

DON JUAN.

Note [A]. — LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF "MY GRANDMOTHER'S REVIEW."¹

[See "Testimonies of Authors," *anté*, p. 581.]

MY DEAR ROBERTS,

As a believer in the church of England — to say nothing of the State — I have been an occasional reader and great admirer of, though not a subscriber to, your Review, which is rather expensive. But I do not know that any part of its contents ever gave me much surprise till the eleventh article of your twenty-seventh number made its appearance. You have there most vigorously refuted a calumnious accusation of bribery and corruption, the credence of which in the public mind might not only have damaged your reputation as a clergyman² and an editor, but, what would have been still worse, have injured the circulation of your journal; which, I regret to hear, is not so extensive as the "purity" (as you well observe) "of its, &c. &c." and the present taste for propriety, would induce us to expect. The charge itself is of a solemn nature, and, although in verse, is couched in terms of such circumstantial gravity, as to induce a belief little short of that generally accorded to the thirty-nine articles, to which you so frankly subscribed on taking your degrees. It is a charge the most revolting to the heart of man from its frequent occurrence; to the mind of a statesman, from its occasional truth; and to the soul of an editor, from its moral impossibility. You are charged then in the last line of one octave stanza, and the whole eight lines of the next, viz. 209th and 210th of the first canto of that "pestilent poem" Don Juan, with receiving, and still more foolishly acknowledging the receipt of, certain monies, to eulogise the unknown author, who by this account must be known to you, if to nobody else. An impeachment of this nature so seriously made, there is but one way of refuting; and it is my firm persuasion, that whether you did or did not (and I believe that you did not) receive the said monies, of which I wish that he had specified the sum, you are quite right in denying all knowledge of the transaction. If charges of this nefarious description are to go forth, sanctioned by all the solemnity of circumstance, and guaranteed by the veracity of verse (as Counsellor Phillips³ would say), what is to become of readers hitherto implicitly confident in the not less veracious prose of our critical journals? what is to become of the reviews? And, if the reviews fail, what is to become of the editors? It is common cause, and you have done well to sound the alarm. I myself, in my humble sphere, will be one of your echoes. In the words of the tragedian, Liston, "I love a row," and you seem justly determined to make one.

It is barely possible, certainly improbable, that the writer might have been in jest; but this only aggravates his crime. A joke, the proverb says, "breaks no bones;" but it may break a bookseller, or it may be the cause of bones being broken. The jest is but a bad one at the best for the author, and might have been a still worse one for you, if your copious contradiction did not testify to all whom it may concern your own indignant innocence, and the immaculate purity of the British Review. I do not doubt your word, my dear Roberts; yet I cannot help wishing that, in a case of such vital importance, it had assumed the more substantial shape

¹ ["Bologna, Aug. 25. 1819. I send you a letter to Roberts, signed 'Wortley Clutterbuck,' which you may publish in what form you please, in answer to his article. I have had many proofs of men's absurdity, but he beats all in folly. Why, the wolf in sheep's clothing has tumbled into the very trap!" — Lord Byron to Mr. Murray.]

² [Mr. Roberts is not, as Lord Byron seems to have supposed, a clergyman, but a barrister at law. In 1792, he established a paper called "The

of an affidavit sworn before the Lord Mayor Atkins, who readily receives any deposition; and doubtless would have brought it in some way as evidence of the designs of the Reformers to set fire to London, at the same time that he himself meditates the same good office towards the river Thames.

I am sure, my dear Roberts, that you will take these observations of mine in good part: they are written in a spirit of friendship not less pure than your own editorial integrity. I have always admired you; and, not knowing any shape which friendship and admiration can assume more agreeable and useful than that of good advice, I shall continue my lucubrations, mixed with here and there a monitory hint as to what I conceive to be the line you should pursue, in case you should ever again be assailed with bribes, or accused of taking them. By the way, you don't say much about the poem, except that it is "flagitious." This is a pity — you should have cut it up; because, to say the truth, in not doing so, you somewhat assist any notions which the malignant might entertain on the score of the anonymous asseveration which has made you so angry.

You say no bookseller "was willing to take upon himself the publication, though most of them disgrace themselves by selling it." Now, my dear friend, though we all know that those fellows will do any thing for money, methinks the disgrace is more with the purchasers: and some such, doubtless, there are; for there can be no very extensive selling (as you will perceive by that of the British Review) without buying. You then add, "What can the critic say?" I am sure I don't know; at present he says very little, and that not much to the purpose. Then comes "for praise as far as regards the poetry, many passages might be exhibited: for condemnation, as far as regards the morality, all." Now, my dear good Mr. Roberts, I feel for you, and for your reputation: my heart bleeds for both; and I do ask you, whether or not such language does not come positively under the description of "the puff collusive," for which see Sheridan's farce of "The Critic," (by the way, a little more facetious than your own farce under the same title,) towards the close of scene second, act the first.

The poem is, it seems, sold as the work of Lord Byron; but you feel yourself "at liberty to suppose it not Lord B.'s composition." Why did you ever suppose that it was? I approve of your indignation — I applaud it — I feel as angry as you can; but perhaps your virtuous wrath carries you a little too far, when you say that "no misdemeanour, not even that of sending into the world obscene and blasphemous poetry, the product of studious lewdness and laboured impiety, appears to you in so detestable a light as the acceptance of a present by the editor of a review, as the condition of praising an author." The devil it does not! — Think a little. This is being critical overmuch. In point of Gentle benevolence or Christian charity, it were surely less criminal to praise for a bribe, than to abuse a fellow-creature for nothing; and as to the assertion of the comparative innocence of blasphemy and obscenity, confronted with an editor's "acceptance of a present," I shall merely observe, that as an Editor you say very well, but, as a Christian divine, I would not recommend you to transpose this sentence into a sermon.

And yet you say, "the miserable man (for miserable he is, as having a soul of which he cannot get rid)" — But here I must pause again, and inquire what is the meaning of this parenthesis? We have heard of "little soul," or of "no soul at all," but never till now of "the misery of having a soul of which we cannot get rid;" a misery under which you are possibly no great sufferer, having got rid apparently of some of the intellectual part of your own when you penned this pretty piece of eloquence.

Looker-on," which has since been admitted into the collection of British Essayists; and he is known, in his profession, for a treatise on the Law of Fraudulent Bankruptcy. In 1834, he also published the Memoirs of Hannah More.]

³ [Charles Phillips, Barrister, was in those days celebrated for ultra-Irish eloquence. See the Edinburgh Review, No. lviii.]

