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## LIFE OF MACAULAY.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, whose father was Zachary Macaulay—famous for his advocacy of the abolition of slavery, was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, towards the end of 1800. From his infancy he showed a precocity that was simply extraordinary. He not only acquired knowledge rapidly, but he possessed a marvelous power of working it up into literary form, and his facile pen produced compositions in prose and in verse, histories, odes, and hymns. From the time that he was three years old he read incessantly, for the most part lying on the rug before the fire with his book on the ground, and a piece of bread and butter in his hand. It is told of him that when a boy of four, and on a visit with his father, he was unfortunate enough to have a cup of hot coffee overturned on his legs, and when his hostess, in her sympathetic kindness, asked shortly after how he was feeling, he looked up in her face and said, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." At seven he wrote a compendium of Universal History. At eight he was so fired with the *Lay* and with *Marmion* that he wrote three cantos of a poem in imitation of Scott's manner, and called it the "Battle of Cheviot." And he had many other literary projects, in all of which he showed perfect correctness both in grammar and in spelling, made his meaning uniformly clear, and was scrupulously accurate in his punctuation.

With all this cleverness he was not conceited. His parents, and particularly his mother, were most judicious in their treatment. They never encouraged him to display his powers of conversation, and they abstained from every kind of remark that might help him to think himself different from other boys. One result was that throughout his life he was free from literary vanity; another was that he habitually overestimated the knowledge of others. When he said in his essays that every schoolboy knew

this and that fact in history, he was judging their information by his own vast intellectual stores.

At the age of twelve, Macaulay was sent to a private school in the neighborhood of Cambridge. There he laid the foundation of his future scholarship, and though fully occupied with his school work—chiefly Latin, Greek, and mathematics—he found time to gratify his insatiable thirst for general literature. He read at random and without restraint, but with an apparent partiality for the lighter and more attractive books. Poetry and prose fiction remained throughout his life his favorite reading. On subjects of this nature he displayed a most unerring memory, as well as the capacity for taking in at a glance the contents of a printed page. Whatever caught his fancy he remembered, as well as though he had consciously got it by heart. He once said, that if all the copies of *Paradise Lost* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* were to be destroyed, he would from memory alone undertake to reproduce both.

In 1818 Macaulay went from school to the university—to Trinity College, Cambridge. But here the studies were not to his mind. He had no liking for mathematics, and was nowhere as a mathematical student. His inclination was wholly for literature, and he gained various high distinctions in that department. It was unfortunate for him that he had no severe discipline in scientific method; to his disproportionate partiality for the lighter sides of literature must be attributed his want of philosophic grasp, his dislike to arduous speculations, and his want of courage in facing intellectual problems.

The private life of Cambridge had a much greater influence on him than the recognized studies of the place. He made many friends. His social qualities and his conversational powers were widely exercised and largely developed. He became, too, a brilliant member of the Union Debating Society, and here politics claimed his attention. Altogether he gave himself more to the enjoyment of all that was stirring around him than to the taking of university honors. In 1824, however, he was elected a Fellow, and began to take pupils. Further, he sought a wider field for his literary labors, and contributed papers to some of the maga-

zines—mostly to *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*. Chief among these contributions are "Ivry," and "Naseby" in spirited verse, and the conversation between Cowley and Milton, in as splendid prose.

When Macaulay went to Cambridge, his father seemed in affluent circumstances, but the slave-trade agitation engrossed his time and his energy, and by and by there came on the family commercial ruin. This was a blow to the eldest son, but he bore up bravely, brought sunshine and happiness into the depressed household, and proceeded to retrieve their position with stern fortitude. He ultimately paid off his father's debts.

Though called to the bar in 1826, he did not take kindly to the law, and soon renounced it for an employment more congenial—literature. Already in 1824 he had been invited to write for the *Edinburgh Review*, and in August, 1825, appeared in that magazine his article on Milton, which created a sensation, and made the critics aware of the advent of a new literary power. This first success he followed up rapidly, and besides giving new life to the periodical, he soon gained for himself a name of note. In 1828 he was made a Commissioner of Bankruptcy, and in 1830 was elected M.P. for Calne. In the Reformed Parliament he sat for Leeds.

He entered Parliament at an opportune period, and was in the thick of the great Reform conflict. His speeches on the Reform Bill raised him to the first rank as an orator, and gained for him official posts. It was while burdened with these severe public labors that he wrote thirteen (from Montgomery to Pitt) of the *Edinburgh Review* Essays. Thus he went on for four years, but the narrow circumstances of his family induced him to accept the lucrative post of legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India. This necessitated his going to India, which was clearly adverse to his prospects at home; yet the certainty of returning with £20,000 saved from his large salary was sufficient inducement to make the sacrifice, and he sailed February 15, 1834.

