's, Lord Ruthven's, &c. &c. I was also kindly pressed to re-visit many places on my return, which thus becomes uncertain." It was at this time that he stayed near Fortrose with Dr. Gillies, who has left an account of the occasion in his **Memoirs of a Literary Veteran**:

"Pinto and I had differences of opinion, and arguments grounded thereon every day, yet we never quarrelled. Our mode of life in the country was regularly and pleasantly arranged. In the mornings we seldom met all, his hour of breakfast being later than mine; but usually about twelve or one o'clock, at his suggestion, the carriage was brought to the door for an excursion to pay visits, or search after antiquities and geological specimens. I often found time to compose a sonnet while my venerable mentor's

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51 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, II, p. 405, letter dated 24th March 1813.

52 National Library of Scotland, MS. 4001, f. 198. That not all his hosts felt equal pleasure at his visits is indicated by an anecdote told by Charles Rogers: "Mr. Pinkerton was, in my father's estimate, self-opinionative and unamiable. He talked much about himself and his writings, was inclined to oppose the general opinion, and would not tolerate that any theory of his own should be impugned or questioned. Said a young miss of thirteen to Mr. Despster one morning, before the antiquary joined the breakfast table, 'Grandpapa, when is Mr. Pinkerton going away?' 'Hush, my dear,' said Mr. Despster with a smile" (Leaves from my autobiography, London 1876, p. 23).
thoughts were engrossed with Roman camps, Caledonian stations, green earth, plum-pudding agate, jasper, quartz, and hornblend. Some few of these somets he thought tolerable; but I cannot refer to any one, for they have all perished.

I remember diverse pleasant afternoons spent in this manner, cheered by autumn sunshine, especially one at Finella's Castle (or rather the foundations thereof), near to Vettersoain House, where we were hospitably received by my friends Sir John and Lady Jane Stewart. My learned companion was stoutly provided with anecdotes of this eccentric lady (Finella, I mean), and sedulously pointed out to me how far the building had extended originally, and how very strong a fortress it must have been. In the same neighbourhood is a Roman camp, which, of course, engaged his especial veneration. Another ruin of a different kind (for its lofty towers were still standing) dwells on my recollection - I mean Dzigal, one of the many possessions of Lord Panmure. Here, "Finella" found less of interest than I did, because the castle happened not to figure prominently in Scottish history. No sorceress, like Finella, was remembered here, and we could only conjecture what sort of beings its inhabitants once were. At Dzigal, the most remarkable trait, in my estimation, was the remains of a large pleasure garden adjoining the walls, with terraces and such like, in which no baronial owner had taken his pleasure for at least two centuries, and in which strange to tell, perennial flowers yet sprung up and bloomed here and there, of a race belonging to that epoch when the castle was in its glory. But of all our haunts, that which best pleased my eccentric guest was the agate quarry, near the town of Montrose, where he would work with his hammer for hours together among the green earth and plum-pudding blocks; indeed, would not have come away till dusk, if I had not reminded him that dinner would be spoiled. On his departure in November, his room was lumbered by specimens, a selection from which I afterwards sent to him by a Montrose vessel.

By November 1815 he had returned to Edinburgh and renewed his application for some paid employment. Through Dempster's intervention, he tried to obtain a place in the Register House under Lord Frederick Campbell; but neither Dempster nor Campbell was able to help him. It may have been the failure of this last attempt to obtain recognition in his own country which determined him on leaving it for good; it may have been that he realised that he had outworn his welcome, since Gillies records that "when he left Edinburgh in
1814, there were but three individuals in the whole community with whom he remained on speaking terms, namely, Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Thomas Thomson, and my obscure self." Whatever the cause, he retired to Paris, where he spent the rest of his life in increasingly depressed and indigent circumstances, much afflicted by ill-health and never quite abandoning the hope of regaining his former place in the world of letters. Francis Douce, writing to Thoekelin in April 1819, tells him:

I was at Paris the year before last where I saw your old acquaintance Mr. Pinkerton who has resided there for some years past, & I suppose may be considered as a banished man. From his own account he was at one time in receipt of an ample income from the London booksellers, but he must either have deceived me, or have played his cards very badly. One cause of his ruin was an unfortunate marriage that involved him in an expensive and ruinous lawsuit. He is living in mean lodgings, and exists partly by clearing scarce books on the Parisian stalls, and supplying some of the London dealers in that article. 53)

Less than a year before his death, he wrote to Scott:

I hope you will excuse this intrusion upon your pursuits after so long a silence. For six melancholy years I have been confined to my chamber and often to my bed by a lingering disease supposed to be a rheumatic gout. But for some weeks the disease has become more pernicious having seized both my hands so as to render me utterly incapable of holding a book and much less a pen. A friend from Yorkshire who lives in the same hotel is so kind as to be my secretary. During this melancholy period my chief relaxation from care and anxiety has been the perusal of those enchanting novels which the world imparts to you, most of which I have read three or four times in the French translations still with the same unsatiated curiosity and pleasure.

As for any small slips which might occur to me as a critic and antiquary, they were so obscured by the surrounding beauties that they did not abide a moment in my memory, for it is the mark of our old friend Horace that where the greatest part of a poem is splendid we must not pay attention

53
Letter no. 239, dated April 30th, 1819.
to minute defects, or in a more modern instance the words of Bolingbroke in regard to Marlborough he was so great a liar that I forget his faults.

As my situation is the effect of the unavoidable calamities that attend poor human nature I hope you will permit me in the Language of Scripture to speak before I die and to whisper in your private ear that I am not only under a great bodily disease but my mind suffers from psychiatric pressure cut off as I am from all resources and imprisoned as it were in a foreign land—

I am with great respect and esteem your faithful and obedient servant J. Pinkerton. P.S. As I have the pleasure of writing to you permit me to observe that the old cross of Edinbro' mentioned in one of your Novels was re-created in Lord Somerville’s gardens near Edinbro.'

He died on the 10th March, 1826; and is now chiefly remembered by Nichol's famous description of him as "a very little and very thin old man, with a very small, sharp, yellow face, thickly pitted by the small-pox, and decked with a pair of green spectacles."

His acquaintance with Thorkelin began almost immediately after the latter's arrival in this country. Thorkelin reached London in July 1766; and on the 2nd September, he addressed the following memorable letter to Pinkerton:

As I have long wished to be acquainted with you, I won’t permit any moment, leading to the aimed point, to escape, or go in vain.

I will also accept your kindful invitation tomorrow, and render my due thanks to the Eternal Being for the restitution of your health, dear for every of your friends.

54 National Library of Scotland, MS. 3800, f. 284, letter dated 25th June and headed "Rue de Ponthieu No. 10."

55 Illustrations of Literature, V, p. 673.

56 Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 139.
Throughout his stay in England, they remained in close and constant touch, although it seems that the friendship was not totally exempt from the stresses to which any relationship with Pinkerton was apt to be subjected. "Talked in the evening with Mr. Pinkerton who began with his usual absurdities," Thorkelin notes in his diary on 5th October 1790; and the following day he records "Visited Mr. Nicol who was very polite and told me that he and his wife had been very ill... He did not mention that Mr. Pinkerton had so maliciously said, so that I conclude it is a lie." They managed to remain on friendly terms, however, and, as will be seen from the following letters, wrote frequently to each other during the first year after Thorkelin's return to Copenhagen. Dawson Turner's publication of Pinkerton's literary correspondence has made it possible to reconstruct the exchange of letters between them; and indeed, of all the six correspondents included in this dissertation, this is the only case in which it is possible to say with any degree of certainty that only one letter (that written by Pinkerton immediately after Thorkelin's departure from England) seems to be missing. The correspondence, like most of the others, ends abruptly in 1792, but in this case at least it is not difficult to see why. In May 1792, Dr. Lorimer wrote a cantankerous letter to Thorkelin, reproaching him for not having replied to his last communication:

I also sent you the 2d Edition of Capt. Noot's Tour, and

Diary: "talede med M. Pinkerton om anledninger, som begyndte med hans nødvendige udrimeligheder... Besøgte M. Nicol, som var meget høflig og fortalte mig, at han og hans kone havde været meget syge... I havd M. Pinkerton saa enddaabefullig havde sagt, revnede han intet, hvoraf jeg slutter, at det er Lyn..."
a Copy of the Gentleman's Magazine in which it was reviewed, by Pinkerton as I suspected; and I told Mr. Nichols that in mentioning the name of Professor Thorkelin, he had treated you unfairly; but I little thought that his expression could ever have proved prophetic! 58)

Newte's Tour in England and Scotland in 1785 by an English Gentleman (London 1783) was in fact the work of Dr. William Thomson, another of Thorkelin's friends, and was, in its first edition, perfectly innocuous. The second edition appeared in 1791, with various additions and omissions which are noted in the review in the Gentleman's Magazine to which Lorimer refers. One of these additions is the story of a silver coin of Robert the Bruce, which had been given by a gentleman in Argyleshire to Dempster and lost by him in Pool-Dew in Rossshire, but whose existence could be vouched for both by Dempster and by Thorkelin.

We cannot help wishing this anecdote in the coinage of Scotland had been better authenticated; especially as in Mr. Cardonell's accurate account of the Scottish money, we find not the most distant hint, nor does there appear room for this addition to the commonly-received legend. Perhaps it is a lucky circumstance that this unique coin is lost. *Wrote the anonymous reviewer.* .... Hume's account of the battle of Flodden is omitted, and all about the Danes and Northumbrians, and Professor Thorkelin, who, it is believed, will not show himself so communicative to this country as the civilities he received in it seemed to demand. 59)

If Thorkelin had reason to believe that this notice was the work of Pinkerton, then it is only too easy to understand why he dropped the correspondence, and since he does not seem to have written to Pinkerton after the date of Lorimer's letter, it may be assumed that Lor-

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58 Letter no. 529, dated 12th May 1792.

ner's meddlesome officiousness had achieved its object, although a long letter from Thomson of 4th July 1793 endeavoured to present the matter in a more favourable light:

That urges me, I candidly confess, to cast off the fetters of this Vice, at this Time, is, the Never-seeing Inquiries of Dr. Lorimer, concerning a Copy of Captain Neute's Tour, which, it seems, he sent to you; and for which, it seems, tho' you did not order it, he expected payment. He has been very ill, for near a twelve month, having had a stroke of the palsy, and cannot without much difficulty use a pen. I therefore undertook to write to you on that mighty subject: for tho' the Doctor is rich, and has no Children, he is very penurious 60).

The Doctor's sending the Copy of the 2d Edition of The Tour, accompanied as I find it was by something of Pinkerton's about something relating to your being kept out of the 2d. Edition, - that had been published in the first, was an act of officiousness on his part not to say of Indiscretion & Malignity. As he had quarrelled wt. Pinkerton, he wanted the breach to be continued between Pinkerton & you - But hear now, the truth of the story of your Name in one place (for in another it is yet retained wt. due respect) being out of the 2d. Edition. Dr. Lorimer was himself the Chief Cause of it . . . Dr. Lorimer importuned me to admit a great deal that he had Collected about the History of Medical Colleges in Scotland. The Size of the new quarto was settled wt. Capt. Neute & the printer. His long deductions could not be inserted without something being left out . . . 61)

Whatever the truth of the stories told by Lorimer and Thomson, however, it does not affect the remarks made by Pinkerton, and Thor- kelin had every reason to resent them. But it seems clear that Pinkerton's complaint was due to the fact that he felt that Thor- kelin was neglecting him and the other friends he had made in England, and the inference is that Thor- kelin had already stopped answering letters

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60 Compare this use of the word "penurious" with a similar usage in the obituary of another of Thor- kelin's friends, Harry Naughton: "im-mensely rich and as miserable as rich".

61 Letter no. 822.
from his English acquaintance. In this case it seems to be clear that severance of communications came from Thorkelin; and since Pinkerton obviously felt that he was not the only friend who was being treated with discourtesy, it may be assumed that he had heard that others—perhaps Wilson, or Haughton or Lorimer himself—had ceased to receive answers to their letters also. The outbreak of war, and Pinkerton's subsequent residence in France would supply additional arguments against the resumption of the correspondence by a man as cautious as Thorkelin.

Since much of Pinkerton's importance in the contemporary antiquarian world derived from his position as leader of the Gothic school in the vexed question of the origin of the Plots, it may not be irrelevant, for the proper understanding of his letters, to consider briefly the hypotheses on which this position was based. His first salvo in the dispute was fired off in his "Essay on the Origin of Scottish Poetry" in Ancient Scottish Poems, the most moderate of all his writings on the subject; and however much Pinkerton's ideas may have been revised by modern research, the present-day reader is likely to find more of value in this essay than in any other of Pinkerton's works on the subject. His chief odium here is bestowed, not without reason, on the Ossianic poems of Macpherson, rather than on the Celtic race as much. By the time the Disserta-

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and indeed the letters of Dr. Jamieson, Lord Monboddo and George Darpster.

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The degree of publicity which this acrid antiquarian dispute enjoyed among the contemporaries of the protagonists may be estimated by Scott's introduction of it into The Antiquary, Chap. vi. Jonathan Oldbuck is staunch to the teachings of "the learned Pinkerton."
tion on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths was published one year later, his ideas on the subject had been clarified and are expanded at greater length, in greater detail and with greater venom. Briefly, his theories are based on the assumption that, in ancient Europe, four great original races existed: the Celts, the most ancient inhabitants, the aborigines of Europe, "who were to the other races what the savages of America are to the European settlers there;" the Iberi of Spain and Aquitaine, who were of Moorish extraction and derived from North Africa; the Sarmatians, who originally possessed South-west Tertiary, but were expelled by the Tartars; and, finally and most important, the Scythians, who originated in ancient Persia and spread thence to the Bosphorus and over most of Europe, and who were synonymous with the people known by Pinkerton, along with Thorkelin, Dr. Jamieson and many others, as the Goths. The Scythians themselves are derived by Pinkerton from Noah through Shan, the father of Asia; and from their original empire, bounded by the Euphrates on the west and the Indus on the east, they spread across the whole of Western Europe. The Picts, or Piccs, belonged to a branch of this Scythian (or Gothic) people which settled in Scandinavia and from thence moved across to settle the British Isles from the north, starting in Orkney and Shetland. It follow-

Dissertation, chap. II, p. 17

The word "Gothic" as used by Pinkerton, Thorkelin and Dr. Jamieson, should not be confused with its use by Talpole, Gray and the disciples of 18th century Gothic revival in art and architecture. As used by the former, it has a precise ethnic significance which is quite lacking from its more general use in Gothic novels, castles, etc.

For Pinkerton's derivation of the word "Pikcs", see Dissertation.
ed logically from this that the language spoken by the Picts was a variant of the Scandinavian language, and that the language of lowland Scotland thus derived direct from the old Norse or Gothic language, and not from the Anglo-Saxon which was similarly, though separately derived.

The case for the opposition was ably sustained in this dispute by George Chalmers in his Caledonia and by Joseph Pitton in his 67 Annals of the Caledonians, Picts and Scots, who followed in the footsteps of Camden, Selden and Father Imen in believing the Picts to have been of British origin, driven from their former possessions by the Roman invasions, and returning, as the Roman empire crumbled, to reoccupy their lost territory. They were assisted in their arguments by what was the biggest obstacle in Pinkerton's way: namely, the fact which even Pinkerton could not deny, that the Scots (of an

p. 23: "The name is thus spelt to avoid the double meaning of the word Picti, or Picts, as we translate it; and in conformity with the origin of the people who were Piki or Peukini ... and the name of their country in Norway, which in the Scandinavian and Icelandic histories, &c., is called Pika, pronounced and spelt Vike, for they have no P, and pronounce P as V ... (pp. 178-79) The Saxons found the sound of P and V so similar, that they actually adopted the Roman letter P to express V, and V, a modification of V. Thus on the coins of William I and II of England Pile is rile; and the name occurs in the earliest Saxon coins and MSS. and in the printed Saxon of this day, as all know. ... The physical reason of the Northern nations using V for P, or pronouncing P as V, may be that the cold contracts their organs, for V is only a less open pronunciation of P." Pinkerton was obviously unaware of the distinction between a Roman P and the Runic wynn which, as he himself points out, was commonly used in the Old English type fonts of the eighteenth century.

67 George Chalmers, Caledonia; or, an Account, Historical and topographical, of North Britain; from the most ancient to the present times; with a dictionary of places, chronographical and philological. 3 vols., London 1807-24. Joseph Pitton, Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots; and of Strathclyde, Cumberland, Galloway, and Murray, Edinburgh 1823.
in inferior 'Irish' Celtic race') had at some stage overcome the Picts (of
the great and victorious Gothic race); and consequently, the basic
improbability that the Gothic language of the Picts should have sur-
vived in Scotland as opposed to the Celtic language. This diffi-
culty is summarized by Scott in his review of Ritson's Annals in the
Quarterly Review of July 1829:

This general belief, however encumbered with difficulties, is
a deathblow to the hypothesis of Pinkerton, called the Gothic
system. Let us grant to the upholders of that belief that
the Picts had come into this country from Scandinavia -
Let us pass over the improbability that, though possessed
of the various aliases of Peukini, Pechter, Peuchter, and
Pechter, they veiled themselves for two centuries under the
British epithet of Caledonians, or woodmen - that, in or
about the year 200, they reassumed their proper denomination
of Picts, and were distinguished, as Pinkerton insists a
Gothic people must have been, by conduct and courage, over
the inferior Celtic tribes - granting, we say, these improb-
able circumstances, how is it possible, that possessing an
infinite superiority in arts and arms over the Scots, ad-
mitted to have been genuine Celts from Ireland, they should
have yet succumbed so absolutely under the latter people,
that the Pictish dynasty was destroyed, their name and lan-
ding abolished, and their country seized upon by a people
unworthy, according to the leading principle of this sys-
tem, to loose the very latches of their brogues, if they happen-
ed to wear such integuments? That the Celts inhabiting a
much more limited country, should have been victorious, and
so completely victorious, over the mighty Goths, must remain
an insoluble difficulty to the supporters of a system which
assumes the superiority of the latter over the former as its
very groundstone. 68)

The dispute is thus resolved by Scott in favour of the school of
both Chalmers and Ritson, although he admits the possibility that
the Picts may at some time have come into contact with the Norse-
men, and thus

may have transferred to their own language a considerable
portion of that of the worshipers of Odin. Then, upon

68
Quarterly Review, Vol. XII, No. LXXI, p. 152; reprinted in Scott's
Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XX, Edinburgh 1835.
the retreat of the Romans, the Vecturiones, or southern Picts, broke into Lothian and Northumberland, they were not long ere they encountered with Saxons and Danes, and from then their language might receive another stock of Saxon and Danish phraseology; and, already prepared to borrow from that source, they might again assimilate their original Celtic more nearly to a Gothic dialect. I verily believe that, entering the language of the Picts to be radically Celtic, these repeated collisions and communications between them and tribes of Gothic descent, was sufficient to give it such a tinge of the Teutonic as will fully account for the Scottish words which appear to have been directly derived from the Hano-Gothic, Sulo-Gothic, Icelandic, or other dialects of the Gothic tongue, without passing through the Anglo-Saxon medium. 69)

If any apology is needed for developing Pinkerton's outmoded theories at such length, it must be grounded in the fact that they were in such general currency at the time when he wrote. The degree of influence which they exerted over the work of Pinkerton's contemporaries can perhaps best be seen in Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary, a work very much influenced by the ideas of both Thorke- lin and Pinkerton, in which may be seen "a desire to derive words and synonyms from the Icelandic, the Sulo-Gothic, and other more remote sources, which, if system had not been in the way, the venerable lexicographer might have found at his own door in the Anglo-Saxon."

The hypothesis on which Pinkerton's system was based was not original either in Great Britain or in Scandinavia. The idea of the migration of the Scythian tribes from Asia to Scandinavia was first popularized by Snorre Sturlason in Heimskringla and was elaborated by Kallet and Percy in Northern Antiquities. To what extent Thorke lin was a convert of Pinkerton's, however, must remain uncertain. It

69 Ibid., pp. 157-53.

70 Ibid., p. 146.
is clear from his letter of 18th September 1787 (see Letter no. I, note 1) that he had read either Pinkerton's "Essay on the Origin of Scottish Poetry" or his Dissertation before he set forth on his travels to the Highlands and islands of Scotland with Dempster and the Fisheries Commission, and it is certain that before he ever set foot in Britain, he was acquainted with the fundamental tenets of the Gothic system. It must be presumed that he went to Scotland with a predisposition to find proof of these theories. But it also seems likely that he was genuinely struck by the number of correspondences to the Scandinavian languages which he heard in Scotland, and that in his conversation with Dr. Jamieson, which will be considered in the following essay, he was expressing his own opinions.
John Jamieson, the Scottish lexicographer, was born in Glasgow on 3rd March 1759. Thanks to the notes which he himself compiled at a time when he seems to have contemplated writing his autobiography, the principal facts of his origins and career are easily accessible, and it is unnecessary to do more here than mention those which had particular influence on that part of his work with which we are principally concerned, his activities as an antiquary and lexicographer. He was the son of the Rev. John Jamieson, the Seceder minister of the Associate Congregation in Haymarket Street, and his mother, the daughter of a respectable Edinburgh merchant, was the granddaughter of Robert Bruce of Garlet, a Presbyterian minister who had suffered persecution for his faith during the religious troubles of the preceding century. His paternal grandfather was William Jamieson of Hill House, in West Lothian, a man of good connections and a strict Episcopalian; but this blot on the family record of dissent appears to have been concealed from his grandson, who learned of it only at a fairly advanced age from a friend, Sir Alexander Seton, who remembered William Jamieson. The shame felt by Jamieson's father on account of his own father's religious convictions may account for the change in the spelling of the family surname.

1 Efforts to trace the present whereabouts of this autobiographical skecth have proved unsavory, and it has thus been necessary to resort to the versions of it published by previous users; of these, David Donaldson's preface to his Supplement to Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary (Paisley and London 1837) is quoted in future as Donaldson, and Johnstone's preface to his abridgment (Edinburgh 1840) as Johnstone.
and it is interesting to note that, although Jamieson himself retained his father's version of it, his only surviving son reverted to the former "Jamieson''.

Jamieson's education followed fairly orthodox lines, accelerated in his case by his father's failing health and his consequent anxiety to see his only son safely established in the world. Thus he was entered in the Humanity Class of Glasgow University at the age of nine, an early age even by eighteenth century standards of schoolboy precocity. Here he studied with Professor Moor, under whom he "seems to have made progress in everything save his proper business, the Greek language'', and with Professor Muirhead, whose influence, according to Jamieson's own account, appears to have been a particularly happy one for a future lexicographer:

The Professor, . . . not satisfied with an explanation of the words of any classical passage, was most anxious to call the attention of his pupils to the peculiar force of the terms that occurred in it; particularly pointing out the shades of signification by which those terms, viewed as synonymous, differed from each other. This mode of illustration, which, at that time, I suspect, was by no means common, had a powerful influence in attracting my attention to the classical books, and even to the formation of language in general, and to it I most probably may ascribe that partiality for philological and etymological research in which I have ever since had so much pleasure. 3)

At the age of eleven he graduated to the Logic class, at fourteen he was entered as a student of theology at the Associate Presbytery of Glasgow and moved to Edinburgh, where he lived in the home of his maternal grandfather, Mr. Cleland, while he continued his studies;

2 Johnstone, p. x.

3 Ibid., p. x.
and at the early age of twenty he was licensed as a preacher by 
the Presbytery of Glasgow. Like his father, he was a member of 
the anti-burgher sect, and no offers of advancement in later life 
ever persuaded him to become reconciled to the established Church; 
but he was in no way soured or made intolerant by his rigid noncon-
formism. As a student in Edinburgh, he succumbed willingly to the 
charms of Dr. Allan Robertson, the leader of the moderate party in 
Church politics, and wrote later that "if he were to acknowledge any 
ecclesiastical leader, or call any man a master in divine matters, 
he would prefer the Principal in this character to any man he had 
ever seen; for he conducted business with so much dignity and 
sunny of manner, that those who followed seemed to be led by a 

See J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (London 1960), 
pp. 323-24: "The /Secessions/ movement soon had troubles of its 
own. In 1747 it was split in two by a violent disagreement as to 
whether it was lawful or sinful for a Seceder to take the oath re-
quired of burgesses of certain cities whereby they acknowledged 
the true religion publicly preached within the realm and authorized 
by the laws. Those who allowed the lawfulness of the oath . . . 
were excommunicated by the more intransigent party, and two eccle-
siastical bodies were organized, popularly known as the Burghers 
(Associate Synod) and Anti-Burghers (General Associate Synod). In 
spite of the schism both bodies maintained themselves and grew slow-
ly but steadily at the expense of the national Church, gathering to 
themselves many who were dissatisfied by the operation of patronage, 
or by laxity in matters of doctrine and church discipline. . . . 
At the turn of the century, both branches of the Secessions began to 
develop scruples regarding the section of the Confession of Faith 
which dealt with the duties of the civil magistrate in ecclesiasti-
cal affairs. Both set about revising their Testimonies, in order 
publicly to disavow 'compulsory and persecuting principles', and in 
both there were conservatives rendering this difficult. Then the 
New Light prevailed (in 1789 among the Burghers, in 1808 among the 
Anti-Burghers) 'Auld Licht' remants hived off from both maintain-
ing the traditional positions. The 'Auld Licht' Burghers gravita-
ted towards the Church of Scotland which they joined in 1839. The 
'Auld Licht' Anti-Burghers or Constitutionalists continued as the 
Original Secession Church. . . . On the other hand the New Lichts 
drew nearer to one another and in 1820 united to form the United 
Secession Synod with some 200 congregations 'under its inspection.'"
silken cord."

In later life, he was to be one of the most ardent advocates of union between the New Lights of the Burglar and Anti-Burglar sects, and worked unceasingly to make the reconciliation of 1820 possible. As a young minister, he laid himself open to misconstruction by the more illiberal members of his flock by his association with Episcopalians and Catholics, and the only sect towards which he seems ever to have felt antagonism was the Unitarian movement, as represented by Dr. Priestley. On receiving his license from the Presbytery, he spent some time as an itinerant preacher, but by 1761 he was settled in his first charge as minister of the newly formed Seceder congregation in Forfar, where he was to remain for sixteen years.

His first few years there seem to have been lonely and unhappy. His stipend was meagre (£50 a year), Forfar society was narrow and uncongenial to a young man with literary ambitions, and, in spite of his own liberal outlook, he seems to have encountered a certain amount of antagonism from the ministers of the Established and Episcopalian churches. His situation was gradually rendered more comfortable, partly by his marriage to Charlotte Watson, the youngest daughter of Robert Watson of Shielhill, and partly by his chance meeting with George Dempster of Dunnichen, which opened up to him a wider and more interesting social circle. "Many a happy day," he wrote,

have I spent under the roof of this benevolent man. We walked together; we rode together; we fished together; we took an occasional ride to examine the remains of antiquity in the adjacent district; and if the weather was bad, we found intellectual employment in the library.

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Donaldson, p. 6.
often in tracing the origin of our vernacular words in the continental languages. 6)

He was also able to borrow books from Dempster, and to receive and send his letters free of charge, until Dempster retired from the House of Commons, both valuable privileges for a needy minister. He was at all times a welcome visitor at Dunnichen, where he came in contact with a circle from which his own limited means would probably otherwise have excluded him. In short, he summed up, "I would have been blind indeed had I not seen the beneficent operation of Providence in opening up my way to external respectability."

Dempster remained a firm friend to Jamieson throughout his life; and then, in October 1787 he brought a distinguished Danish guest, Professor Thorkelin, to Dunnichen to stay with him, he naturally took him to call at Jamieson's house the following day. From this encounter sprang the first *Phonological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*; and the conversation which inspired its beginnings has been recorded for us in Jamieson's autobiographical notes and thence in Johnstone's Preface:

Up to this period, Dr. Jamieson had held the common opinion, that the Scottish is not a language, and nothing more than a corrupt dialect of the English, or at least of the Anglo-Saxon. The learned Danish Professor first deceived him, — though full conviction came tardily,— and proved to his satisfaction that there are many words in our national tongue which never passed through the channel of the Anglo-Saxon, nor were ever spoken in England. Before leaving Dunnichen, Thorkelin requested the Doctor to note down for him all the singular words used in that part of the country, no matter how vulgar he might himself con-


sider then; and to give the received meaning of each.
Jardineson laughed at the request, saying, "What would you
do, Sir, with our vulgar words; they are merely corrup-
tions of English?" Thorkelin, who spoke English fluently,
replied with considerable warmth, "If that be so, Johnson,
had said co, I would have forgiven him, because of his
ignorance or prejudice; but I cannot make the same
example for you, when you speak in this contemptuous manner
of the language of your country, which is, in fact, more
ancient than the English. I have now spent four months
in Angus and Sutherland, and I have met with between three
and four hundred words purely Gothic, that were never used
in Anglo-Saxon. 8) You will admit that I am pretty well
acquainted with Gothic. I am a Goth; a native of Iceland,
the inhabitants of which are an unmixed race, who speak
the same language which their ancestors brought from Nor-
way a thousand years ago. All or most of these words
which I have noted down, are familiar to me in my native
island. If you do not find out the sense of some of the
terms which strike you as singular, send them to me; and
I am pretty certain I shall be able to explain them to you."
Jardineson, to oblige the learned stranger, forthwith purchased
a two-penny paper book, and began to write down all the re-
markable or quaint words of the district. From such small
beginnings, made more than twenty years before any part of
the work was published, arose the four large quarto vol-
umes of his Dictionary and Supplement, the complete revolu-
tion in his opinion as to the origin of the Scottish lan-
guage, and that theory of its origin which he has maintained
in the learned Dissertations which accompany his Dictionary. 9)

The linguistic theories on which Jardineson based his work are
matter now of purely antiquarian interest, and are discussed at
greater length in the introductory essay on Pinkerton, their best-

8
In example of this list may be found in Newton's Tour in England and
Scotland in 1705 by an English Gentleman (London 1783), pp. 330-61,
where Thorkelin's researches are mentioned, and specimens of his
linguistic discoveries given. The list of words printed by Newton
includes, for example, cast (a footpath or road), scot (a large chest),
baier (child), besting (with child, grand), smal (a working horse),
elde (fuel for fire), frith (an earthen or an of the sea), gay
(to walk), gart (a yard), greet (to cry) and hoot (a dry
cough). If they do not carry instant conviction concerning his
linguistic theories, they do at least testify to the limitations of
his Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.

