Title: Early Reviews of English Poets

Author: John Louis Haney

Release date: July 6, 2006 [EBook #18766]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Starner, Taavi Kalju and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

EARLY REVIEWS

OF

ENGLISH POETS

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JOHN LOUIS HANEY, PH.D.

Assistant Professor of English and History, Central High School, Philadelphia;
Research Fellow in English, University of Pennsylvania

PHILADELPHIA
THE EGERTON PRESS
1904

PRESS OF
THE NEW ERA PRINTING COMPANY,
LANCASTER, PA.

TO

MY FRIEND AND TEACHER

PROFESSOR FELIX E. SCHELLING

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

[Pg vii]

PREFACE

"Among the amusing and instructive books that remain to be written, one of the most piquant would be a history of the criticism with which the most celebrated literary productions have been greeted on their first appearance before the world." It is quite possible that when Dr. William Matthews began his essay on *Curiosities of Criticism* with these words, he failed to grasp the full significance of that future undertaking. Mr. Churton Collins recently declared that "a very amusing and edifying record might be compiled partly out of a selection of the various verdicts passed contemporaneously by reviews on particular works, and partly out of comparisons of the subsequent fortunes of works with their fortunes while submitted to this censorship." Both critics recognize the fact that such a volume would be entertaining and instructive; but, from another point of view, it would also be a somewhat doleful book. Even a reader of meagre imagination and rude sensibilities could not peruse such a volume without picturing in his mind the anguish and the heart-ache which those bitter and often vicious attacks inflicted upon the unfortunate victims whose works were being assailed.

Authors (particularly sensitive poets) have been at all times the sport and plaything of the critics. Mrs. Oliphant, in her *Literary History of England*, said with much truth: "There are few things so amusing as to read a really 'slashing article'—except perhaps to write it. It is infinitely easier and gayer work than a well-weighed and serious criticism, and will always be more popular. The lively
[Pg viii] and brilliant examples of the art which dwell in the mind of the reader are invariably of this class." Thus it happens that we remember the witty onslaughts of the reviewers, and often ignore the fact that certain witticisms drove Byron, for example, into a frenzy of anger that called forth the most vigorous satire of the century; and others so completely unnerved Shelley that he felt tempted to write no more; and still others were so unanimously hostile in tone that Coleridge thought the whole detested tribe of critics was in league against his literary success. There were, of course, such admirable personalities as Wordsworth's—for the most part indifferent to the strongest torrent of abuse; and clever craftsmen like Tennyson, who, although hurt, read the criticisms and profited by them; but, on the other hand, there are still well-informed readers who believe that the *Quarterly Review* at least hastened the death of poor Keats.

It has been suggested that such a volume of the "choice crudities of criticism" as is here proposed would likewise fulfill the desirable purpose of avenging the author upon his ancient enemy, the critic, by showing how absurd the latter's utterances often are, and what a veritable farrago of folly those collected utterances can make. We may rest assured that however much hostile criticism may have pained an author, it has never inflicted a permanent injury upon a good book. If there appear to be works that have been thus more or less obscured, the fault will probably be found not in the critic but in the works themselves. According to this agreeable theory, which we would all fain believe, the triumph of the ignorant or malevolent critic cannot endure; sooner or later the author's merit will be recognized and he will come into his own.

The present volume does not attempt to fulfill the conditions suggested by Dr. Matthews and Mr.
[Pg ix] Collins. A history of contemporary criticism of famous authors would be a more ambitious undertaking, necessitating an extensive apparatus of notes and references. It seeks merely to gather a number of interesting anomalies of criticism—reviews of famous poems and famous poets differing more or less from the modern consensus of opinion concerning those poems and their authors. Although most of the chosen reviews are unfavorable, several others have been selected to afford evidence of an early appreciation of certain poets. A few unexpectedly favorable notices, such as the *Monthly Review's* critique of Browning's *Sordello*, are printed because they appear to be unique. The chief criterion in selecting these reviews (apart from the effort to represent most of the periodicals and the principal poets between Gray and Browning) has been that of interest to the modern reader. In most cases, criticisms of a writer's earlier works were preferred as more likely to be spontaneous and uninfluenced by his growing literary reputation. Thus the volume does not attempt to trace the development of English critical methods, nor to supply a hand-book of representative English criticism; it offers merely a selection of bygone but readable reviews—what the critics thought, or, in some cases, pretended to think, of works of poets whom we have since held in honorable esteem. The short notices and the well-known longer reviews are printed entire; but considerations of space and interest necessitated excisions in a few cases, all of which are, of course, properly indicated. The spelling and punctuation of the original texts have been carefully followed.

The history of English critical journals has not yet been adequately written. The following introduction offers a rapid survey of the subject, compiled principally from the sources indicated in the bibliographical list. I am indebted to Professor Felix E. Schelling of the University of
[Pg x] Pennsylvania, and to Dr. Robert Ellis Thompson and Professor Albert H. Smyth of the Philadelphia Central High School for many suggestions that have been of value in writing the introduction. Dr. Edward Z. Davis examined at my request certain pamphlets in the British Museum that threw additional light upon the history of the early reviews. Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach and Professor J.H. Moffatt read the proofs of the introduction and notes respectively, and suggested several noteworthy improvements.

J.L.H.

Central High School,
Philadelphia.

[Pg xi]

CONTENTS

[Pg xiii]

INTRODUCTION

To the modern reader, with an abundance of periodicals of all sorts and upon all subjects at hand, it seems hardly possible that this wealth of ephemeral literature was virtually developed within the past two centuries. It offers such a rational means for the dissemination of the latest scientific and literary news that the mind undeceived by facts would naturally place the origin of the periodical near the invention of printing itself. Apart from certain sporadic manifestations of what is termed, by courtesy, periodical literature, the real beginning of that important department of letters was in the innumerable *Mercurii* that flourished in London after the outbreak of the Civil War. Although the *British Museum Catalogue* presents a long list of these curious messengers and news-carriers, the only one that could be of interest in the present connection is the *Mercurius Librarius; or a Catalogue of Books Printed and Published at London*[A] (1668-70), the contents of which simply fulfilled the promise of its title.

Literary journals in England were, however, not a native development, but were copied, like the fashions and artistic norms of that period, from the French. The famous and long-lived *Journal des Sçavans* was begun at Paris in 1665 by M. Denis de Sallo, who has been called, since the time of Voltaire, the "inventor" of literary journals. In 1684 Pierre Bayle began at Amsterdam the publication of *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, which continued under various hands until
[Pg xiv] 1718. These French periodicals were the acknowledged inspiration for similar ventures in England, beginning in 1682 with the *Weekly Memorial for the Ingenious: or an Account of Books lately set forth in Several Languages, with some other Curious Novelties relating to Arts and Sciences*. The preface stated the intention of the publishers to notice foreign as well as domestic works, and to transcribe the "curious novelties" from the *Journal des Sçavans*. Fifty weekly numbers appeared (1682-83), consisting principally of translations of the best articles in the French journal.

A few years later (1686), the Genevan theologian, Jean Le Clerc, then a resident of London,

established the *Universal Historical Bibliothèque; or, an Account of most of the Considerable Books printed in All Languages*, which was continued by various hands until 1693 in a series of twenty-five quarto volumes. Contemporary with this review was a number of similar publications which had for the most part a brief existence. Among them was the *Athenian Mercury*, published on Tuesdays and Saturdays (1691-1696), the *History of Learning*, which appeared for a short time in 1691 and again in 1694; *Works of the Learned* (1691-92); the *Young Student's Library* (1692) and its continuation, the *Compleat Library* (1692-94); *Memoirs for the Ingenious* (1693); the *Universal Mercury* (1694) and *Miscellaneous Letters, etc.* (1694-96). Samuel Parkes includes among the reviews of this period Sir Thomas Pope Blount's remarkable *Censura Celebrium Authorum* (1690). That popular bibliographical dictionary of criticism (reprinted 1694, 1710 and 1718) is only remembered now for its omission of Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson and Milton from its list of "celebrated authors." Neither that volume nor the same author's *De Re Poetica* (1694)
[Pg xv] finds a proper place in a list of periodicals. They should be grouped with such works as Phillips' *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675) and Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatic Poets* (1691) among the more deliberate attempts at literary criticism.

Between 1692-94 appeared the *Gentleman's Journal; or, the Monthly Miscellany. Consisting of News, History, Philosophy, Poetry, Music, Translations, etc.* This noteworthy paper, edited by Peter Anthony Motteux while he was translating Rabelais, included among its contributors Aphra Behn, Oldmixon, Dennis, D'Urfey and others. In many ways it anticipated the plan of the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731), which has usually been accorded the honor of priority among English literary magazines. The *History of the Works of the Learned; or, an Impartial Account of Books lately printed in all Parts of Europe* was begun in 1699 and succumbed after the publication of its thirteenth volume (1711). Among its editors was George Ridpath, who was afterwards immortalized in Pope's *Dunciad*. The careers of the *Monthly Miscellany* (1707-09) and *Censura Temporum* (1709-10) were brief. About the same time an extensive series of periodicals was begun by a Huguenot refugee, Michael De la Roche, who fled to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and became an Episcopalian. After several years of hack-work for the booksellers, he published (1710) the first numbers of his *Memoirs of Literature, containing a Weekly Account of the State of Learning at Home and Abroad*, which he continued until 1714 and for a few months in 1717. In the latter year he began at Amsterdam his *Bibliothèque Angloise* (1717-27), continued by his *Memoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne* (1720-1724) after the editorship of the former had been placed in other hands on account of his pronounced anti-
[Pg xvi] Calvinistic views. At Amsterdam, Daniel Le Clerc, a brother of the Jean Le Clerc already mentioned, published his *Bibliothèque Choisée* (1703-14) and his *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne* (1714-28). Both of these periodicals suggested numerous ideas to De la Roche, who returned to London and conducted the *New Memoirs of Literature* (1725-27). His last venture was a *Literary Journal, or a Continuation of the Memoirs of Literature*, which lasted about a year.

Contemporary with De la Roche, Samuel Jebb conducted *Bibliotheca Literaria* (1722-24), dealing with "inscriptions, medals, dissertations, etc." In 1728 Andrew Reid began the *Present State of the Republick of Letters*, which reached its eighteenth volume in 1736. It was then incorporated with the *Literary Magazine; or the History of the Works of the Learned* (1735-36) and the joint periodical was henceforth published as a *History of the Works of the Learned* until 1743. Other less extensive literary journals of the same period were Archibald Bower's *Historia Literaria* (1730-34); the *Bee; or, Universal Weekly Pamphlet* (1733-35), edited by Addison's cousin, Eustace Budgell; the *British Librarian, exhibiting a Compendious Review or Abstract of our most Scarce, Useful and Valuable Books, etc.*, published anonymously by the antiquarian William Oldys, from January to June, 1737, and much esteemed by modern bibliophiles as a pioneer and a curiosity of its kind; a *Literary Journal* (1744-49) published at Dublin; and, finally, the *Museum; or the Literary and Historical Register*. This interesting periodical printed essays, poems and reviews by such contributors as Spence, Horace Walpole, the brothers Warton, Akenside, Lowth and others. It was published fortnightly from March, 1746 to September, 1747, making three
[Pg xvii] octavo volumes.

The periodicals enumerated thus far can hardly be regarded as literary in the modern acceptation of the term; they were, for the most part, ponderous, learned and scientific in character, and, with the exception of the *Gentleman's Journal* and Dodsley's *Museum*, rarely ventured into the domain of *belles-lettres*. An occasional erudite dissertation on classical poetry or on the French canons of taste suggested a literary intent, but the bulk of the journals was supplied by articles on natural history, curious experiments, physiological treatises and historical essays. During the latter half of the eighteenth century theological and political writings, and accounts of travels in distant lands became the staple offering of the reviews.

A new era in the history of English periodicals was marked by the publication, on May 1, 1749, of the first number of the *Monthly Review*, destined to continue through ninety-six years of varying fortune and to reach its 249th volume. It bore the subtitle: *A Periodical Work giving an Account, with Proper Abstracts of, and Extracts from, the New Books, Pamphlets, etc., as they come out. By Several Hands.* The publisher was Ralph Griffiths, who continued to manage the review until his death in 1803. It seems remarkable that this periodical which set the norm for half a century should have appeared not only without preface or advertisement, but likewise without patronage or support of any kind. From the first it reviewed poetry, fiction and drama as well as the customary classes of applied literature, and thus appealed primarily to the public rather than, like most of its predecessors, to the learned. Its politics were Whig and its theology Non-conformist. Griffiths was not successful at first, but determined to achieve popularity by enlisting
[Pg xviii] Ruffhead, Kippis, Langhorne and several other minor writers on his critical staff. In 1757 Oliver

Goldsmith became one of those unfortunate hacks as a result of his well-known agreement with Griffiths to serve as an assistant-editor in exchange for his board, lodging and "an adequate salary." About a score of miscellaneous reviews from Goldsmith's pen—including critiques of Home's *Douglas*, Burke's *On the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Smollett's *History of England* and Gray's *Odes*—appeared in the *Monthly Review* during 1757-58. The contract with Griffiths was soon broken, probably on account of incompatibility of temper. Goldsmith declared that he had been over-worked and badly treated; but it is quite likely that his idleness and irregular habits contributed largely to the misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, a Tory rival and a champion of the Established Church had appeared on the field. A printer named Archibald Hamilton projected the *Critical Review: or, Annals of Literature. By a Society of Gentlemen*, which began to appear in February, 1756, under the editorship of Tobias Smollett and extended to a total of 144 volumes when it ceased publication in 1817. Its articles were of a high order for the time and the new review soon became popular. The open rivalry between the reviews was fostered by an exchange of editorial compliments. Griffiths published a statement that the *Monthly* was not written by "physicians without practice, authors without learning, men without decency, gentlemen without manners, and critics without judgment." Smollett retorted that "the *Critical Review* is not written by a parcel of obscure hirelings, under the restraint of a bookseller and his wife, who presume to revise, alter and amend the articles occasionally. The principal writers in the *Critical Review* are unconnected with booksellers,
[Pg xix] unawed by old women, and independent of each other." Such literary encounters did not fail to stimulate public interest in both reviews and to add materially to their circulation.

When the first volume of the *Critical Review* was complete, the "Society of Gentlemen" enriched it with an ornate, self-congratulatory Preface in which they said of themselves:

> "However they may have erred in judgment, they have declared their thoughts without prejudice, fear, or affectation; and strove to forget the author's person, while his works fell under their consideration. They have treated simple dulness as the object of mirth or compassion, according to the nature of its appearance. Petulance and self-conceit they have corrected with more severe strictures; and though they have given no quarter to insolence, scurrility and sedition, they will venture to affirm, that no production of merit has been defrauded of its due share of applause. On the contrary, they have cherished with commendation, the very faintest bloom of genius, even when vapid and unformed, in hopes of its being warmed into flavour, and afterwards producing agreeable fruit by dint of proper care and culture; and never, without reluctance disapproved, even of a bad writer, who had the least title to indulgence. The judicious reader will perceive that their aim has been to exhibit a succinct plan of every performance; to point out the most striking beauties and glaring defects; to illustrate their remarks with proper quotations; and to convey these remarks in such a manner, as might best conduce to the entertainment of the public."

Moreover, these high ideals were entertained under the most unfavorable circumstances. By the time the second volume was complete, the editors took pleasure in announcing that in spite of "open assault and private assassination," "published reproach and printed letters of abuse, distributed like poisoned arrows in the dark," yea, in spite of the "breath of secret calumny" and the "loud blasts of obloquy," the *Critical Review* was more strongly entrenched than before.

[Pg xx] There was more than mere rhodomontade in these words. Not only did open rivalry exist between the two reviews, but they were both made the subject of violent attacks by authors whose productions had been condemned on their pages. John Brine (1755), John Shebbeare (1757), Horace Walpole (1759), William Kenrick (1759), James Grainger (1759) and Joseph Reed (1759) are the earliest of the many writers who issued pamphlets in reply to articles in the reviews. In 1759 Smollett was tried at the King's Bench for aspersions upon the character of Admiral Sir Charles Knowles published in the *Critical Review*. He was declared guilty, fined £100, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Yet in spite of such difficulties, the *Critical Review* continued to find favor among its readers. The articles written by its "Society of Gentlemen" were on the whole far more interesting in subject and treatment than the work of Griffiths' unfortunate hacks; but the *Monthly* was also prospering, as in 1761 a fourth share in that review was sold for more than £755.

In 1760 appeared a curious anonymous satire entitled *The Battle of the Reviews*, which presented, upon the model of Swift's spirited account of the contest between ancient and modern learning, a fantastic description of the open warfare between the two reviews. After a formal declaration of hostilities both sides marshal their forces for the struggle. The "noble patron" of the *Monthly* is but slightly disguised as the Right Honourable Rehoboam Gruffy, Esq. His associates Sir Imp Brazen, Mynheer Tanaquil Limmonad, Martin Problem, and others were probably recognized by contemporary readers. To oppose this array the *Critical* summons a force that contains only two names of distinction, Sampson MacJackson and Sawney MacSmallhead
[Pg xxi] (*i.e.*, Smollett). The ensuing battle, which is described at great length, results in a victory for the *Critical Review*, and the banishment of Squire Gruffy to the land of the Hottentots.

Dr. Johnson's well-known characterization of the two reviews was quite just. On the occasion of his memorable interview (1767) with George III, Johnson gave the King information concerning the *Journal des Savans* and said of the two English reviews that "the *Monthly Review* was done with most care; the *Critical* upon the best principles; adding that the authors of the *Monthly*

Review were enemies to the Church." Some years later Johnson said of the reviews:

> "I think them very impartial: I do not know an instance of partiality.... The Monthly Reviewers are not Deists; but they are Christians with as little Christianity as may be; and are for pulling down all establishments. The Critical Reviewers are for supporting the constitution both in church and state. The Critical Reviewers, I believe, often review without reading the books through; but lay hold of a topick and write chiefly from their own minds. The Monthly Reviewers are duller men and are glad to read the books through."

Goldsmith's successor on the *Monthly* staff was the notorious libeller and "superlative scoundrel," Dr. William Kenrick, who signalized his advent (November, 1759) by writing an outrageous attack upon Goldsmith's *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*. His utterances were so thoroughly unjustified that Griffiths, who had scant reason for praising poor Oliver, made an indirect apology for his unworthy minion by a favorable though brief review (June, 1762) of *The Citizen of the World*. During 1759 the *Critical Review* published a number of Goldsmith's articles which probably enabled the impecunious author to effect his removal from the garret in Salisbury Square to the famous lodgings in Green Arbour Court. After March, 1760, we find no
[Pg xxii] record of his association with either review, although he afterwards wrote for the *British Magazine* and others.

During the latter half of the century several reviews appeared and flourished for a time without serious damage to their well-established rivals. The *Literary Magazine; or Universal Review* (1756-58) is memorable for Johnson's coöperation and a half-dozen articles by Goldsmith. Boswell tells us that Johnson wrote for the magazine until the fifteenth number and "that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness and vivacity of his mind, than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others." The *London Review of English and Foreign Literature* (1775-80) was conducted by the infamous Kenrick and others who faithfully maintained the editor's well-recognized policy of vicious onslaught and personal abuse. Paul Henry Maty, an assistant-librarian of the British Museum, conducted for five years a *New Review* (1782-86), often called *Maty's Review*, and dealing principally with learned works. It apparently enjoyed some authority, but both Walpole and Gibbon spoke unfavorably of Maty's critical pretensions. *The English Review; or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature* (1783-96), extended to twenty-eight volumes modelled upon the plan of the older periodicals. In 1796 it was incorporated with the *Analytical Review* (1788) and survived under the latter title until 1799. The *Analytical Review* deprecated the self-sufficient attitude of contemporary criticism and advocated extensive quotations from the works under consideration so that readers might be able to judge for themselves. It likewise hinted at the tacit understanding then existing between certain authors, publishers and reviews for their mutual advantage, but which was arousing a
[Pg xxiii] growing feeling of distrust on the part of the public. The *British Critic* (1793-1843) was edited by William Beloe and Robert Nares as the organ of the High Church Party. This "dull mass of orthodoxy" concerned itself extensively with literary reviews; but its articles were best known for their lack of interest and authority. The foibles of the *British Critic* were satirized in Bishop Copleston's *Advice to a Young Reviewer* (1807) with an appended mock critique of Milton's *L'Allegro*. In 1826 it was united with the *Quarterly Theological Review* and continued until 1843.

The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor (1799-1821) played a strenuous rôle in the troublous times of the Napoleonic wars. It continued the policy of the *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* (1797-98) conducted with such marked vigor by William Gifford, but it numbered among its contributors none of the brilliant men whose witty verses for the weekly paper are still read in the popular *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*. The *Review* was conducted by John Richards Green, better known as John Gifford. Its articles were at times sensational in character, viciously abusing writers of known or suspected republican sentiments. From its pages could be culled a new series of "Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin" which for sheer vituperation and relentless abuse would be without a rival among such anthologies.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the principal reviews in course of publication were the *Monthly*, the *Critical*, the *British Critic*, and the *Anti-Jacobin*. The latter was preëminently vulgar in its appeal, the *Critical* had lost its former prestige, and the other two had never risen above a level of mediocrity. There was more than a lurking suspicion that these periodicals were,
[Pg xxiv] to a certain extent, booksellers' organs, quite unreliable on account of the partial and biassed criticisms which they offered the dissatisfied public. The time was evidently ripe for a new departure in literary reviews—for the establishment of a trustworthy critical journal, conducted by capable editors and printing readable notices of important books. People were quite willing to have an unfortunate author assailed and flayed for their entertainment; but they did not care to be deceived by laudatory criticisms that were inspired by the publisher's name instead of the intrinsic merits of the work itself.

Such was the state of affairs when Francis Jeffrey, Henry Brougham and Sydney Smith launched the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802, choosing a name that had been borne in 1755-56 by a short-lived semi-annual review. There were several significant facts associated with the new enterprise. It was the first important literary periodical to be published beyond the metropolis. It was the first review to appear quarterly—an interval that most contemporary journalists would have condemned as too long for a successful review. Moreover, it was conducted upon an entirely different principle than any previous review; by restricting its attention to the most important works of each quarter, it gave extensive critiques of only a few books in each number and thus avoided the multitude of perfunctory notices that had made previous reviews so dreary and

unreadable.

The idea of founding the *Edinburgh Review* was apparently suggested by Sydney Smith in March, 1802. Jeffrey and Francis Horner were his immediate associates; but during the period of preparation Henry Brougham, Dr. Thomas Brown, Dr. John Thomson and others became interested. After some delay, the first number appeared on October 10, 1802, containing among
[Pg xxv] its twenty-nine articles three by Brougham, five by Horner, six by Jeffrey and nine by Smith. Although there was a slight feeling of disappointment over the mild political tone of the new review, its success was immediate. The edition of 750 copies was speedily disposed of, and within a month a second edition of equal size was printed. There was no regular editor at first, although the publication of the first three numbers was practically superintended by Smith. Afterwards Jeffrey became editor at a salary of £300. He had previously written some articles (including a critique of Southey's *Thalaba*) for the *Monthly Review* and was pessimistic enough to anticipate an early failure for the new venture. However, at the time he assumed control (July, 1803) the circulation was 2500, and within five years it reached 8,000 or 9,000 copies. Jeffrey's articles were recognized and much admired; but the success of the *Edinburgh* was due to its independent tone and general excellence rather than to the individual contributions of its editor. Its prosperity enabled the publishers to offer the contributors attractive remuneration for their articles, thus assuring the coöperation of specialists and of the most capable men of letters of the day. At the outset, ten guineas per sheet were paid; later sixteen became the minimum, and the average ranged from twenty to twenty-five guineas. When we recall that the *Critical Review* paid two, and the *Monthly Review* sometimes four guineas per sheet, we can readily understand the distinctly higher standard of the *Edinburgh Review*.

Horner left Scotland for London in 1803 to embark upon a political career. During the next six years occasional articles from his pen—less than a score in all—appeared in the review. Smith and Brougham likewise left Edinburgh in 1803 and 1805 respectively; but they ably supported
[Pg xxvi] Jeffrey by sending numerous contributions for many years. During the first quarter-century of the review's existence, this trio, with the coöperation of Sir James Mackintosh and a few others, constituted the mainstay of its success. Jeffrey's remarkable critical faculty was displayed to best advantage in the wide range of articles (two hundred in number) which he wrote during his editorship. It is true that his otherwise sound judgment was unable to grasp the significance of the new poetic movement of his day, and that his best remembered efforts are the diatribes against the Lake Poets. Hence, in the eyes of the modern literary dilettante, he figures as a misguided, domineering Zoilus whose mission in life was to heap ridicule upon the poetical efforts of Wordsworth, Coleridge and the lesser disciples of romanticism.

There are in the early volumes of the *Edinburgh* no more conspicuous qualities than that air of vivacity and graceful wit, so thoroughly characteristic of Sydney Smith. The reader who turns to those early numbers may be disappointed in the literary quality of the average article, for he will instinctively and unfairly make comparison with more recent standards, instead of considering the immeasurably inferior conditions that had previously prevailed; but we may safely assert that the majority of Smith's articles can be read with interest to-day. He was sufficiently sedate and serious when occasion demanded; yet at all times he delighted in the display of his native and sparkling humor. Although most of his important articles have been collected, far too much of his work lies buried in that securest of literary sepulchres—the back numbers of a critical review.

Henry Brougham at first wrote the scientific articles for the *Edinburgh*. Soon his ability to deal with a wide range of subjects was recognized and he proved the most versatile of the early
[Pg xxvii] reviewers. In the first twenty numbers are eighty articles from his pen. A story that does not admit of verification attributes to Brougham a whole number of the *Edinburgh*, including an article on lithotomy and another on Chinese music. Later he became especially distinguished for his political articles, and remained a contributor long after Jeffrey and Smith had withdrawn. A comparatively small portion of his *Edinburgh* articles was reprinted (1856) in three volumes.

Although the young men who guided the early fortunes of the review were Whigs, the *Edinburgh* was not (as is generally believed) founded as a Whig organ. In fact, the political complexion of their articles was so subdued that even stalwart Tories like Walter Scott did not refrain from contributing to its pages. Scott's *Marmion* was somewhat sharply reviewed by Jeffrey in April, 1808, and in the following October appeared the article by Jeffrey and Brougham upon Don Pedro Cevallos' *French Usurpation of Spain*. The pronounced Whiggism of that critique led to an open rupture with the Tory contributors. Scott, who was no longer on the best terms with Constable, the publisher of the *Edinburgh*, declared that henceforth he could neither receive nor read the review. He proposed to John Murray—then of Fleet Street—the founding of a Tory quarterly in London as a rival to the northern review that had thus far enjoyed undisputed possession of the field, because it afforded "the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with." Murray, who had already entertained the idea of establishing such a review, naturally welcomed the prospect of so powerful an ally. Like a good Tory, Scott felt that the "flashy and bold character of the *Edinburgh's* politics was likely to produce an indelible impression upon the youth of the
[Pg xxviii] country." He ascertained that William Gifford, formerly editor of the *Anti-Jacobin* newspaper, was willing to take charge of the new review, which Scott desired to be not exclusively nor principally political, but a "periodical work of criticism conducted with equal talent, but upon sounder principle than that which had gained so high a station in the world of letters."

In February, 1809, appeared the first number of the *Quarterly Review*. Three of its articles were by Scott, who continued to contribute for some time and whose advice was frequently sought by both editor and publisher. Canning, Ellis, and others who had written for the then defunct *Anti-*

Jacobin became interested in the *Quarterly*; but the principal contributors for many years were Robert Southey, John Wilson Croker and Sir John Barrow. This trio contributed an aggregate of almost five hundred articles to the *Quarterly*. In spite of its high standard, the new venture was a financial failure for at least the first two years; later, especially in the days of Tory triumph after the overthrow of Napoleon, the *Quarterly* flourished beyond all expectation. Gifford's salary as editor was raised from the original £200 to £900; for many years Southey was paid £100 for each article. Gifford was distinctly an editor of the old school, with well-defined ideas of his official privilege of altering contributed articles to suit himself—a weakness that likewise afflicted Francis Jeffrey. While it appears that Gifford wrote practically nothing for the review and that the savage *Endymion* article so persistently attributed to him was really the work of Croker, he was an excellent manager and conducted the literary affairs of the *Quarterly* with considerable skill. His lack of system and of business qualifications, however, resulted in the frequently irregular appearance of the early numbers.

[Pg xxix] On account of his failing health, Gifford resigned the editorship of the *Quarterly* in 1824, and was succeeded by John Taylor Coleridge, whose brief and unimportant administration served merely to fill the gap until an efficient successor for Gifford could be found. The choice fell upon Scott's son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, who, from 1825 to 1853, proved to be a most capable editor. The subsequent history of the review under Whitwell Elwin (1853-1860), William Macpherson (1860-1867), Sir William Smith (1867-1893), Mr. Rowland Prothero (1894-1899) and the latter's brother, Mr. George Prothero, the present editor, naturally lies beyond the purposes of this introduction.

The period of Lockhart's editorship of the *Quarterly* was likewise the golden epoch of the *Edinburgh*. Sydney Smith's contributions ceased about 1828. In the following year Jeffrey was elected Dean of the Faculty of Advocates. He felt that the tenure of his new dignity demanded the relinquishment of the editorship of an independent literary and political review; accordingly, after editing the ninety-eighth number of the *Edinburgh*, he retired in favor of Macvey Napier, who had been a contributor since 1805. Napier conducted the review with great success from 1829 until his death in 1847. His policy was to prefer shorter articles than those printed when he assumed control. At first, each number contained from fifteen to twenty-five articles; but the growing length and importance of the political contributions had reduced the average to ten. The return to the original policy naturally resulted in a greater variety of purely literary articles.

[Pg xxx] Macaulay had begun his association with the *Edinburgh* by his remarkable essay on *Milton* in 1825—a bold, striking piece of criticism, full of the fire of youth, which established his literary reputation and gave a renewed impetus to the already prosperous review. During Napier's editorship he contributed his essays on *Croker's Boswell*, *Hampden*, *Burleigh*, *Horace Walpole*, *Lord Chatham*, *Bacon*, *Clive*, *Hastings* and many others. Napier experienced some difficulty in steering a middle course for the review between Lord Brougham, who sought to use its pages to further his own political ambitions, and Macaulay, who vigorously denounced the procedure. The *Edinburgh* was no longer conspicuous among its numerous contemporaries; but the literary quality was much higher than at first. Among the other famous contributors of this period were Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Thackeray, Bulwer, Hallam, Sir William Hamilton and many others. This was undoubtedly the greatest period in the history of the review. Its power in Whig politics is shown by the fact that Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell sought to make it the organ of the government.

Napier's successor in 1847 was William Empson, who had contributed to the *Edinburgh* since 1823 and who held the editorship until his demise in 1852. Next followed Sir George Cornewall Lewis, who, however, resigned in 1855 to become Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Palmerston's cabinet. During his régime he wrote less than a score of articles for the review. His immediate successor was the late Henry Reeve, whose forty years of faithful service until his death in 1895 brings the review practically to our own day. When Reeve began his duties by editing No. 206 (April, 1855) Lord Brougham was the only survivor of the contributors to the original number. In 1857, when a discussion arose between editor and publisher concerning the denunciatory attitude assumed by the review toward Lord Palmerston's ministry, Reeve drew up a list of his contributors at that time, including Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Tait, George [Pg xxxi] Grote, John Forster, M. Guizot, the Duke of Argyll, Rev. Canon Moseley, George S. Venables, Richard Monckton Milnes and a score of others—most of them "names of the highest honour and the most consistent adherence to Liberal principles." Within the four decades that followed, the personnel of the review has made another almost complete change. A new group of contributors, under the editorship of Hon. Arthur R.D. Elliot, is now striving to maintain the standards of old "blue and yellow." A caustic note in the (1890) Annual Index of *Review of Reviews* said of the *Edinburgh*:

> "It has long since subsided into a respectable exponent of high and dry Whiggery, which in these later days has undergone a further degeneration or evolution into Unionism.... Audacity, wit, unconventionality, enthusiasm—all these qualities have long since evaporated, and with them has disappeared the political influence of the *Edinburgh*."

The two great rivals which are now reaching their centenary[B] are still the most prominent, in fact the only well-known literary quarterlies of England. During their life-time many quarterlies have risen, flourished for a time and perished. The *Westminster Review*, founded 1824, by Jeremy Bentham, appeared under the editorship of Sir John Bowring and Henry Southern. As the avowed organ of the Radicals it lost no time in assailing (principally through the vigorous pens of James

Mill and John Stuart Mill) both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. In 1836 Sir William Molesworth's recently established *London Review* was united with the *Westminster*, and, after several changes of joint title, continued since 1851 as the *Westminster Review*. Since 1887 it has
[Pg xxxii] been published as a monthly of Liberal policy and "high-class philosophy." The *Dublin Review* (London, 1836) still continues quarterly as a Roman Catholic organ; similarly the *London Quarterly Review*, a Wesleyan organ, has been published since 1853. Of the quarterlies now defunct, it will suffice to mention the dissenting *Eclectic Review* (1805-68) owned and edited for a time by Josiah Conder; the *British Review* (1811-25); the *Christian Remembrancer* (1819-68), which was a monthly during its early history; the *Retrospective Review* (1820-26, 1853-54) conducted by Henry Southern and afterwards Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas as a critical review for old and curious books; the *English Review* (1844-53); and the *North British Review* (1844-71), published at Edinburgh. The impulse toward the study of continental literature during the third decade of the century gave rise to the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (1827-46); the *Foreign Review and Continental Miscellany* (1828-30) and the *British and Foreign Review* (1835-44), continued as the *British Quarterly Review* (1845-86).

A most determined effort to rival the older quarterlies resulted in the *National Review*, founded in 1855 by Walter Bagehot and Richard Holt Hutton. Its articles were exhaustive, well-written and thoroughly characteristic of their class. In addition to the excellent work of both editors, there were contributions by James Martineau, Matthew Arnold, and Hutton's brother-in-law, William Caldwell Roscoe. Yet, in spite of the high standards maintained until the end, the *National* ceased publication in 1864. The many failures in this class of periodicals seem to indicate quite clearly that the spirit of the age no longer favors a quarterly. For our energetic and progressive era such an interval is too long. The confirmed admirer of the elaborate essays of the
[Pg xxxiii] *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* will continue to welcome their bulky numbers; but the average reader is strongly prejudiced in favor of the more frequent, more attractive and more thoroughly entertaining monthlies.

It is one of the curiosities in the history of periodical literature that no popular monthly developed during the first half of the nineteenth century: the great quarterlies apparently usurped the entire field. We have already seen that the *Critical Review* came to an end in 1817 whilst the *Monthly* continued until 1843. In both cases, however, the publication amounted to little more than a sheer struggle for existence. The *Monthly's* attempt to imitate in a smaller way the plan of the quarterlies proved an unqualified failure. Neither of the two periodicals established at the beginning of the century ever achieved a position of critical authority. The *Christian Observer*, started (1802) by Josiah Pratt and conducted by Zachary Macaulay until 1816, was devoted mainly to the abolition of the slave-trade. Its subsequent history until its demise in 1877 is confined almost wholly to the theological pale. The second periodical was the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* (1806-37), which achieved some literary prominence for a time under the editorship of W.J. Fox. During the last two years of its existence, Richard Hengist Horne and Leigh Hunt became its successive editors, but failed to avert the final collapse.

It would be useless to enumerate the many short-lived attempts, such as the *Monthly Censor* (1822) and Longman's *Monthly Chronicle* (1838-41) that were made to provide a successful monthly review. The first of the modern literary monthlies was the *Fortnightly Review*, established in 1865, evidently upon the model of *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which had been
[Pg xxxiv] published at Paris since 1831. Like the great French periodical, it was issued fortnightly (at first) and printed signed articles. It was Liberal in politics, agnostic in religion and abreast of the times in science. The publishers, Messrs. Chapman and Hall, secured an experienced editor in George Henry Lewes, who had contributed extensively to most of the reviews then in progress. The success of the new review was assured by the presence of such names as Walter Bagehot, George Eliot, Sir John Herschel, Mr. Frederic Harrison and Herbert Spencer on its list of contributors. It provided articles of timely interest in politics, literature, art and science; in its early volumes appeared serially Anthony Trollope's *Belton Estate* and Mr. George Meredith's *Vittoria*.

Lewes edited the first six volumes, covering the years 1865-66. The review was then made a monthly without, however, changing its now inappropriate name, and the editorship was accepted by Mr. John Morley, who conducted the *Fortnightly* with great success for sixteen years. Most of the earlier contributors were retained; others like Mr. Swinburne, J.A. Symonds, Professor Edward Dowden and (Sir) Leslie Stephen established a standard of literary criticism that was practically unrivalled. The authority of its scientific and political writers was equally high; as for serial fiction, Mr. Morley published Mr. Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career* and *The Tragic Comedians*, besides less important novels by Trollope and others. More recently the publication of fiction has been exceptional. The (1890) *Review of Reviews* Index said of the *Fortnightly*:

> "While disclaiming 'party' or 'editorial consistency,' and proclaiming that its pages were open to all views, the *Fortnightly* seldom included the orthodox among its contributors. The articles which startled people and made small earthquakes
> [Pg xxxv] beneath the crust of conventional orthodoxy, political and religious, usually appeared in the *Fortnightly*. It was here that Professor Huxley seemed to foreshadow the expulsion of the spiritual from the world, by his paper on 'The Physical Basis of Life,' and that Professor Tyndall propounded his famous suggestion for the establishment of a prayerless union or hospital as a scientific method for testing the therapeutic value of prayer. Mr. Frederic Harrison chanted

> in its pages the praises of the Commune, and prepared the old ladies of both sexes for the imminent advent of an English Terror by his plea for Trade Unionism. It was in the *Fortnightly* also that Mr. Chamberlain was introduced to the world, when he was permitted to explain his proposals for Free Labour, Free Land, Free Education, and Free Church. Mr. Morley's papers on the heroes and saints (Heaven save the mark!) of the French Revolution appeared here, and every month in an editorial survey he summed up the leading features of the progress of the world."

Since Mr. Morley's retirement in 1883, the editors of the *Fortnightly* have been Mr. T.H.S. Escott (1883-86), Mr. Frank Harris (1886-94) and the present incumbent, Mr. W.L. Courtney.

The *Fortnightly* was not long permitted to enjoy undisputed possession of the field. In 1866, while it was still published semi-monthly, the *Contemporary Review* was launched. Alexander Strahan, the publisher, selected Dean Alford as its editor in order to assure a more reserved tone than that of its popular predecessor. Although Liberal in politics, like the *Fortnightly*, it assumed a very different and apparently corrective attitude in religious matters. Most of its articles for many years were upon theological subjects and were written by scholars comparatively unknown to the public. The gradual change in policy furthered by its later editors, especially Mr. James Knowles and Mr. Percy Bunting has brought the *Contemporary* nearer to the general type of popular
[Pg xxxvi] monthlies. Its principles seem to tend toward "broad evangelical, semi-socialistic Liberalism."

In 1877 Mr. Knowles found it impossible to conduct the *Contemporary* any longer in the independent manner that seemed essential to him; accordingly, he withdrew and established the *Nineteenth Century*, which in deference to the new era and a desire to be abreast of the times, recently adopted the somewhat awkward title of the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Like the *Fortnightly*, it presented a brilliant array of names from the first. The initial number contained a Prefatory Sonnet by Tennyson, and articles by Gladstone, Matthew Arnold, Cardinal Manning, and the Dean of Gloucester and Bristol. It is sufficient to state that this standard has since been maintained by Mr. Knowles and has made his *Nineteenth Century and After* the most popular of the monthlies.

The *National Review* (not to be confounded with Bagehot and Hutton's quarterly of that name), is the youngest and least important of the monthly reviews. It was established in 1883 as a Conservative organ under the editorship of Mr. Alfred Austin and Professor W.J. Courthope. Well-known writers have contributed to its pages, yet it has never assumed a place of first importance in the periodical world. Its present editor is Mr. Louis J. Maxse.

It is well to bear in mind that these reviews all seek to discuss the most important subjects of contemporary interest, and to secure the services of writers best qualified to treat those subjects. In the narrow sense of the term, they are not literary reviews; the function of periodicals that discuss present day politics, sociology, theology, history, science, art and numerous other generic subjects is more inclusive and appeals to a much larger audience than the periodical of literary criticism. In the quarterlies and monthlies we look for the most authoritative reviews of the
[Pg xxxvii] important books of the day; but for general literary review and gossip, a new class of monthlies, best represented by Dr. Robertson Nicoll's *Bookman* (1891) and the American *Bookman* (1895) and *The Critic* (1881) has appeared. These fill a gap between the more substantial monthlies and the very popular weekly papers.

The last-mentioned class was practically developed during the nineteenth century. The frequency of publication forbade a strict devotion to the cause of *belles-lettres*; hence, in most cases, politics or music and art were included in the scheme. At first literature was granted meagre space in newspapers of the *Weekly Register* and *Examiner* type. William Cobbett, profiting by his previous experience with *Porcupine's Gazette* and the *Porcupine*, began his *Weekly Political Register* in 1802 and continued its publication until his death in 1835. It was so thoroughly political in character that it hardly merits recognition as a literary periodical. The *Examiner*, begun in 1808 by John Hunt, enjoyed during the thirteen years of his brother Leigh's coöperation a wide reputation for the excellence of its political and literary criticism. Under Albany Fonblanque, John Forster and William Minto it continued with varying success until 1880.

The first truly literary weekly review was the *Literary Gazette*, established in 1817 by Henry Colburn, of the *New Monthly Magazine*, under the joint editorship of Mr. H.E. Lloyd and Miss Ross. After the first half-year of its existence, Colburn sold a third share to the Messrs. Longman and another third to William Jerdan, who became sole editor and eventually (1842) sole proprietor. The original price of a shilling was soon reduced to eight pence. Jerdan set the prototype for later literary weeklies in his plan, which embraced "foreign and domestic
[Pg xxxviii] correspondence, critical analyses of new publications, varieties connected with polite literature, philosophical researches, scientific inventions, sketches of society, biographical memoirs, essays on fine arts, and miscellaneous articles on drama, music and literary intelligence." Thus Jerdan followed his friend Canning's advice by avoiding "politics and polemics" and by aiming to present "a clear and instructive picture of the moral and literary improvement of the times, and a complete and authentic chronological literary record for general reference." He secured the services of Crabbe, Barry Cornwall, Maginn, Campbell, Mrs. Hemans and others: with such an array of contributors he was able to crush the several rival weeklies that soon entered the field.

Toward the end of its prosperous first decade, however, the misfortunes of the *Literary Gazette* began. Colburn's publications had been roughly handled in its pages and he accordingly aided James Silk Buckingham in founding the *Athenæum*. The first number appeared on January 2,

1828, as an evident rival of the older weekly. For a time the new venture was on the verge of failure and the proprietors actually offered to sell it to Jerdan. Within half a year Buckingham was succeeded by John Sterling as editor. Frederic Denison Maurice's friends purchased the *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* (begun 1819) and merged it with the *Athenæum* in July, 1828. For a year Sterling and Maurice contributed some of the most brilliant critical articles that have appeared in its pages. The working editor at that time was Henry Stebbing who had been associated with the *Athenæum* since its inception and who was the only survivor[C] of the original staff when the semi-centennial number was published on January 5, 1878.

