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We discern in Lord Byron a degree of mental power, and a turn of mental disposition, which render us solicitous that both should be well cultivated and wisely directed, in his career of life. He has received talents, and is accountable for the use of them. We trust that he will render them beneficial to man, and a source of real gratification to himself in declining age. Then may he properly exclaim with the Roman orator, "*Non lubet mihi deplorare vitam, quod multi, & ii docti, sæpe fecerunt; neque me vixisse pœnitet: quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustra me natum existimem.*" CICERO *de Senect.*

May 1812

Byron, *Childe Harold*, I-II (2nd edition, 1812); review by Thomas Denman, *Monthly Review*, 2nd Series, LXVIII (May 1812), 74-83. Denman (1779-1854) was a Cambridge graduate who began reviewing for the *Monthly* and *Critical Reviews* about this time to supplement a meager income as an aspiring barrister. He eventually rose to become Lord Chief Justice in the reform administration (1832) and Baron Denman of Dovedale.

ART. VII. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. A Romaunt. By Lord Byron. 4to. 1l. 10s.—2d. edit. 8vo. 12s. Boards. Murray. 1812.

THE high popularity, which this singular production has so rapidly attained, will materially abridge our critical labors; since few of our poetical readers, or of those readers who peruse poetical articles in a Review, will by this time stand in need of our information on the subject. We may therefore spare ourselves the task of tracing the desultory windings of Lord Byron's plan with any degree of accuracy, and might be almost contented with adding our humble praise to those general applauses which we have witnessed with the more pleasure, because they are the accomplishment of the favourable predictions which we confidently hazarded*, on his Lordship's first appearance before the public. We shall, however, do something more than this: we shall enrich our own pages with a few of the best stanzas in the poem; and we shall flatter ourselves that any observations, which may be excited in the course of a re-perusal, will contribute to give a permanency to the noble author's reputation, that may not be inferior to the splendor of his present success.

Childe Harold, sick of the voluptuous dissipation of an unrestrained youth, resolved to change the scene, to shake off *ennui*, and to give a new stimulus to an exhausted mind, by foreign travel:

' His house, his home, his heritage, his lands,
The laughing dames in whom he did delight,
Whose large blue eyes, fair locks, and snowy hands,
Might shake the saintship of an anchorite,
And long had fed his youthful appetite;
His goblets brimm'd with every costly wine,
And all that mote to luxury invite,
Without a sigh he left, to cross the brine,
And traverse Paynim shores, and pass Earth's central line.'

Who Childe Harold was, we are wholly at a loss to inform the inquirer. We only know that his satiated appetite is said to have made him selfish, gloomy, discontented, and suspicious; and we are warned against supposing that any real personage is represented by him. In some trivial and local particulars, it is

* See M. R. for November, 1807.

indeed

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indeed admitted that grounds might exist for such a notion; and certainly those tourists, who have visited Newstead Abbey*, will easily recognize its likeness in several parts of the poem:

'It was a vast and venerable pile;
So old it seemed only not to fall,
Yet strength was pillar'd in each massy aisle.
Monastic dome! condemned to uses vile!
Where Superstition once had made her den,'—&c. P. 6.

Again, the Childe is told by his staunch yeoman;

'My spouse and boys dwell near thy hall,
Along the bordering lake.'—

Not to mention several minor points of resemblance:—but, as Lord B. expresses his hope that, in the main points, no similarity can be supposed to exist, we must conclude that his choice of a hero was directed not by sympathy of character, but by coincidence of circumstances, which may be justly deemed very remarkable.

With this matter, however, the reader and the reviewer have little concern; except that some disappointment, perhaps, results from the promise of a story which is never told, and that the interest is too much divided between the poet and his imaginary traveller. Why did the title page raise such magnificent expectations? *The Pilgrimage of Childe Harold* teems with images of chivalrous antiquity, heroic adventure, and affecting superstition; with visions of our Lady of Loretto, or of the Pillar; with votive offerings at the shrine of St. Jago of Compostella; with barefoot-marches to the Holy Sepulchre; and with all the varieties of self-imposed penance, by which knights-errant could hope to subdue, rather than win, the affections of unrelenting beauties. — Why also is the term *Romaunt* applied to a series of the most elegant and correct descriptions, interwoven with reflections which are full of good sense and shrewdness, but which may as well be styled religious as romantic? No effect is produced, no incident created, by this imaginary *Childe*; who in the whole poem does nothing but go over the ground which Lord Byron traversed, write verses very much in the style of the detached pieces at the end of the volume, and make remarks and observations which might with equal probability have occurred to his Lordship's own mind. Indeed, when we read of him, we involuntarily think of the author; and when we have accompanied the author in fifteen stanzas of very impressive meditation, we are somewhat angry at finding our *tête-à-tête* interrupted by the needless inquiry,—“*But where is Harold?*”

* Lord B.'s seat in Nottinghamshire.