9
Donaldson, pp. 11-12.
known exponent. They led Jamieson into many strange deductions and errors from which his natural shrewdness would otherwise probably have preserved him. But the importance of his work in making a written record of the Scottish language at that particular stage of its development can hardly be over-estimated. Increased commerce with England during the eighteenth century, both commercial and literary, had resulted in the Scottish language being increasingly relegated to the level of a provincial dialect. The labours of Hume, Robertson and Adam Smith had added much to the lustre of their country’s reputation for learning, but had done little for the preservation of its language.

No other man was more solicitous than Hume to be thoroughly English in style, or more alive to the disadvantages attendant in public life upon a mode of speech which had necessarily come to be thought provincial. He compiled a list of Scotticisms to be carefully avoided. He requested a creature like M’Alloch (or Mallet) to correct any such slips of language discoverable in his History. He advised that his nephews should be sent to Eton, chiefly to avoid the risk of contracting the Scots accent, and he mistrusted upon the Scotticisms to be found in Robertson’s Charles V. That historian himself was no less eager to catch the true English idiom, though, perhaps, neither he nor Hume was ever wholly successful in doing so.

All through the eighteenth century, to write and speak pure English was the steady aim of the party in Scotland which was the champion of “enlightenment” and the foe of “barbarism” and “superstition”. The vernacular might be left to the “bigots” and “high-flyers”, who were supposed to be destitute of what in a later age came to be called culture. Not the least interesting of Beattie’s prose writings is an anonymous little volume, published in 1787, on Scotticisms, arranged in alphabetical order, designed to correct improprieties of speech and writing. 10)

The need for a dictionary of the Scottish language had been recognized, however, and its production had been recommended by many

writers and scholars before Jamieson began his work. Johnson had suggested the task to Boswell in 1769, telling him that "Ray has made a collection of north-country words. By collecting those of your country, you will do a useful thing towards the history of the language." The project has also been urged by Dr. William Cuming of Dorchester, who wrote to the Scots antiquary, George Paton, that he had "long earnestly wish'd for the publication of a dictionary of the Scots language," and suggested that a society should be formed under the presidency of Lord Hailes to produce it. Paton welcomed the idea, and forwarded it to Percy for his approval:

Dr. Cuming of Dorchester is extremely anxious that a Dictionary of our Scots Language should be set about and that immediately as he justly observes that it is almost evanescent, this must be a labour of much time and application, which cannot be confined to the industrious collection of one Person as both learned and unlearned can offer a nite here: I heartily wish to fall in with one to arrange properly your most excellent Glossaries, intermixing these of Gardin Douglas, Ray, Md. Hailes &c &c and fairly transcribed to which may be added many local words, when thus collected. I might procure a printer to make an impression of an hundred copies to disperse properly amongst the carefull and Ingenious here in our various Shires and elsewhere for their varieties, after which the different Explanations &c might be collected and if possible the Etymologies also. I will rejoice in having your countenance in this, with that directions you would be pleased to communicate to further such a Scheme. I shall most cheerfully contribute and then once disengaged from a piece of business, which will occupy all this Summer, I will do all in my power to forward this plan under your suspicious regulations."

Cuming's and Paton's scheme, however, came to nothing; and is the


less to be regretted, in that it seems likely to have produced not so much a dictionary of the Scottish language as one of archaic and provincial terms. Then Jamieson began his work, therefore, he had a clear field, and expressed his own surprise that no one has ever attempted to rescue the language of the country from oblivion by compiling a Dictionary of it. Had this been done a century ago, it would most probably have been the means of preserving many of our literary productions, which it is to be feared are now lost, as well as the meaning of many terms now left to conjecture. Till of late, even those who pretended to write glossaries to the Scotch books which they published, generally explained the terms which almost every reader understood, and quite overlooked those that were more ancient and obscure. The Glossary to Douglas’s Virgil formed the only exception to this observation. 13)

Jamieson therefore used this glossary as the basis for his own work, but extended it far beyond the range of anything that had previously been considered possible for one man to achieve. David Donaldson, in his introduction to the Dictionary Supplement in 1837, wrote that he had “purposely passed over all words that are vulgar in form or gross in meaning, as unsuitable for a work intended as an aid to polite learning”, but Jamieson was influenced by no such scruples. "Where there I can produce no written authority," he tells Thorkelin, "I retain a word, though only in the mouth of the vulgar; because many such I find good classical words in other Northern dialects." Hosts of volunteers in all parts of the country sent him lists of regional words to add to his collection, especially after the publication of the Dictionary itself in 1808:

"The learned author, from the palace and the castle to the cottage, found devoted, and often able auxiliaries, in

13
John Jamieson, Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, Edinburgh 1808, p. 11. This work is quoted in future as Dictionary."
completing his great design... Among the Scottish nobility who assisted him we find Henry Duke of Buccleuch, who made his factors in the south collect words; Alexander Duke of Gordon; the Earl and Countess of Linton; the Earl and Countess of Holland; Sir Robert Liston, who, when he was a youth, holding the plough, had acquired a thorough acquaintance with his mother tongue; and a long list of the gentlemen of the country. But this is neither so remarkable nor so interesting as another description of his auxiliaries. He mentions a common soldier in a Scottish militia regiment, then stationed in Ireland, who sent him a list of words, in a letter displaying great talent, while at Linton House, in Teviotdale, and other places in the south, at which he frequently visited, the shepherds of the district were wont to visit with him with words. 14)

Some of these auxiliaries, however, turned out to be more embarrassing than helpful to him. In his introduction to the large two-volume Supplement which appeared in 1825, Jamieson printed a long list of acknowledgments for such assistance, including a note which reads as follows:

My list of Ayrshire and Renfrewshire words would have appeared to greater disadvantage, had it not been much increased by the spontaneous and unceasing exertions of Mr. Joseph Archibald, a native of the former county; who, although he has not enjoyed the same literary advantages with many of my coadjutors, yields to none of them in zeal for the preservation and elucidation of our native tongue. 15)

Dr. Andro Cranford, a physician and antiquary of some repute from Lochinver, has left us another version of Archibald's assistance:

But omissions and mistakes were not the only defects of Dr. Jamieson's two works. His Supplement is stained with one great sin, or error of omission. I refer to his insertion of a considerable number of words, as used in Ayrshire, which were never used there, or anywhere


15 John Jamieson, Supplement to the Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, Edinburgh 1825, p. viii. This work is quoted in future as Supplement.
else, at all; but were the nauseous fruit of a miserable fraud, on the part of a few young men, in one of the parishes of that country. The history of these mock words, I have every reason to believe, was this. — In the village of Dalry, lived a weaver, of the name of Joseph Archibald, who was one of a French class, taught by a Frenchman there. This Archibald was vain and silly; and his fellow students were mischievous. They coined many new words, chiefly from the French, and passed them off on him, that he, in his turn, might palm them off on Dr. Jamieson, as genuine old Scots ones, and, in the simplicity of his heart, and from the vanity of assisting the Doctor, in his learned labours, he (from time to time) sent the bastard term to the Doctor, as legal and true word [sic] accordingly. Strange as it may seem, the Doctor fell into this desppicable trap. The term was inserted in his Supplement, and their Collector complimented, in the preface! But they were only inserted, and only as Ayrshire words; they were left unauthenticted by any instances of their use from any books or other authority; and the Doctor, it is said, said to the individual, who had thus been made the innocent dupe of their fabrication, that they were unlike old Scots words. 16

Joseph Archibald was in fact a schoolmaster in Dalry, not a weaver, and later lived, first at Skelmorlie, Largs, and then at Greenock, where he died in great poverty. His chief claim to fame, apart from his connection with Jamieson, lies in his having presented to Sir Walter Scott the trinket of Thomas Reid, the original of Tam o’Shanter. The picture of him drawn by Crawford accords well enough with that derived from his "fan-mail" letters to Scott. But that Crawford’s story was substantially true, there can be little doubt. It is possible that some of the long list of words which he condemns are perfectly genuine, and it would obviously be impossible

16andro Crawford, An Etk to Dr. Jamieson’s Scottish Dictionary and Supplement, 1840-49, National Library of Scotland, 12. 5512-16.

17For the correspondence which passed between Archibald and Scott, see H.J.C. Grierson’s edition of The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, London 1932-37, vol. IX, passim.
at this date to verify the correctness of words which existed nearly
two hundred years ago in oral tradition only, especially as many of
them may have had a very localised currency. Others are perfectly
genuine variants of words known elsewhere in a different form. But
a considerable number of the words attacked by Crawfurd probably were
spurious, and it is likely that there were others, which he omits
from his list, which were equally so. Jamieson's openly-evoked de-
termination to include words which were in oral use only, with no
written authority, laid him open to abuses of this nature; and al-
though, when he quotes an authority, his reference is scrupulously
exact, in the very nature of things his acceptance of words in purely
localized use, from districts with which he was not personally ac-
quainted, and whose authenticity it would have been difficult for
him to check, made him particularly liable to error of this kind.

It would be churlish, however, if not unjust, to insist on the
defects of the Dictionary. That there were defects can surprise no
one who considers the task which Jamieson had set himself. Johnson's
definition of the lexicographer and his account of the obstacles
which he encountered in his own labours are forcibly expressed and
widely known. Jamieson's difficulties were no fewer; and, taking

In the matter of Archibald's "bastard terms", I have been partic-
ularly grateful for the help of Mr. David Jamieson, editor of the
Scottish National Dictionary. Crawfurd's story seems to be con-
firmed by Donaldson in his introduction to the Supplement of 1887;
"and I may here state regarding a number of very peculiar words ex-
plained by Jamieson, that they are at least questionable, and in
some cases, mere inventions. Specially so are such words as brecum-
trullis recorded as used in Ayrshire; for it is well known that
several of them were supplied to the correspondent in that district
by way of hoax. They certainly were never in general use even
among the vulgar, and they are not worthy of a place in the Dic-
tionary" (p. viii).
into account his small income; large family, the unavoidable calls made on his time by his profession and the disorganised nature of the material on which he had to work, it may be asked whether they were not in some respects greater.

Another problem, moreover, arose to confront him when he was about halfway through his task. He discovered that he was after all to have competition. The Rev. Jonathan Boucher, vicar of Epsom in Surrey, was discovered to be working on a dictionary which, so far as can be ascertained (for it was never published), would have been much more the type of work envisaged by Cumings, Paton and Percy.

At the time, however, it seemed to both men that their work would necessarily overlap, and proposals were made that one of them should buy out the other. The negotiations were described by Jamieson in a letter to Heber of 4th August 1800:

In consequence of your information, Mr. Boucher wrote to me sometime ago. I delayed answering till I should see the No. of his MS. This did not fall into my hands till a few weeks ago. He certainly discovers much erudition and ingenuity. But his plan differs from mine, in so far as it regards the Scottish language, principally in two respects. He is far more copious in his account of particular words, and in his authorities. This, I apprehend, will be an injury to the work. He gives many of our petty writers as authorities, whose names can be no honour to his page, I mean such as have inundated the world with their trash since Burns wrote. The other is, that he seems determined to refuse the use of all words that have not been printed. My Glossary, I conceive, has this circumstance especially to recommend it, that for twelve years past I have carefully collected all the old words of this kind that came in my way, especially of the Northern dialects. Many of these are already lost - several thousands, which I find good classical words in other languages, I have endeavoured to rescue from oblivion. These, I am resolved not to bury.

Robert Jamieson, who helped Boucher in his work on it, described it to Scott as an "Archaeological Dictionary" (National Library of Scotland, MS. 3875, f. 20).
The authority I have for this satisfies me far more than the use of a word by such writers as Morison, Galloway &c.

As Mr. Boucher proposed that one of us should buy the other off, although rather reluctant in this business I consented to what his friend Mr. Glegg [Bishop of Stirling] proposed, which was, that Mr. Boucher should allow me £200 for my work, incorporate both, and publish them under both our names. Mr. Boucher is unwilling to risk any money, so much at least, although it would be a very poor reciprocation. I wrote to him about ten days ago, but have not yet had an answer, and scarcely could. Mr. Glegg called again the other day, and told me Mr. B. now proposed to take the whole risk of printing on himself, and after this was paid off, to divide the profit with me, if there were any. Such is the character of Mr. B. for candour and integrity, that I would most cheerfully confide in him, if circumstances answered. But the object here is at best uncertainly known, and very distant. Now, the size of his work is much more against the sale than that of mine, which I as resolved, shall not exceed one volume - I am very sensible that the publication of two different works on the same subject will be hurtful to both. But it seems doubtful whether Mr. B.'s more powerful and extensive patronage may not be counterbalanced by the inferior size of my work. According to any idea I can have of him, in present form, it will be nearly triple the price. 39)

The offer of £200 for his manuscripts must have been a severe temptation to a father of fourteen children without private income and without patronage, and Jamieson could hardly have been blamed for succumbing to it. It is clear from this letter, however, that he felt considerable reluctance to accede to the proposal, a reluctance which was increased, no doubt, by Boucher's avowed intention of treating the Scottish language as a dialect of the English. Negotiations hung fire for some months, at the end of which Jamieson wrote again to Lieber, reporting his final decision:

I lately wrote to your friend Mr. Boucher, that by the advice of my literary friends here, I had come to the final resolution to carry on my glossary entirely by 39.

self. In this I am convinced I will eventually have most pleasure. He gave me to understand that he expected but little aid from my labours. Thus I would merely have accepted a bribe to condition it to the flames; at any rate, I must have felt very unpleasantly in consigning over my own judgment, on a literary subject — on every point, to the final sentence of another. 21)

As will be seen in Jamieson’s letters to Thorkelin, Boucher issued his prospectus shortly after the receipt of this letter, and Jamieson, goaded on by this, did the same. Whether or not he expected Thorkelin to be gratified by his statement that “this work owes its origin to a circumstance merely accidental, which it is of no consequence to the public to mention,” it is impossible to guess. At all events, Thorkelin does not seem to have taken immediate umbrage, since he obviously replied to Jamieson’s letter in which copies of the prospectus were enclosed. Jamieson was further justified in his refusal to hand over his work to Boucher by the latter’s death in 1604, with his own dictionary incomplete, and before Jamieson’s dictionary (to which he had subscribed) could reach him. Jamieson clearly believed that Boucher had tried to steal a march on him; but there does not seem to have been any justification for this conviction. Boucher appears to have behaved towards Jamieson with generosity and good feeling, and his offer of £500 for Jamieson’s work was undoubtedly a very handsome one. Posterity must be grateful that Jamieson did not accept it, for his dictionary was to remain without a rival for well over a hundred years, and is still of con-

21 Ibid., p. 109 (letter dated 29th December 1600).

22 The only copy of this prospectus I have been able to trace is that preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (E2. Eng. Lang. a. 68).
siderable literary interest.

The interest of this series of five letters needs no emphasis. It dates from the day after the meeting between Jamieson and Thorkelin, and traces the growth and development of the Dictionary from the first twopenny notebook to the final "two volumes quarto". It is unfortunate that no trace of Thorkelin's replies to Jamieson have survived, even in draft, to show what he felt at the progress of the work of which he was the "parent" or whether he were able to send Jamieson the books he needed. The correspondence stops short in September 1802, for no apparent reason, and it is interesting, possibly significant, that Thorkelin's name does not appear on Jamieson's list of subscribers, and that there is no printed acknowledgement to him by name in the Dictionary itself. It can hardly be supposed that he would have grudged the price of a work in which he had so personal an interest, and it is perhaps permissible to wonder whether Jamieson's slightly ungenerous reference to the genesis of his work in his prospectus had left Thorkelin with some feeling of resentment. It is equally possible that he had intended to subscribe to the work, but that the bombardment of Copenhagen and his own subsequent financial embarrassments in 1807, just before the Dictionary's publication, drove the matter from his mind. The tone of Jamieson's letters is cordial, but business-like. They rarely stray from the matter in hand, and there is no trace in them of the personal interest and genuine friendship which is so evident in the letters of, for example, Robert Jamieson and George Dempster.

The best-known portrait of Jamieson is that which Scott has left us, of
an excellent good man and full of mild Scottish cracks which amuse me well enough but are caviar to the young people. A little prolix and heavy is the good Dr., somewhat prosaic and accustomed to much attention on the Ban Sunday from his congregation and I hope on the six other days from his family. So he will demand full attention from all and sundry before he begins a story and once begun there is no chance of his ending. 23)

Lockhart describes him in 1819 in his professional capacity:

I went on the same day to hear Dr. Jamieson, and found him also a sensible and learned preacher. He is a very sagacious-looking person, with bright grey eyes, and a full, round face - the tones of his voice are kindly and smooth, and altogether he exhibits the very reverse of that anchoritic aspect and air which I had remarked in Dr. McCrie. 24)

His life was made much happier by his removal in 1797 to Edinburgh, where he became minister of the Nicolson Street Anti-Burgher congregation; this brought him a considerable rise in salary, no unimportant consideration to a man with fourteen children to provide for, and it also gave him access to libraries and to a more varied literary society. None of his later works rivalled the Dictionary in fame or success, although his editions of Barbour's Bruce and

23 Scott's Journal, p. 176-77.

24 J.G. Lockhart, Peter's Letters to his Kingsfolk, Edinburgh 1819, p. 103.

25 Alexander Lowson, in his Portrait Gallery of Forfar Notables, has left an account of how Jamieson broke the news of his impending translation to his Forfar congregation: "There is a little incident in connection with this call which deserves to be recorded. When the elders of the Forfar congregation met to consider the call, which, according to form, had been submitted to them, Mr. Jamieson made a little speech, saying that God had called him to a greater sphere of usefulness, and that, though he felt sorry to part with the people among whom he had lived so long, he felt it was his duty to respond to the call of the Lord, and to accept the position that had been offered to him. Then up rose one of Mr. Jamieson's elders - 'You need nae,' he said, 'be blatherin' a' that; if the Lord had called you to Dimsturdy Muir, it wad ha'e been lang ere you had heard Him.'"
Blind Harry's, Wallace were, when issued, both useful and respected. His historical account of the ancient Culdees of Iona, published in 1811, is now best known to most people as part of the unsellable stock which lumbered the shelves of the Ballantynes' printing house and embarrassed its proprietors. His later life was saddened by the deaths of most of his children (only one son survived him), and of his wife, and by his own poor health. His work on the Dictionary was officially recognized by his election as an Associate of the Royal Society of Literature founded by George IV, which brought him a pension of 100 guineas a year; but the society, which included Coleridge and d'Israeli among its members, expired with its founder, and Jamieson's pension disappeared with it. This was a serious loss to a man whose income never exceeded £150 a year, and who by this time had in any case retired. He wrote to Earl Spencer to ask whether anything could be done to restore the pension; and Spencer, unable to do anything with William IV, delicately offered to continue it out of his own pocket. The offer was declined by Jamieson with dignity but with sincere gratitude, and both men were left with feelings of mutual respect and satisfaction; so much so that Spencer left him a legacy of £100 a year in his will. The original pension was restored in 1833 through the agency of Earl Grey. During his last years, he toured the Border country with his angling rod, seeking relief from his bilious complaints, and visiting friends. He was one of the last of Scott's friends to see him at Abbotsford before Scott left for the final journey to the Mediterranean from which he only returned to die:

One day, if I recollect aright, in September 1830,
he and his daughters, Mrs. Lockhart and Miss Scott, called for us, urging that we should fix a day for dining with him en famille. Both Mrs. Jamieson and I tried to decline making any engagement; but Sir Walter, saying that he had come for this very purpose, added, if I could not fix a day, he would, and that his landau would be at our door at a particular hour. Observing still some demur on our part, he said that he hoped we would not object to this plan, as it was not in the slightest degree inconvenient for him; for that he had abundance of servants, and horses that had nothing to do. We saw that we could not, without hurting his feelings, make any further hesitation. On the day agreed, we went to Abbotsford. He paid us every possible attention; but I saw he was much broken up; and although he did all in his power to excite his spirits, the exertion seemed the last gleam of the setting sun... Then we were on our way home, I said to my wife, "I will never see Sir Walter again." 26

Jamieson himself died in his house in George Square on 12th July 1833, "universally regretted, esteemed and beloved for his learning, piety and social qualities, and as one of the links which connected Scottish society with the past." 27

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27 Donaldson, p. 15.
Few of Thorold's acquaintances were more influenced in their later careers by their meeting with him than was Robert Jamieson, just as few of them have been more ignored by later scholars. Neglect and lack of advancement embittered him during his lifetime, and barely thirty years after his death, Thomas Constable, in compiling his short sketch of him, complained of the slenderness of the material available for biographical consideration. Of the six correspondents whose letters are included in this dissertation, he is (with the exception of Charles Henry Wilson) probably the least well-known today. The few short biographical notices of him that are to be found in reference books are full of inaccuracies; and, slender though the biographical material may be, so many of them could so easily have been corrected by reference to available information, and particularly to his own surviving letters, that the errors can only be explained by lack of interest. In this connection it is ironical to consider the comparatively well-documented life of a man like Pinkerton, especially in view of the relative value of Pinkerton's and Jamieson's contributions to scholarship. Well might Jamieson have complained with Juvenal and Johnson that "slow rises worth, by poverty deprest."

In these circumstances, therefore, it may not be inappropriate

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1 Constable, I, pp. 505-17.
2 Johnson's London, 1. 176.
to sketch here the course of Jamieson's career, so far as it is possible to trace it. His date of birth is given in the Dictionary of National Biography as "1780?", and this has been accepted by most later writers. It is clear, however, that he must have been born in 1772, and that he was a native of Moray, possibly of Elgin. It is obvious that his parents were poor, and his method of speaking of his mother implies that she was not a woman of any education. Of his father, nothing is known, and Jamieson never refers to him. It is permissible to conjecture either that he died while his son was still young, or that Jamieson may have been illegitimate. Either explanation would fit the circumstances of Jamieson's being obliged from the age of 15 to scramble for a subsistence "in a state of anxious uncertainty and painful dependence." The latter explanation might account for the undertones of resentment which are discernible in so many of Jamieson's letters. That he did between the ages of 15 and 18 he does not relate; but in 1790 he entered the University of Aberdeen (King's College), and must have graduated.

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3 See his letter to Scott of 19th October 1804 (National Library of Scotland, MS. 3975, f. 21): "After having been driven about in the world, from the age of 15, at which I left my native cottage in Morayshire, till the age of 32..." This is confirmed by his letter to Thorkelin of 1st June 1806 (no. XXVIII) in which he speaks of himself as being 34.

4 See his letter to Constable (Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 672) of 7th June 1803: "You will oblige me very much by writing to Mr. Isaac Forsyth, Bookseller in Elgin, and authorizing him to pay my poor old mother in Westfield for me, the sum of 10s sterling. He can give the money to Mr. Buchan, the Episcopal Clergyman in Elgin, who will give it to the good old woman; & let him tell her that I got it for Old Ballads, which she often thought very silly in me to be so fond of."

5 Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 3975, f. 21.
with the degree of M.A. in 1793. For his actions over the next few years, it is necessary to rely on one or two random statements made by him in later life. In the Introduction to his part of *Northern Antiquities*, he tells us that, before leaving for Riga, he spent "upwards of twelve years in England." Since he left for Riga in 1805, we may assume that he came to England directly he received his degree. Part of this twelve years appears to have been spent in Wales, but it has not proved possible to trace what he did there.

The first certain information we have as to his employment is that he was engaged as a teacher of classics at the King's School, Llan-colesfield, by Dr. David Davies in 1796 or 1797, and remained there for six years. His time there does not seem to have been entirely

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7 Illustrations of *Northern Antiquities* (see letter XXXI, note 7), p. 243.  
8 See his letter to Constable of 13th February 1801 (Nat. Lib. of Scot., Ms. 672): "... you have valued Shaw's Dictionary too high. It is worth nothing; and may be had in London for 8 or 9 shillings. I ordered it when I lived in Wales (about 5 yrs. ago), & paid 2 guineas ..." A letter from him to the Welsh scholar, William Owen Pughe (Nat. Lib. of Wales, Brysein Collection, Ms. 15222) refers to his determination to learn the Welsh language.  
9 Jamieson's name is not mentioned in the records of the King's School, Llan-colesfield, but as these begin too late to be of any use, the fact is not of importance. He refers to it himself (as do most of his acquaintance) simply as "Llan-colesfield School," but there can be little doubt that this was the school at which he was employed. The headmaster from 1790-1823 was a Dr. David Davies; and Jamieson several times refers to his employer as "the Revd. Dr. Davies". The school seems to have enjoyed a considerable reputation at this time, and it is interesting that Scott refers to it (see p. 248) as "the great seminary at Llan-colesfield, which has sent forth so many good scholars."
unhappy. In June of 1801, he wrote to Constable with some pride:

I am not so very poor; my income this half-year being fifty
& a half guineas, with board, lodging, coal, candle, attendance, etc. This, though not opulence, is comfortable for
a poor minstrel... 10)

Some years later, when he was seeking an occupation to which he could
return from Uise, he looked back almost nostalgically to the life of
a schoolmaster in England:

... In England the master of an endowed school, who is
generally a man of learning, is more respected than he could
hope to be in any other country in the world; and in Eng-
land, teachers of every kind, with the exception of the
masters of beggarly emantherous academies in and about
London, are respected and paid as they ought to be, & as
they deserve. If an English teacher is not independent,
it is his own fault; but in Scotland, a spirit of Indepen-
dence, such as a liberal education & generous habits of
thinking are likely to produce, would be the most ruinous
spirit by which a poor teacher could possibly be influenced;
and from my long residence in England, I should probably
be less disposed to humour the caprice of unreasonable
parents than I might otherwise have been. 11)

It seems to have been while he was employed at Macclesfield that the
idea of publishing a collection of ballads first occurred to him.
The origin of his interest in ballads is not known, although it
seems from his own account that he had been interested in them from
his early youth. Like Scott, he may have come in childhood upon a
volume of Percy's Reliques, and been similarly entranced. Certain-
ly he seems to have turned to them in Macclesfield to solace the
dreaminess of his employment and the loneliness of his life there.
At all events, it seems to have been in 1798 or early 1799 that he

10 Constable, I, p. 508.

11 Letter to Scott, Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 5377, f. 81, dated 6th
June, 1803.
decided to make a collection for purposes of publication, and his first step seems to have been to approach his former teacher, Prof. Garrard, of King's College. Garrard was enthusiastic about the proposal, did that he could to help Jamieson with texts personally, and, most important of all, put him in touch with one of the fountainheads of balladry at that time in Scotland, Mrs. Brown, wife of the minister of Falkland and youngest daughter of Professor Thomas Gordon, Professor of Philosophy at King's College. Mrs. Brown, to whom most Scottish collectors of the period were indebted, had been acquainted with ballads from her earliest years. Her father told Alexander Fraser Tytler of Spodehouselee how

Aunt of my children, Mrs. Parquhar, now dead, who was married to the proprietor of a small estate, near the sources of the Dee, in Deeside, a good old woman, who spent the best part of her life among flocks and herds, resided in her latter days in the town of Aberdeen. She was posses of a most tenacious memory, which retained all the songs she had heard from nurses and countrywomen in that sequestered part of the country. Being maternally fond of my children, when young, she had them much about her, and delighted them with her songs, and tales of chivalry. By youngest daughter, Mrs. Brown, at Falkland, is blest with a memory as good as her aunt, and has almost the whole of her songs by heart. 13

Dr. Robert Anderson ascribes her knowledge of the ballads to "her mother and an old maid-servant who had been long in the family..."

Mrs. Brown is fond of ballad poetry, writes verses and reads every-

12 Gilbert Gerrad (1760-1815), minister of the Scots Church in Amsterdam and appointed in 1791 Professor of Theology in King's College. His three sons were all noted explorers.

13 Quoted in Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (Kelso 1802), I, pp. clv-cv.
thing in the marvellous way. Yet her character places her above the suspicion of literary imposture; but it is wonderful how she should happen to be the depository of so many curious ballads."

Whatever the source of Mrs. Brown's knowledge, she had begun some years previously to make a MS. collection for the benefit of William Tytler; this collection she now gave to her nephew, Professor Scott of King's College, who passed it on to Jamieson in March 1799.

This collection gave Jamieson an excellent start and he wasted no time in adding to it. The following year, he made a journey to Scotland, and, on his return from Aberdeen, he met Mrs. Brown personally and obtained further ballads from her. More important still, on his way through Edinburgh, he was taken by Dr. Robert Anderson to be introduced to Walter Scott at his cottage at Lasswade. Jamieson had already known that Scott was working on a collection which promised to be very similar to his own; but it was not until this meeting that he was able to compare notes with him, and discovered to his dismay that the two collections overlapped to a very considerable extent, a circumstance largely to be ascribed to the ubiquitous labours of Mrs. Brown. In Scott, however, he found "in-

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14 Letter from Dr. Robert Anderson to Percy dated 14th September 1800, printed in Nichols' Illustrations of Literature, VII, pp. 89-90.

15 Robert Blem Scott (1770-1811), philosopher and professor, first of natural philosophy, and later of Greek, mathematics and moral philosophy, at King's College.

16 This collection is now generally known from Child's description as the Jamieson-Brown MS. Mrs. Brown later prepared another collection in which she repeated the better part of the first collection with some variants; this MS. later came into the hands of Scott and was used by him for the Border Minstrelsy.
instead of an imperious rival, ... a friend and liberal promoter.

Scott assured him that his design of confining his publication to the Border ballads would prevent their duplicating each other's work entirely; he made Jamieson a present of one or two further ballads, and sent him home to Macclesfield in a much more cheerful state of mind. It was from this meeting that Scott's long friendship and correspondence with Jamieson were to date.