In India he maintained his reputation as a hard worker. Besides his official duties as a Member of Council, he undertook the additional burden of acting as chairman in two important committees, and it is in connection with one of these—the committee

appointed to draw up the new codes—that he has his chief title to fame as an Indian statesman. The New Penal Code was in great part his work, and proves his wide acquaintance with English Criminal Law. He also took great part in the work of the Committee of Public Instruction, and was chiefly instrumental in introducing English studies among the native population. But he was not popular in Calcutta. Certain changes he helped to introduce roused the feeling of the English residents against him, and he was attacked in the most scurrilous way.

In 1838 he was back in England. Meanwhile he had written two more essays for the *Edinburgh*, one on Mackintosh and one on Bacon, and he was hardly home when there appeared another, that on Sir W. Temple. After spending the winter in Italy, he reviewed in 1839 Mr. Gladstone's book on *Church and State*, and might have settled down to purely literary life, but once more he was drawn into politics. Elected as Member for Edinburgh, he was soon admitted into the Cabinet as Secretary-at-War to the Whig Ministry of Lord Melbourne. The position, however, was no gain to Macaulay. He purposed to write "*A History of England*, from the accession of King James II., down to a time which is within the memory of men still living," and his official duties forced him to lay this project aside for the present.

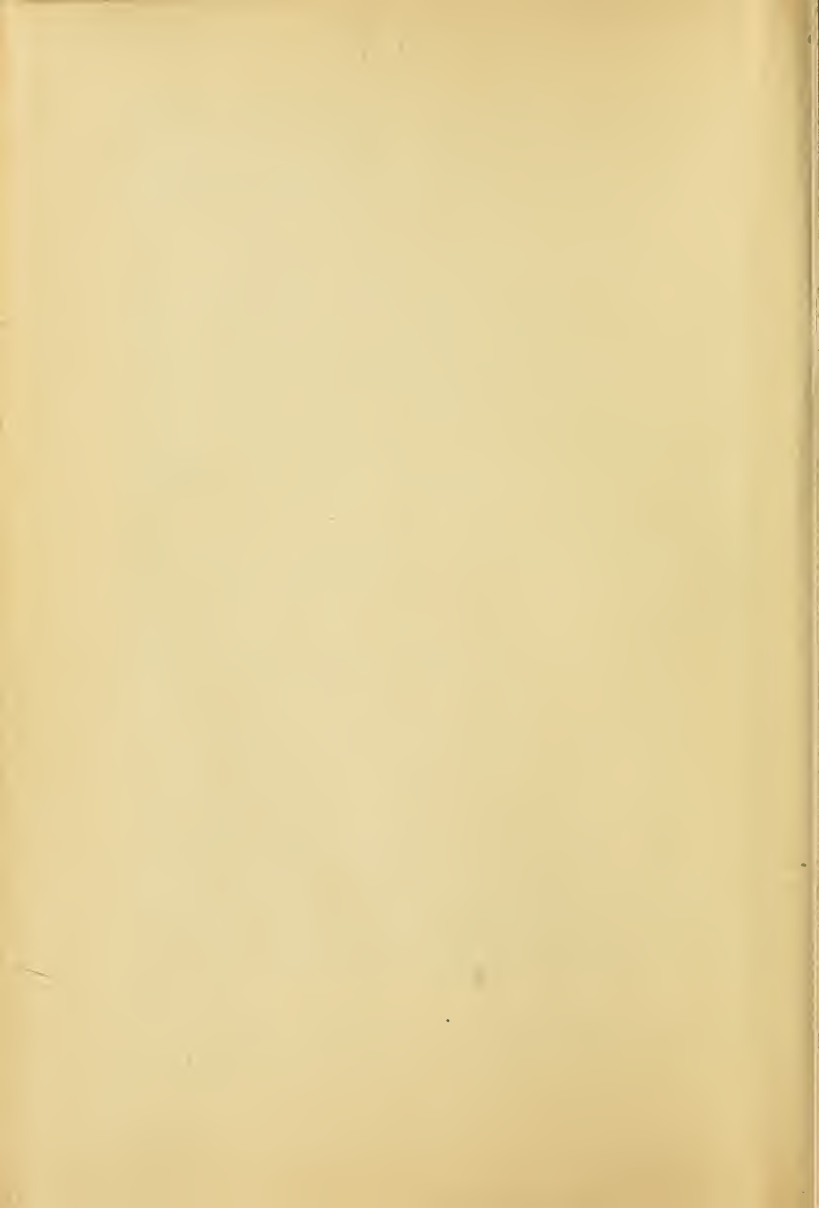
Fortunately Lord Melbourne's ministry did not last long; it fell in 1841, and Macaulay was released from office. Still retaining his seat for Edinburgh, and speaking occasionally in the House he was free to follow his natural bent.

