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BYRON, THE POET

EDITED BY
WALTER A. BRISCOE

A COLLECTION OF ADDRESSES
AND ESSAYS

BY

VISCOUNT HALDANE	PROF. H. J. C. GRIERSON
SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH	J. A. HAMMERTON
THE HON. WHITELAW REID	EDMUND HUNISMAN
WILLIAM ARCHER	CECIL ROBERTS
SHIRLEY C. ATCHLEY	HERBERT. C. ROE
MARIE CORELLI	PROF. GEO. SAINTSBURY
PROF. W. MACNEILE DIXON	WILFRED WHITTEN
PROF. F. S. GRANGER	ETC.

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A CENTENARY VOLUME

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THE EDITOR
AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATES THIS BOOK
TO
HIS WIFE

*Oh / if you wish that happiness
Your coming days and years may bless,
And virtues crown your brow ;
Be still as you were wont to be,
Spotless as you've been known to me?--
Be still as you are now.*

—BYRON.

PREFACE

"BYRON, THE POET" is a volume of collected addresses and essays relating to Lord Byron and his poetry.

The Addresses have been delivered on various dates in the county with which he was so intimately associated, and where his name stands pre-eminent in the world of literature.

The selected essays deal with numerous phases of Byron's career; and there are additional chapters on the life and writings of the poet.

.

The Editor begs to acknowledge the kind assistance rendered by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (whose early encouragement and co-operation made the volume possible), Viscount Haldane, Sir Squire Bancroft, Miss Marie Corelli; Professors Macneile Dixon, Granger, Grierson, and Saintsbury; Messrs. William Archer, Shirley C. Atchley (of the British Legation, Athens), S. Clements, F. W. Davies, J. A. Hammerton, Edmund Huntsman, Cecil Roberts, Herbert C. Roe and Family, and Wilfred Whitten (*John O' London*).

A special word of thanks is due to the Rev. the Lord Byron, M.A., for kind assistance rendered in the matter of portraits and information relating thereto; and to the following

publishers for courteous permission to reproduce some of the matter contained herein : the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Messrs. Bradbury Agnew & Co., (the proprietors of *Punch*), and the proprietors of the *Sphere* and *Taller*.

In addition to the aforementioned, thanks are tendered to Sir James Barrie, O.M., (who was engaged in journalistic work in the old *Journal* office in Nottingham, only a few doors below where the boy Byron wrote his first "poem"), who sends his "best wishes for the success of the enterprise."¹

.

It is hoped that the proceeds from the sales of this volume will be sufficient to enable a contribution to be made towards a Byron Memorial in connection with the Nottingham Public Libraries.

The *raison d'etre* of the publication, however, is a literary one: the collation of hitherto scattered matter, much of which is a valuable contribution to Byroniana.

"Byron, the Poet," is a volume designed to appeal not only to the *litterateur*, and to every student of Byron, but to the general reader; for Byron had admirers (as well as decriers) in every class of Society.

W. A. B.

*Thyfanesy thy temples, to the surface bow.
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,
Broke by the share of every rustic plough .
So pensh monuments of mortal Birth,
To perish all in turn, save well-recorded Worth.*

-- BYRON.

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*And glory long has made the sages smile ;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person /eaves behind.*

—BYRON.

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*" Dead ! God, how much there is
in thai little word!"*

—BYRON.

BYRON, THE POET

"A man must serve his time to ev'ry trade,
Save censure ; critics all are ready made."
—BYRON.

PART 1

CRITICAL AND GENERAL

- I: BYRON : A STUDY Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch,
M.A., Litt.D.
- II: THE FAME OF BYRON . . . The Hon. Whitelaw Reid,
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- III: BYRON AND GOETHE . . . Viscount Haldane, O.M.
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- VII: BYRON AS A PROSODIST . . Prof. George Saintsbury,
M.A.,LL.D.
- VIII: THE MORAL INFLUENCE
OF BYRON Prof. Frank Granger, M.A.,
Litt.D.
- VIII: BYRON. Prof. W. Macneile Dixon,
Litt.D.

"Fame is the thirst of youth."
—BYRON.

I

BYRON

BY SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH, M.A., **LITT.D.**,
King Edward VII Professor of English Literature in the University of Cambridge

I

IT were dangerous, perhaps, for a visitor to let himself overflow and expansively praise the people of Nottingham, for endowing, in their University College, an annual lecture under the great name of Byron. It may be that some pride of county association, of property in him; some sense that he who was in many ways a man of the world—who, more than Odysseus of old, ¹¹ saw many cities of men and was acquainted with their spirit"—does yet peculiarly belong to you by race and birth and those early influences of which no man ever rids himself—has at least as much to do with it as your discernment that the greatness of Byron needs proclaiming and specially needs it just now. But, however it came about, I congratulate you : and however much I wish you had chosen someone to do it better, I am proud to make an essay here upon an act of justice that, in England at any rate, badly needs the doing.

More than thirty-five years ago Matthew Arnold made bold to prophesy thus:

These two, Wordsworth and Byron, stand, it seems to me, first and pre-eminent ... a glorious pair, among the English

poets of this [nineteenth] century. Keats had probably, indeed, a more consummate poetic gift than either of them; but he died having produced too little and being as yet too immature to rival them. I, for my part, can never even think of equalling with them any other of their contemporaries;—either Coleridge, poet and philosopher wrecked in a mist of opium; or Shelley, beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. Wordsworth and Byron stand out by themselves. When the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these.

The passage is notorious for a clever wayward injustice it does to Shelley. (The only void in which Shelley ever beat his luminous wings in vain was a void in Mr. Arnold's understanding.) But will it last in equal disrepute for its prophecy concerning Byron? The year 1900 has been turned, and eighteen years have been added, and to-day (let us be frank about it) that prophecy has come nowhere near fulfilment. Indeed, promise of defeat followed close on its utterance, when Swinburne—who of all men then alive to be listened to—Swinburne, professed hater of despotism, who of all men might have been counted on to lift a louder trumpet and resound the rally—Swinburne, who had written in praise of Byron, words so noble that they might well seem to melt into a pledge to escort a fellow-spirit through darkness and detraction up to glory—

Tarry, dear cousin Suffolk !

My soul shall thine keep company to heaven ;
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast!

—when Swinburne so promptly wheeled back on past praise and joined with the revilers to revile—so persuasively too! But that the absurdity was possible may teach us two things: the first, that in these days a

claim for Byron really needs pressing among his countrymen ; the second that one who presses it must first lay his account with their present neglect, and—what is more—recognise it for an *obstinate* neglect, born not of idleness or indifference but of positive reluctance to allow the claim. Indeed, the other day a teacher in an ancient University advertised a course of lectures on the " Romantic Revolt " in English Poetry and left Byron out!

This reluctance begins and ends at home. On the continent of Europe, through which his poetry first ran as a flame, it has endured and burnt constantly. When he died, on the 19th of April, 1824, at Missolonghi, the Greek Provisional Government in the midst of the Easter festival, closed all shops and public offices, and proclaimed, with salute of guns, a general mourning for twenty-one days. To-day I take down from the shelf a volume (dated 1905) by Dr. George Brandes—it is Volume 4 of a series treating of *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* and treats particularly of *Naturalism in England*, and this is what I find. Dr. Brandes, viewing the movement by *his* sense of proportion, assigns 33 of his pages to Wordsworth, 17 to Coleridge, 12 to Southey, 25 to Scott, 19 to Keats, 17 to Landor, 43 to Shelley, and no less than 116 to Byron ! It is obvious that between this foreign critic and our domestic lecturer we must strike a balance somewhere, somehow. And Byron belongs to *us* !

There may be cities who refuse,
To their own child the honours due,
And look urgently on the Muse ;
But ever shall those cities rue
The dry, unyielding, niggard breast,
Offering no nourishment, no rest,
To that young head which soon shall rise
Disdainfully, in might and glory, to the skies.

II

Easy talk about reaction will not carry us very far. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* appeared on March loth, 1812, and, as everyone knows, Byron flashed into sudden, dazzling fame. Edition crowded on edition. Before its appearance Tom Moore gratified his lordship by expressing a fear that it was too good for its age. To this the late Professor Nichol somewhat tartly (but in my opinion very justly) retorted that this is precisely what it was not.

Its success was due to the reverse being the truth. It was just on the level of its age. Its flowing verse, defaced by rhyimical faults perceptible only to finer ears, its prevailing sentiment, occasional boldness relieved by pleasing platitudes, its half-affected rakishness, here and there elevated by a rush as of morning air, and its frequent richness—not yet, as afterwards, splendour—of description, were all appreciated by the fashionable London of the Regency; while the comparatively mild satire, not keen enough to scarify, only gave a more piquant flavour to the whole.

For three full heady years Byron—a spoilt child from the cradle—knew the idolatry of this society and inhaled its incense. His name (I can conceive no more illustrious triumph, in England, for art over the popular imagination) figured in the shop-windows over new styles in collars and neck-ties. The young shopman behind the counter read his poems, and on Sundays walked Hampstead Heath as a full-blooded Giaour arming an Odalisque—and after all, when we consider, this was a deal better than playing the "Abstract Buck" on the model of the Prince Regent Byron in fine and in the language of the day was the "rage": and he fed it lavishly: all too carelessly as an artist, and with seeming carelessness as a dandy who chose to be a genius; yet

all the while with an irritable care which vanity taught vanity to conceal. These three marvellously successful years were his worst, whether we take him as artist or as man; years in which he poured out *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*. There was no resisting them. "*Lara*" says he, "I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry, 1814." Now in 1814 a class in England—Byron's class—was celebrating the apparent end of the Napoleonic struggle. It had profited pretty successfully through that struggle; it was emerging in a triumphant political position; and its exultation shaped itself in the form of the improved Brighton Pavilion and the sort of behaviour that went on inside it. (The Brighton Pavilion, you may remember, was adapted to resemble the Kremlin at Moscow.) Our rulers, long denied Continental travel, were hungry for foreign parts, where Byron had been; for foreign titillations, which *Childe Harold* had enjoyed and reported. "Sentimentalists," says George Meredith "are a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil/" and sentiment is an even readier coinage than hypocrisy for the tribute that vice pays to virtue. What sentimentalist of the Regency could command his duct of tears over such a passage as

He who hath bent him o'er the dead,
Ere the first day of Death is fled,
The first dark day of Nothingness,
The last of Danger and Distress,
(Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where Beauty lingers,) . . .

or refuse a thrill to the question

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?

When writing like that enjoys a rage—a patently excessive rage—we ought not to grieve that reaction comes, nor to grieve that it comes swiftly: but we may deplore (I think) when it descends upon the poet at the hands of those who taught him to be overweening, and afterwards found sanctuary for their sins of taste in the violence they contributed to his punishment. As Macaulay noted, the age set about smashing its idol in characteristic British fashion, assailing not the poetry he had written up to 1816, and not at all (of course) themselves for its having entranced them; but assailing the man for having been wicked in a wicked age; and this although his wickedness was half a parade of perverse vanity, and although, as a fact, he was so innocent of the charge upon which they seized as to be helpless before it, in a bewilderment at what it all meant.

We know no spectacle [says Macaulay] so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice . . . But once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with leniency, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are taken from him. If he has a profession, he is ruined. He is cut by the higher orders and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised . . . At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

III

So it happened with Byron. But a hundred years is a long while: and I cannot agree with Mr. Coleridge, Byron's latest and best editor, when he wistfully opines that "perhaps, even yet, the time has not come for a definite and positive appreciation of his genius. The tide of feeling and opinion must ebb and flow many times before his rank and station among the poets of all time will be finally determined." Surely, in 1918, we can hold our minds aloof from the passions of 1818 (amid which the fourth and last canto of *Childe Harold* appeared) and judge Byron's claim dispassionately, even as we can judge the claim of Burns, another poet whose private life, if you will, came short of edifying. Is Byron's poetry great poetry? Is it genuine poetry? Does it ring true? Is it *sincere*? Yes, there we have—for all poetry, greater or less—the critical word—*sincerity*. Though poetry speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *sincerity*, it is become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

We shall apply that crucial test later. For the moment we must deal with some awkward preliminaries, since—to speak bluntly—a great deal of Byron's writing before 1816 forces on us the question, Whether it be poetry at all? Well, if we would do our critical duty, and be clear about Byron, let us have it out even with *that* question, though it involve our making some damaging, almost desperate admissions. •

To begin with, no ear trained upon the exquisite lyric of Shelley, with its jet and fall, its modulated runs, pauses, linked lapses—all natural as movement of water is natural—can miss to detect Byron's lyrical gift as cheap, almost null. Take a chorus from *Heaven and Earth* and set it beside a chorus from *Prometheus*

Unbound, and it reads like a schoolboy's exercise—

Oh son of Noah ! mercy on thy kind !
What! wilt thou leave us all— all—*all* behind ?

But let us take a lyrical stanza or two—

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,—

which, with the rest of *Hebrew Melodies* reatfs to me,
I confess, like turgid school-exercise work : or

Oh ! what is more brave than the dark Suliote,
In his snowy camese and his shaggy capote ?
To the wolf and the vulture he leaves his wild flock,
And descends to the plain like a stream from the rock,

Then the Pirates of Parga that live by the waves,
And teach the pale Franks what it is to be slaves—.

I protest that my tongue stammers against continuing.
Now remember that readers of the Regency admired
that by the thousand, and then set it beside these long
neglected stanzas by Shelley—

Pause not! The time is past' Every voice cries, Away '
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood :
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude,

Away, away ! to thy sad and silent home ;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth ;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee
erewhile,

Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings are not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one sweet smile.

Surely, after that, the thumped-out rhythm of even
the best lyric of Byron's is hard to pass: and we have

had Tennyson, too, and Swinburne to educate us: Swinburne, for example:

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Maenad and the Bassand ;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight,
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

I am hardy—and hardier, being one who deplores the almost complete tyranny of the lyric in these days—to claim that it has at any rate trained the Englishman's lyrical ear: and so must own that the foreigners—especially the German, who makes no account of this defect in Byron, himself lacking the instruction, even the vocal apparatus, to detect it—can bring little or nothing to help Byron against his countryman's damaging criticism.

For a second point: Byron, who wrote much in blank verse, had, to the end, small sense of it. Of the slide of caesura by which Milton's organic line almost draws tears by its very perfection, he had no sense at all; as none for the handling by which Shakespeare at the last tamed it, not only to "perform at point" anything from a shearer's feast to the broken outcry of royal Lear, but set it humming to the soul in all undersounds and oversounds. By a perversity Byron chose to admire the line of Pope, which, admirable in itself, of all lines least suited our poet's genius: while his own careless fluidity precluded that neatness which the Popian line most demands. In plain words, Byron did not take enough trouble—a source of failure in many walks of life. When the good Sir Walter Scott, reviewing *Cain*, wrote that in this "very grand and tremendous drama," Lord

Byron "has certainly matched Milton on his own ground," the mountain brought forth a little mouse predestined for Matthew Arnold to play with, in Matthew Arnold's pretty feline way. But the mischief goes down beyond carelessness; the carelessness being but symptomatic. Too often Byron's blank verse has no nerve of life. *There* resides the malady of such lines as:

Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant m
His everlasting face and tell him that
His evil is not good

(at which Arnold scoffed) or:

Unless you keep company
With him (and you seem scarce used to such high
Society) you can't tell how he approaches.

These defects—and not a few others, from clumsiness of dramatic touch down to sheer bad grammar, *vulgarly* bad grammar—stare at us out of Byron's page. But poetry can have all these faults and remain poetry—remain even high poetry—so it be fervent, imaginative, and (above all) sincere.

IV

What, then, of Byron's sincerity? You will know M. Scherer's dictum: "This beautiful and blighted being is at bottom a coxcomb. He posed all his life long." I shall presently try to show that four words in that judgment convert the whole to a falsehood. But again let the devil's advocate have his way for a while with Byron the man. I shall in this audience presume a knowledge at least of the main facts of his life. You know that he was well born if it be well born to come of a line of strong men, arrogant under title of nobility, eminently unlike their poorer neighbours, and able—though too often in sinister ways—to assert this un-

likeness for superiority, warranting a claim to be a law to themselves. You know the story of the fifth—the "wicked"—Lord Byron; how he killed his kinsman and neighbour Chaworth by some sinister sword-play in a darkened room in Piccadilly, and thereafter (having escaped by verdict of his peers) lived out a mad and morose life—by report a haunted one—at Newstead, shooting at bottles for distraction, and absolutely ignoring the brat at Aberdeen who, in default of direct issue, was to succeed him.

You know that the father of this brat was Captain John Byron, a spendthrift and heartless rake; that the mother was a vulgar, doting, illiterate Scotch heiress, who, having been wickedly abandoned to bring the child up, did, to spoil him, all that pretentiousness in penury, all that fondness combined with ungovernable temper, could possibly achieve. You know, moreover, that the child was born with a club foot, and was of a vanity so sensitive that the deformity (a slight one) tortured his life—and this though, as all contemporaries testify, he grew to a young man of winning, of surpassing, personal beauty, with a face as it were a vase nobly cut in ivory or alabaster and lit from within: "the only man I ever contemplated," testified Charles Mathews, "to whom I felt disposed to apply the word beautiful." Byron left among his papers a note of the feeling of horror and humiliation that came over him as a child when his mother, in one of her gusts of passion, taunted him with being "*a lame brat!*" and if you turn to the opening lines of *The Deformed Transformed*, his last, unfinished drama, you will read that taunt still seared on his memory, as, pursuing, you will find the whole~poem vibrant to its torture. Yes, Byron was abnormally, even insanely, sensitive; and, as sensitiveness promotes vanity, Byron was inordinately vain;

and, as vanity leads to posturing, and posturing to pretence, and pretence to downright lying, we may, if we will, damn Byron on all these counts. There is, unhappily, evidence that even of the last he was not guiltless.

Thus far, then, the devil's advocate has his way. Yet, in Portia's words:

{ Tarry a little : there is something else.

v

Suppose a man, noble of nature, at bottom fiercely proud and courageous, but spoilt in childhood and so sensitive to the world's opinion that, the world flattering him for an idol, he returns the compliment by making the world his god. Suppose that world to be the May-fair of the Prince Regent's day—a tawdry society of war-profiteers swollen upon the miseries of a bowed and ruined populace—a society to my mind even more hateful, because falser, in its smug godliness than in its vices. It has flattered this man to the skies, and he repays it with *Thou art my God: in Thee do I put my trust.*

Now suppose this man, so sensitive, of a sudden exposed to a false charge of which he cannot even learn the particulars. Suppose him to look around in dismay—for the calumny, whatever it is, has leapt up within his own doors, from the very breast of his wife, and escaped into the street. Still he is confident. The world, in which he has trusted, will rally to him, will not fail him.

But lo! it has as suddenly crumbled, fallen away. He is alone, deserted, naked as Lear. The pavement of popularity has broken up and become a hissing. Its stones are burning marl to his feet. He, like Lear, must go out a wanderer.

Now such a reversal of fortune—to use the Aristotelian phrase—if it befall a weak man, a fribble, a coxcomb, such as Byron seems to M. Scherer, merely ends him. He awakes from illusion, he has lost the breath of his being; nothing remains but to turn his face to the wall. Such a stroke descended on Byron. It cut sheer down through tissue and nerve of one of the most sensitive men ever born. And he screamed—as how should he not, being such a man? But I say to you that the surgery cut down to a man, to a great man, to a great poet—and saved his soul. It cut down through affected or practised falsities, to the truth which lay in the kernel of the man. And I say to you that, in this matter of truth, while it is well for us that we demand exactitude of statement, strict correspondence of report with fact, as one test of an English gentleman, it were better if we demanded a higher allegiance—allegiance to the truth within him. You may never in your life have said a word false to fact, and yet all your life by timidity and paltering with essential truth have been playing false before men. In our hearts we all know it; that orthodoxy is, with many, a lie of the soul. Of that lie, having proved it a lie and by bitter experience, Byron became (because among men of his age he saw it, for what it was) most definitely the deadliest denouncer.

VI

I shall return to this. For the moment I ask you to take April 25th, 1816, the day on which Byron sailed from England for ever, and to set that for a mark dividing all that he wrote before from all that he wrote afterwards: and I promise you that with this simple book-marker between what to discard and what to retain, you will never again doubt that he was a great poet.

Still using April 1816 for bookmarker, divide the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* from the remainder, begun in early May of that year. Who can fail to perceive the sudden deepening of the voice to sincerity, the as sudden lift to music and imagination? Who can fail to feel that out of mere Vanity Fair we have passed at one stride into a region of moral earnestness, into acquaintance with a grand manner, into a presence? The very exordium gives the convincing shock—the exordium in which he proclaimed—as Shelley also proclaimed—that he, the poet, has power actually to embody his thoughts, give them life and yield them over "nurselings of immortality."

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
 In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
 So that no wonder waits him—nor below
 Can Love or Sorrow, Fame, Ambition, Strife,
 Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
 Of silent, sharp endurance—he can tell
 Why Thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
 With airy images and shapes which dwell
 Still unimpaired, though old, in the Soul's haunted cell.
 'Tis to create, and in creating live
 A being more intense, that we endow
 With form our fancy, gaining as we give
 The life we image, even as I do now—
 What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
 Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
 Invisible but gazing, as I glow
 Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
 And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.

We pass a few stanzas, and come to the account of Brussels and the night-alarm before Waterloo. Who can read it and find not (in Sydney's phrase) his heart moved more than with a trumpet? Still we pass, to dwell at its close, dwell upon the exquisite stanza to young Howard—Byron's kinsman—who fell in the

swoop of Vivian's cavalry upon the dying final attack of the French guard:

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing, had I such to give ;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,

I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

If any man deny that for poetry—deny to that last line, with its dragging monosyllables, the informing touch of high poesy—let us not argue with him. Let us content ourselves with telling him.

VII

I repeat that if we take April 25th, 1816, the date on which he sailed from England, and place it in our Byron for a book-marker, we shall find ourselves, by that simple act, made ready to face his disparagers. "The one great thing," says Lacordaire, "is to have a life of one's own"; and from that date Byron, who had hitherto lived in the opinion of others and fed on it and written much shoddy to please it, found himself—and found a great poet. Let there be no nonsense about his rising upon any "stepping-stone of his dead self to higher things!" Byron's self underwent no kind of dissolution: it came through its ordeal very much alive; defiantly the same soul as ever, with head bloody but unbowed and with heart more arrogant than ever. Through torment and bitterness he had attained to "know the heavenly powers"; to know them—if I may conjecture ~~his~~ on his own addition—a devilish sight too well. Henceforward he stands opposed to them: but he stands up.

You may smile at any man—small bi-forked creature that he is—standing up, questioning, arraigning, denouncing the higher powers; but you must acknowledge the right of the challenge. If God created man in his image, man has a right (shall we not even say, a duty ?) to erect himself to the fullest inch of that image, and ask questions. Does it not, at any rate, argue a certain nobility of mind (if exorbitant) in one betrayed by his fellow-creatures, that he walks straight up and has it out with the Creator himself?

That is what—in *Manfred*, in *Cain*—in *Heaven and Earth*, in *The Vision of Judgment*, in *The Deformed Transformed*—substantially in every line he wrote after that Spring of 1816, informs his purpose. He hates Castlereagh, and all jackals; Brougham, and all sham opponents of tyranny. He disdains its stupidity in George III., its fungoid growth in George IV., the hard and brilliant *expertise* of Wellington in saving the world for the benefit of a class. He sees War for what it is, or at any rate for what he believes it to be—a piratical hazard of the powerful, cruelly employing the unreasoning but agonising mass of mankind as dupes and victims. And, proud rebel that he is, he carries the question (Shelley, too, carried it) up past your George the Third, Wellington. Castlereagh, to hand it, with Lucifer's own politeness, to the Almighty in session. "Your pardon, Sire—but, with such agents, *is* the judge of the Earth, just now, doing right?"

At any rate, to take hold upon Genesis and shake it, as Byron and Shelley did in an age (with difficulty conceivable by us) when even to venture a doubt that the Universe came into being in six days of twenty-four hours by the clock was to evoke every curse of the orthodox, is an act of intellectual courage, and remains that in despite of Goethe and his dictum that "the

moment Byron begins to reflect, he is a child." It may be simple : but it is, or was, a thought; and to utter and maintain it, against the England of Byron's day, required a mind very high above childishness : nay, a mind that had some measure of the Titanic: for, be the thought itself simple, the challenge is the grand challenge of Prometheus.

Many have noted that in all good portraits of Byron his head has a poise, his face a *lurid* look, as of one who dwelt in a region above his fellows, in a high atmosphere where tempests are more frequent, more terrific—but more frequent also and closer, clearer, more rarefied, are the vistas of Heaven. It is the face of Lucifer, star of the morning—of Lucifer, the accuser with the beautiful curled (lip—equally the accuser whether at Heaven's gate claiming George III. for hell, or prompting Cain to demand of God himself, concerning Adam's transgression :

What had I done in this?—I was unborn :
 I sought not to be born ; nor love the state
 To which that birth has brought me. Why did he
 Yield to the Serpent and the woman? or
 Yielding—why suffer?

What was there in this ?
 The tree was planted, and why not for him ?
 If not, why place him near it, where it grew
 The fairest in the centre ? They have but
 One answer to all questions. " Twas *his* will,
 And *he* is good." How know I that ? Because
 He is all-powerful, must all-good, too, follow ?

But (to leave theology alone and deal only with Byron's attitude towards *earthly* despots) I will ask you to consider this one point upon which some thought will be usefully expended, whether you apply it to the Europe of to-day, again staggering—blinded, almost broken—out of a stupendous war upon human liberty,

or prefer to narrow it backwards down and upon an academic theme, "The Romantic Revival in English Poetry." If, and while, you so narrow it, I yet beg you to reflect that, of its pioneers, Coleridge tottered through opium to Highgate; Wordsworth, after a few glorious years, settled to live comfortably beside the cataracts of the Lake Country that had haunted him like a passion—and ended with Ecclesiastical Sonnets and Sonnets in Defence of Capital Punishment; Southey, the Pantisocrat, turned renegade and kept in long domesticity *his* home fires burning with duplicate proofs of articles betraying his old faith. But, of the ensuing rank of rebels, the great ones—Shelley, Keats, Landor, Byron—for various reasons found England no place for them, departed into exile, and in exile died. Let us weigh their names to-day against those of Frere, Castlereagh, Gifford, Lockhart, ask which were—after all and on the whole—in the right, and beware how *we* persecute for opinion.

We have only to read a list of the poems poured forth in those first months of passionate exile and we stand amazed before an energy which seems almost maniacal. We examine them, and are amazed yet more by their poetical strength. *Chillon*, the *Stanzas to Augusta*, *The Dream*, the awful poem on *Darkness* with its most awful conclusion—but suffer me while I read it:

And War, which for a moment was no more,
 Did glut himself again :— a meal was bought
 With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
 Gorging himself in gloom ; no Love was left ;
 All jbarth was but one thought—and that was Death,
 Immediate and inglorious ; and the pang
 Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
 Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh ;
 The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
 Even dogs assailed their masters, all save one,

And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famished men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws ; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famished by degrees ; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies • they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heaped a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage ; they naked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery ; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shrieked, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The World was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless —
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths ;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropped
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead ; the tides were in their grave,
The Moon, their mistress, had expired before ;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perished ; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Such things as that—with *Manfred*, *Mazeppa*, *Beppo*,
The Lament of Tasso, *The Prophecy of Dante*—come not
of determination of words to the pen, but are creations,
heaved out from the volcanic breast of this man.

VIII

It happened—as such things do happen—that this soul, turned inward upon itself and, having found itself, preoccupied with expressing itself—that Byron, alone, or having only the Alps and Shelley, most ethereal of men, for his spiritual companions—blundered, in *Manfred* and *Cain*, over the edge of that actual and fatal ground on which all the serpents of scandal were hissing lies about him—and about Shelley, with *The Revolt of Islam* and some utterly false deductions for all their excuse. "The time Byron and Shelley spent together"—I quote here from Dr. George Brandes—

profitable and enjoyable as it was, would have been happier but for the behaviour of some of their fellow countrymen whose curiosity led them to dog the footsteps and spy the actions of the two poets. English tourists had the incredible impertinence to force their way into Byron's house. When a stop was put to this, they stood with telescopes on the shore or on the road; they looked over the garden wall; and hotel-waiters were bribed, as the Venetian gondoliers afterwards were, to communicate all that went on.

Hired spies never fail with a story: it is the goods they are paid to deliver. Rumours, all false, spiced and garnished up to meet the market of scandal, were duly indited in the letters of these tourists and posted to England—"gossip" by degrees making the poets out to be incarnate devils.

It consequently hardly surprises us to read that, one day at Madame de Stael's, when Byron was announced, a pious old English lady, Mrs. Hervey, the novel-writer, fainted when she heard his name.

But Byron, aware of the hubbub, kept unaware of the particular lie and now too scornful to enquire, writes

on and on. His task is to arraign the wickedness before which men fawn—spiritual wickedness in high places.

And so—as it might seem by felicitous chance, out of an experiment in *Beppo*—but truly by destiny—all his fortunes with his insurgent wrath against them, his knowledge of men and cities, his fatal sensual half-knowledge of women, with that noble damning core of true intuition ever torturing our Lucifer wide-eyed for the best thing missed, for salvation lost—all his facility of wit, his perfectness in the note of conversation among well-bred men and women; his own very considerable grasp of politics; his sense of Europe; his sense of the hypocrisy underlying all received government, all received religion; his sense of seas and mountains and vast natural forces amid which man may be viewed at will as a controlling engineer or a derisory ape;—all these (I say) in the end miraculously met together, found the measure and stanza exactly suitable to them and to Byron's genius, and combined in *Don Juan*.

I believe *Don Juan* will some day be recognised for one of the world's few greatest epics. I am sure that it is, after *Paradise Lost*, our second English Epic. *Don Juan* has this, at any rate, in common with the *Iliad* itself: it belongs with heart and soul to its age—a remarkable age, too, in human history—and it paints that age with such lively intensity, with such a sweep of power, that no generation to come will ever be able to dispute the picture. Still less will anyone dispute the play of life in the story, with its multitudinous variety of movement. It undulates like an ocean sweeping the reader along upon its waves, carrying him from shores familiar to shores romantic, from mart to mart of traffic, passion, intrigue, to shipwreck him but—as Odysseus was shipwrecked long ago—to leave him stretched, with the brine on his nakedness, on sands in the bland sun-

light, caressed by soft winds/ gazing up faint and half awake into the eyes of young love, innocent and startled. But I pass over the famous passage of Juan's first meeting with Haidde, to read you another—yet more characteristic perhaps—describing her father's—the pirate Lambro's—unexpected return and intrusion on their festal love-making.

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
 His garden trees all shadowy and green ;
 He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,
 The distant dog-bark; and perceived between
 The umbrage of the wood, so cool and dun,
 The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen
 Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes
 Of coloured garbs, as bright as butterflies.

* * * *

And still more nearly to the place advancing,
 Descending rather quickly the declivity,
 Through the waved branches, o'er the greensward glancing,
 'Midst other indications of festivity,
 Seeing a troop of his domestics dancing
 Like Dervises, who turn as on a pivot, he
 Perceived it was the Pyrrhic dance so martial,
 To which the Levantines are very partial.

And further on a group of Grecian girls,
 The first and tallest her white kerchief waving,
 Were strung together like a row of pearls,
 Linked hand in hand, and dancing ; each too having
 Down her white neck long floating auburn curls—
 (The least of which would set ten poets raving);
 Their leader sang—and bounded to her song
 With choral step and voice the virgin throng.

And here, assembled cross-legg'd round their trays,
 Small social parties just begun to dine;
 Pilaus and meats of all sorts met the gaze,
 And flasks of Samian and of Chian wine,
 And sherbet cooling in the porous vase;

Above them their dessert grew on its vine ;—
 The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er,
 Dropped in their laps, scarce plucked, their mellow store.

A band of children, round a snow-white ram,
 There wreath his venerable horns with flowers ;
 While peaceful as if still an unweaned lamb,
 The patriarch of the flock all gently cowers
 His sober head, majestically tame,
 Or eats from out the palm, or playful lowers
 His brow, as if in act to butt, and then,
 Yielding to their small hands, draws back again.

* * * *

Here was no lack of innocent diversion
 For the imagination or the senses,
 Song, dance, wine, music, stories from the Persian,
 All pretty pastimes in which no offence is ;
 But Lambro saw all these things with aversion,
 Perceiving in his absence such expenses,
 Dreading that climax of all human ills
 The inflammation of his weekly bills.

* * * *

Perhaps you think, in stumbling on this feast,
 He flew into a passion, and in fact
 There was no mighty reason to be pleased ;
 Perhaps you prophesy some sudden act,
 The whip, the rack, or dungeon at the least,
 To teach his people to be more exact,
 And that, proceeding at a very high rate,
 He showed the royal *penchants* of a pirate.

You're wrong.—He was the mildest mannered man
 That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;
 With such true breeding of a gentleman,
 You never could divine his real thought;
 No courtier could, and scarcely woman can
 Gird more deceit within a petticoat;
 Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,
 He was so great a loss to good society !

For a second specimen of the poem's quality I choose
 Juan's encounter with the highwaymen in Canto XI:

Don Juan had got out on Shooter's Hill;
 Sunset the time, the place the same declivity
 Which looks along that vale of Good and Ill
 Where London streets ferment in full activity,
 While everything around was calm and still.
 Except the creak of wheels, which on their pivot he
 Heard,—and that bee-like, bubbling, busy hum
 Of cities, that boil over with their scum :—

I say, Don Juan, wrapt in contemplation,
 Walked on behind his carriage, o'er the summit,
 And lost m wonder of so great a nation,
 Gave way to it, since he could not overcome it.
 " And here," he cried, " is Freedom's chosen station ;
 Here peals the People's voice nor can entomb it
 Racks—prisons—inquisitions; Resurrection
 Awaits it, each new meeting or election.

" Here are chaste wives, pure lives ; here people pay
 But what they please ; and if that things be dear,
 Tis only that they love to throw away
 Their cash, to show how much they have a-year.
 Here laws are all inviolate—none lay
 Traps for the traveller—every highway's clean—
 Here"—he was interrupted by a knife,
 With—" Damn your eyes ! your money or your life !"—

These free-born sounds proceeded from four pads
 In ambush laid, who had perceived him loiter
 Behind his carriage ; and, like handy lads,
 Had seized the lucky hour to reconnoitre,
 In which the heedless gentleman who gads
 Upon the road, unless he prove a fighter
 May find himself within that isle of riches
 Exposed to lose his life as well as breeches.

Juan, who did not understand a word
 Of English, save their shibboleth, "God damn 1"
 And even that he had so rarely heard,
 He sometimes thought 'twas only their " Salam,"
 Or " God be with you 1"—and 'tis not absurd

To think so,—for half English as I am
(To my misfortune), never can I say
I heard them wish " God with you," save that way ;—

Juan yet quickly understood their gesture,
And being somewhat choleric and sudden,
Drew forth a pocket pistol from his vesture,
And fired it into one assailant's pudding—
Who fell, as rolls an ox o'er in his pasture,
And roared out, as he writhed his native mud in,
Unto his nearest follower or henchman,
" Oh Jack ! I'm floored by that 'ere bloody Frenchman !"

Those who approach *Don Juan* with preconceived notions of what an Epic should be, may deny it the title if they will. / call it an Epic : but, Epic or not (as we consent or refuse to be slaves to definition), it is a tremendous poem. If I hesitated at all to commend it to the young, I should hesitate not in prudery—for youth, the natural time of temptation, is the time to meet it and be trained to overcome it. I should hesitate rather because the poem appeals less to the young than to intelligent and mature men and women who (as Nichol puts it) " have grown weary of mere sentiment, and yet retain enough of sympathetic feeling to desire at times to recall it." The poem, in short, addresses middle age, as Montaigne's Essays address middle age. If we are wise we shall come to them both at last.

Anyhow (to quote Nichol again) " in writing *Don Juan*, Byron attempted something that had never been done before, and his genius so chimed with his enterprise that it need never be done again" Like many another epical undertaking—the *Faerie Queene* for example—it survives as a broken pillar on the author's grave. Byron himself, even in the act of writing it, scarcely suspected that this was his grand charge against the forts of hypocrisy and despotism.

He dreamed of action: and the circumstances of his death have clouded in the biographies the glory of the greater performance. He had written :

And I will war, at least in words (and—should
 My chance so happen—deeds), with all who war
 With Thought;—and of Thought's foes by far most rude
 Tyrants and sycophants have been and are,
 I know not who may conquer ; if I could
 Have such a prescience, it should be no bar
 To this my plain, sworn downright detestation
 Of every despotism in every nation.

The war against the forts of folly, the enemies of Thought, is—alas ! must be—unending. But, for Byron's temporal victory, seek in *Don Juan*. *Don Juan* was his Heights of Abraham : and falling, he passes into a splendour of memory.

You know the end: how he died as a man should, although not actually on the field of battle as he had anticipated in the lines entitled *On this Day I Complete my Thirty-Sixth Year* :

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
 Glory and Greece around me see !
 The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
 Was not more free.

Awake ! (not Greece—she *is* awake !)
 Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
 Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
 And then strike home !

Tread those reviving passions down,
 Unworthy manhood !—unto thee
 Indifferent should the smile or frown
 Of Beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live* ?
 The land of honourable death
 Is here :—up to the Field, and give
 Away thy breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy Rest

He died at Missolonghi, on the 19th of April, 1824, of a fever caught from the marshes there in the heat of organising the grand struggle by which Greece won her liberty. "Byron is dead." Tennyson has told us how, when the news reached England, he, a young man, went about all day speechless, or only saying to himself "Byron is dead," "Byron is dead!" Let Swinburne, in token of our pardon for later offences, be allowed to recover an earlier word and speak it for the last:

His work was done at Missolonghi; all of his work for which the fates could spare him time. A little space was allowed him to show at least a heroic purpose, and attest a high design: then with all things unfinished before him and behind, he fell asleep after many troubles and triumphs. Few can ever have gone wearier to the grave; none with less fear. He had done enough to earn his rest. Forgetful now and set free for ever from all faults and foes he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death, out of reach of time, out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred, beyond the blame of England and the praise of Greece. In the full strength of his spirit and body his destiny overtook him and made an end of all his labours. He had seen and borne and achieved more than most men on record. He was a great man, good at many things, and now he had attained his rest.

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II

THE FAME OF BYRON

BY THE HON. WHITELAW REID, M.A., LL.D.,

American Ambassador to England, 1905-1912

THERE was a time when no English poet was so popular and so universally read either in England or on the Continent as Byron. To borrow his own graphic phrase, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. Then there came a time when no English poet was so odious. The disapproval aroused by his acts, his utterances, and what the world thought it knew of his character, extended to his work. Men still read it, but often to dwell only on the baleful brilliancy of the light that had gone astray. The pendulum of public opinion swung to and fro. When it finally settled—not very far from a just medium—the century had passed its meridian, new tastes had developed, new men arisen, and Byron was already relegated to the shelf of authors who *had* been favourites—to the shelf where we now range Scott and Wordsworth and Coleridge, with their elders, Pope, Goldsmith, Addison and yet greater names—men to be still read on occasion, but no longer an intimate, essential part of the literary life of the time. We need not shut our eyes to the fact that these changes were partly due to a frequent instinct of the public to weigh the worth of Lord Byron's verse by the worthlessness of his life.

When you consider the nature of England, and indeed when you consider the history of the nineteenth century, the reason why Lord Byron's work and fame seem less vital than they were becomes plain enough. He was perpetually in revolt. His work is the literature of revolt, and for the most part of unwise and unsuccessful revolt. It was revolt against Society, revolt against those features of morality on which Society sets up the most exacting standards; revolt against his order; revolt against Theology if not Religion; and finally, revolt against many established opinions, most established institutions, and against some established governments. Yet his revolutions were all failures. Even in his worst moments of utter perversity, when eager to maintain his affected pose as the most startlingly, sensationally, picturesquely wicked Englishman, he passed in an instant to strains of surpassing sweetness when he thought of his daughter or his sister—to pictures of feminine charm and purity and grace which neither English literature nor the classics of the world can afford to lose from their immortal treasures.

The depths to which he fell, in some of his poems of the Venetian period, reveal with plain frankness the amazing side of his literary character. The worst of his works were never really popular with the people, whose approval he would have seriously valued, but they were enormously read at the time. They have long since ceased to enjoy that lowest tribute which misdirected genius shares with the output of the gutters. But even at the worst, he would suddenly pass from wearisome pages of mere degradation of his powers to a lyric that will set the pulses of all men throbbing while brave deeds are honoured or liberty is loved.

Byron's fame would be better founded if it did not

rest on so many works. Here, too, he approved the better course, but held to the worse. In a letter to his publisher he deliberately laid down the proposition that a good long poem was impossible—he, the author of one poem in sixteen cantos, of three poems of high importance in one year, of two in another, and of six in the last year of his really valuable literary activity. Murray had written that half of the third and fourth cantos of a certain work was very good. "You are wrong," was Lord Byron's answer, "for if it were it would be the finest poem in existence. Where is the poetry of which one half is good? Is it in the *Aeneid*? Is it Milton's? Is it Dryden's? Is it anyone's except Pope's or Goldsmith's, of which all is good? If one half be good, what would you have more? No—no: No poetry is generally good—only by fits and starts—and you are lucky to get a sparkle here and there. You might as well want a midnight all stars as a rhyme all perfect." It must be admitted, that in spite of his genius, his practice often conformed to his theory.

Byron's real inspiration was apt to be personal or political rather than poetic; and also apt to be in favour of some revolt against existing order. It is pitiful to note how much of his finest verse is occupied with his family troubles and personal griefs. With his firm determination to bear them in silence, and the melodious volubility in which he continues just the same to pour them forth—meanwhile revelling in the ridicule of the conventions which he defies. In politics his very first appearance in the House of Lords was in a generous and humane appeal for men here in his own county, engaged in a lawless strike which no one would now justify, against the use of machinery in Nottingham industries. The earliest effect of his travels was discontent with his country's cause in Portugal. Then

came hostility to the established order in Italy, dissatisfaction with the Government in Spain, hostility to Turkey and to Austria, and a resolute effort to arouse the Greeks to resistance. In short, to use the language in which he thought to describe his own principles.

... plain, sworn, downright detestation,
Of every despotism in every nation,

flamed out at every opportunity throughout his work. His sympathies with Ireland led him into wild outbursts against Castlereagh. With Greece they carried him sometimes into bitter attacks on Lord Elgin, for the crime of bringing the Elgin marbles to the British Museum; oftener into stinging reproaches to the Greeks themselves. Many of his finest passages throb with enthusiasm for her history and her art, with love and hope for the land itself. He sustained the cause of Modern Greece with his fortune as well as his genius and his fame, and at last laid down his life in a wild but nobly disinterested and generous effort in her service.

I have ventured to speak of *Childe Harold* as a high-water mark of his genius. We should lose much if no other work of Byron's were preserved, but his fame might rest securely on that alone. In its splendid close Italy was largely its field, and a hundred Italian gems will occur in it to every student of the poet—the wonderful picture of Venice with which it opens; the astrophe to "Rome, my country, city of the soul"; the exquisite descriptions of natural scenery, as of Clitumnus, or of art, as of St. Peter's or of the Venice de Medici, "drunk with beauty"; the reflections on the Mount Imperial.

But when all his sparkling froth and dull noise some sediment has been rejected, you will still be able to hold up for the admiration and instruction a body of noble

English verse, hardly surpassed, perhaps hardly equalled in the whole century whose dawn he illuminated. It is verse, too, wherein the dictum utterly disappears that it must be without relation to truth or duty, for it breathes the wider, more humane truths to which the world began growing up through the Nineteenth Century ; it is a bugle call to duty, and its strong lasting note is Liberty.

[The foregoing was a " Speech Day" Address, given at the Albert Hall, Nottingham, under the auspices of University College, Nottingham; January, > 1911.]

III

BYRON AND GOETHE

BY VISCOUNT HALDANE, O.M.

"The wonderful glory to which Byron has in the present, and through all future ages, elevated his country, will be as boundless in its splendour as it is incalculable in its consequences, nor can there be any doubt that the nation which boasts so many great names will class Byron among the first of those through whom she has acquired such glory."—*Goethe*. #

* * *

GOETHE admired Scott much, but he did not place him in the same category with Byron as a creative force.

"Byron alone I put in the same category with myself," he said to Chancellor von Muller, "Walter Scott is nothing compared with Byron."

Echermann described Goethe's feelings towards his young contemporary as that of a father to a son. At the same time he was under no illusions as to the defects in Byron.

"Only," he said, "when Byron expresses the result of his direct observation is his judgment sound and clear. Reflection is not his strong point."

Not the less on this account did Goethe discern in

Byron a direct force which made him a unique figure among poets.

"Byron's like," he said, in writing about him, "is not to be found in past centuries; the elements necessary for appraising such a career are wholly wanting."

There is no doubt that Byron's poetry influenced Goethe's mind very deeply.

HALDANE.

IV

BYRON, THE POET

BY ALDERMAN EDMUND HUNTSMAN

Chairman of the Council of University College, Nottingham.

IT would be a shame if the greatest genius which this district has ever produced in the field of literature were not to be the subject of deserved eulogy from time to time.

Now the subject is so large—although the title is modestly put "Byron the Poet," it suggests the exclusion from our consideration of quite a large number of matters of profound interest—the subject is so large that one has to exercise a very discriminating choice as to the topics with which one should deal. It is an ancient maxim that the poet is born and not made, by which I assume was meant that at birth there is a mysterious spark of genius which the poet has given him as his heritage and that by no other means can the poet ever be produced. Cicero, I believe, in his works adopts this maxim, and curiously enough presents exact proof of what the maxim states. He says: "Whereas the poet is born and not made, the orator is made and not born." For many years of his life he strove to become a poet, but in vain; and every school-boy has read of that industrious apprentice Demosthenes who by sheer industry, it is said, succeeded in putting

himself at the very summit of oratorical persons in the history of the world.

If it be true that the poet owes so much to his birth it is perhaps well that we should see what that implies in the case of Byron. When I was young heredity and environment were words which were somewhat idealised, but they appear to have lost a little, at all events, of their vogue. "Will no one rid me of this pestilent past?" is said to have been the language used by Henry II. when he was thinking of the trouble that Thomas a Becket had caused him in one way or another; and you know that as a result of royal remorse, according to history, the sacred stones of Canterbury were stained with blood, shed by the relentless hand of murder. Even kings can be penitent, and as the result of the remorse which is supposed to have visited Henry II. Newstead was granted to a religious order, and there arose the stately fane that for centuries has been the admiration of those who inhabit this district. It was the scene of devotion to charity and to the virtues which clustered round the religious institutions, but if another Henry—Henry V.—is to be believed there were other things than virtues in that building; for in his reign there is a grant of pardon to the religious persons who occupied the premises in respect of all crimes whatsoever that they had committed prior to a certain date except only murders, if such there had been.