[Pg xxxix] Even the high standards set by Maurice and Sterling failed to win public favor. The crisis came about the middle of 1830 when Charles Wentworth Dilke became "supreme editor," enlisted Lamb, George Darley, Barry Cornwall and others on his staff, and reduced the price of the *Athenæum* from eightpence to fourpence. The apparent folly of reducing the price and increasing the expenses did not lead to the generally prophesied collapse; this first experiment in modern methods resulted in the rapid growth of the *Athenæum's* circulation, to the serious detriment of the *Literary Gazette*. Jerdan tried to stem the tide by publishing lampoons on the dullness of Dilke's paper; but when the *Athenæum* was enlarged in 1835 from sixteen to twenty-four pages Dilke's triumph was evident. The *Literary Gazette* was compelled to reduce its price to fourpence in its effort to regain the lost subscriptions. Dilke labored earnestly to improve his paper and when, in 1846, he felt that it was established on a firm basis, he made Thomas Kibble Hervey editor and devoted his own time to furthering his journalistic enterprises. However, he continued to contribute to the weekly; his valuable articles on Junius and Pope together with several others were afterwards reprinted as *Papers of a Critic*.

Jerdan withdrew from the *Literary Gazette* in 1850. The hopeless struggle with the *Athenæum*, involving a third reduction in price to threepence, lasted until 1862, when the *Gazette* was incorporated with the *Parthenon* and came to an end during the following year. Hervey edited the *Athenæum* until 1853 when ill-health necessitated his resignation. The later editors include William Hepworth Dixon, Norman MacColl and at present Mr. Vernon Rendall. After the withdrawal of Dixon in 1869 a reformation in the staff and management of the *Athenæum* took
[Pg xl] place.

> "Some old writers were parted with, and a great many fresh contributors were found. While special departments, such as science, art, music and the drama, were of necessity entrusted to regular hands, indeed, the reviewing of books, now more than ever the principal business of 'The Athenæum,' was distributed over a very large staff, the plan being to assign each work to a writer familiar with its subject and competent to deal with it intelligently, but rigidly to exclude personal favouritism or prejudice, and to secure as much impartiality as possible. The rule of anonymity has been more carefully observed in 'The Athenæum' than in most other papers. Its authority as a literary censor is not lessened, however, and is in some respects increased, by the fact that the paper itself, and not any particular critic of great or small account, is responsible for the verdicts passed in its columns." (Fox Bourne.)

Half a year after the inception of the *Athenæum*, the first number of the *Spectator* was issued (July 6, 1828) by Robert Stephen Rintoul, an experienced journalist who had launched the ill-fated semi-political *Atlas* two years before and therefore decided to confine his new venture to literary and social topics. The political excitement of the time soon aroused Rintoul's interest, and he undertook the advocacy of the Reform Bill with all possible ardor. From him emanated the famous battle-cry: "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." He conducted the *Spectator* with great skill until 1858, when he sold it two months before his death. Although he wrote little for its pages, Rintoul made the *Spectator* a power in furthering all reforms. The literary standard, while somewhat obscured for a time by its politics, was high. In 1861 the *Spectator* passed into the hands of Mr. Meredith Townsend who sold a half share to the late Richard Holt Hutton with the understanding that they should act as political and literary editors respectively. During the four years of the American Civil War, the *Spectator* espoused the cause of the North and was
[Pg xli] consequently unpopular; but the outcome turned the sentiment in England and likewise the fortunes of the *Spectator*. Hutton's contributions included his most memorable utterances upon theological and literary subjects. In the midst of religious controversy he was able to discuss delicate questions without giving offense, to enlist all parties by refraining from expressed allegiance to one. The *Spectator* of Hutton's day was, in Mrs. Oliphant's opinion, "specially distinguished by the thoughtful tone of its writing, the almost Quixotic fairness of its judgments, and the profoundly religious spirit which pervades its more serious articles." Hutton retired shortly before his death in 1897. The present editor is Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey.

The *Saturday Review* was established in November, 1855, by A.J. Beresford Hope. Its first editor was John Douglass Cook, who had indexed the early volumes of the *Quarterly* for Murray and had gained his journalistic experience with the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. Though possessed of no great personal ability, Cook had the useful editorial faculty of recognizing talent, and consequently gathered about himself the most promising writers of the younger generation, including, among others, Robert Talbot Cecil, the late Lord Salisbury. The *Saturday Review* at once became the most influential and most energetic of the weekly papers. Its politics, independent at first, later assumed a pronounced Conservative complexion. Cook remained editor until his death (1868) when he was succeeded by his assistant, Philip Harwood. Since the latter's retirement in 1883 the more recent editors include Mr. Walter H. Pollock, Mr. Frank Harris and

[Pg xlii] the present incumbent, Mr. Harold Hodge. Professor Saintsbury wrote of the *Saturday Review*:

> "Its staff was, as a rule, recruited from the two Universities (though there was no kind of exclusion for the unmatriculated; as a matter of fact, neither of its first two editors was a son either of Oxford or Cambridge), and it always insisted on the necessity of classical culture.... It observed, for perhaps a longer time than any other paper, the salutary principles of anonymity (real as well as ostensible) in regard to the authorship of particular articles; and those who knew were constantly amused at the public mistakes on this subject."

Such "salutary principles of anonymity" were not observed by the *Academy, a Monthly Record of Literature, Learning, Science and Art*, which began to appear in October, 1869, and was published for a short time by John Murray. Its founder, Dr. Charles E. Appleton, edited the *Academy* until his death in 1879. All the leading articles bore the authors' signatures, and, following the example of the more ambitious monthlies, Dr. Appleton secured the best known writers as contributors. The first number opened with an interesting unpublished letter of Lord Byron's; its literary articles were by Matthew Arnold, Gustave Masson and Mr. Sidney Colvin, theology was represented by the Rev. T.K. Cheyne and J.B. Lightfoot (later Bishop of Durham), science by Thomas Huxley and Sir John Lubbock (now Lord Avebury), and classical learning by Mark Pattison and John Conington. This remarkable array of names did not diminish in subsequent numbers. Besides those mentioned Mr. W.M. Rossetti, Max Müller, G. Maspero, J.A. Symonds, F.T. Palgrave and others contributed to the first volume. Later such names as William Morris, John Tyndall, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Walter Pater and Robert Louis Stevenson appeared in its pages.

In spite of its brilliant program, the size of the *Academy*, even at its price of sixpence, was too
[Pg xliii] slight to rank as a monthly. After four years' experience, first as a monthly, then as a fortnightly, it became and has remained a weekly. The editorial succession since the death of Dr. Appleton has been C.E. Doble (1879-81); Mr. James Sutherland Cotton (1881-96); Mr. C. Lewis Hind (1896-1903); and Mr. W. Teignmouth Shore. The issue of November 7, 1896, announced Mr. Cotton's retirement and the inauguration of a new policy, which, in addition to technical improvements, promised the issue of occasional supplements of a purely academic and educational character, and the beginning of the series of *Academy Portraits* of men of letters. At the same time the publication of signed articles was abolished and the *Academy* remained anonymous until the recent editorial change. A new departure in October, 1898, made the *Academy* an illustrated paper—the most attractive though not the most authoritative of the weeklies. It has departed widely from the set traditions of Dr. Appleton, but most readers will agree that the departure has been justified by the needs of the hour. There is small satisfaction in reading a one-page review from the pen of an Arnold or a Pater; we feel that such authorities should express themselves at length in the pages of the literary monthlies; that the reader of the weekly should be content with the anonymous (and less expensive) review written by the staff-critic. Whatever the personal bias, it is at least certain that under present conditions the *Academy* appeals more generally to the popular taste. Its recent absorption of a younger periodical is indicated in the compounding of its title into the *Academy and Literature*—a change that does not commend itself on abstract grounds of literary fitness and tradition.

A consideration of periodicals of the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Rambler* class evidently lies beyond
[Pg xliv] our present purpose; though Addison's papers on *Paradise Lost* and similar articles show an occasional critical intent. The magazines, however, have in various instances shown such an extensive interest in matters literary that a brief account of their development will not be amiss. The primary distinction between the review and the magazine is well understood; the former criticizes, the latter entertains. Hence fiction, poetry and essays are better adapted than book-reviews to the needs of the literary magazine. As already stated, Peter Motteux's *Gentleman's Journal* (1692-94) probably deserves recognition as the first English magazine, though its brief career is forgotten in the honor accorded to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, established in 1731 by Edward Cave and which, still under the editorship of "Sylvanus Urban, Gentleman," is now approaching its three hundredth volume. In the early days its lists of births, deaths, marriages, bankrupts, events, etc., must have made it a useful summary for the public. In literature it printed merely a "Register of New Books" without comment of any sort. It is exasperating to find such books as *Pamela* or *Tom Jones* listed among "New Publications" without a word of criticism or commendation. We could spare whole reams of pages devoted to "Army Promotions" and "Monthly Chronicle" for a few lines of literary review.

Although the booksellers refused to aid Cave in establishing his magazine, the demonstration of its success brought forth numerous rivals. As they all followed Cave's precedent in ignoring literary criticism, it will suffice to mention merely the names of the *London Magazine* (1732-79); the *Scots Magazine* (1739-1817), continued as the *Edinburgh Magazine* until 1826; the *Universal Magazine* (1743-1815); the *British Magazine* (1746-50); the *Royal Magazine* (1759-71); and
[Pg xlv] finally the *British Magazine, or Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies* (1760-67) edited by Tobias Smollett, who published his *Sir Launcelot Greaves* in its pages—perhaps the first instance of the serial publication of fiction. Goldsmith wrote some of his most interesting essays for Smollett's magazine.

An important addition to the ranks was the *Monthly Magazine* begun in 1796 by Sir Richard Phillips under the editorship of John Aikin. The principal contributor was William Taylor of Norwich who, during a period of thirty years, supplied to the *Monthly Magazine* and other periodicals a series of 1,750 articles of remarkable quality. His contributions gave the Magazine

standing as a literary review. Hazlitt accorded to Taylor the honor of writing the first reviews in the style afterwards adopted by the Edinburgh Reviewers, which established their reputations as original and impartial critics. He is remembered to-day as the author of an unread *Historic Survey of German Poetry* which was vigorously assailed by Carlyle in the *Edinburgh Review*. The *New Monthly Magazine* was started in 1814 by Henry Colburn and Frederick Shoberl in opposition to Phillips' magazine. Its first editors were Dr. Watkins and Alaric A. Watts. At a later time Campbell, Bulwer, Theodore Hook and Harrison Ainsworth successively assumed charge. Under such capable direction the magazine naturally won a prominent place among the periodicals of the day. During its later years the *New Monthly* was obscured by more ambitious ventures and came to an inglorious end in 1875—thirty-two years after the suspension of Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*.

[Pg xlvi] A most significant event in the history of the magazine was the founding of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* in April, 1817, by William Blackwood. The new magazine was projected to counteract the influence of the *Edinburgh Review*, but under its first editors, James Cleghorn and Thomas Pringle, it failed to win favor. After six numbers were issued, a final disagreement between Blackwood and the editors resulted in the withdrawal of the latter. The name of the monthly was changed to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*—popularly *Blackwood's* or "Maga"—and henceforth until his death Blackwood was his own editor. John Wilson (Christopher North) and John Gibson Lockhart, the most important of the early contributors to *Blackwood's*, published in that famous seventh number the clever *Chaldee Manuscript*—an audacious satire upon the original editors, the rival publisher Constable, the *Edinburgh Review* and various literary personages under a thinly veiled allegory in apocalyptic style. It at once attracted wide attention (including a costly action for libel within a fortnight) and was suppressed in the second impression of the number. The same number of *Blackwood's* set the precedent for the subsequent critical vituperation that made the magazine notorious. It contained an abusive article on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and the first of a series of virulent attacks on "The Cockney School of Poetry." Much of the literary criticism in the first few volumes is inexcusably brutal; fortunately, *Blackwood's* soon became less rampant in its critical outbursts. The coöperation of James Hogg and the ill-fated Maginn introduced new articles of varied interest, particularly the witty letters and the parodies of "Ensign O'Doherty." Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianæ* became a characteristic feature of *Blackwood's*; John Galt and Susan Ferrier won popularity among the novel readers of the day; and in the trenchant literary criticism of Lockhart, Wilson, Hogg and [Pg xlvii] their confrères an equally high standard was maintained.

After the death of the elder Blackwood in 1834, the management of the magazine passed to his sons successively. John Blackwood, the sixth son, enjoyed the distinction of "discovering" George Eliot and beginning, by the publication of her *Scenes of Clerical Life* in 1857, a relationship that was both pleasant and profitable to the firm. A few years earlier appeared the first contributions of another remarkable literary woman—Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, whose association with *Blackwood's* lasted over forty years. Her history of the house of Blackwood was published in the year of her death (1897).

Blackwood's is still a strong conservative organ. The already quoted Index of the *Review of Reviews* says of it: "With a rare consistency it has contrived to appear for over three score years and ten as a spirited and defiant advocate of all those who are at least five years behind their time. Sometimes *Blackwood* is fifty years in the rear, but that is a detail of circumstance. Five or fifty, it does not matter, so long as it is well in the rear." Such gentle sarcasm merely emphasizes the fact that *Blackwood's* has always aimed to be more than a magazine of *belles-lettres*. The publishers celebrated the appearance of the one thousandth number in February, 1899, by almost doubling its size to a volume of three hundred pages, including a latter-day addition to the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* and other features.

An important though short-lived venture was the *London Magazine*, begun in January, 1820, under the editorship of John Scott. By its editorial assaults upon the *Blackwood* criticisms of the "Cockney School," it became the recognized champion of that loosely defined coterie. The initial attack in the May number was further emphasized by more vigorous articles in November and [Pg xlviii] December of 1820, and January, 1821. Lockhart, who was the recipient of the worst abuse, demanded of Scott an apology or a hostile meeting. The outcome of the controversy was a duel on February 16th between Scott and Lockhart's intimate friend, Jonathan Henry Christie. Scott was mortally wounded, and died within a fortnight; the verdict of wilful murder brought against Christie and his second at the inquest resulted in their trial and acquittal at the old Bailey two months later. It would have been well for the *London Magazine* and for literature in general if that unfortunate duel could have been prevented or at least diverted into such a ludicrous affair as the meeting between Jeffrey and Tom Moore in 1806.

The most famous contributions to the *London Magazine* during Scott's régime were Lamb's *Essays of Elia*. Those charming productions, now ranked among our dearly treasured classics, were not received at first with universal approbation. The long and justly forgotten Alaric A. Watts said of them: "Charles Lamb delivers himself with infinite pain and labour of a silly piece of trifling, every month, in this Magazine, under the signature of Elia. It is the curse of the Cockney School that, with all their desire to appear exceedingly off-hand and ready with all they have to say, they are constrained to elaborate every sentence, as though the web were woven from their own bowels. Charles Lamb says he can make no way in an article under at least a week." In July, 1821, the *London Magazine* was purchased by Taylor and Hessey. Although Thomas Hood was made working-editor, the *Blackwood* idea of retaining editorial supervision in the firm was

followed. Within a few months De Quincey contributed his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*
[Pg xlix] —the most famous of all the articles that appeared in the magazine. Lamb[D] and De Quincey continued to write for the magazine for several years. Other contributors, especially of literary criticism, were Barry Cornwall, Carlyle, Hazlitt, Henry Cary and, toward the end, Walter Savage Landor. The magazine became less conspicuous after 1824 and dragged out an obscure existence until 1829; but it is probable that no other periodical achieved the standard of purely literary excellence represented by the *London Magazine* during the first five years of its existence.

In February, 1830, James Fraser published the first number of *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*. The magazine was not named after the publisher but after its sponsor, Hugh Fraser, a "briefless barrister" and man about town. The latter enlisted the aid of Maginn who had severed his connection with *Blackwood's* in 1828. In general, *Fraser's* was modelled upon *Blackwood's*; but a unique and popular feature was the publication of the "Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters" between 1830-38. This famous series of eighty-one caricature portraits chiefly by Daniel Maclise, with letter-press by Maginn, has been made accessible to present-day readers in William Bates' *Maclise Portrait Gallery* (1883) where much illustrative material has been added to the original articles. It is evident that the literary standard of *Fraser's* soon equalled and possibly surpassed that of *Blackwood's*. Among its writers were Carlyle (who contributed a critique to the first number, published *Sartor Resartus* in its pages, 1833-35, and, as late as 1875, his *Early Kings of Norway*), Thackeray, Father Prout and Thomas Love Peacock. Maclise's plate
[Pg l] of "The Fraserians" also includes Allan Cunningham, Theodore Hook, William Jerdan, Lockhart, Hogg, Coleridge, Southey and several others. It is unlikely that all of them wrote much for *Fraser's*; but the staff was undoubtedly a brilliant assemblage. James Anthony Froude became editor in 1860 and was assisted for a time by Charles Kingsley and Sir Theodore Martin. He was succeeded by his sub-editor, William Allingham, during whose administration (1874-79) the fortunes of *Fraser's* suffered a decline. The gradual failure was due to the competition of the new shilling magazines rather than to incompetence on the part of the editor. The end came in October, 1882, when *Fraser's* was succeeded by *Longman's Magazine* which is still in progress.

The magazines established soon after *Fraser's* followed for the most part a policy that demands for them mere passing mention in the present connection. Literary criticism and reviews were largely abandoned in favor of lighter and more entertaining material. The *Dublin University Magazine* (1833-80) and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1832-61) best represent the transitional stage. During its early history, the latter employed prominent contributors, who gave it an important position. Such magazines as the *Metropolitan* (1831-50) and *Bentley's Miscellany* (1837-68) set the standards for similar periodicals since that time. Charles Dickens' experience with *Bentley's* led to the publication of his weeklies, *Household Words* (1850 to date) and *All the Year Round* (1859), which was incorporated in 1895 with the former. *Macmillan's Magazine*, first of the popular shilling monthlies, began in 1859 and was soon followed by Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine* (1860) and *Temple Bar* (1860). All of these magazines are still in progress. The
[Pg li] occasional publication of an article by a literary critic hardly justifies their inclusion within the category of critical reviews, as their essential purpose is to instruct and entertain, rather than to sit in judgment upon contemporary letters.

There are in course of publication to-day numerous literary periodicals of varying scope and importance that have not even been mentioned by title in our hasty survey. Enough has been said, however, to give some idea of the magnitude of the field, and to show that most of the great names of modern English literature have been more or less closely associated with the history of the literary reviews. Those reviews have usually sought to foster all that is highest and best in our intellectual development; and although English literary criticism has been, on the whole, less convincing, less brilliant and less authoritative than that of France, it has during the past century set a fairly high standard of excellence. It seems difficult to understand why the literary conditions in England, instead of developing critics like Sainte-Beuve, Gaston Paris, Brunetière and others whose utterances redound to the lasting glory of French criticism, should be steadily tending toward a lower and less influential level. Mr. Churton Collins in his pessimistic discussion of "The Present Functions of Criticism" deplores the spirit of tolerance and charity manifested toward the mediocre productions of contemporary writers; he attributes the degradation of criticism to the lack of critical standards and principles, and indirectly to the neglect of the study of literature at the English Universities. The plea for an English Academy has been made at different times and with different ends in view, but under modern conditions such an institution would hardly solve the problem. Mr. Collins shows how the intellectual aristocracy of the past
[Pg lii] has been superseded by the present omnivorous reading-public afflicted with a perpetual craving for literary novelty. The inevitable rapidity of production results in a deluge of poor books which are foisted upon readers by a "detestable system of mutual puffery." This condition of affairs naturally offers few opportunities for the development of critical ideals; but it hardly applies to the incorruptible reviews of recognized standing. The reasons for the lack of authority in modern English criticism are more deeply grounded in an inherent objection to the restraint imposed upon an artist by artificial canons of taste, and in a well-founded impression that many of the greatest literary achievements evince a violation of such canons.

It is not to be inferred that criticism is thereby disdained and disregarded. The critical dicta of a Dryden or a Johnson, a Coleridge or a Hazlitt, and, more recently, an Arnold or a Pater, are valued and studied because they emphasize the vital elements essential to the proper appreciation of a literary product; and, moreover, because such critics, in transcending the limitations of their kind, establish higher and juster standards for the criticism of the future. On the other hand, the great majority of critical utterances must necessarily be ephemeral; they may

exert considerable contemporary influence, but are usually forgotten long before the works that called them forth. Unless this criticism is more than a perfunctory examination of the merits and defects of the work under consideration, it cannot endure beyond its own brief day.

Several fruitless attempts have been made to reduce criticism to an exact science, which, quite disregarding the factor of personal taste, could refer all literature to a more or less fixed and arbitrary set of critical principles. The champions of this objective criticism point to the
[Pg liii] occasionally ludicrous divergence of the views expressed in criticism of certain poets or novelists, and insist that there is no occasion for such a bewildering difference of opinion. They seem to forget that the criticism which we esteem most highly at all times is the subjective criticism in which the personality of a competent and sincere critic is manifest. Literature, like music, painting and the other arts, has its own laws of technique—fundamental canons that must be observed in the successful pursuit of the art; but at a certain point difference of opinion is not only possible but profitable. The critics who would unite in condemning a thirteen-line sonnet or a ten-act tragedy could not be expected to agree on the relative merits of Milton's and Wordsworth's sonnets. Unanimity of opinion is as impossible and undesirable concerning the poetic achievement of Browning and Whitman as it is concerning the music of Brahms and Wagner, or the painting of Turner and Whistler. Great artists who have taken liberties with traditions and precedents have done much to prevent the critics from falling into a state of self-complacency over their scientific methods and formulas.

The most helpful form of criticism is the interpretative variety, not necessarily the laudatory "appreciation" that is so popular in our day, but an honest effort to understand and elucidate the intention of the writer. The proper exercise of this art occasionally demands rare qualifications on the part of the critic; at the same time it adds dignity to his calling and value to his utterance. It serves to dispel the popular conception of a critic as a disappointed *litterateur* who begrudges his more brilliant fellow craftsmen their success and who dogs their triumphs with his ill-tempered snarling. Interpretative criticism needs few rules and no system; yet it serves a noble
[Pg liv] purpose as a guide and monitor for subsequent literary effort.

The question of anonymous criticism has occasioned much thoughtful discussion. In former times anonymity was often a shield for the slanderer who saw fit to abuse and assail his victim with the rancorous outburst of his malice; but it is also clear that the earlier reviewers were mere literary hacks whose names would have given no weight to the critique and hence could be omitted without much loss. The authorship of important *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*[E] articles in the days of their greatness was usually an open secret. Later periodicals, like the *Fortnightly* and the *Academy* found it a profitable advertisement to publish the signatures of their eminent critics. The tendency of the present day is largely in favor of anonymity; no longer as a cover for the dispensation of malicious vituperation, but as a necessary safe-guard for the unbiased and untrammeled exercise of the critical function. Certain abuses of the privilege are inevitable. Mr. Sidney Colvin in looking over the criticisms of Mr. Stephen Phillips' poetry recently discovered in three periodicals convincing parallels that led Mr. Arthur Symons to confess to the authorship of all three critiques. The average reader would in most cases be strongly influenced by the united verdict of the critics of the *Saturday Review*, the *Athenæum* and the *Quarterly Review*; in this instance his convictions would undoubtedly be rudely shattered when he learned the truth. Under such conditions anonymous criticism is a menace, not an aid to the reader's judgment.

In conclusion, it must be borne in mind that criticism is not an end but a means to an end. All the
[Pg lv] literary criticism ever uttered would be useless as such if it did not evince a desire to further the development of literary art. The *Iliad* and the *Œdipus* were written long before Aristotle's *Poetics*, and it is not likely that either Homer or Sophocles would have been a greater poet if he could have read the Stagirite's treatise. Yet the *Poetics*, as a summary of the essential features of that art, served an important purpose in later ages and exerted far-reaching influences. Criticism in all ages has necessarily been of less importance than art itself—it guides and suggests, but cannot create. Literary history shows that true criticism must be in conformity with the spirit of the age; it cannot oppose the trend of intelligent opinion. It may praise, censure, advise, interpret —but it will always remain subservient to the art that called it forth. There is no reason to believe that criticism can ever be established in the English-speaking world upon a basis that will subject to an arbitrary and irrevocable ruling the form and spirit of the artist's message to mankind.

[Pg lvi]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Museum. Catalogue of Printed Books. Periodicals. (Revised ed., 1900.)

Dictionary of National Biography.

Encyclopedia Britannica. Article on Periodicals, by H.R. Tedder.

Barrow, Sir John. Autobiography. London, 1847.

Bourne, H.R. Fox. English Newspapers. Chapters in the History of Journalism. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1887.

Cockburn, Lord. Life of Lord Jeffrey. With a Selection from his Correspondence. 2 vols. 8vo.

London, 1852.

Copinger, W.A. On the Authorship of the first Hundred Numbers of the "Edinburgh Review." (Privately Printed.) Manchester, 1895.

Cross, Maurice. Selections from the Edinburgh Review, etc. With a Preliminary Dissertation. 4 vols. 8vo. London, 1833.

Gates, Lewis E. Francis Jeffrey. In *Three Studies in Literature*. 12mo. New York, 1899.

Horner, Leonard. Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, M.P. Edited by his brother. 2 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1853.

Jennings, Louis J. The Correspondence and Diaries of John Wilson Croker. 2 vols. 8vo. New York, 1884.

Jerdan, William. Autobiography. With his Literary, Political, and Social Reminiscences and Correspondence, etc. 4 vols. 12mo. London, 1852-53.

Laughton, John Knox. Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, C.B., D.C.L. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1898.

Napier, Macvey. Selections from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier, Esq. Edited by his son. 8vo. London, 1879.

Oliphant, Mrs. M.O.W., and Porter, Mrs. Gerald. William Blackwood and his Sons, etc. 3 vols.
[Pg lvii] 8vo. New York, 1897-98.

Paston, George. The "Monthly Review." In *Side-Lights on the Georgian Period*. 8vo. London, 1903.

Smiles, Samuel. A Publisher and his Friends. Memoir and Correspondence of the late John Murray, etc. 2 vols. 8vo. London and New York, 1891.

Last Century Magazines. (By T.H.) *Fraser's Magazine*, XCIV (325-333).

Layton, W.E. Early Periodicals. In *The Bibliographer*, III (36-39).

Lee, William. Periodical Publications during the Twenty Years 1712 to 1732. *Notes and Queries* (Third Series), IX (53-54, 72-75, 92-95). Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 164, 268, and X, p. 134.

Niven, G.W. On some Eighteenth Century Periodicals. In *The Bibliographer*, II (38-40).

Parkes, Samuel. An Account of the Periodical Literary Journals which were Published in Great Britain and Ireland, from the Year 1681 to the Commencement of the Monthly Review in the year 1749. In *The Quarterly Journal of Science, Literature and the Arts* (1822), XIII (36-58, 289-312).

Stephen, (Sir) Leslie. The First Edinburgh Reviewers. In *Cornhill Magazine*, XXXVIII (218-234). Also in *Living Age*, CXXXVIII (643-653).

Waugh, Arthur. The English Reviewers. A Sketch of their History and Principles. In *The Critic*, XL (26-37).

Allingham, William. Varieties in Prose. 3 vols. 12mo. London, 1893. Vol. III contains *Some Curiosities of Criticism*, reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine*, LXXXVII (43-51).

Arnold, Matthew. Essays in Criticism. First Series. 12mo. London, 1865. Contains *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time.*

Birrell, Augustine. Men, Women, and Books. 16mo. London, 1894. Contains *Authors and Critics*.

Collins, J. Churton. Ephemera Critica, or Plain Truths about Current Literature. 12mo.
[Pg lviii] Westminster and New York, 1901.

[Copleston, Edward.] Advice to a Young Reviewer, with a Specimen of the Art. 8vo. Oxford and London, 1807. Reprinted in *An English Garner, Critical Essays and Literary Fragments*, ed. J.C. Collins. New York, 1903.

Disraeli, I. Calamities and Quarrels of Authors. A New Edition, etc. 12mo. London, n.d. Contains *Undue Severity of Criticism*.

Gayley, C.M., and Scott, F.N. An Introduction to the Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism, etc. 12mo. Boston, 1899.

Jennings, Henry J. Curiosities of Criticism. 12mo. London, 1881. See *Eclectic Magazine*, XCVII (420-423).

Johnson, Charles F. Elements of Literary Criticism. 12mo. New York, 1898.

Mabie, Hamilton W. Essays in Literary Interpretation. 12mo. New York, 1896. Contains *The Significance of Modern Criticism*.

Matthews, William. The Great Conversers, and other Essays. 12mo. Chicago, 1874. Contains *Curiosities of Criticism*.

Repplier, Agnes. Books and Men. 16mo. Boston, 1888. Contains *Curiosities of Criticism*.

Robertson, John M. Essays toward a Critical Method. Sm. 8vo. London, 1889. Contains *Science in Criticism*.

Robertson, John M. New Essays toward a Critical Method. Sm. 8vo. London, 1897.

Sears, Lorenzo. Principles and Methods of Literary Criticism. 12mo. New York and London, 1898.

Stevenson, E. Early Reviews of Great Writers (1786-1832): Selected and Edited with an Introduction. 12mo. London, n.d.

Trent, W.P. The Authority of Criticism and other Essays. 12mo. New York, 1899.

Winchester, C.T. Some Principles of Literary Criticism. 12mo. New York, 1899.

[Pg lix] **Worsfold, W. Basil.** The Principles of Criticism. An Introduction to the Study of Literature. New Edition. 8vo. New York, 1902.

Wylie, Laura Johnson. Studies in the Evolution of English Criticism. 16mo. Boston, 1894.

Allen, Grant. The Decay of Criticism. In *Fortnightly Review*, XXXVII (339-351).

Clarke, Helen A. The Value of Contemporary Judgment. In *Poet-Lore*, V (201-209).

Critical Errors. In *Chamber's Journal*, XLII (164-166).

Criticism Extraordinary. In *All the Year Round*, XXXIII (558-563).

G.L.A. Some Curiosities of Criticism. In *Temple Bar*, LXXX (241-247).

Howe, Herbert Crombie. The Contradictions of Literary Criticism. In *North American Review*, CLXXV (399-408).

Hunt, T.W. Critics and Criticism. In *Modern Language Notes*, IV, p. 161.

[Pg 1]

EARLY REVIEWS OF ENGLISH POETS

Thomas Gray

ODES. *By Mr.* Gray. 4to. 1s. Dodsley.

As this publication seems designed for those who have formed their taste by the models of antiquity, the generality of Readers cannot be supposed adequate Judges of its merit; nor will the Poet, it is presumed, be greatly disappointed if he finds them backward in commending a performance not entirely suited to their apprehensions. We cannot, however, without some regret behold those talents so capable of giving pleasure to all, exerted in efforts that, at best, can amuse only the few; we cannot behold this rising Poet seeking fame among the learned, without hinting to him the same advice that Isocrates used to give his Scholars, *Study the People*. This study it is that has conducted the great Masters of antiquity up to immortality. Pindar himself, of whom our modern Lyrist is an imitator, appears entirely guided by it. He adapted his works exactly to the dispositions of his countrymen. Irregular[,] enthusiastic, and quick in transition,—he wrote for a people inconstant, of warm imaginations and exquisite sensibility. He chose the most popular subjects, and all his allusions are to customs well known, in his day, to

[Pg 2] the meanest person.[F]

His English Imitator wants those advantages. He speaks to a people not easily impressed with new ideas; extremely tenacious of the old; with difficulty warmed; and as slowly cooling again.—How unsuited then to our national character is that species of poetry which rises upon us with unexpected flights! Where we must hastily catch the thought, or it flies from us; and, in short, where the Reader must largely partake of the Poet's enthusiasm, in order to taste his beauties. To carry the parallel a little farther; the Greek Poet wrote in a language the most proper that can be imagined for this species of composition; lofty, harmonious, and never needing rhyme to heighten the numbers. But, for us, several unsuccessful experiments seem to prove that the English cannot have Odes in blank Verse; while, on the other hand, a natural imperfection

attends those which are composed in irregular rhymes:—the similar sound often recurring where it is not expected, and not being found where it is, creates no small confusion to the Reader,—who, as we have not seldom observed, beginning in all the solemnity of poetic elocution, is by frequent disappointments of the rhyme, at last obliged to drawl out the uncomplying numbers into disagreeable prose.

It is, by no means, our design to detract from the merit of our Author's present attempt: we would only intimate, that an English Poet,—one whom the Muse has *mark'd for her own*, could produce a more luxuriant bloom of flowers, by cultivating such as are natives of the soil, than by endeavouring to force the exotics of another climate: or, to speak without a metaphor, such a genius as Mr. Gray might give greater pleasure, and acquire a larger portion of fame, if, instead of being an imitator, he did justice to his talents, and ventured to be more an original. These two
[Pg 3] Odes, it must be confessed, breath[e] much of the spirit of Pindar, but then they have caught the seeming obscurity, the sudden transition, and hazardous epithet, of his mighty master; all which, though evidently intended for beauties, will, probably, be regarded as blemishes, by the generality of his Readers. In short, they are in some measure, a representation of what Pindar now appears to be, though perhaps, not what he appeared to the States of Greece, when they rivalled each other in his applause, and when Pan himself was seen dancing to his melody.

In conformity to the antients, these Odes consist of the *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Epode*, which, in each Ode, are thrice repeated. The Strophes have a correspondent resemblance in their str[u]cture and numbers: and the Antistrophe and Epode also bear the same similitude. The Poet seems, in the first Ode particularly, to design the Epode as a complete air to the Strophe and Antistrophe, which have more the appearance of Recitative. There was a necessity for these divisions among the antients, for they served as directions to the dancer and musician; but we see no reason why they should be continued among the moderns; for, instead of assisting, they will but perplex the Musician, as our music requires a more frequent transition from the Air to the Recitative than could agree with the simplicity of the antients.

The first of these Poems celebrates the Lyric Muse. It seems the most laboured performance of the two, but yet we think its merit is not equal to that of the second. It seems to want that regularity of plan upon which the second is founded; and though it abounds with images that strike, yet, unlike the second, it contains none that are affecting.

[Pg 4] In the second Antistrophe the Bard thus marks the progress of Poetry.

II. [2.]

In climes beyond the solar road,
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,
The Muse has broke the twilight-gloom
To cheer the shivering natives dull abode
And oft beneath the od'rous shade
Of Chili's boundless forests laid,
She deigns to hear the savage youth repeat,
In loose numbers wildly sweet
Their feather-cinctured Chiefs, and dusky loves.
Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and generous shame,
Th' unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.

There is great spirit in the irregularity of the numbers towards the conclusion of the foregoing stanza.

[II, 3, and III, 2, of *The Progress of Poesy* are quoted without comment.]

The second 'Ode is founded on a tradition current in Wales, that Edward the first, when he compleated the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards that fell into his hands to be put to death.' The Author seems to have taken the hint of this subject from the fifteenth Ode of the first book of Horace. Our Poet introduces the only surviving Bard of that country in concert with the spirits of his murdered brethren, as prophetically denouncing woes upon the Conqueror and his posterity. The circumstances of grief and horror in which the Bard is represented, those of terror in the preparation of the votive web, and the mystic obscurity with which the prophecies are delivered, will give as much pleasure to those who relish this species of composition, as anything that has hitherto appeared in our language, the Odes of Dryden himself not excepted.

[I, 2, I, 3, part of II, 1, and the conclusion of *The Bard* are quoted]—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 5]

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society. A Poem. Inscribed to the Rev. Mr. Henry Goldsmith. *By* OLIVER GOLDSMITH, *M.B. 4to. Pr. 1s. 6d*. Newbery.

The author has, in an elegant dedication to his brother, a country clergyman, given the design of his poem:—'Without espousing the cause of any party, I have attempted to moderate the rage of

all. I have endeavoured to shew, that there may be equal happiness in other states, though differently governed from our own; that each state has a peculiar principle of happiness; and that this principle in each state, particularly in our own, may be carried to a mischievous excess.'

That he may illustrate and enforce this important position, the author places himself on a summit of the Alps, and, turning his eyes around, in all directions, upon the different regions that lie before him, compares, not merely their situation or policy, but those social and domestic manners which, after a very few deductions, make the sum total of human life.

'Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheld, or wandering Po;
Or onward, where the rude Carinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door;
Or where Campania's plain forsaken lies,
A weary waste expanded to the skies.
Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravell'd fond turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.—
Even now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend;
And, plac'd on high above the storm's career,
[Pg 6] Look downward where an hundred realms appear;
Lakes, forests, cities, plains extended wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride.
When thus creation's charms around combine,
Amidst the store 'twere thankless to repine.
'Twere affectation all, and school-taught pride,
To spurn the splendid things by heaven supply'd.
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These little things are great to little man;
And wiser he, whose sympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.'

The author already appears, by his numbers, to be a versifier; and by his scenery, to be a poet; it therefore only remains that his sentiments discover him to be a just estimator of comparative happiness.

The goods of life are either given by nature, or procured by ourselves. Nature has distributed her gifts in very different proportions, yet all her children are content; but the acquisitions of art are such as terminate in good or evil, as they are differently regulated or combined.

'Yet, where to find that happiest spot below,
Who can direct, when all pretend to know?
The shudd'ring tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly asserts that country for his own,
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
And live-long nights of revelry and ease;
The naked Negro, panting at the line,
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his Gods for all the good they gave.—
Nature, a mother kind alike, to all,
Still grants her bliss at Labour's earnest call;
And though rough rocks or gloomy summits frown,
These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down.
From Art more various are the blessings sent;
Wealth, splendours, honor, liberty, content:
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
That either seems destructive of the rest.
[Pg 7] Hence every state, to one lov'd blessing prone,
Conforms and models life to that alone.
Each to the favourite happiness attends,
And spurns the plan that aims at other ends;
Till, carried to excess in each domain,
This favourite good begets peculiar pain.'

This is the position which he conducts through Italy, Swisserland, France, Holland, and England; and which he endeavours to confirm by remarking the manners of every country.

Having censured the degeneracy of the modern Italians, he proceeds thus:

'My soul turn from them, turn we to survey
Where rougher climes a nobler race display,
Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansions tread,
And force a churlish soil for scanty bread;

No product here the barren hills afford,
But man and steel, the soldier and his sword.
No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter lingering chills the lap of May;
No Zephyr fondly soothes the mountain's breast,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.
Yet still, even here, content can spread a charm,
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.
Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts though small,
He sees his little lot, the lot of all;
See no contiguous palace rear its head
To shame the meanness of his humble shed;
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal
To make him loath his vegetable meal;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.'

But having found that the rural life of a Swiss has its evils as well as comforts, he turns to France.

'To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
We turn; and France displays her bright domain.
Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
[Pg 8] Pleas'd with thyself, whom all the world can please.—
Theirs are those arts that mind to mind endear,
For honour forms the social temper here.—
From courts to camps, to cottages it strays,
And all are taught an avarice of praise;
They please, are pleas'd, they give to get esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.'

Yet France has its evils:

'For praise too dearly lov'd, or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought,
And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
Leans all for pleasure on another's breast.—
The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.'

Having then passed through Holland, he arrives in England, where,

'Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
With daring aims, irregularly great,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashion'd, fresh from Nature's hand.'

With the inconveniences that harrass [*sic*] the sons of freedom, this extract shall be concluded.

'That independence Britons prize too high,
Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie;
See, though by circling deeps together held,
Minds combat minds, repelling and repell'd;
Ferments arise, imprison'd factions roar,
Repress ambition struggles round her shore,
Whilst, over-wrought, the general system feels
Its motions stopt, or phrenzy fires the wheels.
Nor this the worst. As social bonds decay,
As duty, love, and honour fail to sway,
Fictitious bonds, the bonds of wealth and law,
Still gather strength, and force unwilling awe.
Hence all obedience bows to these alone,
[Pg 9] And talent sinks, and merit weeps unknown;
Till time may come, when, stript of all her charms,
That land of scholars, and that nurse of arms;
Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
And monarchs toil, and poets pant for fame;
One sink of level avarice shall lie,
And scholars, soldiers, kings unhonor'd die.'

Such is the poem, on which we now congratulate the public, as on a production to which, since the death of Pope, it will not be easy to find any thing equal.—*The Critical Review*.

[Pg 10]

William Cowper

Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq. 8vo. 5s. Johnson.

These Poems are written, as we learn from the title-page, by Mr. Cowper of the Inner Temple, who seems to be a man of a sober and religious turn of mind, with a benevolent heart, and a serious wish to inculcate the precepts of morality; he is not, however, possessed of any superior abilities, or powers of genius, requisite to so arduous an undertaking; his verses are, in general, weak and languid, and have neither novelty, spirit, or animation, to recommend them; that mediocrity so severely condemned by Horace,

> Non Dii non homines, &c.

pervades the whole; and, whilst the author avoids every thing that is ridiculous or contemptible, he, at the same time, never rises to any thing that we can commend or admire. He says what is incontrovertible, and what has already been said over and over, with much gravity, but says nothing new, sprightly, or entertaining; travelling on in a plain, level, flat road, with great composure, almost through the whole long, and rather tedious volume, which is little better than a dull sermon, in very indifferent verse, on Truth, the Progress of Error, Charity, and some other
[Pg 11]
grave subjects. If this author had followed the advice given by Caraccioli,[G] and which he has chosen for one of the mottos prefixed to these Poems, he would have clothed his indisputable truths in some becoming *disguise*, and rendered his work much more agreeable. In its present state, we cannot compliment him on its shape or beauty; for, as this bard himself *sweetly* sings,

> 'The clear harangue, and cold as it is clear,
> Falls soporific on the listless ear.'

In his learned dissertation on *Hope*, we meet with the following lines

> [Quotes some fifty lines from *Hope* beginning,
> Build by whatever plan caprice decrees,
> With what materials, on what ground you please, etc.]

All this is very true; but there needs no ghost, nor author, nor poet, to tell us what we knew before, unless he could tell it to us in a new and better manner. Add to this, that many of our author's expressions are coarse, vulgar, and unpoetical; such as *parrying*, *pushing by*, *spitting abhorrence*, &c. The greatest part of Mr. Cowper's didactics is in the same strain. He attempts indeed sometimes to be lively, facetious, and satirical; but is seldom more successful in this, than in the serious and pathetic. In his poem on Conversation there are two or three faint attempts at humour; in one of them he tells us that

> 'A story in which native humour reigns
> Is often useful, always entertains,
> A graver fact enlisted on your side,
> May furnish illustration, well applied;
> But sedentary weavers of long tales,
> Give me the fidgets and my patience fails.
> 'Tis the most asinine employ on earth,
> To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
> [Pg 12]
> And echo conversations dull and dry,
> Embellished with, *he said*, and *so said I*.
> At ev'ry interview their route the same,
> The repetition makes attention lame,
> We bustle up with unsuccessful speed,
> And in the saddest part cry—droll indeed!
> The path of narrative with care pursue,
> Still making probability your clue,
> On all the vestiges of truth attend,
> And let them guide you to a decent end.
> Of all ambitions man may entertain,
> The worst that can invade a sickly brain,
> Is that which angles hourly for surprize,
> And baits its hook with prodigies and lies.
> Credulous infancy or age as weak
> Are fittest auditors for such to seek,
> Who to please others will themselves disgrace,
> Yet please not, but affront you to your face.'

