

## Don Juan.

"Difficile est propriè communia dicere."—HOR.

"Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more Cakes and Ale?—Yes, by Saint Anne, and Ginger shall be hot in the mouth, too!"—SHAKESPEARE, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*.

### [EDITOR'S PREFACE.]

THE reader of the "Notices of the Life of Lord Byron" is already in possession of abundant details, concerning the circumstances under which the successive cantos of DON JUAN were produced. We think it right, however, to repeat, in this place, some of the most striking passages of the Poet's own letters, with reference to this performance:—

September 19. 1818.—"I have finished the First Canto (a long one, of about 180 octaves) of a poem in the style and manner of Beppo, encouraged by the good success of the same. It is called Don Juan, and is meant to be a little quietly facetious upon every thing. But I doubt whether it is not—at least, as far as it has yet gone—too free for these very modest days. However, I shall try the experiment anonymously; and if it don't take, it will be discontinued. It is dedicated to Southey, in good, simple, savage verse, upon the Laureate's politics, and the way he got them."

January 25. 1819.—"Print it entire, omitting, of course, the lines on Castlereagh, as I am not on the spot to meet him. I have acquiesced in the request and representation; and having done so, it is idle to detail my arguments in favour of my own self-love and 'poeshie;' but I protest. If the poem has poetry, it would stand; if not, fall; the rest is 'leather and prunello,' and has never yet affected any human production 'pro or con.' Dulness is the only annihilator in such cases. As to the cant of the day, I despise it, as I have ever done all its other finical fashions, which become you as paint became the ancient Britons. If you admit this prudery, you must omit half Ariosto, La Fontaine, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Ford, all the Charles Second writers; in short, something of most who have written before Pope and are worth reading, and much of Pope himself. Read him—most of you don't—but do—and I will forgive you; though the inevitable consequence would be, that you would burn all I have ever written, and all your other wretched Claudians of the day (except Scott and Crabbe) into the bargain."

February 1. 1819.—"I have not yet begun to copy out the Second Canto, which is finished, from natural laziness, and the discouragement of the milk and water they have thrown upon the First. I say all this to them as to you, that is, for you to say to them, for I will have nothing underhand. If they had told me the poetry was bad, I would have acquiesced; but they say the contrary, and then talk to me about morality—the first time I ever heard the word from any body who was not a rascal that used it for a purpose. I maintain that it is the most moral of poems; but if people won't discover the moral, that is their fault, not mine."

April 6. 1819.—"You sha'n't make canticles of my cantos. The poem will please, if it is lively; if it is stupid, it will fail; but I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing. If you please, you may publish anonymously; it will perhaps be better; but I will battle my way against them all, like a porcupine."

August 12. 1819.—"You are right, Gifford is right, Crabbe is right, Hobhouse is right—you are all right, and I am all wrong; but do, pray, let me have that pleasure. Cut me up root and branch; quarter me in the Quarterly; send round my 'disjecti membra poetæ,' like those of the Levite's concubine; make me, if you will, a spectacle to men and angels; but don't ask me to alter, for I won't.—I am obstinate and lazy—and there's the truth.—You ask me for the plan of Donny Johnny: I have no plan; I had no plan; but I had or have materials; though if, like Tony Lumpkin, 'I am to be snubbed so when I am in spirits,' the poem will be naught, and the poet turn serious again. If it don't take, I will leave it off where it is, with all due respect to the public; but if continued, it must be in my own way. You might as well make Hamlet (or Diggory) 'act mad' in a strait waistcoat, as trammel my buffoonery, if I am to be a buffoon; their gestures and my thoughts would only be pitifully absurd and ludicrously constrained. Why, man, the soul of such writing is its licence; at least the liberty of that licence, if one likes—not that one should abuse it. It is like Trial by Jury and

<sup>1</sup> [Boswell's Johnson, vol. vii. p. 10. edit. 1835.]

Peerage, and the Habeas Corpus—a very fine thing, but chiefly in the reversion; because no one wishes to be tried for the mere pleasure of proving his possession of the privilege. But a truce with these reflections. You are too earnest and eager about a work never intended to be serious. Do you suppose that I could have any intention but to giggle and make giggle?—a playful satire, with as little poetry as could be helped, was what I meant. And as to the indecency, do, pray, read in Boswell what Johnson, the sullen moralist, says of Prior and Paulo Purgante."

August 24. 1819.—"Keep the anonymous: it helps what fun there may be. But if the matter grows serious about 'Don Juan,' and you feel yourself in a scrape, or me either, own that I am the author. I will never shrink; and if you do, I can always answer you in the question of Guatimozin to his minister—each being on his own coals." I wish that I had been in better spirits; but I am out of sorts, out of nerves, and, now and then (I begin to fear), out of my senses."

Such additional particulars, respecting the production of the later Cantos, as may seem to deserve preservation, shall be given as the poem proceeds. In the mean time, we have been much puzzled how to put the reader, who does not recollect the incidents of 1819, in possession of any thing like an adequate view of the nature and extent of the animadversion called forth by the first publication of Don Juan.

Cantos I. and II. appeared in London, in July, 1819, without the name either of author or bookseller, in a thin quarto; and the periodical press immediately teemed with the "*judicia doctorum—necnon aliorum*." It has occurred to us, that on this occasion we might do worse than adopt the example set us in the Preface to the first complete edition of the DUNCIAD. We there read as follows:—"Before we present thee, Reader, with our exertions on this most delectable Poem (drawn from the many volumes of our Adversaria on modern Authors), we shall here, according to the laudable usage of editors, collect the various judgments of the Learned concerning our Poet: various, indeed!—not only of different authors, but of the same author at different seasons. Nor shall we gather only the Testimonies of such eminent Wits as would of course descend to posterity, and consequently be read without our collection; but we shall likewise, with incredible labour, seek out for divers others, which, but for this our diligence, could never, at the distance of a few months, appear to the eye of the most curious. Hereby thou may'st not only receive the delectation of variety, but also arrive at a more certain judgment, by a grave and circumspect comparison of the witnesses with each other, or of each with himself." In like manner, therefore, let us now gratify our readers, by selecting, in reference to Don Juan, a few of the chief

### Testimonies of Authors,

beginning with the most courtly, and decorous, and high-spirited of newspapers,

#### I. THE MORNING POST.

"The greatest anxiety having been excited with respect to the appearance of this Poem, we shall lay a few stanzas before

<sup>2</sup> ["Am I now reposing on a bed of flowers?"—ROBERTSON.]

### VI. LITERARY GAZETTE.

our readers, merely observing, that, whatever its character, report has been completely erroneous respecting it. If it is not — (and truth compels us to admit it is not) — the most moral production in the world, but more in the 'Beppo' style, yet is there nothing of the sort which Scandal with her hundred tongues whispered abroad, and Malignity joyfully believed and repeated, contained in it. 'Tis simply a tale and *righte merrie conceit*, flighty, wild, extravagant — immoral too, it must be confessed; but no arrows are levelled at innocent bosoms, no sacred family peace invaded; and they must have, indeed, a strange self-consciousness, who can discover their own portrait in any part of it. Thus much, though we cannot advocate the book, truth and justice ordain us to declare."

Even more complimentary, on this occasion, was the sober, matter-of-fact *Thwaitism* of the

#### II. MORNING HERALD.

"It is hardly safe or discreet to speak of Don Juan, that truant offspring of Lord Byron's muse. It may be said, however, that, with all its sins, the copiousness and flexibility of the English language were never before so triumphantly approved — that the same compass of talent — the grave, the gay, the great, the small, 'comic force, humour, metaphysics, and observation — boundless fancy and ethereal beauty, and curious knowledge, curiously applied, have never been blended with the same felicity in any other poem."