The Byrons are said to have figured in Doomsday Book in connection with property in Derbyshire, to have participated in the Crusades, to have served under Edward III. at the siege of Calais, to have borne arms apparently wherever the call of chivalry arose and appealed to them. Henry VIII. actuated by purely religious motives dissolved the Abbey or Monastery of

Newstead and granted it to the Byrons of that period. From then onwards we find the Byrons in the Civil Wars fighting, whenever fighting occurred, with Charles, and all the way through the centuries doing their part as distinguished aristocrats and persons of feudal note.

Now I refer to these things because I want you to see the great traditions and associations that clustered around the young Byron at the time of his birth. There was one Byron called the " Wicked Lord Byron " who had a little quarrel in London with his neighbour Chaworth, and that quarrel resulted in a struggle in a tavern which caused the death of Mr. Chaworth. Byron was found guilty of murder by a London Jury, and on trial by his peers in the House of Lords was pronounced guilty of manslaughter. He retired into an extremely private method of life at Newstead and became an object of wonder and of calumny probably at the hands of all those who lived in the immediate district. He was a turbulent, morose and highly disagreeable person. He had—and I dare say most of the other Byrons had—a passionate nature which was exceedingly difficult to hold in check.

The young Byron comes on a scene highly conducive to the fanning of the poetical spark of genius into that flame which always showed itself to the admiration of the world. Washington Irving, the most genial of writers and of friends, I imagine, describes to us with a felicity unrivalled the scene in which Newstead is set, and it is easy for us to picture what would naturally grow up in the mind of the young Byron in his tender years in that spot. Every grove in the district had its fairy, every dark nook its ghost; in the shades of the forest were elves and spirits of all kinds, both bad and good; and in the vast vistas of the forest one may easily imagine that rebellious spirit against the restraints

of law and order—Robin Hood—arriving at the head of his merry men. The point I want to make is that Byron inherited first of all probably an intense spirit, and that whatever of imagination nature may have implanted in him fed upon material which was abundant on all hands. Be that as it may, in consequence of a rebuke at a very early age we find this child bursting into poetry by way of retort.

The education of Byron was of that kind which is called irregular. There was the unhappy home, of which we have all heard—a serious injury inflicted by a thoughtless parent; the studies at Harrow marked more by horseplay and tricks probably than by study; a University career similarly passed. But, later, still at an early age, we find the poet sitting down to make a note of the reading that he had well and truly done. It was an instance of wide and comprehensive reading such as probably few do when they follow the beaten track of a regular academic routine—history of many countries, poetry of many countries and times, fiction, jurisprudence, science (such as it was at that day) and many other topics, including, of course, a few languages. Byron was not, it is said, a great linguist. He could swear in modern Greek, for he has told us so in some of his letters which remain. He was accomplished in Italian, for, said he,

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
And sounds as if it should be writ on satin,
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South,
And gentle liquids gliding all so pat in.
That not a single accent seems uncouth.
Like our harsh northern whistling, grunting guttural,
Which we're obliged to hiss, and spit, and splutter all.

But before we look at Byron as a poet let us just pay

him one tribute as an accomplished letter-writer. There are many hundreds of his letters left to us for our enjoyment, and all agree that in this particular department of literature he stands without any superior, ancient or modern, British or foreign. Whether it be Goldsmith or S[^]vigne or Goethe or Cicero, or delightful Robert Louis Stevenson, no writer has left in this department of literature more perfect examples of the art. His letters are clear, brisk and vigorous, bright and sparkling in the highest degree, with just that touch of intimacy which characterises the true spirit of real letter writing. But Byron was a humourist, and that is a side of his literary work which is so frequently overlooked. Indeed, he has been styled the father of modern fun, and he is in the direct line of Sterne with his "Tristan Shandy" and William Makepeace Thackeray with books on "Snobbery" and other delightful works of his. Reading Byron with an eye to this side of his writing, you will find that Goethe was right, as he generally was when he spoke of the magnificent humour of our genius and deplored,—and rightly—the absence of interesting humour in the literature of his fatherland. Byron in humour touched one subject which is still a stock subject amongst gentlemen who wish to be funny, and that is the "Mother-in-law" for he wrote "My mother-in-law has been dangerously ill, but she is now dangerously well again." And poor Tom Moore, the model of husbands and the pattern of parents, living the most regular domestic life that you could possibly think of, was upbraided by Byron.

Byron ascribed to Tom Moore all his own irregularities because they were all caused by those sweet, sugary amatory poems written by Tom.

But I am quite sure that we are in order in speaking of Byron the poet, for I am going to quote to you from

time to time some of the judgments of very superior persons called critics who declare that Byron was not a poet at all. Then what is poetry? What a vain question! What is love? What is poetry? What is religion? You have only to ask the questions to see that these beautiful conceptions cannot be squeezed, without being killed, into the narrow framework of any definition. A thousand people would probably give you a thousand different answers to the questions that I have propounded, but I rather think an old writer gives to us the true answer, and the only answer, of which all the questions are capable: "There are five and twenty ways of constructing tribal lays and every single one of them is right." Well, if thought or feeling be casting into some mould of words which claims the attribute of life, warms the heart, lifts the aspirations, shines in the recesses of the mind with light and warmth, be sure, whatever defects there may be such writing is not very far from the highest poetry. Poetry does not depend upon adherence to any conventional rules. Byron defied convention—not always, but frequently—in poetry as he did in life. Of course, the prig can put his finger in the works of Byron on loose, slipshod lines; halting, lame passages, jarring rhyme, shocking metre, even bad grammar, not to mention gross breaches sometimes of taste. Scott said that Byron wrote his poetry with the ease and carelessness with which a man of quality uses his pen. He wrote at a transition period when the old order appeared to be breaking up in a chaos which nothing could heal, and in the rumbling of the earthquake he is a queer man who stays to pore over the maxims of some Lindley Murray to find out exactly how to write.

Critics have not been blind to the blemishes of Byron. There has flowed, from the time when he first began to

write, a stream of criticism. But critics are not always right, and there are plenty of opportunities for seeing their errors in the history of literature. Byron himself was an instance of false and bad criticism. He said this about the period in which he lived: "That this is an age of decline of English poetry will be doubted by few who have calmly considered the subject. Crabbe is the first of English poets. As I told Moore not long ago we are all wrong except Rogers, Crabbe and Campbell. There will be found as comfortable metaphors and ten times more pure poetry in Pope's *Essay on Man* than in *The Excursion*" Well, this sort of view, though it comes from the pen of Byron, recalls Voltaire's famous judgment: "Hamlet is a barbarous piece, such a work as one might suppose to be the fruit of the imagination of a drunken savage." That, if you please, from one who is regarded—perhaps not improperly as one of the greatest critics of all time. And I have one bone to pick with Byron in his method of criticism myself. I am a native of the Fens, and Byron, writing in sympathy of Sydney Smith, says this. Smith had just been promoted to an important living in the Fen district and had been taken there from the heart of London. Byron wrote :

His jokes were sermons and his sermons jokes ;
But both were thrown away amongst the Fens ;
For wit hath no great friend in aguish folks
No longer ready ears and shorthand pens
Imbided the gay bon mot or happy hoax :
The poor priest was reduced to common sense,
Or to coarse efforts very loud and long
To hammer a hoarse laugh from the thick throng.

Byron had no great love for what he called philosophy, by which he meant the old conventional rules of any sort or kind.

If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the mothest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret the sought Kalon found
And seated in my soul.

I have said that Byron has been much criticised. He has been criticised from all points of view, and I wonder how we are to deal with this criticism. But let Mr. Herbert Paul, one of the best critics of modern times, come to our assistance. This is what he said, speaking of Byron: "Some critics consider him second only to Shakespeare; others put him where sensible travellers put themselves—in the third class because there is no fourth." When a number of us were young and were thinking of what fine characters we were going to fashion for ourselves we read Todd's *Student's Manual*. The Rev. Todd tells us to beware of bad books. He admits—this is a warning—that he had read Byron; it was his duty so to do in order to sound the rocks and quicksands in the sea of literature which virtuous youth must avoid. His consolation was—and he needed the consolation—"that what is putrid must soon pass away, and that the works of Byron will quickly pass from notice and be exiled from the libraries of all virtuous men." Well might John Ruskin, writing on the same subject, say that Byron needed to be saved from the criticisms of certain crawling things. Harriet Martineau, the authoress of the *History of the Thirty Years of Peace*, embarks also on a criticism of Byron. She says: "The reason of his fame was of a temporary nature, and the fame must be temporary also. Byron's power, which was great"—that was a very generous acknowledgment—"employed itself in uttering from his own consciousness the discontents of his time

Byron could not produce, except by snatches, what was permanently true, because the eye of his soul was perplexed and dimmed by troubles which prevented his seeing things as they are; he could not produce what was lastingly beautiful because he strove after affectations. There was good enough in him by starts, and by virtue of his genius to suggest what he might have been if reared under good influences." So that much of this criticism evidently comes from an entire misconception as to the function of poetry. They seem to proceed along lines that Dr. Tucker wrote, or that prudential work the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, "done into rhyme and measured out with the yardstick of metre," Scherer, the great critic of his day, was good enough to say that Byron had become one of the French superstitions. "He is no poet; his work is mere declamation, he posed," said this critic "all his life long." Well, we should set against that the dictum of Taine, equally eminent, that "alone among the English poets with his contemporaries Byron gets to the very top of the poetic mountain." They seem to set one another off very well, and, as Goethe says: "Das neue Licht mag für gewisse Augen zu stark seyn." It is very obvious that a new light, burning at that time, was much too strong for some of their eyes. It was not too strong for his, for in his conversations, that are reported very much in detail, he welcomes Byron as the greatest genius in English literature since Shakespeare and the greatest influence in the literary firmament at that time. Matthew Arnold, our super critic, bases all he has to say practically upon the language of Goethe. And Goethe introduced this one qualification: "Invention"—we may call it imagination "such as Byron's was unrivalled. When Byron came to reflect he became a child." That is, he did not

introduce a sustained statement of moral truths such as you find in Tupper's "Philosophy," or anything of that kind. Byron then stood supreme at that time, according to this great authority ; and it was something to be supreme in those days. Now Matthew Arnold denies to Byron a number of fine qualities—sense for form and style, the passion for just expression, the sure and firm touch of the true artist, a lucidity and insight into the real bearings of things as they are—a rather long list of faults and defects. And he compares or contrasts him with a number of poets who were writing here and abroad at the time. But with these allowances he is constrained in the end to admit that Byron as a poet was of greater value than them all; and he goes on to say that it was owing to the surpassing worth of something which he had and something which he was—"the wonderful power of his personality." And Swinburne, speaking as a master of the poetic craft himself carries us one step further into the very holy of holies of this personality, and he finds Byron's success—the essence of it—in "the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects—the excellence of sincerity and strength." If I may be permitted myself to carry the matter one step further still I would say sincerity and strength at white heat.

Now, passing from these general appraisings of the poet, we must notice one or two specific accusations which have been made against him. Of course, the first that arises is that he was not original. Did ever poet write anything, did ever speaker say anything, when he was not suspected of having borrowed some of his best thoughts, some of his best expressions, from those who had gone before? The only way in which a man nowadays can be thoroughly original is to shut

himself in a vacuum and think things out without any possibility of any idea whatever getting through to him. Of course, Byron at times borrowed material from others. It was said that his *Manfred* was stolen from Goethe's *Faust*, and Goethe, like the great man he was, said "Nothing of the kind ; some of the ideas may have been appropriated but all has passed through the mind of Byron and going through that process has become new"—a generous repudiation of the one man who is entitled to complain of any such charges against Byron. But there was another reason why, in that particular instance, there had been no commission of this offence. When Cardinal Newman said that the shield of the spirit was the surest protection against German heresy Dr. Martineau smartly replied that Newman had a still greater protection than that, and that was his entire ignorance of the German language. It so happened that Byron was not acquainted—much to his regret—with that particular language.

The next charge is serious. It is thought that Byron was so melancholy in his writings, or, if you like the word, so misanthropic. It is true that a terrible sadness sometimes amounting to a fierce hatred of many around him does come up in the course of his works. We have not dealt with his life history. In order that we may understand why that note of sadness, which is to some depressing, is there, we must remember that broken heart, that broken home, that feeling of being alone in the world, loosened from all moorings, driven out from all safe retreats and resting places that are the very life of a man. We have this note from time to time coming up seized upon by critics. But why? Homer has his melancholy^Virgil in certain passages which I need not trouble you with and have not time to quote. He goes even to the point of being surprised that men should,

having passed away, desire to come back to the conditions of this life. Byron's melancholy was the result, in my reading of his life, of the sad events which set him loose and drifting from the ordinary moorings. Walter Bagshot ventures upon a criticism of Byron when he says: "If in these days the young poet went about pestering people with the complaint that he wished he had never been born all that would happen to him would be a good dressing down in the *Saturday Review*, and people would suggest that he ought to be in a lunatic asylum." Chesterton, an eccentric writer if you like, comes to our help to some extent in this, for his critics have said that Byron's poetry cannot live. Chesterton says: "The misanthropic idea, as in Byron, is not a truth, but it is one of the immortal lies. As long as humanity exists humanity can be hated. Wherever one shall gather by himself Byron is there in the midst of him." Well, it is perfectly obvious that as these critics are lacking any kind of common standard to apply to justify their position we should attempt no definition as to what poetry is. One fallacy is astonishing. Many of them write as if any poetry is to endure or be great it needs to deal with a great theme—something bulky, of large proportions, weighty in a worldly sense. Surely an error! A true poet may give us fine deathless poetry upon subjects the most humble and perishable. This poetry upon the creature of a day may have such qualities that it may be eternal. Surely the resplendence of a butterfly's wing, the song of the soaring lark, the sunlit daisy in the meadow, the passing—alas! too passing—of the smile that flits across a loved one's face—all these may be dealt with by the true poet, simple, trivial, passing as they are, in language which may be imperishable.

Byron has been said to be the poet of unpoetical people, so we will bid farewell to the critics, and we will

now, without more ado, assume the role of unpoetical people, and just considering ourselves in that light look at one or two of his main features. If you remember that the length of his life was but thirty-six years, and take up the volume of his poems, ignoring the quality for the moment altogether, the mere bulk of them, the range of his subjects, the variety of method, will surely appear to us little short of miraculous. As the reader turns over the pages what glorious, felicitous lines and phrases he finds. Everyone will choose his own. Quite haphazard I take his own phrase. Some "words, like sunbeams dazzling as they pass." And take this: "The natural music of the mountain reed." The effects of a sudden sorrow:

Now furrow'd o'er
With wrinkles, ploughed by moments, not by years.

The play of expression on a loved one's face: "The seal love's dimpling finger hath impressed." Or of yearning:

He heard it, but he heeded not: his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away.

Quiet development: "As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew."

She walks in beauty like the night,
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.

Does he not attain the ideal which Horace has translated for us:

With native eloquence he soars along
Grace in his thoughts and music in his song.

But Byron was the poet of freedom in an age when freedom was struggling with tyranny and despotism in various parts of the earth. But it was Byron's freedom, a kind of freedom that you would expect from one who associated in himself the intellectual and the revolutionary with the heart of the aristocrat.

I wish men to be free
As much from mobs as kings, from you as me.

His heart went out to every nation that was struggling for its freedom, particularly to Italy, his Niobe of nations, and to his beloved Greece. And if opportunity and time permitted, one could gather from his works some of the most inspiring and stimulating calls to freedom that are to be found in the whole range of literature. Mazzini, you will find in a very remarkable essay by Lord Morley, paid Byron the highest possible tribute in saying that his works inspired the cause of Italian liberty in Mazzini's day. No such language perhaps is to be found anywhere as Byron's works abound in on the subject of freedom and against the tyranny of the despot.

There shall they rot, ambition's honour'd fools.
Yes, honour decks the turf that wraps their clay.
Vain sophistry, in these behold the tools,
The broken tools that tyrants cast away
By myriads when they dare to pave their way
With human hearts—to what? A dream alone
Can despots compass aught that hails their sway?
Or call with truth one span of earth their own,
Save that wherein at last they crumble bone by bone.

But Byron was above all, perhaps, the poet of nature. He has been called Nature's very tongue, and surely ocean, sky, mountain, and the sounds and mysteries all around never found truer or more splendid expression. As he tells you, all these things seem to be part of him :

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me, and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities a torture. I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save it be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

What a travelling companion Byron is. As the traveller stands in the Grand Plaz at Brussels, how the phrases haunt his mind and linger in his memory. Quite recently I was there, and whilst one thought of the heroes of the Dutch Independence who perished in that square, one's mind went at once to the thought of the ball that was held on the evening of Waterloo :

There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry,
And bright the lamps shone on
Fair women and brave men.

One could speak of the treasures of *Don Juan*, *Childe Harold*, *Cam*, *Manfred*, and other poems, but we must pass them by. We will just deal very briefly with Byron as a man. And we must take no hard and narrow view of him. One has read many statements as to what he was and what he was not. He has made the one answer to that himself:

Whate'er
I may have been or am doth rest between
Heaven and myself. I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator.

There are three points, in conclusion, on which I would like to speak of Byron the man. Byron loved his sister. That we will pass. Byron loved his dog,—and Byron loved and inspired love in the humble persons who devoted their lives to his service; and that fact alone is enough in my mind to discount what calumny may say against the man and enable us to balance him in the scales of our judgment "Boatswain," the dog, I suppose, is one of the most famous canine creatures that ever walked the earth because he was

immortalised by his master. You have perhaps read the inscription on his monument at Newstead:

Near this spot
 Are deposited the remains of one
 Who possessed Beauty without Vanity
 Strength without Insolence,
 Courage without Ferocity,
 And all the Virtues of Man without his Vices.
 The Praise, which would be unmeaning flattery
 If inscribed over human ashes,
 Is but a just tribute to the Memory of
 Boatswain, a Dog.
 Who was born at Newfoundland, May, 1803,
 And died at Newstead Abbey, Nov. 18, 1808.

And the lines which Byron wrote upon that faithful friend are known to all, but if you will permit me, I cannot resist the temptation to repeat them:

When some proud son of man returns to earth,
 Unknown to glory but upheld by birth,
 The sculptor's art exhausts the pomp of woe,
 And storied urns record who rest below :
 When all is done, upon the tomb is seen,
 Not what he was, but what he should have been ;
 But the poor dog, in life the firmest friend,
 The first to welcome, foremost to defend,
 Whose honest heart is still his master's own,
 Who labours, fights, lives, breathes for him alone,
 Unhonour'd falls, unnoticed all his worth,
 Denied in heaven the soul he held on earth .
 While man, vain insect, hopes to be forgiven,
 And claims himself a sole exclusive heaven.
 Oh man ! thou feeble tenant of an hour,
 Debased by slavery, or corrupt by power,
 Who knows thee well must quit thee with disgust,
 Degraded mass of animated dust I
 Thy love is lust, thy friendship all a cheat,
 Thy smiles hypocrisy, thy words deceit!
 By nature vile, ennobled but by name,

Each kindred brute might bid thee blush for shame.
Ye, who perchance behold this simple urn,
Pass on—it honours none you wish to mourn ;
To mark a friend's remains those stones arise ;
I never knew but one—and here he lies.

But Byron was loved by those who served him. Washington Irving, on his visit to Newstead Abbey, learned a good deal from old Nanny Smith and Joe Murray. They were old servants of Byron; and as to Joe Murray, Byron had arranged with him prior to going to Greece that the dog and Joe and Byron should all rest in the same tomb at Newstead. A visitor to Newstead, whilst Byron was abroad, said to Joe Murray: " Well, old boy, you will take your place here some twenty years hence." Says Joe, shaking his head: " I don't know that, sir, if I was sure his lordship would come here I should like it well enough, but I should not like to be alone with the dog!" Again the gracious Washington Irving tells us one circumstance that he ascertained. He had visited Hucknall church and had there looked on the tomb of Byron, and he found on enquiry—and it was vouched for—that one of Byron's humble dependents, a poor Greek, accompanied his remains to England and followed them to the grave. During the ceremony this poor man stood holding on by a pew in an agony of grief, and it seemed as if he would have gone in the tomb with his master had he not been helped away. A nature, says Washington Irving, that can inspire such devotion is generous and beneficent. Who amongst the critics of the poet's life,

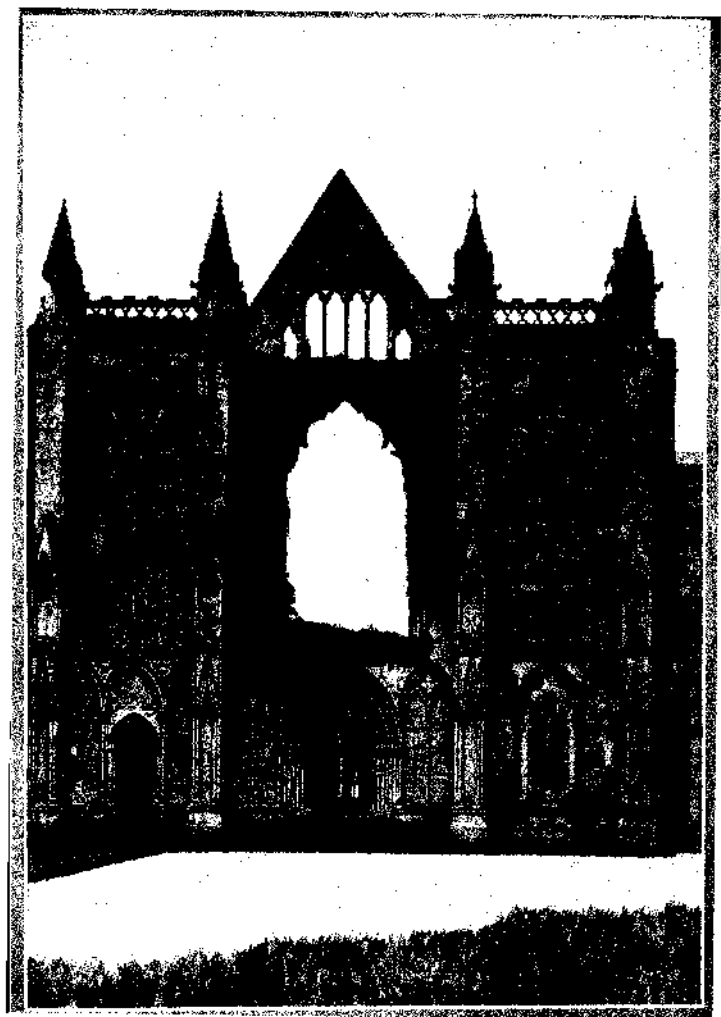
When time, or soon or late, shall bring
The dreamless sleep that lulls the dead.

could wish, hope for, or expect a more eloquent tribute to his worth than that ?

It has been said that if Lord Byron had a fault it was that he bared his breast to the whole world. It was because of the intimate knowledge of him thus gained that many of us love him.

Byron's works are a self-revelation and they reveal, it is true, a chaotic nature in some respects, but also the nature of one who loved freedom, hated tyranny, was kind to the poor: a nature that suffered the greatest sorrow of all by carrying through life a broken heart.

[The foregoing was delivered as the Address on the occasion of a "Byron Night" under the auspices of the Nottingham Public Libraries Committee.—Large Lecture Theatre, University College, Nottingham, January 21, 1921.]



NEWSTEAD ABBEY

(Showing the monument to "Boatswain")

From a punt in the Nottingham Public Libraries

BYRON AND ENGLISH SOCIETY

BY PROFESSOR H. J. C. GRIERSON, LITT.D., LL.D.,
(Edinburgh University.)

It is generally admitted that Byron's fame as a poet, -* so far as it survives, rests upon the poems composed in the years of exile following the violent rupture of his marriage. The first cantos of the *Childe Harold* and the verse tales served to disturb the waters of English poetry with a quickening influx of passionate feeling, but the melodramatic tones of these earlier poems, their deficiency in the finer qualities of poetry, beauty of phrase and rhythm, have consigned them to general oblivion, if readers may still find something stirring and arresting in the passionate speed of Byron's octosyllabics, the colour and animation of these records of travel and strange climes and turbulent moods.

But in the later cantos of *Childe Harold*, in *Manfred*, in *Prometheus* and *Darkness*, in the lyrical epistles to his sister, Byron's poetry acquired a new and deeper accent, his voice a *timbre* that shook the heart of Europe; and when with *Beppo* he found a new medium, and this man of many moods and sparkling wit began to pour himself forth in the most brilliant and buoyant conversation in verse that perhaps any literature can lay

claim to, it was then that Byron became the spokesman of a disillusioned Europe and the arraigner and satirist of aristocratic society and English Evangelical morals and piety.

For to read Byron's later poetry aright one must consider its relation to the English society which cast him out, against which it is one passionate or scornful protest, the more passionate and scornful because that society had for Byron an attraction and authority it never possessed for Shelley while conversely that society, even in holding up its hands in horror and indignation, was fascinated by Byron's poetry when Shelley's musical cry passed over their heads unheeded. What I wish to attempt is an analysis of this mutual attraction and repulsion. Byron was an Englishman—with Scottish blood in his veins—and he never forgot it. His eyes were ever on England; and for Englishmen in Italy Byron was one of the sights. Whatever part he played, in anticipation or actually, on the stage of Italian or Greek politics, the first thought in his mind was of the impression the new *role* would make upon his countrymen. And if Byron's poetry is little read to-day, the interest in Byron is never quite extinguished. His spirit is too daemonic—as is that of Shelley though there is a world of difference between their angels—ever to be exorcised by a purely technical criticism of his faults of style and defects of harmony.

Byron left the shores of England in a tumult of contending emotions. A flood of light has been shed in the last few months upon his life during the fatal years between his return to England in 1811 and his final departure in 1816. By some strange irony the full truth about Byron and about Wordsworth has been made known at the same time. It is not an unfortunate circumstance that the revelation was so long delayed,

for both men are now so far removed from us that moral judgments are superfluous, and what we may contemplate with interest is the fresh and poignant light thrown upon the poetry of two great poets. We know now that Byron was not "le fanfaron de vices qu'il n'avait pas ;" but that his passionate, uncontrolled, not altogether sane temperament—there was a strain of madness in all his ancestral lines, Byrons, Gordons, Duffs—drove him into vices which were not the deliberate choice of his soul but left him a prey to remorse and self-contempt. He had sinned against those he loved the best; and his marriage was a final catastrophe because it entailed a bondage that drove him frantic, and because it left upon one unforgetting mind an impression of the worst in Byron's character as the essential, fundamental element. To Lady Byron her husband was the incarnation of evil. If her vengeance was delayed it has been wreaked to the full, and by the irony of circumstances, which can always go one better than our imagining, from Byron's own blood was fashioned the instrument of his final exposure.

But it was because Byron was not all of a piece in villainy, that he was not essentially what it was so easy to make him out from his own words and from those many acts in which his evil genius turned him against his own better instincts, made him the "agent of his proper woe," that Byron's poetry in these years is the expression, furious or scornful, of a deadly inner conflict, a conflict in which his sympathies were strangely divided, as he understood and even shared the prejudices of those with whom he was at war in a manner altogether incomprehensible to the more single and impervious mind of Shelley. It was this conflict which gave Byron's mature poetry a new *timbre*, a deeper melancholy, a fiercer scorn; but the conflict itself has

a more than personal interest. Strange champion for such a cause, Byron was yet enlisted in the cause of justice and enlightenment, political and spiritual. The spirit of the poet and prophet is often contained in a very imperfect earthly vessel. It is not quite true that a good orator, and *a fortiori* a good poet must be a good man as we judge of good men. It was a noble thought of Milton that "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem : that is a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things : not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy." There is in this an element of truth. Byron could never have written *Paradise Lost* or the *Divina Commedia*; nor would Dante or Milton have deigned to write *Don uan*. But human nature is a strange, mingled yarn, and the relation between a man's character, as we can measure it, and his work is not so simple as Milton's words imply. God's gifts are not so unequally distributed. Great art is sincere. The man himself may be insincere and vain and inconstant, yet when he speaks "in the spirit," as Blake would say, he speaks, like Balaam, truth despite himself. Shylock and Satan take on heroic proportions despite their creator's intention, becoming symbols of truths which social usage or rigid creeds have ignored; but which the kindled imagination of a poet divines. The would-be blasphemer may do more honour to the Idea of Good than the pious hymn-writer; the cynical but passionate and sincere satirist may bear more effective witness to the Ideal than dreamers of Utopias or all the lyrical raptures of a *Prometheus Unbound*.

Byron left England at war with the society which had

flattered and caressed and then cast him out with contumely ; at war with the predominant political sentiment of his country, for the great deliverance of Waterloo seemed to him to mark the triumph of the spirit of reaction against which he had already enlisted under the banner of Fox and Sheridan ; but above all at war with his own soul, conscious of irremediable wrong done to those he loved and respected, conscious of wasted powers and finer susceptibilities and nobler impulses:

"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame."

But it was not only his pride which sustained the conflict with remorse and shame, but also his sense of justice, his critical judgment; and so—as I hope to elucidate—he was at war with the creed by help of which he envisaged his own wrong-doing and its significance, the creed of his early upbringing which he never rejected in the thorough-going fashion of Shelley. This was the inner conflict which drove Byron like a man possessed through Switzerland, uttering the cries which are the last cantos of *Childe Harold Prometheus*; *Manfred*; and flung him into the debauchery of his life at Venice, "crying out and cutting himself with knives." To understand aright all Byron's later poetry of any great significance it is necessary to realize the two main forces which had shaped and coloured his life, and with which he now found himself involved in an inextricable and passionate conflict. He was not at war, as was Shelley, with an evil that stood outside his own mind, inexplicable and baffling, but with forces around but also within himself, whose power to attract as well as to repel he fully realised, against which indeed he had nothing positive to set but only a fierce protest, a passionate sense of injustice and cruelty.

.... a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentrated recompense.

The two forces with which Byron was at war are the two great forces which dominated English life in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—aristocratic society—its ideals, privileges, policy; and that pietistic, Evangelical Christianity which, quickened by the Wesleys, had become the great shaping and inspiring religious influence in the life of serious English people within and without the established church. To both these influences Byron stood exposed in a peculiar way which made him at once deeply sensitive and passionately rebellious. The latter set its impress upon his early training; he passed under the influence of the former as he entered Harrow, or indeed from the moment that he burst into tears when the name of "Byron Dominus" was called in the roll of the Aberdeen Grammar School. And his attitude to the two was strangely similar. He was never religious, but the religion whose power he felt and combated was the evangelical creed in which he was educated at Aberdeen and under his turbulent mother. He was palpably and even painfully proud of his position as a peer of England, and he was the scornful and indignant satirist of aristocratic government and aristocratic morality.

What the English aristocracy had been in the eighteenth century and still was at the close of the Napoleonic wars, its power and privilege, its morals and manners, is hard for us to realize to-day, but an accurate impression may be recovered by any student of history, memoirs, letters and fiction. For my purpose it will be sufficient to quote from the illuminating description given by Sir George Trevelyan in his *Early History of Charles Fox*. And first, as to the attractions and advantages

which such a society had to offer a young man who entered its privileged circle. "Moral considerations apart, no more desirable lot can well be imagined for a human being than that he should be included in the ranks of a highly civilized aristocracy at the culminating moment of its vigour. A society so broad and strongly based that, within its own borders, it can safely permit absolute liberty of thought and speech ;—whose members are so numerous that they are able to believe with some show of reason that the interests of the state are identical with their own, and at the same time so privileged that they are sure to get the best of everything which is to be had ;—is a society uniting, as far as those members are concerned, most of the advantages and all the attractions both of a popular and an oligarchical form of government. It is in such societies that existence has been enjoyed most keenly, and that books have been written which communicate a sense of that enjoyment most vividly to posterity A student who loves to dwell upon times when men lived so joyously that their past seems to us as their present, will never tire of recurring to the Athens of Alcibiades, the Rome of Mark Anthony and Cicero, the London of Charles Townshend and Horace Walpole." That is one side of the picture, the good things, the solid advantages which membership of a proud and privileged society has to offer. But there is another. The morals of English aristocratic society in the Eighteenth and early nineteenth century—indeed until the accession of Queen Victoria—were in essentials those of the Restoration, and hardly less flagrantly paraded. "The frivolity of the last century was not confined to the youthful, the foolish, or even the idle. There never will be a generation which cannot supply a parallel to the lords who, in order that they might better hear the nonsense which they were talking across a tavern table, had Pall

Mall laid down with straw at the cost of fifty shillings a head for the party ; or to the younger brother who gave half-a-guinea every morning to the flower-woman who brought him a nosegay of roses for his button-hole. These follies are of all times ; but what was peculiar to the period when Charles Fox took his seat in Parliament and his place in society, consisted in the phenomenon (for to our ideas it is nothing else) that men of age and standing, of strong mental powers and refined cultivation, lived openly, shamelessly, and habitually, in the face of all England, as no one who had any care for his reputation would now live during a single fortnight of the year at Monaco." These were the years of Lord Weymouth, the Earl of Sandwich, the Duke of Grafton, Sir Francis Dashwood and Lord George Sackville. "Gambling in all its forms was then rather a profession than a pastime to the leaders of the London world." "No one can study the public or personal history of the eighteenth century without being impressed by the truly immense space which drinking occupied in the mental history of the young, and the consequences of drinking in that of the old."

The society which Byron entered was not in every respect the same as that of which Fox was the ornament and scandal, nor did Byron, despite his rank, enter its portals under quite such favourable circumstances as the son of Lord Holland. With Pitt's ministry the era of absolutely subservient and personally scandalous ministries had closed, and purifying forces were at work in society. Yet in all essential respects the aristocratic society of the Regency was still both the privileged and the corrupt society which Sir George Trevelyan describes. It was not unnatural that Byron should be proud and sensitive of his rank—to be an English nobleman was no small thing in the world's eye—nor is it surprising that the

ideals of this society shaped and coloured his feelings and conduct and at the same time evoked his scorn and hatred. We must take human nature as we find it. Those who criticise Byron's snobbishness forget that all English people are snobs. That he was proud of his rank was apparent to everyone who met Byron. Scott's description indicates with his usual discrimination the inconsistent strain in Byron's temperament. "On politics he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism ; but it appeared to me that the pleasure it afforded him as a vehicle of displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office was at the bottom of this habit of thinking, rather than any real conviction of the political principles on which he talked. He was certainly proud of his rank and ancient family, and in that respect as much an aristocrat as was consistent with good breeding. Some disgusts, how adopted I know not, seemed to me to have given this peculiar, and as it appeared, contradictory cast of mind ; but at heart I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle." The disgusts bred in the mind of one whose education had not fitted him to take the position to which he succeeded with ease and without embarrassment, while his fortunes were unequal to the demands of that position, was certainly an element in Byron's inconsistency ; but it was not the whole. His clear intuitions made it impossible for Byron to be the quite complacently privileged aristocrat. But he never could transcend the inconsistency. " He has many generous and exalted qualities," said Shelley, " but the canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out, and something, God knows, wants to be cut out of us all." " Certain it is that Lord Byron has made me feel bitterly the inferiority which the world has presumed to place between us and which subsists nowhere in reality but in our talents

which are not ours but Nature's—or in our rank which is not our own but Fortune's." Byron's uneasiness made him the more prone to assert his position and to adopt the manners and the pose of his class. If he gambled and drank, it was in part because this was the correct thing. The difference between the tone and life of Byron's set at Cambridge, as reflected in his letters, and that of Tennyson and Hallam's set some thirty years later is the difference between Georgian and Victorian England. If Byron, so far from concealing, boasted of his amours and dissipation, that had been for a century the habit of his class. They were privileged not only to indulge their vices but to make a parade of the indulgence. It was as a man of rank that he spoke with at least affected scorn of literature and men of letters. The English aristocracy never shared their French compeers' respect for talent. Of Hume's reception in Paris Sir George Trevelyan writes : "English people of fashion, who were accustomed to see authors kept in their proper place, could not understand why such a fuss should be made about a man with nothing but his talents to recommend him." Byron was always uneasy about his literary friends of whom Rogers and Moore alone he ranked with himself. "The pity of these men," he wrote, after a contemptuous note on most of the authors of the day, "is that they never lived in high life or in solitude : there is no medium for the knowledge of the busy or the still world. If admitted into high life for a season, it is merely as spectators—they form no part of the mechanism thereof. Now Moore and I, the one by circumstances, the other by birth, happened to be free of the corporation, and to have entered into its pulses and passions—*quarum partes fuimus*" (September 12th, 1821.) Byron was not altogether wrong. His sketches of society, especially in the later cantos of *Don Juan*, have

a quality, hard to define but unmistakable, which is only felt again in the work of the great Russian aristocrat, Count Tolstoi: Thackeray and Meredith obviously formed "no part of the mechanism" themselves. But if English men of letters have lost something by their very partial admission to the best society, English society has lost in interest by its contempt for talent. It is chiefly in Meredith's novels that their conversation has intellectual brilliance. In reality its wit at the best is good-natured "chaff," its eloquence declamation on a narrow range of topics supplied by prejudice. In the upper as in other classes good talkers are few, but the former draw from a wider and more piquant range of experience and have the greater charm of manner.

Cynicism was the aristocratic trait in Byron's mind which most jarred upon the sensitiveness of Shelley. Byron's cynicism was of course partly a protection for his intense sensitiveness, as intense as Shelley's own, and more proud, more apt to beget rage. It was also an excuse for the indulgence of the wit and pure gaiety of which there was in Byron, as in Swift, a deep vein. But cynicism was also an aristocratic canker, part of the pose which his class-consciousness demanded, for cynicism is an almost necessary product of such a privileged, self-centred society as Trevelyan describes. Chesterfield, Walpole, La Rochefoucauld—all in different fashion express the cynical contempt for humanity which is begotten of the egoism of a life in which everything must yield to personal ambition, begotten also, one imagines, of the consciousness of enjoying privileges altogether independent of, or out of proportion to, any sense of personal merit. If one enjoys endless advantages for which one can claim no personal merit, it is a comfort to reflect that there is no such thing as real merit. An aristocrat—I speak, of course, of a real

aristocracy, privileged and governing—can hardly become an idealist, an enthusiast for humanity, without practically or theoretically foregoing his privileges and claim of superiority, like Gautama, or Lord Shaftesbury or Count Tolstoi, or, in his measure, Shelley.

This, then, was one great section of English society whose traditions shaped and coloured Byron's life and character, and of which he was to become the fierce and scornful satirist. But it was not the only one. Byron was touched, and that more deeply than his letters indicate, by the other great force in the moral and spiritual life of England in his day. To understand Byron one must read, not only the letters of Walpole and Chesterfield and George Selwyn, but the journals of John Wesley, the letters and poems of Cowper, the whole history of the Methodist movement without, and the Evangelical movement within, the Anglican Church, the lives of John Newton, Hannah More, Joseph and Isaac Milner, John Bowdler, Thomas Gisborne, the Clapham sect. The greatest moral and religious power in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was Evangelical Christianity, of which Victorian England was the social product, for even the High Church movement came out of Evangelicalism.

It was not an intellectual but a moral and spiritual movement. That was at once the strength and weakness of Evangelicalism. It had its root in two things the need of the individual soul for more than a secular and sceptical view of human life, and secondly a profound sympathy with the poor and suffering in an age when, in the words of an historian, "the masses were ignorant and brutalized, and their numbers and demoralization increased rapidly . . . A governing class intent only on pleasure or politics, a Church occupied chiefly with patronage and controversy felt the

force of a great religious wave which was its beat on every wall of privilege" Evangelicalism recognized no need of an intellectual reinterpretation or vindication of the Christian faith. "Wesley," says Leslie Stephen, "takes his creed for granted, and it was the creed, so far as they had one, of the mass of the nation. He is shocked by perjury, drunkenness, corruption, and so forth, but has not seriously to meet scepticism of the speculative variety. If Wesley did not, like the leader of another Oxford movement, feel bound to clear up the logical basis of his religious beliefs he had, of course, to confront deism, but could set it down as a mere product of moral indifference." That was the line taken in Evangelical apologetics, e.g., by Kennedy in his conversations with Byron. Scepticism is the result of moral indifference and failure to study the Scriptures in a reverent spirit. Their acceptance of the verbal inspiration of the Bible confined the spirit of religious England in a closer cage than had been even the creed of the Catholic Church from which the Bible was its weapon of deliverance in the sixteenth century. All stood for it on the same level. No one dreamed of the glaciation which had welded together the different strata which compose the Old and the New Testaments. God's goodness was equally revealed in the craft of Jacob, the penalty of Cain, the exploits of Jael, the murder of Agag, the pogroms in the Book of Esther and in the spiritual aspirations of the Psalms, the divine love and wisdom of the Gospels.

To say that Byron was touched by the sweep of the Evangelical wave may seem strange but it is true. His early years had been spent, not in aristocratic, but in middle-class and pious circles. At Aberdeen he acquired the elements of that intimate knowledge of the Bible which he manifested throughout his life, and imbibed

the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. For him to be religious meant to be Evangelical or Methodist. When Scott told him "That if he lived a few years he would alter his sentiments, he answered rather sharply, 'I suppose you are one of those who prophecy I will turn Methodist.' I replied: 'No—I don't expect your conversion to be of such an ordinary kind. I would rather look to see you retreat upon the Catholic faith, and distinguish yourself by the austerity of your penances. The species of religion to which you must, or may one day, attach yourself must exercise a strong power upon the imagination/' He smiled gravely and seemed to allow I might be right." Scott's was a shrewd remark, and in distinguishing his position from Shelley's, Byron told Moore "I am no enemy to religion but the contrary, . . . I am educating my daughter a strict Catholic . . . for I think people can never have enough of religion if they are to have any. I incline myself very much to the Catholic doctrines." But Byron knew nothing of Catholicism in his early, impressionable days. For him, as he entered life, there were two views of life, and two only, to choose between for one who had none of Shelley's power to find in his own spirit the principles and way by which he was to live; and these were the irreligious, licentious ideals of his own order and the pieties of middle-class Evangelicals. His passions and his pride alike drove him into the one but not without a constant protest on the part of his better nature. "Don't suppose that I took any pleasure in all these excesses or that parsons A., K., and W. were associates to my taste." The second he tended always to treat with amused contempt: "I remember a Methodist preacher who, on perceiving a profane grin on the faces of part of his congregation, exclaimed, 'no hopes for them as laughs/'

Byron was very much one of "them as laughs." Yet he never could quite disown or shake off its influence. And when he was driven into exile, cast off by his country and the aristocracy to which he belonged, his first conflict was not with these—that came later—but in his own heart, with the sense of wrong-doing, and with the creed by which he had been taught to envisage and arraign his own wrong-doing. The central experience of *Childe Harold*, *Prometheus*, *Manfred*, *Cain*, *Sardanapalus*, is the sense of sin and the injustice of the decree which arraigns sin as guilt, a consciousness and conflict inexplicable to the "invincible ignorance" or the purer and more enlightened eyes of Shelley.

Childe Harold is, of course, much besides a confession of Byron's sense of sin and conflict with the creed of his childhood. It is an almost classical—wanting indeed classical clarity of thought and perfection of form—an almost classical expression of the mind of Europe when the long period of high hopes and fierce conflicts which the French Revolution inaugurated had ended with Waterloo in shattering and complete disillusionment. Great men—Napoleon, Rousseau, Voltaire, Gibbon, Hannibal—great events, Waterloo, Cannae—great cities, Venice, Florence, above all, Rome—they all tell the same tale, *Vanitas Vamtatum*. Only Nature, only beauty endures,—the Alps, the Rhine, Thrasimene as it is now:

Her lake a sheet of silver, and her plain
Rented by no ravage save the gentle plow,

and the everlasting sea :

Dark-heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of Eternity.

Byron's was not the only mind that felt the Dionysiac mood which is the theme of his turbid, passionate,

splendid rhapsody. But the deepest personal note in it all is that which I have indicated, the sense of sin, and a proud passionate conflict with the doctrine impressed on his mind in childhood—Evangelical, Calvinist, Augustinian, of predestined sin and predestined guilt; a passionate denial of the justice of the decree which makes man the victim of inherited passions and untoward circumstances and then condemns him as solely and entirely responsible. Childe Harold flees society because his passions make him the victim of society :

III. 69-70.

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind :
 All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
 Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
 Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
 In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
 Of our infection, till, too late and long,
 We may deplore and struggle with the coil,
 In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
 Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
 on fatal penitence, and in the blight
 Of our own Soul turn all our blood to tears,
 And colour things to come with hues of Night ;
 The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
 To those that walk in darkness : on the sea
 The boldest steer but where their ports invite—
 But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,
 Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be.

Again in the fourth canto, when the Childe has been dismissed, the Grotto of Egeria suggests thoughts of love and its disillusionment and that with an abrupt transition, only intelligible if one recalls Byron's own experience, the thought of sin, of the fatal chain of passion and circumstances which had wrecked his life:

IV. 126-7

Our life is a false natuie—'tis not in
 The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
 This ineradicable taint of Sin,
 This boundless Upas, this all-blasting tree,
 Whose root is earth—whose leaves and branches be
 The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—
 Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see,
 And worse, the woes we see not—which throb through
 The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.

Yet let us ponder boldly—'tis a base
 Abandonment of reason to resign
 Our right of thought—our last and only place
 Of refuge ; this, at least, shall still be mine :
 Though from our birth the Faculty divine
 Is chained and tortured—cabined, cribbed, confined,
 And bred in darkness, lest the Truth should shine
 Too brightly on the unprepared mind.
 The beam pours in—for Time and Skill will couch the mind.

In *Childe Harold* this, though the central experience determining the mood of the whole poem, is subordinated to the elaboration of the more general theme of historical world disillusionment. In *Prometheus* and *Manfred* it becomes the principal topic. Each presents in a different form the same fixed, unyielding attitude of mind of one who acknowledges delinquency but rejects with defiance the doctrine which arraigns sin as guilt. In *Prometheus* the individual becomes the symbol of humanity, humanity more sinned against than sinning. In the great speech of Satan with which Milton opens the fourth book of *Paradise Lost* the poet drives home, with stroke after stroke, the responsibility of Satan for his own wrongdoing :

Had'st thou the same free will and power to stand?
 Thou had'st: whom hast thou then or what to accuse

But Heaven's free-will dealt equally to all ?
 Be then his love accurst since, love or hate,
 To me alike it deals eternal woe.
 Nay curst be thou ; since against his thy will
 Choose freely what it now so justly rues.
 Me miserable ! which way shall I fly ?
 Infinite wrath and infinite despair.