But to continue. You call upon Lord Byron, always supposing him *not* the author, to disclaim "with all gentlemanly haste," &c. &c. I am told that Lord B. is in a foreign country, some thousand miles off it may be; so that it will be difficult for him to hurry to your wishes. In the meantime, perhaps you yourself have set an example of more haste than gentility; but "the more haste the worse speed."

Let us now look at the charge itself, my dear Roberts, which appears to me to be in some degree not quite explicitly worded:

"I bribed my *Grandmother's* Review, the British."

I recollect hearing, soon after the publication, this subject discussed at the tea-table of Mr. Sotheby the poet, who expressed himself, I remember, a good deal surprised that you had never reviewed his epic poem of "Saul," nor any of his six tragedies; of which, in one instance, the bad taste of the pit, and, in all the rest, the barbarous repugnance of the principal actors, prevented the performance. Mrs. and the Misses S. being in a corner of the room, perusing the proof sheets of Mr. S.'s poems in Italy, or on Italy, as he says, (I wish, by the by, Mrs. S. would make the tea a little stronger,) the male part of the *conversazione* were at liberty to make a few observations on the poem and passage in question; and there was a difference of opinion. Some thought the allusion was to the "British Critic"; others, that by the expression, "My Grandmother's Review," it was intimated that "my grandmother" was not the reader of the review, but actually the writer; thereby insinuating, my dear Roberts, that you were an old woman; because, as people often say, "Jeffrey's Review," "Gifford's Review," in lieu of Edinburgh and Quarterly: so "my Grandmother's Review" and Roberts's might be almost synonymous. Now, whatever colour this insinuation might derive from the circumstance of your wearing a gown, as well as from your time of life, your general style, and various passages of your writings, — I will take upon myself to exculpate you from all suspicion of the kind, and assert, without calling Mrs. Roberts in testimony, that if ever you should be chosen Pope, you will pass through all the previous ceremonies with as much credit as any pontiff since the parturition of Joan. It is very unfair to judge of sex from writings, particularly from those of the British Review. We are all liable to be deceived; and it is an indisputable fact, that many of the best articles in your journal, which were attributed to a veteran female, were actually written by you yourself; and yet to this day there are people who could never find out the difference. But let us return to the more immediate question.

I agree with you, that it is impossible Lord Byron should be the author, not only because, as a British peer and a British poet, it would be impracticable for him to have recourse to such facetious fiction, but for some other reasons which you have omitted to state. In the first place, his Lordship has no grandmother. Now, the author — and we may believe him in this — doth expressly state that the "British" is his "Grandmother's Review;" and if, as I think I have distinctly proved, this was not a mere figurative allusion to your supposed intellectual age and sex, my dear friend, it follows, whether you be she or no, that there is such an elderly lady still extant. And I can the more readily credit this, having a sexagenary aunt of my own, who perused you constantly, till unfortunately falling asleep over the leading article of your last number, her spectacles fell off and were broken against the fender, after a faithful service of fifteen years, and she has never been able to fit her eyes since; so that I have been forced to read you aloud to her; and this is in fact the way in which I became acquainted with the subject of my present letter, and thus determined to become your public correspondent.

In the next place, Lord B.'s destiny seems in some sort like that of Hercules of old, who became the author of all

¹ ["Whether it be the British Critic, or the British Review, against which the noble lord prefers so grave a charge, or rather so facetious an accusation, we are at a loss to determine. The latter has thought it worth

unappropriated prodigies. Lord B. has been supposed the author of the "Vampire," of a "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," "To the Dead Sea," of "Death upon the Pale Horse," of odes to "La Valette," to "Saint Helena," to the "Land of the Gaul," and to a sucking child. Now, he turned out to have written none of these things. Besides, you say, he knows in what a spirit of, &c. you criticise: — Are you sure he knows all this? that he has read you like my poor dear aunt? They tell me he is a queer sort of a man; and I would not be too sure, if I were you, either of what he has read or of what he has written. I thought his style had been the serious and terrible. As to his sending you money, this is the first time that ever I heard of his paying his reviewers in *that coin*; I thought it was rather in *their own*, to judge from some of his earlier productions. Besides, though he may not be profuse in his expenditure, I should conjecture that his reviewer's bill is not so long as his tailor's.

Shall I give you what I think a prudent opinion? I don't mean to insinuate, God forbid! but if, by any accident, there should have been such a correspondence between you and the unknown author, whoever he may be, send him back his money: I dare say he will be very glad to have it again; it can't be much, considering the value of the article and the circulation of the journal; and you are too modest to rate your praise beyond its real worth. — Don't be angry, — I know you won't, — at this appraisalment of your powers of eulogy; for on the other hand, my dear friend, depend upon it your abuse is worth, not its own weight, — that's a feather, — but *your* weight in gold. So don't spare it: if he has bargained for *that*, give it handsomely, and depend upon your doing him a friendly office.

But I only speak in case of possibility; for, as I said before, I cannot believe, in the first instance, that you would receive a bribe to praise any person whatever; and still less can I believe that your praise could ever produce such an offer. You are a good creature, my dear Roberts, and a clever fellow; else I could almost suspect that you had fallen into the very trap set for you in verse by this anonymous wag, who will certainly be but too happy to see you saving him the trouble of making you ridiculous. The fact is, that the solemnity of your eleventh article does make you look a little more absurd than you ever yet looked, in all probability, and at the same time does no good; for if any body believed before in the octave stanzas, they will believe still, and you will find it not less difficult to prove your negative, than the learned Partridge found it to demonstrate his not being dead, to the satisfaction of the readers of almanacs.

What the motives of this writer may have been for (as you magnificently translate his quizzing you) "stating, with the particularity which belongs to fact, the forgery of a groundless fiction," (do pray, my dear R., talk a little less "in King Cambyse's vein,") I cannot pretend to say; perhaps to laugh at you, but that is no reason for your benevolently making all the world laugh also. I approve of your being angry; I tell you I am angry too; but you should not have shown it so outrageously. Your solemn "if somebody personating the Editor of the, &c. &c. has received from Lord B., or from any other person," reminds me of Charley Incedon's usual exordium when people came into the tavern to hear him sing without paying their share of the reckoning — "if a maun, or *ony* maun, or *ony other* maun," &c. &c.; you have both the same redundant eloquence. But why should you think any body would personate you? Nobody would dream of such a prank who ever read your compositions, and perhaps not many who have heard your conversation. But I have been inoculated with a little of your prolixity. The fact is, my dear Roberts, that somebody has tried to make a fool of you, and what he did not succeed in doing, you have done for him and for yourself.

