

PAPERS.

I.—SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LOYAL WARRINGTON VOLUNTEERS OF 1798.

By James Kendrick, M.D.

“Pro Rege et Patria.”

For King and Country.

The subject of the following paper would perhaps have been more in unison with our feelings, in the past than in the present December, for then the mind of every Briton mistrusted, and even prejudged, the actions of him who for the present rules the destinies of France; little dreaming that at the present moment, the allied fleets of England and France would be riding side by side in the Euxine Sea, in mutual resistance of a common foe, the wilful disturber of the peace of Europe.

But in the spring of the year 1798, it was no fancied, nor even distant danger of invasion, which roused the martial spirit of the loyal men of England to embody themselves, as their name implied, in Volunteer Regiments, for the defence of this country against foreign aggression, and for the suppression of internal disloyalty, no worse a foe.

At this time, (the spring of 1798,) the sanguinary insurrection in Ireland was on the point of breaking forth, and as if to court the attack of a hostile invader, even England herself was distracted with the plots of seditious and designing men. The rampant malice of the French Directory had mustered on the sands of Boulogne an army of 75,000 men, to which they had insolently assigned the title of “the Army of England,” placing at its head the all-victorious conqueror of Italy, General Buonaparte.

On this side the Channel, men of all parties, and of every rank, united in a common bond for the protection of the Sovereign and the Laws. In London alone, upwards of 12,000 gentlemen and tradesmen joined in *Volunteer Corps* to resist the foreign invader, and to subvert internal disaffection. These have had their historian and illustrator in Mr. Ackermann, of the Strand; * but, so far as I know, no provincial corps has

* *Loyal Volunteers of London and Environs*, by R. Ackermann, 87 col. pl., London, 1799.

been thought worthy of either; and although I am not so credulously bold as to affirm, as did the *Loyal Warrington Volunteers*, that the withdrawal of the French army of invasion from Boulogne, and its mission to the conquest of Egypt, was the immediate and direct consequence of the determined appearance which they, (*the Warrington Volunteers*,) displayed at their first muster, yet we must remember that they formed a portion of that loyal band, at whose rising, Buonaparte himself acknowledged that it would be madness to invade England; for were he to win one battle on its coast, a second in the interior, with a population armed and loyal as were the English, would at once annihilate his army, were it twenty times ten thousand.

The *Loyal Warrington Volunteers*, were the second corps embodied in this county—the first being that of Lancaster, which had been raised in the previous year; they also enjoyed the honourable distinction of costing nothing to the government of the country, each volunteer providing himself with arms, accoutrements, clothing, and provisions; and thirdly, laying aside all the distinctions of private life, the shop-keepers, professional men, and clergy took their places indiscriminately in the ranks, actuated by one common ardour, equally submissive to one authority, each vying with the other only in his endeavours to become the better soldier. To the honour of the *privates* of this loyal corps it may be recorded, that one had then, and still more thereafter, signalized himself as a poet of a high order, and before his death had accumulated a classic library, which as the work of a private individual, is unsurpassed in the north of England; the son of a second, besides distinguishing himself in the path of literature, has twice filled the office of chief magistrate in his native town, and even now proffers the munificent sum of £5000 towards its religious improvement; a third, my own father, after a life of active benevolence and usefulness, died ripe in years and rich in honour; whilst a fourth, whose name for miles round his residence, is synonymous with English loyalty and hospitality, still survives, and with unabated zeal for England and her sovereign, protests that, although disabled in his left hand, he would still fight a hostile Frenchman, *could he only catch him in a saw-pit*.

