

COMPOUND WORDS.—Many shew a true Danish origin, as for poverty, rarity, kingdom, ugly, &c. *puretith*, *raretith*, *kunrick*, *ugsom*; and *wun* or *wan* for *un* privative.

SCOTCH PHRASEOLOGY.—Neither this, nor, strictly speaking, the two last heads, belong to pronunciation or accent, and may be better reserved for a future display of English grammar, respecting syntax and idiom, if the present attempt should enable me again to encounter the perils and terrors of the press. If the Scotch differ from us occasionally in the application of words, and they understand one another, what is that to us? If they use them in conversing with us, then indeed either they, or we betray a want of more extensive acquaintance. Both parties have equal right to laugh, and to continue laughing till an explanation takes place. But if they profess to write pure English, and mix their phraseology, then indeed we may censure the author, and laugh alone. Thus Dr Priestly has corrected Hume. A few vitiated idioms have, through inattention, crept into Gibbon's works, and some other elegant Scotch writers.

The past may give a faint idea of the powers of the great Master of languages, and of the universe, in the astonishing corruption of original Hebrew, at the Tower of Babel. The old Hebrew remains in every language, though more corrupted than the human ingenuity of the Scotch has been able to effect in our language. We are happy that the source of common parentage is so well preserved after past animosities, as now to enable us, with a little labour and friendly intercourse, reciprocally to communicate the sentiments of mutual interest and brotherhood.

*Caledones Musæ, paulò majora canamus.*

*Formal Vindication of the Scotch Dialect.*

THIS original Dialect manifests itself by two extremes. The one is found in the native broad and manly sounds of the Scoto-Saxon-English; the terms of coarse and harsh are more

commonly employed. The other is that of a tempered medium, generally used by the polished class of society. To attempt to vindicate the first will be deemed not only singularity, but madness, by some of my countrymen, so strong is the flow of prejudice. The vindication of the second will meet the ideas of liberal observers of men and manners. The subject, viewed in this latter light, gives animation to my efforts. *First*, then, I assert, that the broad dialect rises above reproach, scorn, and laughter: *Secondly*, That the tempered medium, still retaining its characteristic distinction of Scotch, is entitled (not exclusively) to all the vindication, personal and local congruity can inforce, by the principles of reason, national honour, and native dignity. Under this twofold distinction I enter the lists in Tartan dress and armour, and throw down the gauntlet to the most prejudiced antagonist. How weak is prejudice! The sight of the Highland kelt, the flowing plaid, the buskin'd leg, provokes my antagonist to laugh! Is this dress ridiculous in the eyes of reason and common sense? No: nor is the dialect of speech: both are characteristic, and national distinctions. National character and distinction are respectable. Then is the adopted mode of oral language sanctioned by peculiar reasons, and is not the result of chance, contemptible vulgarity, mere ignorance and rustic habit.

The arguments of general vindication rise powerful before my sight, like Highland Bands in full array. A louder strain of apologetic speech swells my words. What if it should rise high as the unconquered summits of Scotia's hills, and call back, with voice sweet as Caledonian song, the days of antient Scotch heroes, or attempt the powerful speech of the Latian Orator, or his of Greece! The subject methinks would well accord with the attempt: *Cupidum, Scotia optima, vires deficiunt*. I leave this to the *King of songs*. Dunbar and Dunkeld, Douglas in *Virgilian* strains, and later poets, Ramsay, Ferguson, and Burns, awake from your graves, you have already immortalized the Scotch dialect in raptured melody! Lend me your golden target and well pointed spear, that I may victoriously pursue to the extremity of South



Britain, reproachful Ignorance and Scorn still lurking there: let impartial Candor seize their usurped throne.

Great, then, is the birth of this national Dialect: it is not the spurious offspring of passive corruption and barbarous ignorance. It took its rise from ancient heroes, and was supported by independency and national pride; when their primitive language, yielding to the mutual intercourse of two distinct nations, adopted, in a manner that best seemed suited to reasonable condescension, the more useful speech of a neighbouring and powerful rival: but just jealousy, and triumphant struggle, ever sought to damp too great usurpation of a potent southern enemy. Thus the Scotch dialect, as powerfully as opposing warriors, tended to preserve national right and equality. Thus it may rank with the dialects of Greece, which distinguished that great people, and preserved the different governments from sinking under the dominion of more polished Athens. These jarring variations of the Greek, some broad as the coarsest Scotch, were never deemed *vulgar*, *contemptible*, *laughable*, and *casual* corruptions of the language, and much less proofs of uncultivated society.