Possibly,

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Possibly, these strictures may be deemed premature, since the poem is not yet completed; and its hero may hereafter be led over other regions, and do something more than think and feel. He may be impelled to useful and vigorous exertion, and destined to redeem the follies of his wild boyhood by pursuing that honorable course which shall enroll his name among the worthies of his country. If he cannot entirely subdue the long indulged propensity to satire, he may at least point it against the deserving heads of meanness, perfidy, and folly; and if he be induced to lift up his voice in that senate in which his birth shall place him, he will boldly assert the eternal principles of liberty: distinguishing between the momentary heat of faction, and the lasting importance of those great truths which have not only conferred the highest benefits on mankind, but have reflected the purest honor on their disinterested advocates. — We must not, however, drop the veil of a romance of the older times; though it seems to have been rather loosely worn by an author who makes *Childe Harold* give vent to certain political disgusts, on viewing ‘*Mariava's dome*,’ — ‘*Oh dome unpleasing unto British eye!*’ where the convention of Cintra was negotiated, and ‘*Policy regained what arms had lost.*’

One advantage is obtained by the semblance of antiquity; that of licensing the introduction of old words, and producing a variety of style which is peculiarly necessary to give ease and animation to the Spenserian stanza. To this purpose, it has here been judiciously made subservient, without unnecessary affectation of *ekes* and *algates*; and we are disposed to think that no writer in our language has been so successful as Lord Byron in the management of this structure of verse, — perhaps not even Spenser himself. The fault most commonly imputed, viz. languor and tardiness, from which that great poet is seldom long exempt, and which most of his imitators seem to have deemed sufficient to constitute a resemblance to him, is not to be found in the pages before us. Thomson was perhaps right in considering it as no blemish in his delightful allegory, “*the Castle of Indolence*;” and Shensstone certainly felt the tone of lengthened garrulity to be most in unison with the subject of his singularly happy sketch, “*the School-mistress*.” The respectable gentlemen, contributors to Dodsley's miscellany, who adopted this measure, seem to have built their preference on its absolute freedom from the necessity of compressing language or concentrating thought. Beattie's “*Minstrel*,” with some passages of considerable force, and many of great majesty, is notwithstanding very frequently rendered feeble and indistinct by the untowardness of the metre: but of the late short continuation of his poem, the principal fault

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fault is that of being left unfinished*. Against the present work, no charge of weakness or wearisomeness can fairly be made; and though bad lines do occur, and we can remark an occasional incorrectness of expression, the whole effect is powerful and elastic: the concluding line of the stanza in particular being no "wounded snake," but a vigorous serpent, which takes a keen aim, and darts at its object with its full collected strength.

This desultory hero quits his native country, and, visiting Spain and Portugal, makes such observations as the present state of those regions naturally suggests; delineating the most prominent features on which the eye of a traveller would rest. We transcribe a short and very spirited passage, descriptive of the array of the hostile armies on the eve of battle:

'Awake, ye sons of Spain! awake! advance!
Lo! Chivalry, your ancient goddess, cries,
But wields not, as of old, her thirsty lance,
Nor shakes her crimson plumage in the skies:
Now on the smoke of blazing bolts she flies,
And speaks in thunder through yon engine's roar:
In every peal she calls — "Awake! arise!"
Say, is her voice more feeble than of yore,

When her war-song was heard on Andalusia's shore?

'Hark! — heard you not those hoofs of dreadful note?
Sounds not the clang of conflict on the heath?
Saw ye not whom the reeking sabre smote;
Nor sav'd your brethren ere they sank beneath
Tyrants and tyrants' slaves? — the fires of death,
The bale-fires flash on high: — from rock to rock
Each volley tells that thousands cease to breathe;
Death rides upon the sulphury Siroc,
Red Battle stamps his foot, and nations feel the shock.

'Lo! where the Giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorches all it glares upon;
Restless it rolls, now fix'd, and now anon
Flashing afar, — and at his iron feet
Destruction cowers to mark what deeds are done;
For on this morn three potent nations meet,
To shed before his shrine the blood he deems most sweet.

'By Heaven! it is a splendid sight to see
(For one who hath no friend, no brother there)
Their rival scarfs of mix'd embroidery,
Their various arms that glitter in the air!
What gallant war-hounds rouse them from their lair,
And gnash their fangs, loud yelling for their prey!
All join the chase, but few the triumph share;

* See Rev. Vol. lix. N. S. p. 214.