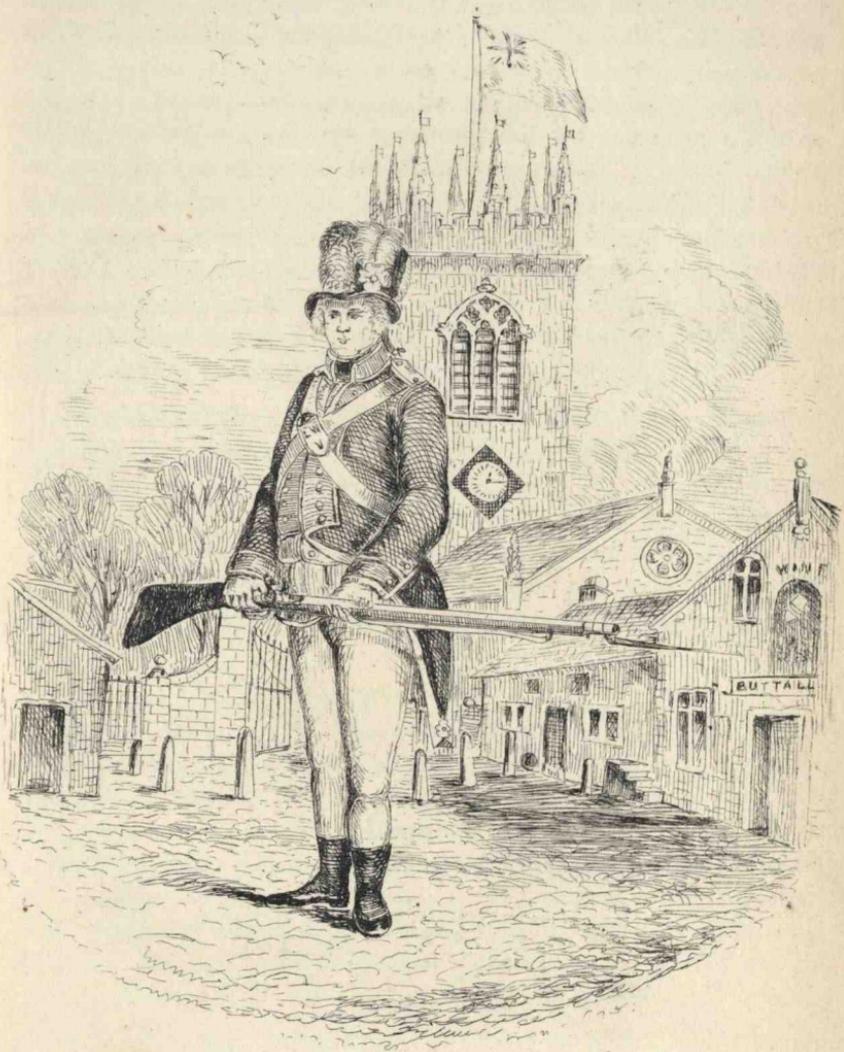
So far as I can discover, the corps of *Warrington Volunteers* owed its origin to no individual patriot, and it is probable, that where all were alike loyal, it arose from the simultaneous wish of the townsmen. The

population of Warrington in 1798, barely numbered 11,000, and it is a creditable fact, that at the first muster of the corps, its numbers amounted to nearly 160. Eventually the regiment consisted of 180. Its affairs were managed by a committee of the officers, and the command vested in Edward Dakin, Esquire, of Warrington, with the rank and title of captain-commandant. I have fortunately been able to recover the muster-roll of this honourable corps, but it will here suffice to say, that the captains were Thomas Pemberton, James Nicholson, and James Leigh, Esquires; the lieutenants, Thomas Skitt, Edward Greenall, and Peter Dutton; with Thomas Claughton and Joseph Lee, ensigns.