With regard to the poem itself, or the author, whom I cannot find out, (can you?) I have nothing to say; my business

its while, in a public paper, to make a serious reply. As we are not so seriously inclined, we shall leave our share of this accusation to its fate. — *Brit. Critic.*]

is with you. I am sure that you will, upon second thoughts, be really obliged to me for the intention of this letter, however far short my expressions may have fallen of the sincere good will, admiration, and thorough esteem, with which I am ever, my dear Roberts,

Most truly yours,

WORTLEY CLUTTERBUCK.

Sept. 4th, 1819.
Little Piddington.

P. S. My letter is too long to revise, and the post is going. I forget whether or not I asked you the meaning of your last words, "the forgery of a groundless fiction." Now, as all forgery is fiction, and all fiction a kind of forgery, is not this tautological? The sentence would have ended more strongly with "forgery;" only, it hath an awful Bank of England sound, and would have ended like an indictment, besides sparing you several words, and conferring some meaning upon the remainder. But this is mere verbal criticism. Good-bye—once more, yours truly,

W. C.

P. S. 2d.—Is it true that the Saints make up the loss of the Review?—It is very handsome in them to be at so great an expense. *Twice* more, yours,

W. C.

NOTE [B.]—SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON AN ARTICLE IN BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, No. XXIX., AUGUST, 1819.

"Why, how now, Hecate? you look angrily."—*Macbeth*.

[See "Testimonies of Authors," No. XVII. *antè*, p. 581.]

TO
J. D'ISRAELI, ESQ.
THE AMIABLE AND INGENIOUS AUTHOR OF
'THE CALAMITIES' AND 'QUARRELS OF AUTHORS;'
THIS ADDITIONAL QUARREL AND CALAMITY
IS INSCRIBED BY
ONE OF THE NUMBER.

Ravenna, March 15. 1820.

"THE life of a writer" has been said, by Pope, I believe, to be "a warfare upon earth." As far as my own experience has gone, I have nothing to say against the proposition; and, like the rest, having once plunged into this state of hostility, must, however reluctantly, carry it on. An article has appeared in a periodical work, entitled "Remarks on Don Juan," which has been so full of this spirit, on the part of the writer, as to require some observations on mine.

In the first place, I am not aware by what right the writer assumes this work, which is anonymous, to be my production. He will answer, that there is internal evidence; that is to say, that there are passages which appear to be written in my name, or in my manner. But might not this have been done on purpose by another? He will say, why not then deny it? To this I could answer, that of all the things attributed to me within the last five years,—Pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Deaths upon Pale Horses, Odes to the Land of the Gaul, Adieus to England, Songs to Madame La Valette, Odes to St. Helena, Vampires, and what not,—of which, God knows I never composed nor read a syllable beyond their titles in advertisements,—I never thought it worth while to disavow any, except *one* which came linked with an account of my "residence in the Isle of Mitylene," where I never resided,

1 [In Sheridan's comedy of "The Rivals."]

2 [See Blackwood, vol. iii. p. 329. Lord B., as it appears from one of his letters, ascribed (though unjustly) this paper to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers!]

3 ["As the passage was curtailed in the press, I take this opportunity of restoring it. In the Quarterly Review (vol. xxi. p. 366.), speaking inci-

dentally of the Jungfrau, I said, 'It was the scene where Lord Byron's Manfred met the devil, and bullied him—though the devil must have won his cause before any tribunal in this world, or the next, if he had not pleaded more feebly for himself than his advocate, in a cause of canonisation, ever pleaded for him.'—SOUTHEY.]

and appeared to be carrying the amusement of those persons, who think my name can be of any use to them, a little too far. I should hardly, therefore, if I did not take the trouble to disavow these things published in my name, and yet not mine, go out of my way to deny an anonymous work; which might appear an act of supererogation. With regard to Don Juan, I neither deny nor admit it to be mine—every body may form their own opinion; but, if there be any who now, or in the progress of that poem, if it is to be continued, feel, or should feel themselves so aggrieved as to require a more explicit answer, privately and personally, they shall have it.

I have never shrunk from the responsibility of what I have written, and have more than once incurred obloquy by neglecting to disavow what was attributed to my pen without foundation.

The greater part, however, of the "Remarks on Don Juan" contain but little on the work itself, which receives an extraordinary portion of praise as a composition. With the exception of some quotations, and a few incidental remarks, the rest of the article is neither more nor less than a personal attack upon the imputed author. It is not the first in the same publication: for I recollect to have read, some time ago, similar remarks upon "Beppo" (said to have been written by a celebrated northern preacher); in which the conclusion drawn was, that "Childe Harold, Byron, and the Count in Beppo, were one and the same person;" thereby making me turn out to be, as Mrs. Malaprop¹ says, "*like Cerberus, three gentlemen at once*." That article was signed "Presbyter Anglicanus;" which, I presume, being interpreted, means Scotch Presbyterian.² I must here observe,—and it is at once ludicrous and vexatious to be compelled so frequently to repeat the same thing,—that my case, as an author, is peculiarly hard, in being everlastingly taken, or mistaken, for my own protagonist. It is unjust and particular. I never heard that my friend Moore was set down for a fire-shipper on account of his Guebre; that Scott was identified with Roderick Dhu, or with Balfour of Burley; or that, notwithstanding all the magicians in Thalaba, any body has ever taken Mr. Southey for a conjuror; whereas I have had some difficulty in extricating me even from Manfred, who, as Mr. Southey silly observes in one of his articles in the Quarterly, "met the devil on the Jungfrau, and bullied him"³; and I answer Mr. Southey, who has apparently, in his poetical life, not been so successful against the great enemy, that, in this, Manfred exactly followed the sacred precept,—"*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*."—I shall have more to say on the subject of this person—not the devil, but his most humble servant Mr. Southey—before I conclude; but, for the present, I must return to the article in the Edinburgh Magazine.

In the course of this article, amidst some extraordinary observations, there occur the following words:—"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." In another place there appears, "the lurking-place of his selfish and polluted exile."—"By my troth, these be bitter words!"—With regard to the first sentence, I shall content myself with observing, that it appears to have been composed for Sardanapalus, Tiberius, the Regent Duke of Orleans, or Louis XV.; and that I have copied it with as much indifference as I would a passage from Suetonius, or from any of the private memoirs of the regency, conceiving it to be amply refuted by the terms in which it is expressed, and to be utterly inapplicable to any private individual. On the words, "lurking-place," and selfish and polluted exile," I have something more to say.—

dentally of the Jungfrau, I said, 'It was the scene where Lord Byron's Manfred met the devil, and bullied him—though the devil must have won his cause before any tribunal in this world, or the next, if he had not pleaded more feebly for himself than his advocate, in a cause of canonisation, ever pleaded for him.'—SOUTHEY.]