Next comes a harsher voice, from — probably Lees Giffard, Esq., LL.D. — at all events, from that stanch organ of high Toryism, the "St. James's Chronicle," still flourishing, but now better known to London readers by its *daily* title of "The Standard."

#### III. ST. JAMES'S CHRONICLE.

"Of indirect testimony, that the poem comes from the pen of Lord Byron, there is enough to enforce conviction. The same full command of our language, the same thorough knowledge of all that is evil in our nature, the condensed energy of sentiment, and the striking boldness of imagery — all the characteristics by which Childe Harold, the Giaour, and the Corsair, are distinguished — shine with kindred splendour in Don Juan. Would we had not to add another point of resemblance, in the utter absence of moral feeling, and the hostility to religion, which betray themselves in almost every passage of the new poem! But Don Juan is, alas! the most licentious poem which has for many years issued from the English press."

The fourth on our list is "The New Times," conducted in those days by the worthy and learned Sir John Stoddart, LL.D., now Chief Justice of Malta.

#### IV. NEW TIMES.

"The work is clever and pungent, sometimes reminding us of the earlier and more inspired day of the writer, but chiefly characterised by his latter style of scattered versification and accidental poetry. It begins with a few easy prefatory stanzas relative to the choice of a hero; and then details the learned and circumspect education of Don Juan, under his lady mother's eye. Lord Byron knows the additional vigour to be found in drawing from the life; and his portraiture of the literary matron, who is, like Michael Cassio, a great arithmetician, some touches on the folly of female studies, and a lament over the hen-pecked husbands who are linked to 'ladies intellectual,' are obviously the results of domestic recollections."

Lord Burleigh himself never shook his head more sagely than

#### V. THE STATESMAN.

"This is a very large book, affecting many mysteries, but possessing very few; assuming much originality, though it hath it not. The author is wrong to pursue so eccentric a flight. It is too artificial: it is too much like the enterprise of Icarus; and his declination, or, at any rate, that of his book, will be as rapid, if not as disastrous, as the fabled tumble of that ill-starred youth."

We pass to "The Literary Gazette," edited then, as now, by William Jerdan, Esq. of Grove House, Brompton; who is sure of being remembered hereafter for his gallant seizure of Bellingham, the assassin of Perceval, in the lobby of the House of Commons, on the 11th of May, 1812; and the establishment of the first Weekly Journal of Criticism and Belles Lettres in England.

"There is neither author's nor publisher's name to this book; and the large quarto titlepage looks quite pure, with only seventeen words scattered over its surface: perhaps we cannot say that there is equal purity throughout; but there is not much of an opposite kind, to offend even fastidious criticism, or sour morality. That Lord Byron is the author there is internal proof. The public mind, so agitated by the strange announcement of this stranger, in the newspaper advertisements, may repose in quiet; since we can assure our readers that the *avatar* so dreaded, neither refers to the return of Buonaparte, nor to the coming of any other great national calamity, but simply to the publication of an exceedingly clever and entertaining poem. Even when we blame the too great laxity of the poet, we cannot but feel a high admiration of his talent. Far superior to the libertine he paints, fancifulness and gaiety gild his worst errors, and no brute force is employed to overthrow innocence. Never was English festooned into more luxuriant stanzas than in Don Juan. Like the dolphin sporting in its native waves, at every turn, however grotesque, displaying a new hue and a new beauty, the noble author has shown an absolute control over his means; and at every cadence, rhyme, or construction, however whimsical, delighted us with novel and magical associations. The style and nature of this poem appear to us to be a singular mixture of burlesque and pathos, of humorous observation and the higher elements of poetical composition. In ribaldry and drollery, the author is surpassed by many writers who have had their day and sunk into oblivion; but in highly wrought interest, and overwhelming passion, he is himself alone."

As the Editor of the Journal above quoted thought fit to insert, soon after, certain extracts from a work then — (and probably still) — in MS., entitled "Lord Byron's Plagiarisms," he (the Editor) will not think it indecorous in us here to append a specimen of the said work — which is known to have proceeded from no less a pen than that of

#### VII. ALARIC A. WATTS, ESQ.

"A great deal has been said, at various times, about the originality of Lord Byron's conception, as it respects the characters of the heroes and heroines of his poetry. We are, however, disposed to believe, that his *dramatis personæ* are mostly the property of other exhibitors, although he may sometimes furnish them with new dresses and decorations, — with 'sable hair,' 'unearthly scowls,' 'a vital scorn' of all beside themselves, — and such additional improvements as he may consider necessary, in order to enable them to make their appearance with satisfaction to himself, and profit, or at least amusement, to the public. Sooth to say, there are few people better adapted to play the part of a Corsair than his lordship; for he is positively unequalled by any marauder we ever met with or heard of, in the extent and variety of his literary piracies, and unacknowledged obligations to various great men — ay, and women too — living as well as deceased."

The next weekly Journalist whom we hold it proper to quote is "The Champion" — in other words, Thomas Hill, Esq., the generous original patron of Kirke White and Robert Bloomfield, so eloquently lauded by Southey in his Life of the former of these poets — then proprietor of

#### VIII. THE CHAMPION.

"Don Juan is undoubtedly from the pen of Lord Byron; and the mystery in the publication seems to be nothing but a bookseller's trick to excite curiosity and enhance the sale: for although the book is infinitely more immoral than the publications against which the prosecutions of the Society for the Suppression of Vice are directed, we find nothing in it that could be likely to be regarded as actionable. At the bar of moral criticism, indeed, it may and must be arraigned; and against the process and decrees of that court, the subterfuges appealed to will be no protection. Other writers, in their attacks upon whatever mankind may or ought to reverence, make their advances in partial detail; Lord Byron proceeds by general assault. Some, while they war against religion, pay homage to morality; and others, while they subvert all morals, cant about religion; Lord Byron displays at once all the force and energy of his faculties, all the powers of poetry, and the missiles of wit and ridicule, against whatever is respectable matter dispersed through the two cantos: and though, in those parts which affect to be critical, the wantonness of wit is sometimes more apparent than the sedateness of impartial judgment; and though the politics occasionally savour more of caustic misanthropy, than of that



ardent patriotic enthusiasm which constitutes the charm of that subject—upon both these topics, on the whole, we find much more to commend than to censure.”

Among the Monthly critics, the first place is due to the venerable Sylvanus Urban.

#### IX. GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.

“Don Juan is obviously intended as a satire upon some of the conspicuous characters of the day. The best friends of the poet must, with ourselves, lament to observe abilities of so high an order rendered subservient to the spirit of infidelity and libertinism. The noble bard, by employing his genius on a worthy subject, might delight and instruct mankind; but the present work, though written with ease and spirit, and containing many truly poetical passages, cannot be read by persons of moral and religious feelings without the most decided reprobation.”