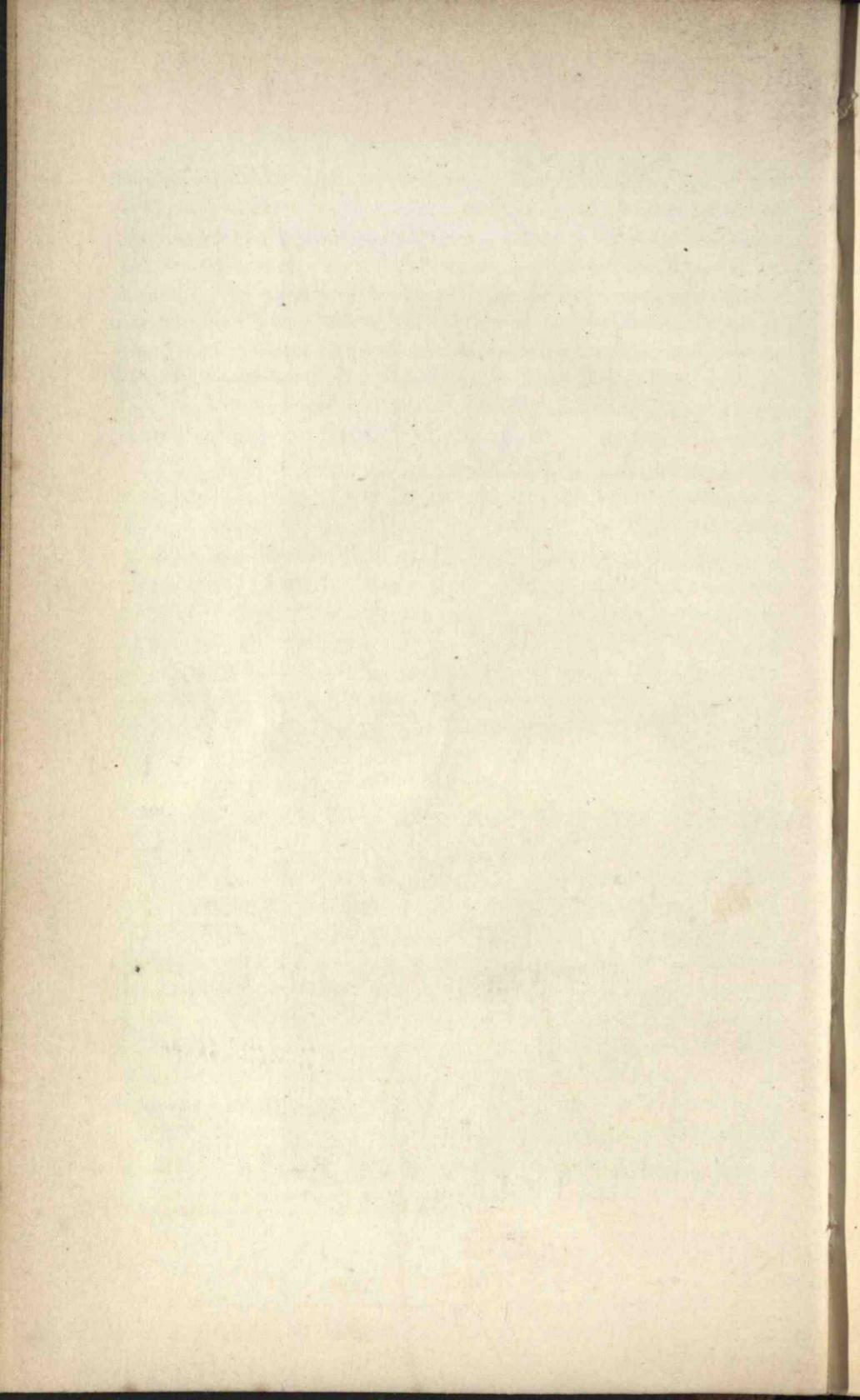
As the volunteer without his uniform would have been no better than his more timid neighbour, I may be allowed to describe in full this very essential part of his composition. The coat of the *Loyal Warrington Volunteer*, was the "old Windsor uniform," blue, trimmed with white, the collar and facings, scarlet; the buttons, round and gilt, with a crown and L.W.V. in cypher. This predominance of blue colour in the costume, gave rise to the *soubriquet* of the regiment, which was thence termed the "Blueback."* The waistcoat and pantaloons were white, the latter fitting tightly to the figure, with half-gaiters of black cloth. The head-covering was the common round hat of the time, surmounted and disguised by an enormous brown bear-skin cover; on the left side a black cockade, and springing therefrom, a white military feather, tipped with red. The cross-belts were of white leather, with an oval breastplate, bearing the letters L.W.V. in Roman capitals. On the cartouche-box, a bugle.

For some weeks before any public parade was ventured upon, a two hours private drill was held at six o'clock in the morning, on three days in the week, in the Old Assembly Room in Golden Square, once the gay scene of the aristocratic and far-famed Warrington assemblies. At one of these early drills, a circumstance occurred which afforded a practical illustration of the ready loyalty which inspirited the Warrington Volunteers. Government had received private but certain information that the Irish insurrection was fully ripe, and the day of general rising fixed upon. Its emissaries were busy even in England, and France was ready to aid it by a descent upon the coast. In this strait, a letter was received from the

* The Blueback is a local name for the common Fieldfare. The volunteers of '98 retaliated upon their successors, the volunteers of 1803, by designating them the "Robin Redbreasts," in allusion to their *scarlet* uniform.



THE LOYAL WARRINGTON VOLUNTEER, OF 1798.