How far the capital city of a government, which survived the vicissitudes of thirteen hundred years, and might still have existed but for the treachery of Buonaparte, and the iniquity of his imitators,—a city, which was the emporium of Europe when London and Edinburgh were dens of barbarians,—may be termed a "lurking-place," I leave to those who have seen or heard of Venice to decide. How far my exile may have been "polluted," it is not for me to say, because the word is a wide one, and, with some of its branches, may chance to overshadow the actions of most men; but that it has been "*selfish*" I deny. If, to the extent of my means and my power, and my information of their calamities, to have assisted many miserable beings, reduced by the decay of the place of their birth, and their consequent loss of substance—if to have never rejected an application which appeared founded on truth—if to have expended in this manner sums far out of proportion to my fortune, there and elsewhere, be selfish, then have I been selfish. To have done such things I do not deem much; but it is hard indeed to be compelled to recapitulate them in my own defence, by such accusations as that before me, like a panel before a jury calling testimonies to his character, or a soldier recording his services to obtain his discharge. If the person who has made the charge of "selfishness" wishes to inform himself further on the subject, he may acquire, not what he would wish to find, but what will silence and shame him, by applying to the Consul-General of our nation, resident in the place, who will be in the case either to confirm or deny what I have asserted.¹

I neither make, nor have ever made, pretensions to sanctity of demeanour, nor regularity of conduct; but my means have been expended principally on my own gratification, neither now nor heretofore, neither in England nor out of it; and it wants but a word from me, if I thought that word decent or necessary, to call forth the most willing witnesses, and at once witnesses and proofs, in England itself, to show that there are those who have derived not the mere temporary relief of a wretched boon, but the means which led them to immediate happiness and ultimate independence, by my want of that very "*selfishness*," as grossly as falsely now imputed to my conduct.

Had I been a selfish man—had I been a grasping man—had I been, in the worldly sense of the word, even a *prudent* man,—I should not be where I now am; I should not have taken the step which was the first that led to the events which have sunk and swoln a gulf between me and mine; but in this respect the truth will one day be made known: in the meantime, as Durandarte says, in the Cave of Montesinos, "Patience, and shuffle the cards."

I bitterly feel the ostentation of this statement, the first of the kind I have ever made: I feel the degradation of being compelled to make it; but I also feel its *truth*, and I trust to feel it on my death-bed, should it be my lot to die there. I am not less sensible of the egotism of all this; but, alas! who have made me thus egotistical in my own defence, if not they, who, by perversely persisting in referring fiction to truth, and tracing poetry to life, and regarding characters of imagination as creatures of existence, have made me personally responsible for almost every poetical delineation which fancy, and a particular bias of thought, may have tended to produce?

The writer continues:—"Those who are acquainted, as *who is not?* with the *main* incidents of the private life of Lord B." &c. Assuredly, whoever may be acquainted with these "main incidents," the writer of the "Remarks on Don Juan" is not, or he would use a very different language. That which I believe he alludes to as a "main incident," happened to be a very subordinate one, and the natural and almost inevitable consequence of events and circumstances long prior to the period at which it occurred. It is the last drop which makes the cup run over, and mine was already

1 [Lord Byron was ever ready to assist the distressed, and he was most unostentatious in his charities; for, besides considerable sums which he gave away to applicants at his own house, he contributed largely, by

full.—But, to return to this man's charge: he accuses Lord B. of "an elaborate satire on the character and manners of his wife." From what parts of Don Juan the writer has inferred this he himself best knows. As far as I recollect of the female characters in that production, there is but one who is depicted in ridiculous colours, or that could be interpreted as a satire upon any body. But here my poetical sins are again revisited upon me, supposing that the poem be mine. If I depict a corsair, a misanthrope, a libertine, a chief of insurgents, or an infidel, he is set down to the author; and if, in a poem by no means ascertained to be my production, there appears a disagreeable, casuistical, and by no means respectable female pedant, it is set down for my wife. Is there any resemblance? If there be, it is in those who make it: I can see none. In my writings I have rarely described any character under a fictitious name: those of whom I have spoken have had their own—in many cases a stronger satire in itself than any which could be appended to it. But of real circumstances I have availed myself plentifully, both in the serious and the ludicrous—they are to poetry what landscapes are to the painter; but my *figures* are not portraits. It may even have happened, that I have seized on some events that have occurred under my own observation, or in my own family, as I would paint a view from my grounds, did it harmonise with my picture; but I never would introduce the likenesses of his living members, unless their features could be made as favourable to themselves as to the effect; which, in the above instance, would be extremely difficult.

My learned brother proceeds to observe, that "it is in vain for Lord B. 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 voice of his countrymen." How far the "openness" of an anonymous poem, and the "audacity" of an imaginary character, which the writer supposes to be meant for Lady B., may be deemed to merit this formidable denunciation from their "most sweet voices," I neither know nor care; but when he tells me that I cannot "in any way *justify* my own behaviour in that affair," I acquiesce, because no man can "*justify*" himself until he knows of what he is accused; and I have never had—and, God knows, my whole desire has ever been to obtain it—any specific charge, in a tangible shape, submitted to me by the adversary, nor by others, unless the atrocities of public rumour and the mysterious silence of the lady's legal advisers may be deemed such. But is not the writer content with what has been already said and done? Has not "the general voice of his countrymen" long ago pronounced upon the subject—sentence without trial, and condemnation without a charge? Have I not been exiled by ostracism, except that the shells which proscribed me were anonymous? Is the writer ignorant of the public opinion and the public conduct upon that occasion? If he is, I am not: the public will forget both, long before I shall cease to remember either.

The man who is exiled by a faction has the consolation of thinking that he is a martyr; he is upheld by hope and the dignity of his cause, real or imaginary: he who withdraws from the pressure of debt may indulge in the thought that time and prudence will retrieve his circumstances: he who is condemned by the law has a term to his banishment, or a dream of its abbreviation; or, it may be, the knowledge or the belief of some injustice of the law, or of its administration in his own particular; but he who is outlawed by general opinion, without the intervention of hostile politics, illegal judgment, or embarrassed circumstances, whether he be innocent or guilty, must undergo all the bitterness of exile, without hope, without pride, without alleviation. This case was mine. Upon what grounds the public founded their opinion, I am not aware; but it was general, and it was decisive. Of me or of mine they knew

weekly and monthly allowances, to persons whom he had never seen, and who, as the money reached them by other hands, did not even know who was their benefactor."—HOPKINS.]

little, except that I had written what is called poetry, was a nobleman, had married, became a father, and was involved in differences with my wife and her relatives, no one knew why, because the persons complaining refused to state their grievances. The fashionable world was divided into parties, mine consisting of a very small minority: the reasonable world was naturally on the stronger side, which happened to be the lady's, as was most proper and polite. The press was active and scurrilous; and such was the rage of the day, that the unfortunate publication of two copies of verses, rather complimentary than otherwise to the subjects of both, was tortured into a species of crime, or constructive petty treason. I was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour: my name, which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered, and muttered, and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew: but this was not enough. In other countries, in Switzerland, in the shadow of the Alps, and by the blue depth of the lakes, I was pursued and breathed upon by the same blight. I crossed the mountains, but it was the same; so I went a little farther, and settled myself by the waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay, who betakes him to the waters.

