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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH:

AND

T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.

1821.

TREASON.

Treason doth never prosper—what's the reason ?
Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason.

We have discovered a plot. Not a dark-lantern business of gunpowder and matches, like Guy Fawkes's, nor of hand-grenades and sabres, like the Cato-street atrocity—nevertheless it is a treasonable conspiracy, having, fortunately, one point of resemblance to the two plots above-mentioned—that it has been discovered and defeated in time. It was directed against ourselves, it aimed at the subversion of our supremacy in the periodical world, and was intended to bring into contempt us, the contributors' Sovereign Lord the Editor, our Magazine, and dignity.

Readers cannot have forgotten an absurd Round-Robin from a shallow-pated junto of disappointed correspondents, who had cockered themselves up by a give-and-take system of self-eulogy, till they fancied themselves constrained by an unanimous feeling of their own surpassing merit, to prescribe to us what we ought to insert. We published their appeal, and added notes, by our own individual self, of the most soothing and kindly quality. These gentlemen and ladies, however, are so sore in the chest, with catarrhs, brought on, we presume, by the puffs of flattery, with which they are in the inveterate practice of ventilating one another, that even the emulsion of our notes, soft and tranquillizing, as if dulcified by oil of almonds, could not be swallowed by them without causing strong symptoms of exacerbation in their disordered breasts. Here, however, it is right that we make a distinction—we must not accuse the whole of those who joined in the petition before declared; some were found still bearing true allegiance to us,—to us, their lawful potentate in matters critical, as long as they claim the privileges of that respectable body literate, the contributors to Maga. We do not divulge how many out of the fourteen adhere to their loyalty, because we believe that one or two are in a wavering state, and will probably, when they see the disgrace which the rebels incur, quit the debateable land, and come over and entrench themselves on the right side, where they shall enjoy all the advantages of a plenary amnesty. One of the band, however, was

so pre-eminently true to his original fealty, that it was by his means that we were made acquainted with, and enabled to frustrate, the machinations of the evil-disposed. He boldly rushed into their conclave, seized upon their papers, and transmitted the perfidious bale to us, shewing himself a very Abdiel,

————— Faithful found,
Among the faithless, faithful only he.

(But this we qualify according to the statement above; nevertheless, he deserves to be reported of as)—

Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal—

and perhaps it is solely through him, that we, at this present moment, are sitting on the throne of these realms of Maga, (*scilicet*, the great-chair in Ebony's back-shop,) and in undisturbed control over demi-gods, angels, devils, and men.—Our demi-gods are those Titans of wit and learning, Odoherty, Wastle, Kempferhäusen, and Co.—Our angels are the ladies, whose crow-quills indite delicate articles on pink-edged Bath wove, and very pretty reading they are.—Our devils fit on sooty pinions around the presses of Messrs Ballantyne;—and our everyday subjects are the myriads in the three kingdoms, whose half-crowns are, without grumbling, paid monthly into our exchequer. Yes, to Abdiel, (for in compassion to some of his party he wishes not to be named,) we are indebted for all this; and to a discerning public we commit our vindication and defence; so to the end that the community at large may see the villainy of the designs of these conjurators, (not conjurers—we acquit them of all expertness in that way,) we shall hereunder pillory some of the documents in our possession; thus giving over to utter scorn the railing invectives of these foul-mouthed chaps, their futile imprecations, and their other impotent attempts against our peace.

It appears that the lever by which these Round-Robin men, this Archimedes corporate, meant to move the world of Christopher North's renown, was to be—a book. By means of a

desperate jerk of this paper lever, propped on the fulcrum of public opinion, these our dominions in fame were to be tilted up and sent—

———— Ten thousand leagues away
Into the devious air—upwhirl'd aloft,
The sport of winds.

So that we, (who, vanity apart, are without controversy Editorum facile princeps,) were to be left as bare of literary reputation, as Jeremy Bentham for instance, or any other unreadable; and *ergo* unread, writer of the present day. It is not quite clear what was to be the title-page designation of this declaration of war, and its authors seem to have tampered with a good many. As far as we can make out from some blurred sheets, it looks as if "*Vindiciæ Asinina*" had been submitted by a wisacre, but had been struck out by a more clear-sighted colleague—it would however have been very appropriate. Another Latin prefix was "*Northius Obsessus*," but probably, as all did not understand it, it met with the luck of the preceding. One wag had put down—

"A rod for the back
Of Kit and his pack."