His leisure hours were given as usual to essay-work for the *Edinburgh*, and he wrote in succession Clive, Hastings, Frederick the Great, Addison, Chatham, etc. But in 1844 his connection with the *Review* came to an end, and he wrote no more for the Blue and Yellow, as it was called. In 1841 he had put forth a volume of poems—the *Lays of Ancient Rome*—not without misgivings as to the result. But the fresh and vigorous language at once carried the volume into popularity, and it had an enormous sale.

On a change of government in 1846, Macaulay, at the request of Lord John Russell, again became a Cabinet Minister, this time

as Paymaster-General of the Army, and having to seek re-election from his constituents, went down to Scotland for the purpose. After a severe contest, and notwithstanding a growing unpopularity, he was successful. But at the general election of the following year the forces in opposition to him redoubled their energy, and he was defeated.

This was the real end of his political life. Although pressed to contest other seats, he resolutely declined, and for the next few years worked 'doggedly' at his *History*. In 1848 appeared the first two volumes, which had an immense success, 13,000 copies being sold in less than four months. The same year he was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University. By 1852 the people of Edinburgh had repented the rejection of their famous Member, and took steps to re-elect him free of expense; and so thoroughly was the scheme carried out that Macaulay, without having made a single speech, and without having visited the city, was returned triumphantly at the top of the poll. Through the length and breadth of the land the news was hailed with satisfaction, as an act of justice for an undeserved slight in the past. The result was very flattering to Macaulay, but he never really returned to political life as in his younger days. Moreover, forty years of incessant intellectual labors had begun to undermine his health, and he was now unequal to the fatigues that formerly were a pleasure to him. Accordingly in 1856, after having brought out the third and fourth volumes of his history, of which in a few months 25,000 copies were sold, he resigned his seat, and yielding too late obedience to all interested in his welfare, gave himself up to the enjoyment of that ease which he had faithfully earned. Then in 1857 he was created a Peer—Baron Macaulay of Rothley, his birthplace. Still struggling on with his *History* in the intermissions of his malady, he died suddenly on December 28, 1859. He was only fifty-nine—the victim of an appetite for work, insatiable and unfortunately too long uncontrolled.



EXTRACTS FROM MOORE'S "LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
LORD BYRON."

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It has been said of Lord Byron, that "he was prouder of being a descendant of those Byrons of Normandy, who accompanied William the Conqueror into England, than of having been the author of *Childe Harold* and *Manfred*."

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Its antiquity was not the only distinction by which the name of Byron came recommended to its inheritor.

Of the better-known exploits of the family, it is sufficient, perhaps, to say, that at the siege of Calais, under Edward III., and on the fields of Cressy, Bosworth, and Marston Moor, the name of the Byrons reaped honors both of rank and fame.

---

Lord Byron combined in his own nature some of the best and, perhaps, worst qualities that lie scattered through the various characters of his predecessors,—the generosity, the love of enterprise, the high-mindedness of some of the better spirits of his race, with the irregular passions, the eccentricity, and daring recklessness of the world's opinion, that so much characterized others.

---

That, as a child, the boy's temper was violent, or rather sullenly passionate, is certain. Even when in petticoats he showed the same uncontrollable spirit with his nurse which he afterwards exhibited, when an author, to his critics. Being reprimanded one day for having soiled or torn a new frock, he got into one of his "silent rages" (as he himself has described them), seized the frock with both his hands, rent it from top to bottom, and stood in sullen stillness, setting his censurer and her wrath at defiance.

Notwithstanding such unruly outbreaks,—in which he was but too much encouraged by the example of his mother, who fre-



quently proceeded to the same extremities with her caps, gowns, etc.,—there was in his disposition, as appears from the testimony of all employed about him, a mixture of affectionate sweetness and playfulness, by which it was impossible not to be attracted; and which rendered him then, as in his riper years, easily manageable by those who loved and understood him sufficiently to be at once gentle and firm enough for the task.

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By an accident, which occurred at his birth, one of his feet was twisted out of its natural position, and this defect (chiefly from the contrivances employed to remedy it) was a source of much pain and inconvenience to him during his early years.

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Though the chance of his succession to the title of his ancestors was for some time altogether uncertain, his mother had, from his very birth, cherished a strong persuasion that he was destined not only to be a lord, but "a great man."

---

The title devolved to him but too soon. Had he been left to struggle on for ten years longer as plain George Byron, there can be little doubt that his character would have been, in many respects, the better for it. On May 19, 1798, his granduncle, the fifth Lord Byron, died at Newstead Abbey, having passed the latter years of his strange life in a state of austere and almost savage seclusion. It is said that, the day after little Byron's accession to the title, he ran up to his mother and asked her "whether she perceived any difference in him since he had been made a lord, as he perceived none himself."

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The small volume of poems which he had now for some time been preparing, was, in the month of November [1806], ready for delivery to the select few among whom it was intended to circulate.