In the passage above quoted, our readers will perceive that the wit is rather aukward, [*sic*] and the verses, especially the last, very prosaic.

Toward the end of this volume are some little pieces of a lighter kind, which, after dragging through Mr. Cowper's long moral lectures, afforded us some relief. The fables of the Lily and the Rose, the Nightingale and Glow-worm, the Pine-apple and the Bee, with two or three others, are written with ease and spirit. It is a pity that our author had not confined himself altogether to this species of poetry, without entering into a system of ethics, for which his genius seems but ill

adapted.—*The Critical Review*.

[Pg 13]

Robert Burns

Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect. *By* Robert Burns, *Kilmarnock*.

When an author we know nothing of solicits our attention, we are but too apt to treat him with the same reluctant civility we show to a person who has come unbidden into company. Yet talents and address will gradually diminish the distance of our behaviour, and when the first unfavourable impression has worn off, the author may become a favourite, and the stranger a friend. The poems we have just announced may probably have to struggle with the pride of learning and the partiality of refinement; yet they are intitled to particular indulgence.

Who are you, Mr. Burns? will some surly critic say. At what university have you been educated? what languages do you understand? what authors have you particularly studied? whether has Aristotle or Horace directed your taste? who has praised your poems, and under whose patronage are they published? In short, what qualifications intitle you to instruct or entertain us? To the questions of such a catechism, perhaps honest Robert Burns would make no satisfactory answers. 'My good Sir, he might say, I am a poor country man; I was bred up at the school of Kilmarnock; I understand no languages but my own; I have studied Allan Ramsay and Ferguson. My poems have been praised at many a fireside; and I ask no patronage for them, if they deserve none. I have not looked on mankind *through the spectacle of books*. An ounce of mother-wit, you know, is worth a pound of clergy; and Homer and Ossian, for any thing that I have heard, could
[Pg 14] neither write nor read.' The author is indeed a striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of laborious life. He is said to be a common ploughman; and when we consider him in this light, we cannot help regretting that wayward fate had not placed him in a more favoured situation. Those who view him with the severity of lettered criticism, and judge him by the fastidious rules of art, will discover that he has not the doric simplicity of Ramsay, nor the brilliant imagination of Ferguson; but to those who admire the exertions of untutored fancy, and are blind to many faults for the sake of numberless beauties, his poems will afford singular gratification. His observations on human characters are acute and sagacious, and his descriptions are lively and just. Of rustic pleasantry he has a rich fund; and some of his softer scenes are touched with inimitable delicacy. He seems to be a boon companion, and often startles us with a dash of libertinism, which will keep some readers at a distance. Some of his subjects are serious, but those of the humorous kind are the best. It is not meant, however, to enter into a minute investigation of his merits, as the copious extracts we have subjoined will enable our readers to judge for themselves. The Character Horace gives to Osellus is particularly applicable to him.

Rusticus abnormis sapiens, crassaque Minerva.

[Quotes *Address to the Deil*, from the *Epistle to a Brother Bard*, from *Description of a Sermon in the Fields*, and from *Hallowe'en*.]—*The Edinburgh Magazine*.

[Pg 15] *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. *By Robert Burns.* Printed at Kilmarnock.

We have had occasion to examine a number of poetical productions, written by persons in the lower rank of life, and who had hardly received any education; but we do not recollect to have ever met with a more signal instance of true and uncultivated genius, than in the author of these Poems. His occupation is that of a common ploughman; and his life has hitherto been spent in struggling with poverty. But all the rigours of fortune have not been able to repress the frequent efforts of his lively and vigorous imagination. Some of these poems are of a serious cast; but the strain which seems most natural to the author, is the sportive and humorous. It is to be regretted, that the Scottish dialect, in which these poems are written, must obscure the native beauties with which they appear to abound, and renders the sense often unintelligible to an English reader. Should it, however, prove true, that the author has been taken under the patronage of a great lady in Scotland, and that a celebrated professor has interested himself in the cultivation of his talents, there is reason to hope, that his distinguished genius may yet be exerted in such a manner as to afford more general delight. In the meantime, we must admire the generous enthusiasm of his untutored muse; and bestow the tribute of just applause on one whose name will be transmitted to posterity with honour.—*The Critical Review*.

[Pg 16]

William Wordsworth

Descriptive Sketches, in Verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss and Savoyard Alps. By W. Wordsworth, B.A. of St. John's, Cambridge. 4to. pp.

55. 3s. Johnson. 1793.

More descriptive poetry! (See page 166, &c.) Have we not yet enough? Must eternal changes be rung on uplands and lowlands, and nodding forests, and brooding clouds, and cells, and dells, and dingles? Yes; more, and yet more: so it is decreed.

Mr. Wordsworth begins his descriptive sketches with the following exordium:

> 'Were there, below, a spot of holy ground,
> By Pain and her sad family *un*found,
> Sure, Nature's God that spot to man had giv'n,
> Where murmuring *rivers join* the song of *ev'n*!
> Where *falls* the purple morning far and wide
> *In flakes* of light upon the mountain side;
> Where summer suns in ocean sink to rest,
> Or moonlight upland lifts her hoary breast;
> Where Silence, on her night of wing, o'er-broods
> Unfathom'd dells and undiscover'd woods;
> Where rocks and groves the *power* of waters *shakes*
> In cataracts, or sleeps in quiet lakes.'

May we ask, how it is that rivers join the song of ev'n? or, in plain prose, the evening! but, if they do, is it not true that they equally join the song of morning, noon, and night? The *purple morning falling in flakes* of light is a bold figure: but we are told, it falls far and wide—Where?—On the mountain's *side*. We are sorry to see the purple morning confined so like a maniac in a straight
[Pg 17] waistcoat. What the night of wing of silence is, we are unable to comprehend: but the climax of the passage is, that, were there such a spot of holy ground as is here so sublimely described, *unfound* by Pain and her sad family, Nature's God had surely given that spot to man, though its *woods* were *undiscovered*.

Let us proceed,

> 'But doubly pitying Nature loves to show'r
> Soft on his *wounded heart* her healing pow'r,
> Who *plods* o'er hills and vales his road *forlorn*,
> Wooing her varying charms from eve to morn.
> *No sad vacuities* his heart *annoy*,
> *Blows* not a Zephyr but it *whispers joy*;
> For him *lost* flowers their *idle* sweets *exhale*;
> He *tastes* the meanest *note* that swells the gale;
> For him sod-seats the cottage-door adorn,
> And *peeps* the far-off *spire*, his evening bourn!
> Dear is the forest *frowning* o'er his head,
> And dear the green-sward to his *velvet tread*;
> Moves there a *cloud* o'er mid-day's flaming eye?
> Upwards he looks—and calls it luxury;
> Kind Nature's *charities* his steps attend,
> In every babbling brook he finds a friend.'

Here we find that *doubly* pitying Nature is very kind to the traveller, but that this traveller has a *wounded heart* and *plods* his road *forlorn*. In the next line but one we discover that—

> 'No *sad vacuities* his heart *annoy*;
> Blows not a Zephyr but it whispers *joy*.'

The flowers, though they have lost themselves, or are lost, exhale their idle sweets for him; the *spire peeps* for him; sod-seats, forests, clouds, nature's charities, and babbling brooks, all are to him luxury and friendship. He is the happiest of mortals, and plods, is forlorn, and has a wounded
[Pg 18] heart. How often shall we in vain advise those, who are so delighted with their own thoughts that they cannot forbear from putting them into rhyme, to examine those thoughts till they themselves understand them? No man will ever be a poet, till his mind be sufficiently powerful to sustain this labour.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 19] *An Evening Walk*. An Epistle; in Verse. Addressed to a Young Lady, from the Lakes of the North of England. By W. Wordsworth, B.A. of St. John's, Cambridge. 4to. pp. 27. 2s. Johnson. 1793.

In this Epistle, the subject and the manner of treating it vary but little from the former poem. We will quote four lines from a passage which the author very sorrowfully apologizes for having omitted:

> 'Return delights! with whom my road beg*un*,
> When *Life-rear'd* laughing *up her* morning *sun*;
> When Transport kiss'd away my April tear,

"Rocking as in a dream the tedious year."

Life *rearing* up the sun! Transport kissing away an *April* tear and *rocking* the year as in a dream! Would the cradle had been specified! Seriously, these are figures which no poetical license can justify. If they can possibly give pleasure, it must be to readers whose habits of thinking are totally different from ours. Mr. Wordsworth is a scholar, and, no doubt, when reading the works of others, a critic. There are passages in his poems which display imagination, and which afford hope for the future: but, if he can divest himself of all partiality, and will critically question every line that he has written, he will find many which, he must allow, call loudly for amendment.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 20]

Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems. *Small 8vo. 5s. Boards.* Arch. 1798.

The majority of these poems, we are informed in the advertisement, are to be considered as experiments.

'They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.' P. i.

Of these experimental poems, the most important is the Idiot Boy, the story of which is simply this. Betty Foy's neighbour Susan Gale is indisposed; and no one can conveniently be sent for the doctor but Betty's idiot boy. She therefore puts him upon her poney, at eight o'clock in the evening, gives him proper directions, and returns to take care of her sick neighbour. Johnny is expected with the doctor by eleven; but the clock strikes eleven, and twelve, and one, without the appearance either of Johnny or the doctor. Betty's restless fears become insupportable; and she now leaves her friend to look for her idiot son. She goes to the doctor's house, but hears nothing of Johnny. About five o'clock, however, she finds him sitting quietly upon his feeding poney. As they go home they meet old Susan, whose apprehensions have cured her, and brought her out to seek them; and they all return merrily together.

Upon this subject the author has written nearly five hundred lines. With what spirit the story is told, our extract will evince.

[Quotes lines (322-401) of *The Idiot Boy*.]

[Pg 21]

No tale less deserved the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution. From Flemish artists we are satisfied with such pieces: who would not have lamented, if Corregio or Rafaelle had wasted their talents in painting Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake?

The other ballads of this kind are as bald in story, and are not so highly embellished in narration. With that which is entitled the Thorn, we were altogether displeased. The advertisement says, it is not told in the person of the author, but in that of some loquacious narrator. The author should have recollected that he who personates tiresome loquacity, becomes tiresome himself. The story of a man who suffers the perpetual pain of cold, because an old woman prayed that he might never be warm, is perhaps a good story for a ballad, because it is a well-known tale: but is the author certain that it is '*well authenticated?*' and does not such an assertion promote the popular superstition of witchcraft?

In a very different style of poetry, is the Rime of the Ancyent Marinere; a ballad (says the advertisement) 'professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets.' We are tolerably conversant with the early English poets; and can discover no resemblance whatever, except in antiquated spelling and a few obsolete words. This piece appears to us perfectly original in style as well as in story. Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible. Our readers may exercise their ingenuity in attempting to unriddle what follows.

'The roaring wind! it roar'd far off,
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air bursts into life,
And a hundred fire-flags sheen
[Pg 22]
To and fro they are hurried about;
And to and fro, and in and out
The stars dance on between.

The coming wind doth roar more loud;
The sails do sigh, like sedge:
The rain pours down from one black cloud,
And the moon is at its edge.

Hark! hark! the thick black cloud is cleft,
And the moon is at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,

The lightning falls with never a jag
A river steep and wide.

The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd
And dropp'd down, like a stone!
Beneath the lightning and the moon
The dead men gave a groan.' P. 27.

We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.

With pleasure we turn to the serious pieces, the better part of the volume. The Foster-Mother's Tale is in the best style of dramatic narrative. The Dungeon, and the Lines upon the Yew-tree Seat, are beautiful. The Tale of the Female Vagrant is written in the stanza, not the style, of Spenser. We extract a part of this poem.

[Quotes lines (91-180) of *The Female Vagrant*.]

Admirable as this poem is, the author seems to discover still superior powers in the Lines written near Tintern Abbey. On reading this production, it is impossible not to lament that he should ever have condescended to write such pieces as the Last of the Flock, the Convict, and most of the
[Pg 23] ballads. In the whole range of English poetry, we scarcely recollect anything superior to a part of the following passage.

[Quotes lines (66-112) of *Lines Written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey*.]

The 'experiment,' we think, has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to 'the purposes of poetic pleasure' but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects. Yet every piece discovers genius; and, ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they certainly rank him with the best of living poets.—*The Critical Review*.

[Pg 24]

Poems, in Two Volumes. By WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Author of the Lyrical Ballads.* 8vo. pp. 320. London, 1807.

This author is known to belong to a certain brotherhood of poets, who have haunted for some years about the Lakes of Cumberland; and is generally looked upon, we believe, as the purest model of the excellences and peculiarities of the school which they have been labouring to establish. Of the general merits of that school, we have had occasion to express our opinion pretty freely, in more places than one, and even to make some allusion to the former publications of the writer now before us. We are glad, however, to have found an opportunity of attending somewhat more particularly to his pretensions.

The Lyrical Ballads were unquestionably popular; and, we have no hesitation in saying, deservedly popular; for in spite of their occasional vulgarity, affectation, and silliness, they were undoubtedly characterised by a strong spirit of originality, of pathos, and natural feeling; and recommended to all good minds by the clear impression which they bore of the amiable dispositions and virtuous principles of the author. By the help of these qualities, they were enabled, not only to recommend themselves to the indulgence of many judicious readers, but even to beget among a pretty numerous class of persons, a sort of admiration of the very defects by which they were attended. It was upon this account chiefly, that we thought it necessary to set ourselves against this alarming innovation. Childishness, conceit, and affectation, are not of themselves very popular or attractive; and though mere novelty has sometimes been found
[Pg 25] sufficient to give them a temporary currency, we should have had no fear of their prevailing to any dangerous extent, if they had been graced with no more seductive accompaniments. It was precisely because the perverseness and bad taste of this new school was combined with a great deal of genius and of laudable feeling, that we were afraid of their spreading and gaining ground among us, and that we entered into the discussion with a degree of zeal and animosity which some might think unreasonable toward authors, to whom so much merit had been conceded. There were times and moods indeed, in which we were led to suspect ourselves of unjustifiable severity, and to doubt, whether a sense of public duty had not carried us rather too far in reprobation of errors, that seemed to be atoned for, by excellences of no vulgar description. At other times, the magnitude of these errors—the disgusting absurdities into which they led their feebler admirers, and the derision and contempt which they drew from the more fastidious, even upon the merits with which they were associated, made us wonder more than ever at the perversity by which they were retained, and regret that we had not declared ourselves against them with still more formidable and decided hostility.

In this temper of mind, we read the *annonce* of Mr Wordsworth's publication with a good deal of interest and expectation, and opened his volumes with greater anxiety, than he or his admirers will probably give us credit for. We have been greatly disappointed certainly as to the quality of the poetry; but we doubt whether the publication has afforded so much satisfaction to any other of his readers:—it has freed us from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of our former censures, and has brought the matter to a test, which we cannot help hoping may be convincing
[Pg 26] to the author himself.

Mr Wordsworth, we think, has now brought the question, as to the merit of his new school of poetry, to a very fair and decisive issue. The volumes before us are much more strongly marked by all its peculiarities than any former publication of the fraternity. In our apprehension, they are, on this very account, infinitely less interesting or meritorious; but it belongs to the public, and not to us, to decide upon their merit, and we will confess, that so strong is our conviction of their obvious inferiority, and the grounds of it, that we are willing for once to wa[i]ve our right of appealing to posterity, and to take the judgment of the present generation of readers, and even of Mr Wordsworth's former admirers, as conclusive on this occasion. If these volumes, which have all the benefit of the author's former popularity, turn out to be nearly as popular as the lyrical ballads—if they sell nearly to the same extent—or are quoted and imitated among half as many individuals, we shall admit that Mr Wordsworth has come much nearer the truth in his judgment of what constitutes the charm of poetry, than we had previously imagined—and shall institute a more serious and respectful inquiry into his principles of composition than we have yet thought necessary. On the other hand,—if this little work, selected from the compositions of five maturer years, and written avowedly for the purpose of exalting a system, which has already excited a good deal of attention, should be generally rejected by those whose prepossessions were in its favour, there is room to hope, not only that the system itself will meet with no more encouragement, but even that the author will be persuaded to abandon a plan of writing, which defrauds his industry and talents of their natural reward.

Putting ourselves thus upon our country, we certainly look for a verdict against this publication;
[Pg 27] and have little doubt indeed of the result, upon a fair consideration of the evidence contained in these volumes.—To accelerate that result, and to give a general view of the evidence, to those into whose hands the record may not have already fallen, we must now make a few observations and extracts.

We shall not resume any of the particular discussions by which we formerly attempted to ascertain the value of the improvements which this new school had effected in poetry;[H] but shall lay the grounds of our opposition, for this time, a little more broadly. The end of poetry, we take it, is to please—and the name, we think, is strictly applicable to every metrical composition from which we receive pleasure, without any laborious exercise of the understanding. This pleasure, may, in general, be analyzed into three parts—that which we receive from the excitement of Passion or emotion—that which is derived from the play of Imagination, or the easy exercise of Reason—and that which depends on the character and qualities of the Diction. The two first are the vital and primary springs of poetical delight, and can scarcely require explanation to any one. The last has been alternately overrated and undervalued by the professors of the poetical art, and is in such low estimation with the author now before us and his associates, that it is necessary to say a few words in explanation of it.

One great beauty of diction exists only for those who have some degree of scholarship or critical skill. This is what depends on the exquisite *propriety* of the words employed, and the delicacy with which they are adapted to the meaning which is to be expressed. Many of the finest passages in Virgil and Pope derive their principal charm from the fine propriety of their diction.
[Pg 28] Another source of beauty, which extends only to the more instructed class of readers, is that which consists in the judicious or happy application of expressions which have been sanctified by the use of famous writers, or which bear the stamp of a simple or venerable antiquity. There are other beauties of diction, however, which are perceptible by all—the beauties of sweet sound and pleasant associations. The melody of words and verses is indifferent to no reader of poetry; but the chief recommendation of poetical language is certainly derived from those general associations, which give it a character of dignity or elegance, sublimity or tenderness. Every one knows that there are low and mean expressions, as well as lofty and grave ones; and that some words bear the impression of coarseness and vulgarity, as clearly as others do of refinement and affection. We do not mean, of course, to say anything in defence of the hackneyed common-places of ordinary versemen. Whatever might have been the original character of these unlucky phrases, they are now associated with nothing but ideas of schoolboy imbecility and vulgar affectation. But what we do maintain is, that much of the most popular poetry in the world owes its celebrity chiefly to the beauty of its diction; and that no poetry can be long or generally acceptable, the language of which is coarse, inelegant, or infantine.

From this great source of pleasure, we think the readers of Mr Wordsworth are in a great measure cut off. His diction has no where any pretensions to elegance or dignity; and he has scarcely ever condescended to give the grace of correctness or melody to his versification. If it were merely slovenly and neglected, however, all this might be endured. Strong sense and powerful feeling will ennoble any expressions; or, at least, no one who is capable of estimating
[Pg 29] those higher merits, will be disposed to mark these little defects. But, in good truth, no man, now-a-days, composes verses for publication with a slovenly neglect of their language. It is a fine and laborious manufacture, which can scarcely ever be made in a hurry; and the faults which it has, may, for the most part, be set down to bad taste or incapacity, rather than to carelessness or oversight. With Mr Wordsworth and his friends, it is plain that their peculiarities of diction are things of choice, and not of accident. They write as they do, upon principle and system; and it evidently costs them much pains to keep *down* to the standard which they have proposed to themselves. They are, to the full, as much mannerists, too, as the poetasters who ring changes on the common-places of magazine versification; and all the difference between them is, that they borrow their phrases from a different and a scantier *gradus ad Parnassum*. If they were, indeed, to discard all imitation and set phraseology, and to bring in no words merely for show or for metre,—as much, perhaps, might be gained in freedom and originality, as would infallibly be lost

in allusion and authority; but, in point of fact, the new poets are just as great borrowers as the old; only that, instead of borrowing from the more popular passages of their illustrious predecessors, they have preferred furnishing themselves from vulgar ballads and plebeian nurseries.

Their peculiarities of diction alone, are enough, perhaps, to render them ridiculous; but the author before us really seems anxious to court this literary martyrdom by a device still more infallible,—we mean, that of connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions, with objects and incidents, which the greater part of his readers will probably persist in thinking low,
[Pg 30] silly, or uninteresting. Whether this is done from affectation and conceit alone, or whether it may not arise, in some measure, from the self-illusion of a mind of extraordinary sensibility, habituated to solitary meditation, we cannot undertake to determine. It is possible enough, we allow, that the sight of a friend's garden-spade, or a sparrow's nest, or a man gathering leeches, might really have suggested to such a mind a train of powerful impressions and interesting reflections; but it is certain, that, to most minds, such associations will always appear forced, strained, and unnatural; and that the composition in which it is attempted to exhibit them, will always have the air of parody, or ludicrous and affected singularity. All the world laughs at Elegiac stanzas to a sucking-pig—a Hymn on Washing-day—Sonnets to one's grandmother—or Pindarics on gooseberry-pye; and yet, we are afraid, it will not be quite easy to convince Mr Wordsworth, that the same ridicule must infallibly attach to most of the pathetic pieces in these volumes. To satisfy our readers, however, as to the justice of this and our other anticipations, we shall proceed, without further preface, to lay before them a short view of their contents.

The first is a kind of ode 'to the Daisy,'—very flat, feeble, and affected; and in a diction as artificial, and as much encumbered with heavy expletives, as the theme of an unpractised schoolboy. The two following stanzas will serve as a specimen.

'When soothed a while by milder airs,
Thee Winter in the garland wears
That thinly shades his few grey hairs;
Spring cannot shun thee;
Whole summer fields are thine by right;
And Autumn, melancholy Wight!
Doth in thy crimson head delight
When rains are on thee.
In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
[Pg 31] Thou greet'st the Traveller in the lane;
If welcome once thou count'st it gain;
Thou art not daunted,
Nor car'st if thou be set at naught;
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such are wanted.' I. p. 2.

The scope of the piece is to say, that the flower is found everywhere; and that it has suggested many pleasant thoughts to the author—some chime of fancy '*wrong or right*'—some feeling of devotion 'more or less'—and other elegancies of the same stamp. It ends with this unmeaning prophecy.

'Thou long the poet's praise shalt gain;
Thou wilt be more beloved by men
In times to come; thou not in vain
Art Nature's favourite.' I. 6.

The next is called 'Louisa,' and begins in this dashing and affected manner.

'I met Louisa in the shade;
And, having seen that lovely maid,
Why should I fear to say
That she is ruddy, fleet, and *strong*;
And down the rocks can leap along,
Like rivulets in May?' I. 7.

Does Mr Wordsworth really imagine that this is at all more natural or engaging than the ditties of our common song writers?

A little farther on we have another original piece, entitled, 'The Redbreast and the Butterfly,' of which our readers will probably be contented with the first stanza.

'Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
[Pg 32] Our little English Robin;
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing?
Art thou the Peter of Norway Boors?
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland?

The bird, whom *by some name or other*
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of children and men?
Could Father Adam open his eyes,
And see this sight beneath the skies,
He'd wish to close them again.' I. 16.

This, it must be confessed, is 'Silly Sooth' in good earnest. The three last [*sic*] lines seem to be downright raving.

By and by, we have a piece of namby-pamby 'to the Small Celandine,' which we should almost have taken for a professed imitation of one of Mr Philip's prettyisms. Here is a page of it.

'Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming spirit!
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane;—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee.
Ill befal the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours!
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no;
Others, too, of lofty mien;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine,
Little, humble, Celandine!' I. 25.

[Pg 33] After talking of its 'bright coronet,' the ditty is wound up with this piece of babyish absurdity.

'Thou art not beyond the moon,
But a thing "beneath our shoon;"
Let, as old Magellan did,
Others roam about the sea;
Build who will a pyramid;
Praise it is enough for me,
If there be but three or four
Who will love my little flower.' I. 30.

After this come some more manly lines on 'The Character of the Happy Warrior,' and a chivalrous legend on 'The Horn of Egremont Castle,' which, without being very good, is very tolerable, and free from most of the author's habitual defects. Then follow some pretty, but professedly childish verses, on a kitten playing with the falling leaves. There is rather too much of Mr Ambrose Philips here and there in this piece also; but it is amiable and lively.

Further on, we find an 'Ode to Duty,' in which the lofty vein is very unsuccessfully attempted. This is the concluding stanza.

'Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.' I. 73.

The two last [*sic*] lines seem to be utterly without meaning; at least we have no sort of conception
[Pg 34] in what sense *Duty* can be said to keep the old skies *fresh*, and the stars from wrong.

The next piece, entitled 'The Beggars,' may be taken, we fancy, as a touchstone of Mr Wordsworth's merit. There is something about it that convinces us it is a favourite of the author's; though to us, we will confess, it appears to be a very paragon of silliness and affectation. Our readers shall have the greater part of it. It begins thus.

'She had a tall man's height, or more;
No bonnet screen'd her from the heat;
A long drab-coloured cloak she wore,
A mantle reaching to her feet:
What other dress she had I could not know;
Only she wore a cap that was as white as snow.

'Before me begging did she stand,
Pouring out sorrows like a sea;
Grief after grief:—on English land

Such woes I knew could never be;
And yet a boon I gave her; for the creature
Was beautiful to see; a weed of glorious feature!' I. 77, 78.

The poet, leaving this interesting person, falls in with two ragged boys at play, and 'like that woman's face as gold is like to gold.' Here is the conclusion of this memorable adventure.

'They bolted on me thus, and lo!
Each ready with a plaintive whine;
Said I, "Not half an hour ago
Your mother has had alms of mine."
"That cannot be," one answered, "She is dead."
"Nay but I gave her pence, and she will buy you bread."

"She has been dead, Sir, many a day."
"Sweet boys, you're telling me a lie";
"It was your mother, as I say—"
[Pg 35] And in the twinkling of an eye,
"Come, come!" cried one; and, without more ado,
Off to some other play they both together flew.' I. 79.

'Alice Fell' is a performance of the same order. The poet, driving into Durham in a postchaise, hears a sort of scream; and, calling to the post-boy to stop, finds a little girl crying on the back of the vehicle.

"My cloak!" the word was last and first,
And loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her very heart would burst;
And down from off the chaise she leapt.

"What ails you, child?" she sobb'd, "Look here!"
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scarecrow dangled.' I. 85, 86.

They then extricate the torn garment, and the good-natured bard takes the child into the carriage along with him. The narrative proceeds—

"My child, in Durham do you dwell?"
She check'd herself in her distress,
And said, "My name is Alice Fell;
I'm fatherless and motherless.

And I to Durham, Sir, belong."
And then, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong;
And all was for her tatter'd cloak.

The chaise drove on; our journey's end
Was nigh; and, sitting by my side,
As if she'd lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern-door we post;
Of Alice and her grief I told;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

[Pg 36] "And let it be of duffil grey,
As warm a cloak as man can sell!"
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell!' I. p. 87, 88.

If the printing of such trash as this be not felt as an insult on the public taste, we are afraid it cannot be insulted.

After this follows the longest and most elaborate poem in the volume, under the title of 'Resolution and Independence.' The poet, roving about on a common one fine morning, falls into pensive musings on the fate of the sons of song, which he sums up in this fine distich.

'We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.' I. p. 92.

In the midst of his meditations—

'I saw a man before me unawares;
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

———————

Motionless as a cloud the old man stood;
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth altogether, if it move at all.
At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conn'd,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now such fre[e]dom as I could I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

———————

"What kind of work is that which you pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
He answer'd me *with pleasure and surprise*;
And there was, while he spake, a fire about his eyes.
[Pg 37] He told me *that he to this pond had come*
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roam'd, from moor to moor,
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance:
And in this way he gain'd an honest maintenance.' I. p. 92-95.

Notwithstanding the distinctness of this answer, the poet, it seems, was so wrapped up in his own moody fancies, that he could not attend to it.

'And now, not knowing what the old man had said,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"
He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said, that, *gathering leeches*, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus *about his feet*
The waters of the ponds where they abide.
"*Once I could meet with them on every side*;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may." I. p. 96, 97.

This very interesting account, which he is lucky enough at last to comprehend, fills the poet with comfort and admiration; and, quite glad to find the old man so cheerful, he resolves to take a lesson of contentedness from him; and the poem ends with this pious ejaculation—

"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor." I. p. 97.

We defy the bitterest enemy of Mr Wordsworth to produce anything at all parallel to this from any collection of English poetry, or even from the specimens of his friend Mr Southey. The
[Pg 38] volume ends with some sonnets, in a very different measure, of which we shall say something by and by.

The first poems in the second volume were written during a tour in Scotland. The first is a very dull one about Rob Roy; but the title that attracted us most was 'an Address to the Sons of *Burns*, after visiting their Father's Grave.' Never was anything, however, more miserable. This is one of the four stanzas.

'Strong bodied if ye be to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if your father's wit ye share,
    Then, then indeed,
Ye sons of Burns! for watchful care
    There will be need.' II. p. 29.

The next is a very tedious, affected performance, called 'the Yarrow Unvisited.' The drift of it is, that the poet refused to visit this celebrated stream, because he had 'a vision of his own' about it, which the reality might perhaps undo; and, for this no less fantastical reason—

"Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!" II. p. 35.

After this we come to some ineffable compositions which the poet has simply entitled, 'Moods of my own Mind.' One begins—

'O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart—
Thou sing'st as if the god of wine
Had help'd thee to a valentine.' II. p. 42.

[Pg 39] This is the whole of another—

'My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.' II. p. 44.

A third, 'on a Sparrow's Nest,' runs thus—

'Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!
Few visions have I seen more fair,
Nor many prospects of delight
More pleasing than that simple sight.' II. p. 53.

The charm of this fine prospect, however, was, that it reminded him of another nest which his sister Emmeline and he had visited in their childhood.

'She look'd at it as if she fear'd it;
Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little prattler among men,' &c., &c. II. p. 54.

We have then a rapturous mystical ode to the Cuckoo; in which the author, striving after force and originality, produces nothing but absurdity.

'O cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?' II. p. 57.

And then he says, that the said voice seemed to pass from hill to hill, 'about and all about!'—Afterwards he assures us, it tells him 'in the vale of visionary hours,' and calls it a darling; but still insists, that it is

'No bird; but an invisible thing,
A voice,—a mystery.' II. p. 58.

[Pg 40] It is afterwards 'a hope;' and 'a love;' and, finally,

'O blessed *bird*! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place,
That is fit home for thee!' II. p. 59.

After this there is an address to a butterfly, whom he invites to visit him, in these simple strains—

'This plot of orchard-ground is ours;
My trees they are, my sister's flowers;
Stop here whenever you are weary.' II. p. 61.

We come next to a long story of a 'Blind Highland Boy,' who lived near an arm of the sea, and had taken a most unnatural desire to venture on that perilous element. His mother did all she could to prevent him; but one morning, when the good woman was out of the way, he got into a vessel of his own, and pushed out from the shore.

'In such a vessel ne'er before
Did human creature leave the shore.' II. p. 72.

And then we are told, that if the sea should get rough, 'a bee-hive would be ship as safe.' 'But say, what is it?' a poetical interlocutor is made to exclaim most naturally; and here followeth the answer, upon which all the pathos and interest of the story depend.

'A Household Tub, like one of those
Which women use to wash their clothes!!' II. p. 72.

This, it will be admitted, is carrying the matter as far as it will well go; nor is there anything,—down to the wiping of shoes, or the evisceration of chickens,—which may not be introduced in
[Pg 41] poetry, if this is tolerated. A boat is sent out and brings the boy ashore, who being tolerably frightened we suppose, promises to go to sea no more; and so the story ends.

Then we have a poem, called 'the Green Linnet,' which opens with the poet's telling us;

'A whispering leaf is now my joy,
And then a bird will be the *toy*
That doth my fancy *tether*.' II. p. 79.

and closes thus—

'While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A brother of the leaves he seems;
When in a moment forth *he teems*
His little song in gushes:
As if it pleas'd him to disdain
And mock the form which he did feign,
While he was dancing with the train
Of leaves among the bushes.' II. p. 81.

The next is called 'Star Gazers.' A set of people peeping through a telescope, all seem to come away disappointed with the sight; whereupon thus sweetly moralizeth our poet.

'Yet, showman, where can lie the cause? Shall thy implement have blame,
A boaster, that when he is tried, fails, and is put to shame?
Or is it good as others are, and be their eyes in fault?
Their eyes, or minds? or, finally, is this resplendent vault?

Or, is it rather, that conceit rapacious is and strong,
And bounty never yields so much but it seems to do her wrong?
Or is it, that when human souls a journey long have had,
And are returned into themselves, they cannot but be sad?' II. p. 88.

There are then some really sweet and amiable verses on a French lady, separated from her own
[Pg 42] children, fondling the baby of a neighbouring cottager;—after which we have this quintessence of unmeaningness, entitled, 'Foresight.'

'That is work which I am rueing—
Do as Charles and I are doing!
Strawberry-blossoms, one and all,
We must spare them—here are many:
Look at it—the flower is small,
Small and low, though fair as any:
Do not touch it! Summers two
I am older, Anne, than you.
Pull the primrose, sister Anne!
Pull as many as you can.

Primroses, the spring may love them—
Summer knows but little of them:
Violets, do what they will,
Wither'd on the ground must lie:
Daisies will be daisies still;
Daisies they must live and die:
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom,
Only spare the strawberry-blossom!' II. p. 115, 116.

Afterwards come some stanzas about an echo repeating a cuckoo's voice; here is one for a sample —

'Whence the voice? from air or earth?
This the cuckoo cannot tell;
But a startling sound had birth,
As the bird must know full well.' II. p. 123.

Then we have Elegiac stanzas 'to the Spade of a friend,' beginning—

'Spade! with which Wilkinson hath till'd his lands,'

—but too dull to be quoted any further.

After this there is a Minstrel's Song, on the Restoration of Lord Clifford the Shepherd, which is in a very different strain of poetry; and then the volume is wound up with an 'Ode,' with no other
[Pg 43] title but the motto, *Paulo majora canamus*. This is, beyond all doubt, the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication. We can pretend to give no analysis or explanation of it;—our readers must make what they can of the following extracts.

'——But there's a tree, of many one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:

The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?' II. 150.

————

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest:
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether fluttering or at rest,
With new-born hope forever in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realiz'd,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surpriz'd:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our feeling
Uphold us, cherish us, and make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
[Pg 44] Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.' II. 154-6.

We have thus gone through this publication, with a view to enable our readers to determine, whether the author of the verses which have now been exhibited, is entitled to claim the honours of an improver or restorer of our poetry, and to found a new school to supersede or new-model all our maxims on this subject. If we were to stop here, we do not think that Mr Wordsworth, or his admirers, would have any reason to complain; for what we have now quoted is undeniably the most peculiar and characteristic part of his publication, and must be defended and applauded if the merit or originality of his system is to be seriously maintained. In our own opinion, however, the demerit of that system cannot be fairly appreciated, until it be shown, that the author of the bad verses which we have already extracted, can write good verses when he pleases; and that, in point of fact, he does always write good verses, when, by any accident, he is led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that school which he would fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority.

[Pg 45] The length to which our extracts and observations have already extended, necessarily restrains us within more narrow limits in this part of our citations; but it will not require much labour to find a pretty decided contrast to some of the passages we have already detailed. The song on the restoration of Lord Clifford is put into the mouth of an ancient minstrel of the family; and in composing it, the author was led, therefore, almost irresistibly to adopt the manner and phraseology that is understood to be connected with that sort of composition, and to throw aside his own babyish incidents and fantastical sensibilities. How he has succeeded, the reader will be able to judge from the few following extracts.

[Quotes fifty-six lines of *Lord Clifford*.]

All English writers of sonnets have imitated Milton; and, in this way, Mr Wordsworth, when he writes sonnets, escapes again from the trammels of his own unfortunate system; and the consequence is, that his sonnets are as much superior to the greater part of his other poems, as Milton's sonnets are superior to his.

[Quotes the sonnets *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*, *London*, and *I griev'd for*

Buonaparte.]

When we look at these, and many still finer passages, in the writings of this author, it is impossible not to feel a mixtures of indignation and compassion, at that strange infatuation which has bound him up from the fair exercise of his talents, and withheld from the public the many excellent productions that would otherwise have taken the place of the trash now before us. Even in the worst of these productions, there are, no doubt, occasional little traits of delicate feeling and original fancy; but these are quite lost and obscured in the mass of childishness and insipidity with which they are incorporated; nor can any thing give us a more melancholy view of
[Pg 46] the debasing effects of this miserable theory, than that it has given ordinary men a right to wonder at the folly and presumption of a man gifted like Mr Wordsworth, and made him appear, in his second avowed publication, like a bad imitator of the worst of his former productions.

We venture to hope, that there is now an end of this folly; and that, like other follies, it will be found to have cured itself by the extravagances resulting from its unbridled indulgence. In this point of view, the publication of the volumes before us may ultimately be of service to the good cause of literature. Many a generous rebel, it is said, has been reclaimed to his allegiance by the spectacle of lawless outrage and excess presented in the conduct of the insurgents; and we think there is every reason to hope, that the lamentable consequences which have resulted from Mr Wordsworth's open violation of the established laws of poetry, will operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example, and be the means of restoring to that antient and venerable code its due honour and authority.—*The Edinburgh Review*.

[Pg 47]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Christabel: Kubla Khan, a Vision. The Pains of Sleep. By S.T. Coleridge, Esq. London, Murray, 1816.

The advertisement by which this work was announced to the publick, carried in its front a recommendation from Lord Byron,—who, it seems, has somewhere praised Christabel, as 'a wild and singularly original and beautiful poem.' Great as the noble bard's merits undoubtedly are in poetry, some of his latest *publications* dispose us to distrust his authority, where the question is what ought to meet the public eye; and the works before us afford an additional proof, that his judgment on such matters is not absolutely to be relied on. Moreover, we are a little inclined to doubt the value of the praise which one poet lends another. It seems now-a-days to be the practice of that once irritable race to laud each other without bounds; and one can hardly avoid suspecting, that what is thus lavishly advanced may be laid out with a view to being repaid with interest. Mr Coleridge, however, must be judged by his own merits.

It is remarked, by the writers upon the Bathos, that the true *profound* is surely known by one quality—its being wholly bottomless; insomuch, that when you think you have attained its utmost depth in the work of some of its great masters, another, or peradventure the same, astonishes you, immediately after, by a plunge so much more vigorous, as to outdo all his former outdoings. So it seems to be with the new school, or, as they may be termed, the wild or lawless poets. After we had been admiring their extravagance for many years, and marvelling at the ease and rapidity
[Pg 48] with which one exceeded another in the unmeaning or infantine, until not an idea was left in the rhyme—or in the insane, until we had reached something that seemed the untamed effusion of an author whose thoughts were rather more free than his actions—forth steps Mr Coleridge, like a giant refreshed with sleep, and as if to redeem his character after so long a silence, ('his poetic powers having been, he says, from 1808 till very lately, in a state of suspended animation,' p. v.) and breaks out in these precise words—

> ''Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
> And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock;
> Tu —— whit! —— Tu —— whoo!
> And hark, again! the crowing cock,
> How drowsily it crew.'
> 'Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
> Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
> From her kennel beneath the rock
> She makes answer to the clock,
> Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour:
> Ever and aye, moonshine or shower,
> Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
> Some say she sees my lady's shroud.'
> 'Is the night chilly and dark?
> The night is chilly, but not dark.' p. 3, 4.

It is probable that Lord Byron may have had this passage in his eye, when he called the poem 'wild' and 'original;' but how he discovered it to be 'beautiful,' is not quite so easy for us to imagine.

Much of the art of the wild writers consists in sudden transitions—opening eagerly upon some topic, and then flying from it immediately. This indeed is known to the medical men, who not unfrequently have the care of them, as an unerring symptom. Accordingly, here we take leave of the Mastiff Bitch, and lose sight of her entirely, upon the entrance of another personage of a [Pg 49] higher degree,

'The lovely Lady Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well'—

And who, it seems, has been rambling about all night, having, the night before, had dreams about her lover, which 'made her moan and *leap*.' While kneeling, in the course of her rambles, at an old oak, she hears a noise on the other side of the stump, and going round, finds, to her great surprize, another fair damsel in white silk, but with her dress and hair in some disorder; at the mention of whom, the poet takes fright, not, as might be imagined, because of her disorder, but on account of her beauty and her fair attire—

'I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!'

Christabel naturally asks who she is, and is answered, at some length, that her name is Geraldine; that she was, on the morning before, seized by five warriors, who tied her on a white horse, and drove her on, they themselves following, also on white horses; and that they had rode all night. Her narrative now gets to be a little contradictory, which gives rise to unpleasant suspicions. She protests vehemently, and with oaths, that she has no idea who the men were; only that one of them, the tallest of the five, took her and placed her under the tree, and that they all went away, she knew not whither; but how long she had remained there she cannot tell—

'Nor do I know how long it is,
For I have lain in fits, I *wis*;'

—although she had previously kept a pretty exact account of the time. The two ladies then go [Pg 50] home together, after this satisfactory explanation, which appears to have conveyed to the intelligent mind of Lady C. every requisite information. They arrive at the castle, and pass the night in the same bed-room; not to disturb Sir Leoline, who, it seems, was poorly at the time, and, of course, must have been called up to speak to the chambermaids, and have the sheets aired, if Lady G. had had a room to herself. They do not get to their bed, however in the poem, quite so easily as we have carried them. They first cross the moat, and Lady C. 'took the key that fitted well,' and opened a little door, 'all in the middle of the gate.' Lady G. then sinks down 'belike through pain;' but it should seem more probably from laziness; for her fair companion having lifted her up, and carried her a little way, she then walks on 'as she were not in pain.' Then they cross the court—but we must give this in the poet's words, for he seems so pleased with them, that he inserts them twice over in the space of ten lines.

'So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court—right glad they were.'

Lady C. is desirous of a little conversation on the way, but Lady G. will not indulge her Ladyship, saying she is too much tired to speak. We now meet our old friend, the mastiff bitch, who is much too important a person to be slightly passed by—

'Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?'

[Pg 51] Whatever it may be that ails the bitch, the ladies pass forward, and take off their shoes, and tread softly all the way upstairs, as Christabel observes that her father is a bad sleeper. At last, however, they do arrive at the bed-room, and comfort themselves with a dram of some homemade liquor, which proves to be very old; for it was made by Lady C.'s mother; and when her new friend asks if she thinks the old lady will take her part, she answers, that this is out of the question, in as much as she happened to die in childbed of her. The mention of the old lady, however, gives occasion to the following pathetic couplet.—Christabel says,

'O mother dear, that thou wert here!
I would, said Geraldine, she were!'

A very mysterious conversation next takes place between Lady Geraldine and the old gentlewoman's ghost, which proving extremely fatiguing to her, she again has recourse to the bottle—and with excellent effect, as appears by these lines.