And there is reason to believe that this might have been adopted, had not the snake been scotched, before it was ready to issue from its hole. After all, the prosaic enunciation of "*Christopher's Downfall, or Northern Stolidity in disgrace*," may have had their votes, for it is written in a conspicuous hand.

What was to come first in the farago, and what last, we do not know, because the capture of the rebels' goods was made before they were duly disposed in order—so we must put forth our specimens quite at random. We first then give the misdoings of Omicron, who (it will be in the recollection of our friends,) was the fabricator of a "*Celestial Tour*." He still has a hankering after preterhuman powers, and here assumes the magical influence of Kehama, making us the Ladurlad of the occasion. He is, however, but a sorry imitator of that wholesale dealer in phlogistic curses, as his imprecations do not take effect—for, (be it known to him, and we thank him,) we have felt our rheumatism rather less troublesome this autumn than usual. Notwithstanding, hear what cruel

things he would accomplish, if he could.

"THE CURSE OF OMICRON.

"I DOOM thy foot
To the torment of gout,
And may each of its twinges
Be felt in thy marrow,
Like a sword or an arrow;
Or that crush which constringes
All our nerves in a twist,
When Doctor Scott's wrist
A fang'd grinder unhinges.
This alone shall not slake
The vengeance I'll take.
In tone more emphatic,
Thy great toe I consign
To the shrewd discipline
Of a visit rheumatic,—
A stinging incessant,—
A gnawing not pleasant,—
Fits hot and fits cold.—
No peace when thou'rt sitting,
No release when thou'rt fitting,
But pains manifold;
For Water and Fire
Shall together conspire,
And in turn shall beset thee;
So that when thou goest forth
A shower shall aye wet thee.
Keep in, then, KIT NORTH,
The roasting shall fret thee,
Damp feet make thee shrug,
If on pavement thou venture!
And if rashly thou enter
Some friend's open door,
Thou shalt find on the floor
Neither carpet nor rug.
Thou shalt live on,—a sight—
While Omicron shall write,
And Editors woo me,
Devoid of thy spite.
Thou, in swathings of flannel,
Thy foot shalt impannel,
An object of wonder,
Crumpled over and under,
So that folks keep aloof
For fear 'tis a hoof,—
So appalling the view!
And be what will the weather,
It shall ne'er wear a Shoe
Manufactured of leather.
And thy Boot shall obey me,
And cover it never,
And the spell shall be on thee
For ever and ever!"

Don't your teeth chatter with horror and trepidation, like Corporal Trim's, or Harry Gill's, our pitying Public? But, to relieve your apprehensions for our foot's welfare, (put up your white pocket-handkerchiefs, dear readers of the gentler sex! your sympathy is overpowering, and withal, needlessly excited,) we can assure you, and we call on Mr Blackwood to corroborate our

declaration, that we have both our good, serviceable, thick-soled leathern shoes upon our feet at this very epoch of being calumniated; so what becomes of his condemnation of us to the crippled state of being only able to wear half a pair at a time? Nay, we possess a pair of boots, which we scorn to leave behind whenever we jog over to Glasgow, and which, indeed, have incased these legs, and done good service, within the last three weeks. So you see, deeply-interested and partly-tearful audience, how wretched a performer Omicron is in the part of Kehama, being his first appearance in that character. But I see, righteous Public, what your opinion is, and what is his destiny,—you are determined to hiss him off the stage,—he is slinking away,—well he is done for.

The next production is by a conspirator of a very white-livered complexion, who signs himself Domesticus. It is entitled "A Familiar Essay on the Character and Conduct of Blackwood's Magazine, with especial reference to No. LIV." It opens in this lack-a-daysical tone:—"I was sitting at tea, on the second of September—a balmy evening, and we had the window open, so that a box of mignonette blended its fragrance with that of the nine shilling hyson.—This was extremely pleasant; but I cannot say that I think it altogether so comfortable as tea-time in winter, when one nudges close into the corner of the sofa, and has the toast kept hot on the fender; indeed, we do not have toast to tea in the summer, which omission alters the whole features of the thing; however, in spite of all this, it was agreeable enough, and so I expressed myself to Kate—" But there is no end to this. In brief, after wallowing in an ocean of sentimental small-talk, he tells us that the Nos. for August arrive: he falls into a wonderment at not meeting with his "Hearth-Rug Promptings;" then he simmers in a warm-watery transport of rage and grief at discovering the