The

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The Grave shall bear the chiefest prize away,
And Havoc scarce for joy can number their array.

'Three hosts combine to offer sacrifice;
Three tongues prefer strange orisons on high;
Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies;
The shouts are France, Spain, Albion, Victory!
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but ever fights in vain,
Are met — as if at home they could not die —
To feed the crow on Talavera's plain,
And fertilize the field that each pretends to gain.'

The tribute of praise and admiration to the maid of Saragoza is warmly and feelingly paid:

'Is it for this the Spanish maid, arous'd
Hangs on the willow her unstrung guitar,
And, all unsex'd, the Anlace hath espous'd,
Sung the loud song, and dar'd the deed of war?
And she, whom once the semblance of a scar
Appall'd, an owl's larum chill'd with dread,
Now views the column-scattering bay'net jar,
The falchion flash, and o'er the yet warm dead
Stalks with Minerva's step where Mars might quake to tread.

'Ye who shall marvel when you hear her tale,
Oh! had you known her in her softer hour,
Mark'd her black eye that mocks her coal black veil,
Heard her light lively tones in Lady's bower,
Seen her long locks that foil the painter's power,
Her fairy form, with more than female grace,
Scarce would you deem that Saragoza's tower
Beheld her smile in Danger's Gorgon face,
Thin the clos'd ranks, and lead in Glory's fearful chase.

'Her lover sinks — she sheds no ill-tim'd tear;
Her chief is slain — she fills his fatal post:
Her fellows flee — she checks their base career;
The foe retires — she heads the sallying host:
Who can appease like her a lover's ghost?
Who can avenge so well a leader's fall?
What maid retrieve when man's flush'd hope is lost?
Who hang so fiercely on the flying Gaul,
Foil'd by a woman's hand, before a batter'd wall?'

Here the poet digresses into a description of the Andalusian ladies, which happens, singularly enough, at the foot of Parnassus; challenging the hoary giant to surpass them with all the beauties who danced around him in the prosperous days of Greece.

The Spanish character is then touched with uncommon spirit; as well as the mixture of gallantry and devotion, and the strange growth of patriotism out of a despotic government, and loyalty to princes whose conduct neither consulted the happiness nor flattered

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flattered the pride of their subjects. We have also a brilliant panorama of Cadiz, a bird's eye view of the country in general, and a particular but rather a long description of a bull-fight.

Canto II. opens at Athens, which seems to have inspired the deep and solemn feelings which belong to that "swelling scene." The author is here led by a train of thought not unlike that which occurs in Sulpicius's fine letter to Cicero, to indulge in some melancholy forebodings of futurity: but, as he views only one side of the question, we may hope that his deliberate opinions are not consonant to these chilling speculations, which are expressed with much power. We have then a few beautiful stanzas alluding to the voyage, and some insinuations about a lady living at Calypso's island, who vainly strove to win the new Telemachus, Childe Harold, and was not a little amazed at the coldness of one who was so famous for sensibility. — We pass to Albania.

- ' Land of Albania! where Iskander rose,
Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
And he his name-sake, whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise:
Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
Through many a cypress-grove within each city's ken.
- ' Childe Harold sail'd and pass'd the barren spot,
Where sad Penelope o'erlook'd the wave;
And onward view'd the mount not yet forgot,
The lover's refuge, and the Lesbian's grave.
Dark Sappho! could not verse immortal save
That breast imbued with such immortal fire?
Could she not live who life eternal gave?
If life eternal may await the lyre,
That only Heaven to which Earth's children may aspire.' —
- ' Morn dawns; and with it stern Albania's hills,
Dark Sulis' rocks, and Pindus' inland peak,
Rob'd half in mist, bedew'd with snowy rills,
Array'd in many a dun and purple streak,
Arise; and, as the clouds along them break,
Disclose the dwelling of the mountainer:
Here roams the wolf, the eagle whets his beak,
Birds, beasts of prey, and wilder men appear,
And gathering storms around convulse the closing year.' —
- ' Ambracia's gulph behold, where once was lost
A world for woman, lovely, harmless thing!
In yonder rippling bay, their naval host
Did many a Roman chief and Asian king
To doubtful conflict, certain slaughter bring:

Look

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Look where the second Cæsar's trophies rose!
Now, like the hands that rear'd them, withering:
Imperial Anarchs, doubling human woes!
God! was thy globe ordain'd for such to win and lose?

