

**POEMS, WRITTEN  
ANNO MCCCLII**

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Poems, written anno MCCCLII by Laurence Minot & Joseph Ritson

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**LAURENCE MINOT & JOSEPH RITSON**

**POEMS, WRITTEN  
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POEMS,

WRITTEN ANNO MCCCLII.

BY LAURENCE MINOT.

WITH

**Introductory Dissertations**

ON THE

SCOTISH WARS OF EDWARD III.

ON HIS

CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF FRANCE,

AND

**Notes and Glossary.**

BY JOSEPH RITSON.

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MDCCCXXV.

## PREFACE

TO THE  
EDITION OF MDCCXCV.

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THE neglect which writers of genius are occasionally condemned to experience, as well from their contemporaries as from posterity, was never exemplified, perhaps, in a more eminent degree than by the poet whose works are now offered to the public. His very name appears totally unknown to Leland, Bale, Pitts, and Tanner: it is mentioned, in short, by no one writer, till late in the present century, nor is found to occur in any catalogue: while the silence of the public records would induce us to believe that the great

monarch whom he has so eloquently and earnestly panegyrised was either ignorant of his existence or insensible of his merit.\*

That these equally elegant and spirited compositions were at length retrieved from the obscurity in which they had been for ages interred, was owing to a whimsical circumstance, which it may not be impertinent to relate. The compiler of the Catalogue of Cottonian Manuscripts, printed at Oxford in 1696, or some person whom he employed, had contented himself with describing the inestimable volume, marked GALBA E. IX, which contains some of the most precious relics of ancient English poetry, in these words: "CHAUCER. *Exemplar emendate scriptum.*" The manuscript, it must be confessed, is very *fairly*, and also pretty *correctly* written, if either be the

\* Of this monarch, who gave to Chaucer an office in the customs, upon condition that he wrote his accounts with his own hand, it has already been observed, that, "though adorned with many royal and heroic virtues," he "had not the gift of discerning and patronizing a great poet." Vide Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, by Tyrwhitt, 1775, 8vo. vol. i. p. xxviii.

meaning of *emendate*, but owes not the smallest obligation to the great poet whose genuine works might, naturally enough, have been expected to occupy the whole. The indolence of the catalogue-maker being equal to his ignorance, readily converted the name of RICHARD CHAWFER, scrawled, perhaps, by some former proprietor of the volume, on a spare leaf, into that of GEOFFREY CHAUCER, the supposed author of its contents. To this fortunate blunder, however—if a blunder there was to be—we are indebted for our acquaintance with the name and writings of LAURENCE MINOT, whom one of a different nature might have consigned to perpetual oblivion. The late ingenious and industrious Mr. Tyrwhitt, in preparing materials for his admirable edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, consulted the manuscript for the purpose of collating an *accurate* copy of his favourite author. His disappointment, which may be easily imagined, would be very speedily converted into the most agreeable sur-



#### PREFACE.

prise, on finding himself thus unexpectedly introduced to the acquaintance of a new poet, anterior, perhaps, to that favourite in point of time, and certainly not his inferior with respect to language. In consequence of this happy discovery, the name of LAURENCE MINOT, which he himself has luckily taken care to preserve, was first ushered into the modern world by a note to the learned "Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer."

A copy of these poems having been communicated to the Rev. Thomas Warton, of Oxford, some extracts from them appeared, with sufficient awkwardness indeed, in the third volume of his *History of English Poetry*, published in 1781. Those extracts, however, are by no means undistinguished by the general inaccuracy which pervades that interesting and important work. Its author, confident in great and splendid abilities, would seem to have disdained the too servile task of cultivating the acquaintance of ancient dialect

or phraseology, and to have contented himself with publishing, and occasionally attempting to explain, what, it must be evident, he did not himself understand. That an English writer of the first eminence should never have heard of the name of **BALIOI**, must excite surprise: and yet this appears to have been the case of our poetical historian, who, in his certainly bold, but not less erroneous, attempts to elucidate one of the following poems, makes "Edward **THE BALIOLFE**" to mean "Edward **THE WARLIKE**," that is, "Edward **THE THIRD**," who "is introduced," he says, "by Minot, as resisting the Scottish invasion in 1347 [1346] at Nevil's Cross, near Durham;"\* though every child might be ex-

\* This is well known to be the northern corruption of *de*: hence the Bruce, the Balliol, of the Scottish poets. See Harbour's *Life of Bruce*, passim. Thus, also, *Philippe de Valois* is here called "*Phillip the Valas*." The name of *Balliol* was frequently written *Ballof*, or *Bailliof*, in the age of our poet. In Mores's *Nomina Nobilium Equitumque sub Edw. I.* 1349, 4to. we find "sir Thomas de *Ballof*;" and in a list of Durham knights, in the time of Henry III. preserved in an ancient manuscript, called *The Boldon-bute*, from its containing a copy of that record, in the auditor's office, Durham,

pected to know that this monarch was, upon that occasion, at the siege of Calais; and, in fact, he is, in the very poem alluded to, expressly stated to be "out of the londe." With respect to the age of the manuscript, which the same gentleman attributes to the reign of Henry VI. he was probably misled by the person who transmitted the poems, as it may very fairly be referred to that of Richard II. though some pieces, it is true, are inserted by a later hand, and of a more modern date.

That these poems were written, or at least completed, in the beginning of the year 1352, according to the present stile, is not a mere circumstance of probability, but may be clearly demonstrated by internal evidence and matter of fact. The latest event they commemorate is the capture of Guisnes Castle, which happened,

"sir John de Bailliof, sir Hugh de Bailliof, sir Eustace de Bailliof." Blind Harry, the Scottish Homer; calls John de Bailliof, "Jhon the Balcoune."