If I may judge by the statements of the few friends who gathered round me, the outcry of the period to which I allude was beyond all precedent, all parallel, even in those cases where political motives have sharpened slander and doubled enmity. I was advised not to go to the theatres, lest I should be hissed, nor to my duty in parliament, lest I should be insulted by the way; even on the day of my departure, my most intimate friend told me afterwards, that he was under apprehensions of violence from the people who might be assembled at the door of the carriage. However, I was not deterred by these counsels from seeing Kean in his best characters, nor from voting according to my principles; and with regard to the third and last apprehensions of my friends, I could not share in them, not being made acquainted with their extent till some time after I had crossed the Channel. Even if I had been so, I am not of a nature to be much affected by men's anger, though I may feel hurt by their aversion. Against all individual outrage, I could protect or redress myself; and against that of a crowd, I should probably have been enabled to defend myself, with the assistance of others, as has been done on similar occasions.

I retired from the country, perceiving that I was the object of general obloquy; I did not indeed imagine, like Jean Jacques Rousseau, that all mankind was in a conspiracy against me, though I had perhaps as good grounds for such a chimera as ever he had: but I perceived that I had to a great extent become personally obnoxious in England, perhaps through my own fault, but the fact was indisputable: the public in general would hardly have been so much excited against a more popular character, without at least an accusation or a charge of some kind actually expressed or substantiated, for I can hardly conceive that the common and every-day occurrence of a separation between man and wife could in itself produce so great a ferment. I shall say nothing of the usual complaints of "being prejudged," "condemned unheard," "unfairness," "partiality," and so forth, the usual changes rung by parties who have had, or are to have, a trial; but I was a little surprised to find myself condemned without being favoured with the act of accusation, and to perceive in the absence of this portentous charge or charges, whatever it or they were to be, that every possible or impossible crime was rumoured to supply its place, and taken for granted. This could only occur in the case of a person very much disliked; and I knew no remedy, having already used to their extent whatever little powers I might possess of pleasing in society. I had no party in fashion, though I was afterwards told that there was one—but it was not of my formation, nor did I then know of its existence—none in literature; and in politics I had voted with the Whigs, with

precisely that importance which a Whig vote possesses in these Tory days, and with such personal acquaintance with the leaders in both houses as the society in which I lived sanctioned, but without claim or expectation of any thing like friendship from any one, except a few young men of my own age and standing, and a few others more advanced in life, which last it had been my fortune to serve in circumstances of difficulty. This was, in fact, to stand alone: and I recollect, some time after, Madame de Staël said to me in Switzerland, "You should not have warred with the world—it will not do—it is too strong always for any individual: I myself once tried it in early life, but it will not do." I perfectly acquiesce in the truth of this remark; but the world had done me the honour to begin the war; and assuredly, if peace is only to be obtained by courting and paying tribute to it, I am not qualified to obtain its countenance. I thought in the words of Campbell,

"Then wed thee to an exiled lot,
And if the world hath loved thee not,
Its absence may be borne."

I recollect, however, that, having been much hurt by Romilly's conduct, (he, having a general retainer for me, had acted as adviser to the adversary, alleging, on being reminded of his retainer, that he had forgotten it, as his clerk had so many,) I observed that some of those who were now eagerly laying the axe to my roof-tree, might see their own shaken, and feel a portion of what they had inflicted.—His fell, and crushed him.

I have heard of, and believe, that there are human beings so constituted as to be insensible to injuries; but I believe that the best mode to avoid taking vengeance is to get out of the way of temptation. I hope that I may never have the opportunity, for I am not quite sure that I could resist it, having derived from my mother something of the "*perferendum ingentium Scotorum*." I have not sought, and shall not seek it, and perhaps it may never come in my path. I do not in this allude to the party, who might be right or wrong: but to many who made her cause the pretext of their own bitterness. She, indeed, must have long avenged me in her own feelings; for whatever her reasons may have been (and she never adduced them to me at least), she probably neither contemplated nor conceived to what she became the means of conducting the father of her child, and the husband of her choice.

So much for "the general voice of his countrymen:" I will now speak of some in particular.

In the beginning of the year 1817, an article appeared in the Quarterly Review, written, I believe, by Walter Scott¹, doing great honour to him, and no disgrace to me, though both poetically and personally more than sufficiently favourable to the work and the author of whom it treated. It was written at a time when a selfish man would not, and a timid one dared not, have said a word in favour of either; it was written by one to whom temporary public opinion had elevated me to the rank of a rival—a proud distinction, and unmerited; but which has not prevented me from feeling as a friend, nor him from more than corresponding to that sentiment. The article in question was written upon the Third Canto of Childe Harold; and after many observations, which it would be ill become me to repeat as to forget, concluded with "a hope that I might yet return to England." How this expression was received in England itself I am not acquainted, but it gave great offence at Rome to the respectable ten or twenty thousand English travellers then and there assembled. I did not visit Rome till some time after, so that I had no opportunity of knowing the fact: but I was informed, long afterwards, that the greatest indignation had been manifested in the enlightened Anglo-circle of that year, which happened to comprise within it—amidst a considerable leaven of Welbeck Street and Devonshire Place, broken loose upon their travels—several really well-born and well-

¹ [See Quarterly Review, vol. xvi. p. 172.]

bred families, who did not the less participate in the feeling of the hour. "Why should he return to England?" was the general exclamation—I answer *why*? It is a question I have occasionally asked myself, and I never yet could give it a satisfactory reply. I had then no thoughts of returning, and if I have any now, they are of business, and not of pleasure. Amidst the ties that have been dashed to pieces, there are links yet entire, though the chain itself be broken. There are duties, and connections, which may one day require my presence—and I am a father. I have still some friends whom I wish to meet again, and, it may be, an enemy. These things, and those minuter details of business, which time accumulates during absence, in every man's affairs and property, may, and probably will, recall me to England; but I shall return with the same feelings with which I left it, in respect to itself, though altered with regard to individuals, as I have been more or less informed of their conduct since my departure; for it was only a considerable time after it that I was made acquainted with the real facts and full extent of some of their proceedings and language. My friends, like other friends, from conciliatory motives, withheld from me much that they could, and some things which they *should* have unfolded; however, that which is deferred is not lost—but it has been no fault of mine that it has been deferred at all.