Lord Lieutenant of the county, wishing to know whether the Volunteers were willing to extend their protection to the county for five miles round Warrington, instead of restricting their duties to the defence of the town only, as at first contemplated. It was judged right and fair to consult the wishes of the privates of the corps, and a chalked line being drawn upon the floor of the ball-room, the letter was read, and every man willing to aid the Lord Lieutenant was desired to step across it. A moment's pause ensued, for the danger would be thereby more than doubled,—but in the next moment, private James Ashton, of the Light Company, stepped over the line, and waving his hat, cried, “come along, lads, death or glory!” To a man the privates followed. Honour be to him—he still lives amongst us—perhaps better known amongst his fellow townsmen as “*Old Death or Glory*,” than by his simple patronymic of James Ashton.

Now and then, indeed, the spirit of loyalty became exuberant. “Captain,” said Paul Greenwood in breathless haste one day, “I heard a man cursing the king just now; should I have run him through?” “No, sir,” said his ready-witted captain, “you should only have *s(e)cured* him.” Rather a dangerous pun, by the way, for the difference between *securing* and *skewering* a man is the mere elision of a letter, and we shall all agree that the difference is *nil* between *skewering* and *running him through*.

The first public muster of the *Loyal Warrington Volunteers* took place on the 30th of April, 1798, at the outskirts of the town, on the precise spot now occupied by the district church of St. Paul. The number of Volunteers gradually increased to 180, the greatest strength which the regiment at any time attained. In compliance with military usage, the corps consisted of a Grenadier, Centre, and Light Company, and the same spirit of mischief which designated it the “Blueback” regiment, extended to its several companies, the 1st or Grenadier company being nicknamed the “*Heavenly*” company, as I suppose from its towering stature; the 2nd, the “*Maltouts*,” from its members firing so badly; and the 3rd, the “*Roast Beef*” company, from the jolly fellows who composed it.

For a short time the parade-ground was removed to Cockhedge, the ancient *Cocagium*, a waste piece of land in the immediate vicinity of the town; but eventually and permanently, a field on the south side of the town, on the banks of the Mersey, known as Harts'-Head Meadow, in Arpley, was selected. And here, as the summer of '98 advanced and wore

on, congregated in the early morning, the wives, children, and sweethearts of the volunteer heroes. Ladies, too, assembled here, the *élite* of Warrington and its neighbourhood, the Egertons, the Bovers, the Pattens, the Turners, the Herons, the Parrs, the Stantons, and the Blackburnes, sanctioning with their presence, and inspiring by their smiles, the generous defenders of their country.

And here, too, on Friday the 14th of September, 1798, the ceremony of presenting colours to the regiment took place, of which we are fortunate in possessing the description of an eye witness, which I shall so far trespass as to read in full.

“Thursday, September 20th, 1798. *Loyal Warrington Volunteers*. This respectable corps was presented with an elegant pair of colours ‘*pro Rege et Patria*,’ on Friday last, by Mrs. Parr, the lady of the worthy banker of that name. The gentlemen of the corps assembled at nine in the morning, and proceeded from the parade to church, where an excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. Daniel Mathias, the chaplain. The text was taken from Judges, chap. v., ver. 1, 2. ‘Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.’ The subject is certainly very appropriate to the occasion, nor was there less judgment displayed in elucidating and applying, than in selecting it. We could have wished that the admirable prayer which was used at the consecration of the banner had been kept distinct from the sermon, as the altar seems the fittest place for so sacred a dedication. From the church, the corps marched to a larger field adjoining the parade-ground, and being drawn up to form three sides of a square, the banners were presented by Mrs. Parr.

“She took the silken prize, and with a smile,
 (The loyal troop attentive all the while,)
 Thus spoke. ‘Accept this gift, ye social band,
 Nor less esteem it from a female hand;
 Beneath its blaze our sacred rights maintain,
 Nor let dishonour tinge it with a stain;
 Remember still—they fight in virtue’s cause,
 Who guard their king, their liberty, and laws.’
 This said a plaudit roam’d the air at large,
 For there was inspiration with the charge.”

“The colours were received from the lady by Captain-commandant Dakin, who in very handsome terms thanked the fair donor for the high honour she had that day conferred on him and his brave associates, and assured her that the standards would be valued as a sacred depository, around which loyalty and patriotism would ever be found, and that whatever might happen in our contest with a ruthless foe, ‘they would never be deserted.’ The corps then went through the different evolutions with great skill and wonderful exactness, very much to the satisfaction of a numerous concourse of spectators. The whole concluded with a grand royal salute.

