

UNIVERSAL MAGAZINE

The UNIVERSAL MAGAZINE of Knowledge and Pleasure, an old-style London monthly magazine, had published 113 volumes, 1747-1803, before updating itself in a new series, 1804-1814 (21 volumes), and, finally, as New Universal Magazine (four volumes in 1814-15). The second series and the New Universal Magazine, published by H. D. Symonds and his successors Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, contained a total of five reviews of Byron, but the last of these – a review of Hebrew Melodies (New Universal Magazine, III, July 1815, 37-38) – was not available in facsimile.

September 1807

Byron, *Hours of Idleness* (1807), *Universal Magazine*, 2nd Series, VIII (Sept. 1807), 235-237. The critic is indulgent in response to the "modesty" of Byron's Preface.

1807.]

Criticism.—Lord Byron's *Hours of Idleness*.

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ment, and on his return to England the first news he heard was, that his friend Mr. Pitt had sent his friend Mr. Tooke to the Tower. The friends of Mr. Tooke out of power, have not been his friends when in power: who are to blame? Has Mr. Tooke changed his sentiments, or have they changed theirs? Let them, who know the history of this reign, answer this question. From the beginning to the present day, Mr. H. Tooke will be found to have uniformly supported the principles of the constitution, as settled at the revolution; to have opposed only what is in opposition to those principles; to have been an advocate for the true rights of the three branches of the constitution, but to have opposed each only, when they overstepped the limits of their respective jurisdictions.

But we cannot allow that Mr. H. Tooke has the influence supposed, over Sir F. Burdett. Their acquaintance commenced somewhat more than twelve years ago; it ripened into friendship. Such a friendship has been, without doubt, advantageous to Sir Francis. To have constant access to the stores of so capacious a mind, is a benefit which few young men of fashion and fortune know how to appreciate, still fewer how to avail themselves of such an advantage. Sir F. Burdett does both; and in consequence is better acquainted with our national history and our national literature, than any of his competitors for the public favour. He may say with Cicero, that the time which others employ in various amusements, he has devoted to the improvement of his mind: he has made the constitution of his country his study; and we wish him the utmost success in the attempt to cleanse the Augean stable.

CRITICISM.

“Nulli negabimus, nulli differemus justitiam.”

Hours of Idleness, a Series of Poems, original and translated. By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a minor. Newark. 1807. pp. 187.

THIS work offers itself to our notice with many claims to indulgence and lenity. It is the production of a youth, who has but just attained his nineteenth year; it is the production of a nobleman; and it is preceded by a singularly modest and ingenuous preface. We call it a modest preface, because it seems to express the real sentiments of the author's mind, not affectedly diffident or crawling with servile humility. However, we may venture to assure Lord Byron, that these effusions of his muse do no discredit to his youth; many of them are elegant and interesting, and almost all possess a neat and harmonic versification. We are authorised, in some measure, to consider this as a posthumous publication, for we are told, with emphatic earnestness, that it is a “first and last attempt.” Pref.; and he adds, “it is highly improbable, from my situation and pursuits hereafter, that I should ever obtrude myself a second time on the public; nor even in the very doubtful event of present indulgence, shall I be tempted to commit a future trespass of the same nature.” This is decisive; yet, might experience venture to whisper into the ears of youth, it would say, that genius is restless, that praise kindles a slumbering fire into flame, and that he who feels he can write is rarely phlegmatic enough to remain silent. We know not, indeed, what may be the views, or what the destination of Lord Byron: perhaps he is justly ambitious of serving his country in a manner more immediately beneficial, and more exalted than in the flowery paths of poesy: if so, we shall be well content to see him rigidly adhering to his resolution. Yet, poetry may occupy the elegant retirement of a gifted mind, whose nobler energies are directed to nobler purposes. Let us hope, then, that Lord Byron may be casuist enough to reason away his pledge, and give, as the trifles of leisure, what he may be unwilling to have considered as the primary occupation of his time.

The prevailing cast of the poems before us is amatory, and in these his lordship seems to have taken Mr. Moore for his model. They have not

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however his polish, his elegance, nor his immorality. They are all small pieces, prettily turned, and certainly very creditable to one so young as the author: but they are not free from faults; and a capital one is the exuberant use of compound epithets, some of which are frequently unintelligible, and frequently ridiculous: for example,

"His locks in grey-torn ringlets wave."

p. 55.

"——Have I not heard your voices

"Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale."

p. 130.

and others of a similar nature which we could point out.

The longest poem in the book is the tale of "Oscar and Alva," written in quatrains, and very pleasingly written. But the altering the measure towards the close, by introducing the double rimes, in imitation of Gray's "Bard," is, we think, a blemish; and the following line, which is entirely owing to this, is quite ludicrous:

"The tapers *wrink*, the chieftains *shrink*," &c.

The first piece in the volume "On leaving Newstead Abbey," is pretty; and the "Epitaph on a Friend," p. 7. is really an elegant and pathetic composition; the thoughts are tender, yet they arise in an easy and natural way. The first line is a close imitation of Pope's "Eloisa,"

"Oh name, for ever sad, for ever dear."

In the "Occasional Prologue," Lord Byron has been led into a gross grammatical error, for the sake of the rime we presume:

"Which stamp'd disgrace on all the author writ."

We know he can plead precedent for it; but still it is an error, and an unpardonable one.

In the "Translations" he has given us some versions from Greek and Latin authors, and, among others, Adria's Address to his Soul, when dying;

"*Animula! vagula, blandula,*" &c.

To say that it is greatly inferior to the beautiful paraphrase of Pope, is not to dispraise Lord Byron; and we must also add, that his translations from Anacreon, though far above mediocrity, are yet below the elegant and spirited version of Mr. Moore.