The other source to be tapped was the venerable author of the Reliques; and accordingly, at Jamieson's request, Anderson and Sir Frederick Horton D'uren both wrote on his behalf to Percy to introduce the young collector, and to solicit Percy's cooperation for him. D'uren's letter described him as "a young man of great modesty and honour; in every respect of pure principles; and, from his classical knowledge and acquaintance with Northern languages, very competent to become a gleaner in that field of literature which his Lordship's labours have deservedly rendered a favourite with the public."

Anderson, more cautiously, warns Percy that

he speaks the Gaelic language, and shows a strong propensity to settle all doubtful etymologies by referring to that language. Against this practice, so fallacious and unsatisfactory, I had many objections. I objected also to his plan of editing the Old Ballads, with interpolated stanzas written by himself, whenever he considers the narrations defective, or the transitions abrupt, obscure, etc. I am in no man's additions. In other respects, he appears to have rightly estimated the duties of an editor. 19

17 Letter from Anderson to Percy of 13th September 1800, printed in Nichol's Illustrations of Literature, VII, pp. 87-89.

18 Ibid., VIII, pp. 335-33, letter from D'uren to Percy of 20th August 1800 (the printed date of "1806" is clearly a misprint).

19 Ibid., VII, 89-90, letter from Anderson to Percy of 14th Sep-
Unfortunately, Percy's nephew was then contemplating a fourth volume of the Reliques, and Percy was thus unable to lend Jamieson the Folio MS. which he had hoped to borrow. But he wrote a kind reply to Jamieson which is chiefly interesting for his justification of his own editorial methods against the attacks of Ritson and his followers:

"Till my nephew has completed his collections for the intended fourth volume, it cannot be decided whether he may not wish to insert himself the fragments you desire; but I have copied for you here that one which you particularly pointed out, as I was unwilling to disappoint your wishes and expectations altogether. By it you will see the defective and incorrect state of the old text in the ancient folio MS. and the irresistible demand on the Editor of the Reliques to attempt some of those conjectural emendations which have been blamed by one or two rigid critics, but without which the collection would not have deserved a moment's attention. 20"

At this time, according to Eden, Jamieson envisaged his publication as consisting "of Scottish poetry (of which he has been fortunate enough to collect several unpublished pieces, not only of antiquity, but of merit); of Border songs (many are still extant which have not appeared in print); and of some poetical Essays of his own... I think, in addition to his plan, he might with great propriety insert in his work some of the best ballads and ancient songs from the old Printed Collections, such as the 'Drolleries', etc., which are now become almost as scarce as MSS." Jamieson seems to have taken

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20 _Ibid._, VIII, p. 541, letter from Percy to Jamieson of 4th April, 1801.

Men's advice, for several songs of this kind were included in the final publication. For the next couple of years he continued his collection; but in 1803, for reasons which are never mentioned, he left what must have been a fairly comfortable situation at the King's School, and is next found at Ipsam, living with a friend, the Rev. Jonathan Doucher, and assisting him with the Archaeological Dictionary which Doucher never lived to complete. Whatever the understanding on which he went to Ipsam, he obviously envisaged quite a long stay, for it was there that he sent an advertisement to the Scotia Magazine, asking for contributions for his ballad collection to be sent to him at Boucher's house. But lexicography, he discovered, did not suit his temperament, and within another year, he had made yet another change, of which he told Scott in a long letter of 19th October, 1804:

To enumerate half the circumstances which have occasioned my long silence, & the delay of my projected publication, would require a narrative far exceeding the bounds of a letter, and would but ill repay your trouble in perusing it. After reading the two first volumes of your excellent work, I was so disheartened, (especially as you promised a third,) that for a considerable time I laid my papers aside altogether. The only consideration that hindered me at that time from offering my materials to you was, that the greater part of such as were not already in your possession, were either entirely my own composition, or such as I had in one way or other been employing my judgment upon; and I could not reconcile myself to the idea of appearing to so much disadvantage, by giving your readers an opportunity of comparing them with such superior compositions as yours & Mr. Leyden's. During the time that I laboured with Mr. Doucher, I found, when too late, that Archaeological Dictionary-making was of

22 See pp. 225-25 supra, and also letter no. XXVII from Dr. John Jamieson to Thorkelin.

23 It appeared in October 1803; the MS. is in the National Library of Scotland, MS. 672.
all pursuits the most inferior to every thing connected with Fancy and Taste. Indeed, a man that sets about an extensive work of that kind, should first make up his mind to never attempting any thing of a different kind afterwards. I am now returned to my old and unprofitable trade of teaching Greek & Latin, & am at present tutor to a boy who is to be a rich Brewer at Kingston-upon-Thames, where we are to spend one half of the year. ... After having been driven about in the world, from the age of 15, at which I left my native cottage in Hertfordshire, till the age of 32; struggling for a subsistence, & the mere "privilege to breathe", in a state of anxious uncertainty & painful dependence, & with a mind but ill-calculated to bear anxiety & dependence, I begin at least most earnestly to desire to be fixed in some one way or another, & to feel myself in quiet at least, by my own industry, & in the way of supporting myself in decent respectability, by the exertion of honest industry, & a proper application of such talents as it has pleased Heaven to bestow upon me. I am not now fit for business or the bustle of life; & I see no probability of my ever doing any good in Scotland, not to call upon my Countrymen for such unearned patronage as might enable me to eat the bread of Idleness; but to endeavour to persuade them to put it in my power to be equally useful to them & to myself, in the only way in which I am likely to be so. What do you think of my attempting to set up a small school, of from 10 to 20 boys, at about 35 or 40 Guineas a year, somewhere within a few miles of Edinburgh? I will be exceedingly obliged to you if you will favour me with your advice on this subject, after having consulted such of your friends as are near you ... 24)

Scott's reply to this letter does not appear to have survived, but that he did reply, and helpfully, is obvious from Jardine's next letter to him:

I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear Sir, for your very obliging letter, and for the kind interest you are pleased to take in my concerns. The M'th-shire school would be the very thing, could it be procured; but if such a thing is practicable, I must be wholly indebted to you for it; for I have no acquaintance in that quarter. Should you find it agreeable to make application to the persons concerned, you will lay me under a very great obligation; and I shall endeavour to conduct myself in such a manner in the situation, if obtained, as to justify your friendly
interference. 25)

This project, however, for reasons which are not recorded, came to nothing, and four months later, Jamieson writes to Scott to tell him that he has accepted a post as tutor in the house of a Scottish merchant in Riga—a prospect which he obviously regarded with deep forebodings:

"Do, my dear Sir, write to me immediately—And may I presume to hope that you will now and then condescend to let me hear from you during my exile—for such I cannot but consider it—it will do me good; & perhaps I may be able to pick up some German & Scandalous curiosities that may amuse you. I shall certainly have more leisure time upon my hands than I shall know well how to dispose of in such a place as Riga. Exer-

tions of Genius, (if I had Genius) I am afraid are not to be looked for. The imagination would be vigorous indeed that could soar any considerable height, while [sic] a man was groaning under all the horrors of St. Patrick's Purgatory; grilled between stoves within doors, and if he ventured out, caught in ribs of ice 23) from frost that will split a stone. 27)"

Despite all these changes of occupation, and the depression of a mind which was indeed "ill-calculated to bear anxiety & dependence", Jamieson had not totally laid aside his ballads; and his letters to Scott, besides retailing his hopes and fears for the future, also record his progress. That he had been much taken aback to discover that Scott had extended his collection to include ballads that could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as Border Raid ballads, is quite plain; and Scott has been blamed by many for infringing the bargain that had been made between Jamieson and himself.

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26 "In this a memory of Shakespeare's "thrilling region of thick-
ribbed ice" (Measure for Measure, III, 1, 114)?

27 Letter dated 30th May 1805, Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 5375, f. 77.
There is, however, a certain amount to be said in Scott's defence, as has been pointed out by W.T. Dobie, in his essay on "The Development of Scott's 'Minstrelsy'". Scott owed Jamieson no particular consideration; at the time they started work, they had not even met. Many of the ballads which were duplicated in the two collections were those contributed by Mrs. Brown, and each man had an equal right to make use of what had been freely given to him. Scott's real advantage lay in his more favourable personal circumstances, which permitted him to push his work forward with none of the anxieties and hardships which afflicted Jamieson; but again, as Dobie has pointed out, Jamieson's difficulties were not Scott's fault, and by the time the Minstrelsy was published, Scott may well have begun to wonder whether Jamieson's work would ever see the light of day. If it were never to appear, then for Scott to deprive himself of the use of several excellent romantic ballads for Jamieson's sake would be quixotic. Jamieson's own letters to Scott betray no feeling of resentment; he readily acknowledges all Scott's kindness to him (which was indeed considerable) and blames his own troubles on his "wretched fortune".

In the meantime he continued his researches, "rummaged the libraries of the Society of Antiquaries, and those of Oxford and Cambridge", and by May 1805 was able to report to Scott that the text of his ballads was all written out, and lacked only the glossary and preface. Scott offered to see the publication through the press for him; and Jamieson spent his last few months in England in supply-
ing hasty notes, introduction and glossary, the whole thing being
completed only the day before he sailed for Riga:

I have just put into the hands of Longman & Rees your MSS.
all carefully sealed up, & the transcript of my ballads.
They are in a miserable state, and no wonder - I don't
know that there is a single page of the prose which I wd.
choose to send into the world in the exact state in which
it at present is - but what can I do? It must be pub-
lished next winter, or never. Ought it to be altogether
suppressed? Look over them and see. I have doubted
much; but upon the whole, I think they may be published;
as the text is in as good a state as it is ever likely to
be in, and surely is sufficiently curious to merit publi-
cation independent of ye. notes. 29)

By the same post, he wrote to Constable, offering to guarantee him
to the extent of 200 against the risks of publishing them if he should
think this necessary; and set out the following morning with the
Mitchell family, his new employer, for Gravesend, en route for
Copenhagen and Riga.

His next letter to Scott was written after his arrival in Riga,
and describes his journey and, in particular, his meeting with Thor-
kelin in Copenhagen:

At Copenhagen I had the great good fortune to get acquainted
with Professor Thorkelin, in whom I need hardly tell you
that I met with every politeness. He received me as if I
had been his old and intimate friend. It seemed to do his
heart good to hear all about his old friends and acquaintance-
tences in Scotland & in London, & to meet with one who had
even a desire to acquire a knowledge of the literary anti-
quities of the North. As a foundation for my Northern Lib-
rary, he made me a present of the "Hiervore Saga, cum notis
Veral. Upsal. 1672;" "Verset Kamog-Zeuml. &c. &c.;" and,
what was much more to my purpose at present, an Old Edition,
(1693) recentioribus muto autior, of the "Danske Kempe
Viner," or Danish Heroic Ballads, containing no less than
200 pieces, with notes by the Editor &c. &c.) To this I

29 Letter dated 10th August 1805, Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 3375, f. 95.

30 Constable, I, p. 511.
immediately fell, tooth & nail, with most voracious appetite; and inspite of the tremendous obstructions which I everywhere met with from typographical errors, unsettled orthography, and obsolete terms, I have, by mere dint of perseverance, made my way through the greater part of the Collection. 32)

It says rash, not only for his perseverance but also for his linguistic ability, that, without much prior knowledge of the language, harpered by a badly-printed and corrupt text, as well as by the lack of such usual aids as dictionaries and grammars, he had, in the short time that had elapsed since he reached Riga (not more than two months), managed to make out enough of the ballads to be able to perceive their obvious relationship to the ballads of his own country:

... so striking, in their structure, manner, and even phraseology, in the resemblance between the Old Danish & Old Scottish Ballads, that I have not now the least doubt but yet many of our popular ditties have been virum volitantes per ora in the North of England and the South of Scotland ever since the Danes were in possession of Northumberland. This it certainly was very much in the way of the Translator & Commentator of Hallet's Northern Antiquities (Dr. Percy) to have remarked; yet I do not recollect that he has done it. I have been particularly struck with innumerable idioms & even particular expressions & combinations of words which are to be met with no where else but in the Æne Viser, & in our Ballads of the North Country. 33)

By the following May, he had completed translations of 

Fair Amy, Newen and Marstin's Daughter and Sir Oluf, and sent

31 For notes on Hevorsar Saga and Æne Viser, see letters XXVII and XXIX. The second work by Verelius, Hæmlundia ad Ranormblam Concordum Antiquum, was published in Upsala in 1675.


33 Ibid.
then to Edinburgh to be included in his book, with the long intro-
ductive letter to Scott which is printed in volume II, pp. 84-93.

The next four years were spent in Riga, acquiring languages (in
addition to the German, Danish, Swedish and Icelandic which he men-
tions to Thorkelin, he also seems to have learnt some Russian and
Lettish), writing long letters, which became increasingly querulous
in tone, as replies failed to come in with sufficient regularity to
satisfy him, and in experiencing that complaint which Sir Joseph
Banks had noted in Cook's sailors on the voyage to Australia: "the
longing for home which the physicians have gone so far as to esteem
a disease under the name of nostalgia." He seems to have been
reasonably happy with the Mitchells. He tells Scott: "I am treat-
ed with the greatest kindness by the family in which I live; the
children are amiable, and fond of me; and I may go to public places,
free of expense oftener than I wish." But he found the Riga win-
ter very trying, and seems to have suffered from continual headaches,
caused by the big stoves which were used to heat the houses. He
also occupied himself in hunting for new ballads, and an undated
letter to Scott gives an amusing account of his methods:

I went the other day on board two or 3 Swedish ships here
to inquire about street ballads. You'd. have been diverted
to hear the conversations that took place between me and the
sailors. I spoke slowly and distinctly, & desired them to
do so also. I understood every thing that they said, & I

34 See H.C. Cameron, Sir Joseph Banks, Sydney 1952, p. 36: "The word
home-sickness was not coined by Coleridge until 1798. Banks' use
of the word nostalgia //in 1770// is a very early one, earlier than
any given in the New English Dictionary." The earliest use re-
corded in the Oxford English Dictionary is 1780.

35 Letter dated 10th November 1805 (see note 32 supra).
made myself perfectly intelligible by using a selection of Danish, Dutch, Scottish in its most Gothic form, German, & Swedish. Then a word did not take in one form, I always tried it in another, till they caught my meaning, and told me how it ought to be pronounced. They said I "spoke very good Swedish; but it seemed somewhat oldish, and I seemed to have forget it a little." - I got about a dozen Swedish street ballads; among which were a beautiful & improved version of Sweet William's Ghost; a good translation of Xin and Jocelina; four curious ancient ballads of exactly the same kind with those in the Karma Viser, one having the same burden as is found with the little piece translated in Herder's Volkslieder, V.2. p. 153; and several modern pieces of considerable merit. At last the captain came on board. He spoke pretty good English. I paid the sailor well for what he gave me; and the captain told me he would bring me my pockets' full of Ballads when he returned next spring. - I can translate the Swedish old Ballads without the help of a dictionary; but they stink so of herrings that none but an antiquary or a Dutchman could touch them. 30)

Despite these occupations, however, he continued to be home-sick for Scotland; and when Scott wrote to tell him that Thomas Thomson, recently appointed Deputy Clerk Register at the Register House, Edinburgh, needed an assistant, he appears to have welcomed the idea. He did not return to Great Britain until 1809; but in September of that year, Scott wrote to Thomson:

I had yesterday a letter from Robert Jamieson who is at length arrived in London. I answered in course that I had every hope you still required his assistance & indeed from anything I have seen or heard he is the very man for the records sedulous anxious sober and skillful. His terror is somewhat querulous but one cannot have everything even in the Register Office besides he will be under your absolute control & dismissed at pleasure. I own myself much interested in this "wandering knight so fair" & hope you can open a corner for him. If he is what I believe him he will be of very great use to you indeed & supersede much personal trouble. . . . Will you let me know whether you still have room for Jamieson & to that extent a new person you think he may be able to realize Guerdon or remuneration. I think you said about £300 a year might be earned by such a person. I also wish to know when he should come down; if your general proposals

30 National Library of Scotland, Ms. 895, f. 25.
are likely I suppose the sooner the better. 37) Thomson appears to have welcomed the proposal, and Jamieson was accordingly instated at the Register House. It should be remember-
ed, if the terms of Scott's letter appear rather less than generous, that as far as we know, he had only once met Jamieson in his life;27 and the terms of many of Jamieson's letters might certainly have jus-
tified him in describing him as "somewhat querimomous". Scott has at least the distinction of being the only person known to have help-
ed Jamieson in any practical way in his ambition to be settled in Scotland.

The length of Jamieson's stay at the Register House is not known for certain, although it is probable that he remained there until 1843. Then he first went there, he at least never envisaged it as
more than a step to the appointment he really wanted, that of Keeper of the Advocates' Library. Scott, in the letter in which he told
Jamieson of the opening at the Register House, had hinted fairly clearly that he too had this in mind:

Mr. Thomson, who has been lately named deputy of the Lord Register, has great occasion of assistance from some person as well acquainted as you are with old hands and Scottish antiquities. He is a noble-minded fellow, and would strain a point to make your situation comfortable, if you would think of assisting him in his department, which is the Ancient Records and Diplomata of Scotland.

... We would, of course, keep the Library in our eye, as it must open one day. 33)

At the time of Jamieson's return from Riga, this post was held, to
the increasing dissatisfaction of the Advocates, by Alexander Manners,

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and in March 1818 he resigned on the plea that ill-health no longer made it possible for him to fulfill the duties of the post. Jamieson's hopes must have risen; but in February 1818, after giving the matter some thought, the Curators of the Library reported to the Faculty their conviction that the appointment of a successor to Hanners would be better postponed, "till some general arrangements should be devised as to the future Establishment requisite on the opening of the new Library; at all events till it should be seen that Candidates would come forward." Jamieson, on hearing of this, wrote to Scott:

"The past at the last meeting of the Advocates has considerably damped my expectations in that quarter; and if on the present occasion I fail there, I have nothing else to look forward to in life, and am now too old to launch out into the world, and begin a new course of life. . . . You and Mr. Thomson are the only gentlemen of the Faculty of whom I have any knowledge; and although I have every confidence in your kindness & zeal, & should have no doubt of success, were the most respectable members only to be attended to, I fear greatly you will have much to do."

Eventually, however, the date for the election of the new Librarian was fixed for the 5th June 1820, and Jamieson wrote again to Scott in some agitation:

I had a conversation with Mr. Thomson yesterday about the Advocates' Library, and I suppose he has told you, or will tell you, what he told me. - I wished to withdraw my name as a Candidate for the Keeper's Place, unless I had such...

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39 Hanners' original resignation was dated 17th February 1818, but was withdrawn pending the negotiation of a suitable annuity. It was tendered again and accepted by the Faculty on 10th March.

40 Minutes of the Faculty of Advocates, 22nd January 1820.

41 Letter dated 12th March 1818, Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 3869, f. 33
assurance of support from you and him, as might afford at least a probability of success. - He dissuaded me, for reasons which he will tell you. The names and letters of recommendation of all the candidates are to be laid on the table; but the Gentlemen of the Faculty will all come there with particular impressions upon their minds; and such recommendations will be little attended to. For twenty years back, I have been given to understand, that if a vacancy occurred, that place was not only the most eligible for me, but I was also the most eligible for it. The hour of trial now approaches. If you and Dr. Thomson still entertain an opinion so flattering to me, which I hope I have done nothing to forfeit, I am confident that your exertions will be made, if opportunity offers, in the way most likely to produce the desired effect. . . . It is presumed that my knowledge of language and MSS. might be particularly useful to the Gentlemen of the Faculty in many cases. - As to my literary courtesy, and disposition to oblige, if you cannot speak, I cannot. 42)

Scott does not seem to have understood properly what aspect of the matter was particularly worrying Jackson, for his reply, which is dated three weeks later, is a straightforward letter of recommendation:

I have the most sincere pleasure in giving my testimony to your personal merit and literary qualifications, which many years' friendly intercourse has perfectly authorized me to do.

I do not pretend to be a judge of your classical attainments; but I know they have been held in high estimation by those who were fully competent to estimate them; and that they are proved, by your having held, with great approbation, an important situation in the great academy at Edinburgh, which has sent forth so many good scholars.

Your researches as an Antiquary have been equally extensive and profound; and I conceive few persons, if any are now alive, possessed of such complete acquaintance with the antiquities, Language, and Literature of the North of Europe, so intimately connected with those of Great Britain. The various works edited by you on these subjects, and particularly that entitled "Northern Antiquities", will vindi-
cate that I have said in the eyes of every competent judge. Your late constant employment among our Records must necess-
arily have enlarged your knowledge of the History of Scot-

42 Letter dated 2nd February 1830, Nat. Lib. of Scot., MS. 672.
land, and qualified you peculiarly for the important and
difficult task of superintending any of our great literary
institutions. I ought to add, with reference to your
present object, that your acquaintance with general bibliog-
rophy always appeared to me extensive; that your knowledge
of modern languages has been enlarged by foreign travel and
domestic study; and that I knew no one more willing to
give assistance to others, and to communicate the knowledge
he has acquired. Without pretending to decide upon the
claims of others, I have never had any hesitation in saying,
that I thought your talents and habits perfectly qualified
you for the charge of such a Library as that of the Faculty;
and I am convinced you would discharge the office with credit
to yourself, and advantage to that important institution.

Something, perhaps, ought to be added respecting private
and personal character, on which subject I could not use too
strong expressions; but shall only say, that, from the worth
and honour which you have uniformly displayed during an ac-
quaintance of nearly twenty years, I have uniformly set the
highest value on the share you have allowed me in your
regard. 43)

Unfortunately, however, Scott either did not know, or under-
estimated the importance of the opinions of those members of the
Faculty most closely involved in the election of a new Keeper.

Since the beginning of the 18th century, when the Advocates' be-
came one of the Copyright Libraries, the volume of business which
the Keeper and his assistants were obliged to handle had multiplied
enormously, and the hours spent in the Library's service by Keepers
and his staff had proved quite inadequate to keep the Library working
properly. It is clear that Keepers' frequent absences from the Lib-
rary came high on the list of complaints made by the Curators and
members of the Faculty during his term of office; and one of the
chief reasons for the delay in appointing his successor was the nec-
essity for reconsidering the terms of the appointment in the light of
the increased amount of work necessary to bring the cataloguing up to

date, to keep the library in good working order and to handle the proposed removal of the library to its new quarters, which were then being built. In short, it had become clear to the Curators that the post could no longer be regarded as the genteel, part-time occupation which it had been considered until then; and that the salary and qualifications of the new Librarian must be in proportion to the vastly-increased amount of work which would be required of him. Harris had been paid £100 a year (and, indeed, appears for some years to have officiated without a salary at all); the new Keeper, it was agreed, should be paid £200, and a business-like list of qualifications to be looked for were drawn up. It has to be admitted that Jamieson fulfilled very few of them except those relating to age, general knowledge of literature and languages, and the qualities of zeal, diligence, activity and habits of order and regularity. Then a short list of candidates was drawn up; it was found to consist of Mr. Cochrane (a London bookseller), David Laing, Dr. David Irving and the Rev. Philip Bliss (a fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, who was actually proposed by Thomas Thomson). Bliss was strongly recommended, but Irving was finally appointed, and it may have been some slight consolation to Jamieson to know in later years that the Advocates were far from satisfied with their choice. His own feelings are not recorded, but the extent of his bitterness may perhaps be deduced from Scott's answer to a letter of reproach which Jamieson had obviously addressed to him:

Sir, I received your letter which is much in tenor and expression that I can only reply to it by declining all communication with you in future. If you have in you pretend legal claims against me for having endeavoured to serve you the law I suppose will make them effectual & to
that I refer you. For my part I know no claims you ever
had upon me except those of old acquaintance and friend-
ship from which you have very effectually released me.
I am Sir Your most obedient Servt. Walter Scott. 44)

Whatever Jamieson may have written to provoke such a reply, it does
not appear to have survived. Scott obviously sent Jamieson's letter
to Thomas Thomson, who replied:

It would not be easy for me to express to you all the pain-
ful feelings which this marvellous Epistle of Sir Jamiesons
has given me. To say the least of it, it is the production
of a very diseased mind, on which mortified vanity, & some
temporary difficulties in finance have been eating with a
frightful effect. I have done all in my power to alleviate
the latter, & then I receive certain remittances from the
Treasury which have been expected for many months past, I
shall be able to pay him up all his arrears, which now amount
to a considerable sum. This, I dare say will do more than
any thing else to lay the soul friend and to bring the patient
to his senses & recollection. - Of course, I cannot forget
the footing on which at the first, you kindly interposed to
procure for him his present employment; & nothing can be
more absolutely monstrous than his present imaginary claims
on your justice. I do not believe he will publish any
thing on the subject. If he does the consequences must be
miscellaneous to himself & to no one else. With all my dis-
just at his present conduct, I cannot help being sorry for
him. - but he must beware of indulging his spleen to the
injury of those who have been his friends - and I rather
think he has sense enough not to do so - Your answer to his
letter was the only one that could with propriety be made. 45)

44 Ibid., VII, pp. 28-29. Jamieson's reply to this letter, dated
29th October 1821 (two days after Scott's) was as follows: "Dear
Sir Walter, I am certain that you will be satisfied that I do just
what I ought to do, when I return your note, and put it in your
power to destroy a document which I am sure you are by this time
sorry should ever have existed. Before you can burn it, I shall of
have ceased to think of it; and upon looking over my letter again,
I cannot doubt but you will be sensible that it deserved a very dif-
ferent kind of answer, and that honourable men, in their transactions
with one another, can never have occasion to speak to Law. If I
stated claims, I also stated the facts upon which these claims rest-
ed. - Then you have coolly considered my letter, in all its bearings,
you will see then in a very different light" (Nat. Lib. of Scot.,
LS. 3893, f. 153).

45 Letter dated 30th October 1821, Nat. Lib. of Scot., LS.3893, f. 141.
It is not difficult, from this rather sanctimonious and repellent letter, to guess at the reasons for Jamieson's distress. Thomson's management of the finances of the Register House had always been haphazard, and eventually became so much so that he was removed from his post and became bankrupt. That the deficiencies in the cashbooks he handed over were due to inefficiency and carelessness rather than to deliberate dishonesty was never in doubt; but this would be little comfort to a man in Jamieson's position, wholly dependent on his salary, and waiting in vain for the payment of enough arrears to "amount to a considerable sum." If he knew that Thomson, on whose good offices he had relied, had actually supported one of his rivals, no doubt his bitterness was proportionately increased. It is clear that for many years he had looked forward to the Keepership as being peculiarly reserved for him with all the concentration which a lonely frustrated character can bring to bear on such an object. Thomson may have been partly correct in ascribing his subsequent outburst to "a very diseased mind." He remained at the Register House, probably because he had nowhere else to go, but his correspondence and, presumably, his friendship with Scott which had lasted for so many years ceased from this date. Nichols records that,

through the kindness of Mr. Hardins, of the British Museum, and Mr. Elvidge, secretary of the Literary Fund, Mr. Robert Jamieson was nominated by Prince Albert to be one of the Poor Brethren of the Charter House. He came from Scotland about 1843, and died at the Charter House September 4, 1844. 47)

46 See George Imlen, Memoir of Thomas Thomson, Edinburgh 1854, and Letter no. XXVI, note 5.

47 Nichols, Illustrations of Literature, VIII, p. 669.
Of his various publications, his *Popular Ballads* is the one which is best remembered today, although at the time of its publication and since it has been somewhat overshadowed by Scott's *Minstrel-.*

Viewed simply as a collection of ballads, however, it has considerable merit. Several ballads were printed there for the first time; and if Jamieson's texts were less readable than Scott's generally were, they at least have the advantage of being on the whole more reliable. He was not impeccable as an editor, but his methods reveal a concern for accuracy and for reliable sources which compares favourably with most other contemporary editors, and Child, after inspecting a MS. used by Jamieson for his publication, was able to report to Grundtvig that "Jamieson was faithful to his texts, comparatively." His *Ballads* should not be looked at in isolation, however, but as a part of an essay in comparative literature unparalleled at that time in this particular field; an essay which was admirably continued, with the help of Henry Weber, in *Northern Antiquities.* In both these works, he points to the similarity which

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There is evidence, in a letter from Henry Weber to Francis Douce, that *Northern Antiquities* was first planned, soon after Jamieson's return to Scotland, in the form of a periodical: "Dear Sir, I take the liberty of requesting your interest in a periodical publication on the subject of ancient Romance and antiquities in general, Foreign & British, which I have lately planned in conjunction with Mr. Robert Jamieson, editor of the *Popular Ballads & Songs*, who has lately returned from Riga, with a considerable stock of works on the subject of German & Northern Romance & tradition, which will enable us to render that department some what interesting. He has also made translations of some of the Danish ballads from the Kempe Vicer, (which in many cases throw great light upon the general connection of such traditional tales with those current in this island) & has also made collections of Livonian, Russian & German popular songs.
he had perceived between the Danish ballads and those of Scotland, and illustrates the close interrelations between the romance literature of Great Britain, Germany and Scandinavia. His "Albinization" of Scandinavian and German ballads and romances to prove their close connection with each other and with our own was perhaps unfortunate, for the brand of Scots dialect which he used for this purpose has certainly not commanded them to the attention of readers, then or now. It is interesting, however, that a better poet than Jægersen, faced with the same problem, found himself impelled to solve it in a similar way:

I have attempted these ballads in Scots. I have long been convinced that the Folk-poetry and the ballads of the Gemanic and the Scandinavian peoples are untranslatable into standard English without the sacrifice of all the essential flavour which makes them what they are, and which alone lures the translator on to his perilous task... It is not so easy to say why this should be so. Various explanations might be suggested but they are all more plausible than cogent. In any case why this should be so if it is so, is a matter for the linguistic experts. But it is interesting to note the explicit testimony of nearly all those who have dabbled in this field. 50)

That is to be deeply regretted is that the disappointments and frus-

But one of our principal objects is, to enrich our numbers by the communications of more eminent & experienced antiquaries, & thus to procure for that highly interesting, & at present so eagerly cultivated branch of learning such a repository as all other sciences & arts have so long enjoyed. Germany & Denmark have both to boast of able publications of the same nature, & England is certainly superior to those countries in the general interest for antiquarian lore.