I have alluded to what is said to have passed at Rome merely to show that the sentiment which I have described was not confined to the English in England, and as forming part of my answer to the reproach cast upon what has been called my "selfish exile," and my "voluntary exile." "Voluntary" it has been; for who would dwell among a people entertaining strong hostility against him? How far it has been "selfish" has been already explained.

I have now arrived at a passage describing me as having vented my "spleen against the lofty-minded and virtuous men," men "whose virtues few indeed can equal;" meaning, I humbly presume, the notorious triumvirate known by the name of "Lake Poets" in their aggregate capacity, and by Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, when taken singly. I wish to say a word or two upon the virtues of one of those persons, public and private, for reasons which will soon appear.

When I left England in April, 1816, ill in mind, in body, and in circumstances, I took up my residence at Coligny, by the lake of Geneva. The sole companion of my journey was a young physician, who had to make his way in the world, and having seen very little of it, was naturally and laudably desirous of seeing more society than suited my present habits or my past experience. I therefore presented him to those gentlemen of Geneva for whom I had letters of introduction; and having thus seen him in a situation to make his own way, retired for my own part entirely from society, with the exception of one English family, living at about a quarter of a mile's distance from Diodati, and with the further exception of some occasional intercourse with Coppet at the wish of Madame de Staël. The English family to which I allude consisted of two ladies, a gentleman and his son, a boy of a year old.²

One of "*these lofty-minded and virtuous men*," in the words of the Edinburgh Magazine, made, I understand, about this time, or soon after, a tour in Switzerland. On his return to England, he circulated—and, for any thing I know, invented—a report, that the gentleman to whom I have alluded and myself were living in promiscuous intercourse with two sisters, "having formed a league of incest" (I quote the words as they were stated to me), and indulged himself on the natural comments upon such a conjunction, which are said to have been repeated publicly, with great complacency, by another of that poetical fraternity, of whom I shall say only, that even had the story been true, he should not have repeated it, as far as it regarded myself, except in sorrow. The tale itself requires but a word in answer—the ladies were *not* sisters, nor in any degree connected, except by the

second marriage of their respective parents, a widower with a widow, both being the offspring of former marriages; neither of them were, in 1816, nineteen years old. "Promiscuous intercourse" could hardly have disgusted the great patron of pantisocracy, (does Mr. Southey remember such a scheme?) but there was none.

How far this man, who, as author of Wat Tyler, has been proclaimed by the Lord Chancellor guilty of a treasonable and blasphemous libel, and denounced in the House of Commons, by the upright and able member for Norwich, as a "rancorous renegade," be fit for sitting as a judge upon others, let others judge. He has said that for this expression "he brands William Smith on the forehead as a calumniator," and that "the mark will outlast his epitaph." How long William Smith's epitaph will last, and in what words it will be written, I know not, but William Smith's words form the epitaph itself of Robert Southey. He has written Wat Tyler, and taken the office of poet laureate—he has, in the Life of Henry Kirke White, denominated reviewing "the ungentle craft," and has become a reviewer—he was one of the projectors of a scheme, called "pantisocracy," for having all things, including women, in common, (*query*, common women?) and he sets up as a moralist—he denounced the battle of Blenheim, and he praised the battle of Waterloo—he loved Mary Wollstonecraft, and he tried to blast the character of her daughter (one of the young females mentioned)—he wrote treason, and serves the king—he was the butt of the Antijacobin, and he is the prop of the Quarterly Review; licking the hands that smote him, eating the bread of his enemies, and internally writhing beneath his own contempt,—he would fain conceal, under anonymous bluster, and a vain endeavour to obtain the esteem of others, after having for ever lost his own, his leprous sense of his own degradation. What is there in such a man to "envy?" Who ever envied the envious? Is it his birth, his name, his fame, or his virtues, that I am to "envy?" I was born of the aristocracy, which he abhorred; and am sprung, by my mother, from the kings who preceded those whom he has hired himself to sing. It cannot, then, be his birth. As a poet, I have, for the past eight years, had nothing to apprehend from a competition; and for the future, "that life to come in every poet's creed," it is open to all. I will only remind Mr. Southey, in the words of a critic, who, if still living, would have annihilated Southey's literary existence now and hereafter, as the sworn foe of charlatans and impostors, from Macpherson downwards, that "those dreams were Settle's once and Ogilby's," and, for my own part, I assure him, that whenever he and his sect are remembered, I shall be proud to be "forgot." That he is not content with his success as a poet may reasonably be believed—he has been the nine-pin of reviews; the Edinburgh knocked him down, and the Quarterly set him up; the government found him useful in the periodical line, and made a point of recommending his works to purchasers, so that he is occasionally bought, (I mean his books, as well as the author,) and may be found on the same shelf, if not upon the table, of most of the gentlemen employed in the different offices. With regard to his private virtues, I know nothing—of his principles, I have heard enough. As far as having been, to the best of my power, benevolent to others, I do not fear the comparison; and for the errors of the passions, was Mr. Southey *always* so tranquil and stainless? Did he *never* covet his neighbour's wife? Did he never calumniate his neighbour's wife's daughter, the offspring of her he coveted? So much for the apostle of pantisocracy.

Of the "lofty-minded, virtuous" Wordsworth, one anecdote will suffice to speak his sincerity. In a conversation with Mr. — upon poetry, he concluded with, "After all, I would not give five shillings for all that Southey has ever written." Perhaps this calculation might rather show his esteem for five shillings than his low estimate of Dr. Southey; but considering that when he was in his need, and Southey had a shilling, Wordsworth is said to have had generally

¹ [Dr. Polidori—author of the "Vampire."]

² [Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, Miss Clermont, and Master Shelley.]

sixpence out of it, it has an awkward sound in the way of valuation. This anecdote was told me by persons who, if quoted by name, would prove that its genealogy is poetical as well as true. I can give my authority for this; and am ready to adduce it also for Mr. Southey's circulation of the falsehood before mentioned.

Of Coleridge, I shall say nothing—*why*, he may divine.¹

I have said more of these people than I intended in this place, being somewhat stirred by the remarks which induced me to commence upon the topic. I see nothing in these men, as poets, or as individuals—little in their talents, and less in their characters, to prevent honest men from expressing for them considerable contempt, in prose or rhyme, as it may happen. Mr. Southey has the Quarterly for his field of rejoinder, and Mr. Wordsworth his postscripts to "Lyrical Ballads," where the two great instances of the sublime are taken from himself and Milton. "Over her own sweet voice the stockdove broods;" that is to say, she has the pleasure of listening to herself, in common with Mr. Wordsworth upon most of his public appearances. "What divinity doth hedge" these persons, that we should respect them? Is it Apollo? Are they not of those who called Dryden's Ode "a drunken song?" who have discovered that Gray's Elegy is full of faults, (see Coleridge's Life, vol. i. note, for Wordsworth's kindness in pointing this out to him,) and have published what is allowed to be the very worst prose that ever was written to prove that Pope was no poet, and that William Wordsworth is?