That is, I take it, the orthodox, essentially religious view. Man has no rights; but he has freedom and therefore complete responsibility. Paul, Augustine, Calvin, had doubts about the freedom, none about the responsibility. Byron and the sceptical mind find it difficult to accept either position. To call a conscious being into existence seems to him to involve moral obligations for a righteous creator. Man's free-will is not, experience and thought seem to indicate, thus absolute. If Satan rebelled it was in virtue of something in his nature, the nature which he did not himself make, but received. Free, a man's conscience tells him he is, within limits and relatively, relative to other created beings to whom he cannot transfer his individual responsibility. But neither conscience nor reason tells him that this complex being which is his responsible self, is of his own making, is free absolutely, i.e., in its relation to the absolute. So much Byron feels, but he is incapable of a philosophical solution of the enigma. The *Prometheus* is a defiant and unshakable arraignment of the conception of Providence taught him by Orthodox Evangelicalism :

" Thy God-like crime was to be kind,
 To render with thy precepts less
 The sum of human wretchedness,
 And strengthen Man with his own mind ;
 But baffled as thou wert from high,
 Still in thy patient energy,

In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force ;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source ;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny ;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence .
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself—an equal to all woes—
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentered recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

Diodati, July, 1816.

In *Manfred* Byron endeavours to give the same theme dramatic form, the lyrical-dramatic form which Goethe's *Faust* had given vogue to, and in the same metaphysical strain. But Byron's genius was not dramatic nor had he the lyrical soul of Shelley. Shelley lacked solidity, Byron lacked wings. Yet *Manfred*, read aright, is an impressive and significant poem. Its closest parallel is Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, a poem which in its best passages has more of the essential music of poetry than Byron's, for a deficiency in essential music is Byron's greatest defect as a poet. But Byron's thought goes deeper than Marlowe's. Marlowe set two moods over against one another, on the one hand lust of knowledge and of the power which knowledge brings, on the other terror of the supernatural; but he failed to link them logically and dramatically. His sympathies, one feels, are with the soaring ambitions of

Faustus, yet at the end he hands him over to the devils of superstition in a speech of splendid power. He failed to show, as Shakespeare did in *Macbeth*, that the forbidden fruit brought its *own* curse. Byron's poem is even less many-mooded than Marlowe's; but its logic, so far as it goes, is lucid and convincing. Manfred is the victim of sin and remorse but the defiant enemy of the orthodox conception of retribution. The punishment of sin is the consciousness of sin, the consciousness above all of wrong to another, to the one who is loved and has been the victim of passion:

" If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living ; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful,
Happy and giving happiness.

Old man ! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
Nor agony—nor greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
Of its own sins—wrongs—sufferance—and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

And when the devils appear it is not to carry off Manfred as they had carried off Faustus. Retribution is not only useless, it is but to add crime to crime:

Must crimes be punished but by other crimes
And greater criminals ? Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel ;
Thou never shalt possess me, that I know :
What I have done is done ; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine.

A step more one feels might have led Byron to proclaim, with Blake and Tolstoi, that the fundamental principle of Christianity and true religion is the doctrine of the eternal forgiveness of sin.

Childe Harold Canto III., *Manfred* and *Prometheus* were all written in 1816-17, and were only a few of the products of that wonderful year which produced poems of such different moods as the *Prisoner of Glutton*, the verses addressed to Byron's sister, *The Dream, Darkness*, and at the end *Beppo* of which I must speak again. To the theme of these three poems, the metaphysic of sin and retribution, Byron returned later and in a calmer mood, drawing himself again, his own temperament and weakness and consciousness of sin, and emphasising his arraignment of the orthodox, evangelical theory of sin and retribution in which he had been reared, when he wrote *Cain* to the horror of Southey and the delight of Shelley. *Sardanapalus* and *Cain* are Byron's most interesting pieces of self-portraiture. *Sardanapalus* is the *apologia* for his life at Venice, his sins of sense. They have not, he seems to say, through the story of Sardanapalus' heroism in the last encounter, they have not robbed him of courage if the call to heroic action should come, as it was soon to come from Greece; and what after all are the sins of sense weighed in the balance against the endless tale of war and bloodshed which the world applauds and the Church condones ?

Oh, thou wouldst doubtless have me set up edicts—
 "Obey the king—contribute to his treasure—
 Recruit his phalanx—spill your blood at bidding—
 Fall down and worship, or get up and toil."
 Or thus—"Sardanapalus on this spot
 Slew fifty thousand of his enemies.
 These are their sepulchres, and this his trophy."
 I leave such things to conquerors ; enough

For me, if I can make my subjects feel
 The weight of human misery less, and glide
 Ungroaning to the tomb • I take no licence
 Which I deny to them. We all are men.

I feel a thousand mortal things about me,
 But nothing god-like,—unless it may be
 The thing which you condemn, a disposition
 To love and to be merciful, to pardon
 The folly of my species, and (that's human)
 To be indulgent to my own.

In *Cain* Byron challenged in his own peculiar way the scriptural orthodoxy of Evangelical Christianity. To understand the tremendous disturbance which the poem created one has to recall—no easy thing now—the state of mind of those for whom every part of Bible was of equal authority as a revelation of the divine. No Higher Criticism had appeared to suggest that the Bible must be seen in perspective, that the primitive myths of the Book of Genesis, Deuteronomy, and the legendary Book of Esther were not documents of the same religious value as the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Gospels. Byron was no such critic. His criticism is again a moral one, a challenge to the view of man's entire responsibility for evil, the doctrine which identifies inherited sin and inherited guilt, the doctrine of retribution. To Kennedy Byron declared (p. 66) that he would certainly say to the potter "Why do you treat me thus?" and that "if the whole world were going to hell he would prefer going with them, than go alone to Heaven." That is the spirit in which *Cain* is composed—"Why do you treat me thus?"

I need not analyse the argument for Byron's thought never gets beyond the simple antinomy of the fact of sin, and the injustice of the evangelical doctrine of responsibility and retribution. The chief interest of the

drama is in the characters of Cain and Lucifer and Ada. Cain is Byron himself, not drawn so melodramatically as in *Childe Harold* and *Manfred*, but with a mournful understanding,—a dark soul, the victim of passions which prompt to "deeds eternity cannot annul;" a dark soul in whom reason rejects the simple solution of orthodoxy, of gentler souls like Adam and Abel. But Lucifer is Byron too, the critical, sceptical intellect which had haunted the child in Aberdeen with troublesome questions, and had never allowed the imagination to create Shelleyan dreams of a regenerate world :

You talk Utopia.

In all this Byron seems to me the child, the defiant and rebellious child, of Evangelical and Calvinistic Protestantism, feeling the power of the doctrine he defied, the reality of sin and evil, as Shelley never did. To call him an atheist whether in Southey's glib fashion or from the more enlightened point of view of Professor Farinelli seems to me not quite just. Kennedy's statement is not to be waived aside : " He said that he was not an infidel who denied the Scriptures and wished to remain in unbelief—on the contrary he was very desirous to believe, as he experienced no happiness in having his religious opinions so unsteady and unfixed." Byron recognised in Shelley the highest of Christian virtues, " charity and benevolence." But he could not share Shelley's confidence in human nature and a man's power to work out his own destiny. His evangelical training had taught him, what his experience confirmed, that human nature is weaker than clay in the hands of the destiny that moulds it; but the character of that Power he could not read and would not belie. He had been taught to fear that power, and his pride would not stoop to acknowledge the authority of what he feared

but could not love. The psycho-analyst might have discovered the explanation of much in Byron's life in the experiences of his childhood.

But the conflict with his own sense of delinquency and the narrow creed by which he had been taught to interpret and judge of that experience was only one of the themes of the later poetry of Byron. The other principal one was his fight with the English aristocracy which, in hypocritical alliance with evangelical and middle-class sentiment, had joined in denouncing and driving him into exile :

The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastaid nobles, who
Have all forsook me, hath devoured the rest;
And suffered me by the voice of slaves to be
Whoop'd out of Rome.

Byron was not quite a Coriolanus, yet the quotation describes aptly enough the circumstances under which Byron was driven from his country. Nor is it any part of my thesis to defend Byron. Apart altogether from the evidence which now makes practically certain the circumstance in which Lady Byron found the final justification to her conscience of the step she took, no one can read the letters she wrote immediately after she left him (brought together in Mr. Prothero's *Letters and Journals* III. Appendix to Chapter 12.) without recognising that a separation of some kind was inevitable. His marriage, in the circumstances, and with a woman of his wife's character and principles, drove Byron frantic; and his conduct towards her from her marriage day onward had clearly been intolerable. The very fact that each was a person of abnormal power and character made any such peaceful existence as Byron submitted to later with La Guiccioli impossible. To Lady Byron

her husband was a Lucifer, a creature of "boundless and impious pride," to live with whom she must abandon "every moral and religious principle against which . . . his hatred and endeavours were uniformly directed"; and to Byron his wife, whom he could not but respect and was never able to forget, represented all that he most detested in English virtue and piety. I am not concerned to make excuses for Byron. The time is past for that. He was what he was. The tragedy of the marriage, as of many another, is that what each saw in the other was not the whole truth. There were elements in Byron which a different upbringing and perhaps another woman might have educed.

But in any case he was a poet, in his manner and measure a prophet, who spoke the truth as it presented itself to him even if he was moved to do so by imperfect motives. There is an element of truth in Byron's arraignment of the Evangelical Protestantism; there is power in Byron's satire of aristocratic society and aristocratic government in England and Europe, which is the theme of his great comic epic *Don Juan*. In *Beppo* (1817) Byron had found at last the medium which allowed him to pour into his poetry all the humour and wit with which his conversation and letters overflowed; and in 1818 the first cantos of *Don Juan* were written.

As *Childe Harold* is more than a record of Byron's conflict with the Evangelical doctrine of sirt and retribution, *Don Juan* is more than merely a satire on life and politics in aristocratic Europe. Like the serious poem, it is a reflection of his varied and shifting moods but more many-side, more gay and brilliant. Of that aspect of it I have spoken elsewhere and need not repeat myself. What I wish to insist on here is that the point of view from which the whole is seen in best perspective is that which Byron himself always em-

phasized, a satire on higher society, and ultimately, like Swift's, on human nature. "I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose high external accomplishments cover and choke internal and secret vices, and I paint the natural effects of such characters; and certainly they are not so highly coloured as we find them in real life ... It is impossible you can believe the higher classes of society worse than they are in England, France and Italy, for no language can sufficiently paint them." "You have so many *divine* poems, is it nothing to have written a *human* one."

Even Mr. Coleridge in his final edition of Byron's poems, obscures a little the right perspective in which the poem is to be seen when he declares that "the argument is a vindication of the natural man," and that "the *raison d'etre* of his song was not only to celebrate but by the white light of truth to represent and exhibit, the great things of the world—Love and War, Death by sea and land, and Man, half-angel and half-demon, the comedy of his fortunes and the tragedy of his passions and fate." That is at once to claim too much for *Don Juan* and to fail to do justice to its chief function. There is no such full picture of life in *Don Juan* as this suggests: but Byron is not concerned to vindicate the natural man or life. He is content to describe with a blend of Fielding's sympathy with youth, Voltaire's mocking gaiety, and Swift's sombre reflection on human nature, life in the class that ruled Europe, from Britain to Turkey.

And the comparison with Swift is the most fundamental. Like *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travels*, *Don Juan* is primarily a satire on the royal and aristocratic politicians who governed Europe. "Here they are/" he seems to say (and the poem closed, or broke

off, just as he had begun to describe that English society in which he had shone like a meteor for a few short and fatal seasons) "here they are, the brilliant coteries who govern us, and to whom Southey and others my savage critics are so profoundly respectful, the same at St. Petersburg as at London, at their eternal game of war and diplomacy for which the price is paid in "the blood and tears of wretched men," the one great preoccupation of their idle moments what they call love. Some day surely humanity will rouse itself and put an end to it:

That hour is not for us but 'tis for you ;
 And as, in the great joy of your Millennium,
 You hardly will believe such things were true
 As now occur I thought that I would pen you 'em ;
 But may their very memory perish too !—
 Yet if perchance remembered, still disdain you 'em
 More than you scorn the savages of yore
 Who *painted* their *bare* limbs but *not* with gore.

But Byron's hopes are not as ardent as Shelley's for he has not Shelley's faith in human nature :

They accuse me—*Me—the* present writer of
 The present poem—of—I know not what—
 A tendency to under-rate and scoff
 At human power and virtue and all that ;
 And this they say in language rather rough.
 Good God ! I wonder what they would be at
 I say no more than hath been said in Dante's
 Verse, and by Solomon and by Cervantes ;

By Swift, by Machravel, by Rochefoucauld,
 By Fenelon, by Luther, and by Plato ;
 By Tillotson, and Wesley, and Rousseau,
 Who knew this life was not worth a potato.
 'Tis not their fault, nor mine, if this be so,—
 For my part I pretend not to be Cato,
 Nor even Diogeneb.—We live and die,
 But which is best, you know no more than I

Socrates said, our only knowledge was
 " To know that nothing could be known ;" a pleasant
 Science enough, which levels to an ass
 Each man of wisdom, future, past, or present.
 Newton (that proverb of the mind) alas ;
 Declared with all his grand discoveries recent,
 That he himself felt only "like a youth
 Picking up shells by the great ocean—Truth."

Ecclesrastes said, "that all is vanity"—
 Most modern preachers say the same, or show it
 By their examples of true Christianity :
 In short all know or very soon may know it ;
 And in this scene of all-confessed inanity,
 By Saint, by Sage, by Preacher and by Poet,
 Must I restrain me, through the fear of strife,
 From holding up the nothingness of life.

Dogs, or men—for I flatter you in saying
 That ye are dogs—your betters far—ye may
 Read, or read not, what I am now essaying
 To show you what ye are in every way.
 As little as the moon stops for the baying
 Of wolves will the bright Muse withdraw one ray
 From out her skies—then howl your idle wrath !
 While she still silvers o'er your gloomy path.

If, despite such passages, Byron failed to convince his first readers and may still fail to convince us, of the serious satirical purpose of his poem, " the most moral of poems," it is because of the vein of irresponsible fun and flippancy which runs through it as through his conversation and letters, and secondly, because of the indulgence, or sympathy, with which he treats one element in the life he is satirising, the game of love. There is nothing in *Don Juan* resembling the morbid and revolting treatment of sexual life in Swift's poems and *Gulliver's Travels*. " There is no indelicacy," Byron writes to Murray, " if Hobhouse wants that let him read Swift, his great idol."

Here Byron draws nearer to Fielding. Young men will love, and young love is probably the best thing life has to give. In the episode of Haidee, and again in *The Island*^A Byron writes in a way to suggest that for his temperament a simpler, more primitive civilisation, less set around with inhibitions and reproving critics, would have cooled the fever of nerves that the complexities of civilisation excited to madness.

Byron's conflict at once with aristocratic society, its politics and morals, and with the one religious force which, like himself, judged and condemned that society, the Evangelical Christianity of Wilberforce, Newton, Cowper, a conflict from which he found no issue, recalls that other and greater aristocrat who declared war against aristocratic society as he knew it from within also, and was driven out of the Faith and Church in which he had hoped to find an ally in his fight. " I honestly desired to make myself a good and virtuous man ; but I was young, I had passions, and stood alone, altogether alone in my search after virtue. Every time I tried to express the longing of my heart for a truly virtuous life I was met with contempt and derisive laughter; but directly I gave way to the lowest of my passions I was praised and encouraged. I found ambition, love of gain, lechery, pride, anger, vengeance, held in high esteem. I gave way to these passions and becoming like unto my elders I felt that the place which I filled satisfied those around me . . . My kind-hearted aunt, a really good woman, used to say to me that the one thing above all others which she wished for me was an intrigue with a married woman . . . Another of her wishes for my happiness was that I should become, if possible, an adjutant to the Emperor; the greatest happiness of all she thought for me would be that I

should find a wealthy bride who would bring me an enormous number of serfs."

When Tolstoi came to realize the vanity and cruelty of aristocratic life, he sought escape and guidance in the creed of his upbringing, the Orthodox Church, and for a time found it in submission and acceptance. There was more in that ancient creed and ritual to appeal to the imagination than in English Evangelicalism and Methodism. But in Tolstoi, as in Byron, the sceptical intellect was too strong for acquiescence. In the end Tolstoi found, or believed he had found, an escape when he realized that despite all the stress which the Church had laid on the literal inspiration of the Bible there was one part which every Church had agreed to ignore or explain away, and that was the Sermon on the Mount. He turned from creed and sacraments to follow the way of Christ. It was, as events proved, an imperfect victory.

Byron had not Tolstoi's greatness of soul, nor the Asiatic, ascetic mystical impulses. His pride was more deeply alloyed with vanity. He might satirise; he could not easily break with the tone and traditions of his order. To his critical intellect, too, Tolstoi's solution, which was no solution but an abnegation of life, would have seemed wanting in common sense. A Catholic Byron might, as Scott told him, have become, never a Tolstoian Christian, a Dukhobor. Yet to look back on Byron's life and poetry through the larger soul and experience of Tolstoi is a help to one who would understand the forces as I have tried to describe them, which were at work in his troubled mind and are reflected in his poetry—pride, passion, aristocratic tradition, a religious sense that would not be stifled, a creed the intellect could not accept; and such solution as Byron found had in it the essential elements of Tolstoi's teaching—work and

self-sacrifice. Against all his shortcomings as a man we may set two of his speeches in Greece :

" I am come here not in search of adventures, but to assist the regeneration of a nation whose very debasement makes it more honourable to become their friend."

" Poverty is wretchedness; but it is perhaps to be preferred to the heartless unmeaning dissipation of the higher orders. I am thankful I am now clear of that, and my resolution to remain clear of it for the rest of my life is immutable."

H. J. C. GRIERSON.

[The principal part of the foregoing was delivered as one of the Byron Lectures, given at University College, Nottingham, March 17th, 1922. It has since been amplified, and appears for the first time, in print in its revised form. It is included by permission of Professor Grierson's publisher, by whom it will be issued, along with other essays by the same writer]

THE GENIUS OF BYRON

BY MARIE CORELLI

THE name of Byron will stir the pulses and move the hearts of all readers of poetry; and to those people who do not understand poetry, or, what is worse do not care to understand it, a brief consideration of the life and qualities of a man of brilliant genius, who like a new star swept into the space of Literature, dazzling all beholders, is sure to rouse their interests and quicken their enthusiasm.

Poetry is the outflow of strong, sincere and passionate emotion and the soul of humanity revealed in music.

No poet before Byron, or since, has ever combined such a wealth of imagery and such vividness of perception, with such power and beauty, as he managed to express within the nine lines of what is known as the Spenserian stanza, in which form *Childe Harold* was composed ; and no poet, at any time, has ever succeeded in uniting so much fervour with tenderness, or so much passion with sweetness.

But he has been the object for the slanders of malignant persons, who, as far as intellect and ability were concerned, were not worthy to tie his shoe. It is not my intention to deal with his private life. I

consider that a man's work is a man's true self. More has been written and suggested upon Byron's private life than is creditable to humanity, and his gifts were so remarkable, and his personality so magnetic, that all the lesser men of literature were jealous of him in his own day. There is jealousy still. They could not abide his dazzling supremacy; they would like to smother his very memory if they could. When they were compelled to mention him they used a high and mighty tone of condescension, not to say superciliousness. They declared that Byron was a very inferior poet, and that they themselves could do as well, if not better. But they offered no proof of their assertion.

No one has ever been so cruelly mauled or maltreated. His wolfish detractors had so gloated over his vices, which probably were not one whit worse than their own, that they had ignored his virtues, and had sought to cheapen his genius which far and away eclipsed that of any poet born since his time.

Mary Chaworth showed a deplorable lack of womanly feeling when she said, "Do you think I could care for that lame boy?" The fact was that Byron was not very lame. His lameness—an accident of birth—was not very pronounced or perceptible.

Byron was unhappy, but he was not as unhappy as he imagined himself to be. He found pleasure, even inspiration, in dwelling on his own troubles. Many poets do this. They cherish a grievance, real or fancied. There must be a sharp sense of pain in the soul before they can cry out. Great thoughts do not spring from easy living; disappointment and suffering are harsh but splendid teachers, and are absolutely necessary to make a great poet.

Poets do not really love; if they did they could not write about it. They imagine they love, and their

imagination embraces many fair objects. So Byron's life, with all his tempestuous emotions, so brilliant and so brief, was lived in a world of imagination, rather than of fact. He was ever seeking the ideal woman, and it is doubtful whether he ever found her. His marriage was a failure. Many marriages are. He was not alone in this sort of universal trouble. I ask you to take the heritage of fine things which this fine poet has left and not to concern yourselves with his personal and private faults. They are no business of ours, and have as little to do with us as our private lives have to do with other people.

Much has been said in criticism of *Don Juan*, but its questionable portions are pure compared with the disgraceful modern problem novels which girls and young men are allowed to read, and which unscrupulous publishers push and advertise for their own miserable profit, regardless of the harm done to the reputation of English literature.

I do not excuse the easy morality of *Don Juan*, but it is frank and unconcealed, and, therefore, less harmful than the insidious poison and the revolting stuff which has won the chief notice and the approval of the modern Press ; and its amazing beauty and power, combined with its varied humour and wit, make it a marvel of the English tongue.

[*Summary of a Lecture delivered at the Nottingham Mechanic Institution on the occasion of a Byron Exhibition, held February 5th 1915, printed by kind permission of the Lecturer.*]

BYRON AS A PROSODIST

BY PROFESSOR GEORGE SAINTSBURY, M.A., L.L.D.

" I HAVE written in so many places about Byron," replied Professor Saintsbury, in response to the editor's request for permission to reprint one of his criticisms of Byron's poetry. " Probably the best thing would be the note on him in my 'History of Prosody.'"

" Byron was the least of the three (Byron, Shelley and Keats) in prosody, as in poetry; but his prosodic merits have, as a rule, been far undervalued, even by his adorers as a poet. He affected, and perhaps really to some extent felt, much greater admiration for the eighteenth-century poets, and for those who mainly or partly followed them in his own time, than for the innovators of the Romantic school; and he himself wrote the stock couplet with correctness and vigour. But he chose for his principal serious poem *Childe Harold*, the Spenserian, which 'regular' classical critics have always disliked; and, though he never achieved its proper character, did finely in it sometimes, and undoubtedly restored its popularity. Again, he chose for his greatest serio-comic pieces, *Beppo* and *Don Juan*, the *Ottawa*; while his minor tales were in Scott—*Christabel* octosyllables. In lyric, too, he showed varied power, and once turned (in the 'Haidee' song) what had been a burlesque before in its exact, and a very sing-song metre in its restricted form, into a thing of remarkable prosodic beauty, to be made more beautiful still

by Praed and Swinburne. His most consummate prosodic achievement is undoubtedly the above-mentioned octave of *Don juan*, which can hardly be surpassed, either in suitability to its subject, or in the way in which the particular characteristics of the metre itself are brought out."

In a "Reasoned List of Poets with special regard to their Prosodic quality and influence," Professor Saintsbury writes of Byron :

"Usually much undervalued as a prosodist, even by those who admire him as a poet. Really of great importance in this respect, owing to the variety, and in some cases the novelty, of his accomplishment, and to its immense popularity. His Spenserians in *Childe Harold* not of the highest class, but the light octaves of *Beppo* and *Don Juan* the very best examples of the metre in English. Some fine but rhetorical blank verse, and a great deal of fluent octosyllabic couplet imitated by Scott. But his lyrics of most importance, combining popular appeal with great variety, and sometimes positive novelty, of adjustment and cadence. Diction is his weakest point."

[The above excerpts from Professor Saintsbury's book are included by kind permission of the author and of the publishers, Messrs Macmillan & Co , Limited.]

VIII

THE MORAL INFLUENCE
OF BYRON

BY PROFESSOR FRANK GRANGER, D.Litt., M.A.

(Vice-Principal of University College, Nottingham).

BYRON'S life was a moral shipwreck, and his poetry occasionally reflected the worst characteristics of his life. One is not, therefore, going to hold up Lord Byron as a character to be imitated, nor all of his poetry as a proper subject for study. We are as conscious as the strictest moralist could be of Lord Byron's faults. There are poems and passages in his works which are unsuitable for study, or should we rather say that the reading of such poems are not always expedient. The strict laws which might forbid us to read or speak of Byron would forbid us also to read Shakespeare. Shakespeare, did I say?—these laws would even forbid us to read the Bible.

Yet whatever view we hold of the Scriptures—of the Old Testament—it must be admitted that an unusual sensitiveness to the demands of morals was exhibited. And we must treat with great respect the selection which the Jews made from their Literature to form their sacred scriptures. But the writers of the Old Testament used the utmost freedom in speaking of the life of man. The Old Testament, in its variety, is like

Shakespeare. That is to say, the presentation of the darker side of human life is not inconsistent with the highest moral aims.

In order to understand the life of man, to understand his strivings towards more excellent things one must recognise the limitations of his nature. Lord Byron was not being held up as a guide in morals but as a poet who was also a man of passionate nature. There are many well-being persons who think that poets and poetry can exercise control over man's actions which had been, and still was, exercised by authoritative religious maxims. I do not hold this opinion. For them the Christian religion held the field. The immoral conduct which disfigured parts of Byron's career contained in it nothing that was surprising though much that was lamentable, for the minister of religion or the social worker.

Again, contemplation of his life exhibited in the clearest light the retribution that usually followed a breach of the moral laws. Byron was not a hypocrite, and his aspirations were those of a good man, though his actions fell short of them.

We are a pleasure seeking race, fond of freedom, fond of change, fond of our own way,—in a word, capricious. Lord Byron's faults are frequent among the people of to-day, without the redeeming virtues of his poetic genius. In Lord Byron's case his nobler moments showed him rising above the limitations of his character. In spite of these limitations we cannot afford to neglect his great poetic achievements.

It is the business of moral philosophy and of theology to consider the estimate which we are to put on a man's character. The question is, was Byron characterised by poetic inspiration? and if so, was the general tendency of his poetry such that we were to gain more by

acquaintance with it than we lost? What was the answer? Byron was a poet who made us think, who made us go outside our own narrow sphere. He has done more than any other modern writer to make the great achievements of Greek history, the glories of the Roman empire, something more than mere names. He has thus enlarged the range of our comparisons.

Byron was also the poet of liberty, in an age when liberty needed voices to proclaim her. It was largely Byron's influence which moved the men who liberated Europe in the nineteenth century. Byron was a great teacher for all Europe. Only Shakespeare is as well-known as Byron in France, Italy, Germany and Spain. We cannot, therefore, allow our moral judgment of his life to overshadow the estimate of his life's work.

[Summary of a Lecture given under the auspices of the Nottingham Public Libraries Committee, at the Hyson Green District Library, Feb. 2nd, 1911.]

BYRON

BY PROFESSOR W. MACNEILE DIXON, **Litt.D.**

(Glasgow Glasgow University)

IN the broad passion of his youth, Byron flung himself upon the world to master and enjoy it, but how soon he learned in his own person the narrow range of human freedom. He learned the gods were stronger than man, and often placed an infinite seeking soul in a finite body.

Byron's death had a marked effect upon the world. There was something quite different from mere literary success, however brilliant; something exceptional, poignant, revealing for a moment, and as if by some sudden illumination, the human heart with all its secret longings laid bare. Byron seemed to sum up in his own person what few men in the world had done. He touched "a chord to which a million hearts responded." What was the chord? The chord of Freedom! There is in human nature and in every one of us an intense desire for freedom, not the political freedom of which we have heard so much, but for individual liberty; and since for Byron every limit was a barrier, and every law a chain, since he flung his angry challenge against nature and destiny, and only in complete emancipation lay for him happiness, he seemed to many a leader, a

standard bearer, as it were. It was natural that poetry that spoke the language of the soul should make a wide appeal, and that poets, even when their writings were but dimly comprehended should fascinate the world.

In Byron there was something of the writer's as well as the poet's genius. He spoke in the immediate heat of the moment, in the first glow of immersion in an intense and new experience, and was torn always by the momentum of his dynamic personality, so that his thoughts and words communicated an instant thrill, as it were, to his readers, and their pulses beat in answer to his own. His oratory, the ringing declamation which so moved his age, lost, as all oratory lost, by the passing of time, something of its agitating power. His star had been, if not eclipsed, somewhat overcast, but only in England. On the Continent of Europe the star had never paled.

It was said that the poet's life was one long pose, but it was possible to enquire too closely into the exact motives of a man. There was one argument which seemed final in the matter. The fire that kindled verse was subterranean, a fire not to be lighted by any effort of the will.

[*The above is the summary of a Byron Foundation Lecture delivered at University College, Nottingham, on March 2, 1923, and is printed by permission of Professor Macneile Dixon, after being approved by the lecturer.*]

BYRON, THE POET

" Resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea
To mend his former morals, or get new."
—BYRON.

PART II

REGIONAL AND SPECIAL

- I: BYRON ABOUT TOWN . . . Wilfred Whitten (*John o' London*).
- II: BYRON IN VENICE . . . Cecil Roberts.
- III: BYRON IN GREECE . . . Shirley C. Atchley
(*Athens*).
- IV: BYRON AS POET LAUREATE
- V: SHAKESPEARE AND BYRON . Prof. Frank Granger,
M.A., D.Litt.
- VI: BYRON ON THE STAGE . . With notes by Sir Squire
Bancroft and William
Archer.
- VII: BYRON'S "FUGITIVE PIECES" Herbert C. Roe.

"What is the end of fame? It is to
fill a certain portion of uncertain paper."
—BYRON.

I

BYRON ABOUT TOWN

BY WILFRED WHITTEN

(John o' London)

I WATCHED, with genuine sadness, the demolition of Byron's old home, No. 8, St. James's Street. It is a plain brick eighteenth-century house of no charm save that which was given to it by the fact that here he lived for several years, and here, on the publication of *Childe Harold* awoke, as he said, to find himself famous. Some years ago I was allowed to go over the house, and it was not without emotion that I trod the sagging floors that Byron had trodden.

HOMES AND HAUNTS

It is curious that the poet who banished himself from London, and was an exile until his death, has many London "shrines." Even his slight connection with Fleet Street, where, at No. 32, Murray published *Childe Harold*, has been perpetuated at No. 85 by various monumental devices. This house, built by Sir J. Tollemache Sinclair, is known as Byron House, and its entrance hall is adorned with marble tablets inscribed with a veritable anthology of Byron's poetry, and with a bust of the "Pilgrim of Eternity" over the door. The quotations include a couplet from his *Hints from Horace* :—

Tis not enough, ye Bards, with all your art,
To polish poems—they must touch the heart.

The house in St. James's Street whose windows are now eyeless sockets still bears on its front another bust, in marble bas-relief, enclosed under glass. The site of his birth-place in Holies Street, Oxford Street, is marked by a tablet on the premises of a big drapery firm. His statue is in Hyde Park, oddly enough, near to Londonderry House, with its suggestions of Lord Castlereagh, whom he hated, and facing the social whirlpool of the Park which, after his embittered departure from England, he never wished to see again. His immediate London haunts can be easily found or traced. No. 4, Bennett Street, St. James's Street, named Bennett House, where he lodged, remained a lodging-house, for the best part of a century after his death, and it is probable that its very area railings are those that he knew. His rooms in the Albany, Piccadilly, which he left to make his unhappy marriage, and the Piccadilly house in which it came to final disaster, are still in being. Samuel Rogers's house, where he first met Tom Moore, and John Murray's drawing-room, where he first met Scott and in whose fire-place his diaries were destroyed, remains)as he knew that You may walk the pavement in Albemarle Street on which he paced up and down when composing *The Corsair*. Hard by is the house that was Watier's Club, where he was one of three men of letters who belonged to that home of dancing and gaming. And in going out of London your eye may fall on the woods of Dulwich which he knew under Dr. Glennie, or on the spire of Harrow Church under which he dreamed dreams and at whose door, long after, his little daughter, Allegra, was buried.

A COLD RECEPTION

A memorable day in Byron's life in St. James's Street was March 13, 1809. His intimate friend, Robert Charles Dallas, walking down the street, saw the young poet's chariot at the door of No. 8, and dropped in. He found his friend looking pale, and he was evidently agitated. He explained that he was about to drive to the House of Lords to take his seat. He had just come of age. Never having had the opportunity to make friends among his own order, he had no friend to introduce him to the Lords. Dallas, however, offered to go with him, and did so. The new-comer was received in an ante-room and the Lord Chancellor (Eldon) was informed that he waited. He was led into the House, which was very thinly attended, and took the oaths at the table. When he had taken them, says Dallas:

The Chancellor quitted his seat, and went towards him with a smile, putting out his hand warmly to welcome him; and, though I did not catch his words, I saw that he paid him some compliment. This was all thrown away upon Lord Byron, who made a stiff bow, and put the tips of his fingers into the Chancellor's hand. The Chancellor did not press a welcome so received, but resumed his seat, while Lord Byron carelessly seated himself for a few minutes on one of the empty benches to the left of the throne, usually occupied by the lords in opposition. When, on his joining me, I expressed what I felt, he said: "If I had shaken hands heartily, he would have set me down for one of his party—but I will have nothing to do with them on either side. I have taken my seat, and now I shall go abroad." We returned to St. James's Street, but he did not recover his spirits.

A NIGHT WITH ROGERS

Byron was, of course, a frequent guest, with Moore, at Rogers famous and fastidiously-furnished treasure-



WHERE BYBON WOKE TO FIND HIMSELF FAMOUS

No. 8 St. James Street in process of demolition

"Sphere" photo.—By permission The Sphere & Tuller, Ud.

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house in St. James's Place, which some years ago was the residence of the late Lord Northcliffe. Tom Moore describes many scenes and talks here, none more amusing than one which was confined to Byron and himself and their host. They had all come in a wild flow of spirits from an early assembly, and Byron, who had been going through one of his frequent self-inflicted ordeals of starvation (to get his weight down) clamoured for bread and cheese, and a joyous supper on it followed. Rogers insisted on reading from Lord Thurlow's newly-published volume, *Poems on Various Occasions*, in which Byron and Moore could find only subjects for mirth. Suddenly they alighted on an eulogy on Rogers himself, which they thought went far to explain his interest in a commonplace volume :—

The opening line of the poem was, as well as I can recollect: "When Rogers o'er his labour bent"; and Lord Byron undertook to read it aloud ;—but he found it impossible to get beyond the first two words. Our laughter had now increased to such a pitch that nothing could restrain it. Two or three times he began, but no sooner had the words ^{le} "When Rogers " passed his lips than our fit burst forth afresh,—till even Mr. Rogers himself, with all his feeling of our injustice, found it impossible not to join us ; and we were, at last, all three, in such a state of inextinguishable laughter, that, had the author himself been of the party, I question much whether he could have resisted the infection.

The stanza which Byron could not read, nor Moore recollect when he told the story, ran :—

When Rogers o'er his labour bent,
Their purest fire the Muses lent,
T'illustrate this sweet argument.

A day or two later Byron sent Moore a burlesque of the poem, beginning:—

When Thurlow this damned nonsense sent
 (I hope I am not violent),
 Nor men nor gods knew what he meant.

TURNING THE SCALE

I have referred, in passing, to Byron's passion for reducing his weight—not a surprising one in view of the fact that he was, even as a very young man, threatened with corpulence. He would starve himself for days on biscuits, and then eat and drink with proportionate gusto. He has his place among the many distinguished men who, during a century and a half, were regularly weighed in the shop of Messrs. Berry, No. 3, St. James's Street, where the carefully-kept registers of these weighings are still preserved. A few days ago Messrs. Berry communicated to the *Morning Post* the following curious table, showing the figures which were entered against Lord Byron's name over a period of five years. It may be doubted whether we have similar particulars of any other great poet:—

	st	lb.	
1806—January 4	13	12	Boots, no hat.
1807—July 8	10	13	Shoes.
July 23	ii	o	„
August 13	10	11½	„
1808—May 27	II	11	I „
1809—June 10	11	11 5¼	»
1811—July 15	9	11½	„

The long interval between the last two entries and the drop of more than a stone and a half in Byron's weight are accounted for by his absence on his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* through Europe and its effect on his physique. The poet who in May, 1810, had swum the Hellespont came back to London a lean and light man. But in after years he tended strongly to become

gross again, and it is a curious thought that had he lived he would probably have been fat in middle age. In his letters Byron frequently refers to this physical tendency. Thus, in April, 1814, he writes: "I have sparred for exercise (windows open) with Jackson an hour daily, to attenuate and keep up the ethereal part of me." And it is the ethereal part of him that the world will remember next year when the centenary of his heroic death at Missolonghi will fall on April 19.

JOHN O' LONDON.

[The foregoing article is reprinted, by kind permission, from "John o' London's Weekly," dated April 28th, 1923, and appeared as one of the popular "Letters to Gog and Magog" contributed weekly by the Editor of that journal.]



LORD BYRON

*As he appeared after his daily ride at Pisa and Genoa
(Silhouette cut in paper by Mrs. Leigh Hunt.— 1822).*

II

BYRON IN VENICE

BY CECIL ROBERTS.

FOR a considerable time the curiosity of the world has been provoked by Byron, and if ever he should cease to be interesting as a poet, he will continue to be an amazing study as a man. Various men and women of genius since his time have defended or arraigned him, sometimes with a passion that obscured fact, sometimes with a partisanship that outraged decency. Literary coroners who spend their time in the mortuaries of the great have found Byron an exhaustless problem. Shelley might be lightly dismissed as "an ineffectual angel," but Byron, during what time he was an angel, of darkness or light, was a very effective one. It is a notable fact that while he was a blackguard to the early nineteenth century, he was also a hero to his valet. He was a great poet and a great letter writer. For nearly a century the world has been informed that he was also a great lover, which is precisely what he was not. There may be two opinions on his merit as a poet, varying with the fashions in verse on which they are based, but there can surely be no two opinions on Byron the amorist. He was a bounder, as selfish as he was callous.

There is little to be gained by dwelling upon this

aspect, but until his final exit and self-redemption at Missolonghi, any study of Byron involves the amorist with the poet. In England there was the first blameless affair of his youth when Mary Chaworth provided him with material for poetry and despair. Later, Lady Caroline Lamb and her wild infatuation gave the poet amusement and annoyance. Immediately following a declaration that he hated women, to Lady Melbourne, he married her niece Miss Milbanke. The basis of this tragedy, resulting in his quitting England, has never been cleared of the undergrowth of gossip and conjecture. A suspicion arises that Byron rather enjoyed the storm that carried him to foreign ports. In Switzerland he added to Shelley's troubles by a liason with Clare Clairmont, in Venice he openly annexed the Countess Guiccioli, declaring with gusto that she had never cost him, directly or indirectly, a sixpence. And side by side with this restless debauchery the poet is creating, greatly, incessantly.

The most interesting chapter of Byron's life, either as artist or man, is enacted in Venice. It happens also to be the most disreputable. Two English poets have put their stamp upon Venice, not so much by their works as by their dwellings. As you glide down the Grand Canal, recalling the Venice of Byron, the dream has a basis in reality when the gondolier points out the Palazzo Mocenigo and murmurs "Bee-roon." On the other side of the canal he will also whisper another enchanted name as he passes the Palazzo Rezzonico, and you look up and wonder whence Browning derived his income to afford such a stately death-chamber.

Two other English poets will also come to mind, if you have any care for the scenes of inspiration. As you glide under that architectural wishbone, the Rialto Bridge, Shakespeare's Merchant leaps to mind—erro-

neously albeit, for it was not of the bridge, but of the Rialto district to which it gives access, that Shylock alluded. The present Rialto Bridge succeeded the earlier wooden one, across which Shylock may have stepped, in 1588. The new bridge was fresh evidence of the splendour of the Great Republic which had already passed the zenith of its power though the Venetians knew it not

The Turk was in Cyprus in 15/1, which dates the action of Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, prior to this event, and the chief claim of Venice of that day, in popular fame, was as the city of the courtesans, who flourished there in greater liberty, splendour and numbers than in any other city of the world. This does not account for the fact that every educated Englishman of that era endeavoured to make pilgrimage to Venice. His motive was as wrongly judged as that of the modern Englishman who goes to Paris. He went because Italian culture drew homage from all the world. Queen Elizabeth recognised the august status of Venice by asking for a resident ambassador at her Court, though she only just lived to receive him. If you were a sensible and well-connected gentleman you went, like Sir Philip Sidney, to Venice to have your portrait painted by the famous Paolo Veronese. Moreover, if you were a poor gentleman you went, then as now, in order to live cheaply, for in Venice in all ages you could get more for nothing than elsewhere on the earth. There were always pageants, and the sights were free, be they executions or crownings.

It is not to be wondered, therefore, why Shakespeare makes such free use with his Antonios, his gentlemen of Verona, his Juliet, his feuds betwixt quarrelsome Italian families. Gossip on every side of him would be of Italy, of Rome and Florence, and of Venice particularly. The poor man knew it also, though a member of no ambassadorial equipage. You may sit dining on the Lido,

marked from the days of Chaucer. Our poets have borrowed freely, adapting such verse forms as were possible in our less pliant tongue. Until recent years the knowledge of Italian was regarded as even more essential than a knowledge of French, so that we find Wordsworth, now brooding over the French Revolution, or the English landscape, making himself familiar with the speech of Tasso and translating three of the *Spectator* Papers into Italian. He was destined to write one of the few great poems written by English poets on Venice, though, his famous sonnet *Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee* apart, he left the maiden city severely alone.

Let us dismiss, therefore, any idea that Byron went to Venice feeling a stranger amid strangers. He tells us himself in the famous fourth canto of *Childe Harold*

I loved her from my boyhood ; she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,
Rising like water-columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart;

and his advent seems to have been prepared—

I've taught me other tongues, and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger;

He was indeed a fluent speaker of Italian.

Byron first arrived in Venice on 11th November 1816, at the age of 28, and he spent the winter and early spring there, moving on to Rome at the end of April. It is singular that his first poetic expression of Venice, beginning—" 'Tis midnight—but it is not dark," should remain in manuscript for ninety years, though Byron's muse in this instance did not soar above such verse as any traveller feels impelled to write.

Byron is immediately aware of the great fund of material on which his inspiration may brood. He writes to Murray for a book containing certain historical

facts. In wandering through the Palace of the Doges he had seen the blacked-out portrait of the traitor, Doge Marino Faliero, a dramatic footnote to history, which to this day holds one in wonderment in that Great Council Hall with its portrait freize of eighty-six Doges and the black tablet bearing the inscription—

Hie est locus Marini Fæltri decapitati pro criminibus.

Either the authorities consulted by Byron were inaccurate or he was careless and trusted to the license permitted the poet, but he blunders in his drama, *Marino Faliero*[^] inspired by the tragedy. He appears to have relied on Italian historians, who wrote of a Palazzo prior to the one seen by Byron, which leads the latter into some singular errors in his setting. In the preface to the drama he soundly trounces Dr. Moore for the historical faults in his *View of Italy*[>] the requested volume sent out by Murray,* but proceeds to state, with reference to Faliero— "the Giant's Staircase where he was crowned, and discrowned, and decapitated, struck forcibly upon my imagination." Imagination here appears to have ignored architectural fact. The drama closes with the following instruction—

Enter on the Balcony of the Palace which fronts Saint Mark's Place a Chief of the Ten, with a bloody sword. He waves it thrice before the People and exclaims:

"Justice hath dealt upon the mighty Traitor !"

The gates are opened: the populace rush in towards the " Giant's Staircase" where execution has taken place. The foremost of them exclaims to those behind:

"The gory head rolls down the Giant's Steps !"

(The curtain falls).

Splendid ! It makes one wonder what Byron might have achieved in an age when authors are encouraged to write film scenarios. But facts play havoc with the

* This is another error. It is, of course, the Giants' Staircase—*Scala det Giganti*, as the Italian name and Sansovino's two statues of Mars and Neptune imply.

setting of the drama. The Chief of the Ten could not have brandished his sword so dramatically on the balcony which *fronts* St. Mark's Place, for that facade was not built until nearly one hundred years after the execution. Nor could the gory head have rolled down the *Giants' Staircase* which did not then exist; and in a fine piece of rhetoric Byron causes Faliero to address a statue as that of one of his ancestors which actually was erected a hundred years later to a soldier of fortune. It is only just to Byron to state that he had some reason for confusion. Faliero was executed at the top of a stone staircase where he had sworn the ducal oath of allegiance, and the bloody sword was shown to the people from the loggia of the palace.

Within a few days of his arrival at Venice Byron was immersed in an affair with his landlord's wife, Marianna Segati. During the next three years he was destined to live at an incredible pace, for his poetic gifts rose to great heights and an incessant output was accompanied by incessant amorous adventures. Simultaneously, assisting the latter if not the former, his fortune was repaired by the generous income he now derived from his writings. Hitherto, as a noble in England he could not demean his rank, according to the conventions of the age, by accepting money for his writings. Though desperately in need of money he maintained the superb gesture of disdain considered proper towards the fruits of literary success, and made presentations of his royalties to friends, less noble and sensitive on the matter.

In the five years of his Italian residence he derived from his writings alone more than £12,000, an ample income in those days prior to income tax, when the English pound was a power in the world. His taste for palaces, mistresses, servants, horses, dogs, private doctors, and travel, was easily gratified. His palaces cost

him little, his mistresses less. He rented the Mocenigo palace, the centre one of the three contiguous palaces pointed out as the "casa di Bee-room" furnished, at a rent of about £190 per annum. It was still a fashionable mansion and had housed that Countess of Arundel of James I's reign, who had made a Doge apologize to her for the false imputations on her honour in connection with the judicial murder of Foscarini. A later tenant had been that blue-stocking, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Of the Countess Guiccioli Byron writes with much satisfaction, "I can assure you that she has never cost me, directly or indirectly, a sixpence," and the bouncer adds to this remark of the parsimonious poet—"Indeed the circumstances of herself and family render this no merit." He might well exclaim in the same letter—"Damn your delicacy! It is a low commercial quality." demonstrating how superior a man of low commerce may be to a genius of high cast.

His thirst for money from Murray was rapacious. He is constantly beseeching Kinnaird, his friend, to hurry on the sale of Newstead Abbey, which he had once vowed he would never sell, and to make Murray advance larger sums. Yet side by side with this fierce expectation was a vein of profligacy. He undertakes the expense of printing an Armenian grammar by way of requiting a friar for his labour in teaching him the Armenian language. He lives in considerable style, though he is to make a much more dashing figure later, after his visit to Rome. The late Spring of 1817 was spent in that visit inspiring the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*, and one to Ferrara, where he wrote *The Lament of Tasso*. It was a year of immense output, the finishing of the Third Canto and writing of the Fourth, of *Manfred* and of *Beppo*, not to mention fugitive pieces. His study of Italian authors, and of Pulci in particular,

led him to the adoption of a metre and spirit in this latter poem which he never abandoned and in which he achieved his greatest triumphs in *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgment*.

Almost the first news he receives in 1817 is from Shelley, who informs Byron of the birth of his daughter by Clare, to whom Byron alludes later in correspondence with Hobhouse as "my bastard," taking satisfaction in its healthiness and the admiration evoked in the Italians when it was brought to Venice.