"We propose to edit one number every quarter, & if we could induce gentlemen in the South to favour us with advice respecting the arrangement & conduct of the work, or transmit any communications upon whatever subject which is connected with our plan, our endeavours should not be wanting to insert whatever of a curious nature has fallen within our cognizance..." (Bodleian MS. Douce d. 22, f. 2).

50

trations of his later life should have prevented him from continuing on the path which he had so eagerly begun to explore and which he was so well qualified to prospect. As it is, his work stands as a solitary eipost, but as a pioneer in the field in which Wenz Grundtvig and F. J. Child were later to follow with their vast comparative collections of ballads, he deserves gratitude and a little fame. His own original verse contributions to Popular Ballads show him to have had a degree of poetical talent which comes, perhaps, as a surprise to those who have read his translations. And as an editor, in an age when editorial exactitude was an uncommon virtue, he stands out as a scrupulous scholar without the ceremony and the rancour which soured the work of Ritson. On the whole, we may echo the judgment of G. Neilson who, in his essay, "A Bundle of Ballads," has attempted to show from his study of the Cosde MS. of Jamieson's transcripts that

his fidelity to his sources is finely vindicated by these careful transcriptions faithfully reproduced in his book. They are of no ordinary value as registers of the seal and method of a great editor at a time when Scott was entering the charmed portal of literary invention through the gateway of the ballads, and when Jamieson himself was ruefully anticipating his departure to the 'shores of the frozen Baltic.' 51)
Manuscript.

The Laing Collection of Thorkelin's correspondence in the Library of Edinburgh University is contained in three large quarto volumes, now in a fairly advanced stage of dilapidation. The calf spines of the three volumes were originally lettered in gold with the title, Dnlsche Breve til G.J. Thorkelin, the number of the volume, and the numbers of the letters contained in it. A better idea of the appearance of the volumes in pristine condition may be obtained from inspection of the four similar volumes of Dnlske Breve preserved in the Royal Archives in Copenhagen, which have clearly had less use. On the Edinburgh volumes only two spines now remain, and the lettering on them is so rubbed as to be almost indecipherable. The same paper has been used for end-papers and fly-leaves in both the Copenhagen and the Edinburgh set; it shows a large and handsome beehive watermark, normally associated with the Dutch papermaking firm, Honig. This mark, being an attractive one, was copied by many other firms during the nineteenth century, and there are several instances of marks almost identical with this one in voorn's Pappertier of Denmark and Norway (1959). I have not, however, been able to find another exactly identical with it, and there appears to be no trace of any Scandinavian papermill by the name of SKN, which is the word inserted in the space generally used for the maker's name. It seems fairly clear from the statement by Pim Magnusson among the 1 Thorkelin papers in the Zealand Provincial Archives that the binding

1 Københavns Stiftkommission Repertitionsprotokol, litr. B, 1828-29,
of the letters was done by Thorkelin himself before his death, presumably between October 1827 (the date of the latest dated letter) and the beginning of 1829. Both in the Copenhagen and in the Edinburgh collections, the letters have been bound in rough alphabetical order, an unusual method for any man to choose unless he had reason to believe that he would receive no further letters suitable for inclusion in the collection. A glance at Appendix B, where the Laing letters are listed by number will show how very erratic this alphabetical arrangement is, and Appendix A will further reveal that no attempt has been made to put the letters into chronological order within the same divisions. Thus letter no. 9 from Mr. James Anderson dated 30th October 1700 precedes letter no. 10 from the same correspondent, dated 10th March 1733. The numbering of the letters has been done in pencil, not all at the same date, and is extraordinarily erratic. Two, or even three or more letters frequently carry the same number; many have no number at all. At one point, the numberer has skipped straight from 570 to 580, omitting all the intervening numbers, while conversely there are two series of letters numbered 493-497. Approximately eighteen letters appear to be missing altogether, not counting nos. 571-79, the absence of which is probably due to a mistake in numbering. Since none of these missing letters corresponds alphabetically with letters which are

pp. 217 ff. (2,553,33): "Etter at jeg, i folje vedkommende be- glæring, har gjennemgjort den af, call. Conferencieand Geheim-archivar og til der Thorkelin efterladt Scalling af Breve til ham m.m. inde- heftet i 6 partihund . . ." ("Having, in accordance with the relevant request, gone through the collection left by the late Councirollor State Archivist and Knight Thorkelin of letters to him, with others, bound in 6 quarto volumes . . ."). See also p. 121 supra.
known to have been abstracted from the collection by Magnusson (e.g. 2
the letter from the Rev. John Buchanan), it may perhaps be assumed
that the numbering was done after the collection came into Mag-

nusson's possession; but the entire arrangement is so haphazard
that it is difficult to be certain on this point. It has been nec-

essary, however, for ease in reference and in order to compile the
indices in Appendices A and B, to evolve some more satisfactory sys-
tem of numbering. Thus, unnumbered letters have been given the
number of the preceding letter with an asterisk, in brackets, e.g.
(655*). There two letters, both unnumbered, follow each other, the
second has been given the same number as the first with two aster-

isks, e.g. (655**). There two letters have been given the same
number; the second has had an asterisk added, without brackets.

Since, obviously, such emergency editorial numbers may not appear
on the actual MSS., the dates of letters, even where they are no more
informative than, for example, "Thursday evening", have been given
in Appendix A in order to assist identification. A large number
of the letters have become detached from the binding, and are now
loose in the volumes and subject to further confusion.

Editorial Treatment.

Contractions (with the exception of contracted titles such as
Prof. for Professor and of book titles which are given in full in a
footnote) have been expanded in square brackets, which have also
been used for all editorial interpolations or emendations. The

See Introduction, p. 122 supra.
apossand has been retained where it has been used. Spelling and punctuation have been reproduced exactly as they are given in the originals, and the authors' use of capital letters has in all cases been retained. Wherever it has been possible to trade Thor- kelin's end of the correspondence, this information has been given in the footnotes. The letters have been arranged in order of date, in accordance with the ruling of Emind Malone:

In my mind, the only rational method of printing letters, is, in chronological order, without the least relation to the persons by whom they are written, or to whom they are addressed. They thus become a kind of history. 3)

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Dear Sir

I rejoice to see from yours that you are still in this world. I was really afraid that some whale had seized you in the Hebrides and disgorged you on the coast of Denmark like another Jonah; or that some Highland witch had converted you into a broomstick and rode away upon you to dance a minuet round the flames of Hecla.

I see however that you have not visited the highlands with impunity for your information is far from accurate. You compare

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1 The text of Thorckelin's letter to Pinkerton is found in Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, I, p. 100, as follows: 'Having arrived to the county of Gætland, after a voyage through the western coast of Scotland, and great part of the Hebrides, not less tedious than lasting, I am happy in being able to pay you my duty, and renew my warmest thanks for your letters to Mr. Buchan [William Buchan, W.S. - Laing Collection no. 609], as the last proof of the best friendship. Since I left your house, the seat for hospitality and the muses, I have struggled with great hardship. Through the Hebrides, the Ushers and the second night have followed me wherever I went; now, the whole has taught me that you, in your Dissertations of the Origin of Nations, have done justice to the Goths and their posterity in the Western Highlands. This people boast of Osain and Pictish Houses: on both they look as belonging to themselves. About Osain Mr. Dampar and I have been very particular; we inquired into the secrets of Mr. Lachperton's birth. All answers proved dark, indistinct, and perfectly insufficient to make good the age and authenticity of that famous Poem. The Pictish Houses are nothing less than conical heaps of stones, built for the purpose of serving the dead in places of abode. These monuments are still frequent in Denmark, in Norway, and in Iceland; they are called Hugger. You please to see account of them in a Prefation to Sporro's History. The age of the famous vitrified castles in at length found out. One Paul Hactyre built that at Grecenesh about 1270. Will you be kind enough to tell this to our friend Mr. Lorimer? In letters from Copenhagen I am informed that the book, already the 12th of June, were taken on board for Mr. Nichols; but all later accounts I shall be glad to get from you: a letter on that subject would exceedingly oblige me. In a few days I go hence to Dunwich in Angusshire, near Porfey, from whence a tour is proposed to Glasgow and the Firth of Clyde.'
the Picts' Houses with the Hebrides and refer me to a preface in Snorro.
I have read that preface to oblige you. But who except a highlander could confound a conical castle with a tumulus? 0 fy!
You might as well compare a church with an elephant.

You also say that Paul Hestyre built the Vitrified Fort at Creech about 1270. There is your authority? Is it an inscription, a medal, or a list? Do leave that noxious poetic air; and come into the regions of accuracy and day-light.

The Danish books are safe arrived but are not yet opened up, as Mr. Nicol was busy moving into Pall Mall, and is now in France.

2 The Iron Age brochs, found principally in the N.E. of Scotland, the Orkneys and Shetlands and the Hebrides, were frequently described as Picts' Houses or Picts' Castles up to the middle of the 19th century. Thomas Pennant, however, describes them in his Tour of Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides (Chester 1772) as "the celebrated edifices attributed to the Danes." A large literature on the subject of the Brochs now exists, of which mention should particularly be made of Joseph Anderson's Scotland in Pagan Times: The Iron Age (Edinburgh 1883); J.R.C. Hamilton's essay, "Brochs and Broch Builders" in The Northern Isles, ed. F.T. Wainwright (Edinburgh 1962); and Alison Young's essay, "Brochs and Danes" in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Vol. XV (1901-62).

3 See letter no. III from Deepster to Thorkelin, note 1, for Thorkelin's account of the Down of Creech, printed in the Edinburgh Magazine.

4 George Nicol (1740-1823), bookseller to George III, "the living Nestor of the Profession", and described by J.B. Nichols as "not a bookseller, but a gentleman dealing in books." In Illustrations of Literature, VIII, p. 529, Nichols further speaks of him as "the intimate friend of John Duke of Roxburgh, who consulted him in all important affairs. . . . The King took great pleasure in the arrangements of the Royal Library, and thereby became acquainted with Mr. George Nicol, for whom he soon acquired the highest esteem, frequently condescending to employ him in confidential missions as a private friend. On the occasion of the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV, entering the Royal Navy as a midshipman, the King commissioned Mr. Nicol to purchase his outfit, saying, 'If I entrust any of my people about the Court, they will purchase finery totally unsuited to the grade my son has to fill, in the first instance,
with respectful compliments to Mr. Dampster I remain always, Dear Sir, Your's sincerely John Pinkerton.

II. From Dr. Jamieson (no. 472).

Honoured Sir,

Then I most unwillingly parted with you yesterday, I forgot to mention my design of sending out to Dunichen the introductory

Letter to Professor Anderson. I hope there will be an opportunity

according to the rules of the service; you will be kind enough, therefore, to go to Wapping, and procure an outfit such as you would provide for your own son, supposing he was about to enter as midshipman on board a Man of War. It is perhaps needless to say that Mr. Nicol performed this duty to the entire satisfaction of His Majesty. With the printer, Bulmer, Nicol was founder of the Shakespeare Press in Pall Mall; and through his second marriage with Mary Boydell, niece of John Boydell, Lord Mayor of London, he was connected with the family of Boydells, the engravers and print-sellers.

1 Professor John Anderson (1728-90) held the Chair of Natural Philosophy in the University of Glasgow from 1757. Jamieson had himself studied with him for a year, although he seems not to have felt much enthusiasm for the subject which Anderson professed. His opinion of Anderson's character is not one which the majority of his colleagues appear to have shared. David Murray, in his Memoirs of the Old College of Glasgow (Glasgow 1827), describes him as "a man of good parts, of various accomplishments, and a popular lecturer", but adds that "he was, however, impossible as a colleague; he was meddling and disputatious, obstinate and inconsiderate, and involved the University in protracted, useless and costly litigation". Sir David McVail, in his memoir of Anderson, describes Anderson, according to Murray, as "a very crotchety old man, distinguished chiefly for his quarrels with his colleagues, and as having been the author of a most absurd last will and testament" (quoted by Murray from McVail's Anderson's College: Its Founder and its Medical School, Glasgow 1879). Anderson's will may have been absurd and, indeed, impractical, for he left little money to implement its provisions for the founding of a college; but his wish for a "Ladies Course of Physical Lectures" with the intention that "the Ladies of Glasgow may have an opportunity, for a small sum, and in the early part of life, of being at several of these Courses of Lectures, by which their Education for Domestic affairs will not be interrupted, no pedantic language will be acquired, as is often the case in more advanced age, and such a stock of general knowledge will be laid in as will make them the most accomplished ladies in Europe" entitles him to be regarded as a pioneer in the field of
tomorrow. I wish the letter had been from a person of more consideration. But your name will supply the deficiencies of mine. Prof. Anderson has always appeared to me to be the most agreeable and obliging member of our Glasgow University. He has done more for it in the line of expense than all the rest. Unhappily there has been a dissension among them. But I flatter myself they will cordially unite in serving you.

Already have I entered on the task you assigned me by the

women's education as well as in that of technical education. For an account of his work and of Anderson College (which was incorporated into the University of Glasgow in 1947), see James Muir's John Anderson Pioneer of Technical Education and the College he founded, ed. James L. Innesley, Glasgow 1950. The "introductory letter" written by Jamieson survives in the Laing Collection, dated 12th October 1787 (no. 473), but there is nothing to indicate whether or not Thorkelin ever presented it.

2 The dissension to which Jamieson refers had been caused by Anderson's attempt to obtain an investigation into the way in which the University's finances were being handled by the factor, Matthew Northland. After some preliminary skirmishing, which was defeated by Principal Lecskon's support of Northland, Anderson brought an action in the Court of Session against the Professor of Divinity, a supporter of Lecskon, and others. The case was remitted to the ordinary visitors of the College; and the results of their investigations amply justified Anderson's complaints. Their decision, known as the Shaw Park Decree, provided for the reform of the abuses they discovered, but it was opposed by the Principal, and was never properly implemented. In 1778, Anderson printed the various documents arising from the case, including the decisions of the Court of Session and the Shaw Park Decree, under the title, Process of Declarator (J. Anderson) concerning the management of the Revenue of Glasgow College, in such a manner as to cast the maximum suspicion on Lecskon. In 1784 he demanded a Royal Commission to look into the continuing irregularities, but this was refused and Anderson lost his subsequent action for damages of £5,700 against the Chancellor, Rector, Visitors and Professors of the University, and was himself successfully sued for damages of £250 by Dr. Taylor, one of the Visitors of the University. Anderson's crusade is described at greater length in J.D. Mackie's The University of Glasgow 1451-1951, Glasgow 1954, pp. 206-09.
assistance of my Landlady who is a true Angusian, and have picked up a few words — but shall not trouble you with them till my vocabulary be enlarged. However I mean to try it rather on a larger scale, by not only mentioning such Scotch words as seem never to have been used in the Old English, but such Angus words as appear only to vary considerably from the English in pronunciation. By the last method you may perhaps discover that some of them are immediately derived from the Gothic, without the intervention of the Saxon.

Indeed, I cannot but look upon it as a most lucky circumstance that I have been in any degree honoured with your acquaintance — For ever since Mr Pinkerton's last Publication came to hand, my mind has been anxiously engaged in revolving his System, wishing, if

Since Jamieson was married by this time and established in his own house, this can hardly be the usual meaning of "Landlady". It is possible that he is using the word in its now obsolete sense as "housekeeper".

Properly speaking, Pinkerton's last publication was his Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths (London 1787); and, since it had been reviewed in the Edinburgh Magazine in October 1787, it is perfectly possible that it could have come into Jamieson’s hands by the date of this letter. It seems much more likely, however, that he is referring to Pinkerton's Ancient Scottish Poems . . . from the MS. Collections of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington (London 1783). This is certainly the book which he mentions in his next letter (no. V), and his manner of speaking of it there implies that he is continuing the discussion begun here. In both books, Pinkerton propounds his "Gothic System", which is discussed at greater length in pp. 205-10, and asserts his belief that lowland Scots, being derived from the language of the Picts, is a Gothic language, independent of the English language which was separately, though similarly, derived; the Picts having colonized Scotland from the north, and moved southward some 300 years before the Angles, Saxons and Jutes invaded England from the south to spread northwards. Thus, Pictish and Saxon, Scottish and English, are both equally derived from the Gothic. . . . The Pictish was the earlier Gothic, the Saxon the later; the idiom and body of the language were ever the same" (Ancient Scottish Poems, p. lxxi).
possible, to put it to the test. For if it can be proved that a great part of what is called the Broad Scotch be really Gothic or Icelandic, it nearly amounts to a demonstration of his theory. But from my total ignorance of the Gothic, and want of opportunity of inspecting Icelandic Dictionaries as I was obliged to relinquish my plan after having wrote a few things. But by labouring for you I hope to learn a little myself.

Let those who are engrossed with the present laugh as they please, it is certainly a matter of as great importance for me to know the language of my native country, and origin of the nation of itself, as to know the history of the Punic Wars or the battle of Marathon. "But it is not classic ground." True, but it may yet be made so, at least in some degree. Had Herodotus or Thucydides never wrote, we would have been as indifferent about the events they describe, as the wretched inhabitants of the Iberia are about the expeditions of the Goths, and the origin of the Picts and Scots. That is it that discourages men of genius, erudition and application from endeavouring to push up the stream in tracing the source of their own nation, but the dark cloud that hangs over it, and the unsuccessful attempts of former adventurers? But ought this really to discourage them? Those who are bent on discovery must never despair. The greatest caution is requisite for avoiding the rocks on which those who have gone before them have been shipwrecked.

5

The word "Iberia" originally referred to a district in the Western Peloponnesus, at that time (13th-14th centuries) a Frankish principality. The word gradually came to be applied to the whole of the Peloponnesus. The name appears to derive from the Greek μηλά, a mulberry tree, from the abundance of mulberries which grow in that area.
But they should eagerly look out for new openings, and if but a single ray seems to break forth on a new path, pursue it to the utmost. This is the only line for success. Even the coldest regions of the North, as they have been the Storehouse of nations, and formerly supplied us with men, may yet greatly aid us in the article of literature.

I feel much for you today as it threatens a continuance of bad weather least you be disappointed as to your design of seeing Fairhaven. I should be happy to know that you think of it. The name is singular. That would you think if the tide has once come up as far. It is not improbable. Beyond Stirling there are Seabegs, Seabegs, six miles from the present channel. It pains me much that I cannot promise myself the pleasure of seeing you again.

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6 Fairhaven, which seems to have been in the neighbourhood of Dempster's house at Dundee, no longer appears on maps of the district, and is not known by that name to the local authorities of the county. It has been suggested to me by the Town Clerk of Forfar and the County Clerk of Angus that the small village of Finnav, formerly known as Finnhaven, may be the place indicated by Jamieson. It is about six miles from Forfar on the Brechin road, and is the site of a medieval castle, a Roman Camp and a Pictish fort, all of which may be supposed to have interested Thorokelin. As will be seen from Jamieson's next letter (no. V), it was the Pictish fort which was the particular object of the expedition, but it also looks as though the expedition was in fact cancelled. Finnav is spelt "Finnhaven" in the Statistical Account of Scotland (Edinburgh 1791), i, p. 465; and "Finnhaven" in Carlyle's Topographical Dictionary of Scotland, London 1813, Vol. II. Neither of these accounts refers to a place known as "Fairhaven".

7 It is probable that the two men did meet again, although neither mentions it. On the 20th April 1789, General Helvill invited Thorokelin to a family dinner to meet, among other guests, Dr. Jamieson from Forfar (no. 553); and Lieut. Hutton's letter of 4th April 1789 to Thorokelin (no. 416) was forwarded to him by Dempster, who has scribbled on the outside: "Try meet the Revd. Dr. Jamieson from Forfar here at 5 o'clock on Tuesday next at dinner," i.e. at Dempster's London house in Queen's Row, Knightsbridge.
May all health and happiness attend you. Please to make my most respectful Compliments acceptable to Mr. Dempster and the Ladies.

Mrs. Jamieson begs to join with me in most affectionate wishes for you. I am Honoured and dear Sir with great respect and esteem,

Your most obedient Servant John Jamieson.

Forfar 12 October 1787.

III. From Dempster (no. 232)

My Dear Sir,

I received your obliging Letter from Edinburgh and by this time I hope you are arrived in perfect safety at your journey's end, and do not on a retrospect of your Summer's Excursion, find reason to regret it. I shall find reason all my life to congratulate myself on having met with so amiable and instructing a Companion. How did the Northern Horse carry you? That have you sold him for? I hope I have proved an economical Counsellor in advising that mode of travelling. Your account of the Down of Criech is published in the Edinburgh Magazine with Proper Compliments to you as a learned antiquarian. How does your Health do? I hope

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1 See the Edinburgh Magazine, September 1787: "Of the History of Constructing the Vitrified Forts found in many parts of Scotland.

"It is to the learned antiquarian Mr. Thorkelem, Professor of History and Antiquities in the University of Copenhagen, we are indebted for a very important piece of information on this subject; which is the more interesting, that no historian has mentioned a single word respecting these buildings.

"The noble Proprietors of Dunrobin Castle gave that gentleman access to the ancient records of their family. Among these, the Professor found a MS. history of the family of Sutherland, written by Sir Robert Gordon of Gordenston, in the year 1630; wherein is contained the following passage, relative to the Down of Creich, which, for its curiosity, is transcribed verbatim:
you have recovered from all your bruises. I was made happy by finding our University had bestowed upon you the well earned Degree of L.L.D. This will remind you to see Dr. Thomson and in conjunction with him to finish the translation of the Icelandic Laws. In my opinion the work should be in Letters from you interspersed with some accounts of Iceland Historical Natural & Oeconom-

"Dom-Creek was built with a strong kind of mortar, by one Paul Mac-tyre. This I do take to be a kind of org: whenever [sic], this is most certain, that there hath not been seen one harder kind of mortar. - This Paul was a man of great Power and possession about 1270. His son being killed in Norway, the castle was never finished." See also the correspondence between Pinkerton and Thorkelin on this subject, supra.

2 Thorkelin was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws of St. Andrews University on 26th October 1787. It seems likely that Dempster, who was himself a former student of St. Andrews, and who had received the same honorary degree in 1784, was instrumental in its being conferred on Thorkelin. The Senate Minute which records it actually states that he received the degree of L.D.; but this is clearly an error. Thorkelin obviously valued the honour highly, and in 1821, towards the end of his life, presented to the University Library a handsome copy of Laxdala Saga, inscribed by him in his usual florid Latin.

3 Dr. William Thomson (1746-1817), the son of a Perthshire carpenter, began his career as librarian to the Earl of Kismoull, and, on taking orders, was appointed by the earl assistant minister of Montevard, Perthshire. His career in the church, however, was short-lived. "The gaiety of his disposition," wrote his obituarist in the Gentleman's Magazine, "soon put an end to his ecclesiastical prospects, and he repaired to London, after obtaining from his noble patron a pension of 50L a year" (1817, i, p. 647). The remainder of his life was spent in London in literary activities. Dr. Jamieson relates that "one evening, on our way home from dining with Mr. Dempster at Knightsbridge, he stopped short at an advertising office, saying he had a little business to do there. How much was I confounded when I heard him dictate for the press a pompous notice of my arrival, literary plans, &c. &c. Then we left the house, I, in pretty strong terms, expressed my dissatisfaction at the manner in which he had used me. All the apology he made was to say - "Allow me to tell you, sir, that you are quite ignorant of the world; a man can never be known in London without puffing. To my certain knowledge, Hastings, during the trial, paid for no fewer than ninety-four puffs!" (Caitlín
There are 10,000 people in this Island all Gaping for accounts of distant Nations, as Fishes do for food. But with plenty of money to purchase it. You'll put some money in your own Pocket & the Doctors, and add to your Literary Reputation & to his.

You must give him materials, & full Liberty to digest and arrange them as he pleases. Give him also my best respects I have enjoyed perfect health since you left us. Our Ladies all join me in most sincere respects. Farewell my Dear Friend Yours affec[tionately] George Davster.

Dunwich by Porfar Novem[ber] 21st 1787.

The enclosed is from the Colln. of Dundee. Pray let me know if Mr. John Cochrane be in London.

IV. From Davster (no. 220)

My Dear Sir

Ten thousand thanks for your Little Essay on Slavery. I hope it will be generally known & read. Before I give you my opinion of it you must give me credit for not dealing in the fulsom &


4 This enclosure has unfortunately not survived and it is difficult to guess what this abbreviation represents. The final letter is not clear, but seems more likely to be an "n" than anything else.

5 The Hon. John Cochrane (1750-1801) was the fifth son of the 8th Earl of Dumfries. He is mentioned in William Thomson's letter as having been one of the guests at the dinner party in Davster's house when the edition of the Laws of Iceland was first discussed, and it was for him that Thorkelin later drew up a memorandum on sulphur deposits in Iceland (see p. 97 supra).
false compliments commonly paid to authors by their friends. That I shall say in my genuine opinion. It is the best the most sensible the most learned and the ablest and most moderate treatise I ever read upon that subject. Your arguments are infinitely strengthened by the ancient learning you possess, and the state of the slave trade of Europe in the middle ages, throws infinite light upon the state of manners at that time, and is highly entertaining. I also admire the conciseness of it. From its reading a little of the Danish idiom I am led to suppose the language your own: if so it is extraordinary well written for a foreigner.

I have lately read in Pinkerton's preface to the Scotch poetry in which he discovers a small share of research. He has given me new ideas of the Picts or Scots and of the Britons & Scots. Many things, in our language particularly, serve to confirm these ideas. I am sure all we not with in the highlands tend to prove what he asserts about Fingal & the kingdom of Norway. But might not he have kept his opinions about the holy bible & God's chosen race the Jews to himself? without informing the learned he outrages all the true sincere ignorant believers. none of whom would be the better for being converted to his opinion. In your book you give us

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1 G.J. Thorkelin, in Essay on the Slave Trade, London 1783 (see pp. 50-55 more). See also letter no. 234 from Dempster to Thorkelin of May 31st 1783 in which he writes, "Somebody has purloined the Copy you sent me of your Essay on slavery. Do me the favour to repair this loss by sending me two of them." The sincerity of Dempster's praise is indicated by his letter of twenty-five years later to Pinkerton: "Your Thorkelin's library! I am glad he has survived it. He has preserved a great share of it in his brain. That little treatise on the slave trade had more sense and learning in a few pages than were contained in all the declamations that subject produced" (Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence, II, p. 409, letter of 8th June 1813).
true reason to love & respect the Christian Religion for the good it has done in extirpating Slavery. Some Sects of it in more modern times have not been quite so innocently & meritoriously employed.

John Pinkerton, *Ancient Scottish Poems* . . . from the MS. Collection of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington, London 1786. The offending passage appears in the introductory "Essay on the Origin of Scottish Poetry," pp. xiv-xxv: "But if we have recourse to scripture for accounts of the origin of men or of nations, we shall be shockingly deceived. The scripture is merely a doctrinal work; and it moves pity to accusations of philosophy decided by scripture, when it is well known that the Copernican system, the spherical shape of the earth, with many other matters now mathematically certain, are quite opposite to scriptural accounts. . . . We may therefore well be excused, if we think the Judaic legends no more binding on our faith, than the Judaic rites are on our practice. If we observe the Later, we are no Christians, yet, as Christians, we hold ourselves obliged to credit the former. Utter absurdity! That has the Christian religion, the most admirable and respectable the world has ever seen, to do with the Judaic? In the God of the Jews, the bloody destroyer of the Canaanites and other nations, commanding to spare neither man woman nor child, the God of human sacrifices in Agag, and Jephthah's daughter; the God after whose heart David, the most criminal of men, was, is he the beneficent father of the Christians? No; that barbarous race worshipped a daemon as usual with other barbarians: the object of our worship is his exact reverse." Dampier's own views on this are not altogether that might have been expected from the "infidel" disciple of David Hume. See also the similar structures of Lord Kames on p. 191. Pinkerton was a sturdy disbeliever in the authenticity of the Ossadian poems, on the basis that "if the poems were written about 500, as Mr. Winthrop pretends, he may be struck down with a trident of dilemmas. 1. The west of Scotland, the Silur Caledonia, was apparently not inhabited. If it was, it was certainly inhabited, either, 2. by a British people, and the poems must have been in an old dialect of the Welsh; or, 3. by the Picts, in which case the language must have been the Gothic or Scandinavian" (pp. xlv-xlvi).

It is difficult to be certain what Dampier meant by this remark, particularly if it were made with any reference to the abolition of slavery. Certain sects of the Christian Church, particularly the Quakers and the Christian zealots, were prominent in the fight for the extirpation of the slave trade, which, indeed, was advocated by most of the major branches of the Church. There were, no doubt, occasional dissident voices raised in many sects, and one of these seems to have been Raymond Harris, the Jesuit who in 1733 published his *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade*, showing its conformity with the principles of Natural and Revealed Religion delineated in the sacred writings of the Lord God (Liverpool 1733). This was received with much enthusiasm by the Liverpool traders,
Have you seen the account of the Tartar Kumiss in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh? I recommend it to your perusal. Also Dr. Hutton's Theory of the Earth as the first Physical Production in the world. Our ladies join me in kindest respects and I remain very affectionately by your friend George Darby.

Dumfries March 27th 1783.

most of whom had a vested interest in the continuance of the slave trade, and was rewarded by the Corporation of Liverpool with a gift of £100.


Papers of the Physical Class:

VI. An Account of the Method of making a Wine called by the Tartars Kumiss; with observations on its use in medicine. By Dr. John Crieve, M.D., F.R.S.Eldin., late Physician to the Russian army [read by Dr. Black, 12th July 1784].

