

Living Literary Characters, No. V.
Edward Lytton Bulwer
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(L. E. L.)

From
The New Monthly Magazine,
Vol 31, 1831
Compiled
by
Peter J. Bolton



THE AUTHOR OF "DELHAM"

Engraved by Thomson from an Original Drawing by F. Say

Edw Bulwer

London. Published in the New Monthly Mag. By Colburn & Bentley, May 1831.

LIVING LITERARY CHARACTERS, NO. V.

*Edward Lytton Bulwer.**(With an engraved Likeness.)*

THE great first cause why our English literature has obtained so high a character for truth and nature is, that it has always reflected, as in a mirror, the age which was passing over it. The chivalric romances were filled with the spirit of their times. The dramas, with their passionate poetry and rich variety of incident, were transcripts of their own wild and adventurous day. The Revolution next left its mental imprint. Milton embodied the stern energy of resistance which had been in action, while the satire of "Hudibras," and the light and licentious comedies which followed, were no less faithful pictures of the wit and profligate indulgence which then prevailed. The ensuing age was one of political intrigue rather than of excitement. It equally gave its literary tone. People reasoned rather than felt, were moral by maxims, and witty in antithesis. The genius of style was abroad. Observation was just rather than profound, keen rather than deep. Wit was carried to its perfection, and also to its excess; people were witty on every thing. Essays, letters, satires, sermons, were the circulating coin. The novels, excellent in plot, coarse, but vigorous in delineation of character, were comedies put into narrative, their merits and their defects equally of their actual period. This cycle also revolved, and its successor was one of wild imagination and strong passion. The few paint the feeling of the many; and the many adopt such words as if they were their own. The great writers, we can scarcely say of our time, embodied the excitement, the morbid sensibility, the visionary philosophy, the melancholy ever attendant upon imaginative feeling, which were the characteristics of an essentially poetical age; and such was the one just departed. Another great change is now passing over our literature, because it is also passing over our time; not less powerful, though perhaps less marked. The former change was more violent; it was wrought by enthusiasm, which, for the time, carries all before it. The present is being worked by opinion, which, if more still, is also more lasting. To-day has nothing in common with Yesterday. People required to be amused in order to be instructed; now, they only permit themselves to be entertained while laying the flattering unction to their souls that it is the vehicle of information. For every why, we ask a wherefore. We will not allow an author to display his talents merely as the knights broke each other's limbs of old, for honour: we expect that he should have a purpose in this display, and that purpose one of tangible benefit. It is this that makes the excellence of the writer before us. With that keen perception of reality, which is the executive power of genius, he has entered into the spirit of his own times. Mr. Bulwer is the first novelist who has placed his best reward, and his great aim, in the utility of his writings. He has seen, that in order to improve, we must first enlighten; and that ridicule, if not the test of truth, is, at least, a good conductor to its lightning. His genius has taken service with reality. In every event he has wrought out, in every character he has created, he has never had the actual

out of mind ; and his works are living pictures, filled with the crimes and the virtues, the thoughts and the feelings, the hopes and the fears which are now among us in daily operation. Young, rich, and high-born, Mr. Bulwer* lacked many of the ordinary excitements to exertion. It is a fact not to be disputed, that the aristocracy have not "progressed" in proportion to the other classes. A young nobleman of the present day has not a better education than his ancestor in the time of Elizabeth. If we look back to the old records, we shall find that the classics, the modern tongues, some knowledge of philosophy, and the information collected by foreign travel, were held indispensable to the formation of a gentleman. What more is now required among the higher ranks? We doubt whether even as much be effected. It would seem that education, in ceasing to be a distinction, had lost half its attraction. The evaded study and dissipation of a public school is succeeded by the equally evaded study and dissipation of a college; and too many of our youthful aristocracy begin life with self-sufficiency for knowledge, prejudices for opinions, and with pleasure a habit rather than an enjoyment. The great error of their condition is, that their road through life is too royal a one, using that phrase quite in its ancient acceptation. We must remember, that to this class Mr. Bulwer belongs, in order to do justice to the energy of mind which has so nobly preferred exertion to indulgence, and has set out by acknowledging the general sympathies, and advocating the general rights of mankind. In the history of an author, it is labour wasted to inquire what first turned his mind to its peculiar pursuit. Even if the fact could be ascertained, it would be useless as an example, for no circumstance affects two men alike; and if brought forward only to support a theory, the theory which cannot be carried into action is rather ingenious than useful. That the subject of our sketch was early addicted to reading is nothing; so are thousands, from whose labour fruit never comes. Literary taste is often confounded with literary talent by others, quite as much as by ourselves. The Cambridge prize poem on Sculpture, afterwards published in a small volume of poems, printed for private circulation, was his first literary effort. Mr. Bulwer is essentially imbued with the spirit of poetry: perhaps, born a few years sooner, he would have been a poet only; but, though circumstances do not make genius, they certainly have much to do with its direction. He had early read largely, and seen much of society: his judgment thus

