my reception at the noble house of Athole." At Oughtertyre House he had also been well received, and he writes:—

"I lived there Sir William's guest for two or three weeks, and was much flattered by my hospitable reception. What a pity that the mere emotions of gratitude are so impotent in this world! 'Tis lucky that, as we are told, they will be of some avail in the world to come."

Of Sir James Hunter Blair:—

"A man he was! How few of the two-legged breed that pass for such deserve the designation! He pressed my hand, and asked me, with the most friendly warmth, if it was in his power to serve me; and if so, that I would oblige him by telling him how. I had nothing to ask of him; but if ever a child of his should be so unfortunate as to be under the necessity of asking anything of so poor a man as I am, it may not be in my power to grant it, but, by G—, I shall try!!!"

There are some tender lines on an early heroine:

"Once fondly lov'd, and still remembered dear," &c.

The lines are in all the editions of the poems, but this note on them in the Glenriddell MSS. is interesting:—

"'Twas the girl I mention in my letter to Dr. Moore, where I speak of taking the sun's altitude. Poor Peggy! Her husband is my old acquaintance, and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we both parted with tears."

In the copies of his letters written out for his friend, Burns does not select his best. He gives, however, his autobiography addressed to Dr. Moore, copied by an amanuensis, to which the poet appends this note:—

"Know all whom it may concern, that I, the author, am not answerable for the false spelling and injudicious punctuation in the foregoing transcript of my letter to Dr. Moore. I have something generous in my temper that cannot bear to see or hear the absent wronged, and I am very much hurt to observe that in several instances the transcriber has injured and mangled the proper name and principal title of a personage of the very first distinction in all that is valuable among men, antiquity, abilities and power (virtue, everybody knows, is an obsolete business); I mean the devil. Considering that the transcriber was one of the clergy, an order that owe the very bread they eat to the said personage's exertions, the affair was absolutely unpardonable.—Ro. B."

Rather a ponderous joke! A letter to Clarinda concludes in this "high falutin'" style:—

"No cold language—no prudential documents. I despise advice and scorn control. If you are not to write such language, such sentiments as you know I shall wish, shall delight to receive, I conjure you by wounded pride! by ruined peace! by frantic disappointed passion! by all the many ills that constitute that sum of human woes, a broken heart!!! to me be silent for ever. If you insult me with the unfeeling apophthegms of cold-blooded caution, may all the—but hold! a fiend could not breathe a malevolent wish on the head of my angel! Mind my request. If you send me a page baptized in the font of sanctimonious prudence, by heaven, earth, and hell, I will tear it into atoms! Adieu; may all good things attend you.—R. B."

Burns adds:—

"I need scarcely remark that the foregoing was the fustian rant of enthusiastic youth."

But in reality the "rant" was written in the autumn of 1792, rather less than four years before the death of the poet. It is curious to find him somewhat ashamed of the extravagant epistle, yet sending it to his fair correspondent, and transcribing it for his friend, the laird of Glenriddell. The Burns MSS. show that Dr. Currie took considerable liberties with the poet's letters, making desirable omissions, and generally softening and sobering vehement expressions. One or two brief examples will suffice. In his autobiography, addressed to Dr. Moore, the poet mentions his going to a dancing school. "My father," he adds, "had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion he took a kind of dislike to me, which, I believe, was one cause of that dissipation which marked my future years." Gilbert Burns entirely dissented from his brother on this point, and Currie softened the passage. "My going was what to this moment I repent, in *opposition to his wishes*. My father, as I said before, was *subject* to strong passions; from that instance of *disobedience* in me, he took a sort of dislike," &c. Afterwards Burns said, "Early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence." Currie gave him the moral benefit of a stronger statement: "Early ingrained piety and virtue *kept me for several years afterwards within* the line of innocence." In his love affairs the poet says: "Like every warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success, and sometimes mortified with defeat." Currie rounds off this declaration: "As in every other warfare in this world, *my fortune was various*; sometimes I was *received with favour*, and sometimes I was mortified *with a repulse*." At Irvine, whither he had gone to learn flax-dressing, Burns says, "I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern bill." Currie evidently thought this too grandiloquent, so he changed it to "I learnt to *fill my glass*." The original letter (now in the British Museum) shows many other variations. But enough for the present.