We next have the

#### X. MONTHLY REVIEW.

“Don Juan is a poem, which, if originality and variety be the surest test of genius, has certainly the highest title to it; and which, we think, would have puzzled Aristotle, with all his strength of poetics, to explain, have animated Longinus with some of its passages, have delighted Aristophanes, and have choked Anacreon with joy instead of with a grape. We might almost imagine that the ambition had seized the author to please and to displease the world at the same time; but we can scarcely think that he deserves the fate of the old man and his son and the ass, in the fable,—or that he will please nobody,—how strongly soever we may condemn the more than poetic licence of his muse. He has here exhibited that wonderful versatility of style and thought, which appears almost incompatible within the scope of a single subject; and the familiar and the sentimental, the witty and the sublime, the sarcastic and the pathetic, the gloomy and the droll, are all touched with so happy an art, and mingled together with such a power of union, yet such a discrimination of style, that a perusal of the poem appears more like a pleasing and ludicrous dream, than the sober feeling of reality. It is certainly one of the strangest, though not the best, of dreams; and it is much to be wished that the author, before he lay down to sleep, had invoked, like Shakspeare's Lysander, some good angel to protect him against the wicked spirit of slumbers. We hope, however, that his readers have learned to admire his genius without being in danger from its influence; and we must not be surprised if a poet will not always write to instruct as well as to please us.”

To which add a miscellany which, in spite of great occasional merit, is now defunct—the

#### XI. LONDON MAGAZINE.

“Lord Byron's poem of Don Juan, though a wonderful proof of the versatility of his powers, is avowedly licentious. It is a satire on decency, on fine feeling, on the rules of conduct necessary to the conservation of society, and on some of his own near connections. Vivacious allusions to certain practical irregularities are things which it is to be supposed innocent is strong enough to resist; but the quick alternation of pathos and profaneness,—of serious and moving sentiment and indecent ribaldry,—of afflicting, soul-rending pictures of human distress, rendered keen by the most pure and hallowed sympathies of the human breast, and absolute jeering of human nature, and general mockery of creation, destiny, and heaven itself—this is a sort of violence, the effect of which is either to sear or to disgust the mind of the reader, and which cannot be fairly characterised but as an insult and outrage.”

The journal next to be cited is now also defunct; but the title has been revived.

#### XII. BRITISH MAGAZINE.

“Byron, after having achieved a rapid and glorious fame, has, by the publication of this poem, not only disgusted every well-regulated mind, and afflicted all who respected him for his extraordinary talents, but has degraded his personal character lower than even his enemies (of whom he has many) could have wished to see it reduced. So gratuitous, so melancholy, so despicable a prostitution of genius was never, perhaps, before witnessed. We wish we were the poet's next of kin: it should go hard but that a writ *de lunatico inquirendo* should issue.”

Another sage long since dead and forgotten, was entitled the

#### XIII. EDINBURGH MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

“Don Juan presents to us the melancholy spectacle of the greatest poet of the age lending the enchantment of his genius to themes upon which we trust that, for the benefit of

mankind, the charm of its perverted inspiration will for ever be expended in vain. This is by far the most offensive of all Lord Byron's performances. We have here, for the first time in the history of our literature, a great work, of which the very basis is infidelity and licentiousness, and the most obtrusive ornaments are impure imaginations and blasphemous sneers. The work cannot perish; for it has in it, full and overflowing, the elements of intellectual vigour, and bears upon it the stamp of surpassing power. The poet is, indeed, ‘damned to everlasting fame.’”

The Monthly organ of criticism possessing most sway among certain strictly religious circles, was, in 1819, as now, the

#### XIV. ECLECTIC REVIEW.

“We have had enough of that with which Lord Byron's poetry is replete—himself. The necessary progress of character, as developed in his last reputed production, has conducted him to a point at which it is no longer safe to follow him even in thought, for fear we should be beguiled of any portion of the detestation due to this bold outrage. Poetry which it is impossible not to read without admiration, yet which it is equally impossible to admire without losing some degree of self-respect, can be safely dealt with only in one way,—by passing it over in silence. There are cases in which it is equally impossible to relax into laughter, or to soften into pity, without feeling that an immoral concession is made to vice. The author of the following stanza might seem to invite our compassionate sympathy:—

“No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart,  
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!

Once all in all, but now a thing apart,  
Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:  
The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art  
Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,  
And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,  
Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgement,” &c.

These lines are exceedingly touching, and they have that character of truth which distinguishes Lord Byron's poetry. He writes like a man who has that clear perception of the truth of things, which is the result of the guilty knowledge of good and evil; and who, by the light of that knowledge, has deliberately preferred the evil, with a proud malignity of purpose which would seem to leave little for the last consummating change to accomplish. When he calculates that the reader is on the verge of pitying him, he takes care to throw him back the defiance of laughter, as if to let him know that all the Poet's pathos is but the sentimentalism of the drunkard between his cups, or the relenting softness of the courtesan, who the next moment resumes the bad boldness of her degraded character. With such a man, who would wish to laugh or to weep? And yet, who that reads him can refrain alternately from either?”

Another now silent oracle was

#### XV. THE BRITISH CRITIC.

“A satire was announced, in terms so happily mysterious, as to set the town on the very tiptoe of expectation. A thousand low and portentous murmurs preceded its birth. At one time it was declared to be so intolerably severe, that an alarming increase was to be apprehended in the catalogue of our national suicides; at another, it was stated to be of a complexion so blasphemous, as, even in these days of liberality, to endanger the personal security of the bookseller. Fearful indeed was the prodigy—a book without a bookseller; an advertisement without an advertiser—a deed without a name. After all this portentous par-turition, out creeps Don Juan,—and, doubtless, much to the general disappointment of the town, as innocent of satire as any other Don in the Spanish dominions. If, then, it be not a satire—what is it? A more perplexing question could not be put to the critical squad. Of the four hundred and odd stanzas which the two Cantos contain, not a title could, even in the utmost latitude of interpretation, be dignified by the name of poetry. It has not wit enough to be comic; it has not spirit enough to be lyric; nor is it didactic of anything but mischief. The versification and morality are about upon a par; as far, therefore, as we are enabled to give it any character at all, we should pronounce it a narrative of degrading debauchery in dog-grel rhyme. The style which the noble Lord has adopted is tedious and wearisome to a most insufferable degree. Don Juan is no burlesque, nor mock heroic: it consists of the common adventures of a common man, ill conceived, tediously told, and poorly illustrated. In the present thick and heavy quarto, containing upwards of four hundred dog-grel stanzas, there are not a dozen places that, even in the merriest mood, could raise a smile. It is true that we may be VERY DULL DOGS, and as little able to comprehend the wit of his lordship, as to construe his poetry.”

We now arrive at two authorities to which, on this occasion, uncommon attention is due, inasmuch as

their castigations of Don Juan were considered worthy of very elaborate comment and reclamation on the part of Lord Byron himself. Of these, the first is that famous Article in the no otherwise famous work, since defunct, styled “The British Review,” or, in the phrase of Don Juan—

#### XVI. “MY GRANDMOTHER'S REVIEW, THE BRITISH.”

“Of a poem so flagitious, that no bookseller has been willing to take upon himself the publication, though most of them disgrace themselves by selling it, what can the critic say? His praise or censure ought to found itself on examples produced from the work itself. For praise, as far as regards the poetry, many passages might be exhibited; for condemnation, as far as regards the morality, all: but none for either purpose can be produced, without insult to the ear of decency, and vexation to the heart that feels for domestic or national happiness. This poem is sold in the shops as the work of Lord Byron; but the name of neither author nor bookseller is on the title page: we are, therefore, at liberty to suppose it not to be Lord Byron's composition; and this scepticism has something to justify it, in the instance which has lately occurred of the name of that nobleman having been borrowed for a tale of disgusting horror, published under the title of ‘The Vampire.’ But the strongest argument against the supposition of its being the performance of Lord Byron is this;—that it can hardly be possible for an English nobleman, even in his mirth, to send forth to the public the direct and palpable falsehood contained in the 209th and 210th stanzas of the First Canto.

“For fear some prudish readers should grow skittish,  
I've bribed my grandmother's review—the British.