* Edward Earle Lytton Bulwer is the third and youngest son of General Bulwer, of Heydon Hall, Norfolk, by Elizabeth, daughter and sole heiress of Richard Warburton Lytton, of Knebworth Park, Herts. Both these are very ancient families. The Bulwers have possessed lands still held by them in Wood Dalling, Norfolk, since the Conquest; and Knebworth has been the property of the Lyttons since the reign of Henry VII., when it passed into the hands of the first De Lytton, of Lytton, in Derbyshire, Treasurer to that King, and Governor of Boulogne Castle. Mr. E. Lytton Bulwer has two brothers, one, William, the present proprietor of Heydon Hall; the other, Henry, the present Member for Wilton: with both of these he has been sometimes confounded. Both in the paternal and maternal branches, Mr. Bulwer's family is connected, by ancient intermarriages, with some of the most distinguished in England—viz. the De Greys, ancestors of the Lords of Walsingham; the Cecils, of the Marquess of Exeter; the Spencers, of the Duke of Marlborough; the St. Johns, of Bletsoe; the Lords Falkland; the Wyndhams, of Felbrig; the Longuevilles, &c. &c.—See *Collins's Baronetage and Peerage*.

balanced his imagination, and the same accuracy of observation which has since shown itself to be one of his most characteristic merits, told him, that the celebrity of one age must be sought in an opposite path by its successor. We had been rich in poetry, even to luxury; and when has not luxury led to satiety? Mr. Bulwer's literary career may even thus early be divided into the two worlds of romance and reality. His first works, to use his own words, were brought from

“ ———— the poet's golden land,
Where thought finds happiest voice and glides along
Into the silver rivers of sweet song,”

touched with that imaginative melancholy which after-years deepens into reflection, and marked with that keen perception which experience ripens into thought. Poetry is a good foundation for philosophy: we must have felt ourselves to allow for the feelings of others. To this period belong “Weeds and Wildflowers,” “The Rebel,” and his first prose work, “Falkland.”* Each of these productions bears the same stamp—the broad arrow of genius. But they were too selfishly beautiful: melancholy had just finished its monopoly, and the age of sympathy, like that of chivalry, was passed. Ridicule is the re-action of enthusiasm. Sentiment was considered confined to schools; and, so far from affecting too much feeling, people were beginning to be ashamed of having any. Mr. Bulwer has since had a brighter and a higher aim: but these writings belong to those earlier days, when, to quote himself, “Romance, that bright magician,” was wont

“O'er the dim glades of duller life to fling
Hues from the sun and blossoms from the spring.”

Life has little breathing time; and, even when we do for a moment reflect, it is rather on our present than our past: the pains and pleasures of memory are put aside as quickly as the poem which celebrates them. But, if such a feat of mental magic could be performed, who would be so utterly a stranger to all our thoughts and feelings, as the self of five years ago with the self of to-day? We cannot but believe that experience has wrought a great change in Mr. Bulwer's mind. His views of life are more true, while his ideas of excellence are at once more elevated, and yet more practical. He seems to have laid it down as a principle, that, though poetry may “breathe the difficult height of the iced mountain-tops,” its most precious gift, as he beautifully says, is

“ ———— to sing over all,
Making the common air most musical.”

He has felt that knowledge was only desirable as the pioneer of utility, and genius only glorious as the high priest of virtue. It is not too much to say, that where, in the “Disowned,” he puts the development of these principles into the mouth of Algernon Mordaunt, those half dozen pages are one of the noblest and the truest moral and philosophical essays in our language.†

“Pelham,” one of the most successful novels of our day, appeared in 1828. Its delineations were too true not to be taken as personal af-

* “Weeds and Wildflowers,” 1826; “Falkland,” 1827; “O'Neil,” 1827.

† “The Disowned,” vol. iii. p. 65.