X. Theory of the Earth; or an Investigation of the Laws observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land upon the Globe. By James Hutton, M.D., F.R.S.Eldin., and Members of the Royal Academy of Agriculture at Paris [read March 7 and April 4 1783].

The Theory of the Earth, Hutton's best-known work, caused great excitement when he first expounded it. Briefly, his theory was that the surface of the globe was being constantly changed by two continuous and simultaneous processes: firstly, the wearing away of mountains, rocky outcrops, promontories, etc., by the action of wind and weather on them; and, secondly, the replacement of them by the operation of subterranean fire in the form of earthquakes and volcanoes. In February 1783 Hutton's friend, Professor Joseph Black, wrote to Princess Dashkova: "In this system of Dr. Hutton's there is a grandeur and sublimity by which it far surpasses any that has been offered. The boundless pre-existence of time & of the operations of Nature which he brings into our view; the depth and extent to which his imagination has explored the action of fire in the internal parts of the Earth, strike us with astonishment. And then we consider the view which he gives us of a great river such as that of the Irans, descending in a thousand streams from the high centre of the Indies, and forming those immense and level plains through which it flows in the greater part of its course, the mind is expanded in contemplating so great an Idea, and the length of time which the change thus
V. From Dr. Jardine (no. 474)

Dear Sir,

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you I have not been unmindful of your request. I have still been endeavouring to pick up a few Anglo words. But after all, my collection is small. I have not much above 200. One great reason of this is that I do not observe them so attentively as I did when I first came to this country. Then they were new and unintelligible to me. Now they are familiar to my ear, and being at no loss to understand them, I overlook them. I do not wish to send you my vocabulary till it be more complete.

I am glad to hear that you are engaged in publishing a comparative view of Scandinavian and British antiquities. I saw Mr. Dampier receive some specimens of it lately, of which he promised me the perusal. But I have not been at Dunwich since. I have lately got Alfric's Saxon Pentateuch as and have been trying to

imagined (I may say demonstrated) must have required; the short-lived bustle of men's remotest reach of History or Tradition, of the inquisitive Antiquarian appear as nothing when compared with an object so great" (Sir William Ramsay, The Life and Letters of Joseph Black, F.R.S., London 1913).

1 This somewhat misleading description appears to refer to Thorkelin's Fragments of English and Irish history in the ninth and tenth century, London 1783 (see p. 53 supra). Cf. Dampier's letter of 3rd August 1783 (no. VI): "I have unfortunately lost the first sheet of the quarto fragments you sent me."

tateuchos, Liber Job, et Evangelium Nicodemi, Anglo-Saxonice; Historiae Judith Fragmentum, Duno Saxonice. Exhibit nunc primum ex
read it. But my progress is slow, as I have no Dictionary. I remember that then we were speaking of the Scotch Language, I objected to its derivation from the Gothic, that the Gothic was highly declinable. But I renounce this objection, as I find the Saxon too. And the objection holds with no more force against the derivation of the Scotch from the Gothic, than of the modern English from the Saxon, which is undeniable. Pray, how might it be accounted for, that the English is indeclinable, when the Saxon was; especially as the declinable state of a language is certainly one evidence of its superiority to one that is not declinable? This is undoubtedly a retrograde notion.

John, codicibus Edvardus Twaites, ex Collegio Reginae. Oxonias, in Theatro Sheldoniano, M. Dom. MDCCVIII. The 'Heptateuch' was a title invented by Twaites to express the Pentateuch together with Joshua and Judges. Jamieson probably used Twaites' edition; a later edition was published by Creain at Cassel and Göttingen, 1872.

This view was by no means an uncommon one among Jamieson's contemporaries and even later, although Lonboddo, as may be seen on p. 140, had, as early as 1773, arrived at a perception of the fact that a highly complicated inflectional system is not necessarily evidence of a language's sophistication or age. Jamieson here speaks as a representative of the rear-guard of the old school. Within the next half century, different ideas were to be accepted and the view put forward by Lonboddo in the first volume of his Grün and Progress of Language, and apparently ignored was elaborated first by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his Über das Entstehen der grammatischen Formen und ihren Einfluss auf die Ideenentwicklung (1822), and later by Jacob Grimm in his better-known essay on the origin of language. Jøgersen has summarized Grimm's position and his relation to his predecessors: "On the whole, then, the history of language discloses a descent from a period of perfection to a less perfect condition. This is the point of view that we meet with in nearly all linguists; but there is a new note when Grimm begins vaguely and dubiously to see that the loss of flexional forms is sometimes compensated by other things that may be equally valuable or even more valuable; and he, even, without elaborate arguments, contradicts his own main contention when he says that 'human language is retrogressive only apparently and in particular points, but looked upon as a whole it is progressive, and its intrinsic force is continually increasing.' He
You would receive Dr Anderson's accurate description of the Vitrified fort at Fairhaven. I have discovered another, since that time, far more perfect, containing within two outer walls many foundations of vitrified houses.

I have bestowed some labour on the passages and words which Mr Pinkerton publishes at the end of the Ancient Poems, as not understood. I flatter myself I have discovered the meaning of some of them with certainty, and as to others, shall venture my conjectures which, if you think proper, you may communicate to him.

instances the English language, which by sheer making havoc of all old phonetic law and by the loss of all flexions has acquired a great force and power, such as is found perhaps in no other human language" (Otto Jespersen, Language, its nature, development and origin, London 1922, p. 62).

4

Dr. James Anderson of Cotfield, near Edinburgh, agriculturalist, and founder of the periodical The Bee (Edinburgh 1791-93). Anderson tells Thorélin of his expedition "along with your worthy friend Mr Dempster and the Revd Mr Jamieson of Forfar, to a vitrified fort near his house at Denlichen. Some account of the peculiarities we there observed that I thought worthy of remark, I have drawn up to communicate to you - It is sent along with this to Mr Dempster and Mr Jamieson for their revision and correction before it be forwarded to you" (letter no. 10). During his travels through Scotland, as we have seen, Thorélin took a particular interest in Pictish houses and in vitrified forts, both of which he believed (in common with many other antiquaries) to be of Danish origin, and Angus as a county was particularly rich in Pictish remains.

5

In the following notes 3 - 68, all initial page and line references (e.g. Gavin Douglas, King Hert, p. 335, l. 333) are to the Scottish Text Society editions by Sir William Craigie of The Maitland Folio NS. (Edinburgh and London 1913) and The Maitland Quartto NS. (Edinburgh and London 1920). Jamieson's page references in the text of the letters are to Pinkerton's Ancient Scottish Poems, London 1786, in which the lines are not numbered. Abbreviations are as follows:


DOST: A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, ed. Sir W. Craigie
P. 13 st. 42. "Scho bisselie as fortrewalt as scho was" - It would seem that the first "scho" has been an error of some transcriber, and should be "so" or "sar. Danger, throu' want of sleep, in keeping the door, was sore fatigued, or fatigued with constant business.

P. 71. "Scho rounds him an epistill intill eyre." Epistill is used in English indefinitely for any kind of harangue. To round is to tell one anything roundly, sometimes to scold. - While he sat like a Bishop in his chair, she spake a long harangue into his ear.

and A.J. Aitken, Chicago and London 1931-


Craigie, Q: Sir William Craigie, The Kaitland Quarto 1525, Edinburgh & London 1920


II: Scott and Hayton, A Glossary of Tudor and Stuart Words, Oxford 1914.


6

Gavin Douglas, King Hart, Craigie F., p. 295, l. 566. This line is in fact found in stanza 43 of Pinkerton's edition, not stanza 42. See PVB: "It is difficult to make sense of this line as it stands. A tentative emendation is to: So bisselie fortrewalt as scho was. The line has then some relation to those which come before and after: 'since she was exhausted with toiling so busily!'" (p. 229).

7

Anon., The Froth of Berwik, Craigie F., p. 133, l. 133. Pinkerton's edition p. 72, not 71. In the dictionary, Macison uses this line to illustrate "Rom", "Rome", "Round", "Rum", to whisper. Cf. Sh: "Round, to whisper... In prov. use in England and Scotland... HE roman... OE ruman." "Epistil(1)", an epistle, letter (DOES). III. Gives this line as "Scho roundes than one pistill in his eir" from the Barnatyne MS.
P. 112. "Bran to byk." Bran is the husk of wheat-ground. It is given to horses and cattle for food. One would think that byk had been originally written byte, to eat, as both sense and rhyme would answer better. Byte corresponding to subtvt and yrvt. I know of no sense in which byk is used, but as signifying to warm one's self in the sun or at the fire.

P. 116. "That on their conscience roam and rude,
May turn sauch opin, and ane wane."
The poet in an ironical sense calls kirkmen "holy and guide." I know not that "roam and rude" can apply to, unless it be to a well-raised and hard road. Round is generally sounded roon' in Scotland. One might turn any thing upon their conscience, it was so wide and obdur ate. Wane signifies a large cart or wagon, such as in this country is drawn by oxen; a very proper metaphor, because being yoked two and two abreast, they take a great deal of roon to turn on. The other passage from the Priests of Pebbils evidently alludes to the same thing, although under a different notion. A bad bishop would get into place over every obstacle, over both cart and wheel.

I have heard a proverbial expression of this kind used here.

8 Dumbar, The Petition of the Grey Horse, Craige F., p. 30, l. 45. Jamieson was perfectly correct. The phrase has been misread by Pinkerton, and should be "brune to byt".

9 Dumbar, Of the Parhdis Instabilitie, Craige F., p. 203, ll. 42-43, where this line is given "That on your conscience roome and rude / May turn sauch opin and ane wane." [dictionary: Jamieson gives "roome" correctly as large, spacious, but "opin" does not appear. In spite of Pinkerton's misreading, Jamieson has in fact come very close to the real sense of the passage. Pinkerton's own note on it reads, not surprisingly: "The last stanza of p. 116 escapes my apprehension entirely."

10 The Thrie Pretiosa of Pebbils, ed. for the Scottish Text Society by
P. 158. "Heirischip of Horsemeit." The expense of meat for horses. He disputes about this at every inn. Heirischip is still used in this sense. Any thing is said to be "a perfect heirischip," which is very dear.

P. 57. "Banchis" has an evident reference to a Bank, as we now say Bills and Banknotes - "Banchis all selit" is the same with the foregoing "evidents of heritage braid selit," or sealed with the broad seal.

P. 515. "Bervie" seems evidently to mean Inverbervie, commonly called Bervie a royal Burgh, and the county-town of Kincardineshire.

P. 52. Besweik, Beseech. This sense agrees with that follows - "with my sweet words."

T.D. Robb, Edinburgh & London 1920, l. 410. See Robb's note, p. 74: "The meaning of the line "Bot over waine and quhell in yll he get" is obvious, but the appropriateness of the figure is not very evident." This poem is not part of the Haftland MSS., but the line is quoted by Pinkerton in his "List of Passages not Understood", p. 557, apparently in illustration of the lines from Dumbar (see note 9 above).

11 Anon., The Selie Court Jorn, Craige F., p. 241, l. 22. See DOSE: "heirischip" = Heres(c)hip, Heirship, Heirischip, ... "The act or practice of harrying, plundering or pillaging by an army or armed force. Freq. to make Hereschip."

12 Dumbar, The Two Herit Yesen and the Tede, Craige F., p. 109, l. 437, where this line is given "Bot quhen my billis and my banchis wes all selit," and "banchis" is glossed as documents. 111: "Banchis", documents.

13 Haftland, The Polye of an Mild Man, Craige F., p. 62, l. 23, which reads "Bervie" for "Bervie."

14 Dumbar, The Two Herit Yesen and the Tede, Craige F., p. 105, l.
P. 11. "It culd thame bre, and biggit thame to byde." The host rode so fast that the messengers were obliged to beg them to stay, to go slower. "It culd thame bre" seems to signify that it caused or could make them to pant, perhaps an allusion to the braying of an ass. If we should suppose culd to be a verb, it might refer to a proverbial expression still used, of cooling one's bru, bre, or broth, for humbling their pride.

P. 112. My boks are sprung. There are two teeth in the horse's mouth vulgarly called boots, which when they are old, grow so long that they cannot eat hard or short meat. Unless this passage be read my boots are springing high, I know not what to make of it.

223. Jameson gives "beswark" in the Dictionary as "to allure; to beguile, to deceive." DOSI: "to beguile, deceive."

Douglas, King: Hart, Craige F., p. 230, l. 183. Small glosses "bre" as "to astonish or disturb - from AS. breogan." Dictionary gives "brey" from the same source, to terrify. "Beggit" - see PDB: "The meaning has caused difficulty. Small and G. Gregory Smith) suggest a derivation from OE. byrnan, byenn, and C.G.S. glosses as 'inclined, bent, compelled.' This is attractive but improbable, as the normal IE representative of OE byrnan is bey, intervocalic g being vocalised. From its form biggit might be the preteterite of big (ON byggja) which was common in OE. with such senses as 'build, dwell.' But neither of these senses (nor the others recorded by DOSI and NLD) seems suitable in the context. The most likely explanation is that biggit means 'begged'. DOSI gives i spellings in its formlist for big, v., and cites other examples in additions and corrections. The sense of lines 188-189 is: 'It alarmed them, and Dread of Disdain, who ran on foot beside them, begged them to wait; / he said to them..." Further support is given by this interpretation by the punctuation stroke after disdain, which indicates a fairly heavy medial pause..." (p. 223-24).

Dunbar, The Petition of the Gray Horse, Craige F., p. 19, l. 40, which gives "ty bok(in) or spru(n)ing", glossing "beldis" as "obsuced." LLI: "Beldis", (?) teeth; ditto JK. Pinkerton's note reads: "Boks is perhaps from bok, Goth. ovulus, venter, the belly."
P. 12. "Brathit - perhaps expanded. PercyGLOSS. V. 5. has 17
Breyd, grew out, unsheathed.

P. 363. by mistake in the index 353. Chevin. Perhaps this
might have been designed for shriven, confessed, as denoting good
consul, given in consequence of his declaring his difficulties.
However, it is fully as probable that it is used in the sense men-
tioned in the Note, as SPenser uses chevisance for an enterprise.

P. 48. Cheval signifies distorted. One is still said to
show one's mouth, when making ridiculous or ill-natured faces.

Clevia referred to as in P. 116 is only found in 112. It
should certainly be clevir. The rhyme requires this as well as
the sense; for it is undoubtedly cloyer that is here meant, in many
places in Scotland still called clevir. Squish seems to be a
corruption of squash, to waste, crush or destroy. If I am not much
mistaken, I have heard it used in this sense in Clydesdale.

Bevis to rhyme with ever requires also to be Bevir. This word
is still used for any thing worn out. They vulgarly say, a bevir-

Not in DOST.

17
Douglas, King Hart, Craigie F., p. 261, l. 219, where "brathit"
is glossed displayed. FJB: "brathit up. 'Lifted up'. The verb
is uncommon, and DOST suggests it is a variant of braudit, the
preterite or more probably the past participle of braid (OE bregdan);
but the form might equally well derive from ON breida. Cf. ON
bregda upp handa, 'to hold up one's hand!' (p. 224). Percy's
Glossary of obsolete and Scottish words has "Brayde" (not Breyd),
grew out, unsheathed (Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, London
1765, III, p. 325).

18
'non., The Dumb Wife, Craigie F., p. 70, l. 40 which glosses
"chevin", succeeded. DOST: "chevin", v. i., to achieve, accomplish.
Pinkerton's note compares "Chevir, sortir d'une affaire, Gloss. du
Roman de la Rose."
coat, when it is threadbare, a bevir-hat, when it is worn out, and even a bevir-horse. Strene would seem to be strayed. The horse here is made to say in the poor Poets stead, Tho' I had the strength of a strayed horse, that feeds at large on every pasture, yet I would be housed and stalled co.

P. 99. Crokike refer to sheep or lambs that are crippled or crooked, so that they are unfit for gambols. Any thing crooked is still called a crokike. Thus, a crokike is a vulgar appellation for a sixpence.

P. 41. Deve is undoubtedly confuse or stupidify. It is a very common phrase, "Dima deve me 'tli' your din."

P. 61 Donemeg seems to mean suitors. We say to dog one i.e. to follow him like a dog, to persecute with solicitations. A lover

19 Dumbar, The Two Harlot Women and the Wede, Craigie F., p. 101, l. 108, which closes "chevill" as wy. LII: "schevill" (from Chevman and Myllar), wy. The word does not appear in the DOSt.

20 Dumbar, The Petition of the Gray Horse, Craigie F., p. 19, l. 23. Pinkerton has misread "clever" as "clevis". LII gives "squische", unclossed. JK: "squische" to crop or crunch.

21 ditto, l. 27. Craigie gives this line as "and led the strethenis off all strenoverne." Pinkerton has misread "strenoverne" as "stre- bevis." LII gives "strenover" from the Reidpeth MS., with the note: "Strenover may be for 'Strathanver' in Sutherland, but the point of the allusion is quite obscure." I have not found any instance of "bevir" used in the sense that Jamieson suggests.

22 Dumbar, To the Queen, Craigie F., p. 418, l. 18. DOSt: "Crok, Crock, n. of obscure origin an old ece." LII: crokike = old ewes.

23 Douglas, King Hart, Craigie F., p. 292, l. 903. DOSt: "Deve, Defel(e), Deave, ME deve, OE (a) deaflen, to deafen; to stun or annoy with talking."
is said (vulgarly) to dog his mistress, when he follows her from place to place.

P. 45. "Dynamit the feulis." The dew made the yule moist, and dinnered the foals, or gave the birds their dinner.

P. 49. A Farsy evir - a horse that has the disease called in Scotland the Farsy a kind of gall or Itch. The phrase is still very common.

P. 57. Borrow-lands is still commonly used to signify those pieces of ground which are within the privilege of a royal burgh.

P. 7. Fitchend. The only word I can recollect that bears a resemblance to this is fiddging. It is used in Ramsay's Ed. of Christ's Kirk, & in Maggie Landar, and signifies an awkward notion, denoting fondness or impatience. The chains may be called fitchend.


ditto, p. 93, l. 10. Craige has "and dy(n)nit the feulis." Pinkerton's own note reads: "Dynamit, in this line, is put at a guess; the word in the MS. is dynit, I believe, but the end of the y is turned up backwards, which in merchand, and such words, stands for evr. - Perhaps the meaning of dynamit is fed ..." DOT: Din, Dyn, Yb., to make a loud noise or outcry.

ditto, p. 102, l. 114. So IL and other editors.

ditto, p. 109, l. 558. Jardineon gives "land" is this sense in the Dictionary, but also gives it under a separate heading as "A house consisting of different stories; but always used to denote the whole building. It most commonly signifies a building, including different tenements." DOT: "Land belonging to, or situated within, a borough." IL: "His burrow landis" (from Chapman and Ryller) = houses in a high or principal burgh.
as moving gently backwards and forwards –

P. 102. *FLYRDS. "A flirling thing" is a common contemptuous phrase in Angus for an empty, vain, unsettled person. The same with Flirts.

P. 133. *FRAVANT seems to be quarrelsome. It is said here, such a one was framing in a passion.

P. 134. *Fre, hold from, or free you, if it be not fray, to be afraid.

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Douglas, *King Hart, Craigie F., p. 258, l. 107. Small glosses "fitschand" as "moving, hoisting, from Icel. vikja." *Dictionary: "to move, by slow accoucations, from one place to another," Cf. DNB: "fitschand. Variously glossed as 'moving, hoisting' (Small, Craigie); 'moving, glancing, dangling' (G.C.S.); 'serving to fasten' (DOET). DOET records two verbs with the form flieche or fitch. The first, representing OE *fichier, 'to fix', is the one that DOET takes to be used here; although it is a possible epithet for chaynis (the reading of previous editors) it is inappropriate for frynis (see below). The second verb (of obscure origin; according to NED an intermediate form betw. flieche and fried) gives the sense required: 'moving to and fro, turning restlessly ...' Frynis. This is clearly the original reading of the MS and has been retained, although a correction has been made by a later hand, which may be read either as chaynis (the reading of previous editors) or thaynis. It is possible to extract some sort of meaning from chaynis (e.g. 'chain-barricade' or 'chains holding up the drawbridge'), but thaynis seems more likely to be the correction intended, since it is a Sc. variant of frynis (cf. note to *Palace of Honour, 1. 1431). From the point of alliteration, however, it seems a correction for the worse. Fanes, or weather vanes, which were frequently gilded, were a fashionable architectural feature often mentioned in the description of castles by allegorists of the 15th and 16th centuries" (p. 221).

Dunbar, *Appis the Solisartis in Court, Craigie F., p. 7, l. 9. Craigie and III give "flyrds" in their glossaries as gibe, mock. Jamieson defines it in the Dictionary as he does here, but under a separate heading gives "Flyre", to gibe, to make sport. DOET gives Flirt, Flyre, of obscure origin, t to talk idly, to flirt; and also Flyr(e), Flire, to jest, mock at. III: flyrdis, jibe, mock.

"A fute nyd frog" - a fringe or ornament of that kind "a foot long." The word nyd conveys most properly the idea of any thing hanging down.

Gait glydis - little insignificant horses. Gait ordinarily signifies a child.

Gait seems to be used in the same sense.

Cob seems to have the sense of Gebby which in Scotch signifies the stomach.

Grene seems to be the same with Grope. We still say that one grene in the dark. "A gangarel on to graep" may be a child beginning to walk who is obliged to grope. In Angus a Gangarel is a wandering person who has no fixed place of residence.

Quintin Shaw, The Voyage of Court, Craige F., p. 335, l. 22: "Your freindis will fre and on you wondir." Dictionary gives fre, "it may signify, make enquiry." Not glossed by Craige, who prints this line with footnote "sic". DOST gives no sense of fre which would fit this line, but frey v.2, to have fear, to be afraid, would fit quite well. Cf. example quoted in DOST from Kennedy's Pass. Christ., l. 249, "For ccred thai frayet sair."


Anon., A Complaint ament Heiris, Craige F., p. 439, l. 56. Dictionary: "Gait Glydis; Glyde is an old horse. Gait may perhaps signify small, puny, from get, a child." Gait is glossed by most later editors as galled; cf. DOST: Gait, ppl.a., Galled (ver. of Geld).


Wattland, Aranis the Thevis of Liddisdal, Craige F., p. 302, l. 55. Jamieson in the Dictionary gives rob as both mouth and stomach. DOST: rob, a mouth, a beak.
wagabond. Also applied to a child learning to walk.

P. 61. Haloc. A halloket person is one who is foolish & unsett/led.

P. 57. Hopit. Hop signifies to leap, to spring, the same.

with hop. Perhaps heaped, accumulated.

P. 58. Pluchit herle, a plucked heron. In some places of Scotland called a Harle, as in Angus; elsewhere a Hurle.

P. 10. Lone seems to signify Land, generally sounded in Sco-

36

Dunbar, Of the Blackmoir, Craigne F., p. 415, l. 7. This line has caused most editors some trouble. Craigne gives "gangarell" as a spider, and "grasp" as to seize, touch, examine. The line thus makes sense, though it is difficult to see why a negress should be compared to a spider. LMII gives the following note: "The MS. has grnap, but of the various explanations of the phrase none is in the least satisfactory. Butgangarell or "gangrel" = "wanderer" is, among other things, a toad, and grnap is apparently a scribal error for grnap or "gape". Onto gape would then be for "on-gape" or "agape" or "opened", and the comparison would run, "a mouth when opened like that of a toad" (p. 212). Jamieson gives "grap" in the Dictionary as a griffin. Bellyse Balldon in his edition of Dunbar (Oxford 1907), apparently follows Jamieson in glossing gangarell as a trap or a child beginning to walk. LMII gives gangarell toad, and gape, grap or grnap, to examine by touching, feel, using this line for illustration in both cases.

37

Dunbar, The Eva Marigit Regen and the Nede, Craigne F., p. 113, l. 465. In the Dictionary Jamieson gives halok as "a light thoughtless girl, a term of common use in the south of Scotland." LMII glosses halok as foolish and gives the following note: "The significance of this line is obscure... Halok is found in the 'Postscript' added to Rutherford's Letters, ed. 1739, p. 525; 'a well-meaning kind of harmless, tho' half-halloked persons', where it is taken to mean 'foolish' or 'thoughtless'" (p. 217). LMII: Halok, origin unknown, a light, thoughtless girl.

38

Ibid., p. 109, l. 334. LMII gives "hepit" (from Chepman and Ryler edition), heaped. Craigne reads "hepit".

39

Ibid., p. 110, l. 332. So most later editors.
land without the D. This agrees with the sense.

P. 134. "Spends the pack" is a proverbial phrase. One is vulgarly said to spend or perish the pack, when he squanders his substance, a metaphor taken from Peddlars, who in Scotland are generally called Packmen, & their merchandize - their pack - applied either to goods carried on the shoulders, or on horseback.

P. 321. Penny meal seems to be penny-meal, and to allude to the custom of poor farmers making up their rent with part of their crop, giving meal for money. House-meal in construction is used to denote money as applied to a particular purpose - house-rent - "They were wont to pay all their rent in money without breaking on their crop, but by oppression they are so heredit or impoverished that they cannot do so."

P. 239. Fret seems to allude to raised work - as it is still used. By Purdey-fret the writer appears to refer to some jewel rising out of its socket, to express the gentle protuberance of her cheeks and lips. Probably, thro' mistake he might apprehend the purde to be a precious stone, or there might be some stone then so called, different from that we call the purde.

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40 Douglas, King Hart, Craige F., p. 230, l. 179. Jamieson says in the Dictionary, referring to this line: "I have been inclined to view this as bearing the sense of conceal. But it seems the same with leyme; merely signifying, not to lie, to tell the truth." Cf. WIB: lane, la(y)ne, v., conceal; nocht to leyne, not to deceive, to tell the truth.

41 Iron. & Complaint of Heirs, Craige F., p. 480, l. 74. This is the same meaning as is given in the Dictionary.

42 Haidland, Idem, Complaint of the Communies, Craige F., p. 531, l. 9. Jamieson gives this more accurately in the Dictionary: "rent paid in money, as distinguished from what is paid in kind." So DOET.
P. 59. Raid is surely RIDE, a gross word still used to convey the same idea; unless it should be taken in the sense of ravishment as "the Raid of Ruthven."

P. 60. Rupe. I should be apt to think that this has originally been RUSE. - "Vain ruse", vain praise or commendation in the same sense as in P. 51, "rusing his rardis."

P. 43. Skarth. To say a Skart for a lean person - a "mere skart." In the same line "a scotarde behind" seems to convey a far more nasty idea than that mentioned in the Glossary. To scot is to pour forth violently, & denotes one that has not the power of retention. There is a very coarse Scotch word nearly allied to this in sound, which conveys the very same filthy idea.

P. 45. "Spynist rose." The vulgar in Angus still call the Rose peony, the Spynie or Spynist rose.

P. 247. Stalk, probably stalk.

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43 Anon., The Banlie of Helicon, Craige G., p. 155, l. 69. Craige gives puruce fret as "smoothed as with a purice."


45 Ibid., p. 112, l. 431. Pinkerton has misread "ruse" as "rufe."

46 Ibid., p. 101, l. 92. Skarth has had various meanings attributed to it; by Craige, that of "abortion, monster"; by Ill., "comorant"; and by Jameson himself, that of "a small puny creature" (Dictionary). On scotarde, all are agreed on the same sense given by Jameson here.

47 Ibid., p. 99, l. 29. Ill gives spynist, "blown, opened out."

48 Anon., With eiching and, Craige G., p. 202, l. 50. From the con-
"Water's my eyes", as it is spelled P. 332.

Water-cail, water-broth, or broth without meat in them -

P. 184, 332. Staklt = to stalk is to provide. It is still commonly said, "are you stalked in a horse"; or "I will stalk you" -
or, "You are ill-stalked."

P. 300. Skalkt. Skalk sounded Skalk signifies to spread anything in a dirty way, to bedaub. "He skalkt him fouler than a full", seems to mean that in the contest he made him more nasty than a fool in, who is pursued by children, and covered with dirt thrown at him. A child who has dirtied his cloaths is said to have them all skalked.

Crymed in the same stanza, explained by bellowed, is I suppose the same word with our Angus Crum. It is applied to the noise made by black cattle, but expresses something less than bellowing, a lower noise expressive of dissatisfaction. Thence people in distress are said to crun when mourning.

text, Jamieson's guess seems more likely than the usual meaning of a wooden post or stake: "Sir bodye small wes ydderit and berent / As in the stalk quhilk someris drouth opprest."

Dunbar, The Eve Herietason end the red. Craige F, p. 112, 1. 437. This is a misprint in Pinkerton's List of Words not Understood. He has "walkir" correctly in the text of the poem.

Anon., Complaint ment Keiris, Craige F, p. 439, 1. 77, and Maitland, Thevia the Chevil of Liddisdill, Craige F, p. 302, 1. 50.

Dunbar, of Sir Thomas Norrie. Craige F, p. 3, 1. 40 (fii; "Sir Thomas Norrie. So with spelling Norme(e) in Treat. Scott., iii, 196, 375, varying, however, to Norrie. . . . He was one of the king's nery fools or jesters."). Pinkerton has misread the line. Craige has "(He) call'd him fouler yet a full."

Ibid., l. 42. DOCT: Crune, cryn, v. North. MEd. croyne, MDu.
P. 51. so aud, so widely, to speak beyond the truth.

P. 117. Thrail. To the best of my recollection Thraive in

Lanarkshire signifies a heap of any thing, a multitude, drove of

cattle.

P. 49. Trew astryt. I would understand astryt as a sub-

stantive - a true, a real appointment, as opposed to mere suspicion.

we find trey spelled in the same manner 164.

P. 9. Perhaps nalt may denote a slow motion. we have still

a compound word, only, dragle, to signify a slow, lazy creature.

P. 63. Mistle to a general signifies (in Angus) money given in

change, whether silver or copper. Here it evidently means the sil-

ver which is given in exchange for gold. It is almost out of use.

Kronen, etc. 7, 1, to bellow, rumble. 2, to sing. 191: crownd,

bellowed. Cf. Burns' Maln-o'en: "The deil, or else an outlier

quey / Gat up an' gae' a croon.'