On his return from Rome in May, 1817, his conquest of Venice was undertaken seriously. The presence of the hated Austrians had robbed the city of its pride but not of its gaiety. Forty years after the death of Baldassare Galuppi it was still the spendthrift city of Browning's matchless poem, perhaps the only great poem written by an English poet on Venice—

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in
May?
Balls and masks begun at mid-night, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say ?

Byron was a frequent figure at those balls and masks. He had to go warily, for the stranger in Venice touched the gaiety of two races dwelling in one city, yet disdainful to cross each other's shadow. As an Englishman you might speak or dine with the hated Austrians, but your reception was a little cooler along the Grand Canal. The ancient glory of Venice had departed when a terrified Council, under the menacing shadow of Napoleon, had declared a democratic government on May 12th 1797. The last Doge of a line illustrious for a thousand years, whose office had ruled the Morea, Dalmatia and Constantinople, whose navies had humbled Genoa, and whose State had defied Popes and Emperors,

handed his ducal coronet to a servant, saying he should not need it again. Worse humiliation was to follow. Napoleon proceeded to sell Venice and the Venetian territory to the Emperor of Austria, as if it had been a piece of old-fashioned furniture amid the trappings of his new empires, and before he handed over the furniture, he stripped it of whatever decorations pleased his eye, of pictures and parchments and books, and also of those much travelled four horses on the cathedral front, forwarding them to Paris.

Byron was fortunate to see those steeds restored just two years prior to his advent. Let us hope they have made their last journey. It is said they adorned the triumphal arch of Nero and of Trajan, that Constantine sent them to Constantinople and gallant old blind Doge Dandolo, who captured the city at the age of ninety-seven, brought them to Venice in 1204. To Byron they were emblems of defeat, Napoleon having fulfilled the empty threat of Admiral Doria, when he blockaded Venice with the Genoese navy, and in a moment of vacillation the Venetians sued for peace, to receive the retort " Not until we have first put a bridle upon those unbridled horses of yours, that are upon the porch of your St. Mark."

Before St. Mark still glow his steeds of brass,
 Their gilded collars glittering in the sun ;
 But is not Dona's menace come to pass ?
 Are they not *bridled*?—Venice, lost and won,
 Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
 Sinks, like a seaweed, into whence she rose !
 Better be whelmed beneath the waves, and shun,
 Even in destruction's depth, her foreign foes,
 From whom submission wrings an infamous repose.

Infamous or not, Byron enjoyed her repose to the full. As if to compensate for the four bridled horses

restored to the platform on the facade of St. Mark's, but unusable, and the only horses in Venice, he imported four of his own to the Lido. That strip of sand, which is one of the narrow islands separating the lagoon from the Adriatic, was not then the honeymoon land replete with luxurious hotels filled with foreigners willing to be plundered. It was not even a populous bathing *plage* where elegant ladies adorn themselves with elegant bathing-costumes that are put to many uses except that of bathing. The Byronic tradition appears still to linger in one respect. Horses, for the purpose of riding, may be obtained at a riding school located there for the pleasure of horseless Venice. In Byron's time he must have had the Lido almost to himself. It was then a plain sea-barrier to Venice, holding little but a fort at each extremity, a few market-gardens, and a Jews' cemetery which provided the light-hearted Venetians with an annual festival on which it was the fashion to go out to the Lido and dance and feast on the Jews' graves.

The great Lord Byron was a familiar figure towards evening on this strip of sand. His private gondola, with gondolier! in livery, would convey him across the lagoon from the Palazzo Mocenigo to the north end of the Lido, where his horses were stabled in the dismantled fort commanding the Porto. Here a servant would await him with horses saddled. Sometimes his lordship rode only with his servant, sometimes he brought a guest. The distance was usually the same. They would ride out along the sand for the first part and then along the *murassi* or embankment, as far as the middle of the island, at whose southern extremity they could see the fishing village of Malamocco.

On their right would lie the wide lagoon, stained with the hues of sunset and bearing on its irredescent

face the fishing boats, their sails, like butterflies' wings, spread with bright colours renewed in the water below. Afar would lie Venice with its campanili, its dim palaces in the shadow of evening, with the black outline of noble Santa Maria della Salute marking the opening of the Grand Canal, where it rose from the green lagoon, backed by the crimson sunset. And further, covering like a screen the flaming sky that lay westward, the dark Euganean Hills lifted their serrated crests, crimson-rimmed against the pageant. Here day departed in such glory as nowhere else might earth and sky be seen commingling, where man's ambition had built upon the water things of beauty that are as the fabric of a dream ; temples of massive domes and noble columns, palaces of marble in glimmering marriage of Byzantine and Gothic, of East and West, welded in the craftsmanship of the Middle Ages.

The exiled poet riding there would turn from that vision, such as in a later day Turner immortalised on canvas, and eastwards would look upon the dark Adriatic sea, the gentle bride of proud Venice, who yearly wedded her, symbolising the Republic's sovereignty in ancient and elaborate ceremonial. But this was not for Byron's eyes. The majesty, the sovereignty had departed. The gay ship of State, the *Bucentaur*, on which the Doge sailed to the Adriatic for the mystic rite, lay rotting, what was left of it.

The elaborate espousal of the Sea was last performed by the last Doge, for the six-hundred-and-eighteenth time, in the year 1796, with no abatement of a single item of the most august of all Venetian ceremonies. On the eve of the Festival of the Ascension the boat was towed out of the Arsenal and anchored off the Piazzetta in full view of the populace. This was the last and largest of several *Bucentaurs*, one-hundred-and

fifteen feet over all, twenty-two feet beam, and twenty-six feet deep from upper poop-deck to keel. Its flat bottom made it essentially a fine weather craft. It was rowed by one-hundred-and-seventy-eight artisans who propelled forty-two curious oars, for each was forked into three blades entering one rowlock. The rowers stood on the main deck, the upper deck being that of state where the Doge had his saloon. At the end of it was the small window out of which was thrown the wedding-ring in the course of the ceremony. His throne was raised on two steps, and over the cabin were spread great cloths of crimson velvet, gold lace, tasselled and fringed.

The Venetians had always a monstrous conceit of themselves and of their pre-eminence in the order of the universe, as visitors to the Palazzo Ducale may have witnessed in the *Triumphs* of Tiepolo, Tintoretto, Veronese and Giovane which decorated the rich saloons. The cabin of the *Bucentaur* had a similar exaggeration of majesty. A statue of Victory was jostled by Prudence and Strength, and Apollo dutifully smiled on the nine Muses at the command of Venice, who quite inappropriately assembled also the Virtues, and, appropriately, the Arts of Shipbuilding, Fishing, Architecture and others. Dutifully the statues went on that last empty ceremony, mocking, perhaps, a State now devoid of victory, of prudence, of strength, and all the virtues. From forty-eight windows the gay assembly of ambassadors, magistrates and the company of the Doge peered out. At the bow rode a vast figure-head of Justice—final mockery of a State which had often forgotten it and was now about to beseech it in vain.

With squires and pages, with the Head Constable, the High Chancellor, the papal Nuncio, the councillors and

the ambassadors, with a blowing of silver trumpets and a bearing of silken standards, with the ducal sword upraised, the Doge boarded his ship. A roar of salute from the artillery, a simultaneous swing and dip of oars, and the great barge, beflagged and gay with strains of music, goes forth across the lagoon, accompanied by a court of lesser barges, holding the "Doge" of the fishermen and the heads of the various Guilds. Bringing up the procession comes the enormous fleet of private gondolas, gorgeously draped, with be-ribboned gondolieri and freighted with laughing ladies and immaculate gallants. Two boats await the *Bucentaur*, one with the Patriarch who sends, by his acolytes, a gift of Damascus roses ; the other boat contains the choir. They are taken in tow.

The great ship has now reached the Porto di Lido, where the first swell of the sea warns it to trust no further the fickle bride. In deep silence the Doge opens the little window behind his throne, the Patriarch, now aboard, pours forth the holy water into the sea and prays. He then hands the ring to the Doge, who drops it into the sea, saying: " We espouse thee, O Sea, in token of perpetual sovereignty." Immediately the hush is broken, the bells of the campanili ring, the forts fire a salute, men and women cheer, wave flags and strew the lagoon with fresh flowers, and then all go ashore to hear High Mass at San Nicola on the Lido.

It was significant that the *Bucentaur's* last pilot was a scoundrel foremost among those who, a few months later, beached the noble craft on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, stripped her of ornaments to obtain the gold, renamed her *Idra*, and converted her into a sailors' prison, leaving her to rot. Byron, lamenting the old ceremony, presumptuous as nearly all Venetian ceremonies, yet of more beauty and gaiety than our

own dismal civic ceremonials, probably saw only the fragments of the wreck, stored in the Arsenal, when he wrote :

The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord ;
And annual marriage now no more renewed,
The Bucentaur lies rotting unrestored,
Neglected garment of her widowhood 1

Almost the only survivor of those reckless days lamented by Byron was the Patriarch of Venice, whom he met one evening of December, 1816, at the Austrian Count Governor's, amid a motley crowd endeavouring to keep up that Venetian institution, the *conversazione*.

But we left Byron riding on the Lido. Let us return and observe his companion. It is the summer evening of August 23rd, 1818. In the morning a young man and woman had arrived by gondola from Padua. They were in Venice on a delicate and peculiar mission. The young woman, Clare Clairmont, had been a member of that small party which Percy Bysshe Shelley, a young man of charming if wayward genius, had led over the Alps in the Spring of 1816. Settling with his wife, Mary, their son, William, and Clare Clairmont at a cottage on the edge of the lake about two miles distant from Geneva, they were separated by a vineyard only from that Villa Diodati, where once young John Milton had visited his friend in 1639. Another famous English poet, self-exiled from England, now dwelt in it and Shelley had for companion by night and day, Lord Byron.

It happened that Miss Clairmont, unknown to Shelley and his wife, had already met Lord Byron, when she had called upon him in England to seek his aid in procuring for her an engagement at Drury Lane. It is not a little singular that the two poets, following their passion for sailing, encountered a squall in which

they nearly lost their lives. Byron and boats seemed closely linked in Shelley's horoscope, to culminate in that final tragedy off Via Reggia.

These excursions on Lake Geneva resulted in close intimacy between Byron and Miss Clairmont. Later she returned to England, and on January 12th, 1817, gave birth to Byron's daughter, Clara Allegra, called Alba or Ba. As we have seen, this child, with her nurse, were sent for to Venice by Byron, who, later, placed them in the house of Hoppner, the English Consul-General at Venice. The distracted mother appealed in vain to be allowed to see her child. Finally she followed the Shelleys on their second continental trip, and leaving Mrs. Shelley behind, Shelley, with the poor mother undertook the delicate mission to Venice. Shelley had promised to intercede on her behalf. They called at the Hoppners early on the Sunday morning of August 23rd, where the mother was reunited to her child.

Shelley heard unpleasant accounts of Byron's mode of life, and in consultation with the Hoppners they considered it prudent to say nothing of the mother's presence in Venice. Shelley, therefore, proceeded alone to Byron's palazzo in the afternoon. After a long conversation nothing was settled in the matter, and towards evening Byron invited Shelley to take a ride with him on the Lido.

"So he took me in his gondola—much against my will, for I wanted to return to Clare at the Hoppners, who was anxiously waiting for me—across the lagoon to a sandy island, which defends Venice from the Adriatic. When we disembarked we found his horses waiting for us, and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking."

The incidents of that day inspired Shelley to write

some of his best and certainly some of his worst poetry. The latter belongs to a tribute he paid to the child at the Hoppners, in which he tells us:

For, after her first shyness was worn out,
We sate there rolling billiard balls about.

which might enter a competition for the worst line in English verse.

His other poem, *Julian and Maddalo*, contains a magnificent passage on the sunset over Venice, as seen from the Lido. Byron becomes Count Maddalo:

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adua towards Venice . . .
. . . the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many folded hills . they were
Those famous Euganean hills which bear,
As seen from Lido through the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains toweling as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun.

Such was the eventide reaching across that smooth lagoon ; " the harbour piles " is the only false note. By these Shelley probably meant those *pah*, triple piles, black-headed, holding to each other like drowning persons in the water. They are an important feature of the lagoons, marking the navigable channels, and they take upon themselves, and give in their reflections on the rippled water, a ceaseless interchange of delicate colour. In the preface to *Julian and Maddalo* we have Byron as he appeared, under fictitious disguise, to the observant Shelley.

" He is a person of most consummate genius, capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of

becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud."

Shelley then proceeds to draw a generous portrait. But as they rode along the Lido on that memorable evening of August 23rd, the future was mercifully hidden. That very sand marked by the horses' hoofs was to be the burial place a month later of his child, Clara, who died within a few hours of reaching Venice with Mrs. Shelley.

Byron appears now to have been radiant in his verse and in his amours. He had finished the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*. He had written that gay Venetian scena, *Beppo*, which catches the spirit of carnival, and appears to hold also the light of other eyes belonging to the now forgotten Marianna—

She was a married woman ; 'tis convenient,
Because in Christian countries 'tis a rule
To view their little slips with eyes more lenient;

The passion of that encounter naturally waned. The sordid story of the lodger and the landlady is an old one, but in Venice it had its humourous aspect. The wife of the linendraper in whose house he lodged had been presented by her lover with a fine set of diamonds, and financial assistance had also been rendered the bankrupt husband. One day Byron was offered a casket for sale which, to his surprise, contained the veritable diamonds. He purchased them and had sufficient humour to re-present them to the lady!

Before the expiration of a year he found his lodgings inconvenient and leased the Palazzo Mocenigo. Free from the restraint of jealous eyes he plunged into debauchery. His house became a harem, and he was often embroiled in public brawls raised by his women, their husbands and lovers. The Palazzo must have

been bedlam with screams, fights, knives and forceful eviction. Byron and the inmates descended to the language of the brothel in altercations, and yet, amid this pandemonium and excess, the inspiration of the poet rose to a steady flame, and he began the opening stanzas of his masterpiece, *Don Juan*. Let us not forget his provocation, though small in comparison with his reaction. There was no diminution of the tide of abuse in England, and the attempted reconciliation with Lady Byron broke down finally. The fire of genius and robust young manhood drove him on, and his temperament had unhappily found the most dissolute city in Europe. Into that appalling house first went his child and her nurse, later transferred to the household of the compassionate Mrs. Hoppner.

Shelley, calling at the Palazzo Mocenigo, seemed little aware that it almost rivalled the infamy of Pietro Aretino's palace. Writing to Peacock some six weeks later, after he had departed to a distant villa at Este, loaned by Byron, he recorded : " I saw Lord Byron and hardly knew him again, he is changed into the liveliest and happiest-looking man I ever met. He read me the first canto of his *Don Juan*—a thing in the style of *Beppo*, but infinitely better, and dedicated to Southey, in ten or a dozen stanzas, more like a mixture of worm-wood and verdigrease than satire."

Byron's house, and apparently Byron, was ruled at this period by a creature who passed under the name of the " Fornarina," from the trade of her husband. Byron's intimates were chosen from the lowest classes because they had more beauty, and because they were less difficult of approach. Margherita Cogni,* to give her her proper name, a fierce-spirited, dark-eyed beauty of

* Moore in his *Life*, confuses her with the supplanted Marianna Segati, left behind in Byron's old lodgings.

twenty-two, had been found by Byron during an evening ride on the Lido and taken to his house. She put such a claim on her association that almost forceful eviction was necessary finally. Even Mrs. Shelley, undertaking to copy Byron's manuscripts before they were subjected to the peril of the post, wrote "if the Fornaretta (sic) will permit" when asking for the *Don Juan* by the bearer! Shelley, writing again to Peacock, corrects his mistake—"Our poor friend Lord Byron is quite corrupted by living among these people, and, in fact, is going on in a way not very worthy of him."—"L. B. is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets."

The truth of these words was confirmed in yet another manner vitally affecting the Shelleys. The observant reader of *Don Juan* will detect a desperate air of self-defence in the verve with which he narrates the irregularities of his hero. Shelley did not see Byron after October 29th, 1818, to whom he had delivered Allegra, at the close of the period permitted for Clare Clairmont, living with the Shelleys, to have the child. He left for Naples and it was August, 1821, before he renewed his sight of Byron, who was then immersed in his new and last affair with the Countess Guiccioli, the sixteen-year-old wife of the wealthy old Count Guiccioli. Byron, whose conduct had shattered his health, was now almost a reformed character when Shelley joined him at Ravenna.

Political troubles had driven the Countess, with her father, Count Gamba, to Florence. At this time also the outraged old husband was seeking the aid of the Pope, and the faithless wife was being menaced with confinement to a convent. A divorce of a kind had been obtained, which gave the Countess the choice of a convent or living under the care of her father. This

amazing state of affairs was increased by the fact that Byron, throughout the long affair, had courted the lady under the very eyes of the old Count, in whose palace at Ravenna he rented a splendid suite!

Byron's era at Venice was closed. Henceforth he was to love sincerely, to live decently, and find a death that made a fitting climax to the life of a man of such tempestuous genius and reckless spirit. He was thirty-one when he quitted Venice, famous throughout Europe, still handsome and of increased fortune.

But the evil that men do lives after them. One slander he permitted against Shelley. A dismissed servant informed the Hoppners that Clare Clairmont was Shelley's mistress and had a child by him, with the result that the Shelleys found themselves ostracised by the Hoppners. Byron assuming a sympathetic attitude towards Shelley in the matter, informed him at Ravenna of the charge made by the Hoppners. Yet it was only five months previous that Byron had used the hideous story to justify himself to the Hoppners for disregarding Clare's appeal against sending Allegra, their child, to a convent. To give Byron the benefit of excuse, he may have believed the story at the time, though such belief scarcely flatters his judgment.

In terrible distress, Shelley wrote beseeching his wife to refute the wicked slander. Immediately on receipt of his letter Mary Shelley wrote a long and pathetic letter to Mrs Hoppner narrating the dismissal of their servant and the cause of the slander. The letter was sent to Shelley, who placed it in Byron's hands, the latter volunteering to convey it to the Hoppners. It appears improbable that the letter was ever sent. It is a contested point, but all the evidence available leaves the Byron apologists a weak case. The letter was found among his papers after death and the cruel calumny

lived unchecked, for there is no record of the Hoppners acknowledging receipt of the refutation.

Thus to the end Venice proved, in the moral sense, the evil genius of Byron. Yet it was Venice that brought him some measure of deliverance from his corrupt mode of life. One evening on the 6th April, 1819, Lord Byron arrived at the *conversazione* of the Countess Benzoni. His handsome and famous presence at once made a stir in the chattering salon. One lady, however, when asked whether she wished to meet the lion, declined. Her reason was not based on morals but fatigue. Not yet sixteen and newly released from a convent to become the third wife of the wealthy old Count Guiccioli of Ravenna, the late festivities of the Venetian season had wearied her, and only in obedience to her gay spouse had she consented to attend the Countess Benzoni's salon. None the less reluctant, sick of tiresome affairs and wearied with his laurels, Lord Byron at first declined his hostess's request to present him. Finally he consented.

The exquisitely noble head, the charm of voice and manner and the glamour of his personality instantly hypnotised the young girl. Byron's agitation was no less. Her delicate beauty, the lustre of her dark eyes, the ivory pallor of her skin, worked their instant magic. The worn, disillusioned roue of thirty-one fell and worshipped before the fresh beauty of this girl-wife.

Even at this hour he cannot truly realise his character, or her effect on it. He is perhaps too soon from the mire, for he has just evaded the claims upon him of a Venetian family to make an honourable end of a low intrigue—"there was a scene, I having been found at her window at midnight; and they sent me a priest and a friend of the family's to talk with me the next day, both of whom I treated with coffee." Straight from

the eyes of the enamoured young countess, he writes to Hobhouse, companion of many amours—

" I have hopes, sir—hopes, but she wants me to come to Ravenna, and then to Bologna. Now this would be all very well for certainties, but for mere hopes ; if she should flaunt me, and I should make a ' fiasco,' never could I show my face on the Piazza. It is nothing that money can do, for the Conte is awfully rich . . . What shall I do ? I am in love, and tired of promiscuous concubinage, and have now an opportunity of settling for life."

As he jested the bonds were upon him. His sight was too unclean to see the real radiance of this new face, or to measure its potency. A fortnight later he records—" She is as fair as sunrise, and warm as noon."

They met each day in Venice until her husband carried her off to Ravenna. The parting brought her to death's door, and in May, at her bidding he set out for her house. He was to become the constant lover, the faithful shadow of his mistress, and from that hour a new Byron took birth. In the five years that remained to him he was often the prey of remorse and melancholy. His triumphs turned to ashes. Once during the Countess's absence he daily visited her house and garden. In a copy of one of her books he wrote—

"... You will not understand these English words, and others will not understand them—which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognise the handwriting of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear I shall exist hereafter—to what purpose you will decide, my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two

out of a convent. I wish that you had stayed there, with all my heart—or, at least, that I had never met you in your married state."

Sincere, or the artist in love with his pose? No, sincere at last, in a mood now recurrent, whose last notable utterance, on the morning of his thirty-sixth birthday, confessed a life of errors, of abused youth and genius, and yet soared to a noble threnody which was also the prophecy of the end at Missolonghi.

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live*?
The land of honourable death
Is here :—up to the field and give
Away thy breath!
Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

When that rest came both Death and Life revenged themselves on their jester. The one denied him the field of battle for his grave, or any of those lovely places in which, from time to time, he declared his wish to be buried. The other weighed his achievement and found him wanting. His hectic handsome personality towers over his dated facile work. It may be Time will yet redress the severity of modern judgment, but it will never restore the sovereignty he knew, yet professed to scorn.

Mute in the land that had roused him to fiery invective, the exile made the last journey along its Great North Road. Irreverent hands had unshrouded the withered feet of the dead Colossus; reverend hands excluded him from the nation's temple, hospitable to lesser poets if lesser sinners. To-day he lies in a dismal vault in the dismal colliery town of Hucknall.

When the tourist's gondola glides past the Palazzo Mocenigo at Venice, the soft voice of the gondolier murmurs "Casa di Bee-ron signore!" and the living eyes rest in a moment of curiosity on the sightless sockets of the dead house. Mean in the glaring noon, the plaster falling from its dilapidated front, with cracked lintels and boarded windows, the green water lapping its weeded steps, the old husk of former beauty drops into shameful decay. No gondolas congregate before its pali, no voices sound in its rooms, no faces appear on its balcony. Far away seems that day when two young men, in the height of youth and fame, swaggered on that balcony, and one of them, the great Lord Byron, seeing two typical Englishmen in a gondola below, exclaimed derisively before his companion, Thomas Moore—"Ah! if you, John Bulls, knew who the two fellows are now standing up here, I think you *would* stare!"

The decrepit house is falling in upon its shameful memories and the wanton ghosts that cling to its musty rooms. Other palaces maintain their bold and beautiful faces, covering their centuries of lust and intrigue, of proud memories and vanished splendour. Not so, the Palazzo Mocenigo. It commands attention by no beauty, it provokes pity in the sight, and sadness in the memory, the palace where the brightest mind and handsomest head in Europe stooped to the lowest pleasures. Let it fall, ruinous as all carnal things. Let those dark days of Venice be eclipsed by the remorseful years that followed, by the flame that blazed ere it was quenched at Missolonghi. Let another poet, dwelling in a palazzo on the opposite side, ask the final question of posterity—

As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom
and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and
folly were the crop.
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing
had to stop ?

[This study is the substance of an Address delivered at Harvard University, March, 1920.]

III

BYRON IN GREECE

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I NEED hardly remind you that the author of *Childe Harold* visited this country on two occasions, first, in the Autumn of 1809, and secondly in 1823, during the war of Independence.

I do not propose to detain you long with details of this first visit, but shall confine myself to giving a slight sketch of the tour and subsequent residence at Athens.

Byron left England with his friend Hobhouse in July, 1809, and travelling by way of Portugal, Spain, and Malta, reached Patras on the 26th of September. There it was that he first set foot on Greek soil—within sight of that town across the Gulf where he was to end his days, fifteen years later, a martyr to his love of Greece, and to his desire to see her liberated from the Turks.

The travellers decided to push on to Janina, where they hoped to visit the celebrated AH Pasha, one of the most remarkable men of those days. They landed at Preveza under weather and other conditions so discouraging that they were on the point of returning to Patras—and were only prevented from doing so by, the lack of the means of transport. Eventually they continued their journey to Janina, but found that AH Pasha in his own words, was " finishing a little war" at Tepelen three days journey to the North.

The first object that attracted their attention on entering Janina interested but hardly encouraged them. This was one quarter of a man's body, which was hung to a branch of a gigantic plane tree by the roadside, by means of a string attached to the fingers. The body was that of a famous brigand who, finding the calling of priest as it seems not sufficiently exciting or lucrative, had exchanged it for that of gentleman of the road. (It may be noted in passing that the famous barbarous custom of hanging and quartering criminals had but recently died out in England).

After a few days spent in exploring the sights of Janina, Byron followed Ali Pasha to Tepelen, encountering on the way near the picturesque Monastery of Zitsa, afterwards immortalised in *Childe Harold*, a terrific thunderstorm, in which he and Hobhouse got separated and lost in the blackness of the night.

I have several times myself traced the footsteps of Byron through Epirus and Albania, and on the occasion of my last visit to Zitsa, I witnessed a storm such as Byron has described.

At Tepelen they found "the man of war and woes," and were entertained by him for four days. The barbaric splendour of Ali's Court has been graphically described in Canto II. of *Childe Harold*, a poem which Byron began to write on the return journey to Preveza. (The Palace of Ali was destroyed two or three years after Byron's visit and was rebuilt; the later building has in its turn been razed to the ground, all that remains being a corner of a room still shewing traces of colour on the walls. The busy town of Byron's time I found in the course of destruction.) At Preveza the friends embarked in a Turkish vessel which was to carry them to Patras. But a heavy storm came on and they were driven up the coast, and barely escaped shipwreck

by running into the port of Splanza. When the storm was at its height the Turkish captain wept bitterly, and the Turkish crew rushed below from fright and seasickness. Byron curled himself up on deck and went to sleep with his customary contempt of danger.

They there changed their plans and journeyed by land through Acarnania to Missolonghi, crossed the gulf to Patras and pushed on thence by easy stages to Vostitsa. Recrossing the gulf to Itea they ascended to Kastri, on the site of Delphi, and travelled thence by way of Livadia, Thebe and Phyle to Athens, which town they reached on Christmas Day, 1809, putting up at lodgings kept by Theodora Macri, daughter of the late English Vice-Consul, and mother of three pretty daughters, the youngest of which, Theresa, has been rendered famous by Byron in one of his best known short poems "Maid of Athens, ere we part." Theresa afterwards married an Englishman named Black, and several of her descendants are alive in Athens to-day. I am afraid that the story of Byron losing his heart to the fair (or dark) Theresa is but a myth founded on poetic licence.

Both Byron and Hobhouse were charmed with Athens, and Byron used afterwards often to declare that the happiest days of his life were passed in Greece.

Three months were spent in Athens or in making excursions to the points of interest in the neighbourhood, such as Marathon, Pentele, Sunium, Salamis, and then the friends took advantage of the offer of a passage to Smyrna in a British man-of-war, the *Plyades*. Dr. Darwin, the father of the world-renowned naturalist, being a fellow passenger.

At Smyrna Byron finished the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, and on April nth embarked in the frigate *Salsette* for Constantinople. On the way thither

he took advantage of the delay in obtaining permission for the ship to pass the Dardanelles, to emulate half of the feat of Leander, by swimming from Abydos to Sestos, an achievement which caused him endless satisfaction, to judge by the number of times it is mentioned in his letters. On July 14th, Byron and Hobhouse left Constantinople in the *Salsette* but parted at the Island of Kea, whence Byron returned alone to Athens, this time taking up his abode at the Capuchin Monastery which formerly stood near the monument of Lysicrates. The Monastery was built against the monument which served as a library, in which Byron wrote many of his letters and poems during his subsequent residence at Athens.

In a letter recently acquired by the British Archaeological School, he writes, "I am living in the Capuchin Convent, Hymettus before me, the Acropolis behind the temple of Jove to my right, the stadium in front, the town to the left, eh, sir, there's a situation, there's your picturesque! Nothing like that, sir, in Lunnon, no, not even the Mansion House. And I feed upon woodcocks and red mullet every day, and I have three horses (one a present from the Pasha of the Morea) and I ride to Piraeus and Phalerum and Munichia."

The Monastery served as his headquarters for a whole year, in the course of which he made several excursions to the Peloponnesus, visiting Veli Pasha, the son of the famous Ali, at Tripolitsa, and doing the principal ancient sites of that province. On his first visit to the Peloponnesus Byron travelled with Lord Sligo as far as Corinth. Lord Sligo had an enormous retinue including, as Byron writes, "a painter, a captain, a gentleman misinterpreter . . . besides sundry idle English varlets." On a subsequent meeting at Athens he found Lord Sligo "with a dragoman who has actually lied himself

into a lockjaw." This gentleman seems to have left many descendants who appear to be lockjaw-proof!

At Patras he was attacked by malaria, caught at Olympia, and he writes to Francis Hodgson, "As I have just escaped from a physician and a fever which confined me five days to bed, you won't expect much *allegrezza* in the ensuing letter . . . Here be also two physicians, one of whom trusts to his genius (never having studied)—the other to a campaign of eighteen months against the sick of Otranto, which he made in his youth with great effect." He goes on to state that one of these doctors, named Romanelli, was forced upon him, and so he wrote his epitaph :

" Youth, Nature, and relenting Jove,
To keep my lamp *in* strongly strove.
But Romanelli was so stout,
He beat all three and blew it out."

Years afterwards, referring to this illness, Byron attributes his recovery to his faithful Albanian servants, who told Dr. Romanelli that if he died they would cut his (Romanelli's) throat. Whereupon the doctor fled, thus affording his patient an opportunity to recover, of which he took advantage.

This first visit to Greece confirmed Byron in his love for that country where he had at last looked upon " The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon," where at his first glimpse of Parnassus he writes that he can do nothing " but gaze beneath thy cloudy canopy, in silent joy to think at last I look at thee!"

April 1811, saw the end of Byron's first visit to Greece ; we will consequently now jump a period of twelve years, during which many important changes had occurred. Byron, who, as he himself tells us, one day in March, 1812, " awoke" after the publication of *Childe Haiold* and found himself *famous*, now found

himself looked upon by the British public as *infamous*. Into the why and wherefore of this change it is not here the place to go.

Then the Greeks, who in 1809-1811 were, in Byron's words, "Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand, from birth till death enslaved, in word, in deed unmanned"—had now risen against their oppressors, and had obtained a number of important successes, so that a great part of Greece was practically free of Turks.

During the past few years Byron had resided in Italy, where he had been following with interest the fortunes of "his old friends, the Greeks/' as he called them. As early as June, 1821, he writes to Tom Moore, "The Greeks, what think you? They are my old acquaintances—but what to think I know not—let us hope howsoever."

On September 4th of the same year he writes to Murray: "What thinkst thou of Greece?" and in October he tells Hobhouse that he had already asked his views about the Greeks. For some months we hear nothing more of the idea, but, writing to Tom Moore in August, 1822, he says that he is fluctuating between South America and Greece. And in December of the same year he alludes to the War in Greece in some lines in the *Age of Bronze*. "The shore where Greece was. No! she is still Greece once more." The following spring, however, he received a letter from Hobhouse, informing him that a Committee had been formed in England in aid of the Greeks, and that an emissary of the Committee would call on Byron (at Genoa, where he was then living). In his letter to Capt. Blaquiere, the agent in question, making an appointment with him on his arrival at Genoa, Byron says: "I cannot express to you how much I feel interested in the cause, and nothing but the hopes I entertained of witnessing

the liberation of Italy itself, prevented me long ago from returning to do what little I could as an individual in that land which it is an honour to have visited."

Byron at once became a member of the Committee, and made his preparations to leave Italy. He sailed from Genoa on July 13th in the *Hercules* brig, taking with him his friends, Count Gamba and Trelawney, the latter a Cornish adventurer. Not having a very clear idea as yet in which way he best could serve the Greek cause, he determined to halt at Zante and study the situation before committing himself.

Being informed, however, that Colonel Napier, British President at Chephlonia, was an ardent Philhellene, he eventually chose that island in preference to Zante.

The situation in Greece was then roughly this:—After a wave of success the Greeks had found time to indulge in their besetting sin of quarrelling among themselves. Colotroni and Petro'bey Mavromichali competed for supremacy in the Peloponnesus; Odysseus was master of Eastern Greece, whilst Mavrocordato, who had been appointed President, was shortly to make Missolonghi his headquarters. Every one of these parties was anxious to attract Byron to its side, but he wisely resolved to wait before taking a definite decision. In his own words, he had come "to join not a *faction*, but a *nation*!" At the end of November he writes to the General Government of Greece explaining the reasons of his delay and exhorting them to compose their differences. A day or two later he writes in the same strain to Mavrocordato.

At length, urged by Colonel Stanhope, who had been sent out by the Committee to co-operate with Byron, and who had gone on to Missolonghi, he determined to proceed to that town. He accordingly sailed at the end

of December, and after a narrow escape from capture by the Turks, and a still narrower escape from shipwreck on the Scrofes rocks, (Gamba, who with some of his attendants and stores sailed at the same time in another vessel, was actually captured, but was released some days later and rejoined Byron at Missolonghi, arriving there, in fact, before Byron himself), he reached Missolonghi on January 5th and was received like a king.

The late Lord Lovelace, Byron's grandson, who inherited some of his grandfather's genius and a good deal of his waywardness, published twenty years ago a book entitled, *Astarte*, which contains some very shrewd and accurate criticisms of the poet's character. Most of his remarks are foreign to my present theme, but there is one point which may interest us. On page 14 of his work, Lord Lovelace writes:—"Lord Byron never displayed or felt much enthusiasm for the inhabitants of modern Greece. He was ready to sacrifice money, occupations and enjoyments on the altar of liberty/' (Lord Lovelace might have added, "and life too,") "but there may have been in this as much love of power and celebrity as of the principle of freedom.

"He hated oppressors more than he loved the oppressed. Heroism of opinion was combined with the spirit of adventure and restlessness. His devotion was not to the cause of Greece but to that of rebellion all over the world. He was just as willing to raise a regiment to go and fight in Spain, America or Ireland. He was equally ready for revolt either here or there, everywhere or nowhere. At Genoa in 1823, when about to start on the nearest chivalrous or buccaneering enterprise in which he could emancipate himself from European law or social fetters, he constantly mentioned his calm conviction of the worthlessness of the people whom he proposed to emancipate and perhaps subject/'

I cannot help thinking that the passage I have just quoted contains what is known as a "half-truth." No man was more fully alive than Byron to the demerits and shortcomings, the faults and the vices, which two thousand years of the lack of liberty had encouraged in the Greek race; and it is to be remembered that four hundred of those years were passed in a slavery more grinding and more destructive of every virtue than any other the modern world has seen. But Byron believed that with liberty these faults would tend to disappear, and to say that his devotion was not to the cause of Greece is not correct. His love for Greece crops out of his letters on many occasions since his first acquaintance with her in 1809. On more than one occasion he declares that Greece is the only country he was ever really happy in, and, again, that if he ever wrote a line worth reading, it was Greece that inspired it. I need not do more than recall to your memory the many stanzas of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* and parts of the *Giaour* and other poems which breathe a passionate devotion to Greece and a fervent desire to see her free.

"Cold is the heart, fair Greece, that looks on thee
Nor feels as lovers o'er the dust they loved."

It is true that he contrasts what he terms the "now degenerate horde" with the half divine inhabitants of old Greece, but this is an endeavour to sting the then apparently lethargic Greeks to a sense of what they had lost, and to arouse in them both a desire to improve their lot and a belief in the possibility of doing so by themselves. The very passion with which he scourges their faults and vices arises from his enthusiasm in the cause of Greece:

"Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not, who would be free
themselves must strike the blow?"

Hence Byron's hesitation in casting in his lot with the Greeks. He wished first to discover in what way he could be of use to them, and to find out whether their efforts for freedom were serious and likely to be sustained. It will be remembered that Byron had just been made rather ridiculous by the fiasco of the Italian Carbonari Movement, into which he had thrown himself heart and soul. The failure of the Italians to realize their destiny and liberate themselves from the Austrian yoke had made him sceptical of revolutionary movements. Once burnt, he dreaded the fire. As time progressed, the invincible determination of the Greek people to be free, manifested in their leaderless struggle, increased his interest and then his enthusiasm.

The transformation of the moderate cynic into the temperate enthusiast, was perhaps not so complete that reconversion was for ever an impossibility, but it was sufficient to stand the wear and tear of those months of worry, privation and disappointment at Missolonghi. From the enthusiast to the martyr was but a step. "I shall stick by the cause as long as a man of honour can," is the burden of repeated letters, and in saying this Byron was not *"protesting too much"* He knew what he had to expect, and he was under no illusion regarding the condition of the people in whose cause he was laying down his life, but he had clenched his teeth and intended, so far as he was concerned, to see the matter through. "And how can I refuse it" (he is speaking of the money he is advancing the Greek Government) "if they will fight? and especially if I should happen to be in their company." And fight they did, after their own manner, not perhaps in the approved Western manner, with regular troops, "solid squares," "thin red lines" and all the theory and mechanism of the modern warfare of the time. If they were not

always unmindful that " He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day," they sometimes, as at Psara and later at Missolonghi itself, "staggered humanity " with their heroism. The annals of history have few brighter pages than those on which is inscribed the tale of the heroic defence of the two places I have named.

It is sometimes overlooked, that, if Byron did much for Greece, Greece also, in a sense, did something for Byron. Those qualities, the possession of which had been visible only to his more intimate friends, were now shown to the world. Energy, perseverance, prudence, foresight, good spirits, even patience were coupled with a good sense which made him arbiter and peace-maker, in the quarrels that so often occurred amongst the adventurers who filled the town. Physical courage, not his bitterest detractors themselves had ever denied him, though there were those who disputed his moral courage.

Here at Missolonghi, all these characteristics were displayed by Byron in an admirable degree, amidst surroundings well calculated to damp the most enthusiastic—surroundings which, indeed, did damp the ardour of too many of those who came to Greece to help her, but expected to find at least elementary comfort, if not something more.

What were his surroundings at Missolonghi ? That town, since converted into a clean little place—almost a healthy one—is situated on what was then a poisonous and interminable swamp. In a letter written to Mr. Hancock of Patras on February 5th, 1824, Byron writes: " *I* take it that a man is on the whole as safe in one place as another, and after all, he had better end with a bullet than bark in his body. If we are not taken off with the sword, we are like to march off with an ague in

this mud basket; and to conclude with a very bad pun ... better martially than marshally: the situation of Missolonghi is not unknown to you; the dykes of Holland when broken down are the deserts of Arabia for dryness, in comparison." Colonel Stanhope wrote to him on April 17th in a letter which reached its destination too late. "Once more, I implore you to quit Missolonghi, and not sacrifice your health and, perhaps your life, in that bog."

So much for the natural surroundings; now for the human: first let us hear Mr. Fletcher, Byron's servant, who had travelled with him on his first visit to Greece and was therefore experienced. "My master," he said to Trelawney during the voyage from Geneva to Cephalonia, "My master can't be right in his mind." "Why?" asked Trelawney. "If he was he would not have left Italy, where we had everything, and go to a country of savages; there is nothing to eat in Greece but tough Billy Goats, or to drink, but spirits of turpentine," (by this I may explain Mr. Fletcher meant what is by other people called retsinato). "Why, Sir, there is nothing there but rocks, robbers and vermin." Seeing his master coming up the companion ladder, he raised his voice—"I defy my Lord to deny it—you may ask him?" To which Byron replied: "I don't deny it: what he says is quite true to those who take a hog's eye view of things. But this I know, I have never been so happy as I was there . . ."

Now let us hear Gamba: He is writing of the days following Byron's arrival at Missolonghi, after his escape from the Turks and from shipwreck—and he incidentally mentions that Byron had not pulled off his clothes since leaving Cephalonia. He continues:—"After eight days of such fatigue he had scarcely time to refresh himself and converse with Mavrocordato and

his friends and countrymen, before he was assailed by the tumultuous visits of the Primates and Chiefs. These latter, not content with coming altogether, each had a suite of twenty or thirty, and not infrequently fifty soldiers. It was difficult to make them understand that he would fix certain hours to receive them, and that the rest of the day was allotted to business or domestic affairs. Their visits began at seven o'clock, and the greater part of them were without any object"

On January 16th, Gamba writes :—" After dinner this day we were surprised by a violent altercation near the Custom House: it had arisen between the Custom House officers and certain Speziot sailors; and the cause of dispute was the sum of 25 paras, about 2jd. Both parties were furious; attaghans and pistols were flourishing about. My Lord ran into the midst of the combatants and contrived to quiet them" . . . and then:—" This evening whilst Mavrocordato was with Lord Byron, two sailors (who had captured an Albanian Turk and had been compelled to hand him over to the authorities) came into the room demanding in an insolent tone that their prisoner should be delivered up to them. My Lord refused: their importunity became more violent, and they refused to leave the room without their Turk (such was their expression); on which Lord Byron, presenting a pistol at the intruders, threatened to proceed to extremities unless they instantly retired. The sailors withdrew . . ."

A comic touch is added by the sequel: The next day the Captain of the privateer came to apologize to Byron, who refused to receive him unless he brought the man who had behaved so badly. This man was consequently brought and excused himself in these words: " If, Effendi, you think I meant to insult you, here is my head for you : " he then went on to explain

that he had really been actuated by the wish to save the prisoner who, he understood, unless rescued, would have been killed by Byron or his people!

Meanwhile, there were interminable disputes with the brave but unruly Suliots, some 2,000 of which were in Missolonghi. Of these, the Government was supposed to pay 1,500, and Byron took the remaining 500 into his service. As a matter of fact, the former rarely got any pay and the latter made up for it by making exorbitant demands upon Byron. They insisted upon about 150 of the corps of 500 men being paid as officers, among whom were to be two generals, two colonels, two captains besides other officers. Well might he have exclaimed with Phocion of old "How many generals we have, and how few soldiers!"

On the 18th of January, Byron and his friends were alarmed by frequent discharges of musketry "longer and more frequent than usual," says Gamba; who adds, "we were accustomed to hear this noise, for the Greeks are in the habit of unloading their guns in the streets, and as they never draw their charges, the balls frequently whistled close to our heads." They found that the Suliots and the inhabitants of the town had come to blows, and some casualties resulted before the prudence of some of the chiefs stopped the conflict. Those of us who have spent the last two years in Athens can appreciate the feelings of Byron and his friends.

On one occasion on February 15th, after one of these disputes, Byron was suddenly seized with convulsions, and such was the violence of the paroxysm that it required two men to hold him down. Half-an-hour afterwards the alarm was given that the Suliots were about to attack Byron's house to seize the powder and cannon stored there. Preparations for resistance were immediately made, but the alarm fortunately proved

false. It had originated in the excited imaginations of two Germans who had been drinking heavily. These men subsequently forced their way into Byron's bedroom, swearing in their intoxication that they had come to protect him against the Suliots.

For some time Byron had been preparing for an attack on the town of Naupaktos, or Lepanto, where the Albanian garrison, whose pay was very much in arrears, had manifested their intention of surrendering the town if Byron would give them their arrears of pay and a safe conduct to return home. But the disputes with the Suliots put an end to this scheme and Byron, to his bitter disappointment, had to disband his corps and forego any idea of earning military distinction which he may have cherished.

On February 19th, a more serious affray with the Suliots took place. One of the bravest and most popular of these unruly soldiers, wishing to show the cannon and other warlike engines to a small boy, a nephew of the heroic Mark Botsaris, attempted to force his way past the sentry at the door of the arsenal. A Swedish officer who was on guard intervened, and in the ensuing scuffle struck the Suliot, who, in return, killed the officer. The Suliot was arrested, but his countrymen assembled round the arsenal and threatened to burn it if he was not set free.

This affray convinced Byron that he could do nothing with the Suliots, and he handed over to the Primates of Missolonghi a sum of 3,000 dollars to assist to send them to Arta, where they subsequently went.

Some weeks later a spy, acting for one of the conflicting factions, was discovered in Byron's own house, and by him handed over to the constituted authority.

It was not the least of the difficulties with which Byron had to contend that Colonel Stanhope, who had

been instructed to co-operate with him, took a totally different view of the means by which the Greeks were to be liberated. He, the military man, acted on the principle that "the pen is mightier than the sword" and wished to overwhelm the Turks by the printing press. Byron, the literary man, considered that "the press should march in the rear and not in the van of the army." "Teach the Greeks to read and write," argued the soldier, "and they will soon liberate themselves." "Turn the Turks out of Greece," replied the poet, "and the Greeks will then have leisure to learn writing and reading."

And so on : the account of the worries and disappointments, petty and serious, might be extended indefinitely. Surely Byron's was no bed of roses during these last few weeks of his life, but, whilst many other volunteers in the Greek cause left the country discouraged by the state of affairs they encountered, Byron felt that honour bound him to remain at his post, where difficulties seemed but to increase his determination to overcome them.

Turn we now to his letters and let us see from his own words how he took things. The letters of this period are brimful of fun, albeit sometimes rather grim, which bursts out from among the serious business of which they treat:

"Mr. Blackett is here ill," he writes to Hancock on January 18th ... "He came to me for some pills, and I gave him some reserved for particular friends, and which I never knew anybody recover from under several months; but he is no better, and, what is odd, no worse." And on February 7th, he writes to the same correspondent that Parry, a former firemaster in the navy, who had been engaged by the Committee, and who had recently arrived from England with stores and

ammunition, complained of the cold : which Byron says, surprised him, for he would " as soon have expected to hear a volcano sneeze as a firemaster (who is to burn a whole fleet) exclaim against the atmosphere." " I fully expected," he continues, " that his very approach would have scorched up the town like the burning-glasses of Archimedes."

There is a modern touch about the penultimate paragraph of this same letter:—" Between Suliot Chiefs, German barons, English volunteers, and adventurers of all nations, we are likely to form as goodly an allied army as ever quarrelled beneath the same banner."

Writing to John Murray on February 5th, he described an earthquake shock which had occurred a few days previously. " The whole army discharged their arms," he writes, " on the same principle that savages beat drums, or howl, during an eclipse of the moon, it was a rare scene altogether—if you had seen the English Johnnies, who had never been out of a Cockney workshop before! or will again if they can help it!" (It is interesting to find this term used in Greece a hundred years ago. The descendants of these "Johnnies" did good service in Macedonia in 1917-18).

Writing to Thomas Moore on March 4th, he jokes about his attack of convulsions—" I had an attack of apoplexy or epilepsy—the physicians have not exactly decided which, but the alternative is agreeable. My constitution therefore remains between the two opinions like Mohamet's sarcophagus between the magnets."