fronts in these days, when every author is identified with his hero, if in that hero there is any thing that offends. If we except the "Literary Gazette," which perceived and did justice to the extraordinary mind then putting forth its powers, "the whole commons" of periodicals, like those "in Kent, were up in arms." One represented "Pelham" as an insolent sneer at the middle ranks, reprobated the effeminacy of perfumes, and talked of an English cook, and the Magna Charta, their own and their country's Constitution, in a breath. Others, again, considered it as an effusion of sheer egotism, and got into a rage with the author, whom they comforted themselves by denouncing as "a coxcomb." One would think that irony was like the Delphin classics, and required notes of explanation. People in general do not understand it. Matthews tells a good story of this density of apprehension:—a criminal, doomed to perish by the sharp edge of the law, was willing that the edge should be really sharp. "I will give you fifty ducats," said he to the executioner, "if you cut off my head at a single stroke." In the pride of his art, the headsman gave a flourish with his sword. "Fifty ducats," reiterated the criminal. "Just shake your head," replied the executioner: he did so, and it rolled on the scaffold. The matter-of-fact man, believing the story up to this point, says, "Well, did he give him the fifty ducats?" In this *point device* spirit were the coxcombries of "Pelham" arraigned. "Perfumes, indeed—how effeminate!" "Almond paste!—I wonder of what materials he thinks he must be made; soap would do for him as well as other people." "Feeding his poodle on chicken and sweet-breads!—what wicked waste, when there are so many poor starving." But wit cuts its bright way through the glass-door of public favour; and "Pelham" took its station, not only as a most entertaining novel, but as a satire, equally just, keen, and amusing. By the way, it is curious to remark how the affectations of one age are made up of the affectations of its predecessors: our present has gone back upon classical materials. What is its indifference, but stoicism made small for common use; its indolence, but a copy of the Lacedemonian, who, when an Athenian had been fined for idleness, requested to be introduced to the gentleman, "who had been punished for keeping up his dignity;" its gourmandism is but the luxury, without the magnificence of the Roman; and, as for perfumes, there was an ancient sage who perfumed his feet instead of his hair. "In the one case," as he justly observed, "the grateful odours ascended to his own nostrils, while, in the other instance, the sweetness but exhaled in the general air." Pelham was an incarnation of the spirit of the times, only with some fine talents and high qualities not quite so general. But the author's own words, in the preface to the second edition, best set forth his intentions.

"Nor have I indulged in frivolities for the sake of frivolity: under that which has the most semblance of levity, I have often been the most diligent in my endeavours to inculcate the substances of truth." "By treating trifles naturally, they may be rendered amusing; and that which adherence to nature renders amusing, the same cause may also render instructive."

One great charm in "Pelham," and in all Mr. Bulwer's works, is the mind which shows itself in every part, and continually breaks out in some clear observation or true remark. An excellent English Rochefoucauld might be formed from his pages, only with all the

feeling and higher sense of excellence in which the Frenchman is so deficient. We must quote two or three, the truth of whose thoughts can only be equalled by the grace of their expression.

“ Since benevolence is inseparable from all morality, it must be clear, that there is a benevolence in little things as well as in great; and that he who strives to make his fellow creatures happy, though only for an instant, is a much better man than he who is indifferent to, or, what is worse, despises it. I do not see that kindness to an acquaintance is at all destructive to sincerity as a friend.” “ The object of education is to instill principles which are hereafter to guide and instruct us; facts are only desirable so far as they illustrate those principles; principles ought, therefore, to precede facts.” “ Learning without knowledge is but a bundle of prejudices.” We would call particular attention to the truth of the next remark. “ They never spoke of things by their right names, and, therefore, those things never seemed so bad as they really were: insensibly my ideas of right and wrong became perfectly confused, and the habit of treating all crimes as subjects of jest in conversation, soon made me regard them as matters of very trifling importance.”

Lord Byron makes a very true remark in one of his letters, that the most prolific authors have always been the most popular. Such has certainly been the case with Mr. Bulwer. “ The Disowned,” “ Devereux,” “ Paul Clifford,” “ The Siamese Twins,” followed each other in rapid succession. The most singular characteristic about these works is their utter dissimilitude: save in a general tone of benevolence, as the basis of philosophy, and an extended and liberal view of the general interests of mankind, these productions are striking contrasts. “ Pelham” was a moral Diorama—a view of London, as it is. “ The Disowned” was a poetical and imaginative picture, but not the less true because the colours were created and combined rather than copied. It is not, perhaps, fair to ascribe your own supposed plan to an author, but we have always thought that “ The Disowned” was the finest illustration of ambition possible—an illustration, too, of its many varieties. The desire of honourable but worldly success in Clarence, is brought into fine contrast with the dreaming and feverish desire of fame which consumes the young artist. Again, the disinterested but fatal patriotism of Wolfe, fatal because confined, is admirably opposed to that of Algernon Mordaunt, whose patriotism takes the ground-work of knowledge, and works hand in hand with philosophy and charity. Mordaunt is one of those ideals of excellence which we respect an author for conceiving. “ The Disowned” also developed a new talent, that of description: there are several landscapes as beautiful and as English as those of our natural painter Collins. As an analysis of cause and effect, the history of Mr. Talbot, the vain man, is a perfect specimen of moral dissection. His vanity is the opposite of Lord Boradail's conceit. Vanity and conceit are often confounded: nevertheless, they are very opposite qualities; as much difference as there is between search and possession; vanity craves “ golden opinions” from all ranks of men; conceit sits down quietly in the enjoyment of its own property. More poetical in its views, more elevated in its philosophy, the remarks scattered through “ The Disowned,” though less worldly, are not less true than those in its predecessor. They take a higher, though not a less actual tone; and we doubt if the sarcastic inference be a whit more accurate than the kindlier one. The difference between their observations is, that in