I sent it in a letter to the editor,  
Who thank'd me duly by return of post—  
I'm for a handsome article his creditor;  
Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to roast,  
And break a promise after having made it her,  
Denying the receipt of what it cost,  
And smear his page with gall instead of honey,  
All I can say is—that he had the money.”

No misdemeanor—not even that of sending into the world obscene and blasphemous poetry, the product of studious lewdness and laboured impiety—appears to us in so detestable a light as the acceptance of a present by an editor of a Review, as the condition of praising an author; and yet the miserable man (for miserable he is, as having a soul of which he cannot get rid), who has given birth to this pestilent poem, has not scrupled to lay this to the charge of ‘The British Review;’ and that, not by insinuation, but has actually stated himself to have sent money in a letter to the Editor of this journal, who acknowledged the receipt of the same by a letter in return, with thanks. No peer of the British realm can surely be capable of so calumnious a falsehood, refuted, we trust, by the very character and spirit of the journal so defamed. We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that this poem cannot be Lord Byron's production: and we, of course, expect that Lord Byron will, with all gentlemanly haste, disclaim a work imputed to him, containing a calumny so wholly the product of malignant invention.

“If somebody personating the editor of the British Review has received money from Lord Byron, or from any other person, by way of bribe to praise his compositions, the fraud might be traced by the production of the letter which the author states himself to have received in return. Surely, then, if the author of this poem has any such letter, he will produce it for this purpose. But lest it should be said that we have not in positive terms denied the charge, we do utterly deny that there is one word of truth, or the semblance of truth, as far as regards this Review or its Editor, in the assertions made in the stanzas above referred to. We really feel a sense of degradation, as the idea of this odious imputation passes through our minds.

“We have heard, that the author of the poem under consideration designed what he has said in the 35th stanza as a sketch of his own character:—

“Yet José was an honourable man;  
That I must say, who knew him very well.”

If, then, he is this honourable man, we shall not call in vain for an act of justice at his hands, in declaring that he did not mean his word to be taken, when, for the sake of a jest (our readers will judge how far such a mode of jesting is defensible), he stated, with the particularity which belongs to fact, the forgery of a groundless fiction.” [No. XVIII. 1819.]

The foregoing vindication of the Editor of the British Review (Mr. Roberts) called forth from Lord Byron that “LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF MY GRANDMOTHER'S REVIEW,” which the reader will find in the

present volume.<sup>1</sup> We next solicit attention to the following passages from the redoubted organ of Northern Toryism,—

#### XVII. BLACKWOOD.

“In the composition of this work there is unquestionably a more thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice—power and profligacy—than in any poem which had ever before been written in the English or, indeed, in any other modern language. Had the wickedness been less inextricably mingled with the beauty, and the grace, and the strength of a most inimitable and incomprehensible muse, our task would have been easy. Don Juan is by far the most admirable specimen of the mixture of ease, strength, gaiety, and seriousness extant in the whole body of English poetry: the author has devoted his powers to the worst of purposes and passions; and it increases his guilt and our sorrow, that he has devoted them entire.

“The moral strain of the whole poem is pitched in the lowest key. Love—honour—patriotism—religion, are mentioned only to be scoffed at, as if their sole resting-place were, or ought to be, in the bosoms of fools. It appears, in short, as if this miserable man, having exhausted every species of sensual gratification—having drained the cup of sin even to its bitterest dregs—were resolved to show us that he is no longer a human being, even in his frailties; but a cool unconcerned fiend, laughing with a detestable glee over the whole of the better and worse elements of which human life is composed—treating well nigh with equal derision the most pure of virtues, and the most odious of vices—dead alike to the beauty of the one, and the deformity of the other—a mere heartless despoiler of that frail but noble humanity, whose type was never exhibited in a shape of more deplorable degradation than in his own contemptuously distinct delineation of himself. To confess to his Maker, and weep over in secret agonies, the wildest and most fantastic transgressions of heart and mind, is the part of a conscious sinner, in whom sin has not become the sole principle of life and action. But, to lay bare to the eye of man—and of woman—all the hidden convulsions of a wicked spirit—and to do all this without one symptom of contrition, remorse, or hesitation, with a calm, careless ferociousness of contented and satisfied depravity—this was an insult which no man of genius had ever before dared to put upon his Creator or his species. Impiously railing against his God—madly and meanly disloyal to his Sovereign and his country,—and brutally outraging all the best feelings of female honour, affection, and confidence,—how small a part of chivalry is that which remains to the descendant of the Byrons—a gloomy visor and a deadly weapon!

“Those who are acquainted (as who is not?) with the main incidents in the private life of Lord Byron—and who have not seen this production, will scarcely believe that malignity should have carried him so far, as to make him commence a filthy and impious poem with an elaborate satire on the character and manners of his wife—from whom, even by his own confession, he has been separated only in consequence of his own cruel and heartless misconduct. It is in vain for Lord Byron to attempt in any way to justify his own behaviour in that affair; and, now that he has so openly and audaciously invited inquiry and reproach, we do not see any good reason why he should not be plainly told so by the general voice of his countrymen. It would not be an easy matter to persuade any Man, who has any knowledge of the nature of Woman, that a female such as Lord Byron has himself described his wife to be, would rashly, or hastily, or lightly, separate herself from the love with which she had once been inspired for such a man as he is, or was. Had he not heaped insult upon insult, and scorn upon scorn—had he not forced the iron of his contempt into her very soul—there is no woman of delicacy and virtue, as he admitted Lady Byron to be, who would not have hoped all things and suffered all things from one, her love of whom must have been inwoven with so many exalting elements of delicious pride, and more delicious humility. To offend the love of such a woman was wrong—but it might be forgiven; to desert her was unmanly—but he might have returned, and wiped for ever from her eyes the tears of her desertion;—but to injure, and to desert, and then to turn back and wound her widowed privacy with unhallowed strains of cold-blooded mockery—was brutally, fiendishly, inexplicably mean. For impurities there might be some possibility of pardon, were they supposed to spring only from the reckless buoyancy of young blood and fiery passions;—for impiety there might at least be pity, were it visible that the misery of the impious soul equalled its darkness;—but for offences such as this, which cannot proceed either from the madness of sudden impulse, or the bewildered agonies of doubt—but which speak the wilful and determined spite of an unrepenting, unsoftened, smiling, sarcastic, joyous sinner—there can be neither pity nor pardon. Our knowledge that it is committed by one of the most powerful intellects our island ever has produced, leads in-

<sup>1</sup> [See APPENDIX: Don Juan, Note A.]



tensity a thousand fold to the bitterness of our indignation. Every high thought that was ever kindled in our breasts by the muse of Byron—every pure and lofty feeling that ever responded from within us to the sweep of his majestic inspirations—every remembered moment of admiration and enthusiasm, is up in arms against him. We look back with a mixture of wrath and scorn to the delight with which we suffered ourselves to be filled by one who, all the while he was furnishing us with delight, must, we cannot doubt it, have been mocking us with a cruel mockery—less cruel only, because less peculiar, than that with which he has now turned him from the lurking-place of his selfish and polluted exile, to pour the pitiful chalice of his contumely on the surrendered devotion of a virgin-bosom, and the holy hopes of the mother of his child. It is indeed a sad and an humiliating thing to know, that in the same year there proceeded from the same pen two productions, in all things so different, as the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold* and this loathsome *Don Juan*.