' From the dark barriers of that rugged clime,
Ev'n to the centre of Illyria's vales,
Childe Harold pass'd o'er many a mount sublime,
Through lands scarce notic'd in historic tales;
Yet in fam'd Attica such lovely dales
Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast
A charm they know not; lov'd Parnassus fails,
Though classic ground and consecrated most,
To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast.'

Our extracts would be wholly out of proportion, if we were to cite all the striking and beautiful descriptions which ensue: but it would be injustice to withhold the following picture of a night-scene among the Suliotes, who appear to have hospitably received the hero, when driven on their coast by adverse winds:

- ' On the smooth shore the night-fires brightly blaz'd,
The feast was done, the red wine circling fast,
And he that unawares had there ygaz'd
With gaping wonderment had star'd aghast;
For ere night's midmost, stillest hour was past
The native revels of the troop began;
Each Palikar his sabre from him cast,
And bounding hand in hand, man link'd to man,
Yelling their uncouth dirge, long daunc'd the kirtled clan.
- ' Childe Harold at a little distance stood
And view'd, but not displeas'd, the revelrie,
Nor hated harmless mirth, however rude:
In sooth, it was no vulgar sight to see
Their barbarous, yet their not indecent glee,
And, as the flames along their faces gleam'd,
Their gestures nimble, dark eyes flashing free,
The long wild locks that to their girdles stream'd,
While thus in concert they this lay half sang, half scream'd:
- ' Tambourgi! Tambourgi! * thy 'larum afar
Gives hope to the valiant, and promise of war;
All the sons of the mountains arise at the note,
Chimariot, Illyrian, and dark Suliote!
- ' Oh! who is more brave than a dark Suliote,
In his snowy camese and his shaggy capote?
To the wolf and the vulture he leaves his wild flock,
And descends to the plain like the stream from the rock.
- ' Shall the sons of Chimari, who never forgive
The fault of a friend, bid an enemy live?
Let those guns so unerring such vengeance forego?
What mark is so fair as the breast of a foe?

* Drummer.

' I ask

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- ‘ I ask not the pleasures that riches supply,
My sabre shall win what the feeble must buy;
Shall win the young bride with her long flowing hair,
And many a maid from her mother shall tear.
- ‘ I love the fair face of the maid in her youth,
Her caresses shall lull me, her music shall sooth;
Let her bring from the chamber her many-ton’d lyre,
And sing us a song on the fall of her sire.
- ‘ Remember the moment when Previsa fell,
The shrieks of the conquer’d, the conquerors’ yell;
The roofs that we fir’d and the plunder we shar’d:
The wealthy we slaughter’d, the lovely we spar’d.
- ‘ I talk not of mercy, I talk not of fear;
He neither must know who would serve the Vizier:
Since the days of our prophet the Crescent ne’er saw
A chief ever glorious like Ali Pashaw.’

This wild chant is composed of several scraps of Albanese poetry, which Lord Byron heard in the familiar ballads of that people. His notes give an interesting account of their manners, habits, and appearance, in all of which he observed a strong resemblance to the Scotch highlanders; and several very striking traits of character are collected.

Some papers are subjoined on the general state of Greece. The following observations have a tone of practical good sense, which pleases us much:

‘ *Franciscan Convent, Athens, January 23, 1811.*

‘ Amongst the remnants of the barbarous policy of the earlier ages, are the traces of bondage which yet exist in different countries; whose inhabitants, however divided in religion and manners, almost all agree in oppression.

‘ The English have at last compassionated their Negroes, and under a less bigoted government may probably one day release their Catholic brethren: but the interposition of foreigners alone can emancipate the Greeks, who, otherwise, appear to have as small a chance of redemption from the Turks, as the Jews have from mankind in general.

‘ Of the ancient Greeks we know more than enough; at least the younger men of Europe devote much of their time to the study of the Greek writers and history, which would be more usefully spent in mastering their own. Of the moderns, we are perhaps more neglectful than they deserve; and while every man of any pretensions to learning is tiring out his youth, and often his age, in the study of the language and of the harangues of the Athenian demagogues in favour of freedom, the real or supposed descendants of these sturdy republicans are left to the actual tyranny of their masters, although a very slight effort is required to strike off their chains.

‘ To talk, as the Greeks themselves do, of their rising again to their pristine superiority, would be ridiculous; as the rest of the world must resume its barbarism, after re-asserting the sovereignty of Greece; but there seems to be no very great obstacle, except in the apathy of

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the Franks, to their becoming an useful dependency, or even a free state with a proper guarantee;—under correction, however, be it spoken, for many, and well-informed men, doubt the practicability even of this.’