These are no words of despondence or of complaint.

Meanwhile, it is evident that Byron was the soul of the community of foreigners at Missolonghi. His inborn fondness of practical joking never left him even in the blackest days. Parry, the imperturbable firemaster, had one other weakness besides his fondness for strong drink.

He was terrified at earthquakes. Byron, therefore, got a number of his Suliots to assemble in the room above Parry's, and, by dint of jumping altogether and rolling cannon balls about the floor, managed to give a very realistic imitation of an earthquake. Meanwhile, Byron, with a few chosen bloods, waited outside the house to receive the panic-stricken Parry with peals of laughter.

When men are treated as dogs, it is not surprising that they should occasionally behave like them. It was, therefore, but to be expected that a conflict between the Turks and their former slaves would not be carried out with that chivalry which Western nations are, or used to be, accustomed to display in their wars. The struggle was ferocious, and deeds were done on both sides which shocked European opinion, then happily unaccustomed to the methods of warfare which were introduced by certain of the combatants in the recent Great War. Before leaving Italy Byron had declared his intention to "civilize their mode of treating their prisoners," and he did his best to imbue the Greeks with more humane feelings towards their oppressors. On more than one occasion, in the hope that his example would be copied by the Turks, and that they would learn to spare those Greeks who fell into their hands, he sent back to the Turks Mahommedan prisoners or refugees who had fallen into the power of the insurgents. In addition, he offered a reward for every prisoner taken by the Greeks, who should be handed over to him. He also introduced a more humane system of punishments for military offenders, though Gamba reports that he had some difficulty in inducing the Prussian officers under his command to fall in with his views.

From the day he reached Missolonghi and, indeed, for some time previously, Byron provided a large portion of the funds with which the campaign was conducted by

sea or by land, commencing with £4,000 which he contributed towards preparing the fleet for action in November, 1823. Rumour had exaggerated the length of his purse, and demands the most extravagant were made upon it by the Administration, the Primates, and by everybody else who needed money, and of these, then, as now, there were not a few in Greece. He was also invested with the title "Commander-in-Chief," and practically all business of any importance—not to mention a good deal which was of no importance—was referred to his judgment. I have already mentioned that he formed the nucleus of a trained regular force, by taking into his service a body of five hundred Suliots. Had he lived, there is little doubt that he would have succeeded in creating a regular army, which would have brought the war to a successful conclusion without the necessity of foreign intervention. He entered into negotiations with respect to this plan with Colonel Napier (who became the famous conqueror of Scinde). Byron thought highly of Napier and subsequent events proved his judgment right.

The Greeks had been very much hampered in their struggle for independence by the lack of funds, and one of the principal objects of the London Committee was to endeavour to float a loan, to be expended in the purchase of munitions and arms and the pay of a body of regular troops. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence which the name of Byron contributed to the success of the first Greek loan, the news of which reached him but a few days before his death. "The name of Byron," says Trelawney, "was the great means of getting the loan," whilst Blaquier, writing after Byron's death, says that had he lived, the ruinous delay in transferring the loan would not have taken place. Not only so, but the news of Byron's identifying himself with

the Greek cause began to attract a large number of foreigners, who were willing to place themselves under his orders—men, too, who were no mere adventurers or penniless enthusiasts like the majority of the foreign volunteers that had so far come to Greece. But on the news of his death many of them turned back. One Englishman with an income of £8,000 a year, a considerable proportion of which he no doubt intended to place at Byron's disposal, was among the number of those who thus returned.

But Byron's health had been undermined by his way of living, and the unwholesome climate of Missolonghi soon made its influence felt, and in conjunction with the worries and cares attendant on his position, was not long in putting an end to his career.

On April 9th, on returning heated from his usual gallop into the country, he was caught and drenched in a heavy thunderstorm, and in the evening fever set in. He rode out again two days later for the last time. From that day he never left his room alive.

The story of that illness and death—of the brilliant young poet, undoubtedly the most famous man and the greatest poet in the world at the time—left to die in the miserable surroundings at Missolonghi, left to the tender mercies of now two, now five, doctors, the one more ignorant than the other, no two agreeing, and whose sole panacea for all ailments was the lancet and the leech; friendless, save for the hysterical Gamba, or the vinous Parry, or for his ignorant, if well-meaning servants: racked with the pains of rheumatic fever and the results of the treatment applied by his medical inquisitors; conscious at last that he was dying without being able to send the last solemn messages to his friends in England, to the wife he had wronged, the child he had loved, and the sister he had both loved and

wronged—where shall we find its equal in pathos and sorrow ?

Byron's death was felt at once by the Greeks as a *national calamity*. " Nobody knows," said Mavrocordato, "except perhaps myself, the loss Greece has suffered. Her safety even depended on his life. His presence at Missolonghi has checked intrigues which will now have uncontrolled sway. By his aid alone have I been able to preserve this town"

Spyridon Tricoupis, in the funeral oration which he pronounced over the dead Byron, says, " Destined by nature to uphold the rights of man whenever he saw them trampled upon . . . He came to share our sufferings ; assisting us, not only with his wealth, of which he was profuse; not only with his judgment, of which he has given us so many salutary examples, but also with his sword . . ." The common people, hardly less eloquent, said simply, " The great man is dead: " " Byron is dead! "

Almost the last intelligible words spoken by Byron, if we are to believe Gamba, (who in this case reports what he could collect from those about him) were these:—

" I have given her—(that is Greece)—my time, my means, my health—and now I give her my life—what could I do more ? " * * * *

I may be allowed to conclude with another quotation from Gamba, which is as applicable in the year 1923 as it was when it was written, all but a hundred years ago.

" The glorious events which have assured, as it now appears, the liberty of Greece, have confirmed Lord Byron's anticipations, and have shown that his hopes were as well founded as his designs were nobly conceived. But the Greek people have not forgotten their

benefactor in the day of their triumph—they have a profound sense of the obligations they owe him, and their gratitude will endure as long as they have a name amongst the nations of the earth."

May not we British allow ourselves some feeling of pride in a man of whom this could be said ?

[*The foregoing*) by the Translator and Local First Secretary at H. M. British Legation in Athens, was given as a lecture in January, 1923, in Athens, and is printed herefor the first time in English. Mr. Atchley is the author of a work with the same title, issued in modern Greek, a copy of which is in the "Byron Collection " in the Nottingham Public Libraries.,]

IV

BYRON AS "POET LAUREATE"

WHATEVER great men the Great War produced
it did not produce a great Poet Laureate.

Whatever poetical effusions the nation had to inspire
it were not sung by the national bard.

Had Lord Byron been living when War was declared
in 1914 he would assuredly have risen to the occasion,
just as he did a hundred years before.

Some of Byron's poetry lived in our minds during
those black years from 1914 to 1918, and strangely
appropriate were many of his verses. Byron might have
written the following during the struggle for freedom in
our own time:

Freedom, such as God hath given
Unto all beneath his heaven,
With their breath, and from their birth,
Though guilt would sweep it from the earth
With a fierce and lavish hand,
Scattering nations' blood like sand ;
Pouring nations' blood like water
In imperial seas of slaughter.

That verse epitomized the whole principle of the great
fight for freedom, when the world witnessed the scattering
of " nations' blood like sand."

Then in the " proud union " of the allies we found a hopeful message—written a hundred years before •

But the heart and the mind,
And the voice of mankind,
Shall arise in communion—
And who shall resist that proud union ?

Wonderful it was, too, when so many of the glorious sons of our Empire went across to France and Belgium, that there should be the following lines, so pathetically appropriate in *Childe Harold*, about those who fought so heroically in their Empire's cause:

Perhaps I loved it well; and should I lay
My ashes in a soil which is not mine ?

So many brave hearts made the Great Sacrifice in a soil which was not theirs—there

. . . where the dead
Are honour'd by the nations.

They died in Belgium, in France, and elsewhere, for their Country's sake and in Freedom's cause.

In August, 1914, Byron might have written word for word as he wrote in *Childe Harold*:

Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men ;
A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell :
But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

Did ye not hear it ? No, 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street.
On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined ;
No sleep till morn, when youth and pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet.

But hark ! that heavy sound breaks in once more,
 As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
 And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
 Arm ! arm ! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar !

Lord Byron would have vividly portrayed the plight of outraged Belgium as the enemy hordes came on—pillaging towns and villages, murdering women and children, and perpetrating vile deeds that made a civilized world shudder.

When Greece failed to keep her compact at the beginning of the War—during the time when King Constantine occupied the throne—Byron's " Song of a Greek" would have been as true in 1915 as when written :

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
 Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
 To feel at least a patriot's shame
 Even as I sing, suffuse my face ;
 For what is left the poet here ?
 For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

One recalls those lines:

Clime of the unforgotten brave !
 Whose land, from plain to mountain-cave,
 Was Freedom's home, or Glory's grave ;
 Shrine of the mighty ! Can it be
 That this is all remains of thee ?

Byron's Ode—included in his *Occasional Pieces*—would have been a striking indictment if addressed to Germany after the Great War. The lines beginning, " Oh, shame to thee" continue :

Unwise in thy glory, and base in thy fall,
 How wretched thy portion shall be ;
 Derision shall strike thee forlorn,
 A mockery that never shall die ;
 The curses of Hate and the hisses of Scorn

Shall burden the winds of thy sky ;
 And proud o'er thy ruin, for ever be hurl'd
 The laughtei of Triumph, the jeers of the World.

Go, look through the kingdoms of earth,
 From Indus all round to the pole,
 And something of goodness, of honour, and worth,
 Shall brighten the sins of the soul;
 But thou art *alone* in thy shame,
 The world cannot liken thee there ;
 Abhorrence and vice have disfigured thy name
 Beyond the low reach of compare ;
 Stupendous in guilt, thou shalt lend us through time
 A proverb, a by-word, for treachery and crime.

Byron was the Poet of Freedom. He wrote :

for from Freedom's battle once begun,
 Bequeath'd by bleeding sire to son,
 Though baffled oft is ever won.

The following words of his may be remembered :
 " Know ye not who would be free themselves must
 strike the blow? By their right arm the conquest
 must be wrought."

Byron had his spirit aroused, and his mind turned to
 higher purposes than mere pleasure, and he threw
 himself into the contest of the Greek Revolution with
 ardour. He not only gave £10,000 to help the Greek
 cause but he himself joined the army of the patriots.
 One recalls his lines :

The mountains look on Marathon,
 And Marathon looks on the sea ;
 And musing there an hour alone
 I dream'd that Greece might still be free.

He died at Missolonghi in Western Greece, engaged
 in an attempt to restore Greece to her former inde-
 pendence and glory, and his death, at the early age of
 thirty-six, was deeply mourned by the Greeks, and by
 all those who knew of his sacrifice in Freedom's cause.

His own words are recalled :

They never fail who die
In a great cause : the block may soak their gore,
Their heads may sodden in the sun ; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls ;—
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
E lapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to Freedom.

SHAKESPEARE AND BYRON

BY PROFESSOR FRANK GRANGER, D.Litt., M.A.

MILTON perceived clearly one of the chief glories of a poet even greater than himself when he wrote:—

Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warbles his native woodnotes wild.

Secondly, Shakespeare's inspiration was overflowing and perennial. In each of these two respects, in a certain childlikeness and in ease of production, Byron also stood pre-eminent. The great German poet and critic, Goethe, said of Byron, "As soon as he reasons he becomes a child." Some people regarded this as fatal to Byron's claim to be considered a great poet, but Milton's description of Shakespeare leadsto a different understanding. The ease with which Byron wrote was accompanied with a certain negligence, but the very carelessness of the poet produced from time to time passages of perfect expression, "native woodnotes wild," and, strangely enough, Milton found in Shakespeare that charming negligence which was one of the distinctions of Byron. Hence they found in Byron that perfect expression, the secret of which was beyond

criticism because it lay in a man's nature, just as a great deal of Shakespeare's charm could only be referred to the original endowments of his nature. In this we had one of the ultimate and inexplicable facts of poetic genius. A man found the natural outlet for his feelings in verse, and from time to time the occasion, the thought, the utterances came together like chemical elements in the crucible, and were fused into one perfect gem. Shakespeare and Byron, therefore, had in common this command of language. Alike they took their themes from varied sources in order to embroider them with the beautiful texture of their verse. Byron, too, deserved his place as a dramatic artist, not as an imitator of Shakespeare. Those people who imitated an original genius like Shakespeare were rarely successful, but where a poet like Byron had taken Shakespeare's poetry into his very being they got some very striking results, and two or three of Byron's plays deserved very careful comparison with some of Shakespeare's. But whereas Byron had a plain style in his dramatic writings, attempting to return to the antique models, Shakespeare was a writer who had an elaborate and very rich style. The simplicity of plot in Byron's plays made it impossible to introduce those subordinate trains of action by which Shakespeare could deal with passions which would be unsuitable for the main plot. Hence in passing from Shakespeare to the later poet, we must not expect from Byron those effects which he expressly left out of his purpose. There was one respect in which Byron excelled Shakespeare as a poet, though not as a dramatist. Byron above all had a feeling for his surroundings. The exquisite way in which *Childe Harold* crystallised out for us the beauties of Greece and Rome, and many another continental city had scarcely anything that answered to it in

Shakespeare. Shakespeare did not realise very much the charm of ancient buildings. Lastly, Byron in all his plays chose a hero who, through some defect in his nature, was unable to control his destiny, and, in this respect, the instinct of the poet led Byron and Shakespeare to the same end. Tragedy, in a word, consisted in this: that man's imperfection made him subject to Fate.

[Summary of a lecture on " The Influence of Shakespeare on Byron" given before the Nottingham Shakespeare Society', 1911.]

VI.

BYRON ON THE STAGE

WITH OPINIONS SPECIALLY CONTRIBUTED BY
SIR SQUIRE BANCROFT AND WILLIAM ARCHER.

BYRON'S critics assert that he was ever fond of being "in the limelight/" and that his life was one continuous period of acting !

True it was that, for a stated period, Byron was fond of the stage proper, which later he confessed a hatred for.

As a boy, he tells us, in his lines recalling his schooldays at Harrow, how

As Lear, I pour'd forth the deep imprecation,
By my daughters, of kingdom and reason deprived ;
Till, fired by loud plaudits and self adulation,
I regarded myself as a Garrick revived.

In those days Byron wrote of himself as being at least the equal of any of his scholar contemporaries.

" When I was a youth, I was reckoned a good actor," we find in his diary. " Besides Harrow speeches, in which I shone, I enacted Penruddock, in the 'Wheel of Fortune,' and Tristram Fickle, in the farce of 'The Weathercock,' for three nights at Southwell, in 1806, with great applause. The occasional prologue for our volunteer play was also of my composition. The other performers were young gentlemen of the neighbour-

hood; and the whole went off with great effect upon our good-natured audience."

This prologue—asking the onlookers if they could not applaud to " at least forgive "—ran as follows :

SINCE the refinement of this polish'd age
 Has swept immoral raillery from the stage ;
 Since taste has now expunged licentious wit,
 Which stamp'd disgrace on all an author writ ;
 Since now to please with purer scenes we seek,
 Nor dare to call the blush from Beauty's cheek ;
 Oh ! let the modest Muse some pity claim,
 And meet indulgence, though she find not fame.
 Still, not for her alone we wish respect,
 Others appear more conscious of defect :
 To-night no veteran Rosen you behold,
 In all the arts of scenic action old ;
 No Cooke, no Kemble, can salute you here,
 No Siddons draw the sympathetic tear ;
 To-night you throng to witness the *debut*
 Of embryo actors, to the Drama new :
 Here, then, our almost unfledged wings we try ;
 Clip not our pinions ere the birds can fly :

Falling in this our first attempt to soar,
 Drooping, alas ; we fall to rise no more.
 Not one poor trembler only fear betrays,
 Who hopes, yet almost dreads, to meet your praise;
 But all our *dramatis personæ* wait
 In fond suspense this crisis of their fate.
 No venal views our progress can retard,
 Your generous plaudits are our sole reward :
 For these, each Hero all his power displays,
 Each timid Heroine shrinks before your gaze.
 Surely the last will some protection find ;
 None to the softer sex, can prove unkind :
 While Youth and Beauty form the female shield,
 The sternest censor to the fair must yield.
 Yet, should our feeble efforts nought avail,
 Should, after all, our best endeavours fail,
 Still let some mercy in your bosoms live,
 And, if you can't applaud, at least forgive.

In the unfortunate year of his marriage we find Lady Byron paying a tribute, but a cynical one, to his histrionic powers. In one of her letters, relating how he feigned insanity to a certain degree, she wrote: " He is too good an actor to over-act . . . "

As a theatrical critic we find Byron to have been a candid one. In one instance his friend Moore was the object of his critique. The production concerned was a farce with the title of " M. P," or the " Blue Stocking," and was first performed at the Lyceum Theatre on September 9th, 1811. On the 14th, Byron penned the following epigram :

GOOD plays are scarce,
So Moore writes farce :
The poet's fame grows brittle—
We knew before
That *Little's* Moore,
But now 'tis *Moore* that's *little*.

This was Moore's last operatic farce, or farcical opera, by the way.

Moore speaks of Byron's " most unlucky connection with the theatre," when as a member of the Drury Lane Committee, " one of the fatalities of his short year of trial as a husband lay." His " intercourse with the Green room" was misconstrued, as Moore emphasizes in one of his letters.

Byron composed the Address, spoken at the re-opening of Drury Lane Theatre, on October 10th, 1812. This showed his homage to the Drama, and his knowledge of stage lore generally.

IN one dread night our city saw, and sigh'd,
Bow'd to the dust, the Drama's tower of pride ;
In one short hour beheld the blazing fane,
Apollo sink, and Shakespeare cease to reign.

Ye who beheld, (oh ! sight admired and mourn'd,
 Whose radiance mock'd the ruin it adorn'd !)
 Through clouds of fire the massive fragments riven,
 Like Israel's pillar, chase the night from heaven ;
 Saw the long column of revolving flames
 Shake its red shadow o'er the startled Thames,
 While thousands, throng'd around the burning dome,
 Shrank back appall'd and trembled for their home,
 As glared the volumed blaze, and ghastly shone
 The skies, with lightnings awful as their own,
 Till blackening ashes and the lonely wall
 Usurp'd the Muse's realm, and mark'd her fall ;
 Say—shall this new, nor less aspiring pile,
 Rear'd where once rose the mightiest in our isle,
 Know the same favour which the former knew,
 A shrine for Shakespeare—worthy him and *you* ?

Yes—it shall be—the magic of that name
 Defies the scythe of time, the torch of flame ;
 On the same spot still consecrates the scene,
 And bids the Drama *be* where she hath *been* :
 This fabric's birth attests the potent spell—
 Indulge our honest pride, and say, *How well* !

As soars this fane to emulate the last,
 Oh ! might we draw our omens from the past,
 Some hour propitious to our prayers may boast
 Names such as hallow still the dome we lost
 On Drury first your Siddons' thrilling art
 O'erwhelm'd the gentlest, storm'd the sternest heart.
 On Drury, Garnck's latest laurel's grew ;
 Here your last tears retiring Roscius grew •
 Sigh'd his last thanks, and wept his last adieu :
 But still for living wit the wreaths may bloom,
 That only waste their odours o'er the tomb.
 Such Drury claim'd and claims—nor you refuse
 One tribute to revive his slumbering muse ;
 With garlands deck your own Menander's head !
 Nor hoard your honours idly for the dead !

Dear are the days which made our annals bright,
 Ere Garnck fled, or Brmsley ceased to write.

Heirs to their labours, like all high-born heirs,
Vain of *our* ancestry as they of *theirs*;
While thus Remembrance borrows Banquo's glass
To claim the sceptred shadows as they pass,
And we the mirror hold, where imaged shine
Immortal names, emblazon'd on our line,
Pause—ere their feebler offspring you condemn,
Reflect how hard the task to rival them !

Friends of the stage ! to whom both Players and Plays
Must sue alike for pardon or for praise,
Whose judging voice and eye alone direct
The boundless power to cherish or reject;
If e'er frivolity has led to fame,
And made us blush that you forbore to blame ;
If e'er the sinking stage could condescend
To soothe the sickly taste it dare not mend,
All past reproach may present scenes refute,
And censure, wisely loud, be justly mute !
Oh ! since your fiat stamps the Drama's laws,
Forbear to mock us with misplaced applause ;
So pride shall doubly nerve the actor's powers,
And reason's voice be echo'd back by ours !

This greeting o'er, the ancient rule obey'd,
The Drama's homage by her herald paid,
Receive *our* welcome too, whose every tone
Springs from our hearts, and fain would win your own.
The curtain rises--may our stage unfold
Scenes not unworthy Drury's days of old !
Britons our judges, Nature for our guide,
Still may *we* please—long, long may *you* preside !

Byron wrote a number of plays, but it was poetic drama that did not generally lend itself to stage presentation. The poet himself declared against their unsuitability for stage production.

It has been said that he had few of the powers of a great dramatist, and that his so-called dramas were "only poems divided into chapters."

True it was that Byron's plays when performed were not destined for long "runs" as a rule.

It is interesting to have the modern view-point, and the editor is fortunate in having the opinion of Mr. William Archer, the well-known theatrical critic and author of *The Drama Old and New*, etc.

"I doubt whether Byron had much dramatic talent," opines Mr. Archer; "and in any case he made no attempt to escape from the stupid conventions of his day. The slovenliness of his writing, too, appears at its worst in his plays"

Mr. Archer's opinions on various plays are given later in this chapter.

Manfred, a drama about which there has been no little controversy, was commenced by Byron in the September of 1816, and finished in the February of the following year. Byron was twenty-nine at the time, and the drama was begun when he was staying in Switzerland. The scene of *Manfred* was laid in the Higher Alps, as a matter of fact.

Byron thus described it to Mr. Murray: "It is in three acts, but of a very wild, metaphysical, and inexplicable kind. Almost all the persons—but two or three—are spirits of the earth and air, or the waters; the scene is the Alps; the hero a kind of magician, who is tormented by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left unexplained. He wanders about invoking these spirits, which appear to him, and are of no use; he at last goes to the very abode of the Evil Principle, *in propriapersona*, to evocate a ghost, which appears, and gives him an ambiguous and disagreeable answer; and, in the third act, he is found by his attendants dying in a tower where he had studied his art. You may perceive, by this outline, that I have no great opinion of this piece of fantasy; but I have at least rendered it

quite impossible for the stage, for which my intercourse with Drury Lane has given me the greatest contempt."

In another communication he wrote :

"The thing, you will see at a glimpse, could never be attempted or thought of for the stage ... I composed it actually with a *horror* of the stage, and with a view to render the thought of it impractical, knowing the zeal of my friends that I should try that for which I have an invincible repugnance—namely, representation."

It is interesting to have the opinion of Mr. Arnold Bennett, one well-versed in stage-craft. In his chatty volume on *Things That Have Interested Me*, the popular author and playwright thus comments: "The weird and even terrible spectacle offered by the Stage Society at Drury Lane Theatre, in the alleged shape of Byron's *Manfred*, did prove one thing—namely, that Byron was not such a wild fool as he sometimes appeared . . . Still, it is the first business of the Stage Society to experiment; so I do not complain. The scenery looked as if it had survived from the first British performance of *Die Walkure*. Heavens ! What Alps !"

From the first publication of *Manfred* there has been a strange misapprehension with respect to it in the mind of the public, and the whole theme has been misunderstood. Gait, in his life of Byron, asks: "How can it have happened that none of the critics have noticed that the story is derived from the human sacrifices supposed to have been in use among the students of the black art ?"

Manfred is represented as being actuated by an insatiable curiosity—a passion to know the forbidden secrets of the world. The scene opens with him at his midnight studies, searching for knowledge : and, with his lamp burnt low, he soliloquises :

" Sorrow is knowledge : they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The tree of knowledge is not that of life."

He calls the Spirits, and in their obedience to his bidding we get an impressive and original scene, which must be read to be appreciated. There is more than one touch of the deepest pathos in the drama, and many fine passages; but, unfortunately, much of the beauty of the lines is forgotten by those whose special mission is to discover in them substance for the calumnies and accusations heaped upon the author.

Manfred acquired dominion over spirits, and found in the possession of the power, that knowledge only brought him sorrow. Certain it was that *Manfred* brought Byron sorrow!

On April 4th, 1820, at the age of thirty-two, Byron commenced *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice*, which he concluded on July 16th of the same year. This historical tragedy in five acts was published towards the end of 1820; and, to Byron's extreme annoyance, and despite his urgent protests, was produced on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre in 1821, when the author was in Italy.

Byron had previously hoped that no manager would be so audacious as to trample on his feelings by producing it on the stage. He wrote that many people thought his talent "essentially undramatic." "I shall perhaps try again (but not for the stage)" he wrote.

Marino Faliero was produced and Macready played it on May 20th, 1842. It was voted a failure as a stage presentation, and Prof. Nichol records of it that it was "badly managed, appointed, acted—and damned." Surely Byron was to be commiserated with in the insistence of the producers to "stage" any work of his against his own better judgment.

As poetry many of the lines will live, as for instance :

" We must behold no object save our country,
And only look on death as beautiful
So that the sacrifice ascend to heaven
And draw down freedom on her evermore.*'

The year 1821 was Byron's most prolific year as a playwright. During this period he began and finished *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, and *Heaven and Earth*; and towards the end of the year commenced *Werner* and *The Deformed Transformed*.

Regarding *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, Byron wrote—by way of preface—" In publishing the following tragedies I have only to repeat, that they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage. On the attempt made by the managers in a former instance, the public opinion has been already expressed. With regard to my own private feelings, as it seems that they are to stand for nothing, I shall say nothing" . . .

The tragedy of *Sardanapalus* seems more fitted for the theatre than any other of Byron's plays, and it appears to have the Shakespearian touch throughout. Yet Byron himself says: "You will find this very *un*-like Shakespeare ; and so much the better in one sense, for I look upon him to be the worst of models, though the most extraordinary of writers."

The character of *Sardanapalus* has been compared to that of Hamlet. Gait says of this resemblance—yet contrast: "The Assyrian monarch, like the Prince of Denmark, is highly endowed, capable of the greatest undertakings ; he is yet softened by a philosophic indolence of nature that makes him undervalue the enterprises of ambition, and all those objects in the attainment of which so much of glory is supposed to consist. They are both alike incapable of rousing themselves from the fond reveries of moral theory, even when the strongest motives are presented to them. Hamlet hesitates to act,

though his father's spirit hath come from death to incite him ; and Sardanapalus derides the achievements that had raised his ancestors to an equality with the gods."

Sardanapalus's contemplations are inspiring:

^{ct}They would have me go
Forth as a conqueror. By all the stars
Which the Chaldeans read ! the restless slaves
Deserve that I should curse them with their wishes
And lead them forth to glory."

The majesty of his lines when his slaves murmur,

" Because I have not shed their blood " ;

and his patriotic sentiment:

" Enough
For me, if I can make my subjects feel
The weight of human misery less."

are examples of the character's kingly greatness and national pride.

There is a certain grandeur about many of the passages, and this drama—dedicated to " the illustrious Goethe"—offered many opportunities to gladden the heart of the producer.

It was performed in several towns in the provinces.

Mr. William Archer specially writes his impression :

" I have seen *Sardanapalus* as produced by Calvert in Manchester in the 'seventies. Some of the spectacular effects were striking. I remember being much impressed by the passage (near the beginning of Act III, I think) in which the revellers hail Sardanapalus as a god, and are immediately struck to earth by a thunderbolt—a crude effect, but telling. Whether Byron designed it, I don't know."

Mr. H. G. Hibbert in his interesting *Playgoer's Memories* (Grant Richards) recalls that there was an interesting season at the Holborn, London, about 1868, when Thos. W. Charles presented *Sardanapalus*, "which

might very well interest some modern *metteur en sdne* with spacious ideas." Miss Monta Gainsborough, in the part of the beautiful slave *Myrrha*, was the leading lady-

Sardanapalus, which had been "produced in all the largest towns of the United Kingdom and America, and has been acknowledged by the entire Press as the grandest stage production of modern times,"—*vide* advertisement—was produced in Nottingham, for the first time in Byron's own county, at the Theatre Royal on May 7th, 1877, and ran for a week. Lest it should be inferred that it was not considered desirable to run it for a longer period it should be stated that this "Grand Revival" could "only be played in Nottingham a limited number of nights in consequence of other engagements," to quote from the managerial announcement. As a matter of fact the headline of the theatrical advertisements was: "Enormous success of Lord Byron's historical play"

Concerning the production side of *Sardanapalus* the scenery was painted from illustrations to *Layard's Ancient Nineveh*, and the costumes "designed from authorities in the Department of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum." We quote from the public notices when we state that "the simulated conflagration universally pronounced the most wonderful stage effect ever seen," whereas "the marvellous thunder and lightning scene," was a thing of wonder and a joy for ever.

The play lent itself to admirable settings, and the audience apparently revelled in the glories of the Palace of Sardanapalus, the Terrace of the Palace on the Tigris, the Hall of Nimrod, the Grand Ballet, the Battle *tableau*, the Dream of Hades, the Funeral pyre, the Burning Palace, and Nineveh by moonlight.

"The play's the thing," however, and we turn to the actual construction of the play itself. Byron's play was

adapted for stage presentation by Mr. Charles Calvert, and the concensus of opinion was that he had done his work well. The adapter "touched the work with a reverent hand," yet succeeded in so moulding the materials at his command that the result was voted entirely satisfactory. There are ample opportunities for display in the course of the action.

The curtain rises upon an apartment of the royal palace at Nineveh, wherein *Beleses*, a Chaldean soothsayer, conversing with *Arbaces*, a crafty Mede aspiring to the throne, discloses the fact of their plotting against the pleasure-loving King. Sunk in voluptuous enjoyments, the King neglects his Queen, *Zarina*, to concentrate all his affections upon *Myrrha*, a beautiful Ionian slave. The conspirators, with good reason, dread the searching eye of *Salemenes*, the Queen's brother. The latter, smarting though he is under the slight which the King puts upon his kinswoman, feels for the monarch a deep-seated and loyal attachment which nothing alienates, for, in the character of his royal master, he finds no vice but indolence, no treachery, no ingratitude. Entrusted with the royal signet, he advances far towards crushing out the incipient rebellion against the King's person, when *Sardanapalus's* own easy and merciful nature undoes the work. Yielding to the entreaties of his beloved *Myrrha*, the King consents to forego the revel without the walls of the city, and thus escapes a snare prepared for him. *Arbaces* and *Beleses* are banished to their satrapies; but, with the suspicion of base souls, being unable to realise that in truth mercy has been extended to them, they return and attack the King's guards in overwhelming force, as he celebrates a feast in the Grand Hall of Nimrod. Roused from his supine voluptuousness by this insolent attack the monarch arms for the fray and at the head of his faithful followers

gives the rebels battle. The whole of the third act passes in or near the Hall of Nimrod, where, overcome at last, *Sardanapalus* scorns to accept life and freedom from his rebel subjects. Making a funeral pyre of the rich furniture of the palace and of his treasures, he immolates himself upon it. Faithful in death as in life the beautiful *Myrrha* fires the pile and, casting herself into the arms of him she loved so fondly, is burnt to ashes with him.

The conflagration of the funeral pyre appears to have been far in advance of anything of the kind ever effected, and nothing more dramatically striking than the thunder and lightning here introduced had, apparently, ever been witnessed on the local stage.

Myrrha, the fascinating slave-girl, was "played feelingly" by Miss Folkard, who "looked the part." Miss Helen Cresswell was "pathetic and gentle" as the Queen. She had but two scenes, but in each she made a distinctly favourable impression, the critics tell us. Mr. Arthur Darley was to be congratulated upon the success of his impersonation as the pleasure-loving monarch. "The kindly nature of the man shone out even from under the indolence of his most luxurious hours, while, when rebellion stirred his blood, he showed himself a worthy successor of Nimrod," we find recorded. Mr. Henry Moxon was not one iota inferior as the loyal, noble soldier, the faithful subject, and the blunt counsellor. Once, it appears, "in the excitement of a really moving scene he seemed to lose his head a little, and what had been admirable declamation nearly came down to the level of ranting, but, recovering himself before the bad impression had become painful, he brought to a fitting end an excellently played part." Mr. Thomas Percy deserved more than a meed of praise for his manly presentation of the crafty and courageous

Mede. Then there was the part of *Beleses*[^] whose greatest point was made in the address to the declining sun.

Despite the fact that the play was voted a success histrionically, "it was a matter for regret that the attendance was only scanty, for such an opportunity of seeing what can be done with stage resources has not before occurred in Nottingham, and may not again for some time to come."

The theatrical critics agreed on the point that it exceeded anything hitherto attempted in theatrical splendour. "We have no hesitation in recording that, from beginning to end, the play, whether regarded as tragedy or spectacle, was entirely successful" was the verdict.

Sardanapahis was reproduced at the Nottingham Theatre Royal as a special attraction for "Goose Fair" week, commencing October 1st, 1877. "Full houses" were the order of the week, and it was agreed that there was "every reason why the drama should gain rather than lose in popularity." There was only one important change in the cast, a new *Myrrha*, played by Miss Monta Gainsborough, who appeared to have enchanted her audience just as she fascinated the monarch of the play. There were the same wonderful scenic effects, "the thunder-bolt panic of the guests," and a total of one hundred performers. So that the public should have no misconception on the matter, the play was billed as a "Reproduction of the grandest play ever seen on the stage."

Sardanapalus was again performed at the Nottingham Theatre Royal for twelve nights, commencing August 19th, 1878. It was advertised in the local newspapers as under:

THEATRE ROYAL, NOTTINGHAM.

ENTIRE REPRODUCTION OF
" SARDANAPALUS."

New scenery by Charles Gibbons and Assistants.
New Dresses and New Properties.

This evening (Monday), August 19th, will be
presented Lord Byron's Grand Historical Play,
" SARDANAPALUS,"

Arranged for presentation by Charles Calvert.

The Company comprises the following artistes :
Mr. Arthur Varley, Mr. W. J. Hainmg, Mr. John S. Wood,
Mr. S. Fisher, Mr. W. Baltimore, Mr. J. R. Craufurd, and
Mr. Henry Moxon ; Miss Gainsborough, Miss Annie Poole,
and Miss Helen Cresswell.

The management issued a special notice in addition
to the above.

"SARDANAPALUS"

NINEVEH, B.C. 607.

In again placing this magnificent piece on the stage of the Nottingham theatre, prior to its visiting the largest and most important towns in the kingdom, I am desirous of giving my generous patrons the opportunity of witnessing, in all its brightness, a revival equalled alone by those artistic triumphs achieved by Mr. Calvert in Manchester, and Mr. Saker in Liverpool; and also of testing, by the secrets of my treasury, whether I may, in the future, venture upon some other revival necessitating the lavish expense of the present production.

The material and paraphernalia used in the piece, certainly the most bulky, complicated, and varied of any piece of modern times, and requiring from everyone engaged in its manufacture the strictest attention to authorities in the most minute detail, has occupied my staff under my personal direction during the past four months, and I trust the public

will have it on view that so complete a piece can and has been turned out by purely local assistance.

The artistes engaged are principally those who have so favourably impressed on previous tours, and who, I doubt not, will find fresh zeal in the exquisite lines of Lord Byron, and the truly pathetic story of this great historical play.

Thos. W. Charles.

The writer has had in his hands a "play-bill" advertising this performance. Mr. Harry Rose, for many years the Bill Inspector at the Nottingham Theatre Royal, possesses a copy in his unique collection of local play-bills.

The *role of Sardanapalus* was again sustained by Mr. Arthur Darley, and the excellent impression created by him on the play's original production in Nottingham was strengthened. The critics were eulogistic over his narration of the "Dream of Hades," an unusually difficult passage to speak; and, in his interpretation of it, it was not the king alone whose "veins curdled" at the very horror of it!

Another spectacular production was that of *Mazeppa*. This descriptive poem of adventure was written by Byron at Ravenna, in 1818, and published in 1819. It is not one of the recognised "plays" of Byron, but it was adapted to the stage in 1831, by H. H. Milner for Anthony Ducrow. We are told that *Mazeppa* has found his way to the stage with the accompaniment of appropriate scenery, alternately savage and splendid, gorgeous processions, dresses and decorations; gallant knights and ladies fair; banquets, tournaments and real horses. "The story," says this critic of the period, "has been considerably varied and amplified to bring these powerful auxiliaries into full play; and an imposing spectacle is the result." The original

Mazeppa, at the Royal Amphitheatre, Westminster, was Cartlitch, we are told in Mr. H. G. Hibbart's "A Play-goer's Memories," (Grant Richards), in which volume there is more about the various Mazeppas, both male and female. *Mazeppa*, as performed, was more of a circus performance, however, than a Byron play. The volume gives an illustration of Mr. Cartlitch as the original Mazeppa, King of Tartary, and there is a photographic reproduction of Miss Ada Isaacs Menken, who claimed the distinction of being the first female Mazeppa. She was followed by Miss Amy Sheridan, and later by Miss Maud Forrester. In Clement Scott's *Theatre Annual* published in 1886, the writer came upon a picture of Miss Phyllis Broughton as Olinska in *Mazeppa*.

The Two Foscari, was another historical tragedy characterizing the Doge of Venice. Of this and its predecessor Byron wrote to Mr. Murray that he was "much mortified" that a friend did not take to his new dramas. "To be sure," he wrote, "they are as opposite to the English drama as one thing can be to another; but I have a notion that, if understood, they will, in time, find favour (though *not* on the stage) with the reader."

The Two Foscari was produced on the stage on April 7th, 1838, and Macready played Francis Foscari.

Cain, described as a mystery, commanded the attention of the public. Moore records that Byron suffered much pain from the virulence of the attacks made upon it; the play being described as "blasphemous" and worse. On this phase Sir Walter Scott said: "He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground. Some part of the language is bold, and may shock one class of readers, whose line will be adopted by others out of affectation or envy. But then

they must condemn the *Paradise Lost* if they have a mind to be consistent." Sir Walter Scott was proud to accept the dedication of this "very grand and tremendous drama of '*Cain!*'" and said: "I may be partial to it, and you will allow I have cause; but I do not know that his Muse has ever taken so lofty a flight amid her former soarings."

There were those, however, who asserted that Sir Walter Scott, for having accepted the dedication, would go down to posterity with the brand of *Cain* upon his brow!

Shelley said of it: "In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since *Paradise Lost*. *Cain* is apocalyptic; it is a revelation not before communicated to man."

Cain, in the judgment of Professor Nichol, is Byron's highest contribution to the metaphysical poetry of the century. In this he grapples with the perplexities of a belief which he never either accepted or rejected, and with the yet deeper problems of Life and Death, of good and ill. It is said that Lord Byron has elsewhere exhibited more versatility of fancy and richness of illustration, but nowhere else has he so nearly "struck the stars." *Cain's* philosophy is summed up in the lines of the fatal tree:

"It was a lying tree—for we *know* nothing ;
At least, it *promised knowledge* at the price
Of death—but *knowledge* still; but what *knows* Man ?"

Sir Egerton Brydges declares : "The censorious may say what they will, but there are speeches in the mouths of *Cain* and *Adah* which nothing in English poetry but the 'wood-notes wild' of Shakespeare ever equalled."

A sequel to *Cain* was perpetrated by Mrs. Beecher Stowe!

Heaven and Earth, described as a mystery—a graphic dream of the world before the Deluge—was founded on the following passage in Genesis, chap, vi: "And it came to pass . . . that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

We have yet to hear of any church dramatic society performing this, but, as it is based on the Scriptures, many more things appear less unlikely.

In January, 1822, *Werner* was finished, and this tragedy was also dedicated to "the illustrious Goethe."

"The whole is neither intended, nor in any shape adapted, for the stage," declared Byron.

William Charles Macready will be recalled as a contemporary of the beautiful Mrs. Siddons, with whom he played in *Hamlet*. It is recorded that in 1819 he "dominated the stage as Richard III," and that he was "a powerful actor in great pieces," but often ill-supported by his company. We have it recorded that his favourite parts were *Macbeth* and that of *Werner*.

It was in October, 1830, that he returned to Drury Lane where, on December 15th, he appeared in Byron's tragedy. The Dictionary of National Biography refers to Macready, and "his great part of *Werner*, perhaps the most powerful of his impersonations."

His many other successful parts are fully treated upon in Mr. William Archer's *Life of Macready*, published in 1890; but it is as a Byron interpreter that his name stands out to Byron students.

Professor John Nichol said of this that there "was no merit either of plan or execution, and the treatment is throughout prosaic." The plot was taken from *The German's Tale*, written by Harriet Lee. Prof. Nichol considers *Werner* to be Byron's "sole success on the modern British stage," however.

Sir Squire Bancroft, whose stage experience is excelled by no living actor, was asked by the editor for his views on the suitability of Byron's works for stage presentation ; and further, for his impressions of any Byron production he may have seen. The *doyen* of British actors, who has just received the congratulations and good wishes of his numerous friends on completing the eighty-second anniversary of his birthday, was very clear in his mind about what he had witnessed.

" As regards Lord Byron's plays I have only seen one of them acted—*Werner*—a dull business," recalls Sir Squire. " *Manfred*, I should say, would be even more so" . . .

Mr. William Archer also kindly gives us his opinion:

" I have seen *Werner* and agree with Sir Squire Bancroft that it is intolerably dull. Yet Macready used somehow to make it effective."

Henry Irving played the name-part in *Werner* at a charity matinee at the Lyceum, June 1st, 1887.

The Deformed Transformed, a drama commenced in November, 1821, and finished in August, 1822, was the last play that Byron ever wrote. The author stated that this production was founded partly on the story of a novel called *The Three Brothers*, published many years before, and partly on the *Fazist* of " the great Goethe."

There is also a strange personal touch about this drama, as students of Byron will note by glancing at the beginning of Scene I, which reads :

(*Enter* ARNOLD *and his mother* BERTHA.)

Bertha : Out, hunchback !

Arnold: I was born so, mother!

This very phrase is stated to be that of Byron's to his own mother, who cruelly designated him " a lame brat," his pathetic answer being " I was born so, mother!" ...

Harriet, why that promise shew
What August to thy last than
Charm, this discontented sin,
From us become not one we see
The not-Love between thy "not"
Loves a stranger to thy heart,
Thou in smiling smiles appear;
In measure in sweetly sweet; say,
In words the languid parted sin,
That-Loves the cold foolishly Love.
The same thy former fire,
Some will love, of all a time,
While that very defect chills us,
Though we can't cold indifference beside us,
Wonders! then wandering heart's Love,
Smile, at, vast, or seem to smile

COPY OF MANUSCRIPT OF BYRON'S POEM TO HARRIET MALTBY

From the original in the collection of the late Harriet C. Lee, Esq., by permission

VII

BYRON'S "FUGITIVE PIECES"

BY HERBERT C. ROE

The object of this contribution is to bring together such information as is known of the very rare edition of Lord Byron's "Fugitive Pieces," in the hope that it may be of interest and of some value to students and collectors of Lord Byron's works.

I

Notes on the copy in the collection of H. C. Roe, purchased at Sotheby's, June 4th, 1918.

Fugitive Pieces by Lord Byron. Presentation copy with autograph inscription "J. M. B. Pigot, Esq.," on the half-title and drawing by Mrs. Pigot in pen and ink and sepia of the Byron arms. Correction throughout with some manuscript inserted and notes on the covers chiefly in Miss E. Pigot's handwriting, imperfect, lacking pp. 17-20 and 58-66, with facsimile of pp. 17-20, paper covers, 4to. Printed by S. & J. Ridge, Newark, 1806. (Sotheby).

This copy has been preserved at Newstead Abbey. Inserted is a note saying "This copy was presented to Mrs. Webb, Newstead Abbey, by Mrs. Wildman in 1861," On the other side of the slip is written in Miss E. Pigot's writing "There is only one more copy of

this edition left which is in the possession of the Rev. J. T. Becher—Lord Byron destroyed all the others." The "J. M. B. Pigot, Esq.," is in Lord Byron's own handwriting. The Newstead copy appears to be of the same printing as the Spoor copy, and therefore earlier than Mr. Becher's copy. Its interest is enhanced by the fact that a poem to the recipient is printed on page 46. The paper is nearly all water-marked "C. Wilmott, 1805."

The note that "there is only one more copy of this edition" is not correct, because there are four known copies.

The manuscript insertions and alterations in this copy are as follows:—

Page i. "On leaving N (ew) st (ea)d."

„ 3. Line 2. "I" corrected in MS. to "me"
(as Spoor copy).

Page 5. "To D (elawarr)."

„ 14. Line 10 "J" (in Jargon).

„ 25. "Thoughts suggested by a College Examination" (at Trinity Camb.)

Line 2 M (a) ns (a) l

Line 4 "trimble" corrected in MS. to
"tremble."

Inserted at p. 28 opposite the poem *To Mary on receiving her picture*, is a note in the handwriting of Miss E. Pigot: "This poem was to that *naughty* Mary to whom the lines were written which occasioned such a commotion in the State and were the reason of this edition being put into the fire."

Page 31. Line 4 "last" corrected in MS. to "fast."

30-31 After the reply to the lines *On the death of Mr. Fox* which appeared in the *Morning Post*, is inserted (Southwell Oct., 1806).

- Page 33- *To a Beautiful Quaker* (at Harrowgate, Sept, 1806).
- Page 36. *To Julia* (Leacroft).
- 39- " An occasional prologue delivered by the author, previous to the performance of the *Wheel of Fortune* at a private theatre." (Spoken by G. Wylde, Esq., London, Sept., 1806).
- Page 41. *To Miss*——(E. P. erased).
- „ 57. *The Cornelian*. Inserted is a note in Miss Pigot's handwriting:—
 (There was a youth in the choir, when Lord Byron was at Cambridge, with whose voice he was so much charmed, that he frequently had him at his rooms, and grew so fond of his society, from his amiable disposition and pleasing manners, that he provided for him by placing him in an advantageous mercantile concern. He died of consumption at an early age, his name was Eddleston and this poem was written upon his giving Lord Byron a small Cornelian heart when he left Cambridge, E. B. P.)