“When we consider the very short time this loyal body of men has taken up arms, we think it but bare justice to observe that Lieutenant Douglas, of the 58th, who has the training of them, is entitled to very high praise.

“The ground was kept by Sir William Gerrard’s Volunteer Cavalry, a very fine body of men, who maintained very good order by means of the old military civility, much better than if they had adopted the too common behaviour of young soldiers. From the field the corps proceeded to the Assembly Rooms, where an excellent dinner was provided, every heart beating high, and impelled by one general sentiment of loyalty. The day was concluded with that exhilarating festivity, which as it brings us nearer to each other, is not only allowable but laudable. We were particularly struck with the effect arising from an excellent band of music, striking up, ‘Croppies lie down,’ so soon as ‘the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and success to his measures’ was given from the chair. ‘Major Earle and the Liverpool Volunteers’ (the former of whom honoured the corps with his presence,) were drunk with three times three, and thunders of applause. May the same unanimity, zeal, and loyalty, which characterized this day—a day on which the heavens seemed to smile, prevail throughout the kingdom, and then we may rather court than dread an invasion from the enemy.”

I have been thus diffuse in describing the presentation of colours to the Warrington Volunteers, as they will else be undeservedly forgotten. When the regiment was disbanded in the year 1801, on the delusive Peace of Amiens, the colours were placed over the altar in the parish church, and here they waved or rather swung for a quarter of a century, when a new generation had arisen, which laughed at the fear of invasion, *for Waterloo had settled that*. The old “Blueback” banners disappeared, for they were considered inappropriate to the place; but two years ago a tattered piece was brought to me, and I deem it worth preserving, as what our facetious friend “*Punch*” would term, “a fragment of a rather glorious old rag.”

A soldier’s life is proverbially one of sunshine and sorrow, and so it was with our Volunteer heroes. On the 10th of October, 1798, died James Leigh, Esquire, captain of the Light Company, a gentleman deservedly respected in private life, and valuable to the newly-raised corps as a zealous and efficient officer. The melancholy duty devolved upon the regiment of following his remains to the family vault at Lymm, in Cheshire, and there, after depositing his mortal remains, of firing three vollies over the grave of their departed comrade.

Again a change, for on the 26th of the following November, the whole regiment of Warrington Volunteers marched to Garswood, the seat of Sir

William Gerrard, near Ashton in Mackerfield, for the purpose of reciprocating, on the occasion of his corps of Volunteer Cavalry receiving their colours, the kind office which they had performed so well at Warrington on the memorable 14th of September previous. But far different was the aspect of the heavens. A day of incessant rain rendered the trampled ground a perfect quagmire; and if the outward man was wetted, so also was the inner man, for the strong ale and punch of Garswood were poured out as freely and gratuitously as the rain that day. Notwithstanding the admonitions of Captain Pemberton, who from his customary sobriety was known amongst the men as *Captain Drinkwater*, there was at the close of the field day a lamentable return of the disabled and missing. Very few of the privates, and report says of the officers, too, could return a-foot, and in marching order to Warrington that night. My informant, who was one of these few, says with singular *naiveté*, "on reaching Warrington we marched straight to Captain Dakin's, to see if the colours had come home." As if, forsooth, they could walk home of themselves.

Early in the following year, the regiment was reviewed by General Oliver Nicolls, the inspecting field-officer of the district. The day was fine, and everything else propitious; and although the General at the close of the evolutions complimented the corps on their steadiness under arms, and their general soldierly bearing, yet it was rumoured afterwards that the sentries at the entrance of the ground, who had unfortunately been selected from the "Maltouts" company, caused the veteran's cheek to pale, by *presenting* the muzzles of their clumsy firelocks at his person, on the order to salute him by *presenting arms*.