53


196. 11: syne, at large. Cf. note 52 supra.

54

Dunbar, Of the Worldis Instabilitie, Craige F, p. 204, 1. 55.

A thrail or thrwe is generally 24 sheaves. See Dictionary: "24

sheaves of corn, including two stocks or 'shocks'." Cf. Burns, To

a House: "A daimen-icker in a thrave's a ma' request."

55

Dunbar, The Twa Marlit Ween and the Wedo, Craige F, p. 102, 1.124.

11, from the Chapman and Kyllar edition, gives this line as "How he

call tak me, with a trame, at trist of ane othir, "How by some trick

he will catch me in a meeting with another." Craige: "How he call

tak me wit(h) ane trew astryt of ane vthir" with footnote "sic".

56


PJD: "Waliit quie a way (IS way); 'chosen, picked out a route for

themselves'"(p. 222). But see Dictionary: "The obvious sense is,

moved forward."

57

P. 152. Volterit, I suppose the same with volterit—"we may be overcome, ere we are aware."

112. 184. Yald is undoubtedly a poor mare—the same as Jade. But Yald is still the general pronunciation.

40. Robet. There is a word used in Angus, which is sometimes sounded robed, & sometimes robart, that signifies, weakly, feeble, decayed. They say "a robart balm" for a wasted child. This seems to correspond sufficiently to the other expression used.

96. Stinlibit—perhaps to belch—from the word stomach.

40. Eldurig. Impatience. It is said here, one has ill during such a thing, or he endures it ill.


515. Pinkerton has misread "cristell" as "vistell".


89. Generally a caterpillar. In the Dictionary, Jamieson defines it as here, and adds "the same with woubit, a hairy worm."

61. Dumbar, Of a Dance in the deusis Chalmer, Craigie F, p. 416, 1. 48. Pinkerton's misreading of "stincckett".

62. Dumbar, The Twa Hariit Wamen and the Rede, Craigie F, p. 102, 1. 113. This is presumably a scribal error in the Haltland MS. Craigie gives "eltring" with the footnote "sic". 121 has "eldynyg" from the Chepman and Lyller edition. In the Dictionary, Jamieson gives "eltring" as an alternative to "eltring."

63. Douglas, Kin-Kert, Craigie F, p. 250, 1. 171. Blunk, originally
58. **Forbairt** - same sense with forbear. Lard is still used in Scotland to signify a stinking fellow.

134. **Fret.**

329. *Mair chairtis.* Any thing is called a mair chance when it is a mere accident, a thing absolutely unexpected. **Chairtis** I do not know.

110. **Ruffie.** A little ruffian, or a rough little fellow.

47 do **Lairder.** The word *Lairdier* which may probably be the same is used in Angus to signify a man of little action.

**&b.** The words are copied irregularly, as the sense of them was

a white horse, came to mean a horse of any colour. **Dost:** Blonk; a steed. **DUB:** blonkin, horses. **Dictionary** has Blonk; steed, but under a separate heading, gives Blonks, not understood.

64

**Dunbar, The Eva Marriit Woom and the Tedo, Craigie F, p. 110, l. 331.** Pinkerton's misreading of forbairt, abandoned, and of laird, a lad.

65

See note 31 supra. Jamieson has repeated this in error.

66

**Haitland, Satire on the Town Ladies, Craigie F, p. 299, l. 72.** Pinkerton's misreading of "m u m c h a n c e s," masquerades or meanings. Cf. also 31: "mumchance, the name of a game, both at dice and at cards . . . played in silence; whence the name." **Chairtis** is given in the **Dictionary;** "Chairtis are undoubtedly cards, and refer to the amusement which bears this name . . . Mention is made, however, . . . of playing at mumchance, which, Bar ton says, is a game of hazard or dice . . . It may therefore be the error of some transcriber."

67

**Dunbar, Complaint to the King, Craigie F, p. 13, l. 42.** Craigie: *Ruffie = ruffian.* So also 111.

68

**Dunbar, The Eva Marriit Woom and the Tedo, Craigie F, p. 100, l. 67.** **111:** Lairder, an impotent person. So also Craigie. **Dictionary:** " Jesús properly to suggest the idea of great infirmity."
discovered, for want of time to arrange them.

I ought to have kept these observations distinct from my letter, but I can't help it now. I once thought of sending them to the 

for the assistance of others in reading the Poems, but thought it most discreet first to submit them, by you, to Dr Pinkerton. If he can make any use of them, they are at his service. If not, I shall deem myself at liberty. I am far more surprised that Dr P. after being so long in England should be so well acquainted with the Scotch, as that he should be at a loss about some words. Many of these I should never have known, had I continued in Clydesdale, where I was born.

I beg to have the honour of hearing from you as soon as possible. Your Friends in Glas... regret that you staid so short time with them.

Mrs Jamieson joins me in most respectful Compliments. — I am, 

Dear Sir, with great respect Your most obedient humble Servant,

John Jamieson.

Forfar 23 July 1788.

P.S. I had almost forgot to beg of you to give me some account of what Gothic Pagan feast Dr P. speaks of, the name of which we retain in Yule, our Christmas. In honour of whom instituted? Its rites? If the same be still preserved in Norway &c — I have some thoughts of attempting a History of Forfarshire — and wish to attend particularly to the popular superstitions, being persuaded many of them are heathenish.

69 This postscript seems to have been prompted by Pinkerton's entry under Yule in his Glossary: "Christmas: originally the Gothic pagen
Mr Dempster is so obliging as to allow me to receive any letters from a distance under cover to him.

VI. From Dempster (no. 219).

My Dear Sir

The fine weather guests & visits have made me a sad correspondent. For it has made me forget to thank you for your last Treat of the Beginning of your work, which afforded me great entertain-ment & exhibits a most interesting picture of the manner of those times. But I think it will be of importance to establish the dates or years of the historical Birds who give us these accounts. For fear the mixture of History & Poetry & little anecdotes [sic] should be

feast of Yule or Yul." Cf. also letter no. XXV of 18th January 1802 from Dr. Jameson to Thorkelin), note 19.

1

G.J. Thorkelin, Fragments of English and Irish History in the Ninth and Tenth Century... translated from the original Icelandic, and illustrated with some notes, London 1783 (see pp. 53-54 supra). The work consists of extracts relating to various parts of the British Isles, taken from:

a) the story of Ragnar Loðbrok, with English translation by Pinkerton and a Latin translation and notes by Thorkelin;

b) an extract from Landnámabók, with English translation and notes;

c) Snorre Saga, ch. cxiii, with English translation and notes.

d) an extract from Landnámabók with English translation;

e) "a collection of records concerning the Orkney Islands" in Thorkelin's possession which, he claims, were copied from MSS. belonging to the Cathedral of Trondheim, and later destroyed in the Copenhagen fire of 1723.

The work (which was later included in Nichols' Bibliotheca Topographica, London 1780-1800) was originally published in two parts; at the time of writing, Dempster had obviously received only the first, consisting of the story of Ragnar Loðbrok.
thought all together fabulous. The resemblance between the origin of York & Carthage might be apt to confirm that Idea. Both were comprehended within the circumference of an Ox's hide. The Queen's enchanted vest or robe is no less of the marvelous kind. Matter of fact men will be apt to take it all for fabulous feats of Chivalry.

I am quite incapable of forming a judgement of the success of a work that is to cost two guineas. People think twice before they subscribe for such a sum. My idea was of some publications relative to the ancient constitution & present state of Iceland that would cost less money. This might serve to excite the attention of the Public to that Country especially if our common friend Dr Thomson would lend his aid to dress up the article of its language and literature in an interesting manner. After that a new Icelandic Grammar and a neat Icelandic Dictionary would have good sale, & then might come the Laws & regulating Orders of the Assembly in the Original with a Translation. Then some of the historians in the same form. In short I look on it as a new & fresh field of literature. The principal books of which would find their way into all our Public & many of our private libraries, and would enrich Printers, Editors & all concerned in it. This is a serious task I prescribe for you. But I do it with no authority for I would not give a farthing for my own opinion on such subjects for less put them in competition with those which you may obtain in town from Sir Joseph Banks, Dr. Thomson & even

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2 The projected edition of the Laws of Iceland (see pp. 55-58 supra).

3 Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), as a result of his journey to Iceland in 1772 and his warm and generous interest in the Icelanders, was obviously likely to take a keen interest in any such work as Thorke-""
your Printer Mr. Nichol which last have wonderfull sagacity at knowing what will and will not take with the Public.

I have unfortunately lost the first sheet of the Quarto Fragments you sent me. It will be most obliging to favour me with another Copy of it, and also of the rest of the work. You will also be kind enough to set me down as a subscriber for this work. and for all other works of any kind which you may wish to undertake by subscription. I hope you will be an Instrument in the Hands of Providence to restore Iceland to its natural footing among European nations. The Dissolution of the Company is one step to it, but it

society and his great wealth and social prestige would clearly make him a most valuable adviser.

John Nichols (1745-1826), printer and writer, was at this time co-editor (with David Henry) of the Gentleman's Magazine, and one of the most important figures in journalism in London. He began his career as apprentice to William Bowyer, "the learned printer", whom he later succeeded in his business. Among his many other publications, his Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century (London 1812-15, 9 vols) and his Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century (London 1817-31, 8 vols., completed by his son, J.B. Nichols) are the best known and are most important sources of biographical and bibliographical information for the period.

The General Commercial Company, which continued the corrupt and restrictive practices of the former Höyrkammer Company of Copenhagen which it succeeded, held the monopoly of Icelandic trade from 1765 until its dissolution in 1774. The Danish monopoly was probably one of the biggest single factors contributing to the miserable conditions of the Icelanders during the 18th century. Between the years 1727 and 1734, three major volcanic eruptions and two earthquakes, and the resultant famine and disease, had reduced the total population of the island to 40,000 inhabitants. The Danish merchants exploited these conditions to the utmost by maintaining a shortage of necessary imports, by charging high prices for rotten timber and putrid and waxy flour (which the Icelanders, through hunger, were forced to buy) and by insisting on paying for Icelandic goods with high-priced brandy which caused still greater deterioration in the health of the inhabitants. The malpractices of the merchants were fiercely opposed by the Icelander, Skuli Magnusson (1711-94) who brought a suit successfully against the Höyrkammer Company for wrongs committed in Iceland,
in but a little Step. For it ought to be accessible to all the
Trading Ships of Europe as Norway and Denmark are, and to have a
Liberty of Trading with all Europe. Depend upon it if its commerce
were as free as its constitution in other respects some of our
migrations would be directed to that quarter the Island would
speedily be peopled. Your help & other Articles would bear a great
value & yourself with your Icelandic Estate become a Lord Suther-
6
land or Duke of Gordon at the Court of Denmark.

You will be pleased to hear that the Constitution of Griech be-
7
gins to operate. Davidson insures me of Twenty new Settlers next

and later made complaints against the General Commercial Company
which resulted in the Company's being obliged to surrender its char-
ter in 1774. In 1786 Icelandic trade was opened to all Danish and
Norwegian citizens, but the economic condition of the country was
little improved by this step. The Icelanders were too impoverished
to engage in trade themselves, and the Danish and Norwegian merchants
conspired to maintain the former high prices of goods. It was not
until April 1854 that all restrictions on free trade with Iceland were
finally removed by Denmark.

6
Thorkelin was heir to his uncle, on whose farm he had been brought
up, but there is no record of his having inherited any landed property
in Iceland. His inheritance of the farm itself would in any case
hardly have placed him on a level with the owners of the Gordon and
Sutherland estates, two of the biggest landowners not only in Scotland
but in the whole of Great Britain. Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon
(1745-1827) was described by Lord Kames as being the greatest sub-
ject in Britain, both in respect of his rent-roll and the number of
persons dependent on his protection; and Lord Cowper, husband of Eliz-
abeth, Countess of Sutherland, was called by Charles Greville in his
Heroes a "Leviathan of Wealth". He was also one of the foremost
agricultural improvers of the period, and the part he later took in
introducing sheep-farming to Sutherland was to earn him the hatred of
the Highlanders who were dispossessed from their homes to make way
for the sheep (see John Prebble, The Highland Clearances, London 1933);
an account of his activities was published by his agent, James Loch,
under the title, In Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the
Incuess of Striford (1820). Dempter presumably calls him Lord
Sutherland either in courtesy or by error; he was not created Duke
of Sutherland until 1833.

7
See Dempter's letter of 23rd August 1787 to Sir Adam Ferguson:
year on its presently barren hills. If so the following year will produce I hope twice the number. My great Drain now touches the Loch of Restineth and the foundations of the new village was last week laid with proper Solemnities. I expect on the 3rd Inst.

My project is to give this estate what I call a constitution. I fix all the present tenants for their lives at the present rent in their houses, gardens and cultivated ground. At their deaths I give the refusal to the person they name for their successor at a rent to be fixed by two arbitrators, and so on for ever - no alteration of rent but on the demise of the tenant. I give leave to any body to settle on the waste ground, paying I shall ing a year for their lives. The same rule as that for the old tenants when they die - only the first generation after the new settler sits at half the appraised rent. The waste remains a common till planted or settled or improved, which I reserve power for myself and heirs to do. I bind myself, heirs and successors for ever to these conditions. I abolish all personal services, and I give the tenant full leave to leave his farm on due notice whenever he pleases, and to resign it to any of his family, the rule of a revaluation being then to be observed as if he had died. At present they pay for their wood for their houses. Whoever builds a stone walled house thatched with heath or straw is to have wood gratis. I call this the constitution of Griech - for god sake don't say a word against it. One word of your mouth will blow away as many happy visions of the future prosperity of the Griech as ever illumined the dying moments of a saint (Fergusson, pp. 165-66). Griech, on the north shore of the Dornoch Firth, formed part of the property (which also included the estates of Sligo and Polrossie) purchased by Dempster in 1786.

Davidson has been identified by Sir James Fergusson as Duncan Davidson of Tulloch, elected M.P. for Cromarty in 1790 (Fergusson, p. 193).

See Dempster's letter to Thorkelin (no. 259) of 10th January 1788: "I am taking measures for draining a Lake here about a mile long & half as broad, filled with Turf and harle, two of the most vendible commodities in this Country, and I am just returning with a land surveyor from planning out a Manufacturing Town or village in so favourable a spot that when planed it may be said to be built and inhabited. I shall apply to the King to give the people leave to choose a Registry for their Police & Government & there shall not be one restrictive Clause in their Charter. I purpose making my lots 30 Feet to the street, with a small Garden behind being fully convinced Citizens should not have more Land than a House & Garden." How far these original ideas were modified over the next two years may be seen from the account of the village given in Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland: "In the year 1788, a farm
to meet Seafirth at Perth by appointment where I shall learn the
causes of the failure of the Icelandie Expedition but learn them with
regret. Next post I will pay a debt of the Letter kind I owe to
Dr Thomson. Please remember me kindly to him & Mrs D's kind res-
psects. That do you do this summer? Farewel my Dear Sir Your
affectionate Friend George Dempster.

Dunmichen Forfar August Third 1783

Pray let me hear soon from you.

VII. From Dempster (no. 217)

Dunmichen Forfar August 21st 1783

My Dear Sir

The receipt of my Letter of date would convince you how
illfounded some of your apprehensions were, those I mean which
supposed I could have forgotten you or that your proposals respect-
ing Iceland & Northumberland could be displeasing to me I have

of 66 acres, called Letham, has been laid out by the proprietor of
Dunmichen for a village. Streets have been marked out on a regular
plan, and lots of any extent are let upon perpetual leases, at the
rate of £2 an acre. It contains already about 20 families, and new
houses are rising on it daily, the situation being favourable for such
a plan, by having the Vinny water on the south, the perennial brook
of Dunmichen moss running through it, plenty of freestones on the
farm itself, and thriving woods and a moss in its neighbourhood.
Here a fair or market has lately begun to be held, once a fortnight,
on Thursdays, for the sale of cloth, yarn, and flax; and £400 or £500
are sometimes returned in one market-day" (I, pp. 421-22).

For the failure of the Icelandie expedition, see Introduction, pp.
47-49. Mackenzie, a co-director with Dempster of the Fishery Soc-
ociety and M.P. for Rossshire, is here referred to by Dempster by his
territorial title, as the last hereditary chieftain or Cabor Feich
of clan Mackenzie. He was not enobled until 1797.

1

This space has been left blank by Dempster in the MS.
written fully to our Common Friend my Idea of a course to be pursued respecting your Northern Literature which would be a Fortune to you & to him. viz. a Icelandic or Norwegian Grammar & Dictionary & some Translations with the opposite original of such pieces as are interesting either for their Intrinsic merit or for the matter of History & Antiquities they contained. There is not a Library in Great Britain of any note that would not enrich itself by their addition; and many individuals would wish to possess a share of this true Treasure of the Learning of our Forefathers. I wish this Idea may be on examination found a just one.

Hardly had I begun my rudiments of northern Enquiries, when by your partiality I find myself enrolled among the members of a most honourable & Laudable Institution in Denmark. I am very sensible of this mark of your Friendship & Partiality for me. Pray tell me that are the Initials of this Society, that I may subjoin them to my name, as the fellows of the Royal Society & other Societies do on certain occasions.

I despair of recovering Sir Adam's Account of Inla. But I

Dr. William Thomson.

Kommliga Islanda Lerdóms-lista Félag (Det Kongelige Islandiske Litteratur Selskab), later simply Islanda Lerdóms-lista Félag. Dempster's name appears in the list of "Bestandige overordentlige medlemmer"; this mark of Thorckelin's friendship and partiality appears also to have been conferred, through his agency, on Sir John Sinclair, Thomas Astle, John Topham, George and Ernst Wolff, Lord Macdonald, Lord Buchan, Dr. John Lopimer, Sir William Fordyce and John Pinkerton (all "bestandige overordentlige medlemmer"), as well as Dr. William Thomson and Jens Wolff ("overordentlige medlemmer"). Astle and Topham both describe themselves as members of the "Reg. Scient. Soc. Island," in the list of Fellows of the Royal Society (London 1808).

See Dempster's letter of 3rd September 1787 to Sir Adam Ferguson;
shall in a few Posts send you the rise & Progress of Stanley. 80.

People came to us from the Highlands (60 Families) which have all

"I am enchanted with your account of Isla or rather of the good sense and spirit of the proprietor. Explain to me if you please more fully what you mean by his tenants being at their ease, and to what that is owing. What is the length of their leases, and what reasonable hope is there of their not reverting on the first minority or absence of the proprietor under the cruel domination of a factor? or the severe exactions of a spendthrift..." (Ferguson, pp. 107-83).

Dempster's own account of his attempt to establish branches of the cotton-spinning industry in Scotland at Stanley and in Lanark is given in a letter to Sir John Sinclair of 21st January 1806: "Ever since the tax on post-horses, it had been my custom, to perform my journeys to and from Parliament, with my own carriage and horses, making time, as other mechanics do, supply my want of pecuniary power. To cause my wife and myself, and to rest my horses, I generally halted a few days at the different watering places by the way; and in the year, I think, 1796, being particularly captivated with the romantic scenery of Hatlock, we staid a week or ten days there. In the course of an afternoon's ride, I discovered, in a romantic valley, a palace of a most enormous size, having, at least, a score of windows of a row, and five or six stories in height. This was Sir Richard Arkwright's (then Mr. Arkwright) cotton-mills. One of our mess-mates being known to the owner, obtained his permission to see this stupendous work. After adiring every thing I saw, I rode up to Mr. Arkwright's house, - knocked at the door. He answered it, himself, and told me who he was. I said my curiosity could not be fully gratified, without seeing the head from whence the mill had sprung. Some business brought him soon after to London. He conceived I had been useful to him; and offered to assist me in establishing a cotton-mill in Scotland, by holding a share of one, and instructing the people. Private business carried him the following summer to Scotland, where he visited Perth, Glasgow and Lanark, and, I believe, Stanley, for I was not then in Scotland. Mr. Dale and I became partners in mills to be erected at Lanark. A company of five or six Perth gentlemen, he and I, entered into partnership on mills to be built at Stanley in Perthshire...

From this last concern I never was able to extricate myself, although it was my intention so to do, as soon as it should become profitable to the adventurers... The war surprised us just when we were beginning to reap the profit of our labours. The price of cotton rose, the value of cotton-yarn fell, and considerable loss was incurred. In the year 1799 the company was dissolved, and those admirable mills are now on sale. In the meantime, the weaving and printing of every species of cotton cloth, took deep root in Glasgow, Paisley, Perth, and other places in Scotland" (Correspondence and Reminiscences of the Rt. Hon. Sir John Sinclair, Bart., London 1831, pp. 331-62). The date 1796 in line 7 of this quotation is obviously an error; the meeting must have been in 1788. One reason for
proved sober, virtuous & industrious. By their means, we lower our wages to the current price of cotton yarn & suffer less by its fall than most other cotton spinners. Write me often. I am about setting out to inspect the Progress of our new Town of Ullespoor in Loch Broom, where if it does not rise to the sound of the Lyre It springs very fast to that of the Bag Pipe. Warehouses, Muys Inns, Private Houses & temporary huts are all going on at the same time. By next year its pointed spires will rival the neighbouring mountains and adorn the Banks of that beautifull Loch. Favor me with the presents Terms of the Prince Royals Premiums.

The fall in the price of cotton had been the introduction "of a foreign article, of the same fabric and quality, introduced by the East India Company into the British market, under circumstances where the just laws of competition cannot operate" (Sots Magazine, vol. I, pp. 98-99).

Ullespoor was one of the new towns founded by the Fishery Society, and its site was one of those visited by the Commission which Thorkeilin had accompanied in 1787. It shared with the other establishments of the Society in the financial ruin resulting from the outbreak of war with France, and after 1793 the town developed no further. The ruins of the warehouses of which Dampier speaks can still be seen.

The final part of this word has been bound into the spine, and what is visible is not very clear. "Private" seems to be the word that best supplies the meaning required by the rest of the sentence. It could be "Power" but this seems unlikely.

These Premiums were offered by the Prince of Denmark as President of the Danish Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, and are thus described by Thorkeilin: "The method adopted by this enlightened body, of enlarging the bounds of knowledge, and promoting the common good, is divided between premiums for theoretical essays, and rewards for practical efforts attended with success. The essays crowned with the approbation of the Society, are printed, and distributed in every parish throughout the kingdom by means of the Rector? the parish priest or the master of the local school. "Rectors" are not usually
One of the best means of improving the Agriculture of Denmark is to have a great desire to compete for. I have no doubt of the " Desire of Freedom" I recommend to the Peasantry. Mrs D sends kind respects. Farewell to Sir Your affectionate George Dempster. How does your Health? Take care of it.

VIII. From Lord Norwood (no. 605)
Edinburg 18 June 1789

Dear Sir,

I give you the trouble of this to desire the favour of you,

found in learned societies in Denmark; nor would the word generally be used to describe the parish priest or schoolmaster. It may be Thorkelin's understanding of the English word which is wrong here, accompanied with a short account of the practical class, viz. that which has been gained, and that proposed for the year next following. The premiums vary according to the choice of the successful candidate. A wealthy citizen receives a gold or silver medal, when a peasant generally prefers the sum of 20£ or the half thereof, in proportion to his merit. The premiums are distributed by the Royal President himself, accompanied by a short but pointed speech to the successful candidate; - a circumstance which operates on the minds of men with the most powerful effect" (Sketch of the Character of His Royal Highness the Prince of Denmark, London 1791, pp. 73-74).

By what was known as the Stavnenband of 1733, the Danish peasants were tied to their native soil as vassals, and oppressed by the many services and taxes which they owed to their feudal superiors. Stuevæng, during his brief period of power, had attempted to relieve them of these burdens, but his downfall was followed by the reactionary ministry of Guldberg, who maintained that the yoke of the peasants could not be removed without Denmark's shaking and quivering to its foundations. The coup d'état of 1784, by which Guldberg fell, opened the way to agricultural reform, and, under the leadership of Count Christian Ulrich Frederik Reventlow, a commission was formed which succeeded in obtaining the repeal of the Stavnenband on 20th June 1788. It is not clear from Dempster's words whether or not the news of this reform had reached him; it seems more probable that it had not. No evidence seems to have survived to indicate whether or not Dempster did make any attempt to compete for one of the Prince Royal's premiums.
that you would go to the keeper of the King's Library and get from
him the Catalogues of Aristotle's Commentators, which I left
with him in order that he might know what he would of them; and when
you have got them send them down to me here in Philobius's
in a frank which you will get from some member of either House of Par-

1

The King's Library was not incorporated with the British Museum Lib-

dary until 1823, when it was presented to the nation by George IV.
Rumours that it was actually bought secretly by the nation to pre-
vent the King from selling it to the Emperor of Russia do not appear
to rest on any firm foundation. The collection, which at the date
of this letter was housed in the Queen's House (now Buckingham Pal-
ace), was built up entirely by George III, who began acquiring books
while he was still Prince of Wales. In 1762 he bought the valuable
library of Joseph Smith, British Consul in Venice, and so laid the
foundations of the King's Library. His first librarian was Richard
Dalton, an artist by training and profession, who, after George III's
accession, was transferred to the post of keeper of the Royal Pic-
tures and Antiquities; he was succeeded by Frederick Augustus Bar-
nard (see note 3 below). The King continued to take an intense in-
terest in the building up of his collection, which was run on the
most liberal principles. In average of £2,000 a year was spent on
it; but George Nicol, the Royal Bookseller, was instructed not to
bid for books for the King against any scholar who was buying books
for use. Access to the library was permitted to all serious schol-
ars, regardless of their political views or the King's prejudices.
Dr. Johnson was among those who read there, and the story of his en-
counter in the Library with its owner is well-known; but a less
well-known example of the King's broadmindedness where learning was
concerned was the visitation of Dr. Joseph Priestley, the famous Dis-
senter, whose views were particularly obnoxious to the King. "If
Dr. Priestley applies to my librarian he will have permission to see
the Library, as other men of science have had," wrote the King to
Lord North. "But I can't think his character as a Politician or
Divine deserves my appearing at all in it" (Walpole and Gilbert, Cata-
logue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections,
London 1921, III, p. vii). For Thorkelin's connection with the King's
Library, see p. 40 supra.

2

This request is answered in Thorkelin's letter to Konboodo of 7th
July 1769 (Nat. Lib. of Scot. MS. TD 395); "On my arrival from the
Country, I waited on Mr. Barnard according to your Lordships order, &
received of him the enclosed Catalogue of the Editions of Aristotle,
& his commentators." I have not been able to discover any printed
book which answers these descriptions, and it is not impossible that
who I think is a very civil obliging man; and I am persuaded he will not grudge you the use of the Greenland Grammar, which you first informed me of, and which I think a great Curiosity. I glanced it over for a while that I sat in the Library, and observed that the Language had Cases of Nouns, and three Numbers, Singular, Dual, and Plural; Conjugations of Verbs, and Tenses formed by Flection, and one very particular form of the Verb, distinguishing the Affirmation of the Action from the Negation of it, by the Flection of

this Catalogue (Honboðað uses the plural in speaking of it and Thorkelin the singular) might have been a manuscript.

3

Frederick Augustus Barnard remained in charge of the King's Library until 1823 when he was created a Knight of Hanover on his retirement. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of Antiquaries, and died on 27th January, 1830, aged 87. According to his obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine (June 1830, vol. 100, p. 571), "he was presumed to be a natural son of Frederick Prince of Wales" and therefore a half-brother of George III. This rumour is referred to by A. Esdelle, who adds that "the presumption is borne out by the portrait which hangs in the King's Library. If so, it is at least curious that he should have been given for a second Christian name that of his father's wife" (The British Museum Library, London 1945, p. 570). He published a catalogue of the King's Library in five volumes which appeared under the title, Bibliotheca Regiae Catalogus (London 1820-29); it contains an interesting account of the origin and growth of the Library and includes a long letter from Johnson to Barnard advising on the acquisition of books for it.

4

Grammatik Gronlandisch Danico-Latina, edita a Paulo Egede, Copenhagen 1760. Paul Egede, son of the famous Greenland missionary, Hans Egede, accompanied his father on his first mission to Greenland in 1721 and devoted his life to the same evangelical work among the Eskimos. Like his father he eventually became Bishop of Greenland, and, apart from this grammar, published among his other works a Dictionarium Gronlandico Latino-Danicum (Copenhagen 1750), a translation into the Greenland language of the New Testament (Copenhagen 1766) and Bestrebninger om Gronland, udvrigte af en Journal helden fra 1721-1788 (Copenhagen '1788). For an account of the Greenland mission of Hans Egede and his sons, see H. A. Bobé, Hans Egede, Colonizer and Missionary of Greenland, Copenhagen 1952.
the word. But there are sundry other particulars concerning the Language, about which you will be able to satisfy me upon a perusal of the Grammar. First I want to know whether it has that material part of speech, I mean the Article, which the Latin Language wants, and whether it does not supply another defect of that Language, the want of two past Tenses, the aorist and the praterperfect, and a third defect of the Latin, the want of a past participle active, and a fourth, the want of a present participle passive. Whether it uses auxiliary verbs in the forming of the Tenses. That is the common length of the words, and whether there be not many monosyllables in the Language; and Lastly whether you can perceive any affinity between it and the Gothic. As to the Gothic, I mean your Language of

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5 This formidable list of requests was answered by Thorkelin in his letter of 7th July (see note 2 supra): "I. . . . did not fail of examining the Greenlandic Grammar & found that that very curiosus language has no C. D. F. H. Z nor X. The Nouns have their dual, & the pronouns are both prepositive & postpositive. The articles with which the Greek & the Gothic are endowed have not fallen to the share of the Greenlandic language: the Greenlanders are totally ignorant of the articles. But no defective they are on this point, so much greater advantage they possess in their conjugations. They have a present, pretetit & futurum & this again a first & a second. Every mode has its dual. The scheme is as follows. Here follows an illustration of the verbal structure of the language, based on the verb hatternek, t. undress; the substance of it will be found in Rale's Grammar, pp. 68-103. . . . With respect to the monosyllables I imagine that no language has less number of them, though I must confess that it seems to me, that many words consisting of great many syllables seem to be a building of as many entire words. The Greenlandic etymology is as yet too little known, & I am apt to think that their nouns representing a certain object is a complete description of it, or a whole combination of ideas much more terse, than even those of the Greeks. Thus many proper Names among our ancestors, which at first seem to be a simple & single noun are compounded & signify two different things." In this connection, see H. Birket-Smith, The Eskimos (London 1859), pp. 62-63: "Eskimo words are usually long and polysyllabic. Two or three syllables are the rule for the stems; but in their derivatives their number is multiplied. This is in exact line with the whole construction of the language, for the out-
Iceland, which is the only pure Gothic extent, I want to know whether it has the article: and whether there be not a great many monosyllables in it such as we have in our Dialect of the Gothic. I think you told me it had three Genders: and I want further to know, whether it supplies all those defects that I have mentioned in the Latin Tongue. I am sensible that to answer all these questions will cost you some trouble; But I know a man of knowledge such as you are, will not grudge the trouble of instructing other people, who are desirous of knowledge. I ever in Your most Obedient humble Servant Jan. Burnett.