'Again the wild-flower wine she drank;

Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
'And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty Lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a Lady of a far countrée.'

—From which, we may gather among other points, the exceeding great beauty of all women who live in a distant place, no matter where. The effects of the cordial speedily begin to appear; as no
[Pg 52] one, we imagine, will doubt, that to its influence must be ascribed the following speech—

'And thus the lofty lady spake—
All they, who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them—and for their sake
And for the good which me befel,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.'

Before going to bed, Lady G. kneels to pray, and desires her friend to undress, and lie down; which she does 'in her loveliness;' but being curious, she leans 'on her elbow,' and looks toward the fair devotee,—where she sees something which the poet does not think fit to tell us very explicitly.

'Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
And she is to sleep by Christabel.'

She soon rises, however, from her knees; and as it was not a double-bedded room, she turns in to Lady Christabel, taking only 'two paces and a stride.' She then clasps her tight in her arms, and mutters a very dark spell, which we apprehend the poet manufactured by shaking words together at random; for it is impossible to fancy that he can annex any meaning whatever to it. This is the end of it.

'But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

[Pg 53] The consequence of this incantation is, that Lady Christabel has a strange dream—and when she awakes, her first exclamation is, 'Sure I have sinn'd'—'Now heaven be praised if all be well!' Being still perplexed with the remembrance of her 'too lively' dream—she then dresses herself, and modestly prays to be forgiven for 'her sins unknown.' The two companions now go to the Baron's parlour, and Geraldine tells her story to him. This, however, the poet judiciously leaves out, and only signifies that the Baron recognized in her the daughter of his old friend Sir Roland, with whom he had had a deadly quarrel. Now, however, he despatches his tame poet, or laureate, called Bard Bracy, to invite him and his family over, promising to forgive every thing, and even make an apology for what had passed. To understand what follows, we own, surpasses our comprehension. Mr Bracy, the poet, recounts a strange dream he has just had, of a dove being almost strangled by a snake; whereupon the Lady Geraldine falls a hissing, and her eyes grow small, like a serpent's,—or at least so they seem to her friend; who begs her father to 'send away that woman.' Upon this the Baron falls into a passion, as if he had discovered that his daughter had been seduced; at least, we can understand him in no other sense, though no hint of such a kind is given; but on the contrary, she is painted to the last moment as full of innocence and purity.—Nevertheless,

'His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quiver'd, his eyes were wild,
Dishonour'd thus in his old age;
Dishonour'd by his only child;
And all his hospitality
To th' insulted daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy,
Brought thus to a disgraceful end.—'

[Pg 54] Nothing further is said to explain the mystery; but there follows incontinently, what is termed '*The conclusion of Part the Second*.' And as we are pretty confident that Mr Coleridge holds this passage in the highest estimation; that he prizes it more than any other part of 'that wild, and singularly original and beautiful poem Christabel,' excepting always the two passages touching the 'toothless mastiff bitch;' we shall extract it for the amazement of our readers—premising our own frank avowal that we are wholly unable to divine the meaning of any portion of it.

'A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds and never seeks;
Makes such a vision to the sight
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm
Perhaps 'tis tender too, and pretty,
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do.'

Hence endeth the Second Part, and, in truth, the 'singular' poem itself; for the author has not yet written, or, as he phrases it, 'embodied in verse,' the 'three parts yet to come;'—though he trusts
[Pg 55] he shall be able to do so' in the course of the present year.'

One word as to the metre of Christabel, or, as Mr Coleridge terms it, '*the* Christabel'—happily enough; for indeed we doubt if the peculiar force of the definite article was ever more strongly exemplified. He says, that though the reader may fancy there prevails a great *irregularity* in the metre, some lines being of four, others of twelve syllables, yet in reality it is quite regular; only that it is 'founded on a new principle, namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables.' We say nothing of the monstrous assurance of any man coming forward coolly at this time of day, and telling the readers of English poetry, whose ear has been tuned to the lays of Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope, that he makes his metre 'on a new principle!' but we utterly deny the truth of the assertion, and defy him to show us *any* principle upon which his lines can be conceived to tally. We give two or three specimens to confound at once this miserable piece of coxcombry and shuffling. Let our 'wild, and singularly original and beautiful' author, show us how these lines agree either in number of accents or of feet.

'Ah wel-a-day!'
'For this is alone in—'
'And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity'—
'I pray you drink this cordial wine'—
'Sir Leoline'—
'And found a bright lady surpassingly fair'—
'Tu—whit!—--Tu—whoo!'

Kubla Khan is given to the public, it seems, 'at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity;'—but whether Lord Byron, the praiser of 'the Christabel,' or the Laureate, the praiser of Princes, we are not informed. As far as Mr Coleridge's 'own opinions are concerned,' it is
[Pg 56] published, 'not upon the ground of any *poetic* merits,' but 'as a PSYCHOLOGICAL CURIOSITY!' In these opinions of the candid author, we entirely concur; but for this reason we hardly think it was necessary to give the minute detail which the Preface contains, of the circumstances attending its composition. Had the question regarded '*Paradise Lost*,' or '*Dryden's Ode*,' we could not have had a more particular account of the circumstances in which it was composed. It was in the year 1797, and in the summer season. Mr Coleridge was in bad health;—the particular disease is not given; but the careful reader will form his own conjectures. He had retired very prudently to a lonely farm-house; and whoever would see the place which gave birth to the 'psychological curiosity,' may find his way thither without a guide; for it is situated on the confines of Somerset and Devonshire, and on the Exmoor part of the boundary; and it is, moreover, between Porlock and Linton. In that farm-house, he had a slight indisposition, and had taken an anodyne, which threw him into a deep sleep in his chair (whether after dinner or not he omits to state), 'at the moment that he was reading a sentence in Purchas's Pilgrims,' relative to a palace of Kubla Khan. The effects of the anodyne, and the sentence together, were prodigious: They produced the 'curiosity' now before us; for, during his three-hours sleep, Mr Coleridge 'has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines.' On awaking, he 'instantly and eagerly' wrote down the verses here published; when he was (he says, '*unfortunately*') called out by a 'person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour;' and when he returned the vision was gone. The lines here given smell strongly, it must be
[Pg 57] owned, of the anodyne; and, but that an under dose of a sedative produces contrary effects, we should inevitably have been lulled by them into forgetfulness of all things. Perhaps a dozen more such lines as the following would reduce the most irritable of critics to a state of inaction.

'A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:

It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she play'd,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread:
For he on honey-dew hath fed,' &c. &c.

There is a good deal more altogether as exquisite—and in particular a fine description of a wood, 'ancient as the hills;' and 'folding sunny spots of *greenery*!' But we suppose this specimen will be sufficient.

Persons in this poet's unhappy condition, generally feel the want of sleep as the worst of their evils; but there are instances, too, in the history of the disease, of sleep being attended with new agony, as if the waking thoughts, how wild and turbulent soever, had still been under some slight restraint, which sleep instantly removed. Mr Coleridge appears to have experienced this symptom, if we may judge from the title of his third poem, '*The Pains of Sleep*;' and, in truth,
[Pg 58] from its composition—which is mere raving, without any thing more affecting than a number of incoherent words, expressive of extravagance and incongruity.—We need give no specimen of it.

Upon the whole, we look upon this publication as one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the press has lately been guilty; and one of the boldest experiments that has yet been made on the patience or understanding of the public. It is impossible, however, to dismiss it, without a remark or two. The other productions of the Lake School have generally exhibited talents thrown away upon subjects so mean, that no power of genius could ennoble them; or perverted and rendered useless by a false theory of poetical composition. But even in the worst of them, if we except the White Doe of Mr Wordsworth and some of the laureate odes, there were always some gleams of feeling or of fancy. But the thing now before us is utterly destitute of value. It exhibits from beginning to end not a ray of genius; and we defy any man to point out a passage of poetical merit in any of the three pieces which it contains, except, perhaps, the following lines in p. 32, and even these are not very brilliant; nor is the leading thought original—

'Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

With this one exception, there is literally not one couplet in the publication before us which would be reckoned poetry, or even sense, were it found in the corner of a newspaper or upon the window of an inn. Must we then be doomed to hear such a mixture of raving and driv'ling, extolled as the work of a '*wild and original*' genius, simply because Mr Coleridge has now and
[Pg 59] then written fine verses, and a brother poet chooses, in his milder mood, to laud him from courtesy or from interest? And are such panegyrics to be echoed by the mean tools of a political faction, because they relate to one whose daily prose is understood to be dedicated to the support of all that courtiers think should be supported? If it be true that the author has thus earned the patronage of those liberal dispensers of bounty, we can have no objection that they should give him proper proofs of their gratitude; but we cannot help wishing, for his sake, as well as our own, that they would pay in solid pudding instead of empty praise; and adhere, at least in this instance, to the good old system of rewarding their champions with places and pensions, instead of puffing their bad poetry, and endeavouring to cram their nonsense down the throats of all the loyal and well affected.—*The Edinburgh Review*.

[Pg 60]

ROBERT SOUTHEY

Madoc, by ROBERT SOUTHEY. 4to. pp. 560. 2l. 2s. Boards. Printed at Edinburgh, for Longman and Co., London. 1805.

It has fallen to the lot of this writer to puzzle our critical discernment more than once. In the *Annual Anthology* we had reason to complain that it was difficult to distinguish his jocular from his serious poetry; and sometimes indeed to know his poetry from his prose. He has now contrived to manufacture a large quarto, which he has styled a poem, but of what description it is no easy matter to decide. The title of epic, which he indignantly disclaims, we might have been inclined to refuse his production, had it been claimed; and we suppose that Mr. Southey would

not suffer it to be classed under the mock-heroic. The poem of Madoc is not didactic, nor elegiac, nor classical, in any respect. Neither is it *Macphersonic*, nor *Klopstockian*, nor *Darwinian*,—we beg pardon, we mean *Brookian*. To conclude, according to a phrase of the last century, which was applied to ladies of ambiguous character, *it is what it is*.—As Mr. Southey has set the rules of Aristotle at defiance in his preface, we hope that he will feel a due degree of gratitude for this appropriate definition of his work. It is an old saying, thoroughly descriptive of such an old song as this before us.

Mr. Southey, however, has not disdained all ancient precedents in his poem, for he introduces it with this advertisement:

> 'Come, listen to a tale of times of old!
> Come, for ye know me! I am he who sung
> The maid of Arc; and I am he who framed
> [Pg 61] Of Thalaba the wild and wonderous song.
> Come, listen to my lay, and ye shall hear
> How Madoc from the shores of Britain spread
> The adventurous sail, explored the ocean ways,
> And quelled barbarian power, and overthrew
> The bloody altars of idolatry,
> And planted in its fanes triumphantly
> The cross of Christ. Come, listen to my lay!'

This *modest ostentation* was certainly derived from the verses imputed to Virgil;

> "Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
> Carmen; et egressus sylvis, vicina coëgi
> Ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
> Gratum opus agricolis: at nunc horrentia Martis, &c."

In the very first part of the poem, also, we find Mr. Southey pursuing the Horatian precept, "*prorumpere in medias res*;" for he commences with the *return* of Madoc to his native country. It is true that, like the Messenger in Macklin's tragedy, he "goes but to return;" and the critic is tempted to say, with Martial, *toto carere possum*.—Thus the grand interest of the work, which ought to consist in exploring a new world, is destroyed at once, by the reader at his outset encountering the heroes returning "sound, wind and limb," to their native country. It may be said that Camœns has thrown a great part of Da Gama's Voyage into the form of a narrative: but he has also given much in description; enough, at least, to have justified Mr. Southey in commencing rather nearer the commencement of his tale.

That he might withdraw himself entirely from the yoke of Aristotle, Mr. Southey has divided his poem into two parts, instead of giving it a beginning, a middle and an end. One of these parts is
[Pg 62] concisely entitled, 'Madoc in Wales;' the other, 'Madoc in Aztlan.' A *middle* might, however, have been easily found, by adding, *Madoc on Shipboard*.—The first of these Anti Peripatetic parts contains 18 divisions; the second, 27 which include every incident, episode, &c. introduced into the poem. This arrangement gives it very much the appearance of a journal versified, and effectually precludes any imputation of luxuriance of fancy in the plot.

Respecting the manners, Mr. Southey appears to have been more successful than in his choice of the story. He has adhered to history where he could discover any facts adapted to his purpose; and when history failed him, he has had recourse to probability. Yet we own that the nomenclature of his heroes has shocked what Mr. S. would call our prejudices. *Goervyl* and *Ririd* and *Rodri* and *Llaian* may have charms for Cambrian ears, but who can feel an interest in *Tezozomoc*, *Tlalala*, or *Ocelopan*? Or, should

> ——'Tyneio, Merini,
> Boda and Brenda and Aelgyvarch,
> Gwynon and Celynin and Gwynodyl,' (p. 129.)
> "Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek,
> That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp[I],"

how could we swallow *Yuhidthiton*, *Coanocotzin*, and, above all, the yawning jaw-dislocating *Ayayaca*?—These torturing words, particularly the latter, remind us so strongly of the odious cacophony of the Nurse and Child, that they really are not to be tolerated. Mr. Southey's defence (for he has partially anticipated this objection) is that the names are conformable to history or analogy, which we are not inclined to dispute: but it is not requisite to tread so closely in the traces of barbarity. Truth does not constitute the essence of poetry: but it is indispensably
[Pg 63] necessary that the lines should be agreeable to the ear, as well as to the sense. Sorry, indeed, we are to complain that Mr. Southey, in attempting a new method of writing,—in professing to set aside the old models, and to promote his own work to a distinguished place in the library,—has failed to interest our feelings, or to excite our admiration. The dull tenor of mediocrity, which characterizes his pages, is totally unsuitable to heroic poetry, regular or irregular. Instead of viewing him on a *fiery Pegasus*, and "snatching a grace beyond the reach of art," we behold the author mounted on a strange animal, something between a rough Welsh poney and a Peruvian sheep, whose utmost capriole only tends to land him in the mud. We may indeed safely compliment Mr. Southey, by assuring him that there is nothing in Homer, Virgil, or Milton, in any

degree resembling the beauties of Madoc.

Whether the expedition of Madoc, and the existence of a Welsh tribe in America, be historically true, it is not our present business to examine. It is obvious, however, that one great object of the poem, the destruction of the altars of idolatry, had failed; for it is not pretended that the supposed descendants of Madoc remained Christians.

We shall now make some extracts from this poem, which will enable our readers to judge whether we have spoken too severely of Mr. Southey's labours.

[Quotes 270 lines of *Madoc* with interpolated comments.]

If the perusal of these and the preceding verses should tempt any of our readers to purchase Mr. Southey's volume, we can warrant equal entertainment in all its other parts, and shall heartily wish the gentleman all happiness with his poet.—To us, there appears a thorough perversion of taste, in the conception and execution of the whole; and we are disgusted with the tameness of
[Pg 64] the verse, the vulgarity of the thoughts, and the barbarity of the manners. If this style of writing be continued, we may expect not only the actions of Vindomarus or Ariovistus to be celebrated, but we may perhaps see the history of the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Catabaws, versified in quarto. The name of Atakulla-kulla would not be inharmonious, compared with some of Mr. Southey's heroes. Indeed, a very interesting poem might be founded on the story of Pocahuntas, as it is detailed by Smith, in his History of the Settlement of Virginia; and if Mr. Southey should meditate another irruption into the territories of the Muse, we would recommend this subject to his attention.

It must be remarked that this is a very handsome and elegantly printed book, with engraved title-pages, vignettes, &c. and had the poet equalled the printer, his work might have stood on the same shelf with those of our most admired writers.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 65]

Charles Lamb

Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd, and Charles Lamb. 12mo. 2s. 6d. Boards. Arch. 1798.

Dr. Johnson, speaking of blank verse, seemed to have adopted the opinion of some great man,—we forget whom,—that it is only "*poetry to the eye*." On perusing the works of several modern bards of our own country, we have sometimes rather inclined to the same idea, but the recollection of Milton and Thomson presently banished it.

We have more than once delivered our sentiments respecting the poetry of Mr. Charles Lloyd. To what we have formerly remarked, in general on this head, we have little to add on the present occasion; except that we begin to grow weary of his continued **melancholy** strains. Why is this ingenious writer so uncomfortably constant to the *mournful* Muse? If he has any taste for variety, he has little to fear from *jealousy* in the sacred sisterhood.—Then why not sometimes make his bow to Thalia?

Mr. Lamb, the joint author of this little volume, seems to be very properly associated with his plaintive companion.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 66]

Album Verses, with a few others. By Charles Lamb. 12mo. pp. 150. London, 1830. Moxon.

If any thing could prevent our laughing at the present collection of absurdities, it would be a lamentable conviction of the blinding and engrossing nature of vanity. We could forgive the folly of the original composition, but cannot but marvel at the egotism which has preserved, and the conceit which has published. What exaggerated notion must that man entertain of his talents, who believes their slightest efforts worthy of remembrance; one who keeps a copy of the verses he writes in young ladies' albums, the proverbial receptacles for trash! Here and there a sweet and natural thought intervenes; but the chief part is best characterized by that expressive though ungracious word "rubbish." And what could induce our author to trench on the masculine and vigorous Crabbe? did he think his powerful and dark outlines might with advantage be turned to "prettiness and favour?" But let our readers judge from the following specimens. The first is from the album of Mrs. Jane Towers.

> "Conjecturing, I wander in the dark,
> I know thee only sister to Charles Clarke!"

Directions for a picture—

> "You wished a picture, cheap, but good;
> The colouring? decent; clear, not muddy;
> To suit a poet's quiet study."

The subject is a child—

> "Thrusting his fingers in his ears,
> Like Obstinate, that perverse funny one,
> In honest parable of Bunyan."

[Pg 67] We were not aware of "Obstinate's" fun before.

An epitaph:—

> "On her bones the turf lie lightly,
> And her rise again be brightly!
> No dark stain be found upon her—
> No, there will not, on mine honour—
> Answer that at least I can."

Or what is the merit of the ensuing epicedium?

[Quotes 48 lines beginning:—

> There's rich Kitty Wheatley,
> With footing it featly, etc.]

Mr. Lamb, in his dedication, says his motive for publishing is to benefit his publisher, by affording him an opportunity of shewing how he means to bring out works. We could have dispensed with the specimen; though it is but justice to remark on the neat manner in which the work is produced: the title-page is especially pretty.—*The Literary Gazette*.

[Pg 68]

Walter Savage Landor

Gebir; a Poem, in Seven Books. 12mo. 74 pp. Rivingtons. 1798.

How this Poem, which appears to issue from the same publishers as our own work, so long escaped our notice, we cannot say. Still less are we able to guess at the author, or his meaning. In a copy lately lent to us, as a matter we had overlooked, we observe the following very apposite quotation, inscribed on the title-page, by some unknown hand:

> Some love the verse——
> Which read, and read, you raise your eyes in doubt,
> And gravely wonder what it is about.

Among persons of that turn of mind, the author must look for the *ten* admirers who, as he says, would satisfy his ambition; but whether they could have the qualities of taste and genius, which he requires, is with us a matter of doubt. Turgid obscurity is the general character of the composition, with now and then a gleam of genuine poetry, irradiating the dark profound. The effect of the perusal is to give a kind of whirl to the brain, more like distraction than pleasure; and something analogous to the sensation produced, when the end of the finger is rubbed against the parchment of the tambourine.—*The British Critic*.

[Pg 69]

Gebir; a Poem, in Seven Books. 8vo. pp. 74. 2s. 6d. Rivingtons. 1798.

An unpractised author has attempted, in this poem, the difficult task of relating a romantic story in blank-verse. His performance betrays all the incorrectness and abruptness of inexperience, but it manifests occasionally some talent for description. He has fallen into the common error of those who aspire to the composition of blank-verse, by borrowing too many phrases and epithets from our incomparable Milton. We give the following extract, as affording a fair specimen:

[Quotes about 60 lines from the beginning of the fifth and sixth books of *Gebir*.]

We must observe that the story is told very obscurely, and should have been assisted by an *Argument* in prose. Young writers are often astonished to find that passages, which seem very clear to their own heated imaginations, appear very dark to their readers.—The author of the poem before us may produce something worthy of more approbation, if he will labour hard, and delay for a few years the publication of his next performance.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 70]

Sir Walter Scott

Marmion; a Tale of Flodden Field. By Walter Scott, Esq. 4to. pp. 500. Edinburgh and London, 1808.

There is a kind of right of primogeniture among books, as well as among men; and it is difficult for an author, who has obtained great fame by a first publication, not to appear to fall off in a second—especially if his original success could be imputed, in any degree, to the novelty of his plan of composition. The public is always indulgent to untried talents; and is even apt to exaggerate a little the value of what it receives without any previous expectation. But, for this advance of kindness, it usually exacts a most usurious return in the end. When the poor author comes back, he is no longer received as a benefactor, but a debtor. In return for the credit it formerly gave him, the world now conceives that it has a just claim on him for excellence, and becomes impertinently scrupulous as to the quality of the coin in which it is to be paid.

The just amount of this claim plainly cannot be for more than the rate of excellence which he had reached in his former production; but, in estimating this rate, various errors are perpetually committed, which increase the difficulties of the task which is thus imposed on him. In the *first* place, the comparative amount of his past and present merits can only be ascertained by the uncertain standard of his reader's feelings; and these must always be less lively with regard to a second performance; which, with every other excellence of the first, must necessarily want the powerful recommendations of novelty and surprise, and consequently fall very far short of the
[Pg 71] effect produced by their strong coöperation. In the *second* place, it may be observed, in general, that wherever our impression of any work is favourable on the whole, its excellence is constantly exaggerated, in those vague and habitual recollections which form the basis of subsequent comparisons. We readily drop from our memory the dull and bad passages, and carry along with us the remembrance of those only which had afforded us delight. Thus, when we take the merit of any favourite poem as a standard of comparison for some later production of the same author, we never take its true average merit, which is the only fair standard, but the merit of its most striking and memorable passages, which naturally stand forward in our recollection, and pass upon our hasty retrospect as just and characteristic specimens of the whole work; and this high and exaggerated standard we rigorously apply to the first, and perhaps the least interesting parts of the second performance. Finally, it deserves to be noticed, that where a first work, containing considerable blemishes, has been favourably received, the public always expects this indulgence to be repaid by an improvement that ought not to be always expected. If a second performance appear, therefore, with the same faults, they will no longer meet with the same toleration. Murmurs will be heard about indolence, presumption, and abuse of good nature; while the critics, and those who had gently hinted at the necessity of correction, will be more out of humour than the rest at this apparent neglect of their admonitions.

For these, and for other reasons, we are inclined to suspect, that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion, that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether, equal; and that, if it had had the fortune to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has
[Pg 72] fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer that it has greater faults, than that it has greater beauties; though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more tedious and flat passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad pieces and mere episodes which it contains, have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the lighter delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristics of both, however, are evidently the same;—a broken narrative—a redundancy of minute description—bursts of unequal and energetic poetry—and a general tone of spirit and animation, unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastised by any great delicacy of taste, or elegance of fancy.

But though we think this last romance of Mr Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers, that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret, that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of
[Pg 73] his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a fantasy as to build a modern abbey, or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are in a manner inseparable from its execution. To enable our readers to judge fairly of the present performance, we shall first present them with a brief abstract of the story; and then endeavour to point out what seems to be exceptionable, and what is praiseworthy, in the execution.

[Here follows a detailed outline of the plot of *Marmion*.]

Now, upon this narrative, we are led to observe, in the first place, that it forms a very scanty and narrow foundation for a poem of such length as is now before us. There is scarcely matter enough in the main story for a ballad of ordinary dimensions; and the present work is not so properly diversified with episodes and descriptions, as made up and composed of them. No long poem, however, can maintain its interest without a connected narrative. It should be a grand

historical picture, in which all the personages are concerned in one great transaction, and not a mere gallery of detailed groups and portraits. When we accompany the poet in his career of adventure, it is not enough that he points out to us, as we go along, the beauties of the landscape, and the costumes of the inhabitants. The people must do something after they are described, and they must do it in concert, or in opposition to each other; while the landscape, with its castles and woods and defiles, must serve merely as the scene of their exploits, and the field of their conspiracies and contentions. There is too little connected incident in Marmion, and a great deal
[Pg 74] too much gratuitous description.

In the second place, we object to the whole plan and conception of the fable, as turning mainly upon incidents unsuitable for poetical narrative, and brought out in the denouement in a very obscure, laborious, and imperfect manner. The events of an epic narrative should all be of a broad, clear, and palpable description; and the difficulties and embarrassments of the characters, of a nature to be easily comprehended and entered into by readers of all descriptions. Now, the leading incidents in this poem are of a very narrow and peculiar character, and are woven together into a petty intricacy and entanglement which puzzles the reader instead of interesting him, and fatigues instead of exciting his curiosity. The unaccountable conduct of Constance, in first ruining De Wilton in order to forward Marmion's suit with Clara, and then trying to poison Clara, because Marmion's suit seemed likely to succeed with her—but, above all, the paltry device of the forged letters, and the sealed packet given up by Constance at her condemnation, and handed over by the abbess to De Wilton and Lord Angus, are incidents not only unworthy of the dignity of poetry, but really incapable of being made subservient to its legitimate purposes. They are particularly unsuitable, too, to the age and character of the personages to whom they relate; and, instead of forming the instruments of knightly vengeance and redress, remind us of the machinery of a bad German novel, or of the disclosures which might be expected on the trial of a pettifogging attorney. The obscurity and intricacy which they communicate to the whole story, must be very painfully felt by every reader who tries to comprehend it; and is prodigiously increased by the very clumsy and inartificial manner in which the denouement is ultimately brought about by the author. Three several attempts are made by three several persons to beat
[Pg 75] into the head of the reader the evidence of De Wilton's innocence, and of Marmion's guilt; first, by Constance in her dying speech and confession; secondly, by the abbess in her conference with De Wilton; and, lastly, by this injured innocent himself, on disclosing himself to Clara in the castle of Lord Angus. After all, the precise nature of the plot and the detection is very imperfectly explained, and we will venture to say, is not fully understood by one half those who have fairly read through every word of the quarto now before us. We would object, on the same grounds, to the whole scenery of Constance's condemnation. The subterranean chamber, with its low arches, massive walls, and silent monks with smoky torches,—its old chandelier in an iron chain,—the stern abbots and haughty prioresses, with their flowing black dresses, and book of statutes laid on an iron table, are all images borrowed from the novels of Mrs Ratcliffe [*sic*] and her imitators. The public, we believe, has now supped full of this sort of horrors; or, if any effect is still to be produced by their exhibition, it may certainly be produced at too cheap a rate, to be worthy the ambition of a poet of original imagination.

In the third place, we object to the extreme and monstrous improbability of almost all the incidents which go to the composition of this fable. We know very well that poetry does not describe what is ordinary; but the marvellous, in which it is privileged to indulge, is the marvellous of performance, and not of accident. One extraordinary rencontre or opportune coincidence may be permitted, perhaps, to bring the parties together, and wind up matters for the catastrophe; but a writer who gets through the whole business of his poem, by a series of lucky hits and incalculable chances, certainly manages matters in a very economical way for his
[Pg 76] judgment and invention, and will probably be found to have consulted his own ease, rather than the delight of his readers. Now, the whole story of Marmion seems to us to turn upon a tissue of such incredible accidents. In the first place, it was totally beyond all calculation, that Marmion and De Wilton should meet, by pure chance, at Norham, on the only night which either of them could spend in that fortress. In the next place, it is almost totally incredible that the former should not recognize his antient rival and antagonist, merely because he had assumed a palmer's habit, and lost a little flesh and colour in his travels. He appears unhooded, and walks and speaks before him; and, as near as we can guess, it could not be more than a year since they had entered the lists against each other. Constance, at her death, says she had lived but three years with Marmion; and, it was not till he tired of her, that he aspired to Clara, or laid plots against De Wilton. It is equally inconceivable that De Wilton should have taken upon himself the friendly office of a guide to his arch enemy, and discharged it quietly and faithfully, without seeking, or apparently thinking of any opportunity of disclosure or revenge. So far from meditating anything of the sort, he makes two several efforts to leave him, when it appears that his services are no longer indispensable. If his accidental meeting, and continued association with Marmion, be altogether unnatural, it must appear still more extraordinary, that he should afterwards meet with the Lady Clare, his adored mistress, and the Abbess of Whitby, who had in her pocket the written proofs of his innocence, in consequence of an occurrence equally accidental. These two ladies, the only two persons in the universe whom it was of any consequence to him to meet, are captured in their voyage from Holy Isle, and brought to Edinburgh, by the luckiest accident in the
[Pg 77] world, the very day that De Wilton and Marmion make their entry into it. Nay, the king, without knowing that they are at all of his acquaintance, happens to appoint them lodgings in the same stair-case, and to make them travel under his escort! We pass the night combat at Gifford, in which Marmion knows his opponent by moonlight, though he never could guess at him in sunshine; and all the inconsistencies of his dilatory wooing of Lady Clare. Those, and all the

prodigies and miracles of the story, we can excuse, as within the privilege of poetry; but, the lucky chances we have already specified, are rather too much for our patience. A poet, we think, should never let his heroes contract such great debts to fortune; especially when a little exertion of his own might make them independent of her bounty. De Wilton might have been made to seek and watch his adversary, from some moody feeling of patient revenge; and it certainly would not have been difficult to discover motives which might have induced both Clara and the Abbess to follow and relieve him, without dragging them into his presence by the clumsy hands of a cruizer from Dunbar.

In the *fourth* place, we think we have reason to complain of Mr Scott for having made his figuring characters so entirely worthless, as to excite but little of our sympathy, and at the same time keeping his virtuous personages so completely in the back ground, that we are scarcely at all acquainted with them when the work is brought to a conclusion. Marmion is not only a villain, but a mean and sordid villain; and represented as such, without any visible motive, and at the evident expense of characteristic truth and consistency. His elopement with Constance, and his subsequent desertion of her, are knightly vices enough, we suppose; but then he would surely have been more interesting and natural, if he had deserted her for a brighter beauty, and not
[Pg 78] merely for a richer bride. This was very well for Mr Thomas Inkle, the young merchant of London; but for the valiant, haughty, and liberal Lord Marmion of Fontenaye and Lutterward, we do think it was quite unsuitable. Thus, too, it was very chivalrous and orderly perhaps, for him to hate De Wilton, and to seek to supplant him in his lady's love; but, to slip a bundle of forged letters into his bureau, was cowardly as well as malignant. Now, Marmion is not represented as a coward, nor as at all afraid of De Wilton; on the contrary, and it is certainly the most absurd part of the story, he fights him fairly and valiantly after all, and overcomes him by mere force of arms, as he might have done at the beginning, without having recourse to devices so unsuitable to his general character and habits of acting. By the way, we have great doubts whether a *convicted* traitor, like De Wilton, whose guilt was established by written evidence under his own hand, was ever allowed to enter the lists, as a knight, against his accuser. At all events, we are positive, that an accuser, who was as ready and willing to fight as Marmion, could never have condescended to forge in support of his accusation; and that the author has greatly diminished our interest in the story, as well as needlessly violated the truth of character, by loading his hero with the guilt of this most revolting and improbable proceeding. The crimes of Constance are multiplied in like manner to such a degree, as both to destroy our interest in her fate, and to violate all probability. Her elopement was enough to bring on her doom; and we should have felt more for it, if it had appeared a little more unmerited. She is utterly debased, when she becomes the instrument of Marmion's murderous perfidy, and the assassin of her unwilling rival.

De Wilton, again, is too much depressed throughout the poem. It is rather dangerous for a poet to
[Pg 79] chuse a hero who has been beaten in fair battle. The readers of romance do not like an unsuccessful warrior; but to be beaten in a judicial combat, and to have his arms reversed and tied on the gallows, is an adventure which can only be expiated by signal prowess and exemplary revenge, achieved against great odds, in full view of the reader. The unfortunate De Wilton, however, carries the stain upon him from one end of the poem to the other. He wanders up and down, a dishonoured fugitive, in the disguise of a palmer, through the five first books; and though he is knighted and mounted again in the last, yet we see nothing of his performances; nor is the author merciful enough to afford him one opportunity of redeeming his credit by an exploit of gallantry or skill. For the poor Lady Clare, she is a personage of still greater insipidity and insignificance. The author seems to have formed her upon the principle of Mr Pope's maxim, that women have no characters at all. We find her every where, where she has no business to be; neither saying nor doing any thing of the least consequence, but whimpering and sobbing over the Matrimony in her prayer book, like a great miss from a boarding school; and all this is the more inexcusable, as she is altogether a supernumerary person in the play, who should atone for her intrusion by some brilliancy or novelty of deportment. Matters would have gone on just as well, although she had been left behind at Whitby till after the battle of Flodden; and she is daggled about in the train, first of the Abbess and then of Lord Marmion, for no purpose, that we can see, but to afford the author an opportunity for two or three pages of indifferent description.

Finally, we must object, both on critical and on national grounds, to the discrepancy between the
[Pg 80] title and the substance of the poem, and the neglect of Scotish feelings and Scotish character that is manifested throughout. Marmion is no more a tale of Flodden Field, than of Bosworth Field, or any other field in history. The story is quite independent of the national feuds of the sister kingdoms; and the battle of Flodden has no other connexion with it, than from being the conflict in which the hero loses his life. Flodden, however, is mentioned; and the preparations for Flodden, and the consequences of it, are repeatedly alluded to in the course of the composition. Yet we nowhere find any adequate expressions of those melancholy and patriotic sentiments which are still all over Scotland the accompaniment of those allusions and recollections. No picture is drawn of the national feelings before or after that fatal encounter; and the day that broke for ever the pride and the splendour of his country, is only commemorated by a Scotish poet as the period when an English warrior was beaten to the ground. There is scarcely one trait of true Scotish nationality or patriotism introduced into the whole poem; and Mr Scott's only expression of admiration or love for the beautiful country to which he belongs, is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his Southern favourites. Independently of this, we think that too little pains is taken to distinguish the Scotish character and manners from the English, or to give expression to the general feeling of rivalry and mutual jealousy which at that time existed between the two countries.

If there be any truth in what we have now said, it is evident that the merit of this poem cannot consist in the story. And yet it has very great merit, and various kinds of merit,—both in the picturesque representation of visible objects, in the delineation of manners and characters, and in the description of great and striking events. After having detained the reader so long with our
[Pg 81] own dull remarks, it will be refreshing to him to peruse a few specimens of Mr Scott's more enlivening strains.

[Quotes over six hundred lines of *Marmion* with brief comment.]

The powerful poetry of these passages can receive no illustration from any praises or observations of ours. It is superior, in our apprehension, to all that this author has hitherto produced; and, with a few faults of diction, equal to any thing that has *ever* been written upon similar subjects. Though we have extended our extracts to a very unusual length, in order to do justice to these fine conceptions, we have been obliged to leave out a great deal, which serves in the original to give beauty and effect to what we have actually cited. From the moment the author gets in sight of Flodden Field, indeed, to the end of the poem, there is no tame writing, and no intervention of ordinary passages. He does not once flag or grow tedious; and neither stops to describe dresses and ceremonies, nor to commemorate the harsh names of feudal barons from the Border. There is a flight of five or six hundred lines, in short, in which he never stoops his wing, nor wavers in his course; but carries the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement, than any Epic bard that we can at present remember.

From the contemplation of such distinguished excellence, it is painful to be obliged to turn to the defects and deformities which occur in the same composition. But this, though a less pleasing, is a still more indispensable part of our duty; and one, from the resolute discharge of which, much more beneficial consequences may be expected. In the work which contains the fine passages we have just quoted, and many of nearly equal beauty, there is such a proportion of tedious, hasty,
[Pg 82] and injudicious composition, as makes it questionable with us, whether it is entitled to go down to posterity as a work of classical merit, or whether the author will retain, with another generation, that high reputation which his genius certainly might make coeval with the language. These are the authors, after all, whose faults it is of most consequence to point out; and criticism performs her best and boldest office,—not when she tramples down the weed, or tears up the bramble,—but when she strips the strangling ivy from the oak, or cuts out the canker from the rose. The faults of the fable we have already noticed at sufficient length. Those of the execution we shall now endeavour to enumerate with greater brevity.

And, in the *first* place, we must beg leave to protest, in the name of a very numerous class of readers, against the insufferable number, and length and minuteness of those descriptions of antient dresses and manners, and buildings; and ceremonies, and local superstitions; with which the whole poem is overrun,—which render so many notes necessary, and are, after all, but imperfectly understood by those to whom chivalrous antiquity has not hitherto been an object of peculiar attention. We object to these, and to all such details, because they are, for the most part, without dignity or interest in themselves; because, in a modern author, they are evidently unnatural; and because they must always be strange, and, in a good degree, obscure and unintelligible to ordinary readers.

When a great personage is to be introduced, it is right, perhaps, to give the reader some notion of his external appearance; and when a memorable event is to be narrated, it is natural to help the imagination by some picturesque representation of the scenes with which it is connected. Yet, even upon such occasions, it can seldom be advisable to present the reader with a full inventory
[Pg 83] of the hero's dress, from his shoebuckle to the plume in his cap, or to enumerate all the drawbridges, portcullisses, and diamond cut stones in the castle. Mr Scott, however, not only draws out almost all his pictures in these full dimensions, but frequently introduces those pieces of Flemish or Chinese painting to represent persons who are of no consequence, or places and events which are of no importance to the story. It would be endless to go through the poem for examples of this excess of minute description; we shall merely glance at the First Canto as a specimen. We pass the long description of Lord Marmion himself, with his mail of Milan steel; the blue ribbons on his horse's mane; and his blue velvet housings. We pass also the two gallant squires who ride behind him. But our patience is really exhausted, when we are forced to attend to the black stockings and blue jerkins of the inferior persons in the train, and to the whole process of turning out the guard with advanced arms on entering the castle.

'Four men-at-arms came *at their backs*,
With halberd, bill, and battle-axe:
They bore Lord Marmion's lance so strong,
And led his sumpter mules along,
And ambling palfrey, *when at need*
Him listed ease his battle-steed.
The last, and trustiest of the four,
On high his forky pennon bore;
Like swallow's tail, in shape and hue,
Flutter'd the streamer glossy blue,
Where, blazoned sable, as before,
The towering falcon seemed to soar.
Last, twenty yeomen, two and two,
In hosen black, and jerkins blue,
With falcons broider'd on each breast,

Attended on their lord's behest.
[Pg 84] 'Tis meet that I should tell you now,
How fairly armed, and ordered how,
The soldiers of the guard,
With musquet, pike, and morion,
To welcome noble Marmion,
Stood in the Castle-yard;
Minstrels and trumpeters were there,
The gunner held his *linstock yare*,
For welcome-shot prepared—

The guards their morrice pikes advanced,
The trumpets flourished brave,
The cannon from the ramparts glanced,
And thundering welcome gave.

Two pursuivants, whom tabards deck,
With silver scutcheon round their neck,
Stood on the steps of stone,
By which you reach the Donjon gate,
And there, with herald pomp and state,
They hailed Lord Marmion.
And he, their courtesy to requite,
Gave them a chain of twelve marks weight,
All as he lighted down.' p. 29-32.

Sir Hugh the Heron then orders supper—

'Now broach ye a pipe of Malvoisie,
Bring pasties of the doe.'

—And after the repast is concluded, they have some mulled wine, and drink good night very ceremoniously.

'Lord Marmion drank a fair good rest,
The Captain pledged his noble guest,
The cup went round among the rest.'

In the morning, again, we are informed that they had prayers, and that knight and squire

——'broke their fast
On rich substantial repast.'
'Then came the stirrup-cup in course,' &c., &c.

[Pg 85] And thus a whole Canto is filled up with the account of a visit and a supper, which lead to no consequences whatever, and are not attended with any circumstances which must not have occurred at every visit and supper among persons of the same rank at that period. Now, we are really at a loss to know, why the mere circumstance of a moderate antiquity should be supposed so far to ennoble those details, as to entitle them to a place in poetry, which certainly never could be claimed for a description of more modern adventures. Nobody, we believe, would be bold enough to introduce into a serious poem a description of the hussar boots and gold epaulets of a commander in chief, and much less to particularize the liveries and canes of his servants, or the order and array of a grand dinner, given even to the cabinet ministers. Yet these things are, in their own nature, fully as picturesque, and as interesting, as the ribbons at the mane of Lord Marmion's horse, or his supper and breakfast at the castle of Norham. We are glad, indeed, to find these little details in *old* books, whether in prose or verse, because they are there authentic and valuable documents of the usages and modes of life of our ancestors; and we are thankful when we light upon this sort of information in an antient romance, which commonly contains matter much more tedious. Even there, however, we smile at the simplicity which could mistake such naked enumerations for poetical description; and reckon them as nearly on a level, in point of taste, with the theological disputations that are sometimes introduced in the same meritorious compositions. In a *modern* romance, however, these details being no longer authentic, are of no value in point of information; and as the author has no claim to indulgence on the ground of simplicity, the smile which his predecessors excited is in some danger of being turned into a
[Pg 86] yawn. If he wishes sincerely to follow their example, he should describe the manners of his own time, and not of theirs. They painted from observation, and not from study; and the familiarity and *naïveté* of their delineations, transcribed with a slovenly and hasty hand from what they saw daily before them, is as remote as possible from the elaborate pictures extracted by a modern imitator from black-letter books, and coloured, not from the life, but from learned theories, or at best from mouldy monkish illuminations, and mutilated fragments of painted glass.

But the times of chivalry, it may be said, were more picturesque than the present times. They are better adapted to poetry; and everything that is associated with them has a certain hold on the imagination, and partakes of the interest of the period. We do not mean utterly to deny this; nor can we stop, at present, to assign exact limits to our assent: but this we will venture to observe, in general, that if it be true that the interest which we take in the contemplation of the chivalrous

era, arises from the dangers and virtues by which it was distinguished,—from the constant hazards in which its warriors passed their days, and the mild and generous valour with which they met those hazards,—joined to the singular contrast which it presented between the ceremonious polish and gallantry of the nobles, and the brutish ignorance of the body of the people:—if these are, as we conceive they are, the sources of the charm which still operates in behalf of the days of knightly adventure, then it should follow, that nothing should interest us, by association with that age, but what serves naturally to bring before us those hazards and that valour, and gallantry, and aristocratical superiority. Any description, or any imitation of the exploits in which those qualities were signalized, will do this most effectually. Battles,—
[Pg 87] tournaments,—penances,—deliverance of damsels,—instalments of knights, &c.—and, intermixed with these, we must admit some description of arms, armorial bearings, castles, battlements, and chapels: but the least and lowest of the whole certainly is the description of servants' liveries, and of the peaceful operations of eating, drinking, and ordinary salutation. These have no sensible connexion with the qualities or peculiarities which have conferred certain poetical privileges on the manners of chivalry. They do not enter either necessarily or naturally into our conception of what is interesting in those manners; and, though protected, by their strangeness, from the ridicule which would infallibly attach to their modern equivalents, are substantially as unpoetic, and as little entitled to indulgence from impartial criticism.