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[August 2, 1807, he writes to a friend:]

"Crosby, my London publisher, has disposed of his second importation, and has sent to Ridge for a *third*—at least so he says. In every bookseller's window I see my *own name*, and *say nothing*, but enjoy my fame in secret. My last reviewer kindly re-



quests me to alter my determination of writing no more; and 'A Friend to the Cause of Literature' begs that I will *gratify* the public with some new work 'at no very distant period.' Who would not be a bard?—that is to say, if all critics would be so polite. . . . So much for *egotism!* My *laurels* have turned my brain, but the *cooling acids* of forthcoming criticisms will probably restore me to *modesty.*" ["Hours of Idleness"—Byron's first literary attempt.]

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Byron, in addition to the real misfortune of being an unbeliever at any age, exhibited the rare and melancholy spectacle of an unbelieving school-boy. The same prematurity of development which brought his passions and genius so early into action, enabled also to anticipate this worst, dreariest result of reason; and at the very time of life when a spirit and temperament like his most required control, those checks which religious prepossessions best supply were almost wholly wanting.

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Such was the state of mind and heart in which Lord Byron now [1809] set out on his indefinite pilgrimage. . . . Baffled, as he had been, in his own ardent pursuit of affection and friendship, his sole revenge and consolation lay in doubting that any such feelings really existed. . . . His natural vivacity and humor but lent a fresher flow to his bitterness, till he at last reveled in it as an indulgence; and that hatred of hypocrisy, which had hitherto only showed itself in a too shadowy coloring of his own youthful frailties, now hurried him, from his horror of all false pretensions to virtue, into the still more dangerous boast and ostentation of vice.

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[After traveling for two years in Greece, Turkey, and the East, Byron returned to England. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* took the public by storm, and Byron "awoke one morning and found himself famous;" then came in rapid succession *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, and *Lara*,—descriptive of the "manners, scenery, and wild passions of the East and of Greece—a region as picturesque as that of his rival [Scott], and as new and fresh to his readers."

In 1815 he married Miss Milbanke, a lady of fortune; but in

about a year Lady Byron left her husband. "Her reasons for taking this step remain a mystery."

Soon [1816] Byron left his native land, and the remainder of his life was spent on the Continent, where he indulged in the grossest dissipation. In 1824 he went to the aid of the Greeks, then struggling for their independence; and, a few months after his arrival at Missolonghi, died of inflammatory fever—after an illness of ten days ]

To attempt to describe how the intelligence of this sad event struck upon all hearts would be as difficult as it is superfluous. He, whom the whole world was to mourn, had on the tears of Greece peculiar claim,—as it was at her feet he now laid down the harvest of such a life of fame.

---

On a tablet of white marble in the chancel of the church of Hucknell is the following inscription :

In the vault beneath,  
where many of his ancestors and his mother are  
buried,  
lie the remains of  
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON  
Lord Byron, of Rochdale,  
in the county of Lancaster,  
the author of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage."  
He was born in London on the  
22nd of January, 1788.  
He died at Missolonghi, in Western Greece, on the  
19th of April, 1824,  
engaged in the glorious attempt to restore that  
country to her ancient freedom and renown.

---

His sister, the honourable,  
Augusta Maria Leigh,  
placed this tablet to his memory.

---

"Many pictures have been painted of him (says a fair critic of his features), with various success; but the excessive beauty of his lips escaped every painter and sculptor. In their ceaseless play they represented every emotion, whether pale with anger, curled in disdain, smiling in triumph, or dimpled with archness and love. This extreme facility of expression was sometimes painful, for I have seen him look absolutely ugly—I have seen him look

so hard and cold, that you must hate him, and then, in a moment, brighter than the sun, with such playful softness in his look, such affectionate eagerness kindling in his eyes, and dimpling his lips into something more sweet than a smile, that you forgot the man, the Lord Byron, in the picture of beauty presented to you, and gazed with intense curiosity—I had almost said—as if to satisfy yourself that thus looked the god of poetry, the god of the Vatican, when he conversed with the sons and daughters of man."

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[*First visit abroad; letter to his mother.*]

"The next day I was introduced to Ali Pacha. I was dressed in a full suit of staff uniform, with a very magnificent saber, etc. The vizier received me in a large room with marble; a fountain was playing in the center; the apartment was surrounded by scarlet ottomans. He received me standing, a wonderful compliment from a Mussulman, and made me sit down on his right hand. I have a Greek interpreter for general use, but a physician of Ali's named Femlario, who understands Latin, acted for me on this occasion. His first question was, why, at so early an age, I left my country? (the Turks have no idea of traveling for amusement). He then said the English minister, Captain Leake, had told him I was of a great family, and desired his respects to my mother; which I now, in the name of Ali Pacha, present to you. He said he was certain I was a man of birth, because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands, and expressed himself pleased with my appearance and garb. He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son. Indeed, he treated me like a child, sending me almonds and sugared sherbet, fruit and sweetmeats, twenty times a day.

