

Lachman's theory of separate authorship of portions of the poem has not maintained itself against the critics. That there are contradictions in its statements and different values in its parts cannot be denied, but they are not explained on the grounds here set forth. The attempted restoration of the poem by elimination and rearrangement has not left twenty or any number of lays that have actually the air of being separate poems. "It is just here," continues Lettsom, "that the failure of the hypothesis is most conspicuous . . . Some of the lays are not ill-adapted, from the nature of their contents, to form separate poems, but they are by no means out of place as episodes in a long work, and are, besides, connected with the rest, while the latter, from the insignificance of their contents alone, from their reference to one another, from their allusions to the past and anticipations of the future, from their abrupt commencements and still more abrupt conclusions, and from their general fragmentary nature, could never have been independent lays

Prof. Lachmann himself seems to be in doubt whether this Frist Lay be complete; he talks of 'this lay, or what has been preserved of it;' he tells us that 'it several times indicates a continuation, and might have deserved a better than that which follows;' but though he expresses a doubt, he gives no reasons for entertaining one. It certainly would require far less ingenuity to assign cogent reasons for a doubt, and indeed for much more than a doubt, on this point

. An attentive examination of the three or four lays just noticed, would, I think, convince every unprejudiced reader that the hypothesis of twenty separate lays by different authors is utterly untenable The wisest course," he concludes, and it is easy to concur with him, "is, in such uncertainty, to take the poem as we find it, and to prefer the authority, however occasionally unsatisfactory, of manuscripts to the speculations of the most ingenious critics."