









**TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE BARONESS HOWE.**

It would be a sufficient reason for sanctioning this work with your Ladyship's name, that it is an offering of gratitude, presented because there is nothing worthier to give.

But there is another cause. He who celebrates a patriot, cannot address himself to [Pg iv] any one more properly than to the daughter of a patriot; of one who was for years the naval sun of England, and from whom the young and enterprising caught the unextinguishable rays of patriotism and courage.

For actions and glory such as his, the female mind is not formed; but in the calm and active virtues of private life, which are almost equally honourable to the possessor, your Ladyship maintains the dignity of your race. I call to witness those whom you have soothed in affliction, and those whom you have honoured with your friendship. They will vindicate me from the charge of flattery, and support my assertion, that your [Pg v] patronage is as glorious to me, as any I could possibly have chosen.

With the hope, that the virtues of your excellent daughter, and your son, whom I am proud to call my friend, may answer your fullest expectations,

I remain,  
Your Ladyship's  
Most obliged  
And devoted Servant,  
W.S. WALKER.



## PREFACE.

As the author of these Poems is only seventeen, some apology may be required for offering them to the public.

Many precedents may be quoted in favour of early publication; and the practice perhaps is not in itself blameable, except when the advice of good judges is unasked, or the work itself uncorrected and negligent. To neither of these charges is the author liable. These poems, as well as the design of publishing them, have been approved of by many sincere and judicious [Pg viii] friends; and the work has been altered in many parts, in conformity to the advice of the same persons. The author has made no improper sacrifice to the Muse: he has deserted no duty, and neglected no necessary employment. Influenced by these motives, he appears before the bar of criticism, not indeed without diffidence, but unconscious of having deserved censure. If his verses are bad, he is content to sink into oblivion; and if the public confirms the favourable judgment of his friends, he does not deny that it will give him real satisfaction. — He is sensible, that if he delayed till time had matured his judgment, and reflection perfected his ideas, the "*scribendi cacoëthes*," perhaps an unfortunate inclination, would take a firm and unalterable [Pg ix] possession of his mind. He is therefore determined to try the public opinion; that he may be enabled either to pursue his poetical studies under their encouragement, or to desist in time from an useless employment. This volume is not intended to challenge approbation, but to be the precursor of something which may challenge it in future: it is not an attempt to gain the prize, but a specimen of his powers, which may entitle him to the honour of standing candidate for that prize. The reader will here find the genuine effusions of a youthful fancy, free, yet not uncontrolled; a collection of pieces, exempt from negligence and inaccuracy, though not from the usual and inevitable faults of early compositions. To offer less than this would be arrogant, [Pg x] and to require more than this would be unreasonable.

"Gustavus Vasa" was originally planned (the reader will smile) at eleven years of age. When the author began to know what poetry was, his first design was to write an epic poem — no matter of what

sort or character, so it was an epic poem. The subject was soon chosen; and the progress of the work was various: sometimes hurried on with all the ardour of hope and enterprize, sometimes relinquished for more lively pursuits, and left to sleep for months in the leaves of a portfolio. In this manner were six long cantos completed. At length the author, in his thirteenth year, perceived numerous faults and extrava [Pg xi] gances in his early composition. He destroyed the manuscript: and some time after recommenced his poem on a new and more rational plan. Accordingly, the first and part of the second book, were written in 1810, and the rest of the work which is published in this volume, principally in 1812. All that is yet completed of this production (except the sequel of the fourth book, and the whole fifth, which are yet uncorrected) is here presented to the public; and on its success the continuation of "Gustavus Vasa" depends.

It was designed to embrace the whole actions of the hero, from his first signaling himself under Steen Sture, to his death in 1560; but as all this could not be regularly [Pg xii] related without destroying the unity of the poem, it was thought most convenient to begin with his introduction among the Dalecarlians at Mora, and conclude with his first election to the royalty, in 1523; the rest being introduced by means of narration, anticipation, and episode.

It will be doubtless objected, that the enterprize is beyond his powers, and that he acted rashly in undertaking it. But this is no light scheme; no work, begun for want of other amusement, and deserted when a more specious or pleasing subject for poetry presented itself. He has considered it seriously; the subject appears full of poetical capabilities, and superior to many others which offered themselves; and if the [Pg xiii] opinion of the world coincides with his own in this point, he has resolved to make it the favourite employment of his maturer years, and to reduce it as far as possible to perfection. Part of his plan for continuing the poem, will be found in the Notes.

The smaller pieces are selected from a large number of original compositions; they are not chosen as his favourites, but as what he esteems most faultless. This appeared the safer method; since it is impossible that "the flimsy productions of a youth of seventeen," as

Kirke White expresses it, should be free from considerable errors; and we are apt to think our most irregular flights, our most vigorous ones. On these [Pg xiv] pieces, however, he places little stress; his principal reliance is on "Gustavus Vasa." The Latin Poems have been honoured by the approbation of different Masters at Eton.

The Author may be accused of arrogance in saying too much of himself. But he felt strongly that early publication, and the design of writing a long epic poem, would naturally be censured by many well-meaning persons; he thought it his duty to state his motives; and was less solicitous to avoid the possible charge of self-conceit, than the certain one of folly and presumption.

Any resemblance to former writers, which [Pg xv] may occur in the course of the work, are generally unintentional. Thus the lines—

"Touch'd the abyss, and, lest his eyes might view  
The abandon'd shore, into its depths withdrew,"

were written before the author had seen Persius's description of a totally abandoned man:

—nescit quid perdat, et, alto  
Demersus, summâ rursus non bullit in undâ.



*The Author has to express his sincere gratitude for a numerous and respectable list of Subscribers. It is far beyond his expectations; and it encourages his hope, that the reception of the present volume will authorize his continuing in the same pursuit.*



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