"To day I saw the remains of the town of Actium, near which Antony lost the world, in a small bay, where two frigates could hardly maneuver; a broken wall is the sole remnant. On another part of the gulf stands the ruins of Nicropolis, built by Augustus, in honor of his victory. Last night I was at a Greek marriage; but this and a thousand things more I have neither time nor space to describe."

[*Extracts from Journal.*]

"SEPT. 19, 1816.—Rose at five. Crossed the mountains to Montbovon on horseback, and on mules, and, by dint of scrambling, on foot also; the whole route beautiful as a dream, and now to me almost as indistinct. . . .

"The view, from the highest points of to-day's journey, comprised on one side the greatest part of Lake Lemán; on the other, the valleys and mountain of the Canton of Fribourg, and an immense plain, with the lakes of Neuchâtel and Morat, and all which the borders of the Lake of Geneva inherit; we had both sides of the Jura before us in one point of view, with Alps in plenty. . . .

"The music of the cows' bells (for their wealth, like the patriarch's, is cattle) in the pastures, which reach to a height far above any mountains in Britain, and the shepherds shouting to us from crag to crag, and playing on their reeds where the steeps appeared almost inaccessible, with the surrounding scenery, realized all that I had ever heard or imagined of a pastoral existence:—much more so than Greece or Asia Minor, for there we are a little too much of the saber and musket order, and if there is a crook in one hand, you are sure to see a gun in the other:—but this was pure and unmixed—solitary, savage, patriarchal. As we went, they played the "Ranz des Vaches" and other airs, by way of farewell. I have lately re-peopled my mind with nature."

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"SEPT. 22.—Arrived at the foot of the mountain (the Jungfrau, that is, the Maiden); glaciers; torrents; one of these torrents *nine hundred feet* in height of visible descent. Lodged at the curate's. Set out to see the valley; heard an avalanche fall, like thunder; glaciers enormous; storm came on, thunder, lightning, hail, all in perfection, and beautiful."

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The Journal concludes: "I am a lover of nature and an admirer of beauty. I can bear fatigue, and welcome privation, and have seen some of the noblest views in the world. But in all this—the recollection of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the

shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity, in the majesty, and the power, and the glory, around, above, and beneath me."

PRINCIPAL WORKS OF LORD BYRON.

*Hours of Idleness*.—"Fugitive Poems."

*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.—Due to an unfavorable criticism in the *Edinburgh Review*.

*Childe Harold*.—"A series of gloomy but intensely poetical monologues put into the mouth of a jaded and misanthropic voluptuary, who seeks refuge from his misery in the contemplation of lovely and historic scenes of travel."

*The Giaour* ([joor] chief).

*The Siege of Corinth*.

*Mazeppa*.

*Parisina*.

*The Prisoner of Chillon*.

*The Bride of Abydos*.

*The Corsair*.

*Lara*.

*The Island*.

"These are, in general, fragmentary. They are made up of intensely interesting moments of passion and action."

*Beppo*.

*The Vision of Judgment*. } "Gay, airy, satirical."

*The Age of Bronze*.—"A vehement, satirical declamation."

*The Curse of Minerva*.—"Directed against the spoliation of the frieze of the Parthenon."

*The Lament of Tasso*.

*The Prophecy of Dante*.—"Written in the *terza rima*, the first attempt of any English poet to employ that measure."

*The Dream*.—"In some respects the most touching of Byron's minor works."

*Manfred.* The best of his dramas. }  
*Marino Faliero.* }  
*The Two Foscari.* } Dramatic Works.  
*Sardanapalus.* }  
*Werner.* }  
*Cain.* }  
*The Deformed Transformed.* }

*Don Juan.*—"The longest, and in some respects the most characteristic, of Byron's poems."

*Hebrew Melodies.*—One of the most familiar of these is "The Destruction of Sennacherib."

"Byron's prose, which is full of vigor and animal spirits, is to be found chiefly in his *Letters.*"

"There are but two personages in all Byron's poems—a man in whom unbridled passions have desolated the heart and left it hard and impenetrable; a man contemptuous of his kind, skeptical and despairing, yet occasionally feeling kindly emotions with a singular intensity. The woman is the woman of the East—devoted and loving, but loving with the unreasoning attachment of the lower animals."

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[For fuller list, see "Nineteenth Century Authors," by Louise Manning Hodgkins.]

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[For fuller list, see "Nineteenth Century Authors," by Louise Manning Hodgkins.]

## BAIN ON THE PARAGRAPH.

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THE division of discourse next higher than the sentence is the Paragraph: which is a collection of sentences with unity of purpose. Like every division of discourse, a paragraph handles and exhausts a distinct topic; there is a greater break between the paragraphs than between the sentences.

There are certain principles that govern the structure of the paragraph, for all kinds of composition.

