

BEAU MONDE

Le BEAU MONDE, or, Literary and Fashionable Magazine (1806-1809, continued with different subtitle in 1810) was a "fashionable" monthly magazine imitating John Bell's La Belle Assemblée, but attempting to appeal to fashionable men as well as women. This aim is evident from the use of Greek in the very first sentence of its review of Wordsworth's Poems (1807) and, indeed, by the very fact that Wordsworth's volumes are accorded such a long review. That Beau Monde also had the ladies in mind is clear from the translation of the Latin mottoes in the first column of the Wordsworth review. Lord Byron's two volumes that fall within the period of the journal are reviewed as a matter of course because of his social standing.

September 1807

Byron, *Hours of Idleness* (1807); *Beau Monde*, II (Sept. 1807), 88-90. Note the opening allusion to other reviewers – presumably those of the *Edinburgh Review*, which was to change its treatment of Byron in its notice of this very volume. The reviewer is obviously a graduate of Cambridge (p. 90) some years older than Byron (p. 88).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

HOURS OF IDLENESS, A SERIES OF POEMS, ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED,

BY GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON, A MINOR.

IT has been said of some brother critics, of well merited popularity, that they are never severe to a Scotchman or a Lord. What truth there may be in this remark, we will not pretend to determine, but for ourselves we will observe, that, with all due respect for the peerage, and a sincere attachment to Scotland, as an enlightened and important member of the body politic, we are free from bias on either head; and whenever a work comes before us, in our quality of critics, it is a matter of perfect indifference to us whether it be written by a peer or a commoner, by a Scotchman, an Englishman, or an Irishman. The republic of letters is a free course on which men of all ranks and stations may contend, and we shall invariably bestow the laurel, without respect of persons, where we think it due. If, as we believe every one must coincide with us, rank, when it enters the arena of literature, is entitled to no privileges; few will dispute that youth has some claims to indulgence. Lord Byron, in his preface, very candidly waves the privilege of his peerage, and says, "he would rather incur the bitterest censure of anonymous criticism, than triumph in honours granted solely to a title." This is honourable and manly. Genius is the gift of the Divinity; nobility a work of human creation. Lord Byron is entitled to no exemptions on account of his rank, and he very properly disclaims them; but he may plead his youth as an excuse for some errors that detract from the merit of his productions, and what

critic would be so severe as to object to the apology?

We are informed in the preface, that *Hours of Idleness* are the fruits of the lighter hours of a young man, who has lately completed his nineteenth year. They indeed bear the internal evidence of a youthful mind; and some few of them, we were sorry to be told, were written during the disadvantages of illness, and depression of spirits. Compositions produced under such circumstances it would be impossible to view with a severe eye; but happily Lord Byron's poems stand in no need of extenuating considerations to arrest the arm of censure. They are evidently the productions of a young man of cultivated taste and feeling; and if we do not find in them those glowing sentiments which have recommended the works of Anacreon Moore, and Mr. Scott so strongly to the public favour, the want of them is to be attributed to the years, rather than to any want of genius in our noble author. A bard of nineteen cannot be expected to write so warmly of love as a bard of riper years; but on the theme of friendship, a theme on which Lord Byron particularly delights to dwell, his sentiments cannot fail to afford pleasure to every one who enjoys the remembrance of the friendships of his youth. In support of this opinion we shall extract his lines addressed to ———, which bespeak a rectitude of heart and propriety of feeling which reflect equal honour on the understanding and disposition of the young nobleman.