C.

ON CERTAIN VERSES WRONGLY ASCRIBED TO ROGERS.

In the *Quarterly Review* of Oct., 1873, there is an article on Holland House, which contains the following passage, p. 434, referring to the trees in the adjacent park: "There is in the grounds another venerable tree (not mentioned in this book) which Rogers thus addressed in verse (now published for the first time)." Then follow eighteen

lines, of which it is only necessary that I should quote the beginning and the end:—

"Majestic tree, whose wrinkled form hath stood
Age after age the patriarch of the wood;
Thou who hast seen a thousand springs unfold
Their ravell'd buds and dip their flowers in gold,

* * * * * *

Yet shalt thou fall, thy leafy tresses fade,
And those bare scattered antlers strew the glade;
Arm after arm shall leave the mouldering dust,
And thy firm fibres crumble into dust;
The Muse alone shall consecrate thy name,
And by her powerful art prolong thy fame;
Green shall thy leaves expand, thy branches play,
And bloom for ever in the immortal day."

I beg to point out that these verses are not by Rogers,—their style ought to have warned the reviewer against making an unqualified statement,—neither do they refer to any tree in the grounds of Holland House; but it appears that they are extracted, with certain omissions, to which I shall have to draw attention, and with the alteration of not half-a-dozen words, from a poem of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, the once widely-known author of *The Botanic Garden*, written upon Swilcar Oak, in Needwood Forest, Derbyshire. The verses will be found in a large quarto prose work of his, called *Phytologia; or, the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening*, published in 1802, at p. 528, prefaced by these words: "The following address to Swilcar Oak, in Needwood Forest, a very tall tree, which measures" (I here omit a few lines), "was written at the end of Mr. Mundy's poem on leaving that forest, and may amuse the weary reader and conclude this section." Then come the verses in question. It appears from p. 526 that Mr. Mundy's poem was at that time unpublished.

The verses in the *Quarterly Review* are identical with those in the *Phytologia*, except that "majestic tree" has been substituted for "gigantic oak," and "leaves" for "gems." Also, a stanza of eight lines is omitted, which has direct reference to Mundy, and in which he is named. Again, in the fourth line from the bottom, "The muse alone" is substituted for "But Mundy's verse." In short, the person who stole the poem wished to dedicate it to some tree in a different place, and that tree not an oak.

It struck me that there was a shade of ambiguity in the language used by Dr. Erasmus Darwin in speaking of his authorship of the verses which had better be cleared up. I therefore sought for, and have before me now, as I write, a copy of Mr. Mundy's poem; another one belongs to the present representative of the family, who resides at Markeaton Hall, Derby. The poem is printed, but I do not know whether it was ever published. The copy before me is "from the author, 1808," and has many pencillings and also some notes in ink, made, as I am assured, by a contemporary pen. It is a quarto pamphlet, on the title-page of which is "Needwood forest, written in the year 1776; Litchfield: printed by John Jackson." Bound up with it is another pamphlet by Mr. Mundy, of the same size, also "from the author," called "The Fall of Needwood. Derby: printed at the Office of J. Drewry, 1808." It is the former of these that alone concerns us; I have mentioned the latter merely to avoid future confusion of two separate works. Mr. Mundy's poem occupies forty-four pages, and is followed by four other small poems, signed respectively with different initials. The first is "Address to Swilcar Oak described in Mr. Mundy's poem on Needwood forest," and is the earlier and somewhat crude form of the verses afterwards published in the *Phytologia*. It is signed E. D., underneath which is written "Dr. Darwin." The next poem, signed A. S., is similarly stated to be by Miss Seward. She is the lady who, as tradition states, wanted to marry the Doctor; but, as he did not respond, she turned spiteful, and showed it in her biography of him. The next, B. B., is by Sir Brooke Boothby, the beautiful monuments to whose family are so great an ornament to Ashbourne Church; and the last is by E. D., Junr., or Erasmus Darwin, a son of the Doctor, much given to versifying, and who died young. It would appear that Mr. Mundy's poem remained long in MS., that his literary friends sent him contributions and complimentary verses, and that he finally had them printed, all together.

