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

THE poetry 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 judgement 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 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 waive 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 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.

In

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 fail,
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. —page 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 turn? And why call the thing in p. 79. a translation, where *two* words (*δύο λέξεις*) of the original are expanded into four lines, and the other thing in p. 81, where *μετ' ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ ἰ ψαίε*, 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 Othona. 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 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 learnt 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 hypotenuse,
Still—mless 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 pedantry as is contained in the following Attic stanzas.

'Our

‘Ost choir would scarcely be excus’d,
 Even as a band of raw beginners;
 All mercy, now, must be refus’d
 To such a set of creaking finness.

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.

ART. III. *Some Account of the public Life, and a Selection from the unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney; the latter consisting of Extracts from an Account of the Russian Empire, a Sketch of the Political History of Ireland, and a Journal of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China; with an Appendix to each Volume.* By John Barrow, F. R. S, Author of *Travels in China, &c. &c.* 2 vol. 4to. pp. 1150, Cadell & Davies. London. 1807.

WE have frequently had occasion to commend the abilities and industry of Mr Barrow; and the last time he came before us, we gave him a hint about writing fewer quartos. This advice, however, seems very little to his liking; and, indeed, he could not easily have taken a better way of showing how determined he was to reject it, than by coming down upon the public with a huge life of Lord Macartney. The private character of this nobleman was no doubt highly respectable; and his conduct, in several situations of no great consequence, as well as in the