The first copy of the book was sent to the Rev. John Thomas Becher, Prebendary of Southwell Minster, who objected to the too voluptuous colouring of one of the poems, and remonstrated with the poet in verse, (*a*)

(*a*) BYRON'S ANSWER TO SOME ELEGANT VERSES,
 SENT BY A FRIEND TO THE AUTHOR, ARE HERE GIVEN :

CANDOUR compels me, Becher ! to commend
 The verse which blends the censor with the friend
 Your strong yet just reproof extorts applause

From me, the heedless and imprudent cause.
 For this wild error, which pervades my strain,
 I sue for pardon—must I sue in vain ?
 The wise sometimes from Wisdom's ways depart:
 Can youth then hush the dictates of the heart ?
 Precepts of prudence curb, but can't control,
 The fierce emotions of the flowing soul.
 When Love's delirium haunts the glowing mind,
 Limping Decorum lingers far behind .
 Vainly the dotard mends her prudish pace,
 Outstnpt and vanquish'd in the mental chase.
 The young, the old, have worn the chains of love ;
 Let those they ne'er confined my lay reprove
 Let those whose souls condemn the pleasing power
 Their censures on the hapless victim shower,
 Oh ! how I hate the nerveless, frigid song,
 The ceaseless echo of the rhyming throng,
 Whose labour'd lines in chilling numbers flow,
 To paint a pang the author ne'er can know '—
 The artless Helicon I boast is youth •—
 My lyre, the heart; my muse, the simple truth,
 Far be't from me the 'virgin's mind' to * taint '—
 Seduction's dread is here no slight restraint.
 The maid whose virgin breast is void of guile,
 Whose wishes dimple in a modest smile,
 Whose downcast eye disdains the wanton leer,
 Firm in her virtue's strength, yet not severe—
 She whom a conscious grace shall thus refine,
 Will ne'er be ' tainted' by a strain of mine.
 But for the nymph whose premature desires
 Torment her bosom with unholy fires,
 No net to snare her willing heart is spread ;
 She would have fallen, though she ne'er had read.
 For me, I fain would please the chosen few,
 Whose souls, to feeling and to nature true,
 Will spare the childish verse, and not destroy
 The light effusions of a heedless boy.
 I seek not glory from the senseless crowd ;
 Of fancied laurels I shall ne'er be proud :
 Their warmest plaudits I would scarcely prize,
 Their sneers or censures I alike despise.

The consequence of this was that Byron, with a fine act of self-sacrifice, and showing the generous pliability of his nature at this time, recalled the whole impression, over which he had bestowed such loving pains, and burnt the copies in Mr. Becher's presence. Four were all that escaped, one of which had been sent to Mr Pigot, at that time residing in Edinburgh, and one Mr. Becher kept himself. The former copy with "J. M. B. Pigot" inscribed in the poet's handwriting, passed into the possession of his friend's sister, Miss Pigot of Southwell, who bequeathed it, with other relics of the poet to Mrs. Webb of Newstead Abbey, where it rested until recently. This copy is imperfect, eight pages at the end being missing, and two leaves in the centre (pp. 17-20) having also been removed. These pages contained the poem of fourteen stanzas, to which Mr. Becher objected. It is called simply *To Mary* They consist merely of some amatory verses in the style of Moore's *Poems by Thomas Little* which, as Byron says in a letter to Moore, "I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth summer. Heigho. I believe all the mischief I have ever done or sung, has been owing to that confounded book of yours."

After the destruction of the quarto, Byron at once commenced a second volume for private circulation which was ready by January, 1807, and published in small octavo by Ridge under the title of *Poems on Various Occasions*. John Pigot was again one of the earliest recipients and was begged to destroy his copy of the quarto. Apparently he compromised by tearing out these leaves which held the "unlucky poem to my poor Mary." (This Mary is not to be confounded with the Heiress of Annesley, nor with Mary of Aberdeen). She was of humble, "if not equivocal" station of life; and had long fair hair, a lock of which, as well as her

picture, Byron used to show among his friends. The early verses *To Mary on receiving her Picture* (V) were also addressed to her.

(b) TO MARY.

ON RECEIVING HER PICTURE.

THIS faint resemblance of thy charms,
Though strong as mortal art could give,
My constant heart of fear disarms,
Revives thy hopes, and bids me live.

Here I can trace the locks of gold,
Which round thy snowy forehead wave,
The cheeks which sprung from beauty's mould
The lips which made me beauty's slave.

Here I can trace—ah, no ! that eye,
Whose azure floats in liquid fire,
Must all the painter's art defy,
And bid him from the task retire.

Here I behold its beauteous hue ;
But where's the beam so sweetly straying,
Which gave a lustre to its blue,
Like Luna o'er the ocean playing?

Sweet copy! far more dear to me,
Lifeless, unfeeling as thou art,
Than all the living forms could be,
Save her who placed thee next my heart.

She placed it, sad, with needless fear,
Lest time might shake my wavering soul,
Unconscious that her image there
Held every sense in fast control

Through hours, through years, through time 'twill cheer ;
My hope in gloomy moments raise ;
In life's last conflict 'twill appear,
And meet my fond expiring gaze.

Notes on the copy in the collection of J. A. Spoor, Esq., of Chicago, purchased at Sotheby's, December 20th, 1912.

Fugitive Pieces, presentation copy with autograph inscription (defective) on the half-title "October 21st, Tuesday, 1806—Haec poemata ex dono sunt—Georgii Gordon Byron, Vale," and a drawing by Mrs. Pigot in pen and ink and sepia of the Byron arms on the same page, autograph corrections throughout, orig., paper covers, (stained and some margins torn). Printed by S. & J. Ridge, Newark, 1806, with a copy of the facsimile reprint Quaritch, 1886."

Only three other copies are known to exist—Mr. Becher's own copy from which the facsimile was made, a copy wanting pages 17-20 and 58-66 (the former of which contained the notorious lines, *To Mary*, never reprinted save in the facsimile) presented to John Pigot, and now preserved at Newstead, and a copy sold in these rooms on June 1st, 1907. The MS. notes include many corrections in the punctuations, nine corrections of misprints, two words substituted and one entirely new line, *On a distant view of the village and school of Harrow-on-the-Hill*, 1806, stanza 7, line 4. It is interesting to observe that this copy must have been one of the earliest printed, earlier even than the Becher copy, for on page 3 of the facsimile the first two lines of the verses *To E*—read :—

" Let folly smile, to view the names
Of thee and me in friendship twm'd."

the present copy reads "and I" in line 2. Also on page 25 *Thoughts suggested by a College Examination*, there is a misprint "trimble" for "tremble" in

the present copy, where it is corrected in MS. It is correctly printed in the facsimile. This copy is offered for sale by the instructions of Mr. T. Bramhall Cooper of Bristol, nephew of Mr. Bramhall, a banker of Sheffield, to whom it came through his uncle, Mr. John Holland, biographer and friend of James Montgomery, the poet." (Sotheby).

This copy is now in the collection of Mr. J. A. Spoor, Chicago.

Mr. Bramhall's father and Mr. Holland were associated about 1840 in joint editorship of the *Sheffield Weekly Mercury*, of which Mr. George Ridge of Newark was the printer. It is believed that this copy belonged to Miss Elizabeth Pigot and afterwards to Mr. Ridge, the printer, and that it came in this way to Mr. Bramhall. It may be noted that a copy of the rare *Poems on Various Occasions*, the issue which succeeded *Fugitive Pieces*, given by Byron to Miss Pigot and bearing her name in his handwriting, has a similar inscription in Latin and the same reproduction of the Byron arms. A curious feature of this copy is the date of the inscription on the fly-leaf. The poem which precedes the date of the inscription is addressed "To Miss E. P." (that is to say Miss Pigot) and is dated October 9th. Here Byron must have stopped the printer for a while, and it is very significant that the next two poems, dated October 26th and 2/th, are both signed "Byron"; and they are the only ones in the book so signed. The last poem in the book is dated November 16th, in which month Moore tells us it was published.

How comes Byron's signature to these poems in a book which is otherwise anonymous? It seems clear that these poems had been distributed in fly-leaf form after the completion of the volume given to Miss Pigot.

The same process may have attended Dr. Pigot's copy, which ends at page 58. On page 57 begins the *Cornelian*, and on page 54 the poem "To the Sighing Strephon," who was Dr. Pigot. Both these poems were undated, but the one previous to them was written on October 28th. Remaining poems appear to have been written between November 7th, the date of the first, and November 16th, the date of the last, and each is complete on one leaf.

Possibly one day some of these separately-printed poems may be discovered, but until then one cannot be over-positive on this theory.

It is worth noticing how prolific was Byron's muse even in those early days. The last poem in *Fugitive Pieces* is dated November 16th, but before the end of 1806, Ridge of Newark, had printed off *Poems on Various Occasions* which contains twelve new poems, including the long *Childish Recollections* and the *Elegy on Newstead Abbey*. Some, though not all, of the twelve must have been composed in the month or five weeks between the issue of the two volumes.

III

Notes on the copy in the collection of Pierpont Morgan, Esq., purchased at Sotheby's, June 1st, 1907.

Fugitive Pieces, the corrected proof of the earliest edition of the poems or *Hours of Idleness*, issued first privately in 1806 and then published in 1807, containing fly-leaf only (as above) and dedication. The text contains thirty-three leaves, signatures B-R, and the last poem is dated November 16th, 1806; original wrappers, S. & J. Ridge, Newark, 1806, 4to.

Lord Byron's corrected copy of the original privately printed edition, made for the first published edition of

the *Hours of Idleness* in 1807. I* contains many corrections, erasures, and additions in Byron's hand, and an inscription on the title by the same " Nov. 8, 1806, H.P.E.D.S.G.G.B., Southwell, Vale; Byron. The Byron arms are drawn in pen and ink on the title (Sotheby).

IV

Notes on the copy in the collection of the late H. Buxton Forman, Esq.

The copy which was formerly owned by the Becher family is now the property of Mr. H. Buxton Forman's family. It was given to the solicitor of the family, Mr. Faulkner of Louth, and by him offered to Mr. Quaritch, who refused, for some strange reason, to negotiate for its purchase. In 1885 it was in the possession of Mr. H. W. Ball, antiquary and bookseller of Barton-on-Humber, who sold it to Mr. Forman.

In the following year a facsimile of this copy, which was a perfect one, was printed at the Chiswick Press, with an introduction by Mr. Forman, who claimed in the preface that this and the Newstead copy were the only ones in existence.

In *Newark as a Publishing Town* by T. M. B(lagg), published in 1898, there is a very full account of the early editions of Byron's poems printed by S. & J. Ridge of Newark. It says " The first volume of poems which Byron ever published was privately printed by S. & J. Ridge of Newark in 1806. It is a quarto book of sixty-six pages. It has no title-page, properly so called, only a fly-leaf title, *Fugitive Pieces*. It contains the following dedications :—" To the friends at whose request they were printed, for whose amusement or approbation they are solely intended ; these Trifles are respectfully dedicated by the Author/' Byron wrote

as preface to this volume :—" As these poems are never intended to meet the public eye, no apology is necessary for the form in which they now appear. They are printed merely for the perusal of a few friends to whom they are dedicated; who will look upon them with indulgence; and as most of them were composed between the age of fifteen and seventeen, their defects will be pardoned or forgotten, in the youth and inexperience of the writer." The whole volume contains some thirty-eight pieces—poems and translations—of which two, viz.: *To Caroline* and *To Mary* together with the last six stanzas of the lines, *To Miss E. P.* (To Eliza) had never been republished in any of Byron's works until the new edition published by Murray in 1898, in which the first and last appear. The poem *To Mary*, for which the book was suppressed, has never been reprinted except in the facsimile of 1886. Of those which did afterwards appear in the public editions several were greatly altered, showing how his crude earlier pieces were afterwards polished by the poet. An interesting example is *On Leaving Newstead*. We know, however, that though this was the first volume of Lord Byron's poems which Ridge produced, he had before this printed several separate poems for his lordship. For instance, the volume *Fugitive Pieces* did not appear until 1806 in November, whereas in August of that year Byron sent Miss Pigot, of Southwell, a printed copy of the poem *On Leaving Newstead*, and in his letter to her, which is dated August 10th, says : " I presume the printer has brought you the offspring of my poetic mania. Remember in the first line to read ' Loud the winds whistle/ instead of * round ' which that blockhead Ridge has inserted by mistake, and makes nonsense of the whole stanza." The same day he

wrote also to Mr. Pigot: " This astonishing packet will doubtless amaze you, but having an idle hour this morning, I wrote the enclosed stanzas, which I request you to deliver to Ridge to be printed *separate* from my other compositions, as you will perceive them to be improper for the perusal of ladies; of course, none of the females of your family must see them." And a few days later he sends a second letter to Mr. Pigot, enclosing some more MS. verses, and says: " Will you desire Ridge to suspend the printing of my poems until he hearb further from me, as I have determined to give them a new form entirely. *This prohibition does not extend to the two last pieces I have sent with my letters to you*" Immediately after this, however, Byron, after a more than usually severe quarrel with his mother, left Southwell, and went first to London and then to Worthing. He seems now to have been exceedingly anxious to destroy these early printed pieces of his, for he writes from Worthing to Mr. Pigot: (August 18th, 1806) " My poetics you will pack up for the same place, and not even reserve a copy for yourself and sister, as I am about to give them an *entire new form*. When they are complete, you shall have the first fruits. Mrs. B. (his mother) is on no account to see or touch them." And again, only eight days afterwards, he reiterates his request to Mr. Pigot: " I wish you to send my poems to my lodgings in London, immediately, as I have several alterations and additions to make ; every copy must be sent, as I am about to *amend* them, and you shall soon behold them in all their glory. I hope you have kept them from the upas tree, that antidote to the arts, Mrs. B." Obviously this is an intimation of Byron's intention to gather them up into the little volume of *Fugitive Pieces*.

Although there is no direct evidence to show that

Byron published his early poems separately, there is not any doubt that prior to August 10th, 1806, he had sent to his friends, the Pigots, some of his poetic offspring. The copies of Elizabeth and John Pigot both appear to be of the same printing, but whereas the John Pigot copy finishes at page 58, the copy of his sister is complete, and comprises 66 pages. In the John Pigot copy, pp. 17-20, containing the condemned poem, *To Mary*, were no doubt torn out by John Pigot himself to appease Byron, or, if not, they were removed when the copy came into the possession of his sister. The last eight pages, which are missing, can easily be accounted for, if the poems were published separately, because John Pigot was then residing in Edinburgh, and, as we know, the earlier part of the poems were sent to him by Byron; yet it is quite possible that the later ones, if published separately, never reached him, and therefore were not included in his collection. Miss Pigot, who resided in Southwell, no doubt had the later poems given to her, and hence the reason of this copy being complete, whereas her brother's copy, which is of the same printing in the earlier part of the book, was never completed. The inscription in Miss Pigot's copy, "October 21st, Tuesday, 1806," rather goes to prove the theory of separate publication, as it is more than likely that Byron presented this copy to her on that date, and she afterwards inserted the later poems herself.

LORD BYRON AND THE PIGOT FAMILY.

The association of Byron with the Pigot family is of extreme interest, for doubtless it is, that the poetic instinct of his lordship was greatly encouraged by Miss Elizabeth Bridget Pigot, to whom some of his earlier poems were written.

In the summer of 1803, Mrs. Byron went to the Manor House, on Burgage Green, Southwell, which was opposite the residence of the Pigots, and ere long a close friendship existed between the two families. We read of "the amiable and intelligent family of the Pigots receiving Byron as one of themselves."

Elizabeth Bridget Pigot was born at Derby, 21st September, 1782, and was the daughter of Dr. John Hollis Pigot, who had a practice in that town. On the death of the doctor in 1794, his widow, who was the daughter of Richard Turner Becher of Southwell, removed her family of three sons and one daughter to Southwell. One of Elizabeth's brothers—John—to whom reference will be made later, became very intimate with Lord Byron. He was junior to his sister by three years.

The first reference Byron makes to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot is in a letter to his sister, Augusta, announcing that his mother was giving a party "at which the principal Southwell belles will be present, with one of whom . . . I intend to fall violently in love . . . and my history will furnish materials for a pretty romance which will be entitled and denominated the loves of Lord Byron and the cruel and inconstant Sigismunda Cuneganda Bridgetina, etc., Princess of Terra Incognita."

Miss Pigot evidently had unusual intellectual and artistic gifts, for we are told that her "literary correspondence was wide and varied," and that Byron did not fail to discern in her a kindred spirit. They read together, and spent many happy hours in what must have been a mutual admiration of all that appealed to their literary tastes. Elizabeth also acted as his lordship's amanuensis. She was some five years older than the poet, and some estimate of their close friendship may be drawn from the manner in which they addressed

each other. Byron indited his letters to "My Dear Bridget" and "Dear Queen Bess." whilst she nick-named him "Tony Lumpkin." For her he copied his lines beginning:—

"In thee I fondly hoped to clasp
A friend, whom death alone could sever ;
Till envy, with malignant grasp
Detached thee from my breast for ever."

which were printed in his first unpublished volume.

If these sentiments came from the heart of the poet one might be lead to believe that the attachment was one of more than friendship, although Byron's mother, in a letter, quotes the opinion of Mrs. Pigot that "though Elizabeth regards him very much as a friend she sees all his faults clearly, and there is not a spark of anything like love."

Mr. Cuthbert Becher Pigot, of Ipswich, a great grandson of Dr. J. M. B. Pigot, states in a note appearing in the *Nottingham Weekly Guardian*, September 15th, 1915, "that as far as I can gather not even Miss Pigot's own family received the slightest hint that there was anything other than friendship between Elizabeth and Byron. Miss Pigot left no papers that throw any light on the matter, but on the other hand she carefully preserved every scrap of the poet's writing, and greatly treasured the few locks of his hair which she cut off for herself, and lastly she gave directions for a packet of Byron's letters to be buried with her—factors which strongly speak of something a little closer than friendship."

There is a story of two letters—one to her lover and one to Lord Byron, which Miss Pigot is said to have written after her engagement to be married to a Mr. Hall—these she inadvertently placed in the wrong covers, and the lover, receiving the letter intended for

Lord Byron, broke off the engagement. Mr. Pigot says, " It is strange we have no record of the love affair between Miss Pigot and Mr. Hall. The only allusions in Miss Pigot's numerous family records to anyone of this name is a casual reference to Mr. Urban Hall, of Mansfield, in connection with a marriage of a member of his family with her own/'

Whatever may have been the actual facts of this *affaire de coeur*, we know that Miss Pigot never married, and that during her long life she cherished and loved to narrate to her friends her recollections of her intimacy with Byron. She died at Southwell on December nth, 1866, aged 83 years, and her remains rest near the South West Tower of the Cathedral.

Mr. Cuthbert Pigot possesses a few treasured relics which have been handed down to him and which were formerly owned by his great aunt. A small paper packet inscribed on the outside in faded brown ink, "G. G. B., 26th April, 1807," inside are the words "George Gordon Byron's hair," and a rich brown curl still bearing the lustre of youth upon it. Another is a gold-rimmed locket containing a painted eye of the poet and a ringlet of his hair. Pinned on the fly-sheet of *Moore's Life of Byron*, presented to Miss Pigot by the author, is a life-sized silhouette of the poet's face. This was taken at the age of eighteen, and bears the artist's initials "W. S. L., Southwell."

Another treasure is an edition of *Poems on Various Occasions* bound in red leather and bearing on both front and back covers the monogram "B" under a coronet. It bears in the author's writing the following inscription: " Elizabeth Bridget Pigot. Ex Dona Georgii Gordon Byron. Vale! 1806." Underneath is a beautifully depicted coat-of-arms of the Byrons, which was undoubtedly done by Margaret Pigot, Miss Pigot's

mother. A tinted drawing of Newstead Abbey by the same hand adorns another page of the book, while at the end of the volume the poem beginning "And wilt thou weep when I am low?" is written out fully in the poet's handwriting. Mr. Pigot says, "Evidently this is one of the several poems addressed by Byron to Miss Pigot, for though it is not so described in the various editions of his poems, yet from the fact that he has written it on a blank page of the volume which he presented to her and headed the poem *To*——it would seem fairly conclusive proof that he wrote it to her." On the very last page is a verse in Byron's writing which does not appear to have been printed. It reads:

" The Poet's Lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the poet's heart;
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art."

Further interest is attached to the book as it contains various notes either by the poet himself or Miss Pigot, stating to whom some of the poems are addressed, and has also noted in each instance to whom reference is made in *Childish Recollections* under the cognomen of *Joannes, Davus, Lycus, Clarus*, etc. The poem beginning "Eliza, what fools are the Mussulman sect" is addressed to Miss Pigot, as also is that commencing "Dear simple girl, those flattering arts." The poems "Doubtless, sweet girl, the hissing lead," and "Oh, did those eyes, instead of fire," are addressed to Miss Anne Houson, who became the wife of the Rev-Luke Jackson, vicar of Hucknall Torkard, while the poem *To Lesbia*, is addressed to Miss Julia Leacroft, "one of the belles of Southwell," referred to by Byron in his letter to his sister, Augusta.

Dr. John Margaret Becher Pigot, brother of Elizabeth

Bridget Pigot, was born at Derby on 26th July, 1785. He was very intimate with Lord Byron in his Southwell days, and undertook to see to certain matters relative to the printing of his lordship's poems, which Ridge of Newark had in hand.

In August, 1806, Mr. Pigot and Byron paid a visit to Harrogate, and in a letter to Miss Pigot, Byron adds a postscript: "Your brother John is seized with a poetic mania, and is now rhyming away at the rate of three lines per hour—so much for inspiration." After they parted in the autumn of this year Byron and Pigot never met again, but they continued to correspond with each other for some time.

Mr. Pigot was educated first at the Grammar School, Southwell, and afterwards proceeded to Edinburgh to study for medicine, and he took his M.D. degree in 1807. On this occasion Byron writes to Pigot a letter dated "Southwell, April, 1807—My Dear Pigot. Allow me to congratulate you on the success of your first examination. Courage, *mon ami*. The title of doctor will do wonders with the damsels. I shall most probably be in Essex or London when you arrive at this place where I am detained with the publication of my rhymes. Adieu.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,
BYRON."

After taking his degree and being elected a Fellow of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, Dr. Pigot was appointed one of the surgeons at the Infirmary at Chester, where he settled. In 1809 he married Lucinda, daughter of Thomas Boyer of Loughborough, by whom he had five children: John Clare, afterwards in Holy Orders; Richard Milnes, a surgeon; Henry Becher, in the Customs; Eliza Becher, married to a Nottingham

solicitor named Samuel Payne; and Ellen, who married Edward Dickenson.

Mrs. Pigot died in 1835 and was buried at Southwell. The doctor married again in 1837, his second wife being Emma Dodsley Flamsteed, sister of the Rev. A. D. Flamsteed, Rector of Lambley, Notts. By this wife he had one son who became a barrister and who died at Nottingham about 1908.

In 1815 Pigot published anonymously, the *History of Chester from its Foundation to the Present Time*. This work is now somewhat rare.

Upon leaving Chester the doctor settled in Nottingham where he took active interest in the municipal life of the town. In 1838 he had a seat in the town council, and in 1840 he was elected Mayor of Nottingham. He was a devoted Freemason, and filled most important offices, being Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Nottinghamshire Freemasons, an office which he resigned in 1857. He was of a kindly and genial disposition, fond of hunting and fishing, and a keen politician. In later life he retired to Ruddington, Notts, where he died on March 26th, 1871, aged 86 years, and his remains were laid to rest in the village churchyard.

HERBERT C. ROE.

[The foregoing was first printed, for private circulation, in 1919. Since granting permission for this to be reprinted in the present volume, Mr. Roe has passed away, to the great regret of his many friends. The editor has received the permission of his family for these notes to be now included. Mr. Roe was one of the most noted of our British collectors of Byromana, and his collection of Byron pictures and literature has been bequeathed to the city of Nottingham.]

BYRON, THE POET.

" Ah ! happy years ! once more
Who would not be a boy ? "—BYRON.

PART III

BIOGRAPHICAL

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" The great end of travel."
—BYRON.

BYRON'S "HAPPY YEARS"

BY THE AUTHOR OF

The Boy Hero of the Air

. . . " Ah, happy years !
Once more who would not be a boy ?"

THUS wrote Byron, whose boyhood was not one of unalloyed bliss but rather of restricted happiness ; but who, nevertheless, invariably looked back upon his childhood days with evident pleasure.

In his verses he writes that:—

" Remembrance . . . portrays each childish scene,
Those fairy bowers, where all in turn have been."

and—

" My wonted haunts, my scenes of joy and woe,
Each early boyish friend, or youthful foe,
Our feuds dissolved, but not my friendship past:
I bless the former, and forgive the last."

Byron compares the sincerity of youth with the hypocrisy of " lengthened years" in the course of his *Childish Recollections*:

" Hours of my youth ! when, nurtured in my breast,
To lore a stranger, friendship made me blest;—
Friendship, the dear peculiar bond of youth,
When every artless bosom throbs with truth ;
Untaught by wordly wisdom how to feign,
And check each impulse with prudential rein ;
When all we feel, our honest souls disclose—

In love to friends, in open hate to foes ;
 No varnish'd tales the lips of youth repeat,
 No dear-bought knowledge purchased by deceit.
 Hypocrisy, the gift of lengthened years,
 Matured by age, the garb of prudence wears.

When now the boy is ripen'd into man,
 His careful sire chinks forth some wary plan ;
 Instructs his son from candour's path to shrink,
 Smoothly to speak, and cautiously to think ;
 Still to assent, and never to deny—
 A patron's praise can well reward the lie :
 And who, when Fortune's warning voice is heard,
 Would lose his opening prospects for a word ?
 Although against that word his heart rebel.
 And truth indignant all his bosom swell"...

It was not Byron the boy who wrote this, although he was but nineteen years of age at the time ; but an adult mind trying to think in the mind of a young boy again, yet with the philosophy of a grown-up. These lines are stated by Byron to " bear the internal evidence of a boyish mind," but it should be emphasized that they were written " during the disadvantages of illness," if not also in a period of " depression of spirits." In those days his thoughts oft went back to the times

"When Friendship bow'd before the shrine of Truth,
 And Love, without his pinion, smiled on Youth."

Byron had the French proverb—" *L' amitie c'est l'amour sans ailes*"—in his mind when he wrote this, and it was not through boyish eyes that he penned his reminiscences ; and this was also the case in his lines *To a youthful friend*, written in 1808, and included in *Occasional Pieces* in various collections of his poems.

Few years have pass'd since thou and I
 Were firmest friends, at least in name.
 And childhood's gay sincerity
 Preserved our feelings long the same.

But now, like me, too well thou know'st
 What trifles oft the heart recall ;
 And those who once have loved the most
 Too soon forget they loved at all.
 And such the change the heart displays,
 So frail is early friendship's reign,
 A month's brief lapse, perhaps a day's,
 Will view thy mind estranged again.

The two following verses depict Byron's maturer view-point again :

It boots not that, together bred,
 Our childish days were days of joy •
 My spring of life has quickly fled ;
 Thou, too, hast ceased to be a boy.
 And when we bid adieu to youth,
 Slaves to the specious world's control,
 We sigh a long farewell to truth ;
 That world corrupts the noblest soul.

Once more does Byron chide the present and extol the childish " days of joy "—and truth !

* * * * *

Byron began his " days of joy " on January 22nd, 1788, when he was born in Holies Street, Cavendish Square, London.

Writing of a baby, Byron once pictured :

" Look ! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,
 And opens out his blue eyes upon thine,
 While his little form
 Flutters as winged with joy."

Whether this was so in Byron's own case we cannot definitely state.

At the tender age of two he was taken by his mother to Aberdeen. Before he reached the age of five years the child Byron was sent to a day-school in Aberdeen, " evidently less with a view to his advance in learning

than for the purpose of keeping him quiet and training him to scholastic discipline," according to one biographer.

He stayed there for a year and was then removed to a seminary, kept by a clergyman of the name of Ross. Then followed a period under the tutorship of a scholar of some repute, by name Paterson, with whom he commenced to study Latin. He was next sent to the Grammar School at Aberdeen, where the general impression retained of this youthful pupil was that he was a lively, warm-hearted, and high-spirited boy; passionate and resentful, but affectionate and companionable with his school-fellows. He was, to a remarkable degree, adventurous and fearless, and, it is written, "always more ready to give a blow than take one." It is said that he was much more anxious to distinguish himself by his prowess at sports and exercises than by advancement in learning.

During his sojourn in Scotland he was removed by his mother for a change of air into the Highlands. This was in the summer of 1796, following an attack of scarlet fever. They took up their residence at a farm-house in the vicinity of Ballater, about forty miles up the Dee from Aberdeen, and within a pleasant drive of that wild and romantic scenery amidst which the dark summit of Lachin-y-gair stood towering before the eyes of the embryo bard; and the verses in which, not many years later, he commemorated this sublime spectacle, afford convincing proof of the deep impression, young as he was at the time, its "frowning glories" made upon him.

In his after years, when at Newstead, he compared his "cultured lands" to the "mountain's craggy side" as pictured in a lament entitled / *would I were a careless child*, included in his *Hours of Idleness*.

I would I were a careless child,
 Still dwelling in my Highland cave,
 Or roaming through the dusky wild,
 Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave ;
 The cumbrous pomp of Saxon pride
 Accords not with the freeborn soul,
 Which loves the mountain's craggy side,
 And seeks the rocks where billows roll.

Fortune ! take back these cultured lands,
 Take back this name of splendid sound ^f
 I hate the touch of servile hands,
 I hate the slaves that cringe around.
 Place me among the rocks I love,
 Which sound to Ocean's wildest roar ;
 I ask but this—again to rove
 Through scenes my youth hath known before.

Again, in his poem on *Loch na Gar*, he recalls with delight that it was

" there my young footsteps in infancy wander'd."

Again, in *Hours of Idleness*, we read of the period when " Youth has flown on rosy pinion," and we come to more of this theme of Remembrance:

Yes, I will hope that Time's broad wing
 Will shed around some dews of spring :
 But if his scythe must sweep the flowers
 Which bloom among the fairy bowers,
 Where smiling Youth delights to dwell,
 And hearts with early rapture swell;
 If frowning Age, with cold control,
 Confines the current of the soul,
 Congeals the tear of Pity's eye,
 Or checks the sympathetic sigh,
 Or hears unmoved misfortune's groan,
 And bids me feel for self alone ;
 Oh may my bosom never learn
 To soothe its wonted heedless flow;
 Still, still despise the censor stern,

But ne'er forget another's woe.
 Yes, as you knew me in the days
 O'er which Remembrance yet delays,
 Still may I rove, untutor'd, wild,
 And even in age at heart a child.

Byron goes on to refer to "every bliss my childhood knew"

There is an amusing reference in *Don Juan*> canto iv., stanza 3, which begins

"As boy, I thought myself a clever fellow,
 And wish'd that others held the same opinion."

Discoursing on the subject of Fame, we find him acclaiming the fact that

"The days of our youth are the days of our glory."

In various other verses Byron compares his boyhood days with his present unhappy state of mind.

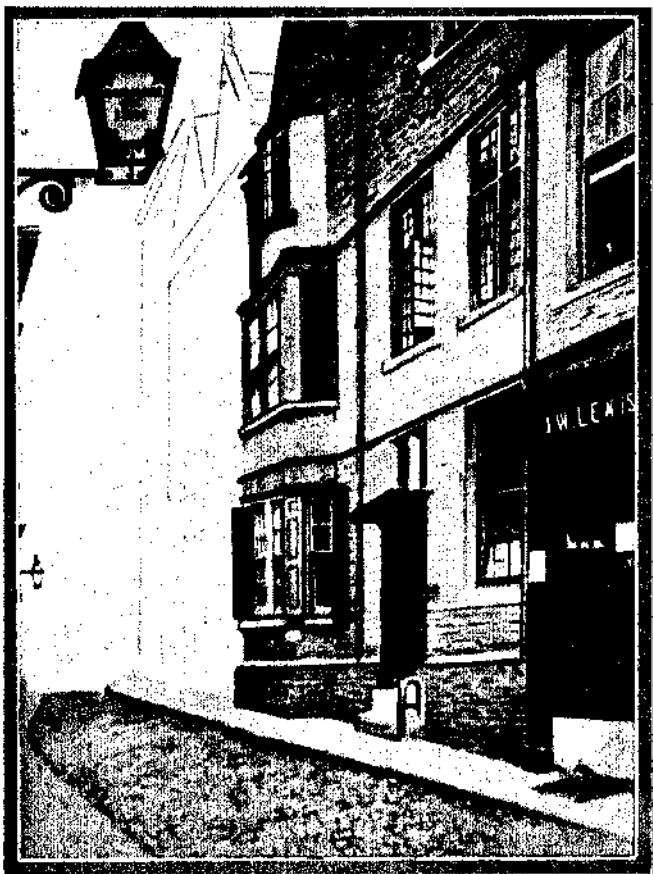
He speaks, in a song in *Occasional Pieces*, of

"In the days of my youth, when the heart is at its spring";
 and, again, in his *Childish Recollections* of the days

"When Youth her garland twined."

This persistent craving for the days that were gone—this "crying for a lost youth"—appears strange to those people who always misunderstood Byron. How few there are who have ever tried to understand him—tracing the evolution of the poet from early boyhood to manhood. Students of psychology write upon the the psychology of the boy of to-day, but few have endeavoured to analyse the development of the mind of Byron. He was surrounded by folks who were out of tune with him, out of sympathy. Environment plays a great part in the lives of many. Let it be appreciated that it played a great part in moulding Byron—as a man.

By an accident which, it is said, occurred at his birth,



THE HOUSE IN WHICH BYRON IS SAID TO HAVE WRITTEN
HIS FIRST "POEM"

From a sepia drawing by S. Clements, Nottingham

one of his feet was twisted out of its natural position, and this defect, chiefly because of the contrivances employed to remedy it, was a source of much pain and inconvenience to him during his early years. He was enabled, as the outcome of certain expedients, to draw on a boot, but this deformity unquestionably materially affected the mentality of this high-spirited boy.

In the summer of 1798, the young lord, at the age of eleven, arrived in Nottinghamshire, and took up residence at Newstead Abbey. For domestic reasons, and with the added object of having her son's foot treated, Mrs. Byron brought him to Nottingham. Their temporary abode was a house at the top of Pelham Street. It was here where he wrote his first "poem," it is believed, inspired by an elderly lady who lived in an adjacent street, and who had a strange fascination for the lunar body, to which sphere she expected to be transported when she had shuffled off this mortal coil. She was a pet aversion of his, and his earliest lines showed his feelings towards her. This initial ode ran as follows:

In Nottingham county there lives at Swine Green
As curst an old lady as ever was seen,
And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
She firmly believes she will go to the moon.

Swine Green was given by Moore as "Swan" Green, but the latter is incorrect. "Swine Green" was afterwards renamed Carlton Street.

In 1799, at the age of eleven, he went to London, there to be placed under the care of Dr. Baillie; and in the same year he became a pupil of Dr. Glennie at Dulwich.

The following year he was sent to Harrow School, and many verses emanated from his pen reminiscent of the happy days spent there.

In a poem entitled *The Tear*, included in the collection

of verses collated as *Hours of Idleness*, he refers to Harrow as

" Sweet scene of my youth !
Seat of Friendship and Truth."

and other references to his school-life follow. In his lines written *On a distant view of the Village and School of Harrow on the Hill*, he begins:

" Ye scenes of my childhood, where loved recollection
Embitters the present compared to the past."

Nevertheless, this term at Harrow to a boy of shy disposition, as Byron was in his youth, was not at first one of sheer delight. From his own account for the first year and a half he " hated Harrow "—

"Where science first dawn'd on the powers of reflection,
And friendships were form'd too romantic to last."

It has been said that Lord Byron's character was as fervid and impetuous in his boyhood as it ever was, a fact well illustrated by the warmth and brevity of his school associations. One biographer, referring to Byron's early "hatred" of Harrow, states that "the activity and sociableness of his nature soon overcame this repugnance; and from being, as he himself says, 'a most unpopular boy,' he rose at length to be a leader in all the sports, schemes, and mischief of the school."

Byron recalls this:

Again I revisit the hills where we sported,
The streams where we swam, and the fields where we fought;
The school where, loud warn'd by the bell, we resorted,
To pore o'er the precepts by pedagogues taught.

Byron's pugilistic successes were many. To quote his own words: "At Harrow, I fought my way very fairly, I think I lost but one battle out of seven, and that was to H., but he only won it by unfair treatment of his own boarding-house. I had not even a second."

Regarding his school-life generally, his own notebooks give some first-hand knowledge and are interesting reading.

" At Harrow I was remarked for the extent and readiness of my general information; but in all other respects idle, capable of great sudden exertions, but of few continuous drudgeries. My qualities were much more oratorical and martial than poetical; and Dr. Drury, my grand patron, had a great notion that I should turn out an orator, from my fluency, my turbulence, my voice, my copiousness of declamation, and my action."

" Peel, the orator and statesman, was my form-fellow. We were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend. There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all, masters and scholars—and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor I was at least his equal."

Byron's verses refer to his histrionic art.

Or, as Lear, I pour'd forth the deep imprecation,
By my daughters, of kingdom and reason deprived ,
Till, fired by loud plaudits and self adulation,
I regarded myself as a Garrick revived.

A further excerpt from Byron's notes follows:

" The prodigy of our school-days was George Sinclair (son of Sir John); he made exercises for half the school, verses at will, and themes without it. He was a friend of mine and in the same remove, and used at times to beg me to let him do my exercises—a request always most readily accorded upon a pinch. On the other hand, as he was of a pacific temperament, I fought for him, or thrashed others for him, or thrashed himself to make him thrash others, when it was necessary as a point of honour and stature that he should so chastise; and we were very good friends."

The consensus of opinion was that he was fonder of physical culture than of mind culture, although it is

shown that he did a "prodigious stock of multifarious reading, including almost the whole body of English poetry." Byron himself wrote that he was "always cricketing, rebelling, /vz^ing, and in all manner of mischiefs."

Of his love of sport he wrote :

" Yet, when confinement's lingering hour was done,
 Our sports, our studies, and our souls were one .
 Together we impell'd the flying ball :
 Together waited in our tutor's hall;
 Together join'd in cricket's manly toil,
 Or shared the produce of the river's spoil;
 Or, plunging from the green declining shore,
 Our pliant limbs the buoyant billows bore . . . "

Byron played cricket with the Harrow Eleven in the match of the season, *versus* Eton, scoring eleven runs in the first innings and two in the second. This was in 1805. He was not a great cricketer. When the late Dean Merivale asked John Arthur Lloyd, captain of the Harrow team that year, whether Byron really played in that all-important fixture, Lloyd answered very candidly: " Yes, and very badly, too! He would never have been in the Eleven if my counsel had been taken."

Byron himself had not much to say about the game itself, but he left a reminiscence of the sequel. " After the match we dined together," he wrote, "and went to the Haymarket Theatre, where we kicked up a row as you may suppose, with so many Etonians and Harrovians met at one place."

It is recorded that the general character that he bore among the masters was that of an idle boy, who could never learn anything. The Rev. Dr. Drury, headmaster of his school, gave his impressions, and these disprove the theory of the boy's capabilities. Dr. Drury wrote :

"Mr. Hanson, Lord Byron's solicitor, consigned him to my care at the age of 13½, with remarks that his education had been imperfect; that he was ill prepared for a public school, but that he thought there was *cleverness* about him. After his departure I took my young pupil into my study, and endeavoured to elicit from him some information with respect to his former amusements and associates, but with little or no effect—in fact, I soon found that a wild mountain colt had been submitted to my management. But there was *mind* in his eye. For some time a degree of shyness hung about him; however, his manner and temper soon convinced me that he might be led by a silken string to a point, rather than by a cable—and on that principle I acted. After some continuance at Harrow, and when the powers of his mind had begun to expand, Lord Carlyle desired to see me in town I accordingly waited upon his lordship. His object was to inform me of Lord Byron's expectations of property when he came of age, which he represented as contracted, and to inquire respecting his abilities. On the former circumstance I made no remark; as to the latter, I replied * He has talents, my lord, which will add lustre to his rank.' 'Indeed!!!' said his lordship, with a degree of surprise, that, according to my feeling, did not express in it all the satisfaction I expected." That phrase " will add lustre to his rank " was a true prognostication, as is universally known.

The boy Byron may have been outwardly blase and indifferent, but he was a youth with a soul. Those who knew him little scarce knew him at all; those who thought they knew him well really knew him but little. They told at Harrow how he would " retire thoughtfully within himself, and give way to moods uncongenial with the usual cheerfulness of his age." Those who classed him as lacking reflection and feeling were unacquainted with his thoughts, and knew not of the hours he used to sit wrapt in thought, " brooding lonely over the first emotions of passion and genius in his soul."¹¹

The following lines, written beneath an elm in the Churchyard at Harrow, tell how he frequently "mused the twilight hours away."

Spot of my youth whose hoary branches sigh,
 Swept by the bleeze that fans thy cloudless sky ;
 Where now alone I muse, who oft have trod,
 With those I loved, thy soft and verdant sod ;
 With those who, scatter'd far, perchance deploie,
 Like me, the happy scenes they knew before :
 Oh ! as I trace again thy winding hill,
 Mine eyes admire, my heart adoies thee still,
 Thou drooping Elm ! beneath whose boughs I lay,
 And frequent mused the twilight hours away ;
 Where, as they once were wont, my limbs recline
 But, ah ! without the thoughts which then were mine ;
 How do thy branches, moaning to the blast,
 Invite the bosom to recall the past,
 And seem to whisper, as they gently swell,
 " Take, while thou canst, a lingering, last farewell ' "

When fate shall chill, at length, this fever'd breast,
 And calm its cares and passions into rest,
 Oft have I thought, 'twould soothe my dying hour,—
 If aught may soothe when life resigns her power,—
 To know some humble grave, some narrow cell,
 Would hide my bosom where it loved to dwell ;
 With this fond dream, methinks, 'twere sweet to die—
 And here it lingers, here my heart might lie ;
 Here might I sleep where all my hopes arose ;
 Scene of my youth, and couch of my repose ;
 For ever stretch'd beneath this mantling-shade,
 Press'd by the turf where once my childhood play'd ;
 Wrapt by the soil that veils the spot I loved,
 Mix'd with the earth o'er which my footsteps moved :
 Blest by the tongues that charm'd my youthful ear,
 Mourn'd by the few my soul acknowledged here ,
 Deplored by those in early days allied,
 And unremember'd by the world beside.

This was written in September, 1807.

In this spot overhanging a picturesque valley and commanding a view of Windsor, would Byron "live to himself/¹ for many solitary hours; "perhaps," it was said, "indulging in those bright forethoughts of fame."

Here he dreamed; and in after years dreamed again of his early youth, as the following lines reveal :

Ye dreams of my boyhood, how much I regret you!
Unfaded your memory dwells in my breast;
Though sad and deserted, I ne'er can forget you ;
Your pleasures may still be in fancy possest.

To Ida full oft may remembrance restore me,
While fate shall the shades of the future unroll!
Since darkness o'ershadows the prospect before me,
More dear is the beam of the past to my soul.

Throughout his life he clung to the memories of those early years.

In his prose-picture of "The death of Calmar and Orla," he wrote;

" Dear are the days of youth !"

and the memory of Byron's youth was ever dear to him.

II

BYRON'S FIRST ROMANCE

BY J. A. HAMMERTON

HAD I married Miss Chaworth, perhaps the whole tenor of my life would have been different/' so wrote Lord Byron, and so it might have been; yet there is reason to doubt if even the consummation of his first love would have exercised the restraining influence which his turbulent spirit required, and the need of which he himself realised. For, deeply though Byron was in love with Mary Chaworth, and much though she, as a beautiful young woman, could inspire such affection in the breast of the youthful poet, it was only a boy's love for a girl, and, from what insight we can get into the character of his Mary, it is fairly evident that, had the two become united in marriage, the chances of the union having proved a happy one are very slight. Indeed it would be more correct to say that such refining and purifying influence as Byron ever received from womankind, excepting the beautiful sympathy of his half-sister, Augusta, came from the memory of his early passion for Mary Chaworth, and the fact that his youthful ideal of her had never been impaired by the closer contact of conjugal relationship. She always remained to him an inspiration, and her influence on his poetry was more elevating and

hallowing than it is likely her influence as a wife would have been.

It was early in 1803 that Byron, then studying at Harrow, met Miss Chaworth in London, and during the summer vacation of that year the young master of Newstead resided with his mother in Nottingham, the Abbey being let at that time to Lord Grey de Ruthyn. The tenant of Byron's ancestral halls was very indulgent to the lad, however, and knowing his great love for the old Abbey and its beautiful surroundings, he placed an apartment at Lord Byron's disposal. About three miles to the south-west of Newstead Abbey lies Annesley Hall, embowered in trees itself, though its farther surroundings may be truly described in Byron's lines:

Hills of Annesley, bleak and barren.

Annesley Hall was the property of Mary Chaworth :

Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honour'd race.

She, like Byron, was then a ward in Chancery. The Chaworths and the Byrons had long been the principal landowners in Nottinghamshire, and the two families had years before been brought into a relationship which gave in Byron's poetic fancy a romantic interest to his passion for the young woman. A historic duel is associated with the two names, Byron's grand-uncle and predecessor in the title: "the wicked lord," having in 1765 killed Mr. Chaworth, the cousin of Mary's father, in a foolish encounter for which he was subsequently tried in the House of Lords and acquitted.

The love of Byron for Mary Chaworth had thus in it something of the love of Romeo and Juliet. It is to this he refers in the following passage from one of his memorandum books :

Our union would have healed feuds in which blood had been shed by our fathers; it would have joined lands broad

and rich; it would have joined at least one heart, two persons not ill-matched in years (she is two years my elder), and—and—and—what had been the result?

During the vacation of the year 1803, Mrs. Byron, then staying in Nottingham, saw little of her son, and Nottingham saw less. He took full advantage of Lord Grey's invitation to occupy a chamber at Newstead, not now so much to be in the atmosphere of his forefathers as to be within easy distance of Annesley and his Mary. He tramped from the Abbey to the Hall day after day to enjoy the society of one who cared for him but slightly, always returning at night to Newstead, and alleging as his reason for not sleeping at Annesley that he was afraid of the family pictures of the Chaworths—he fancied "they had taken a grudge to him on account of the duel, and would coine down from their frames at night to haunt him." But one night he imagined he saw a "bogle" (Scotch for ghost), on his way to Newstead, and after that he nightly braved the family pictures at Annesley, sleeping there during the remainder of the "six short summer weeks," spent in the company of Miss Chaworth.

Byron's time at Annesley was mostly passed in riding with Miss Chaworth and her cousin, sitting in "idle reverie," or in firing with a pistol at a door which opens from the terrace, and upon which the shot-marks may still be seen. But his greatest delight was to sit in the drawing-room listening to Miss Chaworth playing the Welsh air, "Mary Anne," the Christian names of his inamorata, being his favourite piece. Yet all the time he knew that——

Her sighs were not for him ; to her he was
Even as a brother—but no more.

Nor, as Moore points out, was it at all probable, in the event of her affections having been disengaged, that

she would have selected Byron as the object of them. She seems to have always regarded him as a mere lad ; her two years' seniority taking her into the edge of womanhood, whence she looked on Byron as only a schoolboy, and we are not greatly impressed with the young lady's charity, since we know that a chance remark of hers—" Do you think that I could care anything for that lame boy?"—overheard by Byron, wounded him to the soul, and sent him away at once from Annesley, though late at night, heedless of all "bogles/¹ never stopping till he reached Newstead Abbey.