Lord B. then speculates on the probable deliverers of this once glorious region of the earth: but perhaps he rather under-rates the value of the co-operation of the natives, which would certainly be essential on such an occasion, and most undoubtedly would not be obtained without more awakened and more romantic hopes than political calculators may deem strictly rational. We see no harm in those hopes being excited, by any power that may undertake their emancipation; and it is difficult to assign limits to the exertions which might thus be stimulated, or the effects which those exertions might produce.

These papers are followed by some poems of uncommon beauty, others that are whimsical, and a few that may perhaps be termed affected. We have no room for any more extracts. — An appendix gives a list of Romaic authors, and several passages in modern Greek. Though we lately expressed our hopes* of soon receiving some information on this curious subject, we rather grudge the space which it occupies in the present volume; and we shall probably meet with little difference of opinion, in expressing our wish that in its stead a third canto of the poem had made its appearance, though it cannot be denied that the traveller in Greece will find these collections useful. Among other things, Réga’s patriotic song,—*Δύοτε παῖδες τῶν Ἑλλήνων*—is preserved; and a translation of it is given, which is injured by the attempt to follow the original metre too closely.

We need scarcely add, in general terms, to what we have already said, that we think very highly of Lord Byron’s genius: but we hope that he will in future endeavour to excite a more powerful interest than his present plan allowed,—or rather than his want of plan permitted,—by unity of story, connection of incidents, and distinctness (not to say attractiveness and variety) of character. The judicious employment of these valuable materials has often given no slight advantage to very inferior poetical powers, and has not been disdained by the two greatest of all poets, Homer and Shakspeare; while the want of sufficient attention to the grand point of *interest* has contributed to keep him who approaches them the nearest, our immortal Milton, in a state of comparative neglect among general readers.

On Lord Byron’s style we shall offer one remark;—it is rather too full of classical allusions. Hades, Eros, Lethe, &c.

* In our Review of Mr. Gell’s Itinerary, M. R. for August, 1811.

may be considered as exploded; and his great command of graceful and unaffected diction renders needless all resort to allegory or mythology.

February 1813

[Byron] *Genuine Rejected Addresses* [etc.] (1812); review by Francis Hodgson, *Monthly Review*, 2nd Series, LXX (Feb. 1813), 184-187. Hodgson, Byron's Cambridge friend, naturally defends the Committee's choice; more useful is his catalogue of the rival entries, with selections designed to show the Committee's wisdom.

ART. IX. *The Genuine Rejected Addresses*, presented to the Committee of Management for Drury-lane Theatre; preceded by that written by Lord Byron, and adopted by the Committee. Crown 8vo. 6s. Boards. Hatchard, &c. 1812.

SUCH a war of words, as that which has been raised concerning the *Address accepted*, and the *Addresses rejected*, at the opening of Drury-lane Theatre, we do not remember to have witnessed on any occasion of similar insignificance. That the Committee, who proposed a prize for the best poem delivered into the hands of their Secretary by a certain day, were justified in refusing to adopt any one of the compositions in question, we are by no means prepared to concede: but we allow that their choice must have been very difficult, if the specimens contained in the present volume are a fair criterion by which we may judge of the unpublished remainder. So uniform a vein of mediocrity, indeed, has really something singular in it. The much criticised *copy of verses* which succeeded, (that is, which was solicited from the author by the desponding Committee,) according to our judgment, easily transcends any of its present competitors. We understand that the demand for it was very sudden; and that the subjects to be introduced were prescribed to the writer. If so, we almost wonder that it is tolerable; instead of expressing dissatisfaction at the inferiority of style and manner, which are certainly evident when it is compared with other productions of Lord Byron's pen.

Much the greater portion of the addresses before us contain nothing to the purpose of the occasion which called for them. That of Mr. Horace Twiss, and that of Mr. Edmund L. Swift, are the best of the collection. In the former, we have *some* very pleasing lines; and the latter author, who has kept Dr. Johnson closely before his eyes, displays a considerable degree of energy: but the 'energizing' *Monologue* of Dr. Busby, and the rival *Unalogue* of his son, are beyond all serious decision. *Solvuntur risu tabulae.*

Anna, a young lady of fifteen, has here contributed her poetical offering.

'To err is human — to forgive divine,'

as she *originally* observes at the end of her address.

Mr. Fitzgerald seems determined to prove the correctness of the imitation of his style, which we lately exhibited from the "Rejected Addresses:"

'But yet the Drama, rightly understood,
Promotes the private and the public good;
With noblest ardour warms ingenuous youth,
To tread the paths of Virtue, Honour, Truth;

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And