In other points, are they respectable, or respected? Is it on the open avowal of apostasy, on the patronage of government, that their claim is founded? Who is there who esteems those parricides of their own principles? They are, in fact, well aware that the reward of their change has been any thing but honour. The times have preserved a respect for political consistency, and, even though changeable, honour the unchanged. Look at Moore: it will be long ere Southey meets with such a triumph in London as Moore met with in Dublin, even if the government subscribe for it, and set the money down to secret service. It was not less to the man than to the poet, to the tempted but unshaken patriot, to the not opulent but incorruptible fellow-citizen, that the warm-hearted Irish paid the proudest of tributes. Mr. Southey may applaud himself to the world, but he has his own heartiest contempt; and the fury with which he foams against all who stand in the phalanx which he forsook, is, as William Smith described it, "the rancour of the renegade," the bad language of the prostitute who stands at the corner of the street, and showers her slang upon all, except those who may have bestowed upon her her "little shilling."

Hence his quarterly overflowings, political and literary, in what he has himself termed "the ungentle craft," and his especial wrath against Mr. Leigh Hunt, notwithstanding that Hunt has done more for Wordsworth's reputation, as a poet (such as it is), than all the Lakers could in their interchange of self-praises for the last twenty-five years.

And here I wish to say a few words on the present state of English poetry. That this is the age of the decline of English poetry will be doubted by few who have calmly considered the subject. That there are men of genius among the present poets makes little against the fact, because it has been well said, that "next to him who forms the taste of his country, the greatest genius is he who corrupts it." No one has ever denied genius to Marino², who corrupted not merely the taste of Italy, but that of all Europe for nearly a century. The great cause of the present deplorable state of English poetry is to be attributed to that absurd and systema-

¹ [See Notices of Lord Byron's Life.]

² [Tassoni was almost the only Italian poet of the era in which he flourished, who withstood the general corruption of taste introduced by Marino and his followers, and by the "imitated imitators" of Lope de Vega; and he opened a new path, in which a crowd of pretenders have vainly endeavoured to follow him.—Foscolo.]

³ ["The Loves of the Triangles," the joint production of Messrs. Canning and Frere.]

⁴ Goldsmith has anticipated the definition of the Lake poetry, as far as such things can be defined. "Gentlemen, the present piece is not of your

atic depreciation of Pope, in which, for the last few years, there has been a kind of epidemical concurrence. Men of the most opposite opinions have united upon this topic. Warton and Churchill began it, having borrowed the hint probably from the heroes of the Dunciad, and their own internal conviction that their proper reputation can be as nothing till the most perfect and harmonious of poets—he who, having no fault, has had REASON made his reproach—was reduced to what they conceived to be his level; but even *they* dared not degrade him below Dryden. Goldsmith, and Rogers, and Campbell, his most successful disciples; and Hayley, who, however feeble, has left one poem "that will not be willingly let die" (the Triumphs of Temper), kept up the reputation of that pure and perfect style; and Crabbe, the first of living poets, has almost equalled the master. Then came Darwin, who was put down by a single poem in the Antijacobin³; and the Cruscans, from Merry to Jerningham, who were annihilated (if *Nothing* can be said to be annihilated) by Gifford, the last of the wholesome satirists.

At the same time Mr. Southey was favouring the public with Wat Tyler and Joan of Arc, to the great glory of the Drama and Epos. I beg pardon, Wat Tyler, with Peter Bell, was still in MS.; and it was not till after Mr. Southey had received his Malmsey butt, and Mr. Wordsworth⁴ became qualified to gauge it, that the great revolutionary tragedy came before the public and the Court of Chancery. Wordsworth was peddling his lyrical ballads, and brooding a preface, to be succeeded in due course by a postscript; both couched in such prose as must give peculiar delight to those who have read the prefaces of Pope and Dryden; scarcely less celebrated for the beauty of their prose, than for the charms of their verse. Wordsworth is the reverse of Molière's gentleman who had been "talking prose all his life, without knowing it;" for he thinks that he has been all his life writing both prose and verse, and neither of what he conceives to be such can be properly said to be either one or the other. Mr. Coleridge, the future *vates*, poet and seer of the Morning Post, (an honour also claimed by Mr. Fitzgerald, of the "Rejected Addresses⁵," who ultimately prophesied the downfall of Buonaparte, to which he himself mainly contributed, by giving him the nickname of "*the Corsican*," was then employed in predicating the damnation of Mr. Pitt, and the desolation of England, in the two very best copies of verses he ever wrote: to wit, the infernal eulogium of "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," and the "Ode to the departing Year."

These three personages, Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, had all of them a very natural antipathy to Pope; and I respect them for it, as the only original feeling or principle which they have contrived to preserve. But they have been joined in it by those who have joined them in nothing else: by the Edinburgh Reviewers, by the whole heterogeneous mass of living English poets, excepting Crabbe, Rogers, Gifford, and Campbell, who, both by precept and practice, have proved their adherence; and by me, who have shamefully deviated in practice, but have ever loved and honoured Pope's poetry with my whole soul, and hope to do so till my dying day. I would rather see all I have ever written lining the same trunk in which I actually read the eleventh book of a modern epic poem⁶ at Malta, in 1811, (I opened it to take out a change after the paroxysm or tertian, in the absence of my servant, and found it lined with the name of the maker, Eyre, Cockspur Street, and with the epic poetry alluded to,) than sacrifice what I firmly believe in as the Christianity of English poetry, the poetry of Pope.

common epic poems, which come from the press like paper kites in summer; there are none of your Turmus or Didos in it; it is an historical description of nature. I only beg you'll endeavour to make your souls in unison with mine, and hear with the same enthusiasm with which I have written." Would not this have made a proper preface to the Excursion, and the poet and his pedlar? It would have answered perfectly for that purpose, had it not unfortunately been written in good English.

⁵ [See *ant*, p. 421.]

⁶ [Sir James Bland Burgess's "Richard I." See *ant*, p. 449.]