I. The first requisite of the paragraph is that the bearing of each sentence upon what precedes shall be explicit and unmistakable.

II. When several consecutive sentences iterate or illustrate the same idea, they should, as far as possible, be formed alike. This may be called the rule of Parallel Construction.

III. The opening sentence, unless so constructed as to be obviously preparatory, is expected to indicate with prominence the subject of the paragraph.

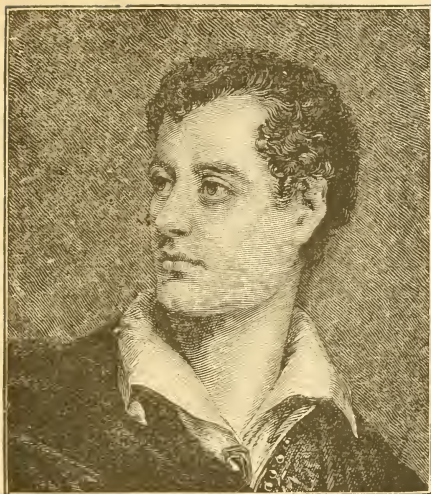
IV. A paragraph should be consecutive, or free from dislocation.

V. The paragraph should possess unity; which implies a definite purpose, and forbids digressions and irrelevant matter.

VI. As in the sentence, so in the paragraph, a due proportion should obtain between principal and subordinate statements.

[Very few writers in our language seem to have paid much attention to the construction of paragraphs. Macaulay is perhaps the most exemplary.]





## LORD BYRON.

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*Letters and Journals of Lord Byron ; with Notices of his Life.*

By THOMAS MOORE, Esq. 2 vols , 4to. London, 1830.

WE have read this book with the greatest pleasure. Considered merely as a composition, it deserves to be classed among the best specimens of English prose which our age has produced. It contains, indeed, no single passage equal to two or three which we could select from the *Life of Sheridan*. But, 5 as a whole, it is immeasurably superior to that work. The style is agreeable, clear, and manly, and when it rises into eloquence, rises without effort or ostentation. Nor is the matter inferior to the manner. It would be difficult to name

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2. **As a composition.** Opposed to what?

5. **Life of Sheridan.** Biography by Moore. Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), author of *The Rivals*, *School for Scandal*, etc.

a book which exhibits more kindness, fairness, and modesty. It has evidently been written, not for the purpose of showing, what, however, it often shows, how well its author can write, but for the purpose of vindicating, as far as truth will permit, the memory of a celebrated man who can no longer vindicate himself. Mr. Moore never thrusts himself between Lord Byron and the public. With the strongest temptations to egotism, he has said no more about himself than the subject absolutely required.

10 A great part, indeed the greater part of these volumes, consists of Extracts from the Letters and Journals of Lord Byron ; and it is difficult to speak too highly of the skill which has been shown in the selection and arrangement. We will not say that we have not occasionally remarked in these two large  
15 quartos an anecdote which should have been omitted, a letter which should have been suppressed, a name which should have been concealed by asterisks, or asterisks which do not answer the purpose of concealing the name. But it is impossible, on a general survey, to deny that the task has been executed with  
20 great judgment and great humanity. When we consider the life which Lord Byron had led, his petulance, his irritability, and his communicativeness, we cannot but admire the dexterity with which Mr. Moore has contrived to exhibit so much of the character and opinions of his friend, with so little pain to  
25 the feelings of the living.

The extracts from the journals and correspondence of Lord Byron are in the highest degree valuable, not merely on account of the information which they contain respecting the distinguished man by whom they were written, but on account  
30 also of their rare merit as compositions. The Letters, at least those which were sent from Italy, are among the best in our language. They are less affected than those of Pope and

15. **Quartos.** Quarto, for *in quarto*, a sheet of paper folded in four.

32. **Pope** (1688-1744). "If the letters of Pope are considered merely as compositions, they seem to be premeditated and artificial" (Johnson's *Lives*). Pope was the first in rank of the artificial poets of the first half of the eighteenth century.

Walpole ; they have more matter in them than those of Cowper. Knowing that many of them were not written merely for the person to whom they were directed, but were general epistles, meant to be read by a large circle, we expected to find them clever and spirited, but deficient in ease. We looked with vig- 5  
ilance for instances of stiffness in the language and awkwardness in the transitions. We have been agreeably disappointed; and we must confess that, if the epistolary style of Lord Byron was artificial, it was a rare and admirable instance of that highest art which cannot be distinguished from nature. 10

Of the deep and painful interest which this book excites no abstract can give a just notion. So sad and dark a story is scarcely to be found in any work of fiction ; and we are little disposed to envy the moralist who can read it without being softened. 15