We would extend this censure to a larger proportion of the work before us than we now choose to mention—certainly to all the stupid monkish legends about St Hilda and St Cuthbert—to the ludicrous description of Lord Gifford's habiliments of divination—and to all the various scraps and fragments of antiquarian history and baronial biography, which are scattered profusely through the whole narrative. These we conceive to be put in purely for the sake of displaying the erudition of the author; and poetry, which has no other recommendation, but that the substance of it has been gleaned from rare or obscure books, has, in our estimation, the least of all possible recommendations. Mr Scott's great talents, and the novelty of the style in which his romances are written, have made even these defects acceptable to a considerable part of his readers. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favour; but he ought to know, that this is a taste too evidently unnatural to be long prevalent in
[Pg 88] the modern world. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk, indeed, of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of maintenance, portcullisses, wimples, and we know not what besides; just as they did, in the days of Dr Darwin's popularity, of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away; and if it be now evident to all the world, that Dr Darwin obstructed the extension of his fame, and hastened the extinction of his brilliant reputation, by the pedantry and ostentatious learning of his poems, Mr Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects. The world will never be long pleased with what it does not readily understand; and the poetry which is destined for immortality, should treat only of feelings and events which can be conceived and entered into by readers of all descriptions.

What we have now mentioned is the cardinal fault of the work before us; but it has other faults, of too great magnitude to be passed altogether without notice. There is a debasing lowness and vulgarity in some passages, which we think must be offensive to every reader of delicacy, and which are not, for the most part, redeemed by any vigour or picturesque effect. The venison pasties, we think, are of this description; and this commemoration of Sir Hugh Heron's troopers, who

> 'Have drunk the monks of St Bothan's ale,
> And driven the beeves of Lauderdale;
> Harried the wives of Greenlaw's goods,
> And given them light to set their hoods.' p. 41.

The long account of Friar John, though not without merit, offends in the same sort; nor can we
[Pg 89] easily conceive, how any one could venture, in a serious poem, to speak of

> ——'the wind that blows,
> And *warms itself against his nose*.'

The speeches of squire Blount, too, are a great deal too unpolished for a noble youth aspiring to knighthood. On two occasions, to specify no more, he addresses his brother squire in these cacophonous lines—

> '*St Anton' fire thee!* wilt thou stand
> All day with bonnet in thy hand?'

And,

> '*Stint in thy prate*,' quoth Blount, '*thou'dst best*,
> And listen to our Lord's behest.'

Neither can we be brought to admire the simple dignity of Sir Hugh the Heron, who thus encourageth his nephew,

> ——'*By my fay*,
> Well hast thou spoke—say forth thy say.'

There are other passages in which the flatness and tediousness of the narrative is relieved by no sort of beauty, nor elegance of diction, and which form an extraordinary contrast with the more animated and finished portions of the poem. We shall not afflict our readers with more than one specimen of this falling off. We select it from the Abbess's explanation to De Wilton.

'De Wilton and Lord Marmion wooed
Clara de Clare, of Gloster's blood;
(Idle it were of Whitby's dame,
To say of that same blood I came;)
And once, when jealous rage was high,
Lord Marmion said despiteously,
Wilton was traitor in his heart,
And had made league with Martin Swart,
When he came here on Simnel's part;
And only cowardice did restrain
[Pg 90] His rebel aid on Stokefield's plain,—
And down he threw his glove:—the thing
Was tried, as wont, before the king;
Where frankly did De Wilton own,
That Swart in Guelders he had known;
And that between them then there went
Some scroll of courteous compliment.
For this he to his castle sent;
But when his messenger returned,
Judge how De Wilton's fury burned!
For in his packet there were laid
Letters that claimed disloyal aid,
And proved King Henry's cause betrayed.' p. 272-274.

In some other places, Mr Scott's love of variety has betrayed him into strange imitations. This is evidently formed on the school of Sternhold and Hopkins.

'Of all the palaces so fair,
Built for the royal dwelling,
In Scotland, far beyond compare,
Linlithgow is excelling.'

The following is a sort of mongrel between the same school, and the later one of Mr Wordsworth.

'And Bishop Gawin, as he rose,
Said—Wilton, grieve not for thy woes,
Disgrace, and trouble;
For He, who honour best bestows,
May give thee double.'

There are many other blemishes, both of taste and of diction, which we had marked for reprehension, but now think it unnecessary to specify; and which, with some of those we have mentioned, we are willing to ascribe to the haste in which much of the poem seems evidently to
[Pg 91] have been composed. Mr Scott knows too well what is due to the public, to make any boast of the rapidity with which his works are written; but the dates and the extent of his successive publications show sufficiently how short a time could be devoted to each; and explain, though they do not apologize for, the many imperfections with which they have been suffered to appear. He who writes for immortality should not be sparing of time; and if it be true, that in every thing which has a principle of life, the period of gestation and growth bears some proportion to that of the whole future existence, the author now before us should tremble when he looks back on the miracles of his own facility.

We have dwelt longer on the beauties and defects of this poem, than we are afraid will be agreeable either to the partial or the indifferent; not only because we look upon it as a misapplication, in some degree, of very extraordinary talents, but because we cannot help considering it as the foundation of a new school, which may hereafter occasion no little annoyance both to us and to the public. Mr Scott has hitherto filled the whole stage himself; and the very splendour of his success has probably operated, as yet, rather to deter, than to encourage, the herd of rivals and imitators: but if, by the help of the good parts of his poem, he succeeds in suborning the verdict of the public in favour of the bad parts also, and establishes an indiscriminate taste for chivalrous legends and romances in irregular rhime, he may depend upon having as many copyists as Mrs Radcliffe or Schiller, and upon becoming the founder of a new schism in the catholic poetical church, for which, in spite of all our exertions, there will probably be no cure, but in the extravagance of the last and lowest of its followers. It is for this reason that we conceive it to be our duty to make one strong effort to bring back the great apostle of the
[Pg 92] heresy to the wholesome creed of his instructors, and to stop the insurrection before it becomes desperate and senseless, by persuading the leader to return to his duty and allegiance. We admire Mr Scott's genius as much as any of those who may be misled by its perversion; and, like the curate and the barber in Don Quixote, lament the day when a gentleman of such endowments was corrupted by the wicked tales of knight-errantry and enchantment.

We have left ourselves no room to say any thing of the epistolary effusions which are prefixed to each of the cantos. They certainly are not among the happiest productions of Mr Scott's muse. They want interest in the subjects, and finish in the execution. There is too much of them about the personal and private feelings and affairs of the author; and too much of the remainder about the most trite commonplaces of politics and poetry. There is a good deal of spirit, however, and a good deal of nature intermingled. There is a fine description of St Mary's loch, in that prefixed to the second canto; and a very pleasing representation of the author's early tastes and prejudices, in that prefixed to the third. The last, which is about Christmas, is the worst; though the first, containing a threnody on Nelson, Pitt, and Fox, exhibits a more remarkable failure. We are unwilling to quarrel with a poet on the score of politics; but the manner in which he has chosen to praise the last of these great men, is more likely, we conceive, to give offence to his admirers, than the most direct censure. The only deed for which he is praised, is for having broken off the negotiation for peace; and for this act of firmness, it is added, Heaven rewarded him with a share in the honoured grave of Pitt! It is then said, that his errors should be forgotten, and that he *died* a Briton—a pretty plain insinuation, that, in the author's opinion, he did not live one; and just
[Pg 93]
such an encomium as he himself pronounces over the grave of his villain hero Marmion. There was no need, surely, to pay compliments to ministers or princesses, either in the introduction or in the body of a romance of the 16th century. Yet we have a laboured lamentation over the Duke of Brunswick, in one of the epistles; and in the heart of the poem, a triumphant allusion to the siege of Copenhagen—the last exploit, certainly, of British valour, on which we should have expected a chivalrous poet to found his patriotic gratulations. We have no business, however, on this occasion, with the political creed of the author; and we notice these allusions to objects of temporary interest, chiefly as instances of bad taste, and additional proofs that the author does not always recollect, that a poet should address himself to more than one generation.—*The Edinburgh Review*.

[Pg 94]

George Gordon, Lord Byron

Hours of Idleness: A Series of Poems, Original and Translated. By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor. 8vo. pp. 200. Newark. 1807.

The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his *style*. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case, by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written. Now, the law upon the point of minority, we hold to be perfectly clear. It is a plea available only to the defendant; no plaintiff can offer it as a supplementary ground of action. Thus, if any suit could be brought against Lord Byron, for the purpose of compelling him to put into court a certain quantity of poetry; and if judgment were given against him; it is highly probable that an exception would be taken, were he to deliver *for poetry*, the contents of this volume. To this he might plead *minority*; but as he now makes voluntary tender of the article, he hath no right to sue, on that ground, for the price in good current praise, should the goods be unmarketable. This
[Pg 95]
is our view of the law on the point, and, we dare to say, so will it be ruled. Perhaps, however, in reality, all that he tells us about his youth, is rather with a view to increase our wonder, than to soften our censures. He possibly means to say, 'See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen, and this by one of only sixteen!'—But, alas, we all remember the poetry of Cowley at ten, and Pope at twelve; and so far from hearing, with any degree of surprise, that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college, inclusive, we really believe this to be the most common of all occurrences; that it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

His other plea of privilege, our author rather brings forward in order to wa[i]ve it. He certainly, however, does allude frequently to his family and ancestors—sometimes in poetry, sometimes in notes; and while giving up his claim on the score of rank, he takes care to remember us of Dr Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only, that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our review, beside our desire to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.

With this view, we must beg leave seriously to assure him, that the mere rhyming of the final syllable, even when accompanied by the presence of a certain number of feet,—nay, although (which does not always happen) those feet should scan regularly, and have been all counted accurately upon the fingers,—is not the whole art of poetry. We would entreat him to believe, that a certain portion of liveliness, somewhat of fancy, is necessary to constitute a poem; and that
[Pg 96]
a poem in the present day, to be read, must contain at least one thought, either in a little degree different from the ideas of former writers, or differently expressed. We put it to his candour,

whether there is any thing so deserving the name of poetry in verses like the following, written in 1806, and whether, if a youth of eighteen could say any thing so uninteresting to his ancestors, a youth of nineteen should publish it.

'Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you, adieu!
Abroad, or at home, your remembrance imparting
New courage, he'll think upon glory, and you.

Though a tear dim his eye, at this sad separation,
'Tis nature, not fear, that excites his regret:
Far distant he goes, with the same emulation;
The fame of his fathers he ne'er can forget.

That fame, and that memory, still will he cherish,
He vows, that he ne'er will disgrace your renown;
Like you will he live, or like you will he perish;
When decay'd, may he mingle his dust with your own.' p. 3.

Now we positively do assert, that there is nothing better than these stanzas in the whole compass of the noble minor's volume.

Lord Byron should also have a care of attempting what the greatest poets have done before him, for comparisons (as he must have had occasion to see at his writing-master's) are odious.—Gray's Ode on Eton College, should really have kept out the ten hobbling stanzas 'on a distant view of the village and school of Harrow.'

'Where fancy, yet, joys to retrace the resemblance,
Of comrades, in friendship and mischief allied;
How welcome to me, your ne'er fading remembrance,
Which rests in the bosom, though hope is deny'd.' p. 4.

[Pg 97] In like manner the exquisite lines of Mr Rogers, '*On a Tear*,' might have warned the noble author off those premises, and spared us a whole dozen such stanzas as the following.

'Mild Charity's glow,
To us mortals below,
Shows the soul from barbarity clear;
Compassion will melt,
Where this virtue is felt,
And its dew is diffus'd in a Tear.

The man doom'd to sail,
With the blast of the gale,
Through billows Atlantic to steer,
As he bends o'er the wave,
Which may soon be his grave,
The green sparkles bright with a Tear.' p. 11.

And so of instances in which former poets had failed. Thus, we do not think Lord Byron was made for translating, during his non-age, Adrian's Address to his Soul, when Pope succeeded so indifferently in the attempt. If our readers, however, are of another opinion, they may look at it.

'Ah! gentle, fleeting, wav'ring sprite,
Friend and associate of this clay!
To what unknown region borne,
Wilt thou now wing thy distant flight?
No more, with wonted humour gay,
But pallid, cheerless, and forlorn.' p. 72.

However, be this as it may, we fear his translations and imitations are great favourites with Lord Byron. We have them of all kinds, from Anacreon to Ossian; and, viewing them as school exercises, they may pass. Only, why print them after they have had their day and served their
[Pg 98] turn? And why call the thing in p. 79 a translation, where *two* words (θελο λεγειν) of the original are expanded into four lines, and the other thing in p. 81, where μεσονυχτιοις ποθ' ὁ ραις, is rendered by means of six hobbling verses?—As to his Ossianic poesy, we are not very good judges, being, in truth, so moderately skilled in that species of composition, that we should, in all probability be criticizing some bit of the genuine Macpherson itself, were we to express our opinion of Lord Byron's rhapsodies. *If*, then, the following beginning of a 'Song of bards,' is by his Lordship, we venture to object to it, as far as we can comprehend it. 'What form rises on the roar of clouds, whose dark ghost gleams on the red stream of tempests? His voice rolls on the thunder; 'tis Orla, the brown chief of Otihoma. He was,' &c. After detaining this 'brown chief' some time, the bards conclude by giving him their advice to 'raise his fair locks;' then to 'spread them on the arch of the rainbow;' and 'to smile through the tears of the storm.' Of this kind of thing there are no less than *nine* pages; and we can so far venture an opinion in their favour, that they look very like Macpherson; and we are positive they are pretty nearly as stupid and tiresome.

It is a sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should 'use it as not abusing it;' and particularly one who piques himself (though indeed at the ripe age of nineteen), of being 'an infant bard,'—('The artless Helicon I boast is youth;')—should either not know, or should seem not to know, so much about his own ancestry. Besides a poem above cited on the family seat of the Byrons, we have another of eleven pages, on the self-same subject, introduced with an apology, 'he certainly had no intention of inserting it;' but really, 'the particular request of some
[Pg 99] friends,' &c., &c. It concludes with five stanzas on himself, 'the last and youngest of a noble line.' There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin-y-gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learned that *pibroch* is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle.

As the author has dedicated so large a part of his volume to immortalize his employments at school and college, we cannot possibly dismiss it without presenting the reader with a specimen of these ingenious effusions. In an ode with a Greek motto, called Granta, we have the following magnificent stanzas.

'There, in apartments small and damp,
The candidate for college prizes,
Sits poring by the midnight lamp,
Goes late to bed, yet early rises.

Who reads false quantities in Sele,
Or puzzles o'er the deep triangle;
Depriv'd of many a wholesome meal,
In barbarous Latin doom'd to wrangle.

Renouncing every pleasing page,
From authors of historic use;
Preferring to the lettered sage,
The square of the hypothenuse.

Still harmless are these occupations,
That hurt none but the hapless student,
Compar'd with other recreations
Which bring together the imprudent.' p. 123, 124, 125.

We are sorry to hear so bad an account of the college psalmody as is contained in the following Attic stanzas.

'Our choir would scarcely be excus'd.
Even as a band of new beginners;
All mercy, now, must be refus'd
To such a set of croaking sinners.

[Pg 100] If David, when his toils were ended,
Had heard these blockheads sing before him
To us, his psalms had ne'er descended,
In furious mood, he would have tore 'em.' p. 126, 127.

But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thorough-bred poets; and 'though he once roved a careless mountaineer in the Highlands of Scotland,' he has not of late enjoyed this advantage. Moreover, he expects no profit from his publication; and whether it succeeds or not 'it is highly improbable, from his situation and pursuits hereafter,' that he should again condescend to become an author. Therefore, let us take what we get and be thankful. What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but 'has the sway' of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, let us be thankful; and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth.—*The Edinburgh Review*.

[Pg 101] *Childe Harolde's Pilgrimage. A Romaunt. By* LORD BYRON. The Second Edition. London: Murray, Fleet Street. 1812. 8vo. pp. 300. Price 12s.

If the object of poetry is to instruct by pleasing, then every poetical effort has a double claim upon the attention of the Christian observer. For we are anxious that the world should be instructed at all rates, and that they should be pleased where they innocently may. We are, therefore, by no means among those spectators who view the occasional ascent of a poetic luminary upon the horizon of literature, as a meteoric flash which has no relation to ourselves; but we feel instantly an eager desire to find its altitude, to take its bearings, to trace its course, and to calculate its influence upon surrounding bodies. When especially it is no more an "oaten reed" that is blown; or a "simple shepherd" who blows it; but when the song involves many high and solemn feelings, and a man of rank and notoriety strikes his golden harp, we feel, at once, that the increased influence of the song demands the more rigid scrutiny of the critic.

Lord Byron is the author, beside the book before us, of a small volume of poems, which gave little promise, we think, of the present work; and of a satyrical poem, which, as far as temper is concerned, did give some promise of it. It had pleased more than one critic to treat his Lordship's first work in no very courtier-like manner; and especially the Lion of the north had let him feel the lashing of his angry tail. Not of a temperament to bear calmly even a "look that threatened him with insult," his Lordship seized the tomahawk of satire, mounted the fiery wings of his
[Pg 102] muse, and, like Bonaparte, spared neither rank, nor sex, nor age, but converted the republic of letters into one universal field of carnage. The volume called English Bards and Scotch Reviewers is, in short, to be considered, among other works, as one of those playful vessels which are said to have accompanied the Spanish armada, manned by executioners, and loaded with nothing but instruments of torture.

This second work was of too sanguinary a complexion to beget a very pleasant impression upon the public mind; and all men, who wished well to peace, politeness and literature, joined in the pæan sung by the immediate victims of his Lordship's wrath, when he embarked to soften his manners, and, as it were, oil his tempers, amidst the gentler spirits of more southern climes. Travelling, indeed, through any climes, may be expected to exert this mitigating influence upon the mind. Nature is so truly gentle, or, to speak more justly, the God of nature displays so expansive a benevolence in all his works; so prodigally sheds his blessings "upon the evil and the good;" builds up so many exquisite fabrics to delight the eyes of his creatures; tinges the flowers with such colours, and fills the grove with such music; that anyone who becomes familiar with nature, can scarcely remain angry with man. With what mitigating touches the scenery of Europe has visited our author, remains to be seen. That he did not disarm it of its force by regarding it with a cold or contemptuous eye, he himself teaches us—

> "Dear Nature is the kindest mother still,
> Though always changing in her aspect mild;
> From her bare bosom let me take my fill,
> Her never-weaned, though not her favoured child.
> O she is fairest in her features wild,
> Where nothing polished dares pollute her path;
> To me by day or night she ever smiled,
> [Pg 103] Though I have marked her when none other hath,
> And sought her more and more, and loved her most in wrath." p. 79.

Our author having re-landed upon his native shores, his first deed is to present to his country the work before us, as the fruits of his travels. It is a kind of poetical journal of journeys and voyages through Spain and Portugal, along the shores of the Mediterranean and Archipelago, and through the states of ancient Greece. When we speak of journal, we mean rather to designate the topics of the work than the manner of its execution; for it is highly poetical. Most contrary to the spirit of those less fanciful records, his Lordship sublimely discards all facts and histories; all incidents; A.M. and P.M.; and bad inns and worse winds; and battles and feasts. Seizing merely upon the picturesque features in every object and event before him, he paints and records them with such reflections, moral or immoral, as arise in his ardent mind.

The "Childe Harolde" is the traveller; and as he is a mighty surly fellow, neither loves nor is loved by any one; "through sin's long labyrinth had run, nor made atonement when he did amiss;" as, moreover, he is licentious and sceptical; Lord Byron very naturally, and creditably to himself, sets out in his Preface with disclaiming any connection with this imaginary personage. It is somewhat singular, however, that most of the offensive reflections in the poem are made, not by the "Childe," but the poet.

[Here follows a summary of the two cantos, with extensive quotations.]

Having by these extracts endeavoured to put our readers in possession of some of the finest parts
[Pg 104] of this poem, and also of those passages which determine its moral complexion, we shall proceed to offer a few remarks upon its character and pretensions in both points of view.

The poem is in the stanza of Spenser—a stanza of which we think it difficult to say whether the excellencies or defects are the greatest. The paramount advantage is the variety of tone and pause of which it admits. The great disadvantages are, the constraint of such complicated rhymes, and the long suspension of the sense, especially in the latter half of the stanza. The noblest conception and most brilliant diction must be sacrificed, if four words in one place, and three in another cannot be found rhyming to each other. And as to the suspension of the sense, we are persuaded that no man reads a single stanza without feeling a sort of strain upon the intellect and lungs—a kind of suffocation of mind and body, before he can either discover the lingering meaning, or pronounce the nine lines. To us, we confess that the rhyming couplets of Mr. Scott, sometimes deviating into alternate rhymes, are, on both accounts, infinitely preferable. One of the ends of poetry is to relax, and the artificial and elaborate stanza of Spenser costs us too much trouble, even in the reading, to accomplish this end. To effect this, the sense should come to us, instead of our going far and wide in quest of the sense. In our conception also, the heroic line of ten syllables, though favourable to the most dignified order of poetry, appears to limp when forced into the service of sonneteers: and poems in the metre before us, are, after all, little better than a string of sonnets; of which it is the constituent principle to be rather pretty than grand—rather tender than martial—rather conceited than wise—to keep the sense suspended for eight lines, and to discharge it with a point in the ninth. These observations are by
[Pg 105] no means designed to apply especially to the author—the extreme gravity of whose general

manner and matter, in a measure covet the dignity of the heroic line. But it is this discordancy of measure and subject, together with the obviously laboured rhymes and the halting of the sense, which in general, we think, have shut out the Spenserian school from popular reading, and have caused a distinguished critic[J] to say, that the "Faiery Queen will not often be read through;" and that, although it maintains its place upon the shelf, it is seldom found on the table of the modern library.

Whilst, however, Lord Byron participates in this defect of his great original, he is to be congratulated, as a poet, but alas! in his poetical character alone, on much happy deviation from him. In the first place, he has altogether washed his hands of allegory; a species of fiction open to a thousand objections. In the next place, he is infinitely more brief than his prototype. And in the third place, he philosophizes and moralizes (though not indeed in a very sound strain), as well as paints—provides food for the mind as well as the eye—kindles the feeling as well as gratifies the sense. Thus far, then, we are among the admirers of his Lordship. But it is to be lamented, that what was well conceived is, from the temperament of his mind, ill executed; that his philosophy is, strictly speaking, "only philosophy so called;" that the moral emotions he feels, and is likely to communicate, are of a character rather to offend and pollute the mind, than to sooth or to improve it. This defect, however, we fear, is to be charged, not upon the poet, but upon the man, at least upon his principles. But, whatever be the cause, the consequences are dreadful. Indeed, we do not hesitate to say, that the temperament of his mind is the ruin of his poem. We shall take
[Pg 106] the liberty, as we have intimated, of touching upon these defects as moral delinquincies, under another head; but for the present we wish to notice them merely as poetical errors.

The legitimate object, then, of poetry, as we have said, is to *instruct* by *pleasing*; and, cæteris paribus, that poem is the best which conveys the noblest lessons in the most attractive form. If, in reply to this, it is urged that the heathen poets, and especially Homer, taught no lesson to his readers; we answer, that he taught all the lessons which, in his own days, were deemed of highest importance to his country. The first object of philosophers and other teachers, in those days, was to make good soldiers, and therefore to condemn the vices which interfered with successful warfare. Now be it remembered, that the grand topic of the Iliad is the fatal influence of the wrath of kings on the success of armies. Its first words are MHNIN αειδε. Besides this, the Iliad upholds the national mythology, or the only accredited religion; and by a bold fiction, bordering upon truth, displays in an Elysium and Tartarus, the eternal mansions of the good and bad, the strongest incentive to virtue and penalty to vice. Indeed, that both this and the Odyssey had a moral object, and that this object was recognized by the ancients, may be inferred from Horace, who says of Homer, in reference to the first poem:

> "Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
> Plenius ac melius Chrysippo aut Crantore dicit."

And as to the second:

> "Rursum—quid virtus, et quid sapientia possit,
> Utile proposuit nobis exemplar Ulyssem." Epist. I. 2.

Many of the Odes of Horace had a patriotic subject—his Epistles and Satires, with those of
[Pg 107] Juvenal and Persius, were the sermons of the day. Virgil chiefly proposed to himself to exalt in his hero the character of a patriot, and, in his fictitious history, the dignity of his country. If the lessons they taught were of small importance or doubtful value, or if they often forget to "teach" in their ambition to "please," this is to be charged rather on the age than on the poet. They taught the best lessons they knew; and were satisfied to please only when they had nothing better to do. In modern times, it will not be questioned that the greatest poets have ever endeavoured to enshrine some moral or intellectual object in their verse. Milton calls Spenser "our sage serious Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." In like manner, the Absalom and Achitophel, the Hind and Panther of Dryden, the philosophic strain of Pope, the immortal page of Milton, and the half-inspired numbers of the Task, are all, in their various ways, attempts of poets to improve or reform the world. Every species of poetry, indeed, has received fresh lustre, and even taken a new place in Parnassian dignity, by a larger infusion of moral sentiment into its numbers. The ancient ballad has arisen to new dignity through the moral touches, we wish they had been less rare, of a Scott; and the stanza of Spenser has acquired new interest in the hands of Lord Byron, from the philosophical air which it wears. Numbers without morals are the man without "the glory." We sincerely wish that the moral tone of his Lordship's poem had been less liable to exception.

His Lordship, we believe, is acquainted with ancient authors. Let him turn to Quinctilian, and he will find a whole chapter to prove that a great writer must be a good man. Let him go to
[Pg 108] Longinus, and he will read that a man who would write sublimely, "must spare no labour to educate his soul to grandeur, and impregnate it with great and generous ideas"—that "the faculties of the soul will then grow stupid, their spirit will be lost, and good sense and genius lie in ruins, when the care and study of man is engaged about the mortal, the worthless part of himself, and he has ceased to cultivate virtue, and polish his nobler part, his soul." Or, if poetical authority alone will satisfy a poet, let him learn from one of the finest of our modern poems:

> "But of our souls the high-born loftier part,
> Th' ethereal energies that touch the heart,
> Conceptions ardent, laboring thought intense,

Creative fancy's wild magnificence,
And all the dread sublimities of song:
These, Virtue, these to thee alone belong:
Chill'd, by the breath of vice, their radiance dies,
And brightest burns when lighted at the skies:
Like vestal flames to purest bosoms given,
And kindled only by a ray from heaven."[K]

That the object of poetry, however, is not simply to instruct, but to "instruct by *pleasing*," is too obvious to need a proof. However the original object of measure and rhythm may have been to graft truth on the memory, and associate it with music; they are perpetuated by the universal conviction that they delight the ear. Like the armour which adorns the modern hall, they were contrived for use, but are continued for ornament.

Assuming this, then, to be a just definition of poetry, we repeat our assertion, that, in the work before us, the temperament of mind in the poet creates the grand defect of the poetry. If poetry should instruct, then he is a defective poet whose lessons rather revolt than improve the mind. If
[Pg 109] poetry should please, then he is a bad poet who offends the eye by calling up the most hideous images—who shews the world through a discoloured medium—who warms the heart by no generous feelings—who uniformly turns to us the worst side of men and things—who goes on his way grumbling, and labours hard to make his readers as peevish and wretched as himself. The tendency of the strain of Homer is to transform us for the moment into heroes; of Cowper, into saints; of Milton, into angels: but Lord Byron would almost degrade us into a Thersites or a Caliban; or lodge us, as fellow-grumblers, in the style of Diogenes, or any of his two or four-footed snarling or moody posterity. Now his Lordship, we trust, is accessible upon much higher grounds; but he will perceive that mere regard for his poetical reputation ought to induce him to change his manner. If, as Longinus instructs us, a man must feel sublimely to write sublimely, a poet must find pleasure in the objects of nature before him, if he hope to give pleasure to others. Let him remember, that not merely his conceptions, but his mind and character are to be imparted to us in his verse. He will, in a measure, "stamp an image of himself!" The fire with which we are to glow must issue from him. Till this change take place in him, then, he can be no great poet. It is Heraclitus who mourns in his pages, or Zeno who scolds, or Zoilus who lashes; but we look in vain for the poet, for the living fountain of our innocent pleasures, for the artificer of our literary delight, for the hand which, as by enchantment, snatches us from the little cares of life, whirls us into the boundless regions of imagination, "exhausting" one "world," and imagining
[Pg 110] others, to supply pictures which may refresh and charm the mind.[L] Lord Byron shews us man and nature, like the phantasmagoria, *in shade*; whereas, in poetry at least, we desire to see them illuminated by all the friendly rays which a benevolent imagination can impart.

We have hitherto confined ourselves to an examination of the influence of the principles and temper of this work upon its literary pretensions; but his Lordship will forgive us if we now put off the mere critic for a moment, and address him in that graver character which we assume to ourselves in the title of our work. In truth, we are deeply affected by the spectacle his poem presents to us. As the minor poems at the conclusion of the work breathe the same spirit, suggest the same doubts, and employ the same language with the "Childe Harold" we are compelled to recognise the author in the hero whom he has painted. In fact, the disclaimer, already noticed in the Preface, seems merely like one of those veils worn to draw attention to the face rather than to baffle it: and in the work before us we are forced to recognise a character, which, since Rousseau gave his Confessions to the public, has scarcely ever, we think, darkened the horizon of letters. The reader of the "Confessions" is dismayed to find a man frankly avowing the most disgraceful vices; abandoning them, not upon principle, but merely because they have ceased to gratify; prepared to return to them if they promise to reward him better; without natural affection, neither loving, nor beloved by any; without peace, without hope, "without God in the world." When we search into the mysterious cause of this autobiographical phenomenon, we at once discover that Rousseau's immeasurable vanity betrayed him into a belief, that even his vices would vanish in the blaze of his excellencies; and that the world would worship him, as idolaters
[Pg 111] do their mishapen gods, in spite of their ugliness. The confessions of Lord Byron, we regret to say, bear something of an analogy to those of the philosopher of Geneva. Are they, then, to be traced to the *same source*? He plainly is far from indifferent to the opinion of by-standers: can he, then, conceive that this peep into the window of his breast must not revolt every virtuous eye? Can he boldly proclaim his violations of decency and of sobriety; his common contempt for all modifications of religion; his monstrous belief in the universal rest or annihilation of man in a future state; and forget that he is one of those who

"Play such tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep;"

as offend against all moral taste; as attempt to shake the very pillars of domestic happiness and of public security?

It is, however, a matter of congratulation, that his Lordship, in common with the republican Confessor, has not revealed his creed without very honestly displaying the influence of this creed upon his own mind. We should not, indeed, have credited a man of his sentiments, had he assured us he was happy: happiness takes no root in such soils. But it is still better to have his own testimony to the unmixed misery of licentiousness and unbelief. It is almost comforting to be told, if we dared to draw comfort out of the well of another man's miseries, that

"Though gay companions o'er the bowl
Dispel awhile the sense of ill;
Though pleasure fires the maddening soul,
The heart—the heart is lonely still."

It is consolatory also to contrast the peace and triumph of the dying Christian, with the awful
[Pg 112] uncertainty, or rather the sullen despair, which breathe in these verses.

"'Aye—but to die and go'—alas,
Where all have gone, and all must go;
To be the nothing that I was,
Ere born to life and living woe.

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o'er thy days from anguish free;
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better not to be."

Nor can religion be more powerfully recommended than by the following avowal of an apostle of the opposite system.

"No, for myself, so dark my fate
Through every turn of life has been,
Man and the world I so much hate,
I care not when I quit the scene."

But whilst, for the benefit of others, we thus avail ourselves of the antidote supplied by his Lordship to his own poison, we would wish also that he might feel the efficacy of it himself. Could we hope that so humble a work as this would reach the lofty sphere in which he moves, we would solemnly say to him: "You are wretched, but will nothing make you happy? You hate all men; will nothing warm you with new feelings? You are (as you say) hated by all; will nothing make you an object of affection? Suppose yourself the victim of some disease, which resisted many ordinary applications; but that all who used one medicine uniformly pronounced themselves cured:—would it be worthy of a philosopher not merely to neglect the remedy, but to traduce it? Such, however, my Lord, is the fatuity of your own conduct as to the religion of Christ. Thousands, as wretched as yourself, have found 'a Comforter' in Him; thousands, having stepped into these waters, have
[Pg 113] been healed of their disease; thousands, touching the hem of His garment, have found 'virtue go out of it.' Beggared then of every other resource, try this. 'Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace.'" His Lordship may designate this language by that expressive monosyllable, cant; and may possibly, before long, hunt us down, as a sort of mad March hare, with the blood-hounds of his angry muse. But we hope better things of him. We assure him, that, whatever may be true of others, we do not "hate him." As Christians, even he who professes to be unchristian is dear to us. We regard the waste of his fine talents, and the laboured suppression and apparent extinction of his better feelings, with the deepest commiseration and sorrow. We long to see him escape from the black cloud which, by what may fairly be called his "black art," he has conjured up around himself. We hope to know him as a future buttress of his shaken country, and as a friend of his yet "unknown God." Should this change, by the mercy of God, take place, what pangs would many passages of his present work cost him! Happy should we be, could we persuade him, in the bare anticipation of such a change, even now to contrive for his future happiness, by expunging sentiments that would then so much embitter it. Should he never change; yet, such an act would prove, that, at least, he meditated no cruel invasion upon the joys of others. Even Rousseau taught his child religion, as a delusion essential to happiness. The philosophic Tully also, if a belief in futurity were an error, deemed it one with which it was impossible to part. Let the author then, at all events, leave us in unmolested possession of our supposed privileges. *He* plainly knows no noble or "royal way" to happiness. *We* find in religion a bark that rides the waves in every storm; a sun that never goes down; a living fountain of waters. Religion is suffered
[Pg 114] to change its aspect and influence according to the eye and faith of the examiner. Like one side of the pillar of the wilderness, it may merely darken and perplex his Lordship's path: to millions it is like the opposite side of that pillar to the Israelites, the symbol of Deity; the pillar of hallowed flame, which lights and guides, and cheers them as they toil onward through the pilgrimage of life. Could we hear any voice proclaim of him, as of one reclaimed from as inveterate, though more honest, prejudices, "behold, he prayeth;" we should hope that here also the scales would drop from the eyes, and his Lordship become an eloquent defender and promulgator of the religion which he now scorns.—*The Christian Observer*.

[Pg 115]

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude; and other Poems. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. Crown 8vo. pp. 101. Baldwin, and Co. 1816.

We must candidly own that these poems are beyond our comprehension; and we did not obtain a clue to their sublime obscurity, till an address to Mr. Wordsworth explained in what school the

author had formed his taste. We perceive, through the "darkness visible" in which Mr. Shelley veils his subject, some beautiful imagery and poetical expressions: but he appears to be a poet "whose eye, in a fine phrenzy rolling," seeks only such objects as are "above this visible diurnal sphere;" and therefore we entreat him, for the sake of his reviewers as well as of his other readers, (if he has any,) to subjoin to his next publication an *ordo*, a glossary, and copious notes, illustrative of his allusions and explanatory of his meaning.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 116]

The Cenci. A Tragedy, in Five Acts. By PERCY BYSSHE SHELL[E]Y. Italy. 1819. pp. 104.

There has lately arisen a new-fangled style of poetry, facetiously yclept the Cockney School, that it would really be worth any one's while to enter as a candidate. The qualifications are so easy, that he need never doubt the chance of his success, for he has only to knock, and it shall be opened unto him. The principal requisites for admission, in a literary point of view, are as follows. First, an inordinate share of affectation and conceit, with a few occasional good things sprinkled, like green spots of verdure in a wilderness, with a "parcâ quod satis est manu." Secondly, a prodigious quantity of assurance, that neither God nor man can daunt, founded on the honest principle of "who is like unto me?" and lastly, a contempt for all institutions, moral and divine, with secret yearnings for aught that is degrading to human nature, or revolting to decency. These qualifications ensured, a regular initiation into the Cockney mysteries follows as a matter of course, and the novice enlists himself under their banners, proud of his newly-acquired honors, and starched up to the very throat in all the prim stiffness of his intellect. A few symptoms of this literary malady appeared as early as the year 1795, but it then assumed the guise of simplicity and pathos. It was a poetical Lord Fanny. It wept its pretty self to death by murmuring brooks, and rippling cascades, it heaved delicious sighs over sentimental lambs, and love-lorn sheep, apostrophized donkies in the innocence of primæval nature; sung tender songs to tender
[Pg 117] nightingales; went to bed without a candle, that it might gaze on the chubby faces of the stars; discoursed sweet nothings to all who would listen to its nonsense; and displayed (*horrendum dictu*) the acute profundity of its grief in ponderous folios and spiral duodecimos. The literary world, little suspecting the dangerous consequences of this distressing malady, suffered it to germinate in silence; and not until they became thoroughly convinced that the disorder was of an epidemical nature, did they start from their long continued lethargy. But it was then too late! The evil was incurable; it branched out into the most vigorous ramifications, and following the scriptural admonition, "Increase and multiply," disseminated its poetry and its prose throughout a great part of England. As a dog, when once completely mad, is never satisfied until he has bitten half a dozen more, so the Cockney professors, in laudable zeal for the propagation of their creed, were never at rest until they had spread their own doctrines around them. They stood on the house tops and preached, 'till of a verity they were black in the face with the heating quality of their arguments; they stationed themselves by the bye roads and hedges, to discuss the beauties of the country; they looked out from their garrett [*sic*] windows in Grub-street, and exclaimed, "*O! rus, quando ego te aspiciam*;" and gave such afflicting tokens of insanity, that the different reviewers and satirists of the day kindly laced them in the strait jackets of their criticism. "But all this availeth *us* nothing," exclaimed the critics, "so long as *we* see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the gate of the Temple; that is to say, as long as there is one Cockney pericranium left unscalped by the tomahawks of our satire." But notwithstanding the strenuous exertions of all those whose brains have not been cast in the mould of this new species of intellectual dandyism, the evil has been daily and even hourly increasing; and so prodigious is the
[Pg 118] progressive ratio of its march, that the *worthy* Society for the Suppression of Vice should be called upon to eradicate it. It now no longer masks its real intentions under affected purity of sentiment; its countenance has recently acquired a considerable addition of brass, the glitter of which has often been mistaken for sterling coin, and incest, adultery, murder, blasphemy, are among other favorite topics of its discussion. It seems to delight in an utter perversion of all moral, intellectual, and religious qualities. It gluts over the monstrous deformities of nature; finds gratification in proportion to the magnitude of the crime it extolls; and sees no virtue but in vice; no sin, but in true feeling. Like poor Tom, in Lear, whom the foul fiend has possessed for many a day, it will run through ditches, through quagmires, and through bogs, to see a man stand on his head for the exact space of half an hour. Ask the reason of this raging appetite for eccentricity, the answer is, such a thing is out of the beaten track of manhood, *ergo*, it is praiseworthy.

Among the professors of the Cockney school, Mr. Percy Bysshe Shell[e]y is one of the most conspicuous. With more fervid imagination and splendid talents than nine-tenths of the community, he yet prostitutes those talents by the utter degradation to which he unequivocally consigns them. His Rosalind and Helen, his Revolt of Islam, and his Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude, while they possess beauties of a superior order, are lamentably deficient in morality and religion. The doctrines they inculcate are of the most evil tendency; the characters they depict are of the most horrible description; but in the midst of these disgraceful passages, there are beauties of such exquisite, such redeeming qualities, that we adore while we pity—we admire
[Pg 119] while we execrate—and are tempted to exclaim with the last of the Romans, "Oh! what a fall is *here*, my countrymen." In the modern Eclogue of Rosalind and Helen in particular, there is a pensive sadness, a delicious melancholy, nurst in the purest, the deepest recesses of the heart, and springing up like a fountain in the desert, that pervades the poem, and forms its principal attraction. The rich yet delicate imagery that is every where scattered over it, is like the glowing splendor of the setting sun, when he retires to rest, amid the blessings of exulting nature. It is the balmy breath of the summer breeze, the twilight's last and holiest sigh. In the dramatic poem

before us, the interest is of a different nature; it is dark—wild, and unearthly. The characters that appear in it are of no mortal stamp; they are dæmons in human guise, inscrutable in their actions, subtle in their revenge. Each has his smile of awful meaning—his purport of hellish tendency. The tempest that rages in his bosom is irrepressible but by death. The phrenzied groan that diseased imagination extorts from his perverted soul, is as the thunder-clap that reverberates amid the cloud-capt summits of the Alps. It is the storm that convulses all nature—that lays bare the face of heaven, and gives transient glimpses of destruction yet to be. Then in the midst of all these accumulated horrors comes the gentle Beatrice,

> "Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
> Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
> A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
> With needless tears." Page 50.

She walks in the light of innocence; in the unclouded sunshine of loveliness and modesty; but her felicity is transient as the calm that precedes the tempest; and in the very whispers of her virtue,
[Pg 120] you hear the indistinct muttering of the distant thunder. She is conceived in the true master spirit of genius; and in the very instant of her parricide, comes home to our imagination fresh in the spring time of innocence—hallowed in the deepest recesses of melancholy. But notwithstanding all these transcendant qualities, there are numerous passages that warrant our introductory observations respecting the Cockney school, and plunge "full fathom five," into the profoundest depths of the Bathos. While, therefore, we do justice to the abilities of the author, we shall bestow a passing smile or two on his unfortunate Cockney propensities.

The following are the principal incidents of the play. Count Cenci, the *dæmon* of the piece, delighted with the intelligence of the death of two of his sons, recounts at a large assembly, specially invited for the purpose, the circumstances of the dreadful transaction. Lucretia, his wife, Beatrice, his daughter, and the other guests, are of course startled at his transports; but when they hear his awful imprecations,

> "Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendor leaps
> And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
> Under the lamp light, as my spirits do,
> To hear the death of my accursed sons!
> Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
> Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
> And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
> Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
> Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
> And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
> Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
> Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy
> And I will taste no other wine tonight—"

their horror induces them to leave the room. Beatrice, in the meantime, who has been rating her
[Pg 121] parent for his cruelty, is subjected to every species of insult; and he sends her to her own apartment, with the hellish intention of prostituting her innocence, and contaminating, as he pithily expresses it, "both body and soul." The second act introduces us to a tête-a-tête between Bernardo (another of Cenci's sons) and Lucretia; when their conference is suddenly broken off, by the abrupt entrance of Beatrice, who has escaped from the pursuit of the Count. She recapitulates the injuries she has received from her father, the most atrocious of which appear to be, that he has given them all "ditch water" to drink, and "buffalos" to eat. But before we proceed further, we have a word or two respecting this same ditch water, and buffalo's flesh, which we shall mention, as a piece of advice to the author. It is well known, we believe, in a case of lunacy, that the first thing considered is, whether the patient has done any thing sufficiently foolish, to induce his relatives to apply for a statute against him: now any malicious, evil-minded person, were he so disposed, might make successful application to the court against the luckless author of the *Cenci, a tragedy in five acts*. Upon which the judge with all the solemnity suitable to so melancholy a circumstance as the decay of the mental faculties, would ask for proofs of the defendant's lunacy; upon which the plaintiff would produce the affecting episode of the ditch water and buffalo flesh; upon which the judge would shake his head, and acknowledge the insanity; upon which the defendant would be incarcerated in Bedlam.