A year had gone before they met again, and on the hill at Annesley—the spot is pointed out to this day—the last interview, so beautifully recorded in "The Dream," the chief poetic souvenir of his first romance, took place:

I saw two beings in the hue of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green, andj̄mld declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields.
And both were young, and one was beautiful.
And both were young—yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The maid was on the verge of womanhood ;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him ; he had look'd
Upon it till it could not pass away.

"The next time I see you," said Byron in parting with Miss Chaworth. " I suppose you will be Mrs. Musters ;" and she answered: " I hope so." His departure he referred to :

He pass'd
 From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
 And mounting on his steed he went away;
 And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

The statement that the lover never again repassed the "hoary threshold," is rather more than a poetic licence. Miss Chaworth gave her hand and heart to Mr. John Musters in 1805 ; but, while accepting these, he surrendered only his hand in return. Their marriage joined the estates of Annesley and Wiverton to that of Colwick, Mr. Musters adding the historic name of Chaworth to his own patronymic. The union was not a happy one, Mr. Musters having a cold, unsympathetic nature, although like most of his family, he was a man of considerable personal attraction.

It was not until the end of the year 1808 that Byron saw his Mary again, and for the last time. Shortly before his departure from England he was invited to dine at Annesley, and there he went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Musters, the latter now a mother. The sight of their little daughter was a trial to the poet's sensitive nature, and the bitter-sweet sensations of the moment are recorded for us in the touching stanzas:

Well! thou art happy, and I feel
 That I should thus be happy too ;
 For still my heart regards thy weal
 Warmly as it was wont to do.

Thy husband's blest—and 'twill impart
 Some pains to view his happier lot :
 But let them pass—Oh ' how my heart
 Would hate him if he loved thee not!

When late I saw thy favourite child,
 I thought my jealous heart would break
 But when th' unconscious infant smiled,
 I kiss'd it for its mother's sake.

Mrs. Musters was at Colwick Hall in the winter of 1831, when the great Reform Riots took place, and the fright which she received when the mob looted the Hall, together with the shock to her delicate system occasioned by hiding in the shrubbery from the violence of the rioters, most probably hastened her end, the fair object of Byron's early and purest love dying in February, 1832. But she had been out of her mind before the poet's fiery spirit went home in that thunder-storm at Missolonghi eight years previously, for the last sad stanza of "The Dream" wails out:

My dream was past; it had no further change ;
 It was of a strange order, that the doom
 Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
 Almost like a reality—the one
 To end in madness—both in misery.

Memory-haunted Annesley Hall is still much the same as it was when Byron went there laden with his hopeless love for its young owner; the room in which Mary used to beguile him with her music, and most of the other apartments contain many interesting relics of the poet and his lost love.

Chief among the treasures is the pencilled original of the following lines written by Byron after the marriage of Miss Chaworth.

Hills of Annesley ! bleak and barren,
 Where my thoughtless childhood strayed •
 How the northern tempests warring
 Howl above thy jfuted shade !
 Now no more the hours beguiling,
 Former favourite haunts I see ;
 Now no more my Mary smiling,
 Makes ye seem a heaven to me.

[The above article, written by the editor of the "Harmsworth Encyclopaedia," was first printed in "The Sketch," Nov. 17M, 1897, and is reprinted by kind permission of the author.]

III

"A PRINCE OF LOVERS"

BYRON has been pictured as "The Prince of Lovers "

If a poet is judged by his verses then all poets are lovers. Byron, however, was a lover apart from his poetry alone, and has not Carlyle said that "a poet without love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility/'

In Byron's philosophy, what *was* Love?

One versed definition ran :

" Yes—it was love—if thoughts of tenderness,
Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,
And yet—on more than all! untired by time,
Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,
Could render sullen were she ne'er to smile,
Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent
On her one murmur of his discontent;
Which still would meet with joy, with calmness part,
Lest that his look of grief should reach her heart ;
Which nought removed, nor menaced to remove—
If there be love in mortals—this was love ! "

At another time he wrote:

" Love has made its best interpreter a sigh . . . "

And again:

" Soon or late love is his own avenger."

Byron contracted the love-germ early.

Almost his " first dash into poetry "—to use his own term—was in 1800, and the cause of this outburst was his juvenile passion for his cousin Margaret Parker. In his reminiscence of this he wrote : " I do not recollect anything equal to the transparent beauty of my cousin, or to the sweetness of her temper, during the short period of our intimacy. She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace. My passion had the usual effects upon me—I could not sleep; I could not eat; I could not rest. It was the texture of my life to think of the time that must elapse before we could meet again. But I was a fool then, and not much wiser now."

" 'Tis an old lesson ; time approves it true,
 And those who know it best deplore it most;
 When all is won that all desire to woo,
 The paltry prize is hardly worth the cost.

The difference between a man's love and that of a woman's he defined in the following lines:

" Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
 'Tis woman's whole existence ; man may range
 The court, the camp, church, vessel, and the mart,
 Sword, gown, gam, glory, offer m exchange ;
 Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart;
 And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
 Men have all these resources, but one—
 To love again, and be again undone."

There are many people who would associate everything that Byron wrote with the life of Byron himself. It must be remembered, however, that much of his poetry was not written by Byron as the boy and man, but by Byron, the poet.

Of the fair sex he wrote :

" And woman, lovely woman ! thou
 My hope, my comforter, my all!"

The young lord penned amatory verses to Mary; to Caroline, whose "lip would the soul of suspicion disarm"; to Emma, "one so dear"; of M——, "form'd so heavenly fair"; of L. of F. of M. S. G., and numerous other soul-mates.

There are those who think the worst of all Byron's love *affaires*, and would insist that *Don Juan* was his own biography.

In *Don Juan* he wrote, in Canto II, Stanza 21:

" Love's a capricious power. I've known it hold
 Out through a fever caused by its own heat,
 But be much puzzled by a cough or cold,
 And find a quinsy very hard to treat:
 Against all noble maladies his bold,
 But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet,
 Nor that a sneeze should interrupt his sigh,
 Nor inflammation redden his blind eye."

In Stanza 186 we get a dissertation on

" A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love " ;

and in 191 it is related that

" She loved, and was beloved—she adored,
 And she was worshipped . . . "

Although in Canto V, Stanza 2, Byron leads off by saying

" I, therefore, do denounce all amorous writing,"

yet the poet touches freely upon the subject throughout the romance of *Don Juan*; and in Canto XII, Stanza 13, he acclaims:

" ' Love rules the camp, the court, the grove—for love
 Is heaven, and heaven is love*: so sings the bard."

Which in the next stanza he transposes to

" Heaven is not Love, 'tis Matrimony."

Byron may have been designated a Disciple of Love, yet he refused to commit himself to the acceptance of

his critics' statement that his own personality was allied with that of the amorous *Don Juan*, (which his sister and a friend termed "that horrid, wearisome Don.")

If the late Mr. Maurice Hewlett's contention—that "on Byron's side at least there was no passion at all: nothing but vanity"—is true this may excuse or explain much that Byron did. On the other hand a much-read contemporary writer says that Byron "thought that he was a man of many loves, but he was only a man of many passions."

Of course, the gifted author of *Forest Lovers* may not have been correct in his deduction any more than in the other findings advanced in his chapter on "Byron at his worst" (included in his charming volume of *Extempore Essays*), but this opinion in particular is shared by others.

Reverting to the subject of his youthful love for Mary Chaworth, there is an interesting memento—a sequel to this blighted romance—in the *Byron Collection* in the Nottingham Public Libraries. This is a copy of the quarto edition of Moore's *Life of Byron*, with the cover and many pages partly destroyed or blackened by fire. This volume was snatched out of the bonfire made by the Reform rioters in the drawing-room at Colwick Hall in 1831, when Mrs. Musters (*nee* Mary Chaworth) and her maid had to hide for safety in the shrubbery.

Byron's verses to this Mary breathed of true love ; and "sweet is true love, though given in vain," as Tennyson said.

One cannot definitely discover the depth of personal feeling, as apart from that of a prolific poet, in his verses *On Parting*, in *Remind Me Not*, in *Love's Last Adieu*—and in a dozen other odes and dirges.

The following may be biographical :

" My youthful nymphs, alas ! are flown ;
 E is a wife, and C a mother,
 And Carolina sighs alone,
 And Mary's given to another ;
 And Cora's eye, which roll'd on me,
 Can now no more my love recall"...

Then there was his love for Augusta, his half-sister, who "understood " him, and who made allowances for his impetuous temperament; who stood by him

" When all around grew drear and dark,
 And reason half withheld her ray—
 And hope but shed a dying spark
 Which more misled my lonely way."

In a presentation copy of *Childe Harold* he wrote the following inscription : " To my dearest sister and my best friend, who has loved me much better than I deserved."

In these same " Stanzas to Augusta " he wrote :

" Thou stood'st as stands a lovely tree,
 That still unbroke, though gently bent,
 Still waves with fond fidelity
 Its boughs above a monument."

Byron often carried about with him a small Bible which she had presented to him.

There was an inscription cut by Byron on a tree at Newstead :

BYRON

20 SEPT. 1814

AUGUSTUS M. L.

To Augusta Mary Leigh he wrote those verses :

" My sister ! my sweet sister ! if a name
 Dearer and purer were, it should be thine.
 Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
 No tears, but tenderness to answer mine :
 Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
 A loved regret which I would not resign.
 There yet are two things in my destiny,—
 A world to roam through, and a home with thee."

A *facsimile* of the original manuscript is given in this volume.

The original of this, along with six other poems in Byron's handwriting, were formerly in the possession of the Hon. Augusta Leigh, who sold them, writing on the manuscript the pathetic words:

"I have prized these poems and admired them so much that only hard necessity could have induced me to part with them, or indeed, any—but these last of all."

In later years, after Byron had left Albion's shores, his name was associated with that of Countess Guiccioli, with whom he first became acquainted in the April of 1819.

The incident is related that the Countess used to watch Byron through a telescope when he went out riding. One day he was asked by a lady why he did not invite the Countess to accompany him. He drawled in his usual way :

"Consider, consider what a fright she would look in a habit."

Lord Blessington is reported to have once asked him :
"Do you think her handsome ?"

"Handsome ?" he replied. "She is a horror. She has red hair," which was not true.

"Why don't you take her out walking ?" he was asked.

"Because she shuffles like a duck," answered Byron,
"and I am lame ; a pretty couple !"

"Do you ever tell her this ?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What does she say ?"

"She scra-a-atches me," replied Byron.

It was said of the Countess that she was certainly not handsome, and that she had "small eyes, a large nose, and a long upper lip and chin."

Byron's love was not, however, confined to his *amours* with the fair sex alone; and he was a disciple of the French phrase of "*L' amitie est l' amour sans azles*"

" Why should my anxious breast repine,
 Because my youth is fled ?
 Days of delight may still be mine :
 Affection is not dead.
 In tracing back the years of youth,
 One firm record, one lasting truth
 Celestial consolation brings;
 Bear it, ye breezes, to the seat,
 Where first my heart lesponsive beat,—
 ' Friendship is Love without his wings "

Through few, but deeply chequer'd years,
 What moments have been mine !
 Now half obscured by clouds of tears,
 Now bright in rays divine ;
 Howe'er my future doom be cast;
 My soul, enraptured with the past
 To one idea fondly clings ;
 Friendship ! that though is all thine own,
 Worth worlds of bliss, that thought alone—
 ' Friendship is Love without his wings "

" Friendship may and often does grow into love, but love never subsides into friendship," he once said.

Byron valued friendship—" when Friendship bow'd before the shrine of Truth."

Some of the friendships that he contracted were not of class or caste alone, but real human friendships.

A fragment in *Hours of Idleness*, bears out this contention; the following lines being written to " E—," the son of one of his tenants on the Newstead estate:

Let Folly smile, to view the names
 Of thee and me in friendship twined ;
 Yet Virtue will have greater claims
 To love, than rank with vice combined.

And though unequal is thy fate,
Since title deck'd my higher birth I
Yet envy not this gaudy state ;
Thine is the pride of modest worth.

Our souls at least congenial meet,
Nor can thy lot my rank disgrace ;
Our intercourse is not less sweet,
Since worth of rank supplies the place.

The young lord formed a very early and warm affection here, appreciating the comradeship of this youth of " modest worth."

In *Childish Recollections*, he unburdened himself on his need for friendship—to fill the void caused by a father's death.

Yet, why should I alone with such delight,
Retrace the circuit of my former flight ?
Is there no cause beyond the common claim
Endear'd to all in childhood's very name ?
Ah ! sure some stronger impulse vibrates here,
Which whispers friendship will be doubly dear,
To one who thus for kindred hearts must roam,
And seek abroad the love denied at home.
Those hearts, dear Ida, have I found in thee—
A home, a world, a paradise to me.
Stern Death forbade my orphan youth to share
The tender guidance of a father's care.
Can rank, or e'en a guardian's name supply
The love which glistens in a father's eye ?
For this can wealth or titles sound atone,
Made, by a parent's early loss, my own ?
What brother springs a brother's love to seek ?
What sister's gentle kiss has prest my cheek ?
For me how dull the vacant moments rise,
To no fond bosom hnk'd by kindred ties !
Oft in the progress of some fleeting dream
Fraternal smiles collected round me seem ;

While still the visions to my heart are prest,
 The voice of love will murmur in my rest:
 I hear—I wake—and in the sound rejoice ;
 I hear again—but ah ! no brother's voice.
 A hermit, 'midst of crowds, I fain must stray
 Alone though thousand pilgrims fill the way ;
 While these a thousand kindred wreaths entwine,
 I cannot call one single blossom mine :
 What then remains ? In solitude to groan,
 To mix in friendship, or to sigh alone.
 Thus must I cling to some endearing hand,
 And none more dear than Ida's social band.

He had perforce to "mix in friendship, or to sigh alone." Byron found friends at Harrow, but how often he sighed alone!

The following lines, alluding to "Alonzo, best and dearest of my friends," referred to the Hon. John Wingfield, a brother of Lord Powerscourt:

Alonzo! best and dearest of my friends,
 Thy name ennobles him who thus commends :
 From this fond tribute thou canst gam no praise ;
 The praise is his who now that tribute pays.
 Oh ! in the promise of thy early youth,
 If hope anticipate the words of truth,
 Some loftier bard shall sing thy glorious name,
 To build his own upon thy deathless fame.

There is another reference in *Occasional Pieces*:

Yet since in danger courts abound
 Where spacious rivals glitter round,
 From snares may saints preserve you;
 And grant your love or friendship ne'er
 From any claim a kindred care,
 But those who best deserve you!

Byron addresses some lines *To the Earl of Clare*, and these breathe of the pleasure of a youthful friendship :

Friend of my youth ! when young we roved,
Like striplings, mutually beloved,
 With friendship's purest glow,
The bliss which wmg'd those rosy hours
Was such as pleasure seldom showers
 On mortals here below.

The recollection seems alone
Dearer than all the joys I've known,
 When distant far from you ;
Though pain, 'tis still a pleasing pain,
To trace those days and hours again,
 And sigh again, adieu !

In his verses in *Hours of Idleness*, the lines addressed *To George Earl Delawarr*, have a pathetic ring. They speak of the "friendships of childhood," but were written when "rude tempests" were evident.

Oh ! yes, I will own we were dear to each other ;
 The friendships of childhood, though fleeting, are true ,
The love which you felt was the love of a brother,
 Nor less the affection I chensh'd for you.

But Friendship can vary her gentle dominion ;
 The attachment of years in a moment expires :
Like Love, too, she moves on a swift-waving pinion,
 But glows not, like Love, with unquenchable fires.

Full oft have we wander'd through Ida together,
 And blest were the scenes of our youth, I allow ;
In the spring of our life, how serene is the weather !
 But winter's rude tempests are gathering now.

No more with affection shall memory blending,
 The wonted delights of our childhood retrace :
When pride steels the bosom, the heart is unbending,
 And what would be justice appears a disgrace.

Byron thus mourns a lost friend ; the following lines being addressed to Lord Delawarr:

Oh, friend ! for ever loved, for ever dear,
 What fruitless tears have bathed thy honour'd bier!
 What sighs re-echo'd to thy parting breath,
 Whilst thou wast struggling in the pangs of death !
 Could tears retard the tyrant in his course ;
 Could sighs avert his dart's relentless force;
 Could youth and virtue claim a short delay,
 Or beauty charm the spectre from his prey;
 Thou still hadst lived to bless my aching sight,
 Thy comrade's honour and thy friend's delight.
 If yet thy gentle spirit hover nigh
 The spot where now thy mouldering ashes lie,
 Here wilt thou read, recorded on my heart,
 A grief too deep to trust the sculptor's art.
 No marble marks thy couch of lowly sleep,
 But living statues there are seen to weep;
 Affliction's semblance bends not o'er thy tomb,
 Affliction's self deploras thy youthful doom.
 What though thy sire lament his failing line,
 A father's sorrows cannot equal mine '
 Though none, like thee, his dying hour will cheer,
 Yet other offspring soothe his anguish here :
 But who with me shall hold thy former place ?
 Thine image, what new friendship can efface ?
 Ah ! none !—a father's tears will cease to flow,
 Time will assuage an infant brother's woe ;
 To all, save one, is consolation known,
 While solitary friendship sighs alone.

The above lines were written in 1803, as also were the following, further to his friend " D—— " :

In thee, I fondly hoped to clasp
 A friend whom death alone could sever;
 Till envy, with malignant grasp,
 Detach'd thee from my breast for ever.
 True, she has forced thee from my breast,
 Yet, in my heart thou keep'st thy seat;
 There, there thine image still must rest,
 Until that heart shall cease to beat.

And, when the grave restores her dead,
 When life again to dust is given,
 On thy dear breast I'll lay my head—
 Without thee, where would be my heaven ?

It has been asserted that no man ever lived who had such devoted friends as had Byron.

" His power of attaching those about him to his person was such as no one I ever knew possessed," wrote the well-informed Hobhouse.

Byron, however, became embittered against some of his " friends," and we here find him lamenting:

I have tasted the sweets and the bitters of love ;
 In friendship I early was taught to believe ;
 My passion the matrons of prudence reprove ;
 I have found that a friend may profess, yet deceive.

The above lines, written in 1806, were addressed to the Rev. J. T. Becher, on his advising the young poet to mix more with society.

In *Occasional Pieces* again does Byron revile the false friend :

Not so in Man's maturer years,
 When Man himself is but a tool;
 When interest sways our hopes and fears,
 And all must love and hate by rule.

With fools in kindred vice the same,
 We learn at length our faults to blend;
 And those, and those alone, may claim
 The prostituted name of friend.

Elsewhere he speaks of friendship's limitations :

What friend for thee, howe'er inclined,
 Will deign to own a kindred care ?
 Who will debase his manly mind,
 For friendship every fool may share ?

Byron wrote in 1823: "We should live with our friends, not, as the worldly-minded philosopher says, as

though they may one day become our enemies, but as though we may one day lose them ; and this maxim, strictly followed, will not only render our lives happier while together, but will save the survivors from those bitter pangs that memory conjures up, of slights and unkindnesses offered to those we have lost, when too late for atonement, and arms remorse with double force because it is too late."

Byron had many friends, yet he was ever deploring the lack of them.

I loved—but those I loved are gone ;
 Had friends—my early friends are fled :
 How cheerless feels the heart alone
 When all its former hopes are dead !
 Though gay companions o'er the bowl
 Dispel awhile the sense of ill ;
 Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul,
 The heart—the heart—is lonely still.

He had various periods of loneliness.

His inscription on the monument of "Boatswain," a Newfoundland dog—previously referred to by Alderman Huntsman in this volume—concludes with the lines:

"I only had one friend, and here he lies!"

Regarding Byron's favourite dog, there is an interesting document in the Byron Collection in the Nottingham Public Libraries—a statement signed by Mrs. Francis, a servant at Newstead Abbey.

"I, A. Francis, widow of——Francis, do hereby certify that I lived as servant to the late Lord Byron at Newstead Abbey, and that my husband was gamekeeper for Lord Byron at the time that his lordship's favourite dog, 'Boatswain,' died, and to whose memory Lord Byron erected a monument at Newstead Abbey.

"That I sold to Mr. W. M. Kidd, of Nottingham, two

brass collars, with the name of Lord Byron engraved upon them by old Mr. Carr of Nottingham.

" That one of the said collars was the identical collar worn by 'Boatswain,' and the other by his companion, 'Thunder,' who was shot by order of Lord Byron, when 'Boatswain' died. The smaller of the two collars was the one worn by 'Boatswain,' and is rather mutilated, which was done by a bear that was kept by Lord Byron for his own amusement, and with whom 'Boatswain' had many severe contests.

" 'Boatswain's' companion, 'Thunder,' although the largest dog, was not so courageous, and could seldom be induced to face the bear.

" 'Boatswain' died mad, but the cause of his malady was never made known to his lordship, and was as follows, viz.—He was very fond of going with the post-boy to Mansfield for the letters, and on one of these short journeys he was bitten by a mad dog in Mansfield market-place, and when he died mad, his lordship ordered 'Thunder' to be shot from fear of any accident."

Signed : *A. Francis.*

Witness to Mrs. Francis signature: *E. M. Kidd.*

Byron loved his dog.

He loved his friends, whether they were men or women.

In conclusion, one recalls his lines :

" I've seen your stormy seas and stormy women,
And pity lovers rather more than seamen."

IV

A GHOST OF VENICE

BY CECIL ROBERTS

There's the Contessa Guiccioli!
Is she flesh or legend now,
She whose face the long-dead poet
Looked upon, whose girlish brow
Crowned with snow such eyes of wonder?
'Tis her famished ghost, I vow!

Yet—there is a note still lingers
Of the voice that answered when,
Such a head on such a bosom,
Lay the poet-lord, whose pen
Took the very breath of Europe.
Yes, it sounds, I think, as then.

Once, and only once, I saw them,
On a far-off April day
In a salon set in Venice,
On the Grand Canal; they say
'Twas that very night enslaved them,
Till he went the war-like way.

Yes, he was a man, *per Dio!*
Such a head to look upon—
Proud, and with a flash of spirit
That, though forty years have gone,
I recall the thrill that swept us
Seeing then the Destined One.

Ah, they gossiped, but 'twas Venice;
Truth or tale, it mattered not.
"La ! Lord Byron " cried the lady—
" Not another word! " and what
The story was we'll never know
That left the lady very hot.

Yes, he was a charmer. Wicked ?
Well—depends on where you are,
What is called romance in Venice
May be sin at Zanzibar !
Venice is the gate, remember,
Of the East—where rules Ishtar.

Not that I support the rumour ;
Let us watch it, you and I
That we are not less than human,
Else, being caught, we may not cry
On the world to pity frailty.
Others judged them, never I !

Sixteen years, such girlish beauty
Breaking into blossom then ;
Famous, handsome, with a manner
Placing him apart from men ;—
How they talked and laughed and parted,
Sighed—" *A rivederci* " when

Came the gondolier to take her,
Gliding down the starlit water,
Sitting at her side the husband,
Hateful, old and rich, who bought her,
Just a child, sweet, knowing only
What the convent nuns had taught her.

Do you marvel that, impatient,
Her young wings spread out to take
Such a flight in Love's dominion
As they only know who make
Full surrender to the moment,
Ruthless of the bonds they break ?

Byron, wearied with much loving,
Had not been the world's applauded
And escaped the world's loud censure--
'Tis a way the much rewarded
Suffer for the light upon them.
Yet the end, it is accorded,

Fitted well the baffled eagle.
Do you think she said him nay
When he found a cause to die for ?
Lips that loved did not cry " Stay !"
All his will was hers, so found he
Night awhile and deathless day.

Yes, a ghost of the young Countess !
Beauty, youth, all gone with Time,
But there's something she's denied it--
Fast within a book of rime
Beats the heart and hour immortal
That knew such a love sublime.

A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER

(Lines on reading the new BYRON Letters)

Though Byron's poems fail to please
 Our literary super-Borgians ;
 Though he is scouted at the teas
 Frequented by the neo-Georgians ;
 Though modern bards can wail and cry
 More shrilly, freed from metric fetters,
 Few modern critics can deny
 The charm and frankness of his Letters.

" The pageant of his bleeding heart"
 Has lost its freshness—none can doubt it ;
 But here, discarding conscious art,
 He does not " make a song about it ; "
 Here, with a candour so intense
 That we are forced into forgiving,
 In every mood and every tense
 He conjugates the joy of living.

Here, too, as in a glass we see
 The Regency and all its scandals,
 Dandies and dames of high degree,
 Poets and Philistines and Vandals ;
 When BYRON, famous for his " pomes,"
 The champion *Cupidon dechainé*,
 Wrought havoc in a hundred homes,
 For none of all he wooed could say nay.

Freed from the moralizing vein
 Of modern " gentlemen with dusters,"
 We see his victims mirrored plain—
 The GUICCIOLI and MARY MUSTERS ;
 And watch the juggling amorist

Able at once to sport and dally
 With all the hearts upon his list—
 A feat eclipsing CINQUEVALLI !
 Sirens are here and termagants,
 Ill-mannered though extremely well born,
 And, cleverest of confidantes,
 The most amazing Lady MELBOURNE?
 Unhappy CLARE and wise JOHN CAM,
 Advising, warning and consoling,
 And Lady CAROLINE, a LAMB
 Famed for unlamblike caracoling.
 How sane his serious interludes,
 How witty are his frequent mockings
 Of politicians and of prudes
 And highly talented blue-stockings !
 Madame DE STAEL, whose lips distilled
 Ink rather than *celestia mella*;
 And the decorous and well-drilled
 "Rectangular" Miss ANNABELLA.
 Upon his birth no kindly stars
 Nor " the sweet influence of the Pleiades "
 Looked down, but Venus' self and Mars
 Watched o'er this modern Alcibiades.
 Who drank of pleasure's midmost font,
 Who loved too madly " beauty's daughters,"
 Strong swimmer of the Hellespont,
 Yet overwhelmed in life's dark waters
 Courted and praised on every hand,
 Then ostracized and execrated ;
 Too swiftly crowned, too harshly banned,
 Much loved yet miserably mated ;
 Though grievous sins his record taint,
 Though lurid mists his name environ,
 These self-revealing letters paint
 The splendour, not the shame, of BYRON.

[*The foregoing verses appeared in " Punch " of March 8, 1922, and are here reprinted by courtesy of Messrs Bradbury Agnew & CO., Ltd., the proprietors of " Punch"*]

THE BYRON MYSTERY

THE CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

Man hunts, pursues, destroys, his fellow man ;
 Perchance would blast his memory,
 And crush his grave with calumny ;
 But death must set the victim free . . .

[EDITORIAL NOTE . When the idea of this volume was first conceived it was not intended to introduce any reference whatever to the Byron "scandal." Many people still refuse to think of Byron solely as a poet, however, and invariably persist in associating his name with his private actions. Mention of Byron, in too many instances, results in undue emphasis of his youthful indiscretions and domestic differences—and forgetfulness as regards his poetry! People there are who can recount *ad nauseum* his alleged escapades and passionate intrigues but who cannot quote two consecutive lines from his verses. Byron the Poet is too often obscured by Byron the Man, Some critics of Byron's poems may cynically aver that this should readily be forgiven; but too often the case against Byron has been over-elaborated and the other side deliberately unheeded. Fuller knowledge of the circumstances will not absolve Byron from blame, but at least it will prove that there are two view-points in every case. The following matter is collated to strengthen the case for the defence.]

And if my voice break forth, 'tis not that now
 I shrink from what is suffered : let him speak
 Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,
 Or seen my mind's convulsion leave it weak ;
 But in this page a record will I seek.
 Not in the air shrill these my words disperse,
 Though I be ashes ; a far hour shall wreak
 The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
 And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse !

That curse shall be Forgiveness,—Have I not—
 Hear me, my mother Earth ! behold it, Heaven !—
 Have I not had to wrestle with my lot ?
 Have I not suffer'd things to be forgiven ?
 Have I not had my brain sear'd, my heart riven,
 Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away ?
 And only not to desperation driven,
 Because not altogether of such clay
 As rots into the sorals of those whom I survey.

From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
 Have I not seen what human things could do ?
 From the loud roar of foaming calumny
 To the small whisper of the as paltry few,
 And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
 The Janus glance of whose significant eye,
 Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,
 And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
 Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.

But I have lived, and have not lived in vain :
 My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
 And my frame perish even in conquering pain ;
 But there is that within me which shall tire
 Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire ;
 Something unearthly, which they deem not of,
 Like the remember'd tone of a mute lyre,
 Shall on their soften'd spirits sink, and move
 In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love.

Childe Harold, Canto iv., 134-137.

Lord Byron wrote in 1820:

" The man who is exiled by a faction has the consolation of thinking that he is a martyr; he is upheld by hope, and the dignity of his cause, real or imaginary: he who withdraws from the pressure of debt may indulge in the thought that time and prudence will retrieve his circumstances: he who is condemned by the law has a term to his banishment, or a dream of its abbreviation; or, it may be, the knowledge or the belief of some injustice of the law, or of its administration in his own particular: but he who is outlawed by general opinion, without the intervention of hostile politics, illegal judgment, or embarrassed circumstances, whether he be innocent or guilty, must undergo all the bitterness of exile, without hope, without pride, without alleviation. This case mine . . ."

The " world and his wife" were against him, he lamented ; and his letter to his friend Moore, the Irish poet, gives his innermost thoughts :

"... I am at war with ' all the world and his wife,' or rather all the world and my wife are at war with me, and have not yet crushed me, whatever they may do. I don't know that in the course of a hair-breadth existence I was ever, at home or abroad, in a situation so completely uprooting of present pleasure, or rational hope for the future as this same. I say this because I think so and feel it, but I shall not sink under it, the more for that mode of considering the question I have made up my mind. By the way, however, you must not believe all you hear on the subject, and don't attempt to defend me. If you succeeded in that it would be a mortal or an immortal offence. Who can bear refutation? I have but a very short answer for those whom it concerns, and all the activity of myself and some vigorous friends have not yet fixed on any tangible ground or personage on which or with whom I can discuss matters in a summary way with a fair pretext, though I nearly had nailed one yesterday, but he evaded by— what was judged by others—a satisfactory explanation, I

speak of circulators—against whom I have no enmity, though I must act according to the common code of usage, when I hit upon those of a serious order. I must go and dress to dmc. My little girl is in the country, and, they tell me, is a very fine child, now nearly three months old. Lady Noel (my mother-in-law, or, rather, at law) is at present overlooking it. Her daughter (Miss Milbanke, that was) is, I believe, in London with her father. A Mrs. C. (now a kind of house-keeper and spy of Lady N's) who in her better days was a washerwoman, is supposed to be, by the learned, very much the occult cause of our late domestic discrepancies. In all this business I am the sorriest for Sir Ralph. He and I are equally punished through *magis parts quam similes* in our affliction. Yet it is hard for both to suffer for the fault of one. And so it is. I shall be separated from my wife—he will retain his . . ."

Moore's comments upon this letter were as follows :

" With respect to the causes that may be supposed to have led to this separation, it seems needless with the characters of both parties before our eyes, to go in quest of any very iemote or mysterious reasons to account for it. I have already in some observations on the general character of men of genius, endeavoured to point out those peculiarities both in disposition and habitudes by which in the far greater number of instances they have been found unfitted for domestic happiness; of these defects (which are, as it were, the shadow that genius casts, and too generally it is to be feared in proportion to its stature) Lord Byron could not, of course, fail to have inherited his share, in common with all the painfully gifted class to which he belonged. How thoroughly with respect to one attribute of his temperament which he possessed—one that sicklies o'er the face of happiness itself—he was understood by the person most interested in observing him, will appear from an anecdote, related by himself," and which follows ;

" People have wondered at the melancholy which runs through my writings, others have wondered at my personal gaiety; but I recollect once, after an hour in which I had been sincerely and particularly gay, and rather brilliant in company, my wife replying to me when I said (upon her remarking my high spirits). / And yet, Bell, I have been called and miscalled melancholy; you must see how falsely frequently ?' ' No, Byron,' she answered, 'it is not so; at heart you are the most melancholy of mankind, and often when apparently gayest."

Moore's comments are continued :

" As, from the state of their means, his lady and he saw but little society, his only relief from the thoughts which a life of such embarrassment brought with it in those avocations which his duty as a member of the Drury Lane committee imposed upon him, and here, in this most unlucky connection with the theatre, one of the fatalities of his short year of trial as husband lay. From the reputation which he had previously acquired for gallantries and the sort of reckless and boyish levity to which often in very ' bitterness of soul' he gave way, it was not difficult to bring suspicion upon some of those whose acquaintance which his frequent intercourse with the green room induced him to form, or even (as in one instance was the cause) to connect with his name injuriously that of a person to whom he had scarcely ever addressed a single word. Notwithstanding, however, this ill-starred concurrence of circumstances, which might have palliated any excesses, either of temper or conduct, into which they drove him, it was, after all, I am persuaded, to no such serious causes that the unfortunate alienation, which so soon ended in disunion, is to be traced. ' In all the marriages I have ever seen,' says Steele, 'most of which have been unhappy ones, the great cause of evil has proceeded from slight occasions,' and to this I think the marriage under our consideration would not be found upon enquiry to be an exception. Lord Byron himself, indeed, when at Cephalonia, a short time before his

death, seems to have expressed, in a few words, the whole pith of the mystery. An English gentleman with whom he was conversing on the subject of Lady Byron, having ventured to enumerate to him the various causes he had heard alleged for the separation, the noble poet who seemed amused at their absurdity and falsehood, said, after listening to them all—'The causes, my dear sir, were too simple to be easily found out.' In truth, the circumstances, so unexampled, that attended their separation, the last words of the parting wife being those of the most playful affection, while the language of the deserted husband towards the wife was in a strain, as the world knows, of tenderest eulogy—are in themselves a sufficient proof that, at the time of their parting, there could have been no very deep sense of injury on either side. It was not until afterwards that in both bosoms the repulsive force came into operation, when, to the party who had taken the first decisive step in the strife, it became naturally a point of pride to persevere in it with dignity, and this unbendingness provoked, as naturally, in the haughty spirit of the other, a strong feeling of resentment, which overflowed at last in acrimony and scorn. If there be any truth, however, in the principle that 'they never pardon who have done the wrong,' Lord Byron, who to the last disposed to reconciliation, proved, so far at least, his conscience to have been unhaunted by any very disturbing consciousness of aggression . . ."

Thomas Moore, who edited an edition of Byron's *Letters and Journals*, with a biography, in 1830, died in 1852.

In 1869, seventeen years after the Irish poet's death, and forty-five after the death of Byron, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, famous as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, became notorious in the eyes of Byron-lovers by perpetrating *The True Story of Lady Byron's Life and Lady Byron vindicated*, containing scandalous allegations against Lord Byron, which need not be here

recapitulated. Their publication severely injured the American novelist's reputation—and Lord Byron's.

Lady Byron died in 1860, nine years before Mrs. Stowe startled the realm of literature by declaring that, a few years prior to her decease, Lady Byron had made a confidante of her and had told her that the accusations against Byron were only too true.

Lord Byron was dead, Lady Byron was dead, and Mrs. Leigh (Byron's half-sister) was dead—and Mrs. Stowe remained to "tell the tale!"

"Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection" once wrote Byron; and Mrs. Stowe found in this half-forgotten scandal the nucleus of a sensation to please the scandal-mongers of the period.

The words of Sheridan—a contemporary of Byron's—are recalled: "In all cases of slander currency, whenever the forger of the lie is not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers."

But Byron was dead—and his traducers flourished, led by one who could create lovable characters in fiction and defame one in real life.

If Lord Byron had his detractors, out of this "school for scandal" arose many who were proud to stand in his defence.

William Howitt—a contemporary of Byron, an author of note, and a Nottinghamshire man proud of Byron's associations with the county—was one of the first to take up the case for the defence. He wrote:

"Being temporarily at a distance from town, and, therefore not seeing all that may have appeared in the newspapers regarding Mrs. Beecher-Stowe's extraordinary attack upon the memory of Lord Byron, I hope that I may have been forestalled in some of my observations on the subject of good old English fairplay, especially towards the dead. But I do

not feel that I should be justified in my conscience if I did not on such an occasion state some facts which my personal knowledge of Lady Byron made familiar to me. I knew her for some years, and visited her at her house in town, at her summer residence at Richmond, at Eton, and met her at her son-in-law Lord Lovelace's, at Ockham. She also visited us at Esher and Highgate. I am sure that Lady Byron was a woman of the most honourable and conscientious intentions, but she was subject to a constitutional idiosyncrasy of a most peculiar kind, which rendered her, when under its influence, absolutely and persistently unjust. I am sure from my own observation of her that, when seized by this peculiar condition of the nerves, she was hopelessly under its control. Through this the changes in her mood were sudden, and most painful to all about her. I have seen her of an evening in the most amiable, cordial and sunny humour, full of interest and sympathy; and I have seen her the next morning come down as if she had lain all night not on a feather bed, but on a glacier—frozen, as it were, to the very soul, and no efforts on the part of those around her could restore her for the day to a genial social warmth. In such moments she seemed to take sudden and deep impressions against persons and things, which, though the worst might pass away, left a permanent effect. . . . Now apply the spirit of these facts to Lady Byron's separation from her husband and to her conduct since. In all the accounts received from Lord Byron, by Lady Blessington, by Moore, by Captain Medwin, Byron is made on all occasions, and to the last, to assert that he never knew the cause why Lady Byron separated from him. Mrs. Stowe says that Byron in a manner drove her from his house. I believe, and all the accounts of this controversy bear that impression, that the simple fact was that Byron earnestly urged her to go to her father and endeavour to obtain money to get the sheriff's officers out of the house, which the announcement of his having married a great heiress had brought upon him. On the way, Moore says on Byron's

authority, she wrote to him in an affectionate, playful humour; and Captain Medwin, on Byron's authority, too, says, opening her note with the phrase 'Dear Duck.' There can be little doubt that the cause of her altered conduct was from her father representing that Byron would run through her fortune, and she must leave him. Backed up by some such odious story by Lady Noel, and her woman, Mrs. Charlemont, as Mrs. Stowe gives. However, Byron asserts that all his entreaties were vain to induce Lady Byron to assign a reason for her separation."

"Lady Byron has been highly praised for her silence on this subject, as a noble reticence—a refusal on her part to make charges against her husband, which would necessarily stigmatize her own child, and subsequently her own grandchildren. But mark !" emphasizes his defender, "No sooner was Byron dead, having left a carefully-written memoir in his own justification, than Lady Byron sought to buy this up. She, in fact, never ceased her exertions till she had procured the destruction of her husband's own carefully prepared defence. No sooner was this accomplished, no sooner had she stifled his posthumous cries for a fair hearing by the public, than, if we are to believe Mrs. Stowe, she proceeds to blast his character to all posterity, by not merely whispering into the ear charges of the most damning and revolting nature, but she put these into writing. What, I ask, then, is become of the noble reticence and forbearance of Lady Byron? Can the English public, can any honourable person, sanction for a moment a proceeding of this nature? Can anyone be allowed to destroy the evidence of their opponents, and then proceed to utter the vilest charges against them? It is no question with me what may have been the amount of Lord Byron's crimes; but I assert that the moment that Lady Byron deprived her deceased husband of the opportunity of self-justification she deprived herself of every right to advance fresh charges against him. Her lips and her pen were sealed up by the most inexorable justice, from uttering not simply

assertions without proof, as in the present case, but even the most thoroughly evidenced facts in the cause between them. This, I am certain, will be the ultimate verdict of the British public, or it must abandon the noble spirit of equity which has distinguished it in every age of its national existence. It would do this in the case of its meanest citizen, much more in that of one of its erring but most illustrious poets."

There was something appropriate in Byron's own words : " Scandal has something so piquant, it is a sort of cayenne to the mind."

Even if Byron was not " done to death by slanderous tongues"—as Shakespeare wrote—yet he was universally maligned, and much of his fair fame was murdered by the tongue of slander.

The controversy raged, and William Hewitt further took up the cudgels on Byron's behalf:

"The great fundamental fact is that all the dark and revolting charges against Lord Byron are avowed to proceed from the very person, who, before making them, took care to destroy the evidence of the person against whom they were made. That is, Lady Byron, during the life of her husband, had sternly refused to make any explanation to him, or to the public, of the causes of her separation. If she had any to make, the proper time to do that was whilst her husband was living, and, if not true, could have rebutted them. She should have done this or for ever after held her peace. But when her husband was dead, and died with the hundred times repeated declaration of his ignorance of her reasons for leaving him; when she had accomplished the destruction of her husband's statement of his side of the question, and then written, as we are informed, her own representation of it; when all those who knew him best, who had his full confidence, and could best defend him, had followed him to the tomb, we find her, in open breach of her solemnly reiterated assertions of an inviolable silence on the subject, coming out (if Mrs. Stowe's

story be true), with the most damning calumnies which it is possible for a woman to utter against her husband. I beg to ask once more whether it be the opinion of the justice-loving British public that this style of conduct can for a moment receive its sanction? If a practice of this kind can be tolerated, then will no man's reputation be safe from 'the wife of his bosom.' Any wife with a pique may, the moment that the breath is out of her husband's body, rifle his cabinets, overhaul the most sacred records of his past life, and then with impunity proceed to blacken his memory, with the most odious pigments of hell. This, however, is precisely what the zealous advocates of Lady Byron's unwarrantable proceeding, recommend to us as admissible. I have no hesitation in asserting that it is a proceeding as odious, as abhorrent of every right feeling, as opposed to and destructive of every principle that is sacred in life, as it is pre-eminently un-English. I repeat it, that the moment that Lady Byron caused to be destroyed the memoir of her husband, she put herself out of court on the question, and rendered it impossible that it can ever be settled except upon defective and *exparte* evidence.

" Beyond this primal fact, which ought to stand for ever broadly, strongly and un eclipsed by verbiage or sophistry before the public eye, it is scarcely worth while to go; but there are one or two minor facts made patent by recent correspondence. It is perfectly clear, from the letters of Lady Anne Bernard to Lady Byron, quoted by Lord Lindsay, that for years after the separation Lady Byron had no idea of any such crime as Mrs. Stowe makes her allege against Lord Byron, thirteen years ago. There is not a shadow of a shade of any such cause assigned for the separation. The causes enumerated are violent conduct, affected insanity and general licentiousness. That Lord Byron had no idea of any such charge is satisfactorily shown; that Lady Byron had no such idea, the fact, so well observe, of her naming her infant daughter after Augusta Leigh is most conclusive proof. If Lady Byron afterwards fell into such a belief, it must have

been from the fiendish insinuation of some base person like the woman ^c born in a garret, in the kitchen bred.'

" One more fact. The writers, English and American, who claim for Mrs. Stowe the peculiar and almost exclusive confidence of Lady Byron on this subject, are dealing in mere fudge. It is well known to a certain number of persons that Lady Byron, with all her affected strength of character, had the weakness to make such confidantes of most of her lady friends of long standing. Most of these ladies are now dead, and prudently 'died and made no sign.' But there is one at least still living who possesses a series of letters from Lady Byron, containing not horrors of the Beecher-Stowe type, but heavy charges not only against her husband, but against her own daughter.

"What are we to do with a person at once so virtuous and so vituperative—so saintly in one corner of her mind, and harbouring in another that which does not spare even her own flesh and blood? What are we to say to the noble reticence of a wife who destroys her dead husband's defence, outwaits his remaining friends, and then furnishes to her lady adherents all round a sheaf of poisoned arrows to be shot off when not an opposing shield can be raised against them? It is the story of Orpheus over again—torn to pieces by a mob of infuriated women!

" Certain people talk of Byron being 'now unmasked.' He was the very last man to wear a mask. His faults lay from first to last open to the day. We know no more positively of him now than we did. We have no proof whatever—only one-sided assertions; but much counter proof; and we are bound to characterise this attempt to swear away his literary and moral character—such as it was—as most monstrous. I have no desire to condemn Lady Byron. No one honours certain parts of her character more than I do; but she has condemned herself by her breach of her once honourable silence, and by the irreparable wrong done to Byron by the destruction of his justificatory case.

" I exhort you, my countrymen, to revert to and to hold fast and immovably by those great principles of justice which have distinguished us in all ages. 'No man,' says our law and our deepest moral sentiment, 'shall be condemned unheard.' But if Lord Byron be condemned it must be unheard. His lady has murdered him in his sleep; in the last great sleep as it regards this world. She has stifled his voice from the tomb. And let her not persuade you, under these circumstances, that even his poetry is a sham, an empty theatric impersonation studiously got up for effect. In whatever he wrote Byron was only too real. At midnight, penning *Don Juan*, his mind floated in the sphere of a lawless world and its reminiscences. When he wrote his dark dramas of *Cain* and *Manfred*, he was anxiously endeavouring to probe those gloomy mysteries of a corrupted human nature, which Shakespeare, Dante., Goethe, had explored before him, and, contemporaneously Shelley, yet with no man accusing them. In *Childe Harold* he shut out the lower and injurious world and its associations, and rose into a nobler and purer element. He ascended into rapport with the spirit of the august and eternal mountains, and their sublime sense of purity and awe. A voice of loftiest inspiration, a loving genuine voice of man's highest and noblest aspirations then awoke in him. In that spirit he wrote one of the sweetest and noblest poems which live in any language—a poem which breathes the true trumpet tones of imperishable freedom; a tone of God's and man's justice to universal man, a glorious heritage of our language and our common nature; a tone even of religion with which the mathematical mediocrity which now seeks to crush him could never sympathise, because it could not live up and into it.

" Great, immense allowances are to be made for a man like Byron, struggling with a blood and constitution infected by a mad and wicked ancestry. It might be a great misfortune for Lady Byron to marry such a man—which she did with her eyes open—but it was a terrible one for him to marry a

woman who could desert him living and defame him dead. Poor Byron! But spite of all nature's and woman's wrongs; spite of all defamatory efforts, his best sentiments shall animate our children to the love of liberty, of nature, and of patriotism as long as the nation and its language last . . ."

The mention, in William Hewitt's foregoing defence of Byron, of Lady Anne Barnard refers to Lord Lindsay's addition to the controversy originated by Mrs. Stowe's article in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

Lord Lindsay's object was to prove that what was stated on Lady Byron's supposed authority was at variance in all respects with what she stated immediately after the separation, when everything was fresh in her memory. He transcribed the subjoined, and a letter from Lady Byron herself (written in 1818) from *ncordi*, or private family memories, in Lady Anne Barnard's autograph, which he had in his possession. He gave this explanation of the writer: "The late Lady Anne Barnard, who died in 1825, a contemporary and friend of Burke, Windham, Dundas, and a host of the wise and good of that generation, and remembered as the authoress of *Auld Robin Gray*, had known Lady Bryon from infancy, and took a warm interest in her, holding Lord Byron in corresponding repugnance, not to say prejudice, in consequence of what she believed to be his harsh and cruel treatment of her young friend."