"We have mentioned one, and all will admit, the worst instance of the private malignity which has been embodied in so many passages of *Don Juan*: and we are quite sure, the lofty-minded and virtuous men whom Lord Byron has debased himself by insulting, will close the volume which contains their own injuries, with no feelings save those of pity for Him that has inflicted them, and for Her who partakes so largely in the same injuries." [Aug. 1819.]

The "REMARKS UPON AN ARTICLE IN BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE," which Lord Byron wrote on perusing the above-quoted passages, and which were printed at the time, but on consideration suppressed,—are now, for the first time, published in the present volume.<sup>1</sup>

As a pleasing relief, in the midst of these prose criticisms, we present an extract from "COMMON SENSE, A POEM," published in 1819, by a gentleman, we are informed, of eminent respectability, the Rev. Mr. Terrot, of Cambridge.

#### XVIII. TERROT.

"Alas, for Byron!—Satire's self must own  
His song has something of a lofty tone:  
But 'tis an empty sound. If vice be low,  
Hateful and mean, then Byron's verse is so.  
Not all his genius saves him from the curse  
Of plunging deeper still from bad to worse;  
With frantic speed, he runs the road to ruin,  
And damns his name for ever by 'Don Juan.'  
He wants variety; nor does his plan  
Admit the idea of an honest man:  
One character alone can he afford  
To Harold, Conrad, Lara, or my Lord;  
Each half a madman, mischievous and sour,  
Supremely wretched each, and each a Giaour.  
Some fumigate my lord with praises sweet,  
Some lick the very dust beneath his feet.  
Jeffrey, with Christian charity so meek,  
Kisses the hand that smote him on the cheek.  
Gifford's retainers, Tory, Pittite, Rat,  
All join to soothe the surly Democrat.  
I, too, admire—but not through thick and thin,  
Nor think him such a bard as ne'er hath been."

Let us indulge our readers, before we return to the realms of prose, with another wreath from the myrtles of Parnassus,—i. e. with an extract from an "Expostulatory Epistle to Lord Byron"—

"By Cottle—not he whom the Alfred made famous;  
But Joseph of Bristol, the brother of Amos."<sup>2</sup>

#### XIX. COTTLE.

"Is there a man, how fallen! still to fall!  
Who bears a dark precedence o'er all,  
Rejected by the land which gave him birth,  
And wandering now an outcast o'er the earth,  
On every virtuous door engraven 'hence!  
Whose very breath is plague and pestilence;  
A son, dismember'd, and to aliens thrown,  
Corrupting other climes—but first his own?  
One such *there is!* whom sires unborn will curse,  
Hasting with giant stride from bad to worse,  
Seeking untired to gain the sensual's smile,  
A pander for the profligate and vile;  
His head rich fraught (like some bazaar's sly stall)  
With lecherous lays, that come at every call.  
*There is* a man, usurping lordly sway,  
Aiming alone to hold a world at bay;

<sup>1</sup> [See APPENDIX: *Don Juan*, Note B.]

Who, mean as daring, arrogant as vain,  
Like chaff regards opinion with disdain,  
As if the privilege with him were found,  
The laws to spurn by which mankind are bound,  
As if the arm which drags a despot down  
Must palsied fall before a Byron's frown!"

The "Testimonies" hitherto quoted refer to the earlier—most of them to the first two—Cantos of *Don Juan*. We now pass to critical observations on the Poem as a whole; some introduced in periodical works of the time, others from separate tracts. Let us begin with the more measured language of *Blackwood*, in 1825—when Lord Byron was no more.

#### XX. BLACKWOOD.—*iterum*.

"We shall, like all others who say any thing about Lord Byron, begin, *sans apologie*, with his personal character. This is the great object of attack, the constant theme of open vituperation to one set, and the established mark for all the petty but deadly artillery of sneers, shrugs, groans, to another. Two widely different matters, however, are generally, we might say universally, mixed up here—the personal character of the man, as proved by his course of life, and his personal character as revealed in, or guessed from, his books. Nothing can be more unfair than the style in which this mixture is made use of. Is there a noble sentiment, a lofty thought, a sublime conception, in the book?—'Ah, yes,' is the answer. 'But what of that? It is only the *roué* Byron that speaks!' Is a kind, a generous action of the man mentioned? 'Yes, yes,' comments the sage, 'but only remember the atrocities of *Don Juan*; depend on it, this, if it be true, must have been a mere freak of caprice, or perhaps a bit of vile hypocrisy.' Salvation is thus shut out at either entrance: the poet damns the man, and the man the poet.

"Nobody will suspect us of being so absurd, as to suppose that it is possible for people to draw no inferences as to the character of an author from his book, or to shut entirely out of view, in judging of a book, that which they may happen to know about the man who writes it. The cant of the day supposes such things to be practicable, but they are not. But what we complain of, and scorn, is the extent to which they are carried in the case of this particular individual, as compared with others; the impudence with which things are at once assumed to be facts in regard to his private history, and the absolute unfairness of never arguing from his writings to him—but for evil.

"Take the man, in the first place, as unconnected, in so far as we can thus consider him, with his works;—and ask, what, after all, are the bad things we know of him? Was he dishonest or dishonourable?—had he ever done any thing to forfeit, or even endanger, his rank as a gentleman? Most assuredly no such accusations have ever been maintained against Lord Byron, the private nobleman—although something of the sort may have been insinuated against the author. 'But, he was such a profligate in his morals, that his name cannot be mentioned with any thing like tolerance.' Was he so, indeed? We should like extremely to have the catechising of the individual *man* who says so? That he indulged in sensual vices to some extent is certain—and to be regretted and condemned. But, was he worse, as to such matters, than the enormous majority of those who join in the cry of horror upon this occasion? We most assuredly believe exactly the reverse: and we rest our belief upon very plain and intelligible grounds. First, we hold it impossible that the majority of mankind, or that any thing beyond a very small minority, are or can be entitled to talk of sensual profligacy as having formed a part of the life and character of the man who, dying at six-and-thirty, bequeathed a collection of works such as Byron's to the world. Secondly, we hold it impossible that, laying the extent of his intellectual labours out of the question, and looking only to the nature of the intellect which generated, and delighted in generating, such beautiful and noble conceptions as are to be found in almost all Lord Byron's works—we hold it impossible that very many men can be at once capable of comprehending these conceptions, and entitled to consider sensual profligacy as having formed the principal, or even a principal, trait in Lord Byron's character. Thirdly, and lastly, we have never been able to hear any one fact established, which could prove Lord Byron to deserve any thing like the degree or even kind of odium which has, in regard to matters of this class, been heaped upon his name. We have no story of base unmanly seduction, or false and villainous intrigue, against him—none whatever. It seems to us quite clear, that if he had been at all what is called in society an unprincipled sensualist, there must have been many such stories—authentic and authenticated. But there are none such—absolutely none. His name has been coupled with the names of three, four, or more women of some rank: but what kind of women?—

<sup>2</sup> [See *anté*, p. 427.]

every one of them, in the first place, about as old as himself in years, and therefore a great deal older in character—every one of them utterly battered in reputation long before he came into contact with them—licentious, unprincipled, characterless women. What father has ever reproached him with the ruin of his daughter? What husband has denounced him as the destroyer of his peace?

"Let us not be mistaken. We are not defending the offences of which Lord Byron unquestionably was guilty: neither are we finding fault with those who, after looking honestly within and around themselves, condemn those offences—no matter how severely. But we are speaking of society in general, as it now exists; and we say that there is vile hypocrisy in the tone in which Lord Byron is talked of *there*. We say that, although all offences against purity of life are miserable things and condemnable things, the degrees of guilt attached to different offences of this class are as widely different as are the degrees of guilt between an assault and a murder; and we confess our belief, that no man of Byron's station and age could have run much risk of gaining a very bad name in society, had a course of life similar (in so far as we know any thing of that) to Lord Byron's been the only thing chargeable against him.