the one they are taken in the spirit of satire ; in the other, they are taken in that of philosophy. If "Pelham" and the "Disowned" were different, "Devereux" was equally opposed to either. For ourselves, we are free to confess, that "Devereux" is our favourite of all Mr. Bulwer's works. It is at once an historical, a philosophical, and a poetical novel. The historical scenes have that which is usually admitted as the great merit of historical fiction, verisimilitude—if not exactly what people did do, it was exactly what they might be supposed to have done : to use a theatrical phrase, the illusion is well supported. But they have also another great and peculiar merit, the lesson pointed for the apprehension of even the most careless reader. Moral knowledge is the fine gold extracted from the crucible of moral satire. The interview between the Czar and Devereux is an admirable and forcible exposition of a great truth : we allude to the scene where the influence of shame in punishment is illustrated by the difference between the Russian and the German, while under the discipline of the knout. The same remark may apply to the inimitable scenes in Paris. The spirit of that age of epigrams was never so caught by an English writer before. But we draw no false inferences : the dust is diamond-dust, and it sparkles ;—it is not thrown in our eyes. We see that it was a time equally witty and worthless ; and the same glance which takes in its brilliancy also reveals its baseness. Lord Bolingbroke's* character is the most original feature in "Devereux." Historical personages have often lent "the magic of a name" to the fictitious page : but this is the first instance of historical research, philosophical investigation, and the fellow-feeling of a noble mind being devoted to embody, and to appreciate the merits of one to whom historians (we will not say history) have shown scant mercy and less justice. The various conversations in which Bolingbroke takes part, the just observations which throw such light on his sentiments, the eloquent appreciation of his excellence, the clear reasoning on his motives, are the perfection (if we may use such a phrase) of dramatic biography. Mr. Bulwer himself says, "that to do justice to a great man is the highest of literary pleasures ;" and in this analysis of Bolingbroke, we know not which most to admire, the truth of the defence, or the generous warmth of the defender. The tomb of one great man is the altar of another. One very futile objection against this noble impersonation has been urged by the Chinese of criticism, or rather its Chancery barristers, who refer every thing to precedent ;—that, forsooth, "a novel is not the proper place for political or historical discussion." Why, we would ask, is truth to be debarred from taking its most effective, because most popular form ? Such critics are either strangely behind, or wilfully blind, to their own time, who deny the importance of the novel. In works of imagination, a novel has been the Aaron's rod which has swallowed up the rest. If a few great writers choose any one vehicle for their talents, hundreds of their inferiors will choose the same mode, and follow in the track in which they never could have led. We do firmly believe great popularity is

* How strongly do several of the letters lately published in the *Marchmont Correspondence* confirm Mr. Bulwer's view of Bolingbroke's character.

never gained without great desert. All will admit, that the first-rate talent of our time has been developed in the novel. It is an error to say, that this is because it is the most amusing; it is rather because it is the most appropriate. Still, in literature, as in life, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation; and works, like Scott's, which have done more towards giving us real ideas of the days of yore, and drawn closer the links of the past and present, than any chronicle ever written; or works like Godwin's, and these of the author now before us, full of the most important truths, are to receive for their heritage the ill name of works in which, if the scene were laid in former days, a dungeon, a beauty, white plumes and iron fetters, a little valour, and a great deal of love, (*love à l'impossible en passant*,) were all that could be required; or if of modern life, the lover first raked, and then reformed; the heroine was first miserable and then married. Such was the circulating cycle, and hence the novel was held, nay, is still held by many, to be the Paria of literature. Truly may it be said, that to change an opinion is difficult; but to remove a prejudice is impossible. Before we resume our analysis, we cannot but remark on the singular silence preserved towards the most rising author of their day, in the two pseudo-called great Reviews, the Edinburgh and Quarterly. The former might have hesitated to censure in the very beginning, made wise by experience: for nothing is more mortifying than your own prophecy unfulfilled; and it is somewhat disagreeable to find the general judgment in direct opposition to your criticism. We may suppose that Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, &c. have served as landmarks. Every one of these names are now standard ones in our "land's language;" and the Reviewer is remembered by his injustice. Mr. Jeffrey was the Judge Jeffries of literature,—a most partial and unjust judge. The faculty of appreciation, that highest sign of a great mind, was wanting in his: and, take the range of our first-rate authors, they are all instances of public opinion reversing the verdict which proceeded from his tribunal. As for the Quarterly, we all know it is too well trained, to wander beyond the districts of *Moravia*.* It has not room, forsooth, for works that are in every one's hands, whose thoughts and whose feelings are actuating thousands; but, let a dull tragedy, now as much forgotten as the Emperor of Constantinople,† whose name it bears; or a volume of travels, whose young writer carefully records the slender ankles and dark eyes of every Spanish girl with whom he had a flirtation; or let the laureate of "Wat Tyler," and the apotheosis of George III. put forth the poetical annals of the pantry, and mark in italics the pathos of a young lady, not ringing her bell for coals or candles;—let any of these issue from Albemarle-street, and the Quarterly at once finds room for analysis and adulation. The truth is, that we have no great literary review, each being engrossed in politics, busy deciding whether Sadler is a fool, or Malthus a demon. Still, we wonder that observa-