note which indicates our will that they shall not appear at all; after which he cools down into a fit of the sullen, in which he attempts to pick holes in No. 54, complaining of "that eternal Steam-boat," whining over the strangeness of our admitting the "Travels of Columbus," while his own superfine compositions are black-balled. In fine, what with lifting up his hands in consternation, shewing the whites of his eyes in amazement, and drawing down the corners of his mouth in affected reprobation of all he finds, he works himself into a little heat again, and thus bursts out: "This Magazine is fated to be the destruction of all that is lovely and engaging in the literature of this remarkable era. If infant genius, with the tottering step, and mantling blush of diffidence, ventures to approach, it is mercilessly strangled,—if buds of talent shew promise of bloom in its neighbourhood, they are rapaciously plucked and trampled upon,—if a gem is disclosed, which, in proper setting, and worn on the finger of beauty, would refract the aerial light most charmingly, it is smashed to atoms by Christopher North's heavy hammer, and mingled with the dust. Oh! sickening thought, said I, as I rose and looked out at the open window, and saw not a leaf stirring upon our three poplars, and all nature, indeed, as tranquil as if this domineering Editor did not infest the earth with his hated presence, Oh, my poor heart! I ejaculated, nature truly has bowels of sensibility, but man has none!" These are riddles; but if our refusal to print his articles be kept steadily in view, the half-meaning of the shadowy nothings is discoverable: but really we can devote no more space to the spooney and his maudlin lamentations. In consideration of his imbecility, we shall deal leniently with him.

The galvaniser of frogs comes next, and he endeavours to give us a shock with a sonnet, but his battery is a poor one.

"TO BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, NO. LIV.

"DRAB-COATED book, in quakerly disguise!
 Quaker in nought but in thine outward trim,
 For neath that sober surtout thou art brim-
 Full of all swearing tearing insolencies.
 Thou scorn'st good authors, bad dost patronize.
 No wonder George Buchanan looks so grim,
 A-thinking of the stuff that's under him;—
 Besides, within a thistle-bed he lies,—

Meet emblem of the lot which Christopher,
(Because he'll bear no rival near his throne,)

Assigns an evil-starr'd Contributor:—

Hence 'twas Hortensius' fair fame was stifled,

Kit fear'd his sonnets would eclipse his own ;
So he suppress'd them, but their thoughts he rifled !”

Suppressed!—What d'ye mean? Didn't we print, (we forget in which No.,) your sonnet “To the half of a broken pair of Scissars,” beginning “Ah me, thou helpless of helpless things?” The reading public did not approve of it—the thermometer of popular opinion was down at 32, under its frigorific influence, so that we were abundantly justified in stuffing no more of Mr Twitch's sonnets down the regurgitating throats of the literary multitude. He may have a whole quire of his fourteeners by applying in Prince's Street ; and, moreover, as to the charge of rifling the thoughts they contain,—of our enacting the busy bee in the nectareous cups of these flowers,—why, we can only say this—that Mr Blackwood has orders to pay a guinea with every one of these sonnets, in which Mr Hortensius Twitch shall point out to the satisfaction of any chance passer-by the shop-window, (whom he and Mr B., without collusion before-hand, are to lay their paws upon for his purpose,) that there is actually a thought contained ! It must be a definite thought,—one which has been regularly brooded on in Mr T.'s brain, has chipped the shell in the said sonnet, and there stands visibly and intelligibly fledged, and recognizable as a distinct thought by ordinary capacities. If he can only point symptoms of approximation towards a thought, Mr B. is, in that case, only empowered to remunerate the disconsolate poet at the rate of half a crown per sonnet so qualified.