"The last poem he wrote (see *anté*, p. 577.) was produced upon his birth-day, not many weeks before he died. We consider it as one of the finest and most touching effusions of his noble genius. We think he who reads it, and can ever after bring himself to regard even the worst transgressions that have been charged against Lord Byron with any feelings but those of humble sorrow and manly pity, is not deserving of the name of man. The deep and passionate struggles with the inferior elements of his nature (and ours) which it records—the lofty thirsting after purity—the heroic devotion of a soul half weary of life, because unable to believe in its own powers to live up to what it so intensely felt to be, and so reverentially honoured as, the right—the whole picture of this mighty spirit, often darkened, but never sunk, often erring, but never ceasing to see and to worship the beauty of virtue—the repentance of it, the anguish, the aspiration, almost stifled in despair—the whole of this is such a whole, that we are sure that no man can read these solemn verses too often, and we recommend them for repetition, as the best and most conclusive of all possible answers, whenever the name of Byron is insulted by those who permit themselves to forget nothing, either in his life or his writings, but the good."

The present Lord Advocate of Scotland thus gratefully admonished the yet living author of *Don Juan*, in the LXXIIId Number of the *Edinburgh Review*.

#### XXI. JEFFREY.

"Lord Byron complains bitterly of the detraction by which he has been assailed—and intimates that his works have been received by the public with far less cordiality and favour than he was entitled to expect. We are constrained to say that this appears to us a very extraordinary mistake. In the whole course of our experience, we cannot recollect a single author who has had so little reason to complain of his reception—to whose genius the public has been so early and so constantly just—to whose faults they have been so long and so signally indulgent. From the very first he must have been aware that he offended the principles and shocked the prejudices of the majority, by his sentiments, as much as he delighted them by his talents. Yet there never was an author so universally and warmly applauded, so gently admonished—so kindly entreated to look more heedfully to his opinions. He took the praise, as usual, and rejected the advice. As he grew in fame and authority, he aggravated all his offences—clung more fondly to all he had been reproached with—and only took leave of *Childe Harold* to ally himself to *Don Juan*! That he has since been talked of, in public and in private, with less unmingled admiration—that his name is now mentioned as often for censure as for praise—and that the exultation with which his countrymen once hailed the greatest of our living poets, is now alloyed by the recollection of the tendency of his writings—is matter of notoriety to all the world; but matter of surprise, we should imagine, to nobody but Lord Byron himself.

"That the base and the bigoted—those whom he has darkened by his glory, spited by his talent, or mortified by his neglect—have taken advantage of the prevailing disaffection, to vent their puny malice in silly nicknames and vulgar scurrility, is natural and true. But Lord Byron may depend upon it, that the dissatisfaction is not confined to them,—and, indeed, that they would never have had the courage to assail one so immeasurably their superior, if he had not at once made himself vulnerable by his errors, and alienated his natural defenders by his obstinate adherence to them. We are not bigots, nor rival poets. We have not been detractors from Lord Byron's fame, nor the friends of his detractors; and we tell him—far more in sorrow than in anger—that we verily believe the great body of the English nation—the religious, the moral, and the candid part of it—consider the

tendency of his writings to be immoral and pernicious—and look upon his perseverance in that strain of composition with regret and reprehension. We ourselves are not easily startled, either by levity of temper, or boldness, or even rashness of remark; we are, moreover, most sincere admirers of Lord Byron's genius, and have always felt a pride and an interest in his fame: but we cannot dissent from the censure to which we have alluded; and shall endeavour to explain, in as few and as temperate words as possible, the grounds upon which we rest our concurrence.

"He has no priestlike cant or priestlike reviling to apprehend from us. We do not charge him with being either a disciple or an apostle of Satan; nor do we describe his poetry as a mere compound of blasphemy and obscenity. On the contrary, we are inclined to believe that he wishes well to the happiness of mankind—and are glad to testify, that his poems abound with sentiments of great dignity and tenderness, as well as passages of infinite sublimity and beauty. But their general tendency we believe to be in the highest degree pernicious; and we even think that it is chiefly by means of the fine and lofty sentiments they contain, that they acquire their most fatal power of corruption. This may sound at first, perhaps, like a paradox; but we are mistaken if we shall not make it intelligible enough in the end.

"We think there are indecencies and indelicacies, seductive descriptions and profligate representations, which are extremely reprehensible; and also audacious speculations, and erroneous and uncharitable assertions, equally indefensible. But if these had stood alone, and if the whole body of his works had been made up of gaudy ribaldry and flashy scepticism, the mischief, we think, would have been much less than it is. He is not more obscene, perhaps, than Dryden or Prior, and other classical and pardoned writers; nor is there any passage in the history even of *Don Juan* so degrading as Tom Jones's affair with Lady Bellaston. It is no doubt a wretched apology for the indecencies of a man of genius, that equal indecencies have been forgiven to his predecessors: but the precedent of lenity might have been followed; and we might have passed both the levity and the voluptuousness—the dangerous warmth of his romantic situations, and the scandal of his cold-blooded dissipation. It might not have been so easy to get over his dogmatic scepticism—his hard-hearted maxims of misanthropy—his cold-blooded and eager expositions of the non-existence of virtue and honour. Even this, however, might have been comparatively harmless, if it had not been accompanied by that which may look, at first sight, as a palliation—the frequent presentation of the most touching pictures of tenderness, generosity, and faith.

"The charge we bring against Lord Byron in short is, that his writings have a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue—and to make all enthusiasm and constancy of affection ridiculous; and that this is effected, not merely by direct maxims and examples, of an imposing or seducing kind, but by the constant exhibition of the most profligate heartlessness in the persons of those who had been transiently represented as actuated by the purest and most exalted emotions—and in the lessons of that very teacher who had been, but a moment before, so beautifully pathetic in the expression of the loftiest conceptions.

"This is the charge which we bring against Lord Byron. We say that, under some strange misapprehension as to the truth, and the duty of proclaiming it, he has exerted all the powers of his powerful mind to convince his readers, both directly and indirectly, that all emulating pursuits, and disinterested virtues, are mere deceits or illusions—hollow and despicable mockeries for the most part, and, at best, but laborious follies. Love, patriotism, valour, devotion, constancy, ambition—all are to be laughed at, disbelieved in, and despised!—and nothing is really good, so far as we can gather, but a succession of dangers to stir the blood, and of banquets and intrigues to soothe it again! If this doctrine stood alone, with its examples, it would revolt, we believe, more than it would seduce:—but the author of it has the unlucky gift of personating all those sweet and lofty illusions, and that with such grace and force and truth to nature, that it is impossible not to suppose, for the time, that he is among the most devoted of their votaries—till he casts off the character with a jerk—and, the moment after he has moved and exalted us to the very height of our conception, resumes his mockery at all things serious or sublime—and lets us down at once on some coarse joke, hard-hearted sarcasm, or fierce and relentless personality, as if on purpose to show—'Who'er was edified, himself was not'—or to demonstrate practically as it were, and by example, how possible it is to have all fine and noble feelings, or their appearance, for a moment, and yet retain no particle of respect for them—or of belief in their intrinsic worth or permanent reality."

The next Author we must cite, is the late industrious Dr. John Watkins, well known for his "Biographical Dictionary," his "Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan," &c.—styled ignominiously by Lord Byron "Old Grobius."