P.S. Direct for Lord Monboddo, St. John's Street Edinburgh

IX. From Lord Monboddo (no. 601)

Edinburgh 23 July 1789

Dear Sir,

I received your Letter, which I have not only read, but studied with a great deal of pleasure and instruction. The standing character of Eckino is its incorporating and polysynthetic structure. It is incorporating because the pronouns are expressed in the verb during inflexion... the whole Eckino grammar is, one might say, based upon the incredible ease with which idea can be linked with idea. Pink has calculated that the word *ige*, house, can receive eighty different suffixes; and one single, arbitrarily chosen derivative could form sixty-one new derivatives of the second degree; to one of these another seventy suffixes could be attached..." See also Monboddo's next letter of 23rd July 1789, note 6.

6 None of these questions about the Icelandic language is answered in Thorkelin's letter of 7th July.

1 Thorkelin's letter of 7th July 1789; see previous letter, note 2.
had no notion that when they were so far advanced in the Grammatical art as to have Cases formed by Position and a Dual Number, they were no defective in their articulation as to want the use of Six Letters, and one of them an Aspirate. I take it for granted however that they have all the five Vocal Sounds, and in that respect their Language is more perfect than even the English, which wants one Vowel viz. the 2 ypsilon, in place of which they have only the Diphthong eu.

As the Greenlanders express both the Agent and Patient by a form of the word, they have a middle voice, which I think is one of the greatest Arts of Language. You say nothing of Genders: but I take it

2 This remark seems to be in direct contradiction of Kromboddo's theory that the vowels are the basis of all languages, and of his statement in Origin and Progress of Language: "But, on the other hand, the five vowels are to be found, I believe, in all languages, though not all sounded in the same way in every language. For even the Huron language, though it have not, as I have observed, the pure sound of the vowel u; yet it has the mixed sound of it in composition with other vowels, such as the diphthongs eu and ou" (I. p. 336).

3 See Kromboddo, Origin and Progress of Language, II. p. 168: "Then a person acts, it is the active voice; when he suffers, it is the passive. Most languages have no other; but the Greek has a third, called the middle voice, denoting that the person both acts, and suffers, that is to say, is the subject of his own action; so that the verb, in this form, very much resembles the reflected verbs of the French." But see also Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar, London 1924, p. 163: "On the 'middle voice' as found, for instance, in Greek, there is no necessity to say much here, as it has no separate notional character of its own; sometimes it is purely reflexive, i.e. denotes identity of subject and (unexpressed) object; sometimes a vague reference to the subject; sometimes it is purely passive and sometimes scarcely to be distinguished from the ordinary active; in some verbs it has developed special semantic values not easily classified." Cf. Joseph Wright, Comparative Grammar of the Greek Language, London 1812, p. 250: "The parent Indo-Germanic language had two voices - the active and the middle. The former was preserved in the historic period of all the separate languages, and the latter was preserved in Greek, Latin and Latin and also partly in Gothic. It had no special form which were exclusively used to express the passive, but before the parent language had become differentiated into the separate languages the middle forms had to some
for granted that they have then. You do not tell me neither whether they have not what the Latins went two past times, an sōrist such as, I did, and a preterperfect, such as I have done. Whether they be not as deficient as the Latins in a past participle active and a present participle passive: and lastly I want to know, whether you have discovered any difference of signification betwixt their first and second future. I think you told me that you could not discover any

extent begun to be used to express the passive. This mode of expressing the passive underwent further development in Greek, Sanskrit and Latin. And such middle forms as were preserved in Gothic became exclusively passive in meaning . . . " See also Du Bois's 
tiles, The Early German and the Developments of the Middle Voice, Cambridge 1895.

4 See Égede's Grammar, p. 23: "Non datur discrimen Generis, sed quodlibet Nomen est Commonis vel Æquis Generis,"

5 Cf. Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar, London 1924, p. 270: "The Latin perfect, which originated in an amalgamation of the old preteritis (sōrista) and perfects, combines the syntactic functions of those two tenses. In Romanic verbs, however, we witness the same development as in the majority of the Gothicic verbs, the old perfect forms having lost their perfect-function and having become pure preterits, though with this difference from the Gothicic verbs, that they are sōrista (now termed passé défini, passé historique, passé historique), because side by side with them there are imperfects. . . . The real perfect as in Gothic is expressed periphrastically: ho sōrista, ni kōrt, etc.

6 In reading Manbodde's remarks on the Greenland language, it should be borne in mind that it is manifestly impossible to discuss a language such as the Eskimo in the terms of a grammatical system devised to fit the structure of a totally different language, such as Latin or Greek. The same distinctions between nouns and verbs, for example, do not apply. See C. V. Schultz-Lorentzen, A Grammar of the West Greenland Language, Copenhagen 1945, pp. 15-14: "In the Greenlandic language the word has a quite different, much more dominant significance than it has in the language groups familiar to us. Of course the Greenlanders employ a sequence of words in their talk, but these sequences can only improperly be called sentences. Apart from some few instances it may be said that the Greenlandic word contains in itself all the elements necessary to convey a completed
likeness betwixt their Language and the Gothic. If so I must con-
clude that their Language came much earlier from the East, the Parent
Country of all Arts and Civility than the Gothic and before a Language
was perfectly formed in that Country of the East from whence they
came.

As to your Language the Gothic, you have told me enough of it to
convince me that it is a more perfect Language than the Latin, and I
suppose much more perfect than the Greenland in the Article of Arti-
culation. It has also an Article you say, which the Greenland Lan-
guage wants, as well as the Latin. It has genders, but I forget
whether you told me that it had all the three. It forms also Cases
by flection, but I forget how many. And I want to know whether it
has those defects in Tenses and Participle shapes which I have

merging ... Hence the Greenlandic word in the chief object to con-
sider if we would understand the Greenland language. It is the word
with which the grammar principally deals. And the word must not be
regarded as a finished unit ready to be placed in and again fetched
out of a dictionary. The Greenlandic word is living, is constantly
coming into existence, so to speak constantly in course of construc-
tion. Starting from a fixed point of departure, the stem, it is ampli-
fied more and more by additions of various kinds, as the meaning may
require, until everything has been said that can or should be said by
it and a short accented syllable so to speak puts a stop to it."
See also previous letter, note 5.

7. It is not quite clear whether the penultimate word "they" in this
sentence refers to the Goths or to the Greenlanders, but it seems more
likely to refer to the latter than the former — in other words, that
the Greenland language had advanced in an elementary condition and
had reached its contemporary "advanced" state after settlement in
Greenland. But this seems to be contradicted by Lombeodo's later
letter of 19th July 1791, in which he uses the Greenland language to
illustrate his theory that "the Art of Language must have come from a
Country highly civilized and far advanced in other Arts and Sciences,
for I think it is impossible that either the Greenlanders or Goths
could have invented a Language of such Art as they speak."

8. The paper has been torn here.
observed in the Latin Language. And Lastly I want to know whether
there be any Grammar of it, that you could recommend to me. — I over
em with great regard and esteem, Your affectionate humble Servant
Jes. Burnett.

P.S. You may address a Letter to me, under cover of, Lord Advocate
of Scotland [Mr J.]

X. From Lord Kenboddie (no. 599)

[Mr J.] 23 Decem[ber] 1789

Dear Sir,

I believe I wrote you an answer to your Letter in the month of
July last, giving me a very curious account of the Greenland Language.
The more I study Language, the more I am convinced that it is not only
the most curious Art, of the most difficult Invention, of all those in-
vented by Men, but I am further persuaded that it is by Language chief-
ly, that we can discover the Origin of Nations and their Migration from
one Country to another. There is a Book of which I had the use from

9 Hay Campbell (1734-1823), later Sir Hay Campbell. Like Kenboddie,
he was engaged as counsel (though in a more junior capacity) in the
Douglas Cause; and, then the Judgement of the Court of Session was
reversed in the Lords, Campbell rode to Edinburgh to bring the news to
the inhabitants before it could reach them by post. He succeeded Sir
Thomas Miller, on his death in September 1789, as Lord President, and
was himself succeeded as Lord Advocate by Robert Dundas, nephew of
Henry Dundas, Lord Melville. Campbell appears to have been an unin-
spiring, unenthusiastic speaker; but he was described by Lord Cockburn
as being, of all the old judges, "the only one whose mind was thorough-
ly opened to the comprehension of modern jurisprudence." See George
W. Scott, The Lord Advocates of Scotland from the close of the fif-
teenth century to the passing of the Reform Bill, Edinburgh 1885, II,
pp. 174-77.

1 See letter VIII, note 2.
the King's Library, written by a Frenchman, which proves demonstrably, 2
that the Hungarian and the Lapland Languages are the same. Now the
3 Hungarian, as we are told by Hieronymus Marcellinus, came from a Country far to
the East betwixt the Bucine and Caspian Seas; And the Russians have
lately discovered a people in that Country who call themselves HAJARS
which is a name, by which the Hungarians at this day call themselves:

3 This reference is so vague as to make it difficult to identify the
work in question; and it is further complicated by a reference in
his letter of 20th June 1790 to Sir William Jones (see note 14 below):
"The substance of this has been lately discovered by a Prussian
gentleman, who was sometime in Lapland, and learned the language there;
he had also learned the language of Hungary. Upon the subject of
these two languages he has written a treatise, in which I think he has
proved demonstratively that the two are the same." Since it is un-
likely that Konboodo should have read within the space of six months
two different books on a subject on which so little had at that time
been written, it may be assumed that he is describing the same work to
Thorkelin. Samuel Gyamathi's Affinitatis Linguarum Hungaricae cum Idar-
icia, Feniciaca, Origines Grammaticae Demonstrata (Gottingen 1799) is
usually credited with being the first book to point out the similarity
between the two languages, and it was on this that Rask was later to
base his work in the same field. Thorkelin, however, in his answer
to this letter of 20th January 1790 points out that this kinship had
already been asserted by Joannes Sajnovicius in his Demonstratio Idiom
Hungarorum & Lyceorum Idea eae (Copenhagen 1770), and the relationship
had indeed been noticed even earlier by Olof Rudbeck in his Specimen
nus Linguarum Gothicae,... edita valoia linguarum Gothicae cum
Scinica, nec non Etrusca eum Tuscania (Upsala 1717). Neither Rud-
beck's book nor Sajnovic's seems likely to be that referred to by Kon-
boodo; but if a German, rather than a French, authorship be accepted,
it is possible that Johann Herhard Fischer's Quaestiones Petropolitanae
(Gottingen and Goth, 1770) might answer the description. It con-
tains a section, "De origine lingurarum", in which the author sets out
tables as follows: "Tabula harmonica linguarum Ucrica eum ceteras lin-
gud Scythia, Vegulica, Kandinica, Fenicia, Syratica, Permica, Votica,
Tcheremiaisica, Nordvania" (p. 25, section 12); and "Tabula harmonica
linguarum Ucrica e Feniciaca" (p. 23 section 13).

3. The History of Hieronymus Marcellinus (of which only a part survives)
was first printed in Rome in 1474; but this edition, which was taken
from the poorest of the ms sources, is of little value. The likeliest
edition for Konboodo to have used would be that of Henricus Valerius
(Paris 1633) or of his younger brother Raduinus (Paris 1631), both of
which were textually reliable. Pinkerton, in his bibliography to the
Mudry into the History of Scotland, quotes an edition by Boeckh,
for Huns and Huncarians are names imposed upon them by other Nations, such as the name of Scots given to us: for our Highlanders, who are the Original Scotsmen, do not call themselves by that name, but say they are Gaul Albinachs that is Gauls inhabiting Albion. Now what a wonderful Migration of a people and of a Language from a Country beyond the Bering Sea to Lapland. That your Gothic Language and people, came from Crim Tartary, or the Tauric Chersonese, as it was called of

published in Leyden in 1633, and another by Gronovius (Leyden 1695). A translation in the Loch series by John C. Rolfe was produced in three volumes in 1635. The description of the origin of the Huns occurs in Book XXXI.

4. It is generally accepted that the group of tribes from which the Hungarian nation descended originated in the Russian steppes between the Urals and the Volga; and that, in their settlement of the middle Danube basin, they displaced the previous Hun and Sarmatian occupations. Konbodo, by his "Country far to the East betwixt the Bering and Caspian Seas", seems to be describing the Caucasus.

5. Cf. Pinkerton's Enquiry into the History of Scotland, (2nd ed.), II, p. 232: "But there can be no question that Albani was an appellation also belonging to the Picts, and in every probability indigial. Albani was, as would seem, the name which the Picts gave to Britain, or at least to their part of it; for I can never find it applied to present England, either in ancient or modern times; ... as that appellation is always found among Gothic nations, there is room to infer that Albain and Albani were indigial terms among the Picts, who gave them to their territory, and to themselves from situation in it. So the Dalreudind afterward called themselves Albinach, from their situation in Pictland, though originally Gael. ... These matters considered, it will appear as ridiculous to infer that, because our Highlanders now term themselves Albainch, they were the ancient Albainch, as to infer that because the people of Bretagne now call themselves French, they were the original Frans."  

6. Konbodo here presumably means the whole Crinian peninsula, although the term "Tauric Chersonese" was also used more specifically to describe the ancient city founded in the 5th century B.C. on the west side of it, as a colony of Hercules. The district was known by the Russians by the Tartar name of Crin or Kryn (hence Crines); and it is supposed that the earliest Cimmerian Celtic inhabitants were expelled by Scythian invaders during the 7th century B.C. Cf. Pinkerton's History-
old, I think there can be no doubt; and I think it is extremely probable that the Greenland Language, which is also the Language of the Eskimeaux, came also from some Eastern Country. And if there could be discovered any affinity between your Gothic and the Greenland, it would make the thing certain. This is a matter of anxious inquiry, of which I know no body so capable as you.

As to your Gothic, I find there is a Grammar written of it by one

8

Runolphus Jonas, an Icelander, printed at Oxford 1688. This Author says that it has four Declensions, and as many cases as the Greek formed by Flection. It has also a Dual Number, he says, in its Pronouns and

ation on the Origin and Progress of the Sartihians or Goths, p. 42;
footnote: "Grin is Cimmerian shortened; the town Cimmerium is called Cold-Grin, or Old Grin, by the Tartars."

7

See Thorkelin's reply of 20th January 1790: "It is indeed a matter of great surprise to me, how Grotius could repeatedly write 'sic,' that America had received her first population 'sic' from Norway. Some slight pains of collating the languages of the Americans, with that of the Goths, which is enshrined in the language of Iceland, would have convinced that Great Lawyer of a palpable mistake, & he then would have adopted the traduced doctrine of America having received her inhabitants, at least the present Greenlanders & Eskimeaux from some Eastern Regions, & of course, that the two last mentioned nations came from Charchatka, Siberia & other Countries, into which the Great Tartary is divided. It is certain, that the Greenlanders & Eskimeaux, who are no doubt the same people, have once been settled in those dreary Regions; for it is no longer a question, that their language; their mode of living; their manners & their features have a strong affinity with those of the Kalmucks, Tatars, Tunguses & Chermashals." The original MS. of this letter of Thorkelin's now appears to be missing; this quotation is taken from a Xerox of it in my possession.

8

Runolphus Jonas, Recensissima antiquissima linguae sentncionalis
incunabula, id est Grammaticae Islandicae rudimenta nuna prium ... edidit, Copenhagen 1651. It was republished in Oxford, e Theatro Sheldoniano, in 1683, and was later printed by Hices, first in his Institutiones Grammaticae Anglo-Saxonicae, Oxford 1689, and again in the first volume of his Linuaram Veterum Sentncionalum Thea-

surus, Oxford 1705.
Verbs and has three genders. It has five conjugations and several tenses formed by declension, and the rest by auxiliary verbs. It has also all the indeclinable parts of speech, such as adverbs and prepositions. And as to its pronunciation he says it has rhythm, that is long and short syllables, as well as the Greek & Latin. Now I would desire to know of you, whether this account of your language may be depended upon: And I would further desire to know what I have not yet learned either from you or him, whether the Gothic has not two past tenses like the Greek, a praeterperfect and an aorist? Whether it has not also like the Greek, a past participle active, and a present participle passive. If it has all these tenses and participles together with the article, all which the Latin wants; it is a language much more perfect than the Latin.

See Thorkelin's reply in his letter of 20th January 1780: "As to the Gothic Language, the Grammar of Rulolph Jonas . . . may be depended on: However Rulolph is certainly in the wrong, when he asserts, that we have a distinct dual. Besides, he has forgot many things, which since his time have been well explained by John Magnuson, Brother to the celebrated Jonas Magnuson, who laid foundation to a noble institute at Copenhagen, & bound the members, of them that institute /sia/ consists, to publish, at the expense of his legacy, the immense collection of manuscripts concerning the Northern Antiquities & history, which he collected with a success equal to his sanguine wishes on his travels through Denmark, Norway, Iceland Sweden & Germany. The last mentioned Grammar has not been published hitherto, & therefore I shall beg leave to observe, that from this learned performance an addition may be borrowed to what Rulolph has said relative to the genders. It is a fact, that the Icelandic Language has three distinct genders. ex. gr. Godr Nadr a good man; rod com a good woman; rod dyr a good animal. Moreover the declension of the adjective changes when used as a demonstrative ex. gr. sá rod madr, that good man; sá rod com a good woman; pat rod dyr that good animal. The articles are either prepositive or postpositive. viz. elm madr a man; ein com a woman; elt dyr an animal; Madr the man; Coma the woman; dyrit the animal. While we are thus equal with the Greek /sia/, & superior to the Romans with respect to articles & genders, I am sorry to confess, that we have lost the two past tenses: the aorists & the second future, all of which we must supply by the auxiliary verbs of do hef I have; do will I will; do na I may; do mun Scot: I
As to the Catalogue of the Advocate's Library, it is not to be got for money, otherwise you should have had it before now. But I shall procure from the Curator of the Library a Copy for you, which shall be sent with the first Ship after the Christmas Holidays.

Upon the Subject of Language I forgot to tell you that there are Languages in South America among Nations that we should think quite Barbarous, more artificial than your Gothic or than even the Greek in some particulars: Of these you will find an Account given in my first Volume of the Origin of Language which I believe I gave

\[\text{man; do & I ought; do skal I shall. Of participles we have no more than the present active, alskondi loving; & the present passive alskondor loved.}\]

10

This is in response to Thorkelin's letter of 7th July 1739, in which he writes: "During your Lordships stay in London, you once mentioned the Catalogue of the Advocate's Library, & as it is not to be purchased, I presumed to request your interest with a view to get a Copy. That Catalogue is too great a treasure & curiosity of learning, than I should be indifferent about it; in so much more, as not a single copy has found its way to Denmark." This reference could be to the first published catalogue of the Advocate's Library, which was produced in 1692 under the title Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Juris Utriusque, tam Civilis quam Canonici, Publici quam Privati, Feudalis quam Municipalis veriorum Restorum... A Facultate Advocateorvm in Supremo Senatu Judicis in Scotia, in usum Cuniae Legum Juventutis, Constructae, una cum praefatione doctissima D. Georgii Mackenzel a Valle Rosarum Rhusden Facultatis Dei. It is much more likely, however, that Rolband should have spoken to Thorkelin of the later and much more complete Catalogue of the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, of which two parts had by this time appeared: the first, the work of Thomas Ruddall and Walter Goodall, in 1742; and the second, by Alexander Brown, in 1772. The third part, containing additions to the library up to 1807, appeared in that year; no author is named on the title-page, but it is presumably the work of Alexander Hammers, the then Librarian, and his staff.

11

See Origin and Progress of Language, I, chapters vi - ix, in which are discussed the languages of the Galibi (who "inhabit a province of South America, near to the isthmus there the French have had a settlement about a hundred years"), the Caribs of the Caribbean islands, the Peruvians and the Guaran of Paraguay. The Languages of the North
you; or if I have not given it you, Mr. Cadell will take your word
that I desire him to give it you. In it you will see that by study-
ing different Languages we not only discover the History of the Human
Race, and the Origin and Migrations of Nations, but also the progress
of the Human Mind in the formation of its Ideas.

I beg you will take the trouble to call upon a Gentleman of the
name of Mallery who lives in Queen Anne Street west, Cavendish
Square. His name is upon the Door, which I believe is marked No. 6.
You may give my Service to him, and ask him whether he received a
Letter from me inclosing a Letter to Sir William Jones, which I de-

American Hurons and Algonquins, the Esquimaux and of the inhabitants
of the newly discovered Island of Otsehite are also mentioned. It
is worth remark that, of the various south American languages dis-
cussed, only the Peruvian had not had either a Grammar or dictionary
published by the time Monboddo wrote; and reference to the various
works he consulted will be found in his footnotes.

12
Adamant Thomas Cadell (1742-1802), bookseller and publisher of
Monboddo's Origin and Progress of Language, as of many other works
by Robertson, Gibbon and Blackstone. He retired from business in
1793, and was succeeded by his son Thomas, in partnership with William
Davies, until whose death the firm was known as Cadell and Davies.
See Nichols' memoir of Thomas Cadell in Literary Anecdotes, VI, pp.
441-45.

13
Sir Charles Wilkins (1742-1830), orientalist and pioneer of the
study and printing of Sanskrit. He went to India in 1770 as a writer
in the East India Company and remained there until his health obliged
him to return to England in 1780. He was the author of, among many
other publications, a Grammar of the Sanskrit Language (London 1808),
Radicals of the Sanskrit Language (London 1815) and a catalogue of
the manuscripts of Sir William Jones (London 1783). His daughter
married William Hareman, the numismatist, with whom Thorckelin also
corresponded during his stay in England on the subject of languages;
but as Hareman's earliest letter to Thorckelin is dated 1787, their
acquaintance cannot be the result of the introduction to Wilkins in
this letter.

14
Sir William Jones (1743-94), judge of the High Court of Calcutta,
aired the favour of him, that he would forward to India.

I heartily wish you all the compliments of the Season, and ever your affectionate humble servant Jan. Burnett.

XI. From Lord Monboddo (no. 604)

Edinburgh. 4. February 1780

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to inform you that your catalogue of our Advocate's library has been sent off to-day for London by Mr Bell by 2 bookseller here; directed to a man, when Mr Bell says, you know was one of the most brilliant classical and oriental scholars of his generation, although he freely acknowledged his debt to Wilkins in the matter of Sanskrit. He was elected to the Literary Club in 1773, the same year as Garrick and Boswell, and is included by Provost Barnard in the list of members of the Club who might teach him to improve himself:

If I have thoughts and can't express 'em
Gibbon shall teach me how to dress 'em
In terms select and terse;
Jones teach me modesty — and Greek;
With how to think; Burke how to speak,
And Bentham to converse.

It is a distinct possibility that the letter which Thorkelin is asked to enquire about is that written by Monboddo on 20th June 1789 and printed in Allan Knight's Lord Monboddo and some of his Contemporaries, pp. 207-71; it is concerned largely with the matters discussed in this letter to Thorkelin — the origin of the Hungarian people, the similarity of their language to the Finnish and Lapland languages and the "artfulness" of the Greenland language. Jones' collected works were published after his death by his widow and his friend, Lord Teignmouth; and were reprinted in 1807 in thirteen volumes, with a life of Jones by Teignmouth.

1 This letter has been annotated in Thorkelin's hand "from Lord Monboddo" at the top of the first page.

2 John Bell (d. 1806) was known in Edinburgh as "the father of the bookselling trade", and was one of the original promoters of the Society of Booksellers of Edinburgh and Leith. He was first in
very well. But in case you should not know him, you have enclosed his address. Mr. Brown our Librarian has given you a short history of our Library, which you have prefixed to the Catalogue.

I think myself much obliged to you for your long letter giving me an account of your Icelandic Language, and the way your people pass their long winter nights: and I suppose also many of their short summer days, when they cannot go abroad. As to your Language, I think it is clearly a more perfect Language than the Latin: for it partnership with Alexander Kincaid as Kincaid and Bell, and was succeeded in this association by William Creech (later to be the publisher of Burns), when the firm took the name of Kincaid and Creech. About the time that this letter was written, Bell entered into partnership with Bradfute (in whose house in Brown Square Pinkerton stayed as a lodger when he lived briefly in Edinburgh), and the sign of Bell and Bradfute can still be seen in the High Street of Edinburgh. See the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 11th October 1806 for Bell's obituary; and also Bloomer, Bushnell and Dix, A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1725-1775, London 1932.

Unfortunately this name and address, which were presumably written on a separate piece of paper, have not been preserved.

Alexander Brown, Librarian of the Faculty of Advocates' Library. His only published work appears to have been the second volume of the Library Catalogue mentioned here (see previous letter X, note 10).

Nonboddo refers to Thorkelin's letter of 20th January, 1790 (see previous letter X, note 7). The last part of it is unfortunately missing, and the text breaks off at the point where Thorkelin is obviously embarking on an account of the early Icelandic writers and the history of the language. The rough outline of his description of the spending of winter nights by the Icelanders in reading and reciting the sagas can be supplied from other existing letters, and from the accounts of early visitors to Iceland, notably that of the missionary, Benjamin Hornsbergen (Iceland, or the Journal of a Residence in that Island, Edinburgh 1818), who was obviously much impressed by "the itinerant historians, who gain a living during the winter by staying at different farms till they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge."
has an Article, the want of which is a great defect in the Latin Tongue: because without the Article, you cannot distinguish the Subject of a Proposition from the Predicate; For example in that famous Sentence of Juvenal.

 Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus,
it is impossible to say, from the Words whether the meaning be, The Virtue is the only Nobility, or, Nobility the only Virtue, which last, according to our way of arranging the Words, is the most natural Meaning of it. Then the Latins want a present participle passive, which you have, but our Dialect of the Gothic has not. And the Latin also wants a past participle active which we form by the Auxiliary Having, and you I suppose in like Manner; whereas the Latins form it neither by Flection, nor by any Auxiliary word. The deriving also all your terms of Art, such as Philosophy, Rhetoric, Astronomy &c from words of your own Growth, makes your Language much more compleat than the Latin.

- I am much pleased with the Account you give of the delight your Countrymen take in reading their own Antient Books. I suppose they have now given over writing: and I think it were as well, if the English did the same, and read no Books in their own Language, but their old Books.

I think of being at London again this Spring: and when I arrive, you shall very soon hear of me. In the mean time, I am very sincerely Your affectionate humble Servant Jas. Burnett.

XII. From Dunster (no. 230)

Dunmichon Forfar Februar'y 5th 1790

Ly. dear Professor
I return you many thanks for your kind Letter of the 6t Ult. I was really apprehensive bad Health has prevented your going to Ireland & I am and detained you in London. I wish I had partaken in your Tour to those Countries. You don’t mention the Time you spent in Ireland nor if you made any Excursions from Dublin into the Country which then ever the Roman Catholic Religion shall be tolerated & Papists admitted to the Rights of freemen, will be by far the Rich- est Island for its extent belonging to his Majesty. Your Picture of the Isle of Man would make one think it one of the Fortunate Islands. How come they to speak Celtic with a Gothic Government? keys made our word Choice. as you pronounce it Keine. I have had much

1

A very small measure of relief had been granted to the Irish Catholics by the Relief Act of 1703; but Catholics were still excluded from the franchise, from membership of Parliament and from all civic office. By Hobart’s Catholic Relief Act of 1793, they were permitted to bear arms, become members of corporations, vote as 40/- freeholders, act as grand jurors, take degrees at Dublin and hold commissions in the army below the rank of General; but they were still debarred from seats in Parliament and office in the Government or State. Full emancipation was not granted until 1829, when the 40/- franchise qualification was raised to £20. Catholic emancipation had been one of Pitt’s dearest wishes on becoming Prime Minister, but his constant efforts were frustrated by George III’s iron determination that to emancipate the Catholics would be to break his coronation oath. See also Letter XXI, note 5.

2

The Manx language is a form of Goidelic Celtic (closely related to Old Irish and Gaelic); Brythonic Celtic is spoken in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. The Isle of Man was converted by Irish monks in the 5th or 6th century, but it is probable that the language had already been introduced there by Irish invaders much earlier. Both through traders and through the Church, the Manx dialect acquired a certain number of Latin loanswords. It was also influenced by the Scandinavian vikings who settled there in the 9th–11th centuries, and, naturally most of all, by the close proximity of the English. The language is now nearly extinct; in 1943, it was said that there were 20 people on the island who had spoken Manx from infancy, of whom only 10 remained by the time Professor Kenneth Jackson visited Man in 1950. A further four of these had died by the time his Contributions to Manx Philology were published in 1955. Despater presumably refers
pleasure & much instruction this summer from Mr Pinkerton's vol-

ume on the Scotch Antiquities on which he has thrown a glare of
light, as well as on the Settlements made by the Goths in Ireland.

