

15. [MUSGRAVE, Agnes]. *Edmund of the Forest*. An historical Novel. In four Volumes. By the Author of *Cicely*, or the *Rose of Raby*. London: for William Lane, Minerva Press, 1797. £6000



4 vols, 12mo (168 × 100 mm), pp. [2], iv, 252; [2], 269, [1]; [2], 288; [2], 288. Engraved frontispiece to vol. 1 Vol. 1: leaves F 4-6 torn across without loss, worm track to blank upper inner margin of last 12 leaves; vol. 2: 40 mm tear with no loss, affecting a rule but not text, a few leaves in quire B sprung (but secure); vol. 3: one lower forecorner torn away, not touching text; vol. 4: light staining to foremargins towards the end. Overall, very clean and fresh. Contemporary quarter calf, vellum tips, gilt ruled spines, red morocco lettering pieces, black circular numbering pieces. Slight rubbing and very minor chipping. Armorial bookplates of John, 4th Duke of Atholl. A very nice copy.

**FIRST EDITION OF THIS RARE MINERVA PRESS NOVEL, AN EXTRAVAGANT GOTHIC TALE SET IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND.** A notice in the *Critical Review* of November 1797 was unable to identify its author

positively but compared it with Musgrave's first novel, *Cicely* (1795). 'The author has allowed her or his imagination a wider scope, but has plunged into a series of adventures in rapid succession, which defy all possibility of belief ... Horrors are multiplied on horrors, new characters on new characters, until the reader is bewildered in a maze ... The story is supposed to have happened in the reign of James III. of Scotland; and the agency of witchcraft is introduced in compliment to that monarch's credulity ... The scene is, indeed, a copy from Macbeth's visit to the witches; but it wants the additional charm of Shakespeare's genius. With such helps as witches, ghosts, caverns, and ruined castles, we should be too scrupulous in expecting probability: but there are bounds even to fiction ...'

Vol II contains a final advert for the second edition of *Cicely*, or the *Rose of Raby*, 'just published' [1796]. Unlike *Cicely*, *Edmund* did not receive a second edition, though it appeared in French in 1798 and an extract, entitled 'The Adventure James III of Scotland had with the weird Sisters' was reprinted in the 1799 collection *Gothic Stories*. Indeed, more than one version of the story appeared in early nineteenth-century fiction, implying some influence.

Blakey, *Gothic Literature*, p. 181. Garside, Raven and Schöwerling, 1797: 60. ESTC: British Library, New York Society Library, Rice University and University of Virginia only.