* Quere—The shire of Moray?—*Printer's Imp.*

† Lest none of our readers should have heard of "The Worthy Isaac," it was a tragedy published by Murray, and entitled "Isaac Comnenus." We merely name it as one of the latest unfulfilled literary predictions we recall.

tion has not been more awake to the tremendous power the novel possesses as an engine for the dissemination of opinion: but more of this when we come to "Paul Clifford."

To return to "Devereux." The character of the hero seems to us to be one of Mr. Bulwer's most powerful and original conceptions: the influence of circumstances upon nature is finely and profoundly traced. "Devereux" is imaginative, affectionate, passionate by nature; worldly, cold, and guarded in his crust of circumstance. The poetry inherent, and the philosophy acquired, are exquisitely developed. We never could read the account of his boyhood without the most intense interest,—the warm love of the child thrown back upon itself by unkind coldness and unjust preference. We shall only say, fortunate are those who do not sympathize with the affectionate, yet unloved boy, whose heart becomes sullen as sadness always does when utterly unshared. There is terrible injustice in the treatment of children: how arbitrary is the authority exercised over them! How much does the anger or the fondness lavished upon them depend on the temper of the moment! What a contradiction between the much we expect them to acquire, and the little we expect them to observe! At one time they are to learn all that demands comprehension and industry,—(think how much pure abstract knowledge a child is expected to master;) and then, at another period, they are treated like a machine, that neither sees nor hears; or, at least, seeing and hearing as one who understandeth not; saving that memory is a most faithless faculty, a mirror in which a man looks, and "straightway forgetteth what manner of man he is," or was. Our own experience might teach us a different lesson. But preference, and its consequence, neglect, is the child's most cruel wrong. The bitter feeling of comparing our own lot with another's, will come quite soon enough without its being taught in infancy. Early injustice is like the thread of silk planted with the tulip—it colours all the after leaves. Its influence runs through all Devereux's future character; the warm emotions concealed—the affectionate temper checked—restraint deepening into reserve, and self-dependance hardening into self-reliance, are all traced with the accuracy of an anatomist, and with a beauty even beyond their truth. The awakening of all his better nature under the affection of his uncle, and that kind old uncle himself, are transcripts from one of the very best and dearest pages of human life. As for Sir William, we do not insist upon every reader liking him as much as we do ourselves; but we must own, if they do not, we shall have a very bad opinion of them. It is curious to mark the likeness of position and the dissimilarity of character between Pelham and Devereux: both are young, noble, panting, first for pleasure, next for worldly distinction; and both are fops, "mandarins of the first class;" but still how different. Pelham's worldliness is the philosophy of his calm, calculating, yet high nature: that of Devereux, on the contrary, is a disguise and a security. The coxcombrity of Pelham is like a cast from his features; that of Devereux is a mask to his face. The difference is imagination in the one, the want of it in the other. This is especially shown in their love:—love, which, if but an episode in the active life of man, is a lasting influence in his ideal one. We do not think the most susceptible

reader is very unquiet about the success of Pelham's suit: we think the very coldest must be touched by Devereux's generous and devoted attachment to the beautiful and desolate Spanish girl. Love was never more passionate in Byron, more true in Shakspeare, more lovely in nature, than it is here "gently bodied forth." We have hitherto dwelt on other merits than the rich passionate colours given by the heart. But the whole history of Isora is touched by that poetical spirit, which does not, it is true, make nature more beautiful than nature often is, but shows that beauty in its fairest light, the light of imagination. There is, to us, something inexpressibly touching in Devereux's abiding affection, when, to quote an exquisite passage from the "Milton" in after-years, "her memory made the moonlight of his mind," and

" Her thoughts stole o'er like a spirit's lay?
Singing the darkness of his fate away."

One great peculiarity in Mr. Bulwer's writings is, the singular originality of his minor characters: they are not merely "two or three puppets to fill up the scene," whose only distinguishing mark is a name, but each is some embodied thought, and distinguished by some natural touch: in short, people in his books are as different as they are in real life. Mr. Bulwer combines, to a rare degree, the power of creation with the faculty of observation; and it is this union which gives such infinite variety to "his storied page of human life."*

"Paul Clifford" came next; as different to its brethren as if they had not had "one common father."