To return from this digression, we are next introduced to Giacomo, another of Cenci's hopeful progeny, who, like the rest, has a dreadful tale to unfold of his father's cruelty towards him. Orsino, the favored lover of Beatrice, enters at the moment of his irritation; and by the most
[Pg 122] artful pleading ultimately incites him to the murder of his father, in which he is to be joined by the rest of the family. The plot, after one unlucky attempt, succeeds; and at the moment of its accomplishment, is discovered by a messenger, who is despatched to the lonely castle of Petrella (one of the Count's family residences), with a summons of attendance from the Pope. We need hardly say that the criminals are condemned; and not even the lovely Beatrice is able to escape the punishment of the law. The agitation she experiences after the commission of the incest, is powerfully descriptive.

> "How comes this hair undone?
> Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,

And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels—My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel pits! Pah! I am choaked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!"

At first she concludes that she is mad; but then pathetically checks herself by saying, "No, I am dead." Lucretia naturally enough inquires into the cause of her disquietude, and but too soon discovers, by the broken hints of the victim, the source of her mental agitation. Terrified at their defenceless state, they then mutually conspire with Orsino against the Count; and Beatrice
[Pg 123] proposes to way-lay him (a plot, however, which fails) in a *deep and dark ravine*, as he journeys to Petrella.

"But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulph, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life; yet clinging, leans;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall: beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns—below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noon day here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night."

Giacomo, meanwhile, who was privy to the transaction, awaits the arrival of Orsino, with intelligence of the murder, in a state of the most fearful torture and suspence.

"Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.
(*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*)
What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. O,
[Pg 124] Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, thou wouldst fail and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands

Naked before Heaven's judgment seat!
(*a bell strikes*)
One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and when my hairs are white
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus.
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet—'tis Orsino's step."

We envy not the feelings of any one who can read the curses that Cenci invokes on his daughter, when she refuses to repeat her guilt, without the strongest disgust, notwithstanding the intense vigor of the imprecations

"*Cen.* (*Kneeling*) God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If nursed by thy selectest dew of love
[Pg 125] Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathed lameness! All beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!
Lucr. Peace! Peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants he punishes such prayers.
Cen. (*Leaping up, and throwing his right hand toward Heaven*)
He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child—
Lucr. Horrible thought!
Cen. That if she ever have a child; and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and encrease
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! May it be
A hideous likeness of herself, that as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery:
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural.
So he may hunt her thro' the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in Heaven.
(*Exit* Lucretia.)
[Pg 126] I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy."

Ohé! jam satis est!!—The *minutiæ* of this *affectionate* parent's curses forcibly remind us of the

equally minute excommunication so admirably recorded in Tristram Shandy. But Sterne has the start of him; for though Percy Bysshe Shell[e]y, Esquire, has contrived to include in the imprecations of Cenci, the eyes, head, lips, and limbs of his daughter, the other has anticipated his measures, in formally and specifically anathematizing the lights, lungs, liver, and *all odd joints*, without excepting even the great toe of his victim.—To proceed in our review; the dying expostulations of poor Beatrice, are beautiful and affecting, though occasionally tinged with the Cockney style of burlesque; for instance, Bernado asks, when they tear him from the embraces of his sister,

"Would ye divide body from soul?"

On which the judge sturdily replies—"That is the headsman's business." The idea of approaching execution paralyses the soul of Beatrice, and she thus frantically expresses her horror.

"*Beatr.* (*Wildly*) Oh,
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
[Pg 127] Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost.
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be—
What? O, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be—my father's spirit
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!"

The author, in his preface, observes that he has committed only one plagiarism in his play. But with all the triumph of vanity, we here stoutly convict him of having wilfully, maliciously and despitefully stolen, the pleasing idea of the repetition of "down, down, down," from the equally pathetic and instructive ditty of "up, up, up," in Tom Thumb; the exordium or prolegomena to which floweth *sweetly* and *poetically* thus:—

"Here we go up, up, up,
And here we go *down, down, down*!"

In taking leave of Mr. Shelley, we have a few observations to whisper in his ear. That he has the seedlings of poetry in his composition no one can deny, after the perusal of many of our extracts; that he employs them worthily, is more than can be advanced. His style, though disgraced by occasional puerilities, and simpering affectations, is in general bold, vigorous, and manly; but the
[Pg 128] disgraceful fault to which we object in his writings, is the scorn he every where evinces for all that is moral or religious. If he must be skeptical—if he must be lax in his human codes of excellence, let him be so; but in God's name let him not publish his principles, and cram them down the throats of others. Existence in its present state is heavy enough; and if we take away the idea of eternal happiness, however visionary it may appear to some, who or what is to recompence us for the loss we have sustained? Will scepticism lighten the bed of death?—Will vice soothe the pillow of declining age? If so! let us all be sceptics, let us all be vicious; but until their admirable efficacy is proved, let us jog on the beaten course of life, neither influenced by the scoff of infidelity, nor fascinated by the dazzling but flimsy garb of licentiousness and immorality.—*The London Magazine*.

[Pg 129]

ADONAIS. *An Elegy, on the Death of Mr. John Keats*. By P.B. Shelley.

We have already given some of our columns to this writer's merits, and we will not now repeat our convictions of his incurable absurdity. On the last occasion of our alluding to him, we were compelled to notice his horrid licentiousness and profaneness, his fearful offences to all the maxims that honorable minds are in the habit of respecting, and his plain defiance of Christianity. On the present occasion we are not met by so continued and regular a determination of insult, though there are atrocities to be found in the poem quite enough to make us caution our readers against its pages. Adonais is an elegy after *the manner of Moschus*, on a foolish young man, who, after writing some volumes of very weak, and, in the greater part, of very indecent poetry, died some time since of a consumption: the breaking down of an infirm constitution having, in all probability, been accelerated by the discarding his neck cloth, a practice of the cockney poets, who look upon it as essential to genius, inasmuch as neither Michael Angelo, Raphael or Tasso

are supposed to have worn those antispiritual incumbrances. In short, as the vigour of Sampson lay in his hair, the secret of talent with these persons lies in the neck; and what aspirations can be expected from a mind enveloped in muslin. Keats caught cold in training for a genius, and, after a lingering illness, died, to the great loss of the Independents of South America, whom he had intended to visit with an English epic poem, for the purpose of exciting them to liberty. But
[Pg 130] death, even the death of the radically presumptuous profligate, is a serious thing; and as we believe that Keats was made presumptuous chiefly by the treacherous puffing of his cockney fellow gossips, and profligate in his poems merely to make them saleable, we regret that he did not live long enough to acquire common sense, and abjure the pestilent and perfidious gang who betrayed his weakness to the grave, and are now panegyrising his memory into contempt. For what is the praise of cockneys but disgrace, or what honourable inscription can be placed over the dead by the hands of notorious libellers, exiled adulterers, and avowed atheists.

Adonais, an Elegy, is the form in which Mr. Shelley puts forth his woes. We give a verse at random, premising that there is no story in the elegy, and that it consists of fifty-five stanzas, which are, to our seeming, altogether unconnected, interjectional, and nonsensical. We give one that we think among the more comprehensible. An address to Urania:—

"Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And *happier they their happiness who knew*,
Whose *tapers yet burn thro' that night of time*
In which suns perish'd; Others more sublime,
Struck by the *envious* wroth of man or GOD!!
Have sunk extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live," &c.——

Now what is the meaning of this, or of any sentence of it, except indeed that horrid blasphemy which attributes crime to the Great Author of all virtue! The rest is mere empty absurdity. If it were worth our while to dilate on the folly of the production, we might find examples of every species of the ridiculous within those few pages.

Mr. Shelley summons all kinds of visions round the grave of this young man, who, if he has now
[Pg 131] any feeling of the earth, must shrink with shame and disgust from the touch of the hand that could have written that impious sentence. These he classifies under names, the greater number as new we believe to poetry as strange to common sense. Those are—

——"Desires and *Adorations*
Winged *Persuasions* and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and *Glooms*, and glimmering *Incarnations*
Of hopes and fears and twilight Phantasies,
And Sorrow with her family of *Sighs*,
And Pleasure, *blind with tears*! led by the *gleam*
Of her own *dying* SMILE instead of eyes!!"

Let our readers try to imagine these weepers, and close with "*blind* Pleasure led," by what? "by the *light* of *her own dying smile*—instead of *eyes*!!!"

We give some specimens of Mr. S.'s

Nonsense—pastoral.
"*Lost Echo* sits amid the *voiceless mountains*,[M]
And feeds her grief with his remember'd lay,
And will no more reply to winds and fountains."
Nonsense—physical.
—"for whose disdain she (Echo) pin'd away
Into a *shadow* of all *sounds*!"
Nonsense—vermicular.
"Flowers springing from the corpse
————————illumine death
And *mock* the *merry* worm that wakes beneath."
Nonsense—pathetic.
"Alas! that all we lov'd of him should be
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And *grief itself be mortal*! WOE IS ME!"
Nonsense—nondescript.
"In the death chamber for a moment Death,
Blush'd to annihilation!"
[Pg 132] *Nonsense—personal.*
"A pardlike spirit, beautiful and swift—
A love in *desolation mask'd*;—a Power
Girt *round with weakness*;—it can scarce *uplift*
The *weight* of the *superincumbent hour*!"

We have some idea that this fragment of character is intended for Mr. Shelley himself. It closes with a passage of memorable and ferocious blasphemy:—

————————-"He with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguin'd brow,
Which was like Cain's or CHRIST'S!!!"

What can be said to the wretched person capable of this daring profanation. The name of the first murderer—the accurst of God—brought into the same aspect image with that of the Saviour of the World! We are scarcely satisfied that even to quote such passages may not be criminal. The subject is too repulsive for us to proceed even in expressing our disgust for the general folly that makes the Poem as miserable in point of authorship, as in point of principle. We know that among a certain class this outrage and this inanity meet with some attempt at palliation, under the idea that frenzy holds the pen. That any man who insults the common order of society, and denies the being of God, is essentially mad we never doubted. But for the madness, that retains enough of rationality to be wilfully mischievous, we can have no more lenity than for the appetites of a wild beast. The poetry of the work is *contemptible*—a mere collection of bloated words heaped on each other without order, harmony, or meaning; the refuse of a schoolboy's common-place book, full of the vulgarisms of pastoral poetry, yellow gems and blue stars, bright Phoebus and rosy-
[Pg 133] fingered Aurora; and of this stuff is Keats's wretched Elegy compiled.

We might add instances of like incomprehensible folly from every stanza. A heart *keeping*, a mute *sleep*, and death *feeding* on a mute *voice*, occur in one verse (page 8); Spring in despair "throws down her *kindling* buds as if she Autumn were," a thing we never knew Autumn do with buds of any sort, the kindling kind being unknown to our botany; a *green lizard* is like an *unimprisoned flame*, *waking* out of its *trance* (page 13). In the same page the *leprous corpse* touched by the tender spirit of Spring, so as to exhale itself in flowers, is compared to "*incarnations of the stars, when splendour is changed to fragrance*!!!" Urania (page 15) *wounds* the "invisible palms" of her tender feet by treading on human hearts as she journeys to see the corpse. Page 22, somebody is asked to "clasp with panting soul the pendulous earth," an image which, we take it, exceeds that of Shakespeare, to "put a girdle about it in forty minutes."

It is so far a fortunate thing that this piece of impious and utter absurdity can have little circulation in Britain. The copy in our hands is one of some score sent to the Author's intimates from Pisa, where it has been printed in a quarto form "with the types of Didot," and two learned Epigraphs from Plato and Moschus. Solemn as the subject is, (for in truth we must grieve for the early death of any youth of literary ambition,) it is hardly possible to help laughing at the mock solemnity with which Shelley charges the Quarterly Review for having murdered his friend with—a critique![N] If criticism killed the disciples of that school, Shelley would not have been alive to
[Pg 134] write an Elegy on another:—but the whole is most farcical from a pen which on other occasions, has treated of the soul, the body, life and death agreeably to the opinions, the principles, and the practice of Percy Bysshe Shelley.—*The Literary Gazette*.

[Pg 135]

JOHN KEATS

Endymion: A Poetic Romance. By John Keats. London. 1818. pp. 207.

Reviewers have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty—far from it—indeed, we have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it; but with the fullest stretch of our perseverance, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance consists. We should extremely lament this want of energy, or whatever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled, than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into.

It is not that Mr. Keats, (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody,) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius—he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language.

Of this school, Mr. Leigh Hunt, as we observed in a former Number, aspires to be the hierophant.
[Pg 136] Our readers will recollect the pleasant recipes for harmonious and sublime poetry which he gave us in his preface to 'Rimini,' and the still more facetious instances of his harmony and sublimity in the verses themselves; and they will recollect above all the contempt of Pope, Johnson, and such like poetasters and pseudo-critics, which so forcibly contrasted itself with Mr. Leigh Hunt's self-complacent approbation of

—'all the things itself had wrote,
Of special merit though of little note.'

This author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype, who, though he impudently

presumed to seat himself in the chair of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet generally had a meaning. But Mr. Keats has advanced no dogmas which he was bound to support by examples; his nonsense therefore is quite gratuitous; he writes it for its own sake, and, being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry.

Mr. Keats's preface hints that his poem was produced under peculiar circumstances.

> 'Knowing within myself (he says) the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.—What manner I mean, will be *quite clear* to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished.'—*Preface*, p. vii.

We humbly beg his pardon, but this does not appear to us to be *quite so clear*—we really do not
[Pg 137] know what he means—but the next passage is more intelligible.

> 'The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press.'—*Preface*, p. vii.

Thus 'the two first books' are, even in his own judgment, unfit to appear, and 'the two last' are, it seems, in the same condition—and as two and two make four, and as that is the whole number of books, we have a clear and, we believe, a very just estimate of the entire work.

Mr. Keats, however, deprecates criticism on this 'immature and feverish work' in terms which are themselves sufficiently feverish; and we confess that we should have abstained from inflicting upon him any of the tortures of the '*fierce hell*' of criticism, which terrify his imagination, if he had not begged to be spared in order that he might write more; if we had not observed in him a certain degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way, or which, at least, ought to be warned of the wrong; and if, finally, he had not told us that he is of an age and temper which imperiously require mental discipline.

Of the story we have been able to make out but little; it seems to be mythological, and probably relates to the loves of Diana and Endymion; but of this, as the scope of the work has altogether escaped us, we cannot speak with any degree of certainty; and must therefore content ourselves with giving some instances of its diction and versification:—and here again we are perplexed and puzzled.—At first it appeared to us, that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game at *bouts-rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at this play, that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning. He seems to us to write a line at random, and
[Pg 138] then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet enclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of the ideas but of sounds, and the work is composed of hemistichs which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn.

We shall select, not as the most striking instance, but as that least liable to suspicion, a passage from the opening of the poem.

> ——'Such the sun, the moon,
> Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
> For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
> With the green world they live in; and clear rills
> That for themselves a cooling covert make
> 'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
> Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
> And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
> We have imagined for the mighty dead; &c. &c.'—pp. 3, 4.

Here it is clear that the word, and not the idea, *moon* produces the simple sheep and their shady *boon*, and that 'the *dooms* of the mighty dead' would never have intruded themselves but for the '*fair musk-rose blooms*.'

Again.

> 'For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
> Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
> Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
> A melancholy spirit well might win
> Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
> Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine
> Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;
> The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
> To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
> Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
> Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
> To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.'—p. 8.

[Pg 139] Here Apollo's *fire* produces a *pyre*, a silvery pyre of clouds, *wherein* a spirit may *win* oblivion and

melt his essence *fine*, and scented *eglantine* gives sweets to the *sun*, and cold springs had *run* into the *grass*, and then the pulse of the *mass* pulsed *tenfold* to feel the glories *old* of the new-born day, &c.

One example more.

> 'Be still the unimaginable lodge
> For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
> That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
> Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth.'—p. 17.

Lodge, dodge—heaven, leaven—earth, birth; such, in six words, is the sum and substance of six lines.

We come now to the author's taste in versification. He cannot indeed write a sentence, but perhaps he may be able to spin a line. Let us see. The following are specimens of his prosodial notions of our English heroic metre.

> 'Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
> The passion poesy, glories infinite.'—p. 4.
>
> 'So plenteously all weed-hidden roots.'—p. 6.
>
> 'Of some strange history, potent to send.'—p. 18.
>
> 'Before the deep intoxication.'—p. 27.
>
> 'Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion.'—p. 33.
>
> 'The stubborn canvass for my voyage prepared—.'—p. 39.
>
> '"Endymion! the cave is secreter
> Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
> No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
> Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys
> And trembles through my labyrinthine hair."'—p. 48.

[Pg 140] By this time our readers must be pretty well satisfied as to the meaning of his sentences and the structure of his lines: we now present them with some of the new words with which, in imitation of Mr. Leigh Hunt, he adorns our language.

We are told that 'turtles *passion* their voices,' (p. 15); that 'an arbour was *nested*,' (p. 23); and a lady's locks '*gordian'd* up,' (p. 32); and to supply the place of the nouns thus verbalized Mr. Keats, with great fecundity, spawns new ones; such as 'men-slugs and human *serpentry*,' (p. 41); the '*honey-feel* of bliss,' (p. 45); 'wives prepare *needments*,' (p. 13)—and so forth.

Then he has formed new verbs by the process of cutting off their natural tails, the adverbs, and affixing them to their foreheads; thus, 'the wine out-sparkled,' (p. 10); the 'multitude up-followed,' (p. 11); and 'night up-took,' (p. 29). 'The wind up-blows,' (p. 32); and the 'hours are down-sunken,' (p. 36.)

But if he sinks some adverbs in the verbs, he compensates the language with adverbs and adjectives which he separates from the parent stock. Thus, a lady 'whispers *pantingly* and close,' makes '*hushing* signs,' and steers her skiff into a '*ripply* cove,' (p. 23); a shower falls '*refreshfully*,' (45); and a vulture has a '*spreaded* tail,' (p. 44.)

But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte.—If any one should be bold enough to purchase this 'Poetic Romance,' and so much more patient, than ourselves, as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers.—*The Quarterly Review*.

[Pg 141]

Cockney School of Poetry.

No[.] IV.

> ——————————————————Of Keats,
> The Muses' son of promise, and what feats
> He yet may do, &c.

Cornelius Webb.

Of all the manias of this mad age, the most incurable as well as the most common, seems to be no other than the *Metromanie*. The just celebrity of Robert Burns and Miss Baillie has had the

melancholy effect of turning the heads of we know not how many farm-servants and unmarried ladies; our very footmen compose tragedies, and there is scarcely a superannuated governess in the island that does not leave a roll of lyrics behind her in her band-box. To witness the disease of any human understanding, however feeble, is distressing; but the spectacle of an able mind reduced to a state of insanity is of course ten times more afflicting. It is with such sorrow as this that we have contemplated the case of Mr John Keats. This young man appears to have received from nature talents of an excellent, perhaps even of a superior order—talents which, devoted to the purposes of any useful profession, must have rendered him a respectable, if not an eminent citizen. His friends, we understand, destined him to the career of medicine, and he was bound apprentice some years ago to a worthy apothecary in town. But all has been undone by a sudden attack of the malady to which we have alluded. Whether Mr John had been sent home with a
[Pg 142] diuretic or composing draught to some patient far gone in the poetical mania, we have not heard. This much is certain, that he has caught the infection, and that thoroughly. For some time we were in hopes, that he might get off with a violent fit or two; but of late the symptoms are terrible. The phrenzy of the "Poems" was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy of "Endymion." We hope, however, that in so young a person, and with a constitution originally so good, even now the disease is not utterly incurable. Time, firm treatment, and rational restraint, do much for many apparently hopeless invalids; and if Mr Keats should happen, at some interval of reason, to cast his eye upon our pages, he may perhaps be convinced of the existence of his malady, which, in such cases, is often all that is necessary to put the patient in a fair way of being cured.

The readers of the Examiner newspaper were informed, some time ago, by a solemn paragraph, in Mr Hunt's best style, of the appearance of two new stars of glorious magnitude and splendour in the poetical horizon of the land of Cockaigne. One of these turned out, by and by, to be no other than Mr John Keats. This precocious adulation confirmed the wavering apprentice in his desire to quit the gallipots, and at the same time excited in his too susceptible mind a fatal admiration for the character and talents of the most worthless and affected of all the versifiers of our time. One of his first productions was the following sonnet, "*written on the day when Mr Leigh Hunt left prison*." It will be recollected, that the cause of Hunt's confinement was a series
[Pg 143] of libels against his sovereign, and that its fruit was the odious and incestuous "Story of Rimini."

> "What though, for shewing truth to flattered state,
> *Kind Hunt* was shut in prison, yet has he,
> In his immortal spirit been as free
> As the sky-searching lark and as elate.
> Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
> Think you he nought but prison walls did see,
> Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?
> Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
> *In Spenser's halls!* he strayed, and bowers fair,
> Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
> *With daring Milton!* through the fields of air;
> To regions of his own his genius true
> Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
> When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?"

The absurdity of the thought in this sonnet is, however, if possible, surpassed in another, "*addressed to Haydon*" the painter, that clever, but most affected artist, who as little resembles Raphael in genius as he does in person, notwithstanding the foppery of having his hair curled over his shoulders in the old Italian fashion. In this exquisite piece it will be observed, that Mr Keats classes together WORDSWORTH, HUNT, and HAYDON, as the three greatest spirits of the age, and that he alludes to himself, and some others of the rising brood of Cockneys, as likely to attain hereafter an equally honourable elevation. Wordsworth and Hunt! what a juxta-position! The purest, the loftiest, and, we do not fear to say it, the most classical of living English poets, joined together in the same compliment with the meanest, the filthiest, and the most vulgar of Cockney poetasters. No wonder that he who could be guilty of this should class Haydon with Raphael, and himself with Spencer [*sic*].

> "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;
> He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
> Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
> [Pg 144] Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing:
> *He of the rose, the violet, the spring,*
> *The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake*:
> And lo!—whose steadfastness would never take
> A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
> And other spirits there are standing apart
> Upon the forehead of the age to come;
> These, these will give the world another heart,
> And other pulses. *Hear ye not the hum*
> *Of mighty workings?——*
> *Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.*"

The nations are to listen and be dumb! and why, good Johnny Keats? because Leigh Hunt is editor of the Examiner, and Haydon has painted the judgment of Solomon, and you and Cornelius

Webb, and a few more city sparks, are pleased to look upon yourselves as so many future Shakespeares and Miltons! The world has really some reason to look to its foundations! Here is a *tempestas in matulâ* with a vengeance. At the period when these sonnets were published Mr Keats had no hesitation in saying that he looked on himself as "*not yet* a glorious denizen of the wide heaven of poetry," but he had many fine soothing visions of coming greatness, and many rare plans of study to prepare him for it. The following we think is very pretty raving.

"Why so sad a moan?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springing branches of an elm.

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.
[Pg 145] Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,
Feed on apples red, and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees.
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—
Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
As hard as lips can make it: till agreed,
A lovely tale of human life we'll read.
And one will teach a tame dove how it best
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest;
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees:
Another will entice me on, and on
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon;
Till in the bosom of a leafy world
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
In the recesses of a pearly shell."

Having cooled a little from this "fine passion," our youthful poet passes very naturally into a long strain of foaming abuse against a certain class of English Poets, whom, with Pope at their head, it is much the fashion with the ignorant unsettled pretenders of the present time to undervalue. Begging these gentlemens' pardon, although Pope was not a poet of the same high order with some who are now living, yet, to deny his genius, is just about as absurd as to dispute that of Wordsworth, or to believe in that of Hunt. Above all things, it is most pitiably ridiculous to hear men, of whom their country will always have reason to be proud, reviled by uneducated and flimsy striplings, who are not capable of understanding either their merits, or those of any other
[Pg 146] *men of power*—fanciful dreaming tea-drinkers, who, without logic enough to analyze a single idea, or imagination enough to form one original image, or learning enough to distinguish between the written language of Englishmen and the spoken jargon of Cockneys, presume to talk with contempt of some of the most exquisite spirits the world ever produced, merely because they did not happen to exert their faculties in laborious affected descriptions of flowers seen in window-pots, or cascades heard at Vauxhall; in short, because they chose to be wits, philosophers, patriots, and poets, rather than to found the Cockney school of versification, morality and politics, a century before its time. After blaspheming himself into a fury against Boileau, &c. Mr Keats comforts himself and his readers with a view of the present more promising aspect of affairs; above all, with the ripened glories of the poet of Rimini. Addressing the manes of the departed chiefs of English poetry, he informs them, in the following clear and touching manner, of the existence of "him of the Rose," &c.

"From a thick brake,
Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth. Happy are ye and glad."

From this he diverges into a view of "things in general." We smile when we think to ourselves how little most of our readers will understand of what follows.

"Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever sprouting green.
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,

Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing.
[Pg 147] Then let us clear away the choaking *thorns*
From round its gentle stem; let the young *fawns*,
Yeaned in after times, when we are flown,
Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown
With simple flowers: let there nothing be
More boisterous than a lover's bended knee;
Nought more ungentle than the placid look
Of one who leans upon a closed book;
Nought more untranquil than the grassy slopes
Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes!
As she was wont, th' imagination
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,
And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
O may these joys be ripe before I die.
Will not some say that I presumptuously
Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow
Ere the dreadful thunderbolt could reach? How!
If I do hide myself, it sure shall be
In the very fane, the light of poesy."

From some verses addressed to various amiable individuals of the other sex, it appears, notwithstanding all this gossamer-work, that Johnny's affections are not entirely confined to objects purely etherial. Take, by way of specimen, the following prurient and vulgar lines, evidently meant for some young lady east of Temple-bar.

"Add too, the sweetness
Of thy honied voice; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turn'd:
With those beauties, scarce discern'd,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave;
[Pg 148] Like twin water lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn
O, if thou hadst breathed then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage *higher*
Than twin sister of *Thalia*?
At last for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four."

Who will dispute that our poet, to use his own phrase (and rhyme),

"Can mingle music fit for the soft *ear*
Of Lady *Cytherea*."

So much for the opening bud; now for the expanded flower. It is time to pass from the juvenile "Poems," to the mature and elaborate "Endymion, a Poetic Romance." The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so prettily told by a Roman Classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon by Mr John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or of Wieland. If the quantity, not the quality, of the verses dedicated to the story is to be taken into account, there can be no doubt that Mr John Keats may now claim Endymion entirely to himself. To say the truth, we do not suppose either the Latin or the German poet would be very anxious to dispute about the property of the hero of the "Poetic Romance." Mr Keats has thoroughly appropriated the character, if not the name. His Endymion is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon. Costume, were it worth while to notice such a trifle, is
[Pg 149] violated in every page of this goodly octavo. From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea, that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that no mythology can be so finely adapted for the purposes of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the two Cockneys make of this mythology; the one confesses that he never read the Greek Tragedians, and the other knows Homer only from Chapman; and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, Nymphs, Muses, and Mysteries, as might be expected from persons of their education. We shall not, however, enlarge at present upon this subject, as we mean to dedicate an entire paper to the classical attainments and attempts of the Cockney poets. As for Mr Keats' "Endymion," it has just as much to do with Greece as it has with "old Tartary the fierce;" no man, whose mind has ever

been imbued with the smallest knowledge or feeling of classical poetry or classical history, could have stooped to profane and vulgarise every association in the manner which has been adopted by this "son of promise." Before giving any extracts, we must inform our readers, that this romance is meant to be written in English heroic rhyme. To those who have read any of Hunt's poems, this hint might indeed be needless. Mr Keats has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and the Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini; but in fairness to that gentleman, we must add, that the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciple's work than in his own. Mr Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities, which he has done everything in his power to spoil.

[Pg 150] [Quotes almost two hundred lines of *Endymion* with brief interpolated comment.]

And now, good-morrow to "the Muses' son of Promise;" as for "the feats he yet may do," as we do not pretend to say, like himself, "Muse of my native land am I inspired," we shall adhere to the safe old rule of *pauca verba*. We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon any thing he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr John, back to "plasters, pills, and ointment boxes," &c. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry.

Z.

—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

[Pg 151]

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Timbuctoo: a Poem, which obtained the Chancellor's Medal at the Cambridge Commencement, by A. Tennyson, of Trinity College, Cambridge.

We have accustomed ourselves to think, perhaps without any good reason, that poetry was likely to perish among us for a considerable period after the great generation of poets which is now passing away. The age seems determined to contradict us, and that in the most decided manner, for it has put forth poetry by a young man, and that where we should least expect it, namely, in a prize-poem. These productions have often been ingenious and elegant, but we have never before seen one of them which indicated really first-rate poetical genius, and which would have done honour to any man that ever wrote. Such, we do not hesitate to affirm, is the little work before us; and the examiners seem to have felt about it like ourselves, for they have assigned the prize to its author, though the measure in which he writes was never before (we believe) thus selected for honour. We extract a few lines to justify our admiration.

[Quotes fifty lines beginning:—

> "A curve of whitening, flashing, ebbing light!
> A rustling of white wings! the bright descent," etc.]

How many men have lived for a century who could equal this?—*The Athenæum*.

[Pg 152]

Poems by Alfred Tennyson. pp. 163. London. 12mo. 1833.

This is, as some of his marginal notes intimate, Mr. Tennyson's second appearance. By some strange chance we have never seen his first publication, which, if it at all resembles its younge[r] brother, must be by this time so popular that any notice of it on our part would seem idle and presumptuous; but we gladly seize this opportunity of repairing an unintentional neglect, and of introducing to the admiration of our more sequestered readers a new prodigy of genius—another and a brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger; and let us take this occasion to sing our palinode on the subject of 'Endymion.' We certainly did not[O] discover in that poem the same degree of merit that its more clear-sighted and prophetic admirers did. We did not foresee the unbounded popularity which has carried it through we know not how many editions; which has placed it on every table; and, what is still more unequivocal, familiarized it in every mouth. All this splendour of fame, however, though we had not the sagacity to anticipate, we have the candour to acknowledge: and we request that the publisher of the new and beautiful edition of Keats's works now in the press, with graphic illustrations by Calcott and Turner, will do us the favour and the justice to notice our conversion in his prolegomena.

[Pg 153] Warned by our former mishap, wiser by experience, and improved, as we hope, in taste, we have to offer Mr. Tennyson our tribute of unmingled approbation, and it is very agreeable to us, as well as to our readers, that our present task will be little more than the selection, for their delight, of a few specimens of Mr. Tennyson's singular genius, and the venturing to point out, now and then, the peculiar brilliancy of some of the gems that irradiate his poetical crown.

A prefatory sonnet opens to the reader the aspirations of the young author, in which, after the

manner of sundry poets, ancient and modern, he expresses his own peculiar character, by wishing himself to be something that he is not. The amorous Catullus aspired to be a sparrow; the tuneful and convivial Anacreon (for we totally reject the supposition that attributes the Ἐιθε λύρη χαλη γενοιμην to Alcæus) wished to be a lyre and a great drinking cup; a crowd of more modern sentimentalists have desired to approach their mistresses as flowers, tunicks, sandals, birds, breezes, and butterflies;—all poor conceits of narrow-minded poetasters! Mr. Tennyson (though he, too, would, as far as his true love is concerned, not unwillingly 'be an earring,' 'a girdle,' and 'a necklace,' p. 45) in the more serious and solemn exordium of his works ambitions a bolder metamorphosis—he wishes to be—*a river*!

SONNET.

'Mine be the strength of spirit fierce and free,
Like some broad river rushing down *alone*'—

rivers that travel in company are too common for his taste—

'With the self-same impulse wherewith he was thrown'—

a beautiful and harmonious line—

'From his loud fount upon the echoing lea:—
Which, with *increasing* might, doth *forward flee*'—

[Pg 154] Every word of this line is valuable—the natural progress of human ambition is here strongly characterized—two lines ago he would have been satisfied with the *self-same* impulse—but now he must have *increasing* might; and indeed he would require all his might to accomplish his object of *fleeing forward*, that is, going backwards and forwards at the same time. Perhaps he uses the word *flee* for *flow*; which latter he could not well employ in *this* place, it being, as we shall see, essentially necessary to rhyme to *Mexico* towards the end of the sonnet—as an equivalent to *flow* he has, therefore, with great taste and ingenuity, hit on the combination of *forward flee*—

————————'doth forward flee
By town, and tower, and hill, and cape, and isle,
And in the middle of the green *salt* sea
Keeps his blue waters fresh for many a mile.'

A noble wish, beautifully expressed, that he may not be confounded with the deluge of ordinary poets, but, amidst their discoloured and briny ocean, still preserve his own bright tints and sweet savor. He may be at ease on this point—he never can be mistaken for any one else. We have but too late become acquainted with him, yet we assure ourselves that if a thousand anonymous specimens were presented to us, we should unerringly distinguish his by the total absence of any particle of *salt*. But again, his thoughts take another turn, and he reverts to the insatiability of human ambition:—we have seen him just now content to be a river, but as he *flees forward*, his desires expand into sublimity, and he wishes to become the great Gulfstream of the Atlantic.

'Mine be the power which ever to its sway
Will win *the wise at once*—

[Pg 155] We, for once, are wise, and he has won *us*—

'Will win the wise at once; and by degrees
May into uncongenial spirits flow,
Even as the great gulphstream of Flori*da*
Floats far away into the Northern seas
The lavish growths of southern Mexi*co*!'—p. 1.

And so concludes the sonnet.

The next piece is a kind of testamentary paper, addressed 'To ——,' a friend, we presume, containing his wishes as to what his friend should do for him when he (the poet) shall be dead—not, as we shall see, that he quite thinks that such a poet can die outright.

'Shake hands, my friend, across the brink
  Of that deep grave to which I go.
Shake hands once more; I cannot sink
  So far—far down, but I shall know
  Thy voice, and answer from below!'

Horace said 'non omnis moriar,' meaning that his fame should survive—Mr. Tennyson is still more vivacious, 'non *omnino* moriar,'—'I will not die at all; my body shall be as immortal as my verse, and however *low I may go*, I warrant you I shall keep all my wits about me,—therefore'

'When, in the darkness over me,
  The four-handed mole shall scrape,
Plant thou no dusky cypress tree,
  Nor wreath thy cap with doleful crape,

But pledge me in the flowing grape.'

Observe how all ages become present to the mind of a great poet; and admire how naturally he combines the funeral cypress of classical antiquity with the crape hat-band of the modern
[Pg 156] undertaker.

He proceeds:—

'And when the sappy field and wood
Grow green beneath the *showery gray*,
And rugged barks begin to bud,
And through damp holts, newflushed with May,
Ring sudden *laughters* of the jay!'

Laughter, the philosophers tell us, is a peculiar attribute of man—but as Shakespeare found 'tongues in trees and sermons in stones,' this true poet endows all nature not merely with human sensibilities but with human functions—the jay *laughs*, and we find, indeed, a little further on, that the woodpecker *laughs* also; but to mark the distinction between their merriment and that of men, both jays and woodpeckers laugh upon melancholy occasions. We are glad, moreover, to observe, that Mr. Tennyson is prepared for, and therefore will not be disturbed by, human laughter, if any silly reader should catch the infection from the woodpeckers and the jays.

'Then let wise Nature work her will,
And on my clay her darnels grow,
Come only when the days are still,
And at my head-stone whisper low,
And tell me'—

Now, what would an ordinary bard wish to be told under such circumstances?—why, perhaps, how his sweetheart was, or his child, or his family, or how the Reform Bill worked, or whether the last edition of his poems had been sold—*papæ*! our genuine poet's first wish is

'And tell me—*if the woodbines blow*!'

When, indeed, he shall have been thus satisfied as to the *woodbines*, (of the blowing of which in
[Pg 157] their due season he may, we think, feel pretty secure,) he turns a passing thought to his friend—and another to his mother—

'If *thou* art blest, my *mother's* smile
Undimmed'—

but such inquiries, short as they are, seem too common-place, and he immediately glides back into his curiosity as to the state of the weather and the forwardness of the spring—

'If thou art blessed—my mother's smile
Undimmed—*if bees are on the wing*?'

No, we believe the whole circle of poetry does not furnish such another instance of enthusiasm for the sights and sounds of the vernal season!—The sorrows of a bereaved mother rank *after* the blossoms of the *woodbine*, and just before the hummings of the *bee*; and this is *all* that he has any curiosity about; for he proceeds:—

'Then cease, my friend, a little while
That I may'—

'send my love to my mother,' or 'give you some hints about bees, which I have picked up from Aristæus, in the Elysian Fields,' or 'tell you how I am situated as to my own personal comforts in the world below'?—oh no—

'That I may—hear the *throstle sing*
His bridal song—the boast of spring.

Sweet as the noise, in parchèd plains,
Of bubbling wells that fret the stones,
(*If any sense in me remains*)
Thy words will be—thy cheerful tones
As welcome to—my *crumbling bones*!'—p. 4.

[Pg 158] '*If any sense in me remains!*'—This doubt is inconsistent with the opening stanza of the piece, and, in fact, too modest; we take upon ourselves to re-assure Mr. Tennyson, that, even after he shall be dead and buried, as much '*sense*' will still remain as he has now the good fortune to possess.

We have quoted these first two poems in *extenso*, to obviate any suspicion of our having made a partial or delusive selection. We cannot afford space—we wish we could—for an equally minute examination of the rest of the volume, but we shall make a few extracts to show—what we solemnly affirm—that every page teems with beauties hardly less surprising.

The Lady of Shalott is a poem in four parts, the story of which we decline to maim by such an analysis as we could give, but it opens thus—

'On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and *meet the sky*—
And *through* the field the road runs *by*.'

The Lady of Shalott was, it seems, a spinster who had, under some unnamed penalty, a certain web to weave.

'Underneath the bearded barley,
The reaper, reaping late and early,
Hears her ever chanting cheerly,
Like an angel singing clearly....

'No time has she for sport or play,
A charmèd web she weaves alway;
A curse is on her if she stay
Her weaving either night or day....

'She knows not'—

[Pg 159] Poor lady, nor we either—

'She knows not what that curse may be,
Therefore she weaveth steadily;
Therefore no other care has she
The Lady of Shalott.'

A knight, however, happens to ride past her window, coming

——'from Camelot;[P]
From the bank, and *from* the *river*,
He flashed *into* the crystal *mirror*—
"Tirra lirra, tirra *lirra*," (*lirrar*?)
Sang Sir Launcelot.'—p. 15.

The lady stepped to the window to look at the stranger, and forgot for an instant her web:—the curse fell on her, and she died; why, how, and wherefore, the following stanzas will clearly and pathetically explain:—

'A long drawn carol, mournful, holy,
She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her eyes were darkened *wholly*,
And her smooth face sharpened *slowly*,
Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house on the water side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott!
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
To the plankèd wharfage came;
Below *the stern* they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.'—p. 19.

[Pg 160] We pass by two—what shall we call them?—tales, or odes, or sketches, entitled 'Mariana in the South' and 'Eleänore,' of which we fear we could make no intelligible extract, so curiously are they run together into one dreamy tissue—to a little novel in rhyme, called 'The Miller's Daughter.' Millers' daughters, poor things, have been so generally betrayed by their sweethearts, that it is refreshing to find that Mr. Tennyson has united himself to *his* miller's daughter in lawful wedlock, and the poem is a history of his courtship and wedding. He begins with a sketch of his own birth, parentage, and personal appearance—

'My father's mansion, mounted high,
Looked down upon the village-spire;
I was a long and listless boy,
And son and heir unto the Squire.'

But the son and heir of Squire Tennyson often descended from the 'mansion mounted high;' and

'I met in all the close green ways,
While walking with my line and rod,'

A metonymy for 'rod and line'—

'The wealthy miller's mealy face,

Like the *moon in an ivytod*.

'He looked so jolly and so good—
While fishing in the mill-dam water,
I laughed to see him as he stood,
And dreamt not of the miller's daughter.'—p. 33.

He, however, soon saw, and, need we add, loved the miller's daughter, whose countenance, we presume, bore no great resemblance either to the 'mealy face' of the miller, or 'the moon in an
[Pg 161] ivy-tod;' and we think our readers will be delighted at the way in which the impassioned husband relates to his wife how his fancy mingled enthusiasm for rural sights and sounds, with a prospect of the less romantic scene of her father's occupation.

'How dear to me in youth, my love,
Was everything about the mill;
The black, the silent pool above,
The pool beneath that ne'er stood still;

The meal-sacks on the whitened floor,
The dark round of the dripping wheel,
The very air about the door,
Made misty with the floating meal!'—p. 36.

The accumulation of tender images in the following lines appears not less wonderful:—

'Remember you that pleasant day
When, after roving in the woods,
('Twas April then) I came and lay
Beneath those *gummy* chestnut-buds?

'A water-rat from off the bank
Plunged in the stream. With idle care,
Downlooking through the sedges rank,
I saw your troubled image there.

'If you remember, you had set,
Upon the narrow casement-edge,
A *long green box* of mignonette
And you were leaning on the ledge.'

The poet's truth to Nature in his 'gummy' chestnut-buds, and to Art in the 'long green box' of mignonette—and that masterful touch of likening the first intrusion of love into the virgin bosom of the Miller's daughter to the plunging of a water-rat into the mill-dam—these are beauties
[Pg 162] which, we do not fear to say, equal anything even in Keats.

We pass by several songs, sonnets, and small pieces, all of singular merit, to arrive at a class, we may call them, of three poems derived from mythological sources—Œnone, the Hesperides, and the Lotos-eaters. But though the subjects are derived from classical antiquity, Mr. Tennyson treats them with so much originality that he makes them exclusively his own. Œnone, deserted by

'Beautiful Paris, evilhearted Paris,'

sings a kind of dying soliloquy addressed to Mount Ida, in a formula which is *sixteen* times repeated in this short poem.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.'

She tells her 'dear mother Ida,' that when evilhearted Paris was about to judge between the three goddesses, he hid her (Œnone) behind a rock, whence she had a full view of the *naked* beauties of the rivals, which broke her heart.

'*Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die*:—
It was the deep mid noon: one silvery cloud
Had *lost his way* among the pined hills:
They came—*all three*—the Olympian goddesses.
Naked they came—

* * * * * *

How beautiful they were! too beautiful
To look upon; but Paris was to me
More lovelier than all the world beside.
O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.'—p. 56.

In the place where we have indicated a pause, follows a description, long, rich, and luscious—Of the three naked goddesses? Fye for shame—no—of the 'lily flower violet-eyed,' and the 'singing
[Pg 163] pine,' and the 'overwandering ivy and vine,' and 'festoons,' and 'gnarlèd boughs,' and 'tree tops,' and 'berries,' and 'flowers,' and all the *inanimate* beauties of the scene. It would be unjust to the

ingenuus pudor of the author not to observe the art with which he has veiled this ticklish interview behind such luxuriant trellis-work, and it is obvious that it is for our special sakes he has entered into these local details, because if there was one thing which 'mother Ida' knew better than another, it must have been her own bushes and brakes. We then have in detail the tempting speeches of, first—

'The imperial Olympian,
With archèd eyebrow smiling sovranly,
Full-eyèd Here;'

secondly of Pallas—

'Her clear and barèd limbs
O'er-thwarted with the brazen-headed spear,'

and thirdly—

'Idalian Aphrodite ocean-born,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian *wells*—'

for one dip, or even three dips in one well, would not have been enough on such an occasion—and her succinct and prevailing promise of—

'The fairest and most loving *wife* in Greece;'—

upon evil-hearted Paris's catching at which prize, the tender and chaste Œnone exclaims her indignation, that she herself should not be considered fair enough, since only yesterday her charms had struck awe into—

'A wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening-star, with playful tail—'

[Pg 164]

and proceeds in this anti-Martineau rapture—

'*Most* loving is *she*?'
'Ah me! my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close—close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of *fruitful* kisses ...
Dear mother Ida! hearken ere I die!—p. 62.