As a specimen we select the following, and cannot conclude without observing, that upon the whole Lord Byron need feel no regret at having committed his name to the public in the present volume.

LACHIN Y. GAIR.

LACHIN Y. GAIR, or, as it is pronounced in the Erse, LOCH NA GARR, towers proudly pre-eminent in the Northern Highlands, near Invercauld. One of our modern Tourists mentions it as the highest mountain perhaps in Great Britain: be this as it may, it is certainly one of the most sublime, and picturesque, amongst our "Caledonian Alps." Its appearance is of a dusky hue; but the summit is the seat of eternal snows; near Lachin y. Gair, I spent some of the early part of my life, the recollection of which has given birth to the following Stanzas.

"AWAY, ye gay landscapes; ye gardens of roses!

In you let the minions of luxury rove;
Restore me the rocks, where the snow-flake
reposes,

Though still they are sacred to freedom
and love:

Yet, Caledonia! belov'd are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war,

Though cataracts foam, 'stead of smooth
flowing fountains,

I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr.

Ah! there my young footsteps in infancy
wander'd,

My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was
the plaid;*

On chieftains, long perish'd, my memory
ponder'd,

As daily I strode through the pine-cover'd
glade;
I sought not my home, till the day's dying
glory

Gave place to the rays of the bright polar
star;
For Fancy was cheer'd, by traditional story,
Disclos'd by the natives of dark Loch na
Garr.

"Shades of the dead! have I not heard
your voices

"Rise on the night-rolling breath of the
gale?"
Surely the soul of the hero rejoices,

And riles on the wind, o'er his own
Highland vale:

Round Loch na Garr, while the stormy mist
gathers,

Winter presides in his cold icy car;
Clouds, there, encircle the forms of my
Fathers,

They dwell in the tempests of dark Loch
na Garr:

* This word is erroneously pronounced PLAD, the proper pronunciation (according to the Scotch) is shewn by the orthography.

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Pinkerton's Recollections of Paris:

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" Ill-starr'd, though brave, did no visions
foreboding,

" Tell you that Fate had forsaken your
cause?"

Ah! were you destin'd to die at Culloden,
Victory crown'd not your fall with ap-
plause;

Still were you happy, in death's earthy
slumber,

You rest with your clan, in the caves of
Braemar,

The Pibroch resounds, to the piper's loud
number,

Your deeds, on the echoes of dark Loch
na Garr.

Years have rolled on, Loch na Garr, since I
left you,

Years must elapse e'er I tread you again;
Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft you:

Yet still are you dearer than Albion's
plain:

England! thy beauties are tame and do-
mestic,

To one who has rovd on the mountains
afar;

Oh! for the crags that are wild and ma-
jestic,

The steep frowning glories of dark Loch
na Garr.

RECOLLECTIONS of PARIS, in the
YEARS 1802-3-4-5. By JOHN
PINKERTON. 2 vols. 8vo. 1806.
(Concluded from page 138.)

WE cannot devote much more
room or attention to this work.
We have indeed already given it
more of both than in our opinion its
merits demand, but in doing so we
were influenced solely by a wish to
repress a pert and forward vanity,
and to expose a considerable flippancy
of thought and language, which the
author would fain exalt into philoso-
phy and style.

The third chapter in the second
volume, which Mr. Pinkerton deno-
minates "Considerations on a com-
mercial treaty with France," is cer-
tainly a most epicurean production.
From reading it, we shrewdly sus-
pect that in our author's opinion, the
best commercial treaty that could be
established between the two coun-
tries, would be that which enabled
him to have good French wines at
his own table, at a moderate price.
Truly we entertain some serious
doubts, whether Mr. Pinkerton will
not have strong reason to repent his
journey to France, or whether he

will ever be again able to enjoy la-
borious study, and

" Spare fast that oft with Gods doth diet."

We have already given a specimen
of Mr. Pinkerton's eloquence, and
we will now give our readers a small
sample of what, we suppose, he
means for wit:

" In like manner the hall of the
general assembly, national conven-
tion, &c. was uncarpeted, whence the
feet becoming chilled, the head be-
came hot, and the consequences are
known to all Europe!"

This is really amazingly pretty;
a charming stroke of a playful and
sportive fancy; and we do assure the
reader that there are many other spe-
cimens of equal humour and inge-
nuity to be found in the course of
these volumes. And here let us not
forget to inform the world, upon the
authority of Mr. Pinkerton's minute
enquiry and close observation, that
the French ladies do really and abso-
lutely "wear shifts," though it has
been scandalously and maliciously
reported to the contrary by a certain
German traveller. (Vol. II. p. 107.)

We cannot assent to Mr. Pinker-
ton's assertion, that the Edinburgh
herse is of all others "the most ele-
gant." In our opinion, (and we
speak from personal observation) the
herse of Edinburgh resemble more
the travelling dwellings of a shew of
wild beasts, than the solemn and de-
cent receptacle of shrouded mortality.
They are stuck over with glittering
shreds and patches, and affect the eye
like the outside of a puppet-shew at
Bartholomew Fair.

The theory of the association of
ideas has exercised the ingenuity of
the most acute philosophers, and
they have sometimes in vain endea-
voured to trace the connecting link
between two successive ideas. We
think we may venture to propose as
a problem to the Universities of
Europe, what could possibly be the
concatenating series in Mr. Pinker-
ton's mind, when he wrote the follow-
ing paragraph.

" Fromage or cheese is a lax term
at Paris for any substance compressed.
Thus a *fromage d'Italie* is a Bologna
sausage; a *fromage glacé* is a kind of
ice, &c. *Animals killed by electricity*
are found to be singularly tender!"