The pretty fable by which the Duchess of Orleans illustrated the character of her son the Regent, might, with little change, be applied to Byron. All the fairies, save one, had been bidden to his cradle. All the gossips had been profuse of their gifts. One had bestowed nobility, another genius, a third 20  
beauty. The malignant elf who had been uninvited came last, and, unable to reverse what her sisters had done for their favorite, had mixed up a curse with every blessing. In the rank of Lord Byron, in his understanding, in his character, in his very person, there was a strange union of opposite extremes. 25  
He was born to all that men covet and admire. But in every one of those eminent advantages which he possessed over others, was mingled something of misery and debasement. He was sprung from a house, ancient indeed and noble, but

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1. **Walpole** Horace, third son of Robert Walpole, the celebrated prime minister. "Nothing can be more cheery than Horace's letters. Fiddles sing all through them. . . ." (Thackeray's *Four Georges*).

1. **Cowper**. Poet, 1731-1800. He stands forth as the poet of the home and of the marked religious movement of his time. "Living the life of a recluse, Cowper had nothing to talk about but his tame hares, his gardening, or his poems."

10. **That highest art.** *Ars est celare artem.*

16. **Duchess of Orleans.** Wife of Philippe, brother of Louis XIV. of France. Her son, Philippe, Duke of Orleans, was regent of France during the minority of Louis XV.

19. **Gossips.** Here means sponsors.

degraded and impoverished by a series of crimes and follies which had attained a scandalous publicity. The kinsman whom he succeeded had died poor, and, but for merciful judges, would have died upon the gallows. The young peer had great  
5 intellectual powers; yet there was an unsound part in his mind. He had naturally a generous and feeling heart: but his temper was wayward and irritable. He had a head which statuaries loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the  
10 beggars in the streets mimicked. Distinguished at once by the strength and by the weakness of his intellect, affectionate yet perverse, a poor lord, and a handsome cripple, he required, if ever man required, the firmest and the most judicious training. But, capriciously as nature had dealt with him, the parent to whom the office of forming his character was intrusted  
15 was more capricious still. She passed from paroxysms of rage to paroxysms of tenderness. At one time she stifled him with her caresses; at another time she insulted his deformity. He came into the world; and the world treated him as his mother had treated him, sometimes with fondness, sometimes with  
20 cruelty, never with justice. It indulged him without discrimination, and punished him without discrimination. He was truly a spoiled child, not merely the spoiled child of his parent, but the spoiled child of nature, the spoiled child of fortune, the spoiled child of fame, the spoiled child of society. His first  
25 poems were received with a contempt which, feeble as they were, they did not absolutely deserve. The poem which he published on his return from his travels was, on the other hand, extolled far above its merit. At twenty-four he found himself on the highest pinnacle of literary fame, with Scott,  
30 Wordsworth, Southey, and a crowd of other distinguished writers beneath his feet. There is scarcely an instance in history of so sudden a rise to so dizzy an eminence.

Everything that could stimulate, and everything that could gratify the strongest propensities of our nature, the gaze of a

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3. **The kinsman whom he succeeded**, etc. His great-uncle, the fifth Lord Byron, had killed a relation in a duel, the result of a tavern brawl, and had been tried by his peers.

hundred drawing-rooms, the acclamations of the whole nation, the applause of applauded men, the love of lovely women, all this world and all the glory of it were at once offered to a youth to whom nature had given violent passions, and whom education had never taught to control them. He lived as many men 5 live who have no similar excuse to plead for their faults. But his countrymen and his countrywomen would love him and admire him. They were resolved to see in his excesses only the flash and outbreak of that same fiery mind which glowed in his poetry. He attacked religion; yet in religious circles his 10 name was mentioned with fondness, and in many religious publications his works were censured with singular tenderness. He lampooned the Prince Regent; yet he could not alienate the Tories. Everything, it seemed, was to be forgiven to youth, 15 rank, and genius.

Then came the reaction. Society, capricious in its indignation as it had been capricious in its fondness, flew into a rage with its froward and petted darling. He had been worshiped with an irrational idolatry. He was persecuted with an irrational 20 fury. Much has been written about those unhappy domestic occurrences which decided the fate of his life. Yet nothing is, nothing ever was, positively known to the public, but this, that he quarreled with his lady, and that she refused to live with him. There have been hints in abundance, and shrugs and shakings of the head, and "Well, well, we know," 25

3. **All this world and the glory of it.** Matt iv. 8

10. **He attacked religion.** Byron often wrote flippantly and irreverently of religion, but he cannot be said to have attacked it in any of his poems.

13. **He lampooned the Prince Regent.** In *Don Juan* he makes the *amende honorable*, calling the Prince Regent "a polished gentleman from top to toe."