"Paul Clifford" is at once a political satire, a romance of middle life; a practical and moral treatise, put forth in the popular form of a novel. The satire is levelled at existing persons and abuses—the romance is the poetry which passion and feeling extract from the daily events of common life—the moral is that drawn from the temptation which leads, and the punishment which follows, the crimes we know to be hourly committed. For the first time, Mr. Bulwer seems to have felt what an engine of power was the novel for present utility; how forcibly it could be brought to play on the vice whose result is misery—the indolence whose result is injury, and the selfishness which is at once its own best and worst punishment. What leading-article in a review ever brought forward the evil influence of laws, that punish rather than guard, upon the lower classes, with such energy and truth as the dramatic exposition of their hardship and insufficiency in "Paul Clifford?" It is a great and noble distinction for an author (and we know no other modern novelist that can "lay the flattering unction to his soul") to be able to say, "I have written in the hope of

* In this age of facts, where an assertion is held to be a shadow, unless backed by its substance, proof, we must mention instances; we, therefore, refer the reader to Jean Desmarais, the philosophic valet; to Mr. Vavasour, the epitome of respectability, whose unrighteous grasping takes the name of natural affection; Mrs. Lobkins, who qualifies a violent temper, as "her feelings being unkimmon strong;" Dummie Dunaaker, rogue, thief, liar, but with one redeeming touch of humanity,—"What, Do little Paul a mischief! vy, I've known the cull ever since he vas *that* high;" Mr. Copperas, with his one pun; and, to close a list, (only a sample one,) Mr. Brown, and his late Lady W.

pointing attention to great abuses—to awful suffering. The feelings, the weaknesses, the wretchedness of a great body of my countrymen have been utterly neglected; to their benefit I dedicate my talents—the spirit of ‘Paul Clifford’ is the cause of the people.” As a matter of taste, we have owned to liking “Devereux” the best; but as matter of principle, we give the preference to “Paul Clifford.” The use of the last is more actual and immediate.

Whether in lively satire, keen remark, or accurate reflection—whether in deducing the character from circumstance—whether in painting the nice distinction of natural good feeling which favourable position ripens into virtue, or natural strong passion, or weakness, which events harden into crime—the desire of benefit from an obvious lesson, or practical inference necessarily drawn by the reader, the same desire of conferring a moral benefit on the author’s kind is paramount through all. Fiction is the eloquence of experience, and to be useful it must be actual. The character of William Brandon is as yet our author’s most powerful conception. The lava-flood of passion, which bursts in one red flood, chills, hardens—never to melt again—the evil knowledge brought by too early experience (for experience may come too soon—the fruit must be mature that the east wind will not injure); the bitter consciousness of surpassing talent, unused and useless—the pride, which though inherent in the nature, has no outward cause of display, and takes refuge and fights under the shield of scorn—passion, talent, and knowledge—these best gifts of our kind, and yet those that may be turned to the worst purpose—never were these more finely developed than in William Brandon. One single touch of human kindness in this proud and cold man is in his gentle and fatherly love for Lucy, his orphan niece. It may seem fanciful, but it has always reminded us of the tuft of blue violets Frazer records with such expression of pleasure, when he finds them growing, lonely and lovely, on the high and icy mountains of Himala. Lord Mauliverer is an inimitable satire on aristocratic indulgence; he is the *far niente* of indolent luxury embodied in all its selfishness. One single expression sets forth his whole system of action. Brandon, at a *tête-à-tête* dinner, refuses or neglects some dainty of the table, and Mauliverer exclaims, “Oh, hang your abstemiousness, it is d——d unfriendly to eat so little!” This slight speech is the essence of one who desires companionship for its pleasantness, and not for its sympathy. Lucy Brandon, the heroine, is an entire contrast to all Mr. Bulwer’s former female portraits. Isabel and Isora were high-wrought, beautiful, and ideal—as if poetry had lent its aid to life, to show “how divine a thing a woman might be made;” but Lucy is a sweet, simple, gentle creature—entirely a girl—only a very lovely and loveable one, till circumstances discover that gold lies beneath the stream which had hitherto only “broke into dimples and laughed in the sun.” It is the “unconquerable strength of love,” giving its own force to a nature essentially timid and feminine. One of the great merits of this work is the many slight touches, which, like the finishings of a portrait, give such identity to a picture. The descriptions are singularly accurate, from that of the small and most wretched streets in London on a wet night, to the ancient manor-house with its one old chesnut tree “worth a forest.” The affections delineated are such as are in constant play, brightening and sweetening from the lofti-