As the verses of the Doctor in their earliest form have never, to my knowledge, been published, and as they contain the lines in a crude shape, which have been improved in the *Phytologia* version, and wholly omitted in that published by the *Quarterly* Reviewer, they may be acceptable to the reader. They will bring the motive of the omissions in the verses ascribed to Rogers into strong relief. They are as follows:—

"Hail stately oak, whose wrinkled trunk hath stood
Age after age, the sov'reign of this wood;
You, who have seen a thousand springs unfold
Their ravell'd buds, and dip their flowers in gold;
Ten thousand times yon moon relight her horn,
And that bright eye of evening gild the morn.

Say, when of old the snow-hair'd druids pray'd
With mad-ey'd rapture in your hallow'd shade,
While to their altars bards and heroes throng,
And crowding nations join the ecstatic song,
Did e'er such dulcet notes arrest your gales
As Mundy pours along the listening vales!

Yes, stately oak, thy leaf-wrapped head sublime
Ere long must perish in the wrecks of time;
Should o'er thy brow the thunders harmless break,
And thy firm roots in vain the whirlwind shake,
Yet must thou fall.—Thy withering glories sunk,
Arm after arm shall leave the mould'ring trunk.

But Mundy's verse shall consecrate thy name,
And rising forests envy Swilcar's fame:
Green shall thy gems expand, thy branches play,
And bloom for ever in the immortal lay.

E. D."

It is scarcely possible to believe that Rogers purloined the verses from the *Phytologia* and passed them off for his own, though that sort of literary appropriation does, unhappily, exist, as was shown by a statesman in his speech in the House of Commons some twenty years ago, on the death of a great English general, coolly purloining for the occasion the oration of a Frenchman over a recently deceased French marshal. It is to be hoped that the *Quarterly* Reviewer will be able to show that the information upon which he made his assertion is less trustworthy than he imagined.

To conclude, it further appears, from the *Quarterly Review*, that Lord Wensleydale wrote an impromptu couplet on these verses, to the effect that he would bet a thousand pounds that the stout tree would survive them. Time shows that he is wrong. Swilcar oak has, as I am informed, disappeared, and the verses remain. No doubt the residuary legatees of his lordship will be eager to pay the forfeited money to the Doctor's next of kin, in which case I shall be most happy, as one of his grandchildren, to receive my share of it.

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ST. VALENTINE IN THE CAVALIER DAYS.

The *Westminster Drolleries* is a book an original edition of which is not to be had for love or money. The two parts (1671 and 1672) have been printed in perfect fac-simile by Mr. Roberts of Boston, Lincolnshire, who has obligingly forwarded to us a copy. It contains the songs and poems current in the above years at the theatres and at Court. The work is edited by J. Woodfall Ebsworth, M.A., Cantab., who has written an Introduction on the Literature of the Drolleries, and added a copious Appendix of notes, illustrations, &c.

The songs and poems are, of course, very much like the men and the times, and, it may be added, the women also, whose ways and manners they illustrate. There is an impalpable but unmistakable airiness of principle about most of them. Love is mere passion. The words flutter like the ribbons which were in fashion with both nymphs and swains. The oaths bind to nothing; the vows are broken as soon as made; and if the rogues and hussies are amusing, they are not edifying. The book is, in short, one of those which apologizes for its appearance by the statement that it is intended for the student rather than for the general reader. There is, in short, a very *haut goût* in some of its recesses, but "students" of cavalier literature have strong stomachs.