The following is Lady Barnard's contribution to the inquiry:

"The separation of Lord and Lady Byron astonished the world, which believed him a reformed man as to his habits, and a becalmed man as to his remorse. He had written nothing that appeared after his marriage till the famous *Fare thee well*, which had the power of compelling those to pity the writer who were not well aware that he was not the unhappy person he affected to be. Lady Byron's misery was

whispered soon after her marriage, and his ill-usage; but no word transpired, no sign escaped from her. She gave birth shortly to a daughter, and when she went, as soon as she was recovered, on a visit to her father's, taking her little Ada with her, no one knew that it was to return to her lord no more. I heard of Lady Byron's distress; of the pains he took to give a harsh impression of her character to the world. I wrote to her, and entreated her to come and let me see and hear her, if she conceived that my sympathy or counsel could be any comfort to her. She came—but what a tale was unfolded by this interesting young creature who had so fondly hoped to have made a young man of genius and romance (as she supposed) happy! They had not been an hour in the carriage which conveyed them from the church, when, breaking into a malignant sneer, he said: 'Oh! what a dupe you have been to your imagination. How is it possible a woman of your sense could form a wild hope of reforming me? Many are the tears you will have to shed ere that plan is accomplished. It is enough for me to know that you are my wife for me to hate you. If you were the wife of any other man I own you might have charms . . .' I, who listened, was astonished. 'How could you go on after this, my dear?' I said. 'Why did you not return to your father's?' 'Because I had not a conception he was in earnest; because I reckoned it a bad jest, and told him so—that my opinions of him were very different from his of himself, otherwise he would not find me at his side. He laughed it over when he saw me appear hurt, and I forgot what had passed till forced to remember it. I believe he was pleased with me, too, for a little while. I suppose it had escaped his memory that I was his wife.' But she described the happiness they enjoyed to have been unequal and perturbed. Her situation in a short time might have entitled her to some tenderness, but she made no claim on him for any. He sometimes reproached her for the motives that had induced her to marry him—all was 'vanity,' the vanity of Miss Milbanke carrying the point

of reforming Lord Byron! He always knew *her* inducements; her pride shut her eyes to *his*; *he* wished to build up his character and his fortunes—both were somewhat deranged; she had a high name, and would have a fortune worth his attention—let her look to that for *his* motives! ‘Oh, Byron, Byron,’ she said, ‘how you desolate me!’ He would then accuse himself of being mad, and throw himself on the ground in a frenzy, which she believed was affected to conceal the coldness and malignity of his heart—an affectation which at that time never failed to meet with the tenderest commiseration. I could find by some implications, not followed up by me lest she might have condemned herself for her involuntary disclosures, that he soon attempted to corrupt her principles, both with respect to her own conduct and her latitude for his. She saw the precipice on which she stood, and kept his sister with her as much as possible. He returned in the evenings from the haunts of vice, where he made her understand he had been, with matters so profligate! ‘Oh, the wretch!’ said I, ‘and had he no moments of remorse?’ Sometimes he appeared to have them. One night, coming home from one of his lawless parties, he saw me so indignantly collected, and bearing all with such a determined calmness, that a rush of remorse seemed to come over him; he called himself a monster, though his sister was present, and threw himself in agony at my feet. ‘I could not—no—I could not forgive him such injuries. He had lost me for ever!’ Astonished at the return of virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over my face, and I said, ‘Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it any more.’ He started up, and, folding his arms, while he looked at me, burst into laughter. ‘What do you mean?’ said I. ‘Only a philosophical experiment, that’s all,’ said he. ‘I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions.’ I need not say more of this prince of duplicity except that various were his methods of rendering her wretched, even to the last. When her lovely little child was born, and it was laid beside its mother on the bed, and he was informed he

might see his daughter, after gazing at it with an exulting smile, this was the ejaculation that broke from him, "Oh! what an implement of torture have I acquired in you!" Such he rendered it by his eyes and manner, keeping her in perpetual alarm for its safety when in his presence. All this reads madder than I believe he was; but she had not then made up her mind to disbelieve his pretended insanity, and conceived it best to intrust her secret with the excellent Dr. Baillie, telling him all that seemed to regard the state of her husband's mind, and letting his advice regulate her conduct—Baillie doubted of his derangement, but, as he did not reckon his own opinion infallible, he wished her to take precautions as if her husband was so. He recommended her going to the country, but to give him no suspicion of her intentions of remaining there, and for a short time to show no coldness in her letters till she could better ascertain his state. She went—regretting, as she told me, to wear any semblance but the truth. A short time disclosed the story to the world. He acted the part of a man driven to despair by her inflexible resentment and by the arts of a governess (once a servant in the family) who hated him. I will give you," proceeds Lady Anne, "a few paragraphs transcribed from one of Lady Byron's own letters to me. It is sorrowful to think that in a very little time this young and amiable creature, wise, patient, and feeling, will have her character mistaken by everyone who reads Byron's works. To rescue her from this I preserved her letters, and when she afterwards expressed a fear that anything of her writing should ever fall into hands to injure him (I suppose she meant by publication) I safely assured her that it never should. But here this letter shall be placed, a sacred record in her favour, unknown to herself."

LADY BYRON'S LETTER:

"I am a very incompetent judge of the impression which the last canto of *Childe Harold* may produce on the minds of indifferent readers. It contains the usual trace of a

conscience restlessly awake, though his object has been too long to aggravate its burden, as if it could thus be oppressed into eternal stupor. I will hope, as you do, that it survives for his ultimate good. It was the acuteness of his remorse, impenitent in its character, which so long seemed to demand from my compassion to spare every semblance of reproach, every look of grief, which might have said to his conscience, 'You have made me wretched.' I am decidedly of opinion that he is responsible. He has wished to be thought partially deranged, or on the brink of it, to perplex observers and prevent them from tracing effects to their real causes through all the intricacies of his conduct. I was, as I told you, at one time the dupe of his acted insanity, and clung to the former delusions in regard to the motives that concerned me personally until the whole system was laid bare. He is the absolute monarch of words, and uses them, as Bonaparte used lives, for conquest without more regard to their intrinsic value, considering them only as ciphers which must derive all their import from the situation in which he places them and the ends to which he adapts them with such consummate skill. Why, then, you will say, does he not employ them to give better colour to his own character? Because he is too good an actor to over-act, or to assume a moral garb which it would be easy to strip off. In regard to his poetry egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is not difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified; but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene or time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures in a system impenetrable except to a very few, and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions. Nothing has contributed more to the misunderstanding of his real character than the lonely grandeur in which he shrouds it, and his affectation of being above mankind, when he exists almost in their voice. The

romance of his sentiments is another feature of this mask of state. I know no one more habitually destitute of that enthusiasm he so beautifully expresses, and to which he can work up his fancy chiefly by contagion. I had heard he was the best of brothers, the most generous of friends, and I thought such feelings only required to be warmed and cherished into more diffusive benevolence. Though these opinions are eradicated, and could never return, but with decay of my memory, you will not wonder if there are still moments when the association of feelings which arose from them soften and sadden my thoughts. But I have not thanked you, dearest Lady Anne, for your kindness in regard to a principal object, that of rectifying false impressions. I trust you understand my wishes, which never were to injure Lord Byron in any way; for, though he would not suffer me to remain his wife, he cannot prevent me from continuing his friend; and it was from considering myself as such that I silenced the accusations by which my own conduct might have been more fully justified. It is not necessary to speak ill of his heart in general; it is sufficient that to me it was hard and impenetrable—that my own must have been broken before his could have been touched. I would rather represent this as *my* misfortune than as *his* guilt; but, surely, that misfortune is not to be made my crime' Such are my feelings; you will judge how to act. His allusions to me in *Childe Harold* are cruel and cold, but with such semblance as to make *me* appear so, and to attract all sympathy to himself. It is said in this poem that hatred of him will be taught as a lesson to his child. I might appeal to all who ever heard me speak of him, and still more to my own heart, to witness that there has been no moment when I have remembered injury otherwise than affectionately and sorrowfully. It is not my duty to give way to hopeless and wholly unrequited affection; but, so long as I live, my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly. I do not seek the sympathy of the world, but I wish to be known by

those whose opinion is valuable and whose kindness is dear to me. Among such, my dear Lady Anne, you will ever be remembered by your truly affectionate.—A. BYRON."

Lord Lindsay adds: "It is the province of the world at large to judge between the two testimonies before them—Lady Byron's in 1816 and 1818, and that put forward in 1869 by Mrs. B. Stowe, as communicated by Lady Byron thirteen years ago. In the face of the evidence now given, positive, negative and circumstantial, there can be but two alternatives in the case—either Mrs. B. Stowe must have entirely misunderstood Lady Byron, and been thus led into error and mis-statement, or we must conclude that, under the pressure of a life long and secret sorrow, Lady Byron's mind had become clouded with an hallucination in respect of the particular point in question."

* * * * * *

Lady Byron, it may be recalled, adopted the resolution of separating from Byron in the February of 1816, and in his endorsement to the deed of separation Byron wrote:

A year ago, you swore, fond she !
 "To love, to honour," and so forth !
 Such was the vow you pledged to me,
 And here's exactly what 'tis worth.

On April 25th, 1816, he took his last leave of his native land. In the following September he wrote the following lines, on hearing that Lady Byron was ill:

And thou wert sad—yet I was not with thee '
 And thou wert sick, and yet I was not near ;
 Methought that joy and health alone could be
 Where I was *not*—and pain and sorrow here !
 And is it thus ?—it is as I foretold,
 And shall be more so ; for the mind recoils
 Upon itself, and the wreck'd heart lies cold,
 While heaviness collects the shatter'd spoils.
 It is not in the storm nor in the strife

We feel benumb'd, and wish to be no more,
But in the after-silence on the shore,
When all is lost, except a little life.
I am too well avenged !—but 'twas my right!
Whate'er my sins might be, *thou* wert not sent
To be the Nemesis who should requite—
Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.
Mercy is for the merciful—if thou
Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.
Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep !—
Yes ! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel
A hollow agony which will not heal,
For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep ;
Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap
The bitter harvest in a woe as real!
I have had many foes, but none like thee;
For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,
And be avenged, or turn them into friend ;
But thou in safe implacability
Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness shielded.
And in my love, which hath but too much yielded,
And spared, for thy sake, some I should not spare ;
And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth,
And the wild fame of my ungovern'd youth—
On things that were not, and on things that are—
Even upon such a basis hast thou built
A monument, whose cement hath been guilt!
The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord,
And hew'd down with an unsuspected sword,
Fame, peace and hope—and all the better life
Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,
Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,
And found a nobler duty than to part,
But of thy virtues didst thou make a vice,
Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,
For present anger, and for future gold—
And buying other's grief at any price.
And thus once enter'd into crooked ways,
The early truth, which was thy proper praise,

Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,
 And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,
 Deceit, averments incompatible,
 Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell
 In Janus-spirits—the significant eye
 Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext
 Of prudence, with advantages annex'd—
 The acquiescence in all things which tend,
 No matter how, to the desired end—
 All found a place in thy philosophy.
 The means were worthy, and the end is won—
 I would not do by thee as thou hast done ?

About the time that Byron wrote the foregoing, he began *Manfred*.

Professor John Nichol commenting on this "witch drama," as Byron described *Manfred*, said that it had a special attraction for inquisitive biographers, because it has been supposed in some dark manner to reveal the secrets of his prison house, and every conceivable horror has been alleged as its *motif*. This reading between the lines would, if similarly applied, convict Sophocles, Schiller and Shelley of immoral intercourse, Shakespeare of murder, Milton of blasphemy, Scott of forgery, Marlowe and Goethe of compacts with the devil!

Mrs. Stowe would have us believe that Byron, quitting England with guilt in his thoughts, forthwith composed *Manfred*—and that Lord Byron and *Manfred* were one; this *Manfred* character being capable of any and every vice. Mrs. Stowe asserted that "anybody who reads the tragedy of *Manfred* with this story"—the Stowe narrative of Lady Byron's life—"in his mind will see that it is true." Mrs. Stowe analysed *Cain* to support her accusations; yet *Cain*, dedicated to Sir Walter Scott, was pronounced by him to be the best of Byron's

works, and the dedication deemed by Scott to be the greatest honour bestowed upon him.

Sir Walter Scott was another of Byron's defenders, and, in support of this there is a letter (a portion of which is given) which Lord Byron wrote from Pisa, in the January of 1822, to Sir Walter Scott:

"I owe to you far more than the usual obligation for the courtesies of literature and common friendship; for you went out of your way in 1817 to do me a service when it required not merely kindness, but courage to do so ... I allude to the Quarterly Review of the Third Canto of *Childe Harold* which Murray told me was written by you—and, indeed, I should have known it without his information, as there could not be two who could and would have done this at the time. I think that you and Jiffrey and Leigh Hunt were the only literary men, who dared venture even an anonymous word in my favour just then. So, you see, you have been heaping coals of fire in a true gospel manner, and I can assure you that they have burnt right down to my very heart."

Then Byron goes on to speak of his dedication of *Cain* to Sir Walter Scott.

Of this "mystery"—as *Cain* is described—Sir Walter gives it as his considered judgment that it is a "very grand and tremendous drama."

"I do not know that his Muse has ever taken so lofty a flight amid her former soarings," he wrote to Mr. Murray, Byron's publisher, "He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground. . . ."

Truly, "no particular scandal one can touch but it confounds the breather," wrote Shakespeare; and surely Mrs. Stowe had absolutely nothing to justify her. The story, when analysed, "besides brimming over with gross improbabilities, is full of utterly irreconcilable inconsistencies, and is born with the stamp of death

upon it," says another defender of Byron's honour, who continues:

"To the end of time Byron and his verse will be among the most cherished possessions of mankind; and if posterity designs to preserve the memory of this foul fable in connection with his name, it will be only to remember that it was penned by an American writer of romances, published by a magazine somewhat in need of notoriety, accepted at once and without question by a leading newspaper during the 'silly season,' but after due scrutiny and just reflection entirely repudiated by the definite voice of an offended people."

* * * * * *

An important contribution to the story of Lord Byron's life, and having more especial reference to the points raised in Mrs. Stowe's narrative, was made by one who professed to have had an intimate acquaintance with the family details, and whose statements are here recorded in his actual words:

"It is a well-known fact in human history that there is nothing so quickly creates a hatred of another as to taunt any person with his physical deformity, especially if the person is of a quick and nervous temperament, as was notoriously George Gordon Byron. At the time of his birth an accident caused the malformation of one of his feet and legs. Of this he was feverishly sensitive, and any allusion to it would drive him into a furious rage; and even as a child of only four years, he resented it by striking his nurse's friend with a whip for alluding to it—contrasting, as she did, the beauty of his face with the deformity of his leg and foot, which to him throughout his life was a hideous contrast. It was the same to him as was the withered arm and deformed legs to Richard III., and Gloster's soliloquy will be remembered: 'To shrink my arm up like a withered shrub; to shape my legs of an unequal size, that the dogs bark at me as I halt

by them.' Now, when Lord Byron said to his bride, 'You will find that you have married a devil'—as cited by Mrs. Stowe, but as if she really meant Satan—he simply alluded in bitter sarcasm to his deformed foot, more resembling the devil's than man's. And through his life he took the utmost trouble by his costume, etc., to conceal the deformity.

"Two years before his marriage with Miss Milbanke, Lord Byron had been rejected by her—a circumstance never forgotten by man. In a reckless moment Byron wrote again proposing marriage, and to his amazement he was accepted by Miss Milbanke. Never were united two beings more anti-sympathetic. They were married on January 2, 1815, he being twenty-seven and she twenty-three years of age respectively, having been born in 1788 and 1792, and they separated for ever on January 15, 1816, having been married only one year and thirteen days; but there was no intimacy between them after the first six weeks of their married life. In the sixth week of their marriage, and during a jealous mood, Lady Byron fearfully resented a remark of love-memory of Lord Byron's, who said, * I deeply regret to know that my beloved Mary Chaworth was very unhappy in her marriage. Ah, it might have been different had we married!' Upon this sighing remark Lady Byron instantly rose, and in great anger uttered these fatal words: ' Mary Chaworth rejected you for your deformity, as I did once, and it had been better if I had still rejected a man with a devil's foot!' and with those terrible words she left the apartment. To Lord Byron, sensitive as the quivering aspen upon that very fact of his deformity—his ' curse of life,' as he once said to Trelawney—those fearful words were as daggers in the breast of love, esteem, or respect, and from that moment ceased all marital intercourse. Each kept their own apartments, and thus in solitude each sought those friends best entitled to advise. Lady Byron, in another evil moment, as if destiny was driving her to desolation, sent for her former governess—the human being who was the cause why Miss

Milbanke had formerly rejected Lord Byron, She came, and, of course, took sides with her former pupil, over whose mind she had great influence, and sanctioned even the brutal remarks upon the deformity of the husband, and which were quickly communicated to his lordship,

"Then it was that the wounded poet's brother sent for the faithful and devoted Augusta, his half-sister. She was his senior by five years; she having been born in 1783, married in 1807—and at this time (1815) the eight years, wife of Colonel George Leigh, of the British Army, and the mother of a child born of that marriage; and Augusta at this time was thirty-two years of age, and Lady Byron only twenty-three years. Except at about the marriage period this was the first time that Lady Byron had seen the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, and with the indignation from the savage insult and wrong her brother had received, well might the slight fragile form and features of Lady Byron shrink abashed before the majestic figure, the queenly dignity, the intellectual and mild look of sisterly reproach from the Lady Augusta, dignified by that title in society—less in courtesy than to her character as a *gentilissima*—a very 'lady of ladies/ and as such was finally honoured by the Queen of Great Britain, as I will prove."

[The proof cited here is the fact of apartments being assigned to this lady at St. James's Palace.]

"The ancient governess arrived in the latter part of the month of February, and the Hon. Mrs. Leigh in the middle of March, 1815; and what followed established that the former became the 'damned Iago' of the family, and worse, being a female; and the latter, the Lady Augusta, a species of innocent Desdemona; the poet, an equally innocent Cassio, while Lady Byron became a self-consuming jealous Othello.

The first resolution of the brother upon the arrival of his sister was that he would separate from his wife, and by a legal document to that effect. This resolution was successfully resisted by the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, upon the paternal

ground that Lady Byron in a few months would become a mother. Lord Byron, therefore, concluded to remain domiciled until after the birth, and then, upon the convalescence of the mother, to separate, at least for a time \ but an event soon took place, from the malice of 'the female lingo,' which made Byron finally determine to be separated for ever.

"I have already shown the dignified character of the beauty of Lady Augusta; it formed a perfect contrast with Lady Byron's, and, as the latter was prone to be jealous, it was no difficult matter to create that feeling towards Augusta, and finally of a criminal suspicion, instigated by the governess, who urged the natural fact to convey belief, viz., that the Hon. Mrs. Leigh was only the half-sister of the poet. This poisonous suggestion having entered the brain of Lady Byron, it fatally permeated her intellect until she became upon that false idea a monomaniac, and thence she lived, and so she died.

"It was the first week of July, 1815, in a scene of quarrel, that Lord Byron was indirectly accused by Lady Byron with being 'over-fond of his half-sister, Augusta, and that the suspicions of my governess are not without foundation.' This false and malignant aspersion upon his sister and the wife of Colonel Leigh, conjoined with the previous insult regarding his deformity, determined Lord Byron that they should separate for ever. The brother and sister confronted their accusers; they were abashed and silent, and Lady Byron cast the responsibility entirely upon the governess, whom the poet has immortalised in the lines—

'Born in a garret, in the kitchen bred,
Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head,' etc.

it being the most powerful invective from the pen of man, and could only emanate against a woman upon the ground of false, malignant, and demoniac wrong, received by the author, and also his true and irreproachable sister.

"On the 10th of December, 1815, the only child of Lord and Lady Byron was born. Sometime previous to this event

the mother had sought reconciliation with the husband; but he was firm in his resolution to separate. She expressed contrition, atonement, and entire disbelief in the criminal suggestion; and, as a public confession of her injustice to the injured sister, Lady Byron herself proposed that the unborn child, if a girl, should not only be named Ada, the father's selection, but also Augusta, impressing that innocent name as a seal of purity upon the virgin jewel yet within the casket of human nature. By the justice of God it was so; and the child was baptised 'Ada Augusta,' and as she grew to womanhood, and was married, she used that name in preference to Ada, in justice to her father and his sister, and thence she became alienated from her mother.

"Lady Byron had a lingering hope of preventing her husband leaving England, and 'madness' was suggested as a means to an end, but this only expedited the issue; for they separated within six weeks after Ada Augusta's birth. The day of separation came (January 15, 1816), but the statement by Mrs. Stowe of that final interview is entirely false and unnatural, and also malignant in its criminal assertion. The facts of the 'Farewell' are these :

" Lord Byron left his own room and went into that of Lady Byron to take farewell of his wife and daughter, and he sent word to that effect. There were present the father, mother, and infant child (the nurse left upon his entrance). The husband took into his arms Ada Augusta, kissed her with deep emotion, and wept. He took the hand of his weeping wife, and while thus situated (a group for a painter or sculptor) he said, with a deep sigh, the words of his favourite author, Shakespeare, 'When shall we three meet again?' to which his wife responded. 'On earth, I hope.' Lord Byron replied 'In Heaven, I trust'; and those were his last words to her, as he gave back the infant to its mother, and silently and slowly left the chamber, and, with royal etiquette, face to face . . ."

The narrative from which these extracts are taken the chronicler declared that he received, with a "solemn denial of the slander," from the Hon. Mrs. Augusta Leigh, personally, at her residence in James's Palace, London.

"To the Countess Guiccioli, the Countess of Blessington, Viscount Canterbury (formerly speaker of the House of Commons), the Count D'Orsay and the Cornwall Trelawney he solemnly denied the truth of the imputation, and from these personages I received that denial in solemn conversation. Within the dying hour of the great poet, Lord Byron requested all to leave the chamber except Colonel the Hon. Leicester Stanhope. The poet then knew that he was dying, and said to his friend 'Stanhope, I wish you to take charge of my dead body to England. See that it is buried in the grave of my mother.' (Both these dying wishes were fulfilled by his friend.) 'Stanhope, I declare to you, at this solemn moment, that the accusation by Lady Byron against me and my faithful sister was

A lie, an odious, damned lie '
Upon my soul, a wicked lie !

and so defend us when again assailed.'

"Colonel Stanhope took the hand of his dying friend, and said : ' Byron, the name of Augusta being added to that of Ada at the baptism of your daughter, and at the request of Lady Byron, as told me by your sister, dispersed that slander for ever; but, if you would be happier, send your dying declaration by your confidential valet, Fletcher, and order him to see Lady Byron with your death denial.' * I will do so,' said the dying poet. ' Send Fletcher to me. God bless you Stanhope. Of all men you I best love. You will live to see the freedom of this classic land when I shall be no more. Adieu!'

"With manly tears Colonel Stanhope bade adieu to his friend for ever, and within half-an-hour thereafter Fletcher

was at the bedside of his dying master. Then took place the oft-repeated broken sentences cited by Mrs. Stowe and others, but explained by the previous interview with Colonel Stanhope: 'Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her and say—*' Here his voice failed from exhaustion. But had he power, who can doubt but that the dying man would have repeated to his faithful valet what he had already declared to his faithful friend ? "

* * * * * *

Mary Countess of Lovelace in editing the new (1921) edition of *Astarte*—described as "a fragment of truth concerning George Gordon Byron, sixth Lord Byron"—stated in her introduction that "for many years speculations upon the 'Byron Mystery' continued to be published in innumerable forms, and the defenders of Lord Byron—often obviously insincere—revelled in accusations against Lady Byron, alternately of malicious calumny, or of an insanely morbid imagination. *Astarte* is the answer to these accusations."

The "world and his wife" must judge !

Commenting on the publication of that volume, the Rt. Hon. C. F. G. Masterman, a family connection of the Lovelaces, said that "the private life of Byron and the great 'Byron scandal,' does not to-day greatly interest English readers outside a limited literary circle. The controversy has been continued for a hundred years, far more vigorously abroad than in England, and has given rise to innumerable books and pamphlets. *Astarte* has closed it once for all. The reviewers who have been stating that it would have been better not to revive a dead issue have not been facing facts. It is better that the truth should be known than that there should be perpetual bickerings over what the truth is."

The writer of the above even if he condemns the



PORTRAIT OF LORD BYRON IN THE
COLLECTION OF MRS BEECHER STOWE

" LOOK ON THIS PICTURE



PORTRAIT OF LORD BYRON IN THE
HEARTS OF THE BRITISH NATION

—AND ON THIS "

Cartoon in "*The Torch*," 1809

man, commends the poet " In Europe in estimation of his writings he stands second only to Shakespeare. The great critics from Brandes in Denmark to Taine in France devote hundreds of pages to the estimation of it. But he stands for much more than his poetry. He was the originator of the whole Byronic type of hero. He fought with contempt and laughter the whole system of accepted religion and the whole things and tyrannies which returned after Napoleon was safely shut up in St. Helena."

In 1922 " Lord Byron's Correspondence," edited by John Murray—a respected name closely associated with the published works of Byron—was published, and brought forth further controversy on the Byron *affaire*. Commenting on these our dear old friend *Punch* summed up :

These self-revealing letters paint
The splendour, not the shame, of Byron.

Mr. Maurice Hewlett, in a chapter on " Byron at his worst/" included in his interesting volume of "Extemporary Essays" (Milford, 1922) candidly comments upon these Byron letters. " If this sort is a *sequela* to fame, then how 'indigent the great.'¹" Mr. Hewlett does not hesitate to describe Byron as a " coxcomb, a young man without judgment." etc., but adds that " it is proper to say that Byron shows up better as he draws near his end." Then, concludes the author of *Forest Lovers*, etc., " he was, for the first time in his life, genuine, sincere and earnest"

"There is no remembrance which time does not obliterate, nor pain which death does not terminate," wrote Cervantes.

Yet, strange to say, a hundred years after Byron's death we are defending his name against repeated slander—" the solace of malignity."

Byron's lines on *Remembrance*—written as far back as 1807—seemed prophetic:

'Tis done !—I saw it in my dreams ;
 No more with hope the future beams ;
 My days of happiness are few .
 Chill'd by misfortune's wintry blast,
 My dawn of life is overcast;
 Love, Hope, and Joy, alike adieu !
 Would I could add Remembrance too!

Adieu, Remembrance,—to all this Past!

Let us remember Byron as a poet—the poet whom Macaulay described as "the most illustrious Englishman of the nineteenth century," and of whom Geothe wrote that

"The wonderful glory to which Byron has in the present, and through all future ages, elevated his country, will be as boundless in its splendour as it is incalculable in its consequences, nor can there be any doubt that the nation which boasts so many great names will class Byron among the first of those through whom she has acquired such glory . . ."

As, however, so much has appeared in permanent form decrying Byron, it is only an act of justice that certain matter should be collated in a volume designed as a tribute to his memory.

* * * *

Speaking at a meeting convened to consider what means should be taken to found a national memorial to Byron, Disraeli, who presided, said :

" I am happy to meet for the first time the members of the committee who have before consulted on the subject which will engage our attention to-day. But, before we do so, I wish to take this opportunity of attempting to draw your minds to the contemplation of the real object which we have

before us. In the twelfth day of this century a poem was published by a young man, who instantly commanded the sympathies of the nation. There is no instance in literary records of a success so sudden and so lasting. To use his own words he 'awoke one morning and found himself famous.' From that time for twelve years he poured out a series of complete inventions, which are not equalled for their number and their consistency of purpose in the literature of any country, ancient or modern. Admirable for many qualities, for their picturesqueness, their wit, their passion—they are most distinguished by their power of expression and by the sublime energy of their imagination. And then, after these twelve years, he died. He died, I say, in the fulness of his fame, having enjoyed in his lifetime a degree of celebrity which has never fallen to the lot of any other literary man—not only admired in his own country, but revered and adored in Europe. How is it, then, that after half a century has elapsed, we are met here for the first time in public meeting to devise some means of a national expression of admiration and gratitude to qualities so transcendent? It has been said as some reason for this strange and dark neglect that the private character of this poet was not as illustrious as his public one. When half a century has elapsed private character is scarcely an element in the estimate of literary genius. But of his private character it may be said that it was ambiguous, and that of it little is clearly known; and there is no man here—aye, I would say even in this country—that upon that subject can presume to give a definite and precise opinion. But then it was said, as another excuse, that his works were deficient in morality, and that he indulged in too free speculations on those subjects which the human mind can never penetrate, but which it is organically formed to reverence. And yet it must be remembered that he was born in an age of contracted sympathies and restricted thought, and that much which he questioned has since been surrendered. If he fell, which he undoubtedly did, into many

erroneous conclusions upon divine subjects, it may be urged for him that he was very young. I remember once Lord Lyndhurst discussing the character and career of Mr. Canning, and then asking someone who was present, what was the precise age at which Mr. Canning died. He was told that he died at the age of fifty-six. 'What,' said Lord Lyndhurst, then advanced in life but yet in the fulness of his complete compacity, 'only fifty-six; why he was a mere boy.' But we must remember that when Byron died he was twenty years younger than Mr. Canning, and in any speculations upon his character and career this element in that wonderful character and marvellous career should never be omitted. It should always be remembered. I say, that we are speculating on the life of one who, like those whom the gods love, died young. During these fifty years that have elapsed, and during which no public meeting has ever been called to recognise his merits, a chorus of poetasters have unceasingly worked to decry his abilities, and ultimately even to deny his genius. No one who has travelled in Greece can ever question for a moment the place of Byron as a poet of the highest class. He has impressed his mind on that country more than any poet who has existed since Homer. There is not a cape, a promontory, or a column that he has not touched with fire or suffused with the sweetness of his song. If you follow him in his Italian residence, you will find that Italy was to him a source of scarcely inferior inspiration. But the last and greatest of his works does not depend upon local interest. It will remain, as it is now recognised, an unexampled picture of human nature and a triumphant effort of the English tongue. We are met here, then, to-day, at last to do some justice to one of the greatest of England's sons . . . For myself, though I presume not to dictate to this assembly what form their feeling should assume in this respect, I will express my individual desire to see in some public place a semblance of this great spirit, so that English people, when they pass, shall recognise one of the greatest masters of the English language."

This chapter may appropriately be concluded by an extract from a tribute to Byron's memory, by Samuel Rogers:

" Thou art gone ;
And he who would assail thee in thy grave,
Oh ! let him pause ! for who among us all,
Tired as thou wert—even from thy earliest years,
When wandering, yet unspoilt, a Highland boy—
Tired as thou wert, and with thy soul of flame ;
Pleasure, while yet the down was on thy cheek,
Uplifting, pressing, and to lips like thine,
Her charmed cup—ah, who amongst us all
Could say he had not err'd as much and more ?"

LORD BYRON'S ILLNESS AND DEATH

Described, in a letter from William Fletcher (his lordships valet and confidential savant) to the Honourable Augusta Leigh, dated from Missolonghi) April 20th, 1824. With a facsimile reproduced from the original formerly in the possession of the late Herbert C. Roe and here published, for the first time, with his notes.

WILLIAM FLETCHER was the devoted and faithful servant of Lord Byron for over twenty years. He was with his lordship during his early days at Newstead, and accompanied him when he left England, and remained with him until his death in Greece.

The following is a copy of Fletcher's account of his master's illness and death, as written in a letter to Byron's half-sister Augusta, the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

Byron in one of his letters to his mother refers to Fletcher's "ill-written and worse spelt letters," and although the letter here reproduced may easily come under the poet's description, it is nevertheless interesting as giving a faithful account of the closing hours of the life of the one to whom he was so devoted.

[The original letter was in Mr. Roe's possession, and permission to reproduce it was kindly given to the editor. It was issued for private circulation in 1920, and fifty copies were printed. It is here issued to the public for the first time.]

ble. I
 To the Hon - Missolonghi 20th April 1824.
 Mrs. Leigh.
 MADAM,

I am sorry to be under the Painfull Obligation of wrighting you the Most Disegreeable letter that I ever to this unfortunat moment Had ever to write, not only for *me* or *you* But for all the world in General. How Shall I be able to Proceed or Pronounce the fatel word in which My Duty Demands from me has a faithful Servant—But Proceed I must though it costs me tears of Blood. In the first Place, on the 15th Febry, My Lord was attacked with a convulsive fit which was after the Course of a Quarter of an Houre or Less was Quite Gone off. But the Remembrance of it was Followed up by the Most Strictest and Lowest and moderate way of Living so much so that His Lordship would not even take a Dish of fish which his the only Good thing we have here—and my Lord was afterwards but more Slightly with a Nother Convulsive fit But with Much Excercise with walking much it went off with a Slight Head ache and slow *feavour* went off. But the Effect of the first and then This Slight attack the Seacnd time made my Lord Doubley attantive Both to his maxim of Low Living and the More Greater Duty of a Good Christian which I am verry happy to say My Lord Studyed most Ferventley for the Bible was Placed on his Lordship's Breakfast table has regularly has his Simple Cup of tea which his Lordship allways Drank without either Cream or Suger. Now, Madam, I must Proceed with my fatal History which to the 10th of April was in every Respect well Excepting a Cold which I Did Not wonder at this being so verry Low and every Sort of the Most Disegreeable filths in every Part of the Town with Stagnated Dirty water which makes the People Die by scores in a Day.

My Lord still continued with this Slight Cold and a violent Pain in his bones for which I dayley aplyed the Flesh Brush with a Composision of Camphor oile &c, and which My Lords¹

Doctor Prepared, and on the 10 of April My Lord took his Ride out has was his Dayley Practice and a verry heavy Rain Come on and My Lord was verry wet, and in the Evening of the same day My Lord Complained of a violent Headache and Slight Feavour which Dayley increased. On the 3rd Day in the Evening I Began to be verry much alarmed, and I even went Down on my Knees to Beg Perimition of My Lord and with Teares in my Eyes—well knowing how Sereious it where in Loseing one moment in saving the Life of so kind a Lord and Master and so kind and generous a Friend to every one in Distress of what Every Nation or Religion, Jew, Turk, or Infidel—which every one of each of these Tribes has Reed From his genouous hands Most Liberaly. Now I must Proceed with my Lord's answer to me on the subject he says, oh no it will be of no use For I Shall Either be better or *Dead*, before I can have an answer from Doctor Thomas on His arival, I replied My Lord Pray don't Let the Doctor's Deceive you for I am Convinced your Illness His serious, My Lord Replied the Doctors says it will be over in a few days and I Shall be Quite well in a week if I take care of myself which I shall sertingly Do—I went to the Doctors and Explained to them my wish To have an English Doctor of Long and verry Great experience Doctor Thomas whom My Lord acknoweleges to be a man of verry Great Experience and a Most Sincere Frend, they answered if My Lord by any ways should have a Change for the worse Doctor Thomases arival will be too late—verry well My Lords illness Continued with Still more violence, and My Lord still Refused to be Let Blood on the 7th. I Still found My Lord worse and I Requested My Lord once more for Doctor Thomas to come which My Lord said I wish you would write for, I should like to know what His the Mater with me and never mind the Expences verry well I went and Got a Man and Boat to go to Zante with orders to neither Spare Men or Money Zante being a Distance of 70 or 80 Miles and to my and all the worlds Misfortune, he could not be in time and My Lord still Refused to be Let Blood till at

Last I went to his Lordship to not lose one moment in having 6 or 8 ounces took From his Lordship which he at last Consented and the Doctor took at Least 8 ounces which as soon has I saw I said My Lord will Never be better in This world for I saw that his Blood was Quite Gone in such a state of Inflammation that there was not more than £ an ounce of Reale blood in the 8 ounces. I Prayed again for My Lord to allow the Doctor to take a few ounces more which he at last agreed too. I was Quite happy to see the Serum Much Better but it was too late for the Blood had begun to Rise and flow in his Lordship's head which affected his Brains and caused an Inflammation. My onley Blame which I can lay to the Doctors his this for not being more Positive in there Request of takeing Blood from My Lord when they so well knew the Consequences of his Refusal to Doctors where Both too young and was too Much affraid of My Lord's Displeasure to do there Duty saying we will then put it of till to morrow and to morrow was too Late, there was on the 18 a consultation of 4 Doctors which was here and they came to the Resolution of giving My Lord Bark. My Lord even before this was Delerious at times and I never left him for a minute Night or Day. My Lord on the 18 began to make sure of his speedey Deselution and was beginning to Give me Several orders first that I should instantly come and see Miss Byron, and you must go to my poor Dr. Sister and tell them all and then where delerious for a short time and then he came to his Reason for a few minutes and began saying I should like to do something for you, Tita and Luca. I cryed out Pray give your other orders of more Consequences than this he said I have a great deal to tell you which I hope you will see done for I feel I am going. My Lord I Replied I will with my Life My Lord do every thing to the utmost in my Power I know you will Fletcher he Replied and then was delerious again and began to talk at Random till a few minutes which might be 5 minutes then came to his Reason and said you will go to my wife and say

that but co(u)ld go on no further and then he turned again to me in such a faltering voice that I could not understand a word he still verry earnestley continued talking to me.

A CONTINUATION OF MY LORD'S LAST WORDS :—

Once more I understood so far as now you will Be sure to attend to all these orders I said shall I write them Down My Ld said no theire his not time and was Gone again at Quite a Delenous State for a few minutes when he again Commenced again saying now pay great attention to all i say. My Lord now again got me by the hand saying be sure mind all I say and at this moment his voice began to falter and I was not able to Distinguish one word from a nother. My Lord continued talking to me for more than a Quarter of an Houre. I may say nearley half an Houre when My Lord said Quite Plain now I have told you all which I hope you will attend too i answered My Lord I am verry sorry but I have not understood one word which I hope you will now tell me over again. My Lord in Great agitation said then if you have not understood me it his too late and in a faltering Low voice Repeated I am truiey sorry you have not understood me but I will try to make you understand me again but I know well it is too Late now and in a few minutes time all was over for My Lord was Delerious and continued so excepting now and Then a single word from 4 o'clock til 6 after which My Lord how shall I pronounce the fatal word my Hand trembles and my tonge forbids me naming the fatal word but my Duty to the Best of Lords and kindest of Masters bids me Proceed though it costs me tears of Blood so it was now 6 o'clock on the 18 after that My Lord never spoke nor moved even hand nor foot till 6 o'clock on the 19th when he Breathed his last with out even a sigh or a grone. I was watching by him as usual when I persieved him open his Eyes when I said to the Doctors feel his pulse for I fear he his gone which they did and cried out hit his too True and then he shut them never to open them again but went even with out even a sigh or

grone or even moving hand or foot. Now Hond. Madame I hope I have done my duty in stating everything that time will Permit but have many things to say when i see you. My Ld told me you had been verry ill and I hope Madam you are quite recovered and that you Amiable Familey his all Quite well his the prayers of your Most Obt and Humble St. at Command we have everything done which can be done for My Lords Removal to England has soon has everything his settled and all Papers and Property his sealed by Prince Maverecordati with the Government seal of Greece. I have not time to had more has the couriere his waiting for the Letters to bring them to you with the fatal news has Quick has possible. I have onley to add that My Lord died a Good Christian and was it possible for the tears of Greece has well has England to Restore My Lord He would be instantly Restored to Life Eternal but I am convinced My Lord his much happier for his good deeds will be Recorded has long has the world Exists with Honour to His Existing Familey and Frends. Count Peter Gamba comes with My Lord and the Attalion Doctor whom My Lord brought from Genoa and myself and Tita My Lords footman with all the Property of every description which shall be safe Rendered into your hands. I must conclude By my Prayers for you to receive this fatal news with the consolation of being serting My Lord his happier than any of us. I remain Hond. Madam Your most obt verry miserable

and verry Humble Servant,
W. FLETCHER.

AT BYRON'S GRAVE

BY J. A. HAMMERTON.

HUCKNALL TORKARD is not a pretty place; but beauty need not be looked for under coal dust. The town lies about seven miles north from Nottingham, and is easily reached either by road or rail ; the journey by road being very pleasant, for the district is well wooded and the landscape offers many a comely picture of rural life. But Hucknall Torkard ! Who that has ever felt the scent of life in his nostrils could choose this for his abode ? It is a town of mean streets; although the speculative builder is dumping his jerry-work in plenty beside the decaying erections of former years. There is one main thoroughfare, and a glance at its tawdry shops gives an index of the people; the picture-framer displays only gaudy prints of impossible children and unnatural dogs ; the newsagent has nothing in his window but sporting papers and trashy periodicals ; the milliner's stock of hats could please only the colour-blind. It is Saturday afternoon, and as you walk along every passer-by stares at you, open-mouthed, and turns back to look at you. At the doors of the frequent public-houses the loungers are clustered, discussing a football match in a language that is full of colour, but monotonous in its redness ;

and in the atmosphere of the place there is something that makes you thankful you will not be staying in the drunken, rowdy night which lies ahead. Yet one is attracted to this town by the knowledge that within its parish church there is a shrine that makes the ugliness outside less depressing. When you have traversed the main street and arrived at the market-square on which it debouches ; you stand before the church of St. Mary Magdalene, and the burial place of Lord Byron.

The church of St. Mary Magdalene was once a very fine example of old Norman architecture ; but it has been so much " restored " that only a small portion of the original structure remains, though the spirit of the first building has been fairly well preserved. Sitting there, in the midst of a rudely ordered graveyard, with plenty of atmosphere about it, the church is certainly a pretty sight; but on a market-day the stalls of the travelling hucksters are spread right up to its railings, and the place reeks of fried fish and chipped potatoes. Let us be thankful there is no market to-day and the approach to the gateway is free from the presence of the cheap-jack. Pushing back the iron gate, we enter the churchyard, and, proceeding along the main path for a few dozen yards, find ourselves opposite the doorway in the base of the tower. The porch is made of stout oaken beams, blackened with age ; the inner door is also very old. We are pleased to find it open, for we have been disappointed in our search for the sexton ; but the cleaner who is preparing the church for to-morrow's service is an obliging body, and she leads us to the shrine we have travelled some distance to see.

The Byron vault is under the chancel, to the left of the pulpit, and a few spaces in front of the altar. There is not much to see : a plain marble slab, on which the simple name of BYRON is inlaid in brass, together

with the dates of his birth and death, surrounded with the wreath of leaves in brass, sent by the King of Greece. This marks the spot where the poet's body lies, for old John Brown, who is now in his seventy-fifth year, (the former sexton) was able to indicate the exact place when the tablet was sent to be inserted, as he lowered the coffin of the Countess of Lovelace—Ada "sole daughter of my house and heart"—when she was buried there in 1852, Byron resting with his mother on his right and his daughter on his left. Further along the chancel, on the right, there are two mural tablets, the lower of which bears these words :

In the vault beneath,
Where many of his ancestors and his
mother are buried,
Lie the remains of
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON,
Lord Byron of Rochdale, in the
County of Lancaster,
The Author of " Childe Harold's Pilgrim-
age."
He was born in London on the
22nd of January, 1788,
And died at Missolonghi, in Western
Greece, on the
19th of April, 1824,
Engaged in the glorious attempt to restore
that
Country to her ancient freedom and
renown.
His sister, the Honourable
AUGUSTA MARY LEIGH,
Placed this tablet to his memory.

These are the only outward signs of the dust of genius

that lies beneath ; but in the little vestry opening off the chancel hangs a relic of Byron's funeral, the preservation of which we owe to the sentiment of the late sexton. It is a small piece of silk on which the arms of the Byron family are embroidered, and it is understood to have been part of the trappings of the poet's coffin on its journey to Hucknall Torkard. It had been kept in the church for many years, though with no particular care ; but a time came when a new rector was shocked that the relic should have been preserved—his thoughts at having to preach in such propinquity to the dust of the poet are not recorded—and he ordered the sexton to have it burned. The sexton, worthy man, did nothing of the kind, but took the relic home and had it more carefully preserved than before; and when the hostile rector was succeeded by one less bigoted, this interesting souvenir of Byron was brought back to the church and placed in a frame provided by a lady. Beside it to-day hang two small wreaths: one of artificial forget-me-nots, left by a party of American admirers some months ago, and the other of decayed laurels. The cleaner does not know where the latter came from, and we can but suppose that it is one of the two which were mouldering here when Mr. William Winter, the American writer, visited the church thirteen years ago. They had been brought, the one by the Bishop of Norwich and the other by the American poet, Joaquin Miller; but which it is that has survived till now seems a difficult question to answer.

It is a curious edict of fate that the remains of one whose imagination painted some of the most sensuously beautiful pictures which the whole realm of poetry contains, one who sang romance, and lived in it, should moulder in this little church in this unromantic town. And yet, as we stand in the flood of sunshine that

streams through the chancel windows, and falls with a softened radiance on the memorial stone, it does not seem that Byron's last resting-place is unworthy of him, When he died and a censorious Dean refused to inter his poor dust in Westminster Abbey, it was only the fate which had separated him from his countrymen during his few years of crowded life that brought his body here to Hucknall and the tomb of his fathers. And here in his solitary state, in this little country church, where storied urn and animated bust are not, the name of Byron within its kingly wreath shines with even a greater glory than the Abbey could endow it. A few weeks before his death he wrote :—

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile.

And lonely is his grave.

Visitors to St. Mary Magdalene are few, although the register which the sexton keeps shows that the Byronic glamour can still draw people from far distances to view the poet's tomb, and in the earlier years the pilgrimage was more frequently undertaken. The register of these years was stolen in 1834, and has never been regained ; but a manuscript copy was preserved, and this indicated that many distinguished visitors had journeyed to Hucknall between 1824 and 1834. It also contains some poetical tributes, of which the following is most worthy of quotation:

Not in that place where the dead repose
In some splendid holiness, where Time has spread
His sombre shadows, and a halo glows
Around the ashes of the mighty dead,

Life's weary pilgrim rests his aching head.

This is his resting-place, and save his own,
No light, no glory, round his grave is shed ;

But memory journeys to his shrine alone
To mark how sound he sleeps, beneath yon simple stone.

Ah ' say, art thou ambitious ? thy young breast—
Oh, does it pant for honours ? dost thou chase

The phantom Fame, in fairy colours drest,
Expecting all the while to win the race ?

Oh, does the flush of youth adorn thy face,
And dost thou deem it lasting ? dost thou crave,

The hero's wreath, the poet's meed of praise?
Learn that of this, these, all, not one can save

From the chill hand of death. Behold Childe Harold's grave.

*{The above essay (by the author of " George Meredith in Anecdote and Criticism," " Stevensomana" "English Humorists of To-day?" and editor of " Punch Library of Humour? *' Charles Dickens' Library" ** The Fine Art Scott? " The World's Great Books? the " Harmsworth Encyclopedia? etc.,} first appeared in the " British Weekly " of February 11, 1898, and is here reprinted, with some slight revision, by the courtesy of the*