## XXII. WATKINS.

"On this Odyssey of immorality, there cannot be two opinions; for, let the religious sentiments of the reader be as lax as possible, he must be shocked at the barefaced licentiousness of the poem. Marriage is of course reprobated, and all the laws of social life are set at open defiance as violations of natural liberty. Lord Byron is the very *Comus* of poetry, who, by the bewitching airiness of his numbers, aims to turn the whole moral world into a herd of monsters. It must, however, be allowed that in this tale, he has not acted the wily part, of concealing the poison under the appearance of virtue; on the contrary, he makes a frank confession of his principles, and glories in vice with the unblushing temerity of a rampant satyr who acknowledges no rule but appetite. The mischief of the work is rendered doubly so by the attractive gaiety of the language, the luxuriance of the imagery, and the humorous digressions with which the story is embellished and chequered."

Another great moralist—practically, we believe, a most eminent one—is the next on our catalogue; namely, the late *Rev.* Caleb Colton, the author of "Lacon; or, Many Things in Few Words" (or, as Lord Byron, somewhere, was wicked enough to misquote it—"Few Things in Many Words") in his "Remarks on the Tendencies of Don Juan," published in 1822.

## XXIII. COLTON.

"The impurity of Rochester is too disgusting to do harm; the morality of Pope is too neutralised to do good: but the muse of Byron has mixed her poison with the hand of an adept; it is proffered in a goblet of crystal and of gold; it will please the palate, remain on the stomach, and circulate through the veins. There are persons who think that some of the objectionable parts of Don Juan are reclaimed by others that are both beautiful and faultless. But, alas! the poison is general, the antidote particular; the ribaldry and obscenity will be understood by the many; the profundity and the sublimity only by the few. We live in an age when orators are trying how much treason they may talk without being hanged, poets how much nonsense they may write without being neglected, and libertines how much licentiousness they may venture upon without being execrated and despised. We consider Don Juan to be a bold experiment, made by a daring and determined hand, on the moral patience of the public. It is most melancholy to reflect that a man of Lord Byron's stupendous powers should lend himself to such unworthy purposes as these; led thereto by the grovelling gratification of dazzling the fool, or encouraging the knave; of supporting the weakest sophistry by the strongest genius, and the darkest wickedness by the brightest wit. He applies, alas, the beams of his mighty mind, not to comfort, but to censure us, and, like Nero, gives us nothing but a little harmony to console us for the conflagration he has caused. I shall sum up my opinion of Don Juan in the words of Scalliger on a poem of Cardinal Bembo:—"Hoc poema vocare possis aut obscenissimam elegantiam, aut elegantissimam obscenitatem."

We now introduce the Poet's ever kind and grateful friend, Mr. Leigh Hunt, in his work entitled "Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries," concerning which consult Thomas Moore, Esq., *apud* The Times—*or antè*, p. 525.

## XXIV. HUNT.

"Speaking of Don Juan, I will here observe, that Lord Byron had no plan with regard to that poem. His hero in this work was a picture of the better part of his own nature. When the author speaks in his own person, he is endeavouring to bully himself into a satisfaction with the worse, and courting the eulogies of the 'knowing.' His jealousy of Wordsworth and others who were not town poets was not more creditable to him. He pretended to think worse of them than he did. He had the modesty one day to bring me a stanza, intended for Don Juan, in which he had sneered at them all, adding, that nobody but myself thought highly of them. He fancied I should put up with this, for the sake of being mentioned in the poem; an absurdity which nothing but his own vanity had suggested. I told him I should consider the introduction of such a stanza an affront, and that he had better not put it in. I am sorry I did not let it go; for it would have done me honour with posterity."

Another historical evidence is that of Mr. — or Captain —

## XXV. MEDWIN.

"People are always advising me," said Byron (at Pisa, in October, 1821), "to write an epic. If you must have an epic, there's 'Don Juan' for you. I call that an epic; it is an epic as much in the spirit of our day as the *Iliad* was in that of Homer. Love, religion, and politics form the argument, and are as much the cause of quarrels now as they were then. There is no want of *Parises* and *Menelauses*, nor of crim. cons. into the bargain. In the very first canto you have a Helen. Then, I shall make my hero a perfect Achilles for fighting,—a man who can snuff a candle three successive times with a pistol-ball: and, depend upon it, my moral will be a good one: not even Dr. Johnson should be able to find a flaw in it. I will make him neither a dandy in town, nor a fox-hunter in the country. He shall get into all sorts of scrapes, and at length end his career in France. Poor Juan shall be guillotined in the French Revolution! What do you think of my plot? It shall have twenty-four books too, the legitimate number. Episodes it has, and will have, out of number; and my spirits good or bad, must serve for the machinery. If that be not an epic—if it be not strictly according to Aristotle—I don't know what an epic poem means."

Returning to mere criticism, we light upon the late ingenious but eccentric author of "Spirits of the Age"—

## XXVI. MR. WILLIAM HAZLITT.

"Don Juan has, indeed, great power; but its power is owing to the force of the serious writing, and to the oddity of the contrast between that and the flashy passages with which it is interlarded. From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step. You laugh and are surprised that any one should turn round and travestie himself; the drollery is in the utter discontinuity of ideas and feelings. He makes virtue serve as a foil to vice; dandyism is (for want of any other) a variety of genius. A classical intoxication is followed by the splashing of soda water, by frothy effusions of ordinary bile. After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin, and the contents of wash-hand basins. The solemn hero of tragedy plays *Scrub* in the farce. This is 'very tolerable and not to be endured.' The noble lord is almost the only writer who has prostituted his talents in this way. He hallow's in order to desecrate; takes a pleasure in defacing the images of beauty his hands have wrought; and raises our hopes and our belief in goodness to heaven, only to dash them to the earth again, and break them in pieces the more effectually from the very height they have fallen. Our enthusiasm for genius or virtue is thus turned in to a jest, by the very person who has kindled it, and who thus fatally quenches the sparks of both. It is not that Lord Byron is sometimes serious and sometimes trifling, sometimes profigate and sometimes moral—but when he is most serious and most moral, he is only preparing to mortify the unsuspecting reader by putting a pitiful hoax upon him. This is a most unaccountable anomaly. Don Juan has been called a *Tristram Shandy* in rhyme: it is rather a poem about itself."

We find no "Sir Cosmo Gordon" in any baronetage of this age, or even in any list of K.B.'s or K.H.'s; but it stands on the titlepage of a book published in 1825, and entitled "The Life and Genius of Lord Byron." Take, then,

## XXVII. SIR COSMO GORDON.

"At Venice, Lord Byron planned that which, had he lived to complete it, must have been considered as the most daring and the most wonderful of all his works, Don Juan. This work was general in its satire, and warm and glowing in its colouring; and though it had an obvious and important moral,—the absurdity of giving to a young man a secluded and monkish education, in the hope that that would preserve him from temptations,—it excited a great deal of clamour, especially among those upon whom, in the execution of it, the hand of the poet had been heavy. The Don was the most singular and the most original poem that had perhaps ever appeared. It was made up of the most cutting and searching satires, mixed with dissections of the human heart, and delineations of human passion and frailty, which were drawn both to and with the life, and therefore threw all those who dreaded exposure into the most serious alarm. There was much more both of politics and of personality in this poem than in any of his former ones, and upon this account, the outcry against it was more loud and general. The stuff of immortality was, however, in the poem, and not a few of those who were offended at its appearance will probably find (if indeed they shall live as long) their only memorials in it, after all which, good or bad, they have done for themselves shall be forgotten."

The "West" that follows is not Benjamin, the President, but a young American brother of the brush, who visited Lord Byron in Italy, anno Domini 1822.