I am flattened to find myself your kinsman & one of those whose an-
cestors chased the Romans out of Britain. The reverend Mr Jamieson
and I meet & compare our Norse. He is still going on with his
Collection & has made a little Dictionary of Anguus words that an
Inhabitant of Dramtheon would understand. I have had it mentioned to

d 

here to the House of Keys, the Manx elected assembly of (originally)
24 landowners of the Island whose function it was to interpret the
Law. See R.J. Kirkpatrick, A History of the Isle of Man, Liverpool Uni-

versity Press 1950, pp. 68-69: "The origin of the name Keys has given
rise to a good deal of discussion, and it cannot be said that the
problem in finally solved. The suggested derivation from a Scandi-
navian word Kjos, meaning 'chosen' cannot be accepted on linguistic
grounds, but the most likely explanation is that it is an English
word which owe its introduction to the following combination of cir-

stances. In the first place, the Manx name for the Keys has long
been yn Kios as feed, literally meaning 'The Four and twenty'. Such
a title would, no doubt, be more or less unintelligible to the earliest
English officials who came to the Island, but they probably saw some
resemblance in pronunciation between the first words 'Kios-an' and
'keys'. Then, since the essential function of the body in its orig-
inal form was to 'unlock' or solve the difficulties of the law, it
seemed quite apt and convenient for the English to use the term keys
in its figurative sense to describe its members. This word is, in-
deed, used in its Latin form of claves in the earliest document in
the Statute Book dated 1418, in which the Keys are described as Claves
Kumiae et Claves Legis."

3

John Pinkerton, In Enquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the
Reign of Malcolm III, or 1030, including the authentic History of that

4

It is difficult to say precisely what association of ideas made
Dampier mention Dramtheon (or Dramtheon) in this connection. No
doubt the place was familiar to him as the site of the Cathedral in
which the early Kings of Norway were crowned. Possibly he remem-
bered it from Percy's Five Pieces of Nordic Poetry (which he had al-
most certainly read), where Dramtheon is frequently mentioned in
"The Complaint of Harold". In any case it is clear that he under-
stood by it the centre of the Old Norse language and civilisation,
Sir Pitt that it would extend our trade could he negotiate a Treaty of Commerce between Iceland & Great Britain. Pray consider this as the first object for that Island. Learning & true liberty & a full population would soon result from it. I am so sorry 58 years of age forms a growing obstacle to my paying it a visit, and I long to hear Lieut. Pieries account of it. He was there with Sir Stanley this summer. I am not quite idle here. The lake is drained & found to be full of marl, which under Dr Black & Sir Ramsay auspices

5

6
Joseph Black (1729-99), "the illustrious Nestor of the chemical revolution", occupied successively the chairs of Medicine and Chemistry in the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, succeeding in each case his own former teacher, William Cullen. His first major experiments, which gained him fame and his doctorate, and which were subsequently published in Essays and Observations (1755) under the title "Experiments upon Magnesia alba, quicklime, and some other Alkaline Substances", must have disposed him to take a particular interest in Brougham's activities with marl at Dunnichen. He was a close friend of Dr. James Hutton, and Playfair, in his Biographical Account of the late Dr. James Hutton (Edinburgh 1797?), has contrasted the characters of the two men: "On attending to their conversation, and the way in which they treated any question of science or philosophy, one would say that Dr. Black dreaded nothing so much as error, and that Dr. Hutton dreaded nothing so much as ignorance; that the one was always afraid of going beyond the truth, and the other of not reaching it" (pp. 57-58). Brougham, looking back with nostalgia on his student days in Edinburgh, wrote later: "I have heard the greatest understandings of the age giving forth their efforts in their most eloquent tongues - have heard the commanding periods of Pitt's majestic oratory - the vehemence of Fox's burning declamation - have followed the close-compact chain of Grant's pure reasoning - have been carried away by the mingled fancy, epigram, and argumentation of Plunket; but I would without hesitation prefer, for mere intellectual gratification (though aware how much of it is derived from association), to be once more allowed the privilege which I in those
I am going to calcine into lime. Let them the new village has doubled its inhabitants, walks are cutting thro' the woods on our hill & if you should visit Dunnichen next Summer which I wish you would make

days enjoyed, of being present while the first philosopher of his age was the historian of his own discoveries, and be an eyewitness of those experiments by which he had formerly made them once more performed with his own hands... He never failed to remark on the great use of simple experiment within everyone's reach; and liked to dwell on the manner in which discoveries are made, and the practical effect resulting from them in changing the condition of men and things" (Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham, Edinburgh and London 1871, I, pp. 71-73).

7

Rodolphe Erich Raspe (1737-94), a German antiquarian and mineralogist. Formerly employed as Director of the Museum of Antiquities at Cassel, he was sent by his Government on a journey to Italy to make collections for the museum; but was discovered to have made away with a considerable part of what he obtained. He was arrested in March 1775 and escaped to England where he made a living, first by giving German lessons and then by obtaining employment in the Cornish mines. He died at Lucross during an expedition to Ireland.

8

"This valuable mineral, shell marl, being found in greater plenty in this neighbourhood than any where else in the kingdom, or even perhaps in the known world, it may not be thought impartinent to describe it more particularly. About two miles north from Dunnichen, there are a chain of lochs which abound with marl, viz. the lochs of Forfar, Restineth, Recoble and Balgawies. In these lochs, it lay long an inaccessible treasure, till, about forty-five years ago, Captain Strachan, proprietor of the loch of Balgawies, began to drag it... This he performed with so much success, as not only supply his own farm, but to have a surplus for his neighbours... In the year 1790, Dr. Derpster of Dunnichen drained the loch and moss of Restineth, by which an inexhaustible mass of shell-marl has been made accessible... Its qualities are precisely the same with those of lime... The similarity of the two has been still further evinced by Dr. Derpster having constructed a kiln on a plan suggested by Dr. Black for calcining marl, which, after calcination, makes a very strong cement. The calcination of marl will, it is hoped, prove a useful discovery in this neighbourhood, to which other lime must be fetched from the distance of 14 or 15 miles" (Statistical Account of Scotland, Edinburgh 1791, I, pp. 425-27. The entry for Dunnichen, from which this quotation has been taken, is generally supposed to have been contributed by Derpster himself. It includes, as a footnote, a letter from Derpster to Dr. Black on the calcining of lime).
us happy by doing you will see I have not retired from Politics to
end my days in Idleness. I dont think I shall be in London this
winter. Pray pay a visit to Mrs J Dempster in our House at Knights-
bridge. Accept Mrs Da best respects & believe me with much esteem
& affection ever yours &c &c &c George Dempster.

XIII. From Dempster (no. 215)

Dear Sir

I received duly, but with great regret your parting adieux from
London 14th April Inst[ant]. This world is greatly too wide. I
could wish all who like one another, were obliged to settle in the
same Parish, or if possible in the same Street; and for your habita-
tion, I would assign the next Door, if not the same House with our-
selves. Yet for as much as your Temper, your manners, your honour-
able Character, & your vast Learning were delightful to me, and to
all your Friends, yet nevertheless it may be my hard fate never to
see you again. I presume your Leave is expired; and the duties of
your various Employments, will confine you for the rest of your days
to Denmark, at least I fear a second mission, will never draw you
again to Scotland while I supply a little spot on its Surface. Fare-
wel, my Dear Thorkelin, may happiness & health be the Lott of the rest
of your days. But remember when your Court discovers your Talents,
and sends you to govern Iceland, you must bait at Darmchen or Skibo,
and carry me, if alive in your Suit, not to see Isakla, nor the boil-
ing Jet d' Eaux of that Island, but to see a good & worthy People. I

Mrs. John Hamilton Dempster (1760-98), wife of Dempster's half-
brother, and niece to Sir Adam Ferguson of Kilkerran. See also
next letter no. XIII, note 10.
know you won't undertake the Government till your Court shall see its interest, independent of the prosperity & happiness of the People, and open Iceland, as much at least as Denmark is open to the Commerce & intercourse of the rest of Europe, and of the Globe: Have nothing to do with its Government till then: that your duty to Denmark & to Iceland may be exposed to no conflict. This Post will only suit you then you can at once promote the views of your Court & the wealth & happiness of your native Country. Tell us what we were, if you cannot make us that we should be. Your little Treatise on the Slave Trade lies upon my Table. It is eagerly read by all my Guests of Taste, & political-knowledge. There is but one opinion among them concerning this work. Little, short, & concise as it is, it is allowed to contain all & more than has been said or written on the Subject, and its Ideas of gradually abolishing the Traffic in Slaves & Slavery itself, are considered to be truly sound & wise. This is not flattery. And now, my dear Friend, I conjure you to write me now & then how you do, and I impose upon you the Tribute of sending me Copies of every thing you publish. Address all your Letters and all your works to me to the Care of Messrs. Webster & Wedderburn Merchants London. You will not be sorry to hear that my Health which

1 Packet boats for the delivery of overseas mail existed in the latter part of the 18th century but the system was expensive and unreliable, and since most of the packet boats which plied between England and the Continent operated from the south and east coast ports, anyone like Darpster living in Scotland would then have to pay inland postage calculated on a mileage basis from London to the north. It seems to have been fairly common for the international network of merchant houses and their correspondents to be used instead as private post offices. Webster and Wedderburn would probably have a correspondent in Copenhagen and would certainly have a branch in
was daily sinking under a Town Life & the drudgery of a public Trust is perfectly restored by a Country residence & rural occupations. By village which I hardly hoped to see founded may be a Town before I bid adieu to its Inhabitants; and I shall also have the pleasure of seeing good spacious Turnpike Roads connect every Town in the Country, & convenient Parish Roads form communications for every Gentleman and farmer with the great Turnpike Roads. The Loch of Resteneth is

Scotland, possibly even in Dundee. A clue to the firm's identity may be contained in the note given in C.W. Boase's Century of Banking in Dundee (Edinburgh 1867) on James Graham of Leathie, one of the original partners in the Dundee Banking Co. which was, until 1777, George Dempster and Co.: "His eldest son, James, was a merchant in London, and being unfortunate, Leathie was sold; but he afterwards succeeded to Balmuir, and took the name of Webster, and his son James Webster Esq., is the present laird of Balmuir. His second son is John Graham Woodburn of Pearsall, having succeeded to that estate and taken the family name" (p. xx). It will be seen that C.W. Boase seems to have corresponded with Thorkelin through the agency of Messrs. Wilffs & Darville, who, as timber merchants, had close connections with Denmark apart from the consular activities of the Wilff family; Dr. Jardine, when he resumes his correspondence again in 1803, does so through the Danish consuls, Messrs. Muldrep & Salveson, merchants at Leith, who operated in connection with Wilffs & Darville. Officially letters brought from overseas by vessels other than the packets had to be put into the post office immediately wherever the vessel cast anchor. In practice, this seems rarely to have been done.

The Turnpike system, which had been much assisted in England by the passing in 1773 of the General Turnpike Act, was not nearly so advanced in Scotland. The first recorded Turnpike Act in Scotland was passed in 1713, but the system was not generally adopted until the second half of the century, the roads being unsatisfactorily maintained until then by a form of compulsory service known as statute labour, which was generally unpopular and, for the most part, unenforceable. Gradually the number of turnpike trusts increased after 1750, although several counties did not have a trust until after the beginning of the 19th century. See H. Hamilton, An Economic History of Scotland in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford 1903), p. 277: "It is extremely difficult to make any assessment of the work of the turnpike trusts in Scotland. Heydon, who was probably a biased reporter, had nothing good to say of them. 'The roads in Scotland are worse than those in England', he said in a report to the House of Commons in 1811, 'although materials are more abundant, of better quality, and labour at
now completely drained & furnishes Karl & Peat to a wide district.

My wife is building a Cottage at Lochfiethie with a Cower reserved in it for Dr Thorkelin. Every hour of my time is filled up by some improvement & occupation more delightful than another, so that if you should ever consider me as having made any sacrifice to Duty, it was in accepting of a public Station and not in resigning it.

I hope the Powers of Europe will arrange their matters so as to put an end to the Turkish war & to live in Peace with one another, that their subjects may be allowed to breathe a little and attend to the improvement of the Country. Our Friend Dr Anderson publishes

least as cheap, and the toll dues are nearly double. This is because road-making, that in the surface, is even worse understood in Scotland than in England. By late decision of parliament on the subject of mail coaches paying toll, it was universally allowed that the roads in Scotland were in a deplorable state and in these circumstances bankrupt." Sinclair, on the other hand, spoke in enthusiastic terms of the achievements of the trusts: "... substantial roads have been made in all directions", he said, "the great leading highways being connected by cross-roads, the communication with the towns, villages, and sea-ports, is open to every district or parish; and thus, the productions of industry, are freely circulated throughout every part of the kingdom." Over 5,000 miles of road had been constructed, mostly since 1750, and 'three-fourths of them', he added, "within the last twenty years." Sinclair had been interested in road-building from his early youth, seeing, quite rightly, in the absence of roads a major obstacle to Scotland's economic development. His own first essay at the age of 18 was a road built across Ben Cheilt (hitherto supposed impassable) in one day; but, as he himself later admitted, "a road made so rapidly could not be durable."

3

The almost continuous state of war which existed throughout the 18th century between Russia and Turkey had flared up again in 1787 following Russia's seizure of the Crimian peninsula, then Turkish territory. On March 27th, 1791, in pursuance of her traditional policy of maintaining the balance of power in Europe, Britain sent an ultimatum to the Empress Catherine, demanding that Russia resign all her Turkish conquests with the exception of the Crimea. This measure was provoked by Catherine's further intention of seizing Oczakoff and the territory surrounding it as far as the Dniester; but its unpopularity at home and the unlikelihood that Austria would
a weekly paper called the Bee at a very low Price filled with many usefull rural Instructions that tend to promote Agriculture consider-ably. You would take leave of Dr Thoson with regret, my news Paper is the one of which he is Editor & now & then contains stric-
support Britain in the event of war being declared, discouraged Pitt, and no further action was taken. The Gentleman's Magazine of May 1791 (vol. 61, p. 476) records that "the difference with Russia is now come to a crisis. Mr. Flint, the messenger entrusted with the dispatches to Berlin and Petersburgh from the British Cabinet, when he returned, brought dispatches back, dictated with a womanly haut-
car, 'That the British Court will not be permitted, as a Mediator, to dictate terms of peace between the Express of Russia and the Porte; it therefore only remains for Great Britain to recede to-
tally from the language that has been held out to Foreign Courts, or to enforce her policy by the influence of British arms.' The complicated events leading up to the Oozkoff affair are described in detail in the Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, ed. Ward and Gooch, Cambridge 1922, I, pp. 204-209. By a treaty made in 1791 through the agency of England and Prussia, the Dniester was finally established as the future boundary of Turkey and Russia, all the land between the Dniester and the Bug being ceded to Russia, and the Turks being guaranteed free navigation on the Dniester.

4 Dr James Anderson (1739-1803), through whose agency Thorkelin was given an introduction to Jeremy Bentham (see letter V, note 4). The Bee, or, Literary Weekly Intelligencer ran from 1781-93, and at its conclusion filled 18 volumes. The "very low Price" was for coarse paper, if called for at the printing house, 1s. 10d per Volume (at the rate of two-pence-halfpenny a-number); - if de-
ivered in any house in Edinburgh, 2s. - And if sent by post, the price will be, 2s. 5d. for the coarse, 3s. for the common, and 4s. for the fine paper per volume, delivered in numbers, regularly as published, in any post towns in Great Britain. The same allowance will be made for each kind, if delivered in Edinburgh, as is speci-
ied above for the coarse paper (James Anderson, Prospectus of an intende new periodical work to be called The Bee or Universal Liter-
ary Intelligencer, Edinburgh 1790). Presumably only clients for
the coarse paper edition were expected to fetch their copies for themselves. The Earl of Buchan in particular was a frequent con-
tributor to the paper. See also Anderson's letter (no. 11) to Thorkelin of 13th August 1790: "I use the freedom to send along with this same copies of the prospectus of a literary work in which I am about to engage - and will be happy if it so far meets your approbation as to induce you or your friends sometimes to communicate your observations to the public through that channel."
tures of a pleasing & humourous kind. I pray for the preservation of your Prince Royal & of the wise men who surround his Throne. It is from those who have eulogized the Danish Slaves & put an end to the Iceland Monopoly I look for still more enlarged regulations respecting Iceland. I believe it would furnish £20,000 stirling worth of kelp for one article to Europe. Its goutarbrand would probably supply the scarcity of Charcoal at our Jorges & the Tallow.

Probably the English Review, of which, according to the Dictionary of National Biography, Thomson was the proprietor and editor from 1790-93. In connexion with it must however have been earlier than 1794, since he writes on 14th April 1790 to Thorkelin, "I do not now, nor have done for more than a year, take any part in the English Review." (letter no. 803). Deepstar, in August, might well not have known that Thomson had ceased to edit the Review. The paper ran from January 1793 to December 1790; and the U.I.B. states that "then [Thomson] relinquished the ownership it was incorporated with the analytical Review" which was owned by Joseph Johnson and ran from May 1793 to December 1793. May 1793 would fit well enough with Thomson's letter to Thorkelin about the time at which he had left the Review.

See Letter VII, note 9, and Letter VI, note 5.

Kelp, a popular name for any of the large seaweeds belonging to the order Laminariales of the brown algae (Phaeophyta) ... The term kelp also applies to the ash produced by incineration of various kinds of coarse seaweed. Until early in the 19th century the ash obtained from seaweed was an important source of potassium and iodine; recovery of these elements from seaweed is now unprofitable (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago 1963, vol. 15). See also Sir William Ramsay, The Life and Letters of Joseph Black, M.D., London 1913, pp. 64-65: 'The manufacture of kelp was carried on at a very early period on the north and west coasts of Ireland, where 'tangle', a flat-leaved seaweed, of which the botanical name is Fucus palmarus, grows in very large mount; later, large quantities of kelp were produced on the islands and coast of the west of Scotland. The seaweed was dried and burnt; the ashes consist largely of sodium carbonate, or 'soda', and then treated with water the soda dissolves, and the solution, when evaporated, gives crystals of 'washing soda'; if dried up, the powder is called 'soda-ash', and a specially pure variety is termed 'pearl-ash'. The same process was carried out on the Spanish coast, and the product was 'barilla'; the plant there burned was the salada soda, cultivated on the coast of Spain.
& Hydes of your Cattle, your dried Salmon, & Stockfish, would be use-
full in the navies of Europe & the resort of Foreigners would aid
the growth of your new Towns, some of which are I presume Seaports.
It is odd that my Hobby Horse should be Iceland, a Country far re-
moved from me & over the Rulers of which I can never expect to have
any influence. But in Proportion as nature has been unkind I think
it the Duty of Man to supply its defects, & the field for correcting
natural Evils widens, in Proportion as we approach either the Poles
or Equator. Tropartere Climates which yield all the comforts of
Life & almost spontaneously require less care. The ingenuity how-
ever of Tyrannical Governments, can go a good way to counteract these
natural advantages.

Your Letter was not more acceptable to me than to my wife &
to Miss Rose & Charlotte. They all join me in offering you their

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Suterbrand, more commonly suterbrendur, bituminous wood, or
"brown coal". According to the Cheesby-Vigfusson Icelands Dictio-
nary, "suterbrend is the common Icel. word for jet..." Cf.
Uns von Troll's Letters on Iceland, London 1760, pp. 42-43: "This
suterbrand is evidently wood, not quite petrified, but indurated,
which drops asunder as soon as it comes into the air, but keeps well
in water, and never rots: it gives a bright though weak flame, and
a great deal of heat, and yields a sourish though not wholesome
gas. The smiths prefer it to sea-coal, because it does not so
soon waste the iron. The Icelanders make a powder of it, which
they make use of to preserve their cloaths from moths; they like-
wise apply it externally against the cholic. I have seen tea-cups,
plates, &c. in Copenhagen made of Suterbrand, which takes a fine
polish. It is found in many parts of Iceland, generally in the
mountains in horizontal beds; sometimes more than one is to be met
with, as in the mountain of Lek in Bardestrand, where your strata of
suterbrand are found alternately with different kinds of stone. . .
I have brought a large piece of it with me to Sweden, in which there
are evident marks of branches, the circles of the annual growth of
the wood, leaves, and bark, in the surrounding clay: and there is
some reason to believe, that these trees have been mixed in the
thrown-up lava in same eruption of fire or an earthquake."

The identity of "Miss Rose" is a mystery; Mrs. Dargister was born
kindest respects & best wishes. Farewel My Dear Thorkelin Your sincere & affecionate Friend & most Obedien't hu'mbl'e
Servent George Dempster.

Dunnichen by Forfar N. Britain 25th April 1791

Mrs. John Dempster has been ailing. Her husband has carried her to
Lisbon & Cadiz to restore Health to this good & amiable Lady, where
they now are & there she recovers fast.

XIV. From Lord Ionbodd (no. 605)

Dunblane 19 July 1791

Dear Sir,

I have lately perused several Letters that I have from you

Rose Nearing, and it is possible that this is some younger member of
her family, who had been named after her, or, perhaps, a god-daughter.
Charlotte Burrrington was the step-daughter of Dempster's sister, Mrs.
Helen Burrington, and Dempster's ward during Mr. and Mrs. Burrington's
absence in India. See Dempster's letter to Sir Adam Ferguson of
23th February 1795: "It is intended to send Charlotte out this sea-
son to India in Captain R. Dunna's ship which is under sailing or-
ders towards the end of the next month. Mrs. Dempster who has acted
a parent's part towards our ward all along is to crown the whole by
attending her to London and seeing her safely embarked" (Fergusson,
p. 255). Charlotte arrived safely in India, and married Charles
Boddam, a judge in Chupra, Bengal. After Mrs. Dempster's death in
July 1310, she returned to Dunnichen and settled there with her
children as housekeeper to Dempster.

Mrs. John Hamilton Dempster (1766-93) was born Jean Ferguson, the
eldest daughter of Charles Ferguson, brother of Sir Adam Ferguson
of Kilkerran. Her marriage to John Hamilton Dempster, George Dem-
pter's half-brother, took place in 1785, and her only child, George,
was born the following year. From 1791 onwards, she became increas-
ingly unwell, although it appears to have been some time before her
family realized that she was suffering from consumption. She died
on 5th May 1793, and was buried, as was Dempster himself, in Res-
tenneth Priory. Her son, George, Dempster's heir, died three
years later of the same disease at the age of 15 (see letter XIV, note 21).

The long gap in this correspondence between February 1790 and
with much pleasure and Instruction, particularly one upon the Subject of the Greenland Language; by which I am more and more convinced that the art of Language must have come from a Country highly civilized and far advanced in other Arts and Sciences, for I think it is impossible that either the Greenlanders or Goths could have invented a Language of such art as they speak. The Greenland Language has a dual number, which even the Latin has not and which never could have been invented but in a Country where they were so far advanced in Arts & Sciences as to mark the distinction between Unity and Number, that is between one and three which is the first number: And then with respect to the Verb, which is a most artificial part of Speech, the art of the Greenland Language is really wonderful; for besides marking, by flection, the persons Numbers and Times, they have gone farther than even the Greeks, in marking by flection both the agent and the patient of the action. This the Greeks only do, when the agent and the patient are the same; which is what they express by their middle voice. But the Greenlanders go further, and ex-

July 1791 is probably explained by the death on 17th June 1790 of Hon- boddio's younger daughter, Elizabeth Burnett, at the age of 25. Her beauty and character were celebrated throughout Edinburgh, notably by Burns in a very indifferent Elegy on the late Miss Elizabeth Bur- net of Honboddio. She has been better commemorated by the poet's remarks about her in his letters. In a letter to William Chalmers of 27th December 1788, he speaks of his meeting with her, and adds that "there has not been anything nearly like her in all the combina- tions of beauty, grace and goodness the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence," and Mrs. Alison Cockburn records that Burns' "favourite for looks and manners is Miss Burnet — no bad judge indeed." Elizabeth Burnett had de- voted herself entirely to her father, refusing all offers of marriage for his sake, and there can be no doubt that her death was the se- verest possible blow to him; it is typical, however, of his Stoic philosophy that he makes no mention of it in this letter, not even to explain his long silence. It is possible, however (see note 4 below), that he had seen Thorkelin since her death.
press by flection even the change of the person, when the agent and
the patient are not the same, as in the instance you have given me
of a man saying, I undress him; whereas the Greek middle voice only
expresses, I undress myself. Then they have a variety of Modes,
unknown in any other language that I have heard of, such as the in-
terrogative, and the permissive mood; and a great variety of Con-
jugations too.

But besides the very accurate account you have given me of
their language you told me a fact concerning their origin, which I
think is a curious fact in the history of mankind, and by which you
have proved, what has never been so well proved before, that America
was peopled from the north east parts of Asia, and confirms me of the
Truth of a tradition which is preserved among the Indians of North
America, who live near the strait that divides the two continents,
that they were once joined, till the sea broke in & divided them.

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2 See letter IX, note 3.

3 Cf. Frank H. H. Roberts, "Developments in the Problem of the North
American Paleo-Indian" in Essays in Historical Anthropology of North
America (Smithsonian Collection No. 100), Washington 1940: "The
marked similarity in physical features between the Indian and eastern
Asiatics, as well as some cultural resemblances, bespeaks a common
heritage, and there is general agreement that he came from Asia. . . .
There is some difference of opinion with respect to the routes of mi-
gration, but a majority of those studying the problem favor the nor-
thern ones, with the Bering Strait region considered as the most like-
ly avenue, especially for the earliest of the movements. The date of
arrival for the initial immigrants has long been a perplexing ques-
tion and a subject for considerable debate. Throughout the course of
American anthropology ideas have shifted from one extreme to another,
from impossible antiquity to a time too recent to be compatible with
well-founded evidence." It should be remembered that the possibility
of the existence of the Bering Straits was only discovered by the
Danish-born explorer, Vitus Jonassen Bering in 1733, and confirmed by
his later and fatal voyage in 1741, on which he believed that he had
seen the coast of America. Throughout the eighteenth century fur-
As to your Gothic Language, you have proved to me that it is a
more perfect Language than the Latin in several Respects, particu-
larly in having an article, a past participle active, formed indeed by
an auxiliary Verb such as ours is, but which the Latin wants entirely.
And I think you also told me that they have a present participle
passive, which the Latins want as well as we. But I want to be
more particularly informed how they make their verse. You told me
it was not by quantity as the Greeks and Latins make theirs, nor was
it by rhyme; but it was formed by a certain number of Syllables in
Each Verse. Now these Syllables must necessarily be accented, as
the Syllables in our Verse are. And I want to know by what Rule
these accents are marked; whether the Syllables are alternately

Their voyages of exploration were made, chiefly by Russians, during
which the coasts of Kamchatka and Siberia and the islands off them,
including the Aleutian islands, were charted for the first time. The
charts and journals of these expeditions were used by Robertson in
his History of America (London 1777) and summarized by William Coxe
in his Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America
(London 1780); and it was possibly from Robertson's History that
Norbodo remembered the Indian tradition of their country of origin:
"This account of the progress of population in America / i.e. by
the Bering Straits / coincides with the traditions of the Mexicans
concerning their own origin, which, imperfect as they are, were pre-
served with more accuracy, and merit greater credit, than those of
any people in the New World. According to them, their ancestors
came from a remote country, situated to the north-east of Mexico.
They point out their various stations as they advanced from this, in
the interior provinces, and it is precisely the same route which
they must have held, if they had been emigrants from Asia. The Me-
xicans, in describing the appearance of their progenitors, their
manners and habits of life at that period, exactly delineate those
of the rude Tartars, from whom I suppose them to have sprung" (I,
pp. 230-81). It was believed by Steller, one of the scientists
attached to Bering's 1741 expedition, that the continents of Asia and
America had originally been connected at the Straits. See F.A.
Goldner, Bering's Voyages, An Account of the Efforts of the Russians
to Determine the Relation of Asia and America, 2 vols., New York
1 and 2).
I shall be glad to have your answer to this under the care of Sir William Forbes, who forwards this Letter to you— I am Dear Sir Your most obedient humble Servant Jas. Burnett.

It is clear from Herodotus's sixth letter to Thorkelin (not included in this edition) that some of the information asked for here was given to him verbally, presumably on the last of his annual trips to London. This letter (no. 602) is undated; but it cannot be later than this letter of July 1791, since by that time Thorkelin had returned to Copenhagen; it therefore presumably comes in date somewhere between letter no. XI of 4th February 1780 and this present letter. The text of letter no. 602 is as follows: "Dear Sir, I was very much obliged to you for the information you gave me this forenoon upon several subjects, particularly upon the Gothic Poetry— There is one thing further concerning it which I want to be informed about. The accents upon words in verse are different, you said, from the accents in prose. Now I think there must be some rule for the accents of verse; & I should be glad to know what it is— I should be glad also to know whether all your verses are of the same length as those of which you have given me a copy—"

"I hope you can come & dine with me to-morrow at five o' clock— If not I will be at home at 12 o' clock— If I cannot see you at all— I hope you will give me an answer in writing. I am Your very humble Servant Jas. Burnett." The difficulties of eighteenth century antiquarians and prosodists in understanding the principles on which Old English and Old Norse verse were based (difficulties from which Thorkelin himself was by no means exempt, as his edition of Beowulf makes clear) are mentioned on pp. 84-85 above.

Sir William Forbes of Pitligo, Bart. (1759-1806), banker and philanthropist. He was the author of a Life of James Beattie (published in the year of his death), and the supporter of many charitable institutions in Edinburgh, notably the Royal High School, the Merchant Company, Morningside Lunatic Asylum and the Blind Asylum. His death was celebrated by Scott in the Introduction to the Fourth Canto of Marmion; Scene, to whom the Canto is dedicated, had married one of Forbes' daughters shortly before the latter's death:

"... If mortal charity dare claim
The Daughters' attributed name,
Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
'The widow's shield, the orphan's stay.'

Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
By verse intrudes on this sad scene;
For sacred was the pen that wrote,
'Thy father's friend forget thou not:'"