There are some exceptions to this; and, happily, these exist in two examples which serve our purpose well, seeing that to-morrow is Valentine's Day. The first example runs thus merrily:—

"THE DRAWING OF VALENTINES.
The Tune, Madam's Jig.
There was and there was,
And aye Mary was there.
A Crew on St. Valentine's Eve did meet together,
And every Lad had his particular Lass there,
And drawing of Valentines caused their
Coming thither.
Then Mr. John drew Mrs. Joan first, Sir,
And Mrs. Joan would fain have drawn John an' she
durst, Sir.
So Mr. William drew Mrs. Gillian the next, Sir;
And Mrs. Gillian not drawing of William, was vext, Sir.
They then did jumble all in the hat together,
And each did promise them to draw 'em fair, Sir;
But Mrs. Hester vowed that she had rather
Draw Mr. Kester than any that was there, Sir.
And Mrs. Hester drew Mr. Kester again, Sir,
And Mr. Harry drew Mrs. Mary featly,
And Mrs. Mary did draw Mr. Harry as neatly.
They altogether then resolv'd to draw, Sir,
And ev'ry one desir'd to draw their friend, Sir;
But Mr. Richard did keep 'em so in awe, Sir,
And told 'em then they ne'er should make an end, Sir.
So Mr. Richard drew Mrs. Bridget squarely,
And Mrs. Bridget drew Mr. Richard as fairly,
But Mr. Hugh drew Mrs. Sue but slily
And Mrs. Sue did draw Mr. Hugh as wily.
Then have you heard of the twelve who lately drew, Sir?
How ev'ry one would fain their friend have drawn, Sir;
And now there's left to draw but four of the Crew, Sir;
And each did promise his Lass an ell of lawn, Sir.
So My Waty drew Mrs. Katy but slightly,
And Mrs. Katy did draw Mr. Waty as lightly;
But Mr. Thomas in drawing of Annis too fast, Sir,
Made Mrs. Annis to draw Mr. Thomas at last, Sir.
And there is an end, and an end, and an end of my song,
Sir,
Of Joan and Johnny, and William and Gillian too, Sir.
To Kester and Hester and Harry and Mary belong, Sir,
Both Richard and Bridget, and Hugh and honest Sue, Sir,
But Waty and Katy, and Thomas and Annis here, Sir,
Are the only four that do now bring up the rear, Sir.
Then ev'ry one i' the Tavern cry amain, Sir,
And staid till drawing fill'd their brain, Sir."

In the above rough lines we find some of the ceremonies of the Eve of St. Valentine. The second example shows us how, in the same bygone times, St. Valentine's Day was observed when the swains and their mistresses contrived to encounter each other:—

"THE VALENTINE.
As youthful day put on his best
Attire to usher morn,
And she, to greet her glorious guest,
Did her fair self adorn,
Up did I rise, and hid mine eyes
As I went through the street,
Lest I should one that I despise
Before a fairer meet.
And why
Was I,
Think you, so nice and fine?
Well did I wot
Who wots it not?
It was St. Valentine.

In fields, by Phœbus, great with young
Of flowers and hopeful buds,
Resembling thoughts that freshly sprung
In lovers' lively bloods.

A damsel fine and fair I saw,
So fair and finely dight,
As put my heart almost in awe
To attempt a mate so bright.
But O!
Why so,
Her purpose was like mine,
And readily
She said, as I,
Good morrow, Valentine.

A Fair of love we kept awhile;
She, for each word I said
Gave me two smiles, and for each smile,
I her two kisses pay'd.
The Violet made haste t'appear,
To be her bosom guest;
With first Primrose that grew this year,
I purchast from her breast.
To me gave she her golden lock for mine;
My ring of Jett,
For her Bracelett,
I gave my Valentine.

Subscribed with a line of love,
My name for her I wrote;
In silken form her name she wove,
Wherein this was her *mot*.
'As shall this year thy truth appear,
I still, my dear, am thine,
Your mate to day, and Love for aye,
If you so say, was mine,
While thus on us each other's favours shine
No more have we to change,' quoth she.
Now farewell, Valentine.