## XXVIII. WEST.

"He showed me two of the Cantos of Don Juan in manuscript. They were written on large sheets of paper, put together like a schoolboy's copybook. Here and there I observed alterations of words, but seldom of whole lines; and just so, he told me, it was written down at once. It was all *gin*, he said, meaning thereby that he drank nothing but gin when he wrote it. The Guiccioli was present, and said, 'she wished my lord would leave off writing that ugly Don Juan.' 'I cannot give up my Don Juan,' he replied; 'I do not know what I should do without my Don Juan.'"

From "Lord Byron's Works, viewed in connection with Christianity and the Obligations of Social Life,"—a sermon preached in Holland Chapel, Kennington, by the Rev. John Styles, D.D.—and sold by the Doctor's pew-openers, we now submit a brief extract. We believe Dr. Styles has been familiarised to every reader, by one of the Rev. Sidney Smith's articles in the Edinburgh Review.

## XXIX. STYLES.

"Be assured, my Brethren, it is with sorrowful reluctance I feel myself called upon to denounce the greatest genius of the age as the greatest enemy of his species. The poem is one in which the author has put forth all the energy of his wonderful faculties; nor has he written any thing more decisively and triumphantly expressive of the greatness of his genius. It is at once the glory and disgrace of our literature; and will remain to all ages a perpetual monument of the exalted genius and depraved heart of the writer. It is devoted to the worst of purposes and passions; and flows on in one continued stream of pollution. Its great design seems to be, to shame the good out of their virtues, and to inspire the wicked with the pride of depravity. If, for a moment, the author appears to forget himself, and to suffer his muse to breathe of purity and tenderness—if a touch of humanity, a faint gleam of goodness, awaken our sympathy, he turns upon us with a sneer of contempt, or laughs our sensibility to scorn. Indeed, throughout, we discover the heartless despiser of human nature;—a denaturalised being, who, having exhausted every species of sensual gratification, and drained the cup of sin to its bitterest dregs, is resolved to show that he is no longer human, even in his frailties, but a cool, unconcerned fiend, treating, well-nigh with equal derision, the most pure of virtues and the most odious of vices, dead alike to the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other; yet possessing a restless spirit of seduction,—debasement the nobler part of man, that he may more surely bring into action his baser appetites and passions. To accomplish this, he has lavished all the wiles of his wit, all the enchantments of his genius. In every page the poet is a libertine; and the most unexceptionable passages are milled with impurity. The cloven foot of the libidinous satyr is monstrously associated with the angel-wing of genius.—

'I'd rather be the wretch that scrawls  
His idiot nonsense on the walls;  
Not quite a man, not quite a brute,  
Than I would basely prostitute  
My powers to serve the cause of vice,  
To build some jewell'd edifice  
So fair, so foul,—framed with such art  
To please the eye and soil the heart,  
That he who has not power to shun,  
Comes, looks, and feels himself undone.'

O my Brethren! how I wish that the style of this discourse could be *less* accusatory and severe!"

The "Letter of Cato to Lord Byron," next to be quoted, attracted considerable notice; and was, we know not whether justly or unjustly, ascribed to the pen of the Rev. George Croly, D.D., Rector of Romford, in Essex—author of "Paris in 1815," a poem—"Pride shall have a Fall, a Comedy,"—"Catiline, a Tragedy,"—"Salathiel, a Romance,"—"Life of George the Fourth,"—"Comment on the Apocalypse," &c. &c. &c.

## XXX. CATO.

"Whatever your principles, no page of any of your writings has contributed to the security or the adornment of virtue.

Have you not offended against decency? and repudiated shame? Have you not represented almost every woman as a harlot? How your fame will stand with posterity, it would be idle to speculate upon. It is not improbable that something like the doubt which crossed the mind of the senate, whether they should pronounce their deceased emperor a tyrant or a god, will perplex the judgment of succeeding generations as to the credit and character of your poetry. They will hardly know if they shall deify or desecrate a genius so majestic, degrading itself by subjects and sentiments so repulsive. With an insane partiality, we are undervaluing our standard writers, and placing licentious drivellers in their room. The Shakespeares and Miltons of better days are superseded by the Byrons and Shelleys, the Hunts and Moores of our own; but let us hope that the garbage which the present generation luxuriates upon, posterity will nauseate and cast upon the dunghill. With such a teacher as you have shown yourself, how is it possible for the disciples of your school to be any other than most vicious beings? He who brutalizes every feeling that gives dignity to social, every principle that imparts comfort to domestic, life—he who represents all chastity as visionary, and all virtue as vile, is not entitled to be considered as a man—he is a *living literary monster*."

The ensuing paragraphs are from a writer who affixes to his lucubration the initials W.C.—; but with whose full name and surname we have, after much diligence, failed to make ourselves acquainted.

## XXXI. ANON.

"It is to Don Juan, the last of Lord Byron's productions, that he will owe his immortality. It is his only work which excels by its allurements and delight; by its power of attracting and detaining attention. It keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; it is perused with eagerness, and, in hopes of new pleasure, is perused again. The wild and daring sallies of sentiment with which it abounds, the irregular and eccentric violence of wit which pervades every canto, excite at once astonishment and enthusiasm. The original humour, the peculiarity of expression, the incidents, the circumstances, the surprises, the jests of action and of thought, the shades of light and darkness so exquisitely intermingled, impart a peculiarity of character to the work, which places it above all modern, above all ancient fame. Indeed, if we except the sixteen satires of Juvenal, there is nothing in antiquity so bitter or so decisive as the sixteen cantos of Don Juan. The Roman satirist exhibits a mixture of dignity and aversion, of hatred and invective; the English censor displays a contempt of the various relations of society, of the hypocrisies, the tumults, and the agitations of life. Juvenal disdains to wield the feeble weapon of ridicule—Byron delights to mix seriousness with merriment, and thoughts purely jocular with sentiments of exasperation and revenge. Juvenal is never pathetic—Byron, when he arrives at this species of excellence, destroys its effect by effusions of ridicule or insensibility. Both poets, however, exhibit the same ebullitions of resentment against the miserable victims which they sacrifice to their fury—the same scorn for mankind—and the same vehemence in depicting their crimes, passions, and follies. Both attack existing villany, strike at corruption and profrigacy, and trample upon the turpitude and baseness of high life. Both are grave, intrepid, and implacable. If at any time they relax the sternness of their manner, they never forget themselves. They sometimes smile, indeed, but their smile is more terrible than their frown: it is never excited but when their indignation is mingled with contempt.—Don Juan will be read as long as satire, wit, mirth, and supreme excellence shall be esteemed among men: it will continue to enchain every affection and emotion of the mind; and every reader, when he arrives at its conclusion, will view it with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts on departing day."

Another (or the same) Mr. ANON., in a work, in three volumes 8vo, London, 1825, entitled "The Life, Writings, Opinions, and Times of Lord Byron," thus observes—

## XXXII. ANON. (Second.)

"All at once the accumulated torrent of obloquy is poured forth upon the devoted head of Lord Byron! Well—he despised it, and justly he might do so: it will never tarnish a leaf of his laurels. Every man who has once read Don Juan, if he ingeniously confesses the truth, will feel inclined to peruse it again and again. If Byron's works be proscribed on the score of want of decency, it will be necessary to sweep off one half of English literature at once, as *libri expurgati*. But Byron was a proscribed poet with the puritanical moralists, or exclusively good men!"

A third "ANON." meets us in the Author of "Don John; or, Don Juan unmasked; being a Key