- " Oh! yes, I will own we were dear to each
 " other,
 " The friendships of childhood, tho' fleeting,
 " are true;
 " The love which you felt, was the love of a
 " brother,
 " Nor less the affection I cherish'd for you.
- " But Friendship can vary her gentle domi-
 " nion,
 " Th' attachment of years in a moment ex-
 " pires;
 " Like Love too, she moves on a swift-waving
 " pinion,
 " But glows not, like Love, with unquench-
 " able fires.
- " Full oft have we wander'd through Ida to-
 " gether,
 " And blest were the scenes of our youth, I
 " allow;
 " In the spring of our life, how serene is the
 " weather,
 " But winter's rude tempests are gathering
 " now,
- " No more with Affection shall Memory blend-
 " ing
 " The wonted delights of our childhood re-
 " trace,
 " When pride steels the bosom, the heart is
 " unbending,
 " And what would be Justice, appears a
 " disgrace.
- " However, dear S——, for I still must esteem
 " you,
 " The few, whom I love, I can never up-
 " braid,
 " The chance which has lost, may in future
 " redeem you,
 " Repentance will cancel the vow you have
 " made.
- " I will not complain, and tho' chill'd is affec-
 " tion,
 " With me no corroding resentment shall
 " live;
 " My bosom is calm'd by the simple reflection,
 " That both may be wrong, and that both
 " should forgive.
- " You knew that my soul, that my heart, my
 " existence,
 " If danger demanded, were wholly your
 " own;
 " You knew me unalter'd, by years or by dis-
 " tance,
 " Devoted to love and to friendship alone.
- " You knew,——but away with the vain re-
 " trospection,
 " The bond of affection no longer endures;
 " Too late you may droop o'er the fond recol-
 " lection,
 " And sigh for the friend who was formerly
 " yours.
- " For the present, we part,—I will hope not
 " for ever,
 " For time and regret will restore you at
 " last;
 " To forget our dissention we both should ear-
 " deavour,
 " I ask no atonement, but days like the
 " past."
- In the descendant of an ancient family some degree of aristocratical pride may be allowed. When Lord Byron apostrophizes the shades of his forefathers, it is not vanity, we are persuaded, but that high feeling of a generous nature, which bids him to look back to his ancestors for examples, and prove himself not unworthy of the honours he inherits from them. Under these impressions, it is impossible to read his lines on leaving Newstead Abbey, and his elegy on the same place, the venerable seat of the Byron family, supposed to be the most perfect specimen of mixed Gothic architecture in England, without entering into his feelings, and applauding them. The following lines will justify this praise to every reader of taste, and we are glad of the opportunity of enriching our pages with so flattering a promise of youthful genius.
- " Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant,
 " departing
 " From the seat of his ancestors, bids you
 " adieu!
 " Abroad, or at home, your remembrance im-
 " parting
 " New courage, he'll think upon glory, and
 " you.
- " Though a tear dim his eye, at this sad sepa-
 " ration,
 " 'Tis nature, not fear, that excites his re-
 " gret;
 " 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."

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LE BEAU MONDE; OR,

Of the whole of the compositions before us, we think Lord Byron the least happy in his translations and imitations. In them he appears tame and prosaic. It was a bold attempt to translate the episode of Nisus and Euryalus after Dryden, or Anacreon after Moore. As school exercises, for which we suspect they were originally composed, they rank far above mediocrity, but some years hence Lord Byron will probably think with us, that he unnecessarily hazarded some reputation by making them public. They increase, it is true, the size of his volume, but they do not add to its value, and as his Lordship disclaims all ideas of profit from his publication, we are rather surprised that they should not have been suppressed.

His fugitive pieces are so far superior to his translations or imitations, that we are sorry ever to find him employed on subjects so inferior to his real talents. His "Thoughts suggested by a College examination," are precisely what we should have expected from a youthful writer, and what we ourselves have experienced on similar occasions, but what he says of the heads of the Colleges at Cambridge, fits so entirely in unison with our own opinion of them, that we cannot deny ourselves the satisfaction of quoting his lines on the subject, which will at least bear a comparison with any modern party squibs, and in justice of satire will be found superior to most of them.

"With eager haste, they court the lord of
"power,
"Whether 'tis PITT or P—TTY rules the
"hour:*

"To him, with suppliant smiles, they bend the
"head;
"While distant mitres, to their eyes are spread;
"But, should a storm o'erwhelm him with
"disgrace,
"They'd fly to seek the next, who fill'd his
"place.
"Such are the men, who learning's treasures
"guard,
"Such is their practice, such is their reward!
"This much, at least, we may presume to
"say:
"The premium can't exceed the price they
"pay."

A youth of nineteen can scarcely be expected to be a finished poet. Cowley and Pope were authors at an earlier period, but their works excited only wonder that they should have been composed at so juvenile a time of life. Their earlier productions are lost in the blazing splendour of their maturer genius. This we dare not predict will be the fate of Lord Byron's "Hours of Idleness," because on the one hand his Lordship assures us that this is his first and his last attempt, and on the other, we are persuaded from the specimen he has given us of his abilities, that if he cultivates his talent for poetry, as we hope he will do, it will "grow
"with his growth, and strengthen with his
"strength."

* Since this was written Lord H. P—y, has lost his place, and subsequently, (I had almost said CONSEQUENTLY) the honour of representing the University; a fact so glaring requires no comment.

June 1809

Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809); *Beau Monde*, 2nd Series, I (June 1809), 245-246. This feeble notice shows how off-hand and misinformed were many of the classical allusions in the reviews (or how badly proof-read were the reviews); Briarius had a hundred *hands*, not heads.