Alas, said I, let friends not seem
Between themselves so strange;
The Jewels both we dear'st esteem,
You know are yet to change.
She answers no, yet smiles as though
Her tongue her thought denies;
Who truth of maiden's mind will know,
Must seek it in her Eyes.
She blusht
I wisht,
Her heart as free as mine;
She sigh'd and sware,
In sooth you are
Too wanton, Valentine.

Yet I such farther favour won
By suit and pleasing play,
She vow'd what now was left undone
Should finisht be in May.
And though perplext with such delay
As more augments desire,
Twixt present Grief and promist Joy,
I from my Mate retire.
If she
To me
Preserve her vows divine
And constant truth,
She shall be both
My Love and Valentine."

ED.

THE FIRST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER.

It is surprising to find a writer on the subject of newspapers in the *Sunday Times* of January 17 speaking of the *English Mercurie* of 1588 as the "*first* English Newspaper," when the merest tyro in these matters knows that no such paper ever appeared. Mr. Watts, of the British Museum, as far back as 1839, proved in the most satisfactory manner that the several numbers of this journal, deposited in our national library, are gross forgeries. A writer in the *Quarterly Review* (June, 1855) justly remarks, "Indeed, the most inexperienced eye in such matters can easily see that neither their type, paper, spelling, nor composition are much more than one instead of upwards of two centuries and a half old."

The English *Mercuries* consist altogether of seven distinct articles, three of which are in print, and four in manuscript. The only question that remains to be discussed is, Who were the perpetrators of these forgeries? I extract what Mr. Watts says in his pamphlet:—

"The papers came into the Museum in 1766, the year of the decease of Dr. Birch, to whose collection they belonged, and not to that of Sir Hans Sloane, as erroneously stated by Chalmers. It cannot for a moment be supposed that Dr. Birch was accessary to the deception; his character wholly forbids it, and the circumstances that the 'bane and antidote,' the printed part and the manuscript, are both found to have been placed together, seems to show that he took reasonable care that others should not be deceived. The most plausible conjecture as to their origin and preservation appears to be, that the printed copies were got up for the purpose of imposition; that the attempt was detected, and that the whole of the papers were preserved as a memorial of the occurrence. Of the literary forgers of that period, there are three towards whom suspicion may be directed. If Chatterton were any one else but Chatterton, he might be dismissed as too young; but in 1766 he was fourteen, and wanted neither the will nor the wit to execute more ingenious forgeries than this. Were the papers manuscript only, suspicion might rest on him; but he had not the power at that time to effect the execution of printed fabrications. In 1766, George Steevens was thirty, and in that year he commenced his literary career as a commentator on Shakspeare. His habits and propensities were such that his name is the first that occurs to any one making inquiry into a case of literary deception. But the handwriting of the manuscript *Mercuries* does not appear to be feigned, and it is not neat enough, though not deficient in neatness, for the hand of George Steevens. The year 1766 was that of the decease of William Rufus Chetwood, the individual to whom Mr. Rodd of Newport Street, whose knowledge of literary history and anecdote is well known, was inclined to refer the fabrication of the *Mercuries*.

"Chetwood was concerned in a work called *The British Theatre, containing the Lives of the English Dramatic Poets, with an account of all their Plays*, a great part of which is an impudent farrago of forgery and falsehood, which has unhappily succeeded in deceiving many later writers on the subject. He appears, like the Italian Doni, to have had quite a mania for the invention of fictitious titles and fictitious editions; and the former have a peculiar style, which Mr. Rodd thought he recognized in the advertisements of books in the *Mercury*. But the conjecture is negatived, as in the case of Steevens, by the dissimilarity of the handwriting."

Here is a knot to unravel which would be worthy the ingenuity of Mr. Birkinshaw (the writer of the letter in the *Sunday Times*), and infinitely more creditable to him than blindly