Perhaps the most formidable service in which the Warrington Volunteers were called upon to engage, was the suppression of a riot in the town in the year 1799, occasioned by a party of Irish rebels,—who had saved themselves from being shot as traitors by enlisting in His Majesty's service,—overpowering the escort who had them in charge, and actually breaking the sword of the commanding-officer over his head. This serious *fracas* took place at the lower end of Bridge Street, and was afterwards known as the "Battle of the Bridge." At this time even black murder itself could be atoned for by enlisting in one of the "condemned regiments;" and we might hence expect a certain feeling of anxiety on the part of the relatives of the Volunteers, but certainly not to the extent shown by the wife of

Joshua Fletcher, of the Grenadier company, who as she handed him his cumbrous hat, and gave him a parting kiss, said; "*now Joshua, as soon as ever they begin to be rough, do thee run home again as fast as thee can.*"

But smile not to yourselves, gentlemen of Liverpool, nor deem the Volunteers of Warrington less valorous than your own ancestors, for thus and thus runs a tale amongst us. Fifty years before the time of which I have been hitherto treating, namely, in the famous '45, Charles Edward, the Pretender, was on his route from Scotland, and had reached Preston, with the intention of crossing the Mersey at Warrington Bridge. To arrest, or at least to divert his progress, the Earl of Cholmondeley, commander of the district, ordered the demolition or dismantling of the bridge, and either from scarcity of workmen, or his suspicion of the many Jacobites at Warrington, commissioned a party of the Liverpool Blues to effect it for us. Early in a morning, therefore, towards the end of November, the trusty Blues set out from Liverpool, and I presume took the route of Childwall; for the darkest shades of night found them weary and straggling on Penketh Common, two miles short of Warrington. Suddenly the ears of the tired soldiers were pierced with horrid shrieks and most dismal screams, issuing from the very depths of the darkness. The command to halt and form close column was obeyed as if by magic. Grenadiers were ordered to the front, and scouts sent in advance with instructions to be cautious, and return quickly. In their absence, the suspense increased to agony, for the shrieks redoubled in violence, and could only proceed from some quiet village, surprised and pillaged by the expected rebels. Each man looked suspiciously at his neighbour, perhaps expecting to see him converted into a raw-boned Highlander, with his dirk pointed at his throat. But speedily the scouts returned, and then how great the change. They reported that these hideous screams proceeded from a flock of harmless *geese*, which had been disturbed from their quiet sleep on the Common, and were already dispersing in all directions. No sooner said than chase was given to the retreating enemy. Grenadiers and Light-company were mingled together in the scramble, and each man, fixing his bayonet, *secured** his goose, and roasted it for supper that night in a house still standing at the foot of Warrington Bridge.

Here I bring to a close my account of the "Old Blueback"; but not

* Skewered?—Printer's Devil.

without a feeling of doubt that his exploits were so devoid of *blood*-shed that they called for no such deluge of *ink*-shed. Be this as it may, let us at least never forget, and let us teach our children to remember, that if we were spared the horrors of war and conquest on our own soil, we owe this immunity, under Providence, to the loyalty and patriotism of their grandfathers, the *British Volunteers*. Even the great Napoleon himself declared that in 1798, and again in 1803, the *British Volunteers* alone prevented his conquest of this happy country. We ourselves, if not less valiant than our ancestors, are at least "*Dii minorum dierum*," heroes of punier times; for on our late fear of French invasion, Liverpool produced no second John Bolton to raise and maintain his regiment of Volunteer Cavalry, nor with all her increase of wealth did she pour seventeen thousand pounds into the national treasury. Remembering these things, then, let us be "a little blind" to the faults or failings of the old *Volunteers*. Teetotalism and Vegetarianism are now so rife amongst us, that some will turn with distaste from the bare mention of the *Garswood ale* and the *roast goose* of Penketh. But refined and polished as we deem ourselves, when compared with our ancestors of fifty years ago, of one thing I feel certain, namely, that we may derive a useful lesson from the *Volunteers* of '98 in the practice of three sterling virtues—virtues, too, which we are prone to consider peculiarly British—*Loyalty*, *Patriotism*, and *Good-Fellowship*.

II.—A SYNOPTICAL VIEW OF THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES—EARLIEST
AND MEDIEVAL—ON BRITISH HISTORY.

By William Bell, Phil. Dr.

In the general complaint of the want of learning or research, in the so-called dark ages, I am not inclined to concur. Though the Mythologies of the classic writers of those times must have been looked upon by the cloistered student as the chronicles of demons; their poems and glorifications of Venus, Jupiter, and Apollo, as the praises of the evil one; and the philosophical investigations of Cicero, Plutarch, or Seneca as foolishness and fiction; yet it is to the care and transcription of these students that we owe the preservation and perpetuity of most of the great works of those master minds of former ages. It is more especially that I, as a Briton, feel grateful,