But the Edinburgh Reviewers, and the Lakers, and Hunt and his school, and every body else with their school, and even Moore without a school, and dilettanti lecturers at institutions, and elderly gentlemen who translate and imitate, and young ladies who listen and repeat, baronets who draw indifferent frontispieces for bad poets, and noblemen who let them dine with them in the country, the small body of the wits and the great body of the blues, have latterly united in a depreciation, of which their fathers would have been as much ashamed as their children will be. In the meantime, what have we got instead? The Lake school, which began with an epic poem, "written in six weeks," (so Joan of Arc proclaimed herself,) and finished with a ballad composed in twenty years, as "Peter Bell's" creator takes care to inform the few who will inquire. What have we got instead? A deluge of flimsy and unintelligible romances, imitated from Scott and myself, who have both made the best of our bad materials and erroneous system. What have we got instead? Madoc, which is neither an epic nor any thing else? Thalaba, Kehama, Gebir, and such gibberish, written in all metres and in no language. Hunt, who had powers to have made "the Story of Rimini" as perfect as a fable of Dryden, has thought fit to sacrifice his genius and his taste to some unintelligible notions of Wordsworth, which I defy him to explain. Moore has — But why continue? — All, with the exception of Crabbe, Rogers, and Campbell, who may be considered as having taken their station, will, by the blessing of God, survive their own reputation, without attaining any very extraordinary period of longevity. Of course there must be a still further exception in favour of those who, having never obtained any reputation at all, unless it be among provincial literati, and their own families, have none to lose; and of Moore, who, as the Burns of Ireland, possesses a fame which cannot be lost.

The greater part of the poets mentioned, however, have been able to gather together a few followers. A paper of the Connoisseur says, that "it is observed by the French, that a cat, a priest, and an old woman, are sufficient to constitute a religious sect in England." The same number of animals, with some difference in kind, will suffice for a poetical one. If we take Sir George Beaumont instead of the priest, and Mr. Wordsworth for the old woman, we shall nearly complete the quota required; but I fear that Mr. Southey will but indifferently represent the CAT, having shown himself but too distinctly to be of a species to which that noble creature is peculiarly hostile.

Nevertheless, I will not go so far as Wordsworth in his postscript, who pretends that no great poet ever had immediate fame; which being interpreted, means that William Wordsworth is not quite so much read by his cotemporaries as might be desirable. This assertion is as false as it is foolish. Homer's glory depended upon his present popularity: he recited, — and without the strongest impression of the moment, who would have gotten the Iliad by heart, and given it to tradition? Ennius, Terence, Plautus, Lucretius, Horace, Virgil, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Sappho, Anacreon, Theocritus, all the great poets of antiquity, were the delight of their cotemporaries. The very existence of a poet, previous to the invention of printing, depended upon his present popularity; and how often has it impaired his future fame? Hardly ever. History informs us, that the best have come down to us. The reason is evident; the most popular found the greatest number of transcribers for their MSS.; and that the taste of their cotemporaries was corrupt can hardly be avouched by the moderns, the mightiest of whom have but barely approached them. Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, were all the darlings of the cotemporary reader. Dante's poem was celebrated long before his death; and, not long after it, States negotiated for his ashes, and

¹ [The well-known lines under Milton's picture, —

"Three poets, in three distant ages born," &c.]

² [The Rev. Richard Hole. He published in early life a versification of Fingal, and in 1789, "Arthur, a Poetical Romance." He died in 1805.]

disputed for the sites of the composition of the Divina Commedia. Petrarch was crowned in the Capitol. Ariosto was permitted to pass free by the public robber who had read the Orlando Furioso. I would not recommend Mr. Wordsworth to try the same experiment with his Smugglers. Tasso, notwithstanding the criticisms of the Cruscanti, would have been crowned in the Capitol, but for his death.

It is easy to prove the immediate popularity of the chief poets of the only modern nation in Europe that has a poetical language, the Italian. In our own Shakspeare, Spenser, Jonson, Waller, Dryden, Congreve, Pope, Young, Shenstone, Thomson, Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, were all as popular in their lives as since. Gray's Elegy pleased instantly, and eternally. His Odes did not, nor yet do they, please like his Elegy. Milton's politics kept him down. But the Epigram of Dryden¹, and the very sale of his work, in proportion to the less reading time of its publication, prove him to have been honoured by his cotemporaries. I will venture to assert, that the sale of the Paradise Lost was greater in the first four years after its publication, than that of "The Excursion" in the same number, with the difference of nearly a century and a half between them of time, and of thousands in point of general readers. Notwithstanding Mr. Wordsworth's having pressed Milton into his service as one of those not presently popular, to favour his own purpose of proving that our grandchildren will read *him* (the said William Wordsworth), I would recommend him to begin first with our grandmothers. But he need not be alarmed; he may yet live to see all the envies pass away, as Darwin and Seward, and Hoole, and Hole², and Hoyle³ have passed away; but their declension will not be his ascension; he is essentially a bad writer, and all the failures of others can never strengthen him. He may have a sect, but he will never have a public; and his "*audience*" will always be "*few*," without being "*fit*," — except for Bedlam.

It may be asked, why, having this opinion of the present state of poetry in England, and having had it long, as my friends and others well knew — possessing, or having possessed too, as a writer, the ear of the public for the time being — I have not adopted a different plan in my own compositions, and endeavoured to correct rather than encourage the taste of the day. To this I would answer, that it is easier to perceive the wrong than to pursue the right, and that I have never contemplated the prospect "of filling (with Peter Bell⁴, see its preface) permanently a station in the literature of the country." Those who know me best know this, and that I have been considerably astonished at the temporary success of my works, having flattered no person and no party, and expressed opinions which are not those of the general reader. Could I have anticipated the degree of attention which has been accorded me, assuredly I would have studied more to deserve it. But I have lived in far countries abroad, or in the agitating world at home, which was not favourable to study or reflection; so that almost all I have written has been mere passion,—passion, it is true, of different kinds, but always passion: for in me (if it be not an Irishism to say so) my *indifference* was a kind of passion, the result of experience, and not the philosophy of nature. Writing grows a habit, like a woman's gallantry; there are women who have had no intrigue, but few who have had but one only; so there are millions of men who have never written a book, but few who have written only one. And thus, having written once, I wrote on; encouraged no doubt by the success of the moment, yet by no means anticipating its duration, and, I will venture to say, scarcely even wishing it. But then I did other things besides write, which by no means contributed either to improve my writings or my prosperity.

I have thus expressed publicly upon the poetry of the day the opinion I have long entertained and expressed of it to all

³ [Charles Hoyle, of Trinity College, Cambridge, author of "Exodus," an epic in thirteen books.]

⁴ [Peter Bell first saw the light in 1798. During this long interval, pains have been taken at different times to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or rather, to fit it for filling permanently a station, however humble, in the literature of my country.—Wordsworth, 1819.]