In this favourable light we may place the origin of Scotch dialect, whilst *other dialects* of the English language are local corruptions, and carry with them the mark of defective education and rustic ignorance. The provincial Englishman, who quits his country-abode, and mixes with the polite world, is singled out as an unlettered, vulgar native, because pure classical English is the standard of polished society in English land, universally approved and received. The Scotch dialect does not carry with it this reproach: because refined English is neither the received standard of that country, and its most eminent scholars designedly retain the variation; retain it with dignity, subject to no real diminution of personal or national merit. It adds honour to their character, and weight to their words, for it is the received mode of speech deliberately adopted by the northern moiety of this great Isle, and is invested with right and title, title unalienable, ancient right and propriety, locally invulnerable,

founded in legitimate choice, and perpetuated by uncontrollable liberty.

What! does it not appear that our language is abundantly honoured by being spontaneously adopted in Scottish land, thus triumphing, without insolence, over the ancient and native language of a great people, with exclusion of the rival-tongue of France, which affects every where to establish itself where alliance and sway give footing to that nation, once so closely connected with a disinherited, disaffected, discordant mighty empire, that had its own kings, and established succession of royal power. *Imperial Scotland?*

These are general arguments. I will add a few particular remarks respecting what is named the polite and mitigated dialect, and the common and broad mode of speaking. Both have their merit, and give room to fair vindication. First, every liberal and well educated observer will candidly admit, that there is something pleasing in the tempered dialect of the Scotch; that it is graceful and sweet in a well-tuned female voice; that it would be a pity, nay an injury, to local merit, wholly to forgoe it. Being characteristic, it carries with it a distinction a true Patriot should be jealous of resigning, even to the accidental mistake of the occurring rendezvous of the day. For, if the fair daughters of Scotia laid aside all distinction of accent, and wholly adopted our refined sounds, they would frequently, both at home and abroad, in the mixed society of English and Scotch, be challenged for natives of our South. How ready are Englishmen to claim every affirmative perfection for their own; and how ready is a Scotchman to give up what genuinely appears not to be his own. Surely a Duncan, a Campbell, a Primrose, an Elliot, a Miller, and endless breathing models of fairest cast, would not wish to lessen, even by momentary error, the local honour of their birth. Why then should fashion of language, refining beyond reason, begin to make Scotia recal to mind, with a sigh, former days, when, in fair Mary's reign, no Southern rivalry, in the mixture of foreign and domestic society, could, through the total extinction of characterising national speech, turn to partial commendation the momentary

usurpation of mistake, and challenge the property of another country ?

What though the broad, the rough, the unsoftened accent, suit not the voice of the Fair, has it not its merit in the mouths of the sons of Mars, at the head of patriotic Bands ? It is the imitative voice of Jove, when daring monsters tore up the quiet earth to scale his heaven ? Ye modern Giants, impious and daring as your antediluvian fathers, learn from their fate, if ever you dare assail our united coast, our beloved home, our British Jove, our terrestrial heaven, for ye have made the rest of the world a hell, what your doom will be !

A modern Baucis and Philemon, with whom I spent the summer-recess, taught me, with *their sonsie crack*, to form a just idea of this subject of my vindication : “ The honest peasant, “ the venerable villager, lose nothing of native worth, by the “ manly roughness of their dialect. Its disuse would expose “ the homely trader to the suspicion of lost probity ; the “ English visitor would decline the commerce of those whom “ he suspects to have bartered away, by artful condescension “ of oral resemblance, the original characteristic and mark “ of a Scotchman,” said they in other words. To this may be well added, the polished company of men of letters, and public orators, would betray too great condescension, and misplaced disavowal of local particularity, if they gave up all distinction of sound. The manly eloquence of the Scotch bar affords a singular pleasure to the candid English hearer, and gives merit and dignity to the noble speakers who retain so much of their own dialect, and tempered propriety of English sounds, that they may be emphatically named *British Orators*. In fine, there is a limited conformity in the present union of heart and interest of two great kingdoms, beyond which total similarity of sounds would not be desirable, and dissonance itself has characteristic merit.