V. D. B.'s share in the crime is of a deeper stain. He is diabolically desirous of setting forth our infirmities

as matter of merriment. “With all the fierce endeavour of his wit,” not indeed “making the pained impotent to smile,” but seducing the bystanders to sneer at a “soul in agony.” To effect this, he misrepresents us most shamefully. We complain not of his depicting us as a victim of the gouty and rheumatic *virus*, for to our sorrow, “'tis true 'tis pity, pity 'tis 'tis true,” that we are enfeebled by its attacks—but he does this by broadly asseverating that our malady deteriorates our temper ; that we do not bear our faculties meekly under the stings and arrows of this outrageous foe, that we are rendered by it peevish, snappish, testy, tyrannical, unreasonable, and unbearable. Instead of likening us, when seated in our divan, to a father among a devoted family, or to a patriot king presiding over a united people—he makes it appear as if we bore more resemblance to a sour, crusty pedagogue among an unruly crew of striplings too big for his management,—and who, with every inclination to wield the rod, is fain, out of prudence, to let “I dare not” wait upon “I would.” Can there be an example of greater malignity? but fortunately the venom will do no harm, as the point of this libeller's shaft is blunt, and his arm not so potent as his malice. We laugh at the spleen of the wretch, and treat our readers to a sight of the caricature he has drawn, conscious that not even an approach to a ludicrous resemblance can be discovered—it is, however, quite as good as any dramatic sketch of his which has heretofore solicited our approbation.

CHRISTOPHER AGONISTES.

Scene—*Ambrose's.* Time—*After Supper.*

Chr. (Pettishly.) Plague on those herrings, they were nought but salt—
Call you this ale? 'tis innocent of malt—

I'd quench this thirst, if there were wherewithal—

Better than poison'd be, ne'er drink at all.

I'll taste no more of it, this blessed night—

Well, after all, “Death in the Pot” was right.

No doubt this swill, this swipe's so wishy washy,

Was brewed from coculus indicus, and quassia.

(*Sighs.*) Heigho, heigho—'twould make a Job go mad!

The Odontist. Cheer up, my man, the yill is no that bad.

Chr. (Reddening.) Not bad? Well, some folks sure don't own a palate.
Tickler. True, Kit, and yet this ale rolls down my gullet
 Right trippingly, and seems to be, by jingo,
 True home-brew'd tippie, genuine humming stingo.
 But own, now, Kit, is there no paroxysm,
 In that right toe of thine, of rheumatism?
Chr. (Sulkily.) There is—but whereto tends that base suggestion?
 My aching toe is nothing to the question.
(Looking askance) Odoherty may swill in sheer despite,
 But I aver 'tis bad, and I am right.

Odoh. Christie, my jewel, let me merely hint it,
 With the ale you're rather too much discontinued.
 Take a good swig or two, my precious boy,
 The muligrubs which rack your toe will fly;
 I'm sure I find relief immediately. *(Drinks.)*

Chr. (Doggedly.) The matter is to cure my thirst, not toe,
 And that, this vile potation will not do.

Wastle. Ay, but my gentle squire, there's cause to think,
 Were but the toe quite tranquilized, the drink
 Would soon regain its favour in your eyes.

Chr. (Getting warm.) Laird, I'm surprised to find this vain surmise
 Bolstered by you—this silly, stupid stigma,—
 As if I'd no more spirit than a pigmy.

Enter DEVIL.

Devil. More copy's wanted—they're a' at a dead stop—
 And Maister Blackwood rants about his shop;
 He says the twentieth's coming, and the Number
 Han't half its monthly quantity of lumber.

Chr. Tormenting imp! bane of all satisfaction,
 Who eggs thee on to drive me to distraction?

(Turning round furiously.) You've managed this,—you're all in one base
 gang!

Blackwood, Contributors, and all, go hang!

(Breaks the Devil's head, who runs out yelping; the Contributors rise, and form a groupe; some commiserating, some expostulating, some quits at a loss what to think, while Christopher falls back in his chair, exhausted with rage, and overcome with the pain of his toe, which in passion he has hit against the table.)

Oversalted herrings, and bad ale! If we got nothing better for supper at Ambrose's, our suppers, we fancy, would not be so eagerly frequented. As we admit none to them but persons of gentlemanly manners and feelings, it is quite impossible that the rebel V. D. B. should ever be undeluded, if he believes that he has given any thing like a guess at our fare, or a distorted likeness of ourself in our presidential capacity. He must go on in his error—but it will be seen that we have no fear of exposure from such paltry jobbernowls as those of the Round-Robin faction. We think these specimens will suffice tor ouse popular

indignation at these viperous traitors, who, however, are only gnawing a file. If more like evidence be called for, more shall be forthcoming, but we think it needless; we should prefer indeed to find the less guilty, taking warning by those who are gibbeted. We are aware that misprision of treason is the only charge against a few of them. This we shall overlook, if they renew their homage within a reasonable time of grace. Having thus disclosed our danger and escape, we bid all such of our loving subjects as have never swerved from us, Hail, and Farewell.