est to the lowest; while the deeper colouring of passion is terrible from its truth. The scattered observations are as valuable for their justice as they are remarkable for their acuteness. Take the following admirable remark for an instance:—"Showy theories are always more seductive to the young and clever than suasive examples, and the vanity of the youthful makes them better pleased by being convinced of a thing than by being enticed to it." One personage we must not omit—Peter Mac Grawler, critic, editor, thief, cook, hangman. We doubt whether "the last" of that man was "worse than the first." We are reforming all abuses so much, that, perhaps, in a few years, the redoubtable Peter will be an historical memento of a base and cowardly school of criticism, which may then have left "but the name" "of its faults and its sorrows behind." The personal attacks; the virulent sneers; the coarse and false statements; the foolish opinions of a set whose incognito is indeed their existence—for who would or could care for the abuse of an individual whose own character was below contempt, or who would not despise the judgment of one whose only right to pronounce such judgment lay in his own previous failure in some similar attempt to that which he denounces? Who shall deny that the great body of critics are made up of unsuccessful writers?—the inferior magazines and journals are truly the refuge for the literary destitute. Men who are anonymous are usually abusive, and want of principle and want of responsibility are only too synonymous. Nothing can be perfect in this world, but two rules would greatly conduce to the perfectibility of criticism:—the first to speak, not of the author, but of his works; his pages, not himself, are amenable to your remarks: secondly, to do away with the present anonymous system; this would have a double advantage; it would force the critic to be just, if not generous, for his own sake—for men weigh opinions for which they are to be instantly answerable; and also, when the critic is known, the public would be able to judge, from previous knowledge of what he had himself done, how far he was competent to decide on the labours of others; but our present literary bush-fighting is as deteriorating as it is disgraceful. There are some excellent remarks, and written in the best spirit of criticism, in the dedicatory epistle to "Paul Clifford."

Many of the *dramatis personæ* in this work are lightly-sketched caricatures, woodcuts à la Cruikshank of individuals in that high rank to which our meaner ambitions direct themselves, "like the sparks which fly upward," and, we must add, to end in smoke. They are curious and bitter illustrations of "the might and magic of a name." One would think that the wrong and the despicable must be immutable terms; not so—much depends on position, whether we look *down* or *up*. Bachelor Bill being exclusive in Fish-lane, and giving a "hop and a feed," seems a ridiculous and vulgar person—the Duke of Devonshire giving a fête to "the fashionable world," with all its nice distinctions, is "quite another thing."

The Spartans had made no small advance in practical philosophy when, in order to show their children the shame of inebriety, they made their slaves drunk. It is not enough to denounce a vice—you will do more by disgracing it. We have heard some pseudo-genteel readers object to the hero's being only "a highwayman!" Besides the obvious answer, that human nature is human nature all the world over,

we will just give the author's own view of the case: "For my part, I will back an English highwayman, masked, armed, mounted, and trotting over Hounslow Heath, against the prettiest rascal the Continent ever produced." These did not possess such bad materials for a hero; the days are quite past for readers to be contented with the condescending court-suits which enchanted our grandmothers, or with "dark-haired young gentlemen, born to be the destruction of every one connected with them." Mr. Bulwer required a hero surrounded with difficulties, and beset with the temptations to which poverty is subjected in real and social life—such a hero is Paul Clifford. Critics, like copy-books, are ruled by columns—our limits forbid its extract; but we must say how eloquent and how just is the sketch of our late monarch.* It is a fine historical picture, discriminating between good and evil, neither trenching upon the sanctity of the grave with false panegyric nor with coarse insult, and drawing from faults, it were vain to deny, a warning, not a reproach.—The "Siamese Twins" came last. We think scant justice has been done to the passages of the Corinthian order of poetry with which it abounds—the splendid address to Earl Grey; the beautiful descriptions of sleep; the noble tribute to Burns; the exquisite single lines, "painting by words," such as hopes

"That colour while they point the goal;"

or such a description as

"The storm slept dark on the dull sea."

The author says, in the preface to the second edition, "that he would himself rest his fame on 'Milton.'"† It would rest on a sure foundation. "Milton" is a noble poem, "a worthy offering to the immortal dead." "The Westminster" has a fine remark on Channing's Essay on Milton: it says—"The spirit of Milton was upon him, and possessed him; and he writes as one constrained to do so by thoughts too fervid, intense, and expansive to be restrained. He speaks as a priest, under the immediate influence of the god at whose altar he was ministering—so should genius be honoured!" We can have nothing to say that will better apply to this poem. We have heard the term satire objected to, as applied to "The Siamese Twins;" we confess it does not belong to the Sunday-newspaper school of satirists, in which real names and nicknames, personality and brutality constitute what is called a powerful article; but if abuse is not the whole of wit, to wit—the keen and the ready—this poem may well lay claim. If Mr. Bulwer wants any thing, it is that innate gaiety, which in a writer, like good spirits in a companion, carries us along with it. Mr. Bulwer's serious satire is more apparent than his more playful vein, simply because the one has, and the other has not, the impress of his own mind. Nothing, especially in poetry, divides opinion more than great originality; readers are at fault when no good old rule is at hand to serve as a gauge—and when at a loss, it is always safest to condemn. To be the first to praise requires more self-reliance than the generality of people possess, and the "Siamese Twins" is too different

* We allude to the sketch of Gentleman George in the Second Edition.