After such reiterated assurances that she was about to die on the spot, it appears that Œnone thought better of it, and the poem concludes with her taking the wiser course of going to town to consult her swain's sister, Cassandra—whose advice, we presume, prevailed upon her to live, as we can, from other sources, assure our readers she did to a good old age.

In the 'Hesperides' our author, with great judgment, rejects the common fable, which attributes to Hercules the slaying of the dragon and the plunder of the golden fruit. Nay, he supposes them to have existed to a comparatively recent period—namely, the voyage of Hanno, on the coarse canvas of whose log-book Mr. Tennyson has judiciously embroidered the Hesperian romance. The poem opens with a geographical description of the neighbourhood, which must be very clear and satisfactory to the English reader; indeed, it leaves far behind in accuracy of topography and melody of rhythm the heroics of Dionysius *Periegetes*.

'The north wind fall'n, in the new-starrèd night.'

Here we must pause to observe a new species of *metabolé* with which Mr. Tennyson has enriched our language. He suppresses the E in *fallen*, where it is usually written and where it must be pronounced, and transfers it to the word *new-starrèd*, where it would not be pronounced if he did not take due care to superfix a *grave* accent. This use of the grave accent is, as our readers may have already perceived, so habitual with Mr. Tennyson, and is so obvious an improvement, that we really wonder how the language has hitherto done without it. We are tempted to suggest, that if analogy to the accented languages is to be thought of, it is rather the acute ([´]) than the grave ([`]) which should be employed on such occasions; but we speak with profound diffidence; and as Mr. Tennyson is the inventor of the system, we shall bow with respect to whatever his final determination may be.

[Pg 165]

'The north wind fall'n, in the new-starrèd night
Zidonian Hanno, voyaging beyond
The hoary promontory of Soloë,
Past Thymiaterion in calmèd bays.'

We must here note specially the musical flow of this last line, which is the more creditable to Mr. Tennyson, because it was before the tuneless names of this very neighbourhood that the learned continuator of Dionysius retreated in despair—

——επωνυμίας νυν ἔλλαχεν ἄλλας
Αἰθίοπων γαίν, δυσφωνους ουδ' επιήρονς

Μουσαις ὄυνεκα τασδ' ἐγω ουκ αγορευσομ' απασας.

but Mr. Tennyson is bolder and happier—

'Past Thymiaterion in calmèd bays,
Between the southern and the western Horn,
Heard neither'—

We pause for a moment to consider what a sea-captain might have expected to hear, by night, in the Atlantic ocean—he heard

—'neither the warbling of the *nightingale*
Nor melody o' the Libyan lotusflute,'

[Pg 166] but he did hear the three daughters of Hesper singing the following song:—

'The golden apple, the golden apple, the hallowèd fruit,
Guard it well, guard it warily,
Singing airily,
Standing about the charmèd root,
Round about all is mute'—

mute, though they sung so loud as to be heard some leagues out at sea—

——'all is mute
As the snow-field on mountain peaks,
As the sand-field at the mountain foot.
Crocodiles in briny creeks
Sleep, and stir not: all is mute.'

How admirably do these lines describe the peculiarities of this charmèd neighbourhood—fields of snow, so talkative when they happen to lie at the foot of the mountain, are quite out of breath when they get to the top, and the sand, so noisy on the summit of a hill, is dumb at its foot. The very crocodiles, too, are *mute*—not dumb but *mute*. The 'red-combèd dragon curl'd' is next introduced—

'Look to him, father, lest he wink, and the golden apple be stolen away,
For his ancient heart is drunk with overwatchings night and day,
Sing away, sing aloud evermore, in the wind, without stop.'

The north wind, it appears, has by this time awaked again—

'Lest his scalèd eyelid drop,
For he is older than the world'—

[Pg 167] older than the *hills*, besides not rhyming to 'curl'd,' would hardly have been a sufficiently venerable phrase for this most harmonious of lyrics. It proceeds—

'If ye sing not, if ye make false measure,
We shall lose eternal pleasure,
Worth eternal want of rest.
Laugh not loudly: watch the treasure
Of the wisdom of the west.
In *a corner* wisdom whispers. Five and three
(*Let it not be preached abroad*) make an awful mystery.'—p. 102.

This recipe for keeping a secret, by singing it so loud as to be heard for miles, is almost the only point, in all Mr. Tennyson's poems, in which we can trace the remotest approach to anything like what other men have written, but it certainly does remind us of the 'chorus of conspirators' in the Rovers.

Hanno, however, who understood no language but Punic—(the Hesperides sang, we presume, either in Greek or in English)—appears to have kept on his way without taking any notice of the song, for the poem concludes,—

'The apple of gold hangs over the sea,
Five links, a gold chain, are we,
Hesper, the Dragon, and sisters three;
Daughters three,
Bound about
All around about
The gnarlèd bole of the charmèd tree,
The golden apple, the golden apple, the hallowèd fruit,
Guard it well, guard it warily,
Watch it warily,
Singing airily
Standing about the charmèd root.'—p. 107.

We hardly think that, if Hanno had translated it into Punic, the song would have been more
[Pg 168] intelligible.

The 'Lotuseaters'—a kind of classical opium-eaters—are Ulysses and his crew. They land on the 'charmèd island,' and 'eat of the charmèd root,' and then they sing—

> 'Long enough the winedark wave our weary bark did carry.
> This is lovelier and sweeter,
> Men of Ithaca, this is meeter,
> In the hollow rosy vale to tarry,
> Like a dreamy Lotuseater—a delicious Lotuseater!
> We will eat the Lotus, sweet
> As the yellow honeycomb;
> In the valley some, and some
> On the ancient heights divine,
> And no more roam,
> On the loud hoar foam,
> To the melancholy home,
> At the limits of the brine,
> The little isle of Ithaca, beneath the day's decline.'—p. 116.

Our readers will, we think, agree that this is admirably characteristic, and that the singers of this song must have made pretty free with the intoxicating fruit. How they got home you must read in Homer:—Mr. Tennyson—himself, we presume, a dreamy lotus-eater, a delicious lotus-eater—leaves them in full song.

Next comes another class of poems,—Visions. The first is the 'Palace of Art,' or a fine house, in which the poet *dreams* that he sees a very fine collection of well-known pictures. An ordinary versifier would, no doubt, have followed the old routine, and dully described himself as walking into the Louvre, or Buckingham Palace, and there seeing certain masterpieces of painting:—a true poet dreams it. We have not room to hang many of these *chefs-d'œuvre*, but for a few we
[Pg 169] must find space.—'The Madonna'—

> 'The maid mother by a crucifix,
> In yellow pastures sunny warm,
> Beneath branch work of costly sardonyx
> Sat smiling—*babe in arm*.'—p. 72.

The use of the latter, apparently, colloquial phrase is a deep stroke of art. The form of expression is always used to express an habitual and characteristic action. A knight is described '*lance in rest*'—a dragoon, '*sword in hand*'—so, as the idea of the Virgin is inseparably connected with her child, Mr. Tennyson reverently describes her conventional position—'*babe in arm*.'

His gallery of illustrious portraits is thus admirably arranged:—The Madonna—Ganymede—St. Cecilia—Europa—Deep-haired Milton—Shakspeare—Grim Dante—Michael Angelo—Luther—Lord Bacon—Cervantes—Calderon—King David—'the Halicarnassëan' (*quaere*, which of them?)—Alfred, (not Alfred Tennyson, though no doubt in any other man's gallery *he* would have a place) and finally—

> 'Isaïah, with fierce Ezekiel,
> Swarth Moses by the Coptic sea,
> Plato, *Petrarca*, Livy, and Raphaël,
> And eastern Confutzee!'

We can hardly suspect the very original mind of Mr. Tennyson to have harboured any recollections of that celebrated Doric idyll, 'The groves of Blarney,' but certainly there is a strong likeness between Mr. Tennyson's list of pictures and the Blarney collection of statutes—

> 'Statues growing that noble place in,
> All heathen goddesses most rare,
> Homer, Plutarch, and Nebuchadnezzar,
> All standing naked in the open air!'

[Pg 170] In this poem we first observed a stroke of art (repeated afterwards) which we think very ingenious. No one who has ever written verse but must have felt the pain of erasing some happy line, some striking stanza, which, however excellent in itself, did not exactly suit the place for which it was destined. How curiously does an author mould and remould the plastic verse in order to fit in the favourite thought; and when he finds that he cannot introduce it, as Corporal Trim says, *any how*, with what reluctance does he at last reject the intractable, but still cherished offspring of his brain! Mr. Tennyson manages this delicate matter in a new and better way; he says, with great candour and simplicity, 'If this poem were not already too long, *I should have added* the following stanzas,' and *then he adds them*, (p. 84;)—or, 'the following lines are manifestly superfluous, as a part of the text, but they may be allowed to stand as a separate poem,' (p. 121,) *which they do*;—or, 'I intended to have added something on statuary, but I found it very difficult;'—(he had, moreover, as we have seen, been anticipated in this line by the Blarney poet)—'but I have finished the statues of *Elijah* and *Olympias*—judge whether I have succeeded,' (p. 73)—and then we have these two statues. This is certainly the most ingenious device that has

ever come under our observation, for reconciling the rigour of criticism with the indulgence of parental partiality. It is economical too, and to the reader profitable, as by these means

'We lose no drop of the immortal man.'

The other vision is 'A Dream of Fair Women,' in which the heroines of all ages—some, indeed, that belong to the times of 'heathen goddesses most rare'—pass before his view. We have not
[Pg 171] time to notice them all, but the second, whom we take to be Iphigenia, touches the heart with a stroke of nature more powerful than even the veil that the Grecian painter threw over the head of her father.

——'dimly I could descry
The stern blackbearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Watching to see me die.

The tall masts quivered as they lay afloat;
The temples, and the people, and the shore;
One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat—
Slowly,—and *nothing more*!'

What touching simplicity—what pathetic resignation—he cut my throat—'*nothing more*!' One might indeed ask, 'what *more*' she would have?

But we must hasten on; and to tranquillize the reader's mind after this last affecting scene, shall notice the only two pieces of a lighter strain which the volume affords. The first is elegant and playful; it is a description of the author's study, which he affectionately calls his *Darling Room*.

'O darling room, my heart's delight;
Dear room, the apple of my sight;
With thy two couches, soft and white,
There is no room so exquis*ite*;
No little room so warm and bright,
Wherein to read, wherein to write.'

We entreat our readers to note how, even in this little trifle, the singular taste and genius of Mr. Tennyson break forth. In such a dear *little* room a narrow-minded scribbler would have been content with *one* sofa, and that one he would probably have covered with black mohair, or red
[Pg 172] cloth, or a good striped chintz; how infinitely more characteristic is white dimity!—'tis as it were a type of the purity of the poet's mind. He proceeds—

'For I the Nonnenwerth have seen,
And Oberwinter's vineyards green,
Musical Lurlei; and between
The hills to Bingen I have been,
Bingen in Darmstadt, where the *Rhene*
Curves toward Mentz, a woody scene.

'Yet never did there meet my sight,
In any town, to left or right,
A little room so exquis*ite*,
With *two* such couches soft and white;
Nor any room so warm and bright,
Wherein to read, wherein to write.'—p. 153.

A common poet would have said that he had been in London or in Paris—in the loveliest villa on the banks of the Thames, or the most gorgeous chateau on the Loire—that he has reclined in Madame de Staël's boudoir, and mused in Mr. Roger's comfortable study; but the *darling room* of the poet of nature (which we must suppose to be endued with sensibility, or he would not have addressed it) would not be flattered with such common-place comparisons;—no, no, but it is something to have it said that there is no such room in the ruins of the Drachenfels, in the vineyard of Oberwinter, or even in the rapids of the *Rhene*, under the Lurleyberg. We have ourselves visited all these celebrated spots, and can testify in corroboration of Mr. Tennyson, that we did not see in any of them anything like *this little room so exquis*ITE.

The second of the lighter pieces, and the last with which we shall delight our readers, is a severe retaliation on the editor of the Edinburgh Magazine, who, it seems, had not treated the first
[Pg 173] volume of Mr. Tennyson with the same respect that we have, we trust, evinced for the second.

'To CHRISTOPHER NORTH.
You did late review my lays,
Crusty Christopher;
You did mingle blame and praise
Rusty Christopher.

When I learnt from whom it came
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher;

I could *not* forgive the praise,
Fusty Christopher.'—p. 153.

Was there ever anything so genteelly turned—so terse—so sharp—and the point so stinging and *so true*?

'I could not forgive the *praise*,
Fusty Christopher!'

This leads us to observe on a phenomenon which we have frequently seen, but never been able to explain. It has been occasionally our painful lot to excite the displeasure of authors whom we have reviewed, and who have vented their dissatisfaction, some in prose, some in verse, and some in what we could not distinctly say whether it was verse or prose; but we have invariably found that the common formula of retort was that adopted by Mr. Tennyson against his northern critic, namely, that the author would always

—Forgive us all the *blame*,
But could *not* forgive the *praise*.

Now this seems very surprising. It has sometimes, though we regret to say rarely, happened, that, as in the present instance, we have been able to deal out unqualified praise, but never found
[Pg 174] that the dose in this case disagreed with the most squeamish stomach; on the contrary, the patient has always seemed exceedingly comfortable after he had swallowed it. He has been known to take the 'Review' home and keep his wife from a ball, and his children from bed, till he could administer it to them, by reading the article aloud. He has even been heard to recommend the 'Review' to his acquaintance at the clubs, as the best number which has yet appeared, and one, who happened to be an M.P. as well as an author, gave a *conditional* order, that in case his last work should be favourably noticed, a dozen copies should be sent down by the mail to the borough of ——. But, on the other hand, when it has happened that the general course of our criticism has been unfavourable, if by accident we happened to introduce the smallest spice of *praise*, the patient immediately fell into paroxysms—declaring that the part which we foolishly thought might offend him had, on the contrary, given him pleasure—positive pleasure, but *that* which he could not possibly either forget or forgive, was the grain of praise, be it ever so small, which we had dropped in, and for which, and *not for our censure*, he felt constrained, in honour and conscience, to visit us with his extreme indignation. Can any reader or writer inform us how it is that praise in the wholesale is so very agreeable to the very same stomach that rejects it with disgust and loathing, when it is scantily administered; and above all, can they tell us why it is, that the indignation and nausea should be in the exact inverse ratio to the quantity of the ingredient? These effects, of which we could quote several cases much more violent than Mr. Tennyson's, puzzle us exceedingly; but a learned friend, whom we have consulted, has, though he could not account for the phenomenon, pointed out what he thought an analogous case. It is
[Pg 175] related of Mr. Alderman Faulkner, of convivial memory, that one night when he expected his guests to sit late and try the strength of his claret and his head, he took the precaution of placing in his wine-glass a strawberry, which his doctor, he said, had recommended to him on account of its cooling qualities: on the faith of this specific, he drank even more deeply, and, as might be expected, was carried away at an earlier period and in rather a worse state, than was usual with him. When some of his friends condoled with him next day, and attributed his misfortune to six bottles of claret which he had imbibed, the Alderman was extremely indignant—'the claret,' he said, 'was sound, and never could do any man any harm—his discomfiture was altogether caused by that damned single strawberry' which he had kept all night at the bottom of his glass.—*The Quarterly Review*.

[Pg 176]

The Princess; a Medley. By Alfred Tennyson. Moxon.

That we are behind most even of our heaviest and slowest contemporaries in the notice of this volume, is a fact for which we cannot satisfactorily account to ourselves, and can therefore hardly hope to be able to make a valid excuse to our readers. The truth is, that whenever we turned to it we became, like the needle between positive and negative electric poles, so attracted and repelled, that we vibrated too much to settle to any fixed condition. Vacillation prevented criticism, and we had to try the experiment again and again before we could arrive at the necessary equipose to indicate the right direction of taste and opinion. We will now, however, note our variations, and leave them to the public judgment.

The first lines of the prologue were repulsive, as a specimen of the poorest Wordsworth manner and style—

"Sir Walter Vivian all a summer's day
Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun
Up to his people: thither flock'd at noon
His tenants, wife and child, and thither half
The neighbouring borough with their Institute
Of which he was the patron. I was there
From college, visiting the son,—the son
A Walter too,—with others of our set."

The "wife and child" of the tenants is hardly intelligible; and the "set" is but a dubious expression. Nor can we clearly comprehend the next line and a half—

"And me that morning Walter show'd the house,
Greek, set with busts:"

[Pg 177] Does this mean that Sir Walter Vivian inhabited a Greek house, and that the college "set" were guests in that dwelling "set with busts"? To say the least, this is inelegant, and the affectations proceed—

"From vases in the hall
Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than their names,
Grew side by side."

Persons conversant with the botanical names of flowers will hardly be able to realize (as the Yankees have it) the idea of their loveliness; the loveliness of Hippuris, Dolichos, Syngenesia, Cheiranthus, Artocarpus, Arum dracunculus, Ampelopsis hederaca, Hexandria, Monogynea, and the rest.

A good description of the demi-scientific sports of the Institute follows; but the house company and inmates retire to a ruined abbey:—

"High-arch'd and ivy-claspt,
Of finest Gothic, lighter than a fire."

This is a curious jumble in company, two lights of altogether a different nature; but the party get into a rattling conversation, in which the noisy babble of the College Cubs is satirically characterized: we

"Told
Of college: he had climb'd across the spikes,
And he had squeez'd himself betwixt the bars,
And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs; and one
Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common men
But honeying at the whisper of a lord;
And one the Master, as a rogue in grain
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory."

The dialogue happily takes a turn, and the task of writing the *Princess* is assigned to the author,
[Pg 178] as one of the tales in the Decameron of Boccaccio. A neighbouring princess of the south (so the story runs as the prince tells it) is in childhood betrothed to a like childish prince of the north:—

"She to me
Was proxy-wedded with a *bootless calf* [?]
At eight years old."

Both grew up, the prince, all imaginative, filling his mind with pictures of her perfections; but she turning a female reformer of the Wolstencroft [*sic*] school, resolved never to wed till woman was raised to an equality with men, and establishing a strange female colony and college to carry this vast design into effect. In consequence of this her father is obliged to violate the contract, and his indignant father prepares for war to enforce it. The prince, with two companions, flies to the south, to try what he can do for himself; and in the disguise of ladies they obtain admission to the guarded precincts of the new Amazonian league. He, meanwhile, sings sweetly of his mistress—

"And still I wore her picture by my heart,
And one dark tress; and all around them both
Sweet thoughts would swarm as bees about their queen."

And of his friend—

"My other heart,
My shadow, my half-self, for still we moved
Together, kin as horse's ear and eye."

His evasion is also finely told—

"But when the council broke, I rose and past
Through the wild woods that hang about the town;
Found a still place, and pluck'd her likeness out:
Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying bathed
[Pg 179] In the green gleam of dewy-tassell'd trees:
What were those fancies? wherefore break her troth?
Proud look'd the lips: but while I meditated
A wind arose and rush'd upon the South,
And shook the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks
Of the wild woods together; and a Voice
Went with it 'Follow, follow, thou shalt win!'"

Almost in juxtaposition with these beauties, we find one of the disagreeable blots, so offensive to good taste, which disfigure the poem. The travellers are interrogating the host of an inn close to the liberties where the princess holds her petticoated sway:—

"And at the last—
The summer of the vine in all his veins—
'No doubt that we might make it worth his while.
For him, he reverenced his liege-lady there;
He always made a point to post with mares;
His daughter and his housemaid were the boys.
The land, he understood, for miles about
Was till'd by women; all the swine were sows,
And all the dogs'"—

This is too bad, even for medley; but proceed we into the interior of the grand and luxurious feminine institution, where their sex is speedily discovered, but for certain reasons concealed by the discoverers. Lectures on the past and what might be done to accomplish female equality, and description of the boundaries, the dwelling place, and the dwellers therein, fill many a page of mingled excellence and defects. Here is a sample of both in half a dozen lines:—

"We saw
The Lady Blanche's daughter where she stood,
Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
A rosy blonde, and in a college gown
That clad her like an April daffodilly
[Pg 180] (Her mother's colour) with her lips apart,
And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,
As bottom agates seem to wave and float
In crystal currents of clear morning seas."

Curious contradictions in mere terms, also occasionally occur. Thus, of a frightened girl, we are told that—

"*Light*
As flies the *shadow* of a bird she fled."

Events move on. The prince reasons as a man in a colloquy with the princess, and speaks of the delights of maternal affections, and she replies—

"We are not talk'd to thus:
Yet will we say for children, would they grew
Like field-flowers everywhere! we like them well:
But children die; and let me tell you, girl,
Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die:
They with the sun and moon renew their light
Forever, blessing those that look on them:
Children—that men may pluck them from our hearts,
Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—
O—children—there is nothing upon earth
More miserable than she that has a son
And sees him err:"

A song on "The days that are no more," seems to us to be too laboured, nor is the other lyric introduced, "The Swallow," much more to our satisfaction. It is a mixture of prettinesses: the first four triplets run thus, ending in a poetic beauty—

"O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her what I tell to thee.

[Pg 181] "O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And *dark* and true and tender is the North.

"O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And *cheep and twitter twenty million loves*.

"O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, *and her heart*
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died."

The prince saves the princess from being drowned, when the secret explodes like a roll of gun cotton, and a grand turmoil ensues. The rival kings approach to confines in battle array, and the princess resumes the declaration of war:—

"A tide of fierce

Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,
As waits a river level with the dam
Ready to burst and flood the world with foam:
And so she would have spoken, but there rose
A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together; from the illumin'd hall
Long lanes of splendour slanted o'er a press
Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded ewes,
And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike eyes,
And gold and golden heads; they to and fro
Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, same pale,
All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the land,
And some that men were in the very walls,
And some they cared not; till a clamour grew
As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded: high above them stood
The placid marble Muses, looking peace."

[Pg 182] She denounces the perils outside and in—

"I dare
All these male thunderbolts: what is it ye fear?
Peace! there are those to avenge us and they come:
If not,—myself were like enough, O girls,
To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,
And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,
Or, falling, protomartyr of our cause,
Die: yet I blame ye not so much for fear;
Six thousand years of fear have made ye that
From which I would redeem ye: but for those
That stir this hubbub—you and you—I know
Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow morn
We meet to elect new tutors; then shall they
That love their voices more than duty, learn
With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame to live
No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,
Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,
Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks of Time,
Whose brains are in their hands and in their heels,
But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,
To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour
For ever slaves at home and fools abroad."

Ay, just as Shakspere hath it—

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."

The hero also meets the shock, at least in poetic grace:—

"Upon my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy,
Which I shook off, for I was young, and one
To whom the shadow of all mischance but came
As night to him that sitting on a hill
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun,
Set into sunrise."

It is agreed to decide the contest by a combat of fifty on each side—the one led by the prince, and
[Pg 183] the other by Arac, the brother of the princess. And clad in "harness"—

"Issued in the sun that now
Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the Earth,
And hit the northern hills."

To the fight—

"Then rode we with the old king across the lawns
Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of Spring
In every bole, a song on every spray
Of birds that piped their Valentines."

The prince and his companions are defeated; and he, wounded almost to the death, is consigned at her own request to be nursed by the princess:—

"So was their sanctuary violated,
So their fair college turn'd to hospital;
At first with all confusion; by and by
Sweet order lived again with other laws;
A kindlier influence reign'd; and everywhere
Low voices with the ministering hand
Hung round the sick."

The result may be foreseen—

"From all a closer interest flourish'd up.
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gather'd colour day by day."

And the agreement is filled up:—

"Dear, but let us type them now
In our lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
[Pg 184] Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating with one full stroke
Life"

"O we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so through those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee; come,
Yield thyself up; my hopes and thine are one;
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

Who will question the true poetry of this production, or who will deny the imperfections, (mostly of affectation, though some of tastelessness) which obscure it? Who will wonder at our confessed wavering when they have read this course of alternate power, occasionally extravagant, and feebleness as in the long account of the *emeute*? Of the extravagant, the description of the princess, on receiving the declaration of war, is an example:—

"She read, till over brow
And cheek and bosom brake the wrathful bloom
As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
When the wild peasant rights himself, and the rick
Flames, and his anger reddens in the heavens."

The heroine, it must be acknowledged, is much of the virago throughout, and the prince rather of the softest; but the tale could not be otherwise told. We add four examples—two to be admired, and two to be contemned, in the fulfilment of our critique.

"For was, and is, and will be, are but is,"

is a noble line; and the following, on the promised restoration of a child to its mother, is very
[Pg 185] touching—

"Again she veiled her brows, and prone she sank, and so
Like tender things that being caught feign death,
Spoke not, nor stirr'd."

Not so the burlesque eight daughters of the plough, the brawny ministers of the princess' executive, and their usage of a herald. They were—

"Eight daughters of the plough, stronger than men,
Huge women blowzed with health, and wind, and rain
And labour. Each was like a Druid rock;
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and clang'd about with mews."

And they—

"Came sallying through the gates, and caught his hair,
And so belabour'd him on rib and cheek
They made him wild."

Nor the following—

"When the man wants weight the woman takes it up,
And topples down the scales; but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all.
Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she;
Man with the head and woman with the heart;
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion. Look to it; the gray mare
Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
From tile to scullery, and her small goodman
Shrinks in his arm-chair while the fires of Hell
Mix with his hearth; but take and break her, you!
She's yet a colt. Well groom'd and strongly curb'd
She might not rank with those detestable
That to the hireling leave their babe, and brawl
Their rights or wrongs like potherbs in the street.
They say she's comely; there's the fairer chance:
[Pg 186] *I* like her none the less for rating at her!
Besides, the woman wed is not as we,
But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace
Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,
The bearing and the training of a child
Is woman's wisdom."

—*The Literary Gazette*.

[Pg 187]

Robert Browning

Paracelsus. By Robert Browning.

There is talent in this dramatic poem, (in which is attempted a picture of the mind of this celebrated character,) but it is dreamy and obscure. Writers would do well to remember, (by way of example,) that though it is not difficult to imitate the mysticism and vagueness of Shelley, we love him and have taken him to our hearts as a poet, not *because* of these characteristics—but *in spite* of them.—*The Athenæum*.

[Pg 188]

Sordello. By Robert Browning. London: Moxon. 1840.

The scene of this poem is laid in Italy, when the Ghibelline and Guelph factions were in hottest contest. The author's style is rather peculiar, there being affectations of language and invertions of thought, and other causes of obscurity in the course of the story which detract from the pleasure of perusing it. But after all, we are much mistaken if Mr. Browning does not prove himself a poet of a right stamp,—original, vigorous, and finely inspired. He appears to us to possess a true sense of the dignity and sacredness of the poet's kingdom; and his imagination wings its way with a boldness, freedom and scope, as if he felt himself at home in that sphere, and was resolved to put his allegiance to the test.—*The Monthly Review*.

[Pg 189]

Men and Women. By Robert Browning. Two Volumes. Chapman and Hall.

It is really high time that this sort of thing should, if possible, be stopped. Here is another book of madness and mysticism—another melancholy specimen of power wantonly wasted, and talent deliberately perverted—another act of self-prostration before that demon of bad taste who now seems to hold in absolute possession the fashionable masters of our ideal literature. It is a strong case for the correctional justice of criticism, which has too long abdicated its proper functions. The Della Crusca of Sentimentalism perished under the *Baviad*—is there to be no future Gifford for the Della Crusca of Transcendentalism? The thing has really grown to a lamentable head amongst us. The contagion has affected not only our sciolists and our versifiers, but those whom, in the absence of a mightier race, we must be content to accept as the poets of our age. Here is Robert Browning, for instance—no one can doubt that he is capable of better things—no one, while deploring the obscurities that deface the *Paracelsus* and the *Dramatic Lyrics*, can deny the less questionable qualities which characterized those remarkable poems—but can any of his devotees be found to uphold his present elaborate experiment on the patience of the public? Take any of his worshippers you please—let him be "well up" in the transcendental poets of the day—take him fresh from Alexander Smith, or Alfred Tennyson's *Maud*, or the *Mystic* of Bailey—and we will engage to find him at least ten passages in the first ten pages of *Men and Women*, some

[Pg 190] of which, even after profound study, he will not be able to construe at all, and not one of which he will be able to read off at sight. Let us take one or two selections at random from the first volume, and try. What, for instance, is the meaning of these four stanzas from the poem entitled "By the Fireside"?—

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

With me, youth led—I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely—my heart knows how—

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

We really should think highly of the powers of any interpreter who could "pierce" the obscurity of such "stuff" as this. One extract more and we have done. A gold medal in the department of Hermeneutical Science to the ingenious individual, who, after any length of study, can succeed in
[Pg 191] unriddling this tremendous passage from "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," the organist:—

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways!

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help—
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close!

One disertates, he is candid—
Two must dicept,—has distinguished!
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did:
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished—
Back to One, goes the case bandied!

One says his say with a difference—
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining—
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

One is incisive, corrosive—
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant—
Five ... O Danaides, O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—
Now they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

Est fuga, volvitur rota!
On we drift. Where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

[Pg 192] What [with] affirming, denying,

Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like ... it's like ... for an instance I'm trying ...
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying?

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the dickens?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens,
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

Do our readers exclaim, "But where's poetry—the dickens—in all this rigmarole?" We confess we can find none—we can find nothing but a set purpose to be obscure, and an idiot captivity to the jingle of Hudibrastic rhyme. This idle weakness really appears to be at the bottom of half the daring nonsense in this most daringly nonsensical book. Hudibras Butler told us long ago that "rhyme the rudder is of verses;" and when, as in his case, or in that of Ingoldsby Barham, or Whims-and-Oddities Hood, the rudder guides the good ship into tracks of fun and fancy she might otherwise have missed, we are grateful to the double-endings, not on their own account, but for what they have led us to. But Mr. Browning is the mere thrall of his own rudder, and is constantly being steered by it into whirlpools of the most raging absurdity. This morbid passion for double rhymes, which is observable more or less throughout the book, reaches its climax in a long copy of verses on the "Old Pictures of Florence," which, with every disposition to be tolerant of the frailties of genius, we cannot hesitate to pronounce a masterpiece of absurdity. Let the lovers of
[Pg 193] the Hudibrastic admire these *tours de force*:—

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But you are too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
So grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

* * * * * * *

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

The conclusion of this poem rises to a climax:—

How shall we prologuise, how shall we perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

How really deplorable is all this! On what theory of art can it possibly be defended? In all the fine
[Pg 194] arts alike—poetry, painting, sculpture, music—the master works have this in common, that they please in the highest degree the most cultivated, and to the widest extent the less cultivated. *Lear* and the *Divine Comedy* exhaust the thinking of the profoundest student, yet subdue to hushed and breathless attention the illiterate minds that know not what study means. The "Last Judgment," the "Transfiguration," the "Niobe," and the "Dying Gladiator" excite alike the intelligent rapture of artists, and the unintelligent admiration of those to whom art and its principles are a sealed book. Handel's *Israel in Egypt*—the wonder of the scientific musician in his closet—yet sways to and fro, like a mighty wind upon the waters, the hearts of assembled thousands at an Exeter Hall oratorio. To take an instance more striking still, Beethoven, the sublime, the rugged, the austere, is also, as even Mons. Jullien could tell us, fast becoming a

popular favourite. Now why is this? Simply because these master minds, under the divine teaching of genius, have known how to clothe their works in a beauty of form incorporate with their very essence—a beauty of form which has an elective affinity with the highest instincts of universal humanity. And it is on this beauty of form, this exquisite perfection of style, that the Baileys and the Brownings would have us believe that they set small account, that they purposely and scornfully trample. We do not believe it. We believe that it is only because they are half-gifted that they are but half-intelligible. Their mysticism is weakness—weakness writhing itself into contortions that it may ape the muscles of strength. Artistic genius, in its higher degrees, necessarily involves the power of beautiful self-expression. It is but a weak and watery sun that allows the fogs to hang heavy between the objects on which it shines and the eyes it would
[Pg 195] enlighten; the true day-star chases the mists at once, and shows us the world at a glance.

Our main object has been to protest against what we feel to be the false teachings of a perverted school of art; and we have used this book of Mr. Browning's chiefly as a means of showing the extravagant lengths of absurdity to which the tenets of that school can lead a man of admitted powers. We should regret, however in the pursuit of this object to inflict injustice on Mr. Browning. This last book of his, like most of its predecessors, contains some undeniable beauties —subtle thoughts, graceful fancies, and occasionally a strain of music, which only makes the chaos of surrounding discords jar more harshly on the ear. The dramatic scenes "In a Balcony" are finely conceived and vigorously written; "Bishop Blougram's Apology," and "Cleon," are well worth reading and thinking over; and there is a certain grace and beauty in several of the minor poems. That which, on the whole, has pleased us most—really, perhaps, because we could read it off-hand—is "The Statue and the Bust," of which we give the opening stanzas:—

[Quotes fourteen stanzas of *The Statue and the Bust*.]

Why should a man, who, with so little apparent labour, can write naturally and well, take so much apparent labour to write affectedly and ill? There can be but one of two solutions. Either he goes wrong from want of knowledge, in which case it is clear that he wants the highest intuitions of genius; or he sins against knowledge, in which case he must have been misled by the false promptings of a morbid vanity, eager for that applause of fools which always waits on quackery, and which is never refused to extravagance when tricked out in the guise of originality. It is
[Pg 196] difficult, from the internal evidence supplied by his works, to know which of these two theories to adopt. Frequently the conclusion is almost irresistible, that Mr. Browning's mysticism must be of *malice prepense*: on the whole, however, we are inclined to clear his honesty at the expense of his powers, and to conclude that he is obscure, not so much because he has the vanity to be thought original, as because he lacks sufficient genius to make himself clear.—*The Saturday Review*.

[Pg 197]

NOTES

Thomas Gray

When Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard* appeared in 1751, the *Monthly Rev.*, IV, p. 309, gave it the following curious notice:—"The excellence of this little piece amply compensates for its want of quantity." The immediate success and popularity of the *Elegy* established Gray's poetical reputation; hence his *Odes* (1757) were received and criticized as the work of a poet of whom something entirely different was expected. The thin quarto volume containing *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* (entitled merely Ode I and Ode II in that edition) was printed for Dodsley by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill, and was published on August 8, 1757. Within a fortnight Gray wrote to Thomas Warton that the poems were not at all popular, the great objection being their obscurity; a week later he wrote to Hurd:—"Even my friends tell me they [the Odes] do not succeed ... in short, I have heard nobody but a player [Garrick] and a doctor of divinity [Warburton] that profess their esteem for them." For further comment, see Gray's *Works*, ed. Gosse, II, pp. 321-328.

Our review, which is reprinted from *Monthly Rev.*, XVII (239-243) (September, 1757), was written by Oliver Goldsmith, and is included in most of the collected editions of his works. Although it was practically wrung from Goldsmith while he was the unwilling thrall of Griffiths, it is a noteworthy piece of criticism for its time—certainly far superior to the general standard of the *Monthly Review*. While recognizing the scholarly merit of the poet's work, Goldsmith showed clearly why the Odes could not become popular. A more favorable notice of the volume appeared in the *Critical Rev.*, IV, p. 167.

In reprinting this review, the long quotations from both odes have been omitted. This precedent is followed in all cases where the quotations are of inordinate length, or are offered merely as "specimens" without specific criticism. No useful end would be served in reprinting numerous
[Pg 198] pages of classic extracts that are readily accessible to every student. All omissions are, of course, properly indicated.

1. *Quinault*. Philippe Quinault (1635-1688), a popular French dramatist and librettist.

2. *Mark'd for her own*. An allusion to the line in the Epitaph appended to the *Elegy*: "And Melancholy marked him for her own."

Oliver Goldsmith

Goldsmith's *Traveller* (1764) was begun as early as 1755—before he had expressed what Professor Dowden calls his "qualified enthusiasm" and "official admiration" for Gray's *Odes*. In criticizing Gray, he quoted Isocrates' advice—*Study the people*—and properly bore that precept in mind while he was shaping his own verses. The *Odes* and the *Traveller* are respectively characteristic utterances of their authors—of the academic recluse, and of the warm-hearted lover of humanity.

The review, quoted from the *Critical Rev.*, XVIII (458-462) (December, 1764), is from the pen of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Apart from its distinguished authorship and the strong words of commendation in the final sentence, it possesses slight interest as literary criticism. It is, in fact, little more than a brief summary of the poem, enriched by a few well-chosen illustrative extracts. The fact that Johnson contributed nine or ten lines to the poem (see Boswell, ed. Hill, I, p. 441, n. 1, and II, p. 6) may account partly for the character of the review. Johnson's quotations from the poem are not continuous and show several variations from authoritative texts.

William Cowper

Cowper stands almost alone among English poets as an instance of late manifestation of poetic power. He was over fifty years of age when he offered his first volume of *Poems* (1782) to the public. This collection, which included *Table-Talk* and other didactic poems, appeared at the beginning of the most prosaic age in the history of modern English literature; yet the critics did not find it sufficiently striking in quality to differentiate it from the level of contemporary verse, or to forecast the success of *The Task* and *John Gilpin's Ride* three years later.

The notice in the *Critical Rev.*, LIII (287-290), appeared in April, 1782. While the same poems are
[Pg 199] but slightly esteemed to-day, it must be recognized that the attitude of the reviewer was severe for his time. The age had grown accustomed to large draughts of moralizing and didacticism in verse, and the quality of Cowper's contribution was assuredly above the average. The *Monthly Rev.*, LXVII, p. 262, gave the *Poems* a much more favorable reception.

10. *Non Dii, non homines, etc.* Properly, *non homines, non di*, Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 373.

10. *Caraccioli. Jouissance de soi-même* (ed. 1762), cap. xii.

11. *There needs no ghost, etc.* See *Hamlet*, I, 5. 110.

Robert Burns

The Kilmarnock edition (1786) of Burns' *Poems* was published during the most eventful period of the poet's life; the almost universally kind reception accorded to this volume was the one source of consolation amid many sorrows and distractions. Two reviews have been selected to illustrate both the Scottish and English attitude toward the newly discovered "ploughman-poet." The *Edinburgh Magazine*, IV (284-288), in October, 1786, gave Burns a welcome that was hearty and sincere; though we may smile to-day at the information that he has neither the "doric simplicity" of Ramsay, nor the "brilliant imagination" of Ferguson. Besides the poems mentioned in brackets, the magazine published further extracts from Burns in subsequent numbers. The *Critical Review*, LXIII (387-388), gave the volume a belated notice in May, 1787, exceeding even the Scotch magazine in its generous appreciation. With the generally accepted fact in mind that all of Burns' enduring work is in the Scottish dialect, and that his English poems are comparatively inferior, it is interesting to note the *Critical Review's* regret that the dialect must "obscure the native beauties" and be often unintelligible to English readers. The same sentiment was expressed by the *Monthly Review*, LXXV, p. 439, in the critique reprinted (without its curious anglified version of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*) in Stevenson's *Early Reviews*.

There is perhaps no other English poet whose fame was so suddenly and securely established as Burns'. At no time since the appearance of the Kilmarnock volume has the worth of his lyrical achievement been seriously questioned. The *Reliques* of Burns, edited by Dr. Cromek in 1808,
[Pg 200] were reviewed by Walter Scott in the first number of the *Quarterly Review*, and by Jeffrey in the corresponding number of the *Edinburgh*. Both articles are valuable to the student of Burns, but their great length made their inclusion in the present volume impracticable.

14. *Rusticus abnormis sapiens, etc.* Horace, Sat. II, l. 3.

15. *A great lady ... and celebrated professor*. Evidently Mrs. Dunlop and Professor Dugald Stewart, who both took great interest in Burns after the appearance of the Kilmarnock volume.

The thin quartos containing *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* were published by Wordsworth in 1793. The former was practically a school-composition in verse, written between 1787-89 and dedicated to his sister; the latter was composed in France during 1791-92 and was revised shortly before publication. The dedication was addressed to the Rev. Robert Jones, fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, who was Wordsworth's companion during the pedestrian tour in the Alps. Though *An Evening Walk* was published first, the *Monthly Review*, XII, n.s. (216-218), in October, 1793, noticed both in the same issue and naturally gave precedence to the longer poem. Specific allusions in the text necessitate the same order in the present reprint.

The impatience of the reviewer at the prospect of "more descriptive poetry" was due to the fact that many such productions had recently been noticed by the *Monthly*, and that the volumes then under consideration evidently belonged to the broad stream of mediocre verse that had been flowing soberly along almost since the days of Thomson. These first attempts smacked so decidedly of the older manner that we cannot censure the critic for failing to foresee that Wordsworth was destined to glorify the "poetry of nature," and to rescue it from the rut of listless and soporific topographical description. Both poems, in the definitive text, are readable, and exhibit here and there a glimmer of the poet's future greatness; yet it must be borne in mind that Wordsworth was continually tinkering at his verse, to the subsequent despair of conscientious variorum editors, and that most of the absurdities and infelicities in his first editions disappeared
[Pg 201] under the correcting influence of his sarcastic critics and his own maturing taste.

A collation of the accepted text with the *Monthly Review's* quotations will repay the student; thus, the twelve opening lines quoted by the reviewer are represented by eight lines in Professor Knight's edition, and only four of these correspond to the original text. The reviewer confined his remarks to the first thirty lines of the poem and very properly neglected the rest. He followed, with moderate success, the method of quotation with interpolated sarcasm and badinage—a method that was afterwards effectively pursued by the early Edinburgh Reviewers and the Blackwood coterie. There are few examples of that style in the eighteenth century reviews, but some noteworthy specimens of a later period—*e.g.*, the *Edinburgh Review* on Coleridge's *Christabel* and the *Quarterly* on Tennyson's *Poems*—are reprinted in this volume.

The review of *An Evening Walk* is simply an appended paragraph to the previous article. Wordsworth evidently appreciated the advice conveyed in the reviewer's final sentence and found many of the lines that "called loudly for amendment." More favorable notices of both poems will be found in *Critical Review*, VIII, pp. 347 and 472.

Lyrical Ballads

The *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge were published anonymously early in September, 1798—a few days before the joint authors sailed for Germany. Coleridge's contributions were *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *The Foster-Mother's Tale*, *The Nightingale*, and *The Dungeon*; the remaining nineteen poems were by Wordsworth. As the publication of this volume has been accepted by most critics as the first fruit of the new romantic spirit and the virtual beginning of modern English poetry, the reception accorded to the *Lyrical Ballads* becomes a matter of prime importance. It is well known that the effort was a failure at first and that the apparent triumph of romanticism did not occur until the publication of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805); but a contemporary blindness to the beauty of two of the finest poems in English literature cannot be permitted to figure in the critics' dispassionate investigation of causes and influences.