† A Poem appended, in this volume.

from its predecessors for early opinions to be safely trusted to walk alone. But its feelings and its thoughts, "the deep and the true," daily become more familiar; the fine passage is remembered—the exquisite expression quoted—and the laurel puts forth its green boughs, leaf by leaf, till it stands forth a stately tree. This poem is dedicated to his mother—genius making affection as beautiful in expression as it is in spirit. We cannot conceive a more touching tribute. Mr. Bulwer's father died when he was but three years of age, and the care of his education* devolved on a mother, whose love and whose pride must equally be gratified by the result.

We have now, as far as our power extends, done our duty (for what is justice but a duty?) to this extraordinary writer. If we have cordially expressed our admiration, it is because we have cordially felt it. We have neither attempted to detail the stories nor describe the characters; the meagre sketch of a tale, or the bare outline of a character, is as a skeleton, which requires to be clothed in flesh before it can rise up in grace or beauty. We have endeavoured to give our own strong impression—to select some of the most detachable merits, and then to say to our readers, judge for yourselves on the right of our opinion, bearing in mind that we can set forth only a very small part of sixteen volumes, full of all the various development of mind and feeling.

A transition from the author's works to the author's self has been a common consequence of fame in all ages. Though we do not quite go the length of the Genevese, who, publishing an account of Rousseau's visit to his native city, deems it worthy of mention that Jean Jacques wore a cap trimmed with fur, but that he would not decide whether it was lined with fur or not, for he never took it off: still, by that rule which leads us to judge of others' feelings by our own, we think the curiosity, personal though it be, about a distinguished author, is, to say the least, very excusable. We often hear complaints that the author does not sustain the *beau ideal* of his hero; this complaint, at least, cannot be made of Mr. Bulwer. His appearance is distinguished, his features chiselled and regular, and the whole expression of his face highly intellectual as well as handsome. Generally, though we confess to having but a slight personal knowledge, Mr. Bulwer is silent and reserved in society; but this may in some measure arise from his extreme distaste to mixing with it: for at times nothing can exceed the flashing wit of his gayer converse, unless it be the originality and interest of his more serious discourse. Mr. Bulwer is married,† and is we believe among the instances that genius is very compatible with domestic happiness. Prediction has an easy task in foretelling a future when its prophecy is founded on a past of such promise. When we say that he gave us the idea of one whose habits were fastidious and tastes refined—when we find in him the descendant of an ancient and aristocratic family, and know him to be one nursed in all the lavish indulgence of wealth, the more are our causes of ad-

* We believe Mr. E. Lytton Bulwer was never at a public school.

† Mr. Bulwer married Rosina, only surviving daughter of the late Francis Massey Wheeler, Esq., of Lizard Connel, Limerick, grandson of Hugh Lord Massey, by Anna, daughter of Archdeacon Doyle.

miration for one whose talents have disdained repose, and whose pages have ever advocated the cause of right. Sophocles, in the days of old, could dream away his summer midnight on the reeds by the Ilyssus, listening to the moonlight music of the nightingales. Mr. Bulwer early felt that a modern writer had nothing in common with this literary luxury, and his genius has ever seemed held by him as a trust rather than an enjoyment. We should think the great success of his writings in other countries must be very gratifying.* Praise from afar comes the nearest to fame. Mr. Bulwer has already produced four standard novels, works replete with thought and mind, and he yet wants some years of thirty. A still more active career, that of public life, now lies before him. If first-rate talents, enlarged and liberal views, strong and noble principles, can make one man's future an object and benefit to his country, we are justified in the high anticipations with which we look forward to Mr. Bulwer's future. Last year, he was eagerly solicited, by a large body of its most respectable inhabitants, to stand for Southwark. Reluctance to oppose Mr. Calvert made him decline the honour; but we cannot conclude this article better than by part of his first declaration of public faith—"I should have founded my pretensions, had I addressed myself to your notice, upon that warm and hearty sympathy in the great interests of the people, which, even as in my case, without the claim of a long experience or the guarantee of a public name, you have so often, and I must add, so laudably, esteemed the surest and the highest recommendation to your favour. And, gentlemen, to the eager wish, I will not hesitate to avow that I should have added the determined resolution to extend and widen, in all their channels, those pure and living truths which can alone circulate through the vast mass of the community that political happiness so long obstructed from the many, and so long adulterated even for the few.

* Besides being translated into the French and German languages, numerous editions have been published in America.