There were four interesting reviews of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, namely, (1) *Critical*
[Pg 202] *Rev.*, XXIV, n.s. (197-204), in October, 1798, which is reprinted here; (2) *Analytical Rev.*, XXVIII (583-587), in December, 1798; (3) *Monthly Rev.*, XXIX, n.s. (202-210), in May, 1799, reprinted in Stevenson's *Early Reviews*; (4) *British Critic*, XIV (364-369) in October, 1799.

The article in the *Critical Review* was written by Robert Southey under conditions most favorable for such a malicious procedure. The publisher, his friend Cottle, had transferred the copyright of the *Lyrical Ballads* to Arch, a London publisher, within two weeks of the appearance of the volume, giving as a shallow excuse the "heavy sale" of the book. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were in Germany. Southey had quarreled with Coleridge, and was probably jealous of the latter's extravagant praise of Wordsworth. He accordingly seized the opportunity to assail the work without injuring Cottle's interests or entailing the immediate displeasure of the travelling bards.

He covered his tracks to some extent by referring several times to "the author," although the joint authorship was well known to him. While severe in most of his strictures on Wordsworth, Southey reserved his special malice for *The Ancient Mariner*. He called it "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity"; and in a letter written to William Taylor on September 5, 1798—probably while he was writing his discreditable critique—he characterized the poem as "the clumsiest attempt at German sublimity I ever saw." Southey's responsibility for the article became known to Cottle, who communicated the fact to the poets on their return a year later. Wordsworth declared that "if Southey could not conscientiously have spoken differently of the volume, he ought to have declined the task of reviewing it." Coleridge indited an epigram, *To a Critic*, and let the matter drop. Shortly afterwards he showed his renewed good-will by aiding Southey in preparing the second *Annual Anthology* (1800).

The subsequent reviews of the *Lyrical Ballads* adopted the tone of the *Critical* (then recognized as the leading review) and internal evidence shows that they did not hesitate to borrow ideas from Southey's article. The *Analytical Review* also saw German extravagances in *The Ancient Mariner*; the *Monthly* borrowed Southey's figure of the Italian and Flemish painters, and called *The Ancient Mariner* "the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper ... a
[Pg 203] rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence." The belated review in the *British Critic* was probably written by Coleridge's friend, Rev. Francis Wrangham, and was somewhat more appreciative than the rest. For further details, consult Mr. Thomas Hutchinson's reprint (1898) of the *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. (xiii-xxviii). Despite the unfavorable reviews, the Ballads reached a fourth edition in 1805 (besides an American edition in 1802), thus achieving the popularity alluded to by Jeffrey at the beginning of our next review.

Poems **(1807)**

Wordsworth's fourth publication, the *Poems* (1807), included most of the pieces written after the first appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It was likewise his first venture subsequent to the founding of the *Edinburgh Review*. Jeffrey had assailed the theories of the "Lake Poets" (and, incidentally, coined that unfortunate term) in the first number of the *Review*, in an article on Southey's *Thalaba*, and three years later (1805), in criticizing *Madoc*, he again expressed his views on the subject. Now came the first opportunity to deal with the recognized leader of the "Lakers"—the poet whose work most clearly illustrated the poetic theories that Jeffrey deemed pernicious.

The article here reprinted from the *Edinburgh Rev.*, XI (214-231), of October, 1807, and Jeffrey's review of *The Excursion*, in *ibid.*, XXIV (1-30), are perhaps the two most important critiques of their kind. No student of Wordsworth's theory of poetry, as set forth in his various prefaces, can afford to ignore either of these interesting discussions of the subject. (For details, see A.J. George's edition of the *Prefaces* of Wordsworth, Gates' *Selections* from Jeffrey, Beers' *Nineteenth Century Romanticism*, Hutchinson's edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, etc.) It was undoubtedly true that Jeffrey, although an able critic, failed to grasp the real significance of the new poetic movement, and to appreciate the influence wrought by the doctrines of the Lake Poets on modern conceptions of poetry. Yet he was far from wrong in many of his criticisms of Wordsworth. While deprecating the latter's theories, it is clear that Jeffrey regarded him as a poet of great power who was being led astray by his perverse practice. The popular conception of Jeffrey as a hectoring and blatant opponent of Wordsworth is not substantiated by the review. The impartial reader must agree with Jeffrey at many points, and if he will take the trouble to collate Jeffrey's
[Pg 204] quotations with the revised text of Wordsworth, he will learn that the poet did not disdain to take an occasional suggestion for the improvement of his verse.

We recognize Wordsworth to-day as the most unequal of English poets. There is little that is common to the inspired bard of *Tintern Abbey*, the *Immortality Ode* and the nobler *Sonnets*, and the unsophisticated scribe of *Peter Bell* and *The Idiot Boy*. Like Browning, he wrote too much to write well at all times, and if both poets were capable of the sublimest flights, they likewise descended to unimagined depths; but the fault of Wordsworth was perhaps the greater, because his bathos was the result of a deliberate and persistent attempt to enrich English poetry with prosaically versified incidents drawn at length from homely rural life.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The first part of Coleridge's *Christabel* was written in 1797 during the brief period of inspiration that also gave us *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*—in short, that small group of exquisite poems which in themselves suffice to place Coleridge in the front rank of English poets. The second part was written in 1800, after the author's return from Germany. The fragment circulated widely in manuscript among literary men, bewitched Scott and Byron into imitating its fascinating rhythms, and, at Byron's suggestion, was finally published by Murray in 1816 with *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep*. It is probable that the high esteem in which these poems were held by Coleridge's literary friends led him to expect a favorable reception at the hands of the critics; hence his keen disappointment at the general tone of their sarcastic analysis and their protests against the absurdity and obscurity of the poems. The principal critiques on *Christabel* were:—(1) *Edinburgh Rev.*, XXVII (58-67), which is here reprinted; (2) *Monthly Rev.*, LXXXII, n.s. (22-25), reprinted in Stevenson's *Early Reviews*; (3) *The Literary Panorama*, IV, n.s. (561-565); and (4) *Anti-Jacobin Rev.*, L (632-636).

It is evident that Coleridge was eminently successful in the gentle art of making enemies. We have seen that Southey's attack on the *Lyrical Ballads* was a direct result of his ill-will toward Coleridge; the outrageous article in the *Edinburgh Review* was written by William Hazlitt under
[Pg 205] similar inspiration, and was followed by abusive papers in *The Examiner* (1816, p. 743, and 1817, p. 236). There was no justification for Hazlitt, and none has been attempted by his biographers. Judged by its intrinsic merits, the Edinburgh article is one of the most absurd reviews ever written by a critic of recognized ability. Hazlitt followed the method of outlining the story by quotation with interspersed sarcasm and ironical criticism. As a coarse boor might crumple a delicate and beautifully wrought fabric to prove that it has not the wearing qualities of a blacksmith's apron, Hazlitt seized upon the ethereal story of *Christabel*, with its wealth of

mediæval and romantic imagery, and held up to ridicule the incidents that did not conform to modern English conceptions of life. It requires no great art to produce such a critique; the same method was applied to *Christabel* with hardly less success by the anonymous hack of the *Anti-Jacobin*. Whatever may have been Hazlitt's motives, we cannot understand how a critic of his unquestioned ability could quote with ridicule some of the very finest lines of *Kubla Khan*, and expect his readers to concur with his opinion. The lack of taste was more apparent because he quoted, with qualified praise, six lines of no extraordinary merit from *Christabel* and insisted, that with this one exception, there was not a couplet in the whole poem that achieved the standard of a newspaper poetry-corner or the effusions scratched by peripatetic bards on inn-windows. An interesting discussion between Mr. Thomas Hutchinson and Col. Prideaux concerning Hazlitt's responsibility for this and other critiques on Coleridge in the *Edinburgh Review* will be found in *Notes and Queries* (Ninth Series), X, pp. 388, 429; XI, 170, 269.

The other reviews of *Christabel* were all unfavorable. Most extravagant was the utterance of the *Monthly Magazine*, XLVI, p. 407, in 1818, when it declared that the "poem of Christabel is only fit for the inmates of Bedlam. We are not acquainted in the history of literature with so great an insult offered to the public understanding as the publication of that r[h]apsody of delirium."

Hazlitt's primitive remarks on the metre of *Christabel* are of little interest. Coleridge was, of course, wrong in stating that his metre was founded on a new principle. The irregularly four-stressed line occurs in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender* and can be traced back through the halting tetrameters of Skelton. Coleridge himself alludes to this fact in his note to his poem *The*
[Pg 206] *Raven*, and elsewhere.

Coleridge's earlier poetical publications were received with commonplace critiques usually mildly favorable. For reviews of his *Poems* (1796) see *Monthly Rev.*, XX, n.s., p. 194; *Analytical Rev.*, XXIII, p. 610; *British Critic*, VII, p. 549; and *Critical Rev.*, XVII, n.s., p. 209; the second edition of *Poems* (1797) is noticed in *Critical Rev.*, XXIII, n.s., p. 266; for *Lyrical Ballads*, see under Wordsworth; for the successful play *Remorse* (1813), see *Monthly Rev.*, LXXI, n.s., p. 82, and *Quarterly Rev.*, XI, p. 177.

Robert Southey

Madoc, a ponderous quarto of over five hundred pages and issued at two guineas, was published by Southey in 1805 as the second of that long-forgotten series of interminable epics including *Thalaba*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and *Roderick, Last of the Goths*. These huge unformed productions were not poems, but metrical tales, written in a kind of verse that could have flowed indefinitely from the author's pen. In short, Southey was not a poet, and the whole bulk of his efforts in verse, with but one or two exceptions, seems destined to oblivion. As poet-laureate for thirty years and the associate of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the "Lake School," Southey will, however, remain a figure of some importance in the history of English poetry.

The review of *Madoc* reprinted from the *Monthly Rev.*, XLVIII (113-122) for October, 1805, was written in the old style then fast giving way to the sprightlier methods of the *Edinburgh*. Here we find a style abounding in literary allusions and classical quotations, and evincing a generally patronizing attitude toward the author under discussion. Most readers will agree with the sentiments expressed by the reviewer, who succeeded in making his article interesting without descending to the depths of buffoonery. No apology is necessary for the excision of the reviewer's unreasonably long extracts from the poem. *Madoc* was also reviewed at great length in the *Edinburgh Review* by Francis Jeffrey.

61. *Ille ego, qui quondam, etc.* The lines usually prefixed to the *Æneid*.

61. *Prorumpere in medias res*. Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 148.

61. *Macklin's Tragedy*. *Henry VII* (1746), his only tragedy, and a failure.

[Pg 207] 61. *Toto carere possum*. Cf. Martial, *Epig.* XI, 56.

61. *Camoëns*. The author of the Portuguese *Lusiad* (1572) which narrates the adventures of Vasco da Gama.

62. *Milton*. Quoted from Sonnet XI.—*On the Detraction which followed upon my writing certain Treatises*.

63. *Snatching a grace, etc.* Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, l. 153.

Charles Lamb

Most of Lamb's earlier poetical productions appeared in conjunction with the work of other poets. Four of his sonnets were printed with Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796), and he was more fully represented in *Poems by S.T. Coleridge. Second Edition. To which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd* (1797). In the following year appeared *Blank Verse*, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb. For new and interesting material concerning the three

poets, see E.V. Lucas' *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* (1899). Lloyd (1775-1839) wrote melancholy verses and a sentimental, epistolary novel *Edmund Oliver*, but nothing of permanent value. However, in 1798, he was almost as well known as Coleridge, and was hailed in some quarters as a promising poet.

The *Monthly Rev.*, XXVII, n.s. (104-105), in September, 1798, published the critique of *Blank Verse* which is here reprinted. Its principal interest lies in the scant attention shown to Lamb, although the volume contained his best poem—the tender *Old Familiar Faces*. Dr. Johnson's characterization of blank-verse as "poetry to the eye" will be found at the end of his *Life of Milton* as a quotation from "an ingenious critic."

Lamb's drama, *John Woodvil* (1802), written in imitation of later Elizabethan models, was a failure. It was unfavorably noticed in the *Monthly Rev.*, XL, n.s., p. 442 and at greater length in the *Edinburgh Rev.*, II, p. 90 ff.

Many years later (1830) Lamb prepared his collection of *Album-Verses* at the request of his friend Edward Moxon, who had achieved some fame as a poet and was enabled (by the generous aid of Samuel Rogers) to begin his more lucrative career as a publisher. Three years after the appearance of *Album-Verses*, he married Lamb's adopted daughter, Emma Isola. The *Album-Verses*, like most of their kind, were a collection of small value; the *Literary Gazette*, 1830 (441-
[Pg 208] 442), consequently lost no time in assailing them. The *Athenæum*, 1830, p. 435, at that time the bitter rival of the *Gazette*, published a more favorable review, and a few weeks later (p. 491) printed Southey's verses, *To Charles Lamb, on the Reviewal of his Album-Verses in the Literary Gazette*, together with a sharp commentary on the methods of the *Gazette*. Several times during that year the *Athenæum* assailed the system of private puffery which was followed by the *Gazette* and eventually caused its downfall. There is a reply to the *Athenæum* in the *Literary Gazette*, 1833, p. 772.

Walter Savage Landor

Landor was twenty-three when he published *Gebir* anonymously in 1798—the year of the *Lyrical Ballads*—and he lived until 1864. The nine decades of his life covered an important period of literature. He was nine years old when the great Johnson died, yet he lived to see the best poetic achievements of Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. However, he did not live to see *Gebir* a popular poem. Southey gave it a favorable welcome in the *Critical Review*, and became a life-long admirer of Landor; but our brief notices reprinted from the *Monthly Rev.*, XXXI, n.s., p. 206, and *British Critic*, XV, p. 190 of February, 1800, represent more nearly the popular verdict. Both reviewers complain of the obscurity of the poem, which, it will be remembered, had been originally written in Latin, then translated and abridged. Notwithstanding the fact that Landor declared himself amply repaid by the praise of a few appreciative readers, he prepared a violent and scornful reply to the *Monthly Review*, and would have published it but for the sensible dissuasion of a friend. Some interesting extracts from the letter are printed in Forster's *Life of Landor*, pp. (76-85). He protested especially against the imputed plagiarisms from Milton and gave ample evidence of the pugnacious spirit that brought him into difficulties several times during his life. See also the *Imaginary Conversation* between Archdeacon Hare and Walter Landor, wherein the reception of *Gebir* is discussed and Southey's poetry is praised at the expense of Wordsworth's. Landor's first publication, the *Poems* (1795) was noticed in the *Monthly Rev.*, XXI, n.s., p. 253.

Sir Walter Scott

The successful series of metrical tales which Scott inaugurated with the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*
[Pg 209] (1805) had for its second member the more elaborate *Marmion* (1808). From the first, Scott's poems and romances were favorably received by the reviews and usually noticed at great length. There was always a story to outline and choice passages to quote. As suggested in the Preface, these pæans of praise are of comparatively little interest to the student, and need hardly be cited here in detail.

The critique of *Marmion*, written by Jeffrey for the *Edinburgh Rev.*, XII (1-35), had the place of honor in the number for April, 1808. It was chosen for the present reprints partly as a fitting example of Jeffrey's fearlessness in expressing his opinions, and partly for its historic interest as the article that contributed to Scott's rupture with the Edinburghers and to his successful founding of a Tory rival in the *Quarterly Review*. Although the article has here been abridged to about half of its original length by the omission of six hundred quoted lines and a synopsis of the poem, it is still the longest of these reprints. Jeffrey evidently felt that a detailed account of the story was necessary in order to justify his strictures on the plot.

An author of those days could afford to ignore the decisions of the critical monthlies, but the brilliant criticism and incisive diction of the *Edinburgh Review* carried weight and exerted far-reaching influence. Jeffrey's article was practically the only dissonant note in the chorus of praise that greeted *Marmion*, and Scott probably resented the critic's attitude. Lockhart, in his admirable chapter on the publication of *Marmion*, admits that "Jeffrey acquitted himself on this

occasion in a manner highly creditable to his courageous sense of duty." The April number of the *Edinburgh* appeared shortly before a particular day on which Jeffrey had engaged to dine with Scott. Fearing that under the circumstances he might be an unwelcome guest, he sent the following tactful note with the copy which was forwarded to the poet:—

"Dear Scott,—If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than any other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude, and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with everything I have said, it would mortify me very severely to
[Pg 210] believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very long to tell me so. In the meantime, I am very sincerely yours, F. Jeffrey."

There was but one course open to Scott; accordingly to Lockhart, "he assured Mr. Jeffrey that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinions it expressed, and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed. Mr. Jeffrey appeared accordingly, and was received by his host with the frankest cordiality, but had the mortification to observe that the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved herself with exemplary civility during the dinner, but could not help saying, in her broken English, when her guest was departing, 'Well, good night, Mr. Jeffrey. Dey tell me you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr. Constable has paid *you* very well for writing it.'"

Jeffrey's article apparently had little influence on the sale of *Marmion*, which reached eight editions (25,000 copies) in three years. In October, 1808, the *Edinburgh Review* published an appreciative review of Scott's edition of Dryden, and afterwards received with favor the later poems and the principal Waverley Novels.

78. *Mr. Thomas Inkle*. The story of Inkle and Yarico was related by Steele in no. 11 of the *Spectator*. It was afterwards dramatized (1787) by George Colman.

Lord Byron

The twentieth number of the *Edinburgh Review* contained Jeffrey's long article on Wordsworth's *Poems* (1807); the twenty-second contained his review of Scott's *Marmion*; and the twenty-first (January, 1808) contained a still more famous critique, long attributed to Jeffrey—the review of Byron's *Hours of Idleness* (1807). It is reprinted from *Edinburgh Rev.*, XI (285-289) in Stevenson's *Early Reviews* and forms Appendix II of R.E. Prothero's edition of Byron's *Letters and Journals*. We know definitely that the article was written by Henry Brougham. (See Prothero, op.
[Pg 211] cit., II, p. 397, and Sir M.E. Grant Duff's *Notes from a Diary*, II, p. 189.)

It is hardly within the province of literary criticism to deal with hypothetical conditions in authors' lives; but it is at least a matter of some interest to conjecture whether Byron would have become a great poet if this stinging review had not been published. It is evident that the *Hours of Idleness* gave few signs of promise, and the poet, fully intent upon a political career, himself expressed his intention of abandoning the muse. Many an educated Englishman has published such a volume of *Juvenilia* and sinned no more. But a nature like Byron's could not overlook the effrontery of the *Edinburgh Review*. The proud-spirited poet was evidently far more incensed by the patronizing tone of the article than by its strictures: what could be more galling than the reiterated references to the "noble minor," or the withering contempt that characterized a particular poem as "the thing in page 79"? Many years later, Byron wrote to Shelley:—"I recollect the effect on me of the *Edinburgh* on my first poem; it was rage, and resistance, and redress—but not despondency nor despair." (Prothero, V, p. 267.)

There was method in Byron's "rage and resistance and redress." For more than a year he labored upon a satire which he had begun even before the appearance of the *Edinburgh* article. (See letter of October 26, 1807, in *Letters*, ed. Prothero, I, p. 147.) In the spring of 1809, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was given anonymously to the world. The publication of this vigorous satire virtually decided Byron's career. Not only did he abuse Jeffrey, whom he believed responsible for the offending critique, but he flung defiance in the face of almost all his literary contemporaries. The authorship of the satire was soon apparent, and in a flippant note to the second edition, Byron became still more abusive toward Jeffrey and his "dirty pack," and declared that he was ready to give satisfaction to all who sought it. A few years later he regretted his rashness in assailing the authors of his time. He also learned of the injustice done to Jeffrey and had ample reason to feel embarrassed by the tone of the eight reviews of his poems that Jeffrey did write for the *Edinburgh*. (See the list in Prothero, II, p. 248.) In *Don Juan* (canto X, xvi), he made the following retraction:—

"And all our little feuds, at least all *mine*,
Dear Jeffrey, once my most redoubted foe
(As far as rhyme and criticism combine
To make such puppets of us things below),
[Pg 212] Are over. Here's a health to 'Auld Lang Syne!'
I do not know you, and may never know
Your face—but you have acted, on the whole,

Most nobly; and I own it from my soul."

The other reviews of *Hours of Idleness* are of little interest. The *Monthly* and the *Critical* both praised the book; the *Literary Panorama*, III, p. 273, said the author was no imbecile, but an incautious writer.

98. θελο λεγειν,—Anacreon, Ode I. (θέλο λέγειν Ἀτρείδας, κ. τ. λ.)

98. μεσονυκτιοις,ποθ' ὁραις,—Anacreon, Ode III. (μεσονυκτίοις ποθ' ὥραις, κ. τ. λ.)

100. *Sancho,*—Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*. The proverb is of ancient origin. See French, Latin, Italian and Spanish forms in Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

Childe Harold

Shortly after the appearance of the second edition of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron left England and travelled through the East, at the same time leisurely composing the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Their publication in 1812 placed him at the head of the popular poets of the day. Henceforth the reviews gave extensive notices to all his productions. (For references, see J.P. Anderson's bibliography appended to Hon. Roden Noel's *Life of Byron*.) *Childe Harold* was reviewed in the *Edinburgh Rev.*, XIX (466-477), by Jeffrey; in the *Quarterly*, VII (180-200), by George Ellis; in the *British Review*, III (275-302); and *Eclectic Review*, XV (630-641).

The article here reprinted from the *Christian Observer*, XI (376-386), of June, 1812, is of special interest as an early protest from conservative, religious circles against the immoral and irreverent tone of Byron's poetry. As literary criticism, it is almost worthless, in spite of the elaborate allusions and quotations with which the critic—evidently a survivor of the old school—has interlarded his remarks. Little can be said in defense of an article which insists that the chief end of poetry is to be agreeably didactic and which (in 1812) cites Southey as the greatest of living poets. However, it probably represents the attitude of a large number of worthy people of
[Pg 213] the time, who recognized that Byron had genius, and wished to see him exercise his powers with due regard for the proprieties of civilized life. As Byron's offences grew more flagrant in his later poems, the criticisms in the conservative reviews became more vehement. For Byron's controversy with the *British Review*, which he facetiously dubbed "my grandmother's review" in *Don Juan*, see Prothero, IV, pp. (346-347), and Appendix VII. The ninth Appendix to the same volume is Byron's caustic reply to the brutal review of *Don Juan* in *Blackwood's Magazine*, V, p. 512 ff.

101. *Lion of the north*, Francis Jeffrey. The usual agnomen of Gustavus Adolphus. Cf. Walter Scott, the "Wizard of the North."

105. *Faiery Queen will not often be read through*. Hume's *History of England*, Appendix III.

106. *Qui, quid sit pulchrum*, etc. Horace, Epis. II (3-4).

106. *Rursum—quid virtus*, etc. Horace, Epis. II (17-18).

107. *Our sage serious Spenser, etc.* Milton's *Areopagitica*, *Works*, ed. Mitford, IV, p. 412.

107. *Quinctilian*. See Quintilian, Book XII, Chap. I.

107. *Longinus*. *On the Sublime*, IX, XIII, etc.

108. *Restoration of Learning in the East*. A Cambridge prize poem (1805) by Charles Grant, Lord Glenelg (1778-1866).

109. *Thersites*. See Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*.

109. *Caliban*. See Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

109. *Heraclitus*. The "weeping philosopher" (circa 500 B.C.).

109. *Zeno*. The founder (342-270 B.C.) of the Stoic School.

109. *Zoilus*. The ancient grammarian who assailed the works of Homer. The epithet Homeromastix is sometimes applied to him.

113. *The philosophic Tully, etc.* See the concluding paragraph of Cicero's *De Senectute*.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

It is doubtful whether any other poet was so widely and so continuously assailed in the reviews as Shelley. Circumstances have made certain critiques on Byron, Keats, and others more widely known, but nowhere else do we find the persistent stream of abuse that followed in the wake of Shelley's publications. The *Blackwood* articles were usually most scathing, and those of the *Literary Gazette* were not far behind. Fortunately, the poet spent most of his time in Italy and
[Pg 214] thus remained in ignorance of the great majority of these spiteful attacks in the less important periodicals.

Alastor, which appeared in 1816, attracted comparatively little attention. The tone of the brief notice reprinted from the *Monthly Rev.*, LXXIX, n.s., p. 433, shows that the poet was as yet unknown to the critics. *Blackwood's Magazine*, VI (148-154), gave a longer and, on the whole, more favorable account of the poem. In the same year, Leigh Hunt published his *Story of Rimini*, most noteworthy for its graceful rhythmical structure in the unrestricted couplets of Chaucer. This departure from the polished heroics of Pope, which were ill-adapted to narrative subjects in spite of his successful translation of Homer, was hailed with delight by the younger poets. Shelley imitated the measure in his *Julian* and *Maddalo*, and Keats did likewise in *Lamia* and *Endymion*. Hunt was soon recognized by the critics as the leader of a group of liberals whom they conveniently classified as the Cockney School. Shelley's ill-treatment at the hands of the reviewers dates from his association with this coterie. His *Revolt of Islam* (1818) was assailed by John Taylor Coleridge in the *Quarterly Review*, XXI (460-471). *The Cenci* was condemned as a horrible literary monstrosity by the scandalized critics of the *Monthly Rev.*, XCIV, n.s. (161-168); the *Literary Gazette*, 1820 (209-10); and the *New Monthly Magazine*, XIII (550-553). The review here reprinted from the *London Mag.*, I (401-405), is comparatively mild in its censure.

One would naturally suppose that the death of Keats would have ensured at least a respectful consideration for Shelley's lament, *Adonais* (1821); but the callous critics were by no means abashed. The outrageous article in the *Literary Gazette* of December 8, 1821, pp. (772-773), is one of the unpardonable errors of literary criticism; but it sinks into insignificance beside the brutal, unquotable review which *Blackwood's Magazine* permitted to appear in its pages. In the same year Shelley's youthful poetical indiscretion, *Queen Mab*, which he himself called "villainous trash," was published under circumstances beyond his control, and forthwith the readers of the *Literary Gazette* were regaled with ten columns of foul abuse from the pen of a critic who declared that he was driven almost speechless by the sentiments expressed in the poem. Well could the heartless reviewer of *Adonais* write:—"If criticism killed the disciples of that
[Pg 215] [the Cockney] school, Shelley would not have been alive to write an elegy on another."

115. *Eye in a fine phrenzy rolling*. Shakespeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, V, 1, 12.

115. *Above this visible diurnal sphere*. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book VII, 22.

116. *Parcâ quod satis est manu*. Horace, *Odes*, III, 16, 24.

116. *Lord Fanny*. A nickname bestowed upon Lord Hervey, an effeminate noble of the time of George II.

117. *O! rus, quando ego te aspiciam*. Horace, *Satires*, II, 6, 60.

117. *Mordecai*. See Book of *Esther*, V, 13.

118. *Last of the Romans*. Mark Antony in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, III, 2, 194.

120. *Full fathom five*. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, I, 2, 396.

126. *Ohé! jam satis est*. Horace, *Satires*, I, 5, 12-13.

126. *Tristram Shandy*. The excommunication is in vol. III, chap. XI.

133. *Put a girdle*, etc. See Shakespeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II, 1, 175.

John Keats

The history of English poetry offers no more interesting case between poet and critic than that of John Keats. The imputed influence of a savage critique in hastening the death of the poet has given the *Quarterly Review* an unenviable notoriety which clings in spite of the efforts of scholars to establish the truth. To many students, Keats, *Endymion*, and *Quarterly* are practically connotative terms; and this is a direct result of the righteous but misguided indignation of Shelley—misguided because his information was incomplete and the more guilty party escaped, thus inflicting upon the *Quarterly* the brunt of the opprobrium of which far more than half should be accredited to *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Endymion was published in April, 1818. One of the publishers (Taylor and Hessey) requested Gifford, then editor of the *Quarterly Review*, to treat the poem with indulgence. This indiscreet move probably actuated Gifford to provide a severe critique; at any rate, in the belated April number of the *Quarterly*, XIX (204-208), which was not issued until September, appeared the
[Pg 216] famous review. A persistent error, which has crept into W.M. Rossetti's *Life of Keats*, into Anderson's bibliography, and even into the article on Gifford in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, attributes this article to Gifford himself; but it is known to be the work of John Wilson Croker. (See the article on Croker in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* From the article on John Murray (*ibid.*) we learn that Gifford was not wholly responsible for a single article in the *Quarterly*.)

Meanwhile, *Blackwood's Magazine*, III (519-524) had made *Endymion* the text of its fourth infamous tirade against the Cockney School of Poetry. The signature "Z" was appended to all the articles, but the critic's identity has not yet been discovered. Leigh Hunt thought it was Walter Scott, Haydon suspected the actor Terry, but it is more probable that the honor belongs to John Gibson Lockhart. One account attributes the entire series to Lockhart; another attributes the

series to Wilson, but holds Lockhart responsible for the *Endymion* article. Mr. Andrew Lang, in his *Life and Letters of Lockhart*, dismissed the matter by saying that he did not know who wrote the article.

The *Quarterly* critique was reprinted in Stevenson's *Early Reviews*, in Rossetti's *Life of Keats*, in Buxton Forman's edition of Keats' *Poetical Works* (Appendix V) and elsewhere. From a critical point of view, it is, as Forman terms it, a "curiously unimportant production." The student will at once question its power to cause distress in the mind of the poet; as for malignant severity, there are several reviews among the present reprints that put the brief *Quarterly* article to shame. When we turn to what Swinburne calls the "obscener insolence" of the *Blackwood* article, we find an unrestrained torrent of abuse against both Hunt and Keats that amply justified Landor's subsequent allusions to the *Blackguard's Magazine*. The *Quarterly* critique was captious and ill-tempered; but the *Blackwood* article was a personal insult.

It is impossible to consider in detail the vexed question of the influence which these reviews had upon Keats. In Mr. W.M. Rossetti's *Life of Keats*, pp. (83-106) there is a full discussion of the evidence on the subject. Within a few months after the appearance of the articles, Keats wrote: —"Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or *The Quarterly* could possibly inflict." Some weeks later he
[Pg 217] wrote that the *Quarterly* article had only served to make him more prominent among bookmen. After some time he expressed himself less confidently and deprecated the growing power of the reviews, but there is no evidence that he fretted over the critiques. Haydon tells us that Keats was morbid and silent for hours at a time; but it is quite likely that the consciousness of his physical affliction—hereditary consumption—was oppressing his mind. His death occurred on February 23, 1821—about two and a half years after the appearance of the *Endymion* critiques.

Shelley had gone to Italy before the reviews were published. He heard of the *Quarterly* article, but knew nothing of *Blackwood's* while writing *Adonais*; hence in both poem and preface, the former review is charged with having caused Keats' death. Shelley declared that Keats' agitation over the review ended in the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs with an ensuing rapid consumption. These statements, which Shelley must have had indirectly, have not been substantiated. We are forced to the conclusion now generally accepted—that Keats, although sensitive to personal ridicule, was superior to the stings of review criticism and that the distressing events of the last year of his life were sufficient to assure the early triumph of the inherent and unconquerable disease.

141. *Miss Baillie*. Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) authoress of numerous forgotten plays and poems which enjoyed great popularity in their day.

142. *Land of Cockaigne*. Here means London, and refers specifically to the Cockney poets. An old French poem on the *Land of Cockaigne* described it as an ideal land of luxury and ease. The best authorities do not accept Cockney as a derivative form. The Cockney School was composed of Londoners of the middle-class, supposedly ill-bred and imperfectly educated. The critics took special delight in dwelling upon the humble origin of the Cockneys, their lack of university training, and especially their dependence on translations for their knowledge of the classics.

142. *When Leigh Hunt left prison*. Hunt had been imprisoned for libel on the Prince Regent (1812).

146. *Vauxhall*. The Gardens were a favorite resort for Londoners early in the eighteenth century and remained popular for a long time. See Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (chap. VI). The implication in the present passage is that the Cockney poet gets his ideas of nature from the immediate vicinity
[Pg 218] of London.

147. *East of Temple-bar*. That is, living in the City of London.

150. *Young Sangrado*. An allusion to Doctor Sangrado, in Le Sage's *Gil Blas* (1715).

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Tennyson's first poetical efforts, which appeared in *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827) attracted little critical attention. His prize-poem, *Timbuctoo* (1829) received the interesting notice here reprinted from the *Athenæum* (p. 456) of July 22, 1829. *Timbuctoo* was printed in the *Cambridge Chronicle* (July 10, 1829); in the *Prolusiones Academicæ* (1829); and several times in *Cambridge Prize-Poems*. The use of heroic metre in prize-poems was traditional; hence the award was an enviable tribute to the blank-verse of *Timbuctoo*.

Tennyson's success was emphasized by the remarkable series of reviews that greeted his earliest volumes of poems. The *Poems, chiefly Lyrical* (1830) were welcomed by Sir John Bowring in the *Westminster Review*, by Leigh Hunt in the *Tatler*, by Arthur Hallam in the *Englishman's Magazine*, and by John Wilson in *Blackwood's Magazine*. The *Poems* (1833) were reviewed by W.J. Fox in the *Monthly Repository*, and by John Stuart Mill in the *Westminster Review*. This array of names was indeed a tribute to the poet; but the unfavorable review, was, as usual, most significant. The article written by Lockhart for the *Quarterly Rev.*, XLIX (81-97), has been characterized as "silly and brutal," but it was neither. Tennyson's fame is secure; we can at least

be just to his early reviewer. It is true that the poet winced under the lash and that ten years elapsed before his next volume of collected poems appeared; but Canon Ainger is surely in error when he holds the *Quarterly Review* mainly responsible for this long silence. The rich measure of praise elsewhere bestowed upon the volume would leave us no alternative but the conclusion that Tennyson was childish enough to maintain his silence for a decade because Lockhart took liberties with his poems instead of joining the chorus of adulation. We know that there were other and stronger reasons for Tennyson's silence and we also know that the effect of Lockhart's article was decidedly salutary. When the next collection of *Poems* (1842) did appear, the shorter pieces
[Pg 219] ridiculed by Lockhart were omitted, and the derided passages in the longer poems were altered.

We may, without conscientious scruples, take Mr. Andrew Lang's advice, and enjoy a laugh over Lockhart's performance. Its mock appreciations are, perhaps, far-fetched at times; but there are enough effective passages to give zest to the article. It has been said in all seriousness that Lockhart failed to appreciate the beauty of most of Tennyson's lines, and that he confined his remarks to the most assailable passages. Surely, when a critic undertakes to write a mock-appreciation, he will not quote the best verses, to the detriment of his plan. The poet must see to it that his volume does not contain enough absurdities to form a sufficient basis for such an article. There is a striking contrast to the humor of Lockhart in the little-known review of the same volume by the *Literary Gazette*, 1833, pp. (772-774). The latter seized upon some crudities that had escaped the *Quarterly's* notice, and, with characteristic brutality, decided that the poet was insane and needed a low diet and a cell.

Although the reception accorded to *Poems* (1842) was generally favorable, the publication of *The Princess* in 1847 afforded the critics another opportunity to lament Tennyson's inequalities. The spirit of the review of *The Princess* here reprinted from the *Literary Gazette* of August 8, 1848, is practically identical with that of the *Athenæum* on January 6, 1848, but specifies more clearly the critic's objections to the medley. It is noteworthy that Lord Tennyson made extensive changes in subsequent editions of *The Princess*, but left unaltered all of the passages to which the *Literary Gazette* took exception. The beautiful threnody *In Memoriam* (1850) and Tennyson's elevation to the laureateship in the same year established his position as the leading poet of the time; but the appearance of *Maud* in 1856 proved to be a temporary check to his popularity. A few personal friends admired it and praised its fine lyrics; but as a dramatic narrative it failed to please the reviews. The most interesting of the critiques (unfortunately too long to be reprinted here) appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, XLI (311-321), of September, 1855,—a forcible, well-written article, which, incidentally, shows how much the magazine had improved in respectability since the days of the lampooners of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The authorship of the article has not been disclosed, but we know that W.E. Aytoun asked permission of the proprietor to review Tennyson's *Maud*. (See Mrs. Oliphant's *William Blackwood and his Sons*.) The publication of the
[Pg 220] *Idylls of the King* (1859), turned the tide more strongly than before in Tennyson's favor, and subsequent fault-finding on the part of the critics was confined largely to his dramas.

153. *Catullus*. See Catullus, II and III—(*Passer, deliciæ meæ puellæ*, and *Lugete, O Veneres Cupidinesque*).

153. Εἴθε λύρη, κ. τ. λ. Usually found in the remains of Alcæus. Thomas Moore translates it with his *Odes of Anacreon* (LXXVII), beginning "Would that I were a tuneful lyre," etc. Lockhart proceeds to ridicule Tennyson for wishing to be a river, which is not what the quoted lines state. Nor does Tennyson "ambition a bolder metamorphosis" than his predecessors. Anacreon (Ode XXII) wishes to be a stream, as well as a mirror, a robe, a pair of sandals and sundry other articles. See Moore's interesting note.

155. *Non omnis moriar*. Horace, *Odes*, III, 30, 6.

156. *Tongues in trees*, etc. Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, II, 1, 17.

157. *Aristæus*. A minor Grecian divinity, worshipped as the first to introduce the culture of bees.

164. *Dionysius Periegetes*. Author of περιήγησις τῆς γῆς, a description of the earth in hexameters, usually published with the scholia of Eustathius and the Latin paraphrases of Avienus and Priscian. For the account of Æthiopia, see also Pausanias, I, 33, 4.

167. *The Rovers*. *The Rovers* was a parody on the German drama of the day, published in the *Anti-Jacobin* (1798) and written by Frere, Canning and others. It is reprinted in Charles Edmund's *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*. The chorus of conspirators is at the end of Act IV.

169. *The Groves of Blarney*. An old Irish song. A version may be seen in the *Antiquary*, I, p. 199. The quotation by Lockhart differs somewhat from the corresponding stanza of the cited version.

170. *Corporal Trim*. In Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

173. *Christopher North*. John Wilson, of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Robert Browning

The reviews of Browning's poems are singularly uninteresting from a historical standpoint. There is usually a protest against the obscurity of the poetry and a plea that the author should make
[Pg 221] better use of his manifest genius. For details concerning these reviews, see the bibliography of

Browning in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*. The list there given is extensive, but does not include several of the reviews mentioned below.

The early poems were so abstruse that the critics were unable to make sport of them as they did in the case of Wordsworth, Byron, Tennyson, and the rest; and when Browning finally deigned to write within range of the average human intellect, that particular style of reviewing had lost favor. His earliest publication, *Pauline* (1832) was well received by W.J. Fox in *Monthly Repository*, and in the *Athenæum*. *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* called it a "piece of pure bewilderment." See also the brief notice in the *Literary Gazette*, 1833, p. 183. *Paracelsus* (1835) had a similar experience; the reprint from the *Athenæum*, 1835, p. 640, is fairly characteristic of the rest, among which are the articles in the *Monthly Repository*, 1835, p. 716; the *Christian Remembrancer*, XX, p. 346, and the reviews written by John Forster for the *Examiner*, 1835, p. 563, and the *New Monthly Magazine*, XLVI (289-308).

Neither the favorable review of *Sordello* (1840) in the *Monthly Rev.*, 1840, II, p. 149, nor the partly appreciative article in the *Athenæum*, 1840, p. 431, seems to warrant the well-known anecdotes relating the difficulties of Douglas Jerrold and Tennyson in attempting to understand that poem. The *Athenæum* gave the poet sound advice, especially in regard to the intentional obscurity of his meaning. That this admonition was futile may be gathered from the *Saturday Review's* article (I, p. 69) on *Men and Women* (1855) published fifteen years after *Sordello*. The critic reverted to the earlier style, and produced one of the most readable reviews of Browning. Whatever may be the final verdict yet to be passed upon Browning's poetic achievement, the fact remains that the contemporary reviews from first to last deplored in his work a deliberate obscurity which was wholly unwarranted and which precluded the universal appeal that is essential to a poet's greatness.

189. *Della Crusca of Sentimentalism*. Robert Merry (1755-1798) under the name Della Crusca became the leader of a set of poetasters who flourished during the poetic dearth at the end of the eighteenth century and poured forth their rubbish until William Gifford exposed their follies in
[Pg 222] his satires *The Baviad* (1794) and *The Mæviad* (1795).

189. *Alexander Smith*. A Scotch poet (1830-1867).

189. *Mystic of Bailey*. Philip James Bailey (1816-1902), best known as the author of *Festus*, published *The Mystic* in 1855.

192. *Hudibras Butler, etc.* Samuel Butler, author of *Hudibras* (1663-78); Richard H. Barham, author of the *Ingoldsby Legends* (1840); and Thomas Hood, author of *Whims and Oddities* (1826-27). These poets are cited by the reviewer for their skill with unusual metres and difficult rhymes.

[Pg 223]

INDEX

[Pg 224]

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Reprinted in Professor Arber's *The Term Catalogues* (1668-1709). London, privately printed, 1903.

[B] See the centenary number of the *Edinburgh Review* (October, 1902). During the editor's recent tenure of government office, the review was temporarily edited by Mr. E.S. Roscoe.

[C] See his letter in *Athenæum*, January 19, 1878. See also "Our Seventieth Birthday," *Athenæum*, January 1, 1898.

[D] Mr. Bertram Dobell in his *Side-Lights on Charles Lamb* (1903) directs attention to some hitherto unknown articles of Lamb's in the *London Magazine*.

[E] In July, 1902, the *Quarterly Review* published its first signed article—the widely-discussed paper on Charles Dickens by Mr. Algernon Charles Swinburne. Since then several other noteworthy articles have appeared over the authors' signatures.

[F] The best Odes of Pindar are said to be those which have been destroyed by time; and even they were seldom recited among the Greeks, without the adventitious ornaments of music and dancing. Our Lyric Odes are seldom set off with these advantages, which, trifling as they seem, have alone given immortality to the works of Quinault.

[G] Nous sommes nés pour la vérité, et nous ne pouvons souffrir son abord. Les figures, les paraboles, les emblémes, sont toujours des ornements nécessaires pour qu'elle puisse s'annoncer: on veut, en la recevant, qu'elle soit *déguisée*.

[H] See Vol. I. p. 63, &c.—Vol. VII. p. 1, &c.

[I] Milton.

[J] Hume.

[K] Grant's Restoration of Learning in the East.

[L] We cannot resist the temptation of saying, that in this highest department of the poet's art, we know of no living poet who will bear a comparison with Mr. Southey.

[M] Though there is *no Echo* and the mountains are *voiceless*, the woodmen, nevertheless, in the last line of this verse hear "a drear murmur between their Songs!!"

[N] This would have done excellently for a coroner's inquest like that on *Honey*, which lasted *thirty* days, and was facetiously called the "Honey-moon."

[O] See Quarterly Review, vol. XIX, p. 204.

[P] The same Camelot, in Somersetshire, we presume, which is alluded to by Kent in 'King Lear'—

> 'Goose! if I had thee upon Sarum plain,
> I'd drive thee cackling home to Camelot.'

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EARLY REVIEWS OF ENGLISH POETS ***

agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work

or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

• You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.