14. **Tories.** "It was about this time [time of Charles II. of England, 1660-1685] that the names 'Whig' and 'Tory' began to be given to two political parties, which soon became very powerful." "One [Whig] is, in an especial manner, the guardian of liberty, and the other [Tory], of order. One is the moving power and the other the steady power of the state. One is the sail, without which society would make no progress, the other, the ballast, without which there would be small safety in a tempest" (*Macaulay*). Latterly the place of the Whigs has been taken by the Liberals; that of the Tories by the Conservatives. "British Radicals form an important section of the liberal party." (*Century*). "Liberals and Radicals have now generally superseded the Whigs in English politics." (*International*.)

25. **Well, well, we know,** etc. Hamlet, Act I., Scene 5 Hamlet warns his friend Horatio not to hint that he knows the cause of Hamlet's strange behavior.

and "We could an if we would," and "If we list to speak," and "There be that might an they list." But we are not aware that there is before the world, substantiated by credible or even by tangible evidence, a single fact indicating that Lord  
5 Byron was more to blame than any other man who is on bad terms with his wife. The professional men whom Lady Byron consulted were undoubtedly of opinion that she ought not to live with her husband. But it is to be remembered that they formed their opinion without hearing both sides. We do not  
10 say, we do not mean to insinuate, that Lady Byron was in any respect to blame. We think that those who condemn her on the evidence which is now before the public are as rash as those who condemn her husband. We will not pronounce any judgment, we cannot, even in our own minds, form any judg-  
15 ment, on a transaction which is so imperfectly known to us. It would have been well if, at the time of the separation, all those who knew as little about the matter then as we know about it now had shown that forbearance which, under such circumstances, is but common justice.

20 We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We  
25 cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offenses have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an  
30 expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed,  
35 sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our

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33. **Whipping-boy.** The boy whose function it was to be punished for the faults and mistakes of the prince.



own severity, and compare with great pride the high standard of morals established in England with the Parisian laxity. At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

It is clear that those vices which destroy domestic happiness ought to be as much as possible repressed. It is equally clear that they cannot be repressed by penal legislation. It is therefore right and desirable that public opinion should be directed against them. But it should be directed against them uniformly, steadily, and temperately, not by sudden fits and starts. There should be one weight and one measure. Decimation is always an objectionable mode of punishment. It is the resource of judges too indolent and hasty to investigate facts and to discriminate nicely between shades of guilt. It is an irrational practice, even when adopted by military tribunals. When adopted by the tribunal of public opinion, it is infinitely more irrational. It is good that a certain portion of disgrace should constantly attend on certain bad actions. But it is not good that the offenders should merely have to stand the risks of a lottery of infamy, that ninety-nine out of every hundred should escape, and that the hundredth, perhaps the most innocent of the hundred, should pay for all. We remember to have seen a mob assembled in Lincoln's Inn to hoot a gentleman against whom the most oppressive proceeding known to the English law was then in progress. He was hooted because he had been an unfaithful husband, as if some of the most popular men of the age, Lord Nelson for example, had not been unfaithful husbands. We remember a still stronger case. Will posterity believe that, in an age in which men whose gallantries were universally known, and had been

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24. **Lincoln's Inn.** In London, "one of the four English inns of court, which are voluntary societies having exclusive power to call persons to the bar."

28. **Lord Nelson.** Britain's greatest admiral. His last great exploit was the defeat of the combined navies of France and Spain, in Trafalgar Bay (1805). Nelson was mortally wounded in this engagement.

30. **We remember a still stronger case.** Edmund Kean, the great English tragedian (1787(?)–1833).

legally proved, filled some of the highest offices in the state and in the army, presided at the meetings of religious and benevolent institutions, were the delight of every society, and the favorites of the multitude, a crowd of moralists went to  
 5 the theater, in order to pelt a poor actor for disturbing the conjugal felicity of an alderman? What there was in the circumstances either of the offender or of the sufferer to vindicate the zeal of the audience, we could never conceive. It has never been supposed that the situation of an actor is peculiarly  
 10 favorable to the rigid virtues, or that an alderman enjoys any special immunity from injuries such as that which on this occasion roused the anger of the public. But such is the justice of mankind.

In these cases the punishment was excessive; but the offense  
 15 was known and proved. The case of Lord Byron was harder. True Jedwood justice was dealt out to him. First came the execution, then the investigation, and last of all, or rather not at all, the accusation. The public, without knowing anything whatever about the transactions in his family, flew into a vio-  
 20 lent passion with him, and proceeded to invent stories which might justify its anger. Ten or twenty different accounts of the separation, inconsistent with each other, with themselves, and with common-sense, circulated at the same time. What evidence there might be for any one of these, the virtuous  
 25 people who repeated them neither knew nor cared. For in fact these stories were not the causes, but the effects of the public indignation. They resembled those loathsome slanders which Lewis Goldsmith, and other abject libellers of the same class, were in the habit of publishing about Bonaparte; such  
 30 as that he poisoned a girl with arsenic when he was at the military school, that he hired a grenadier to shoot Dessaix

16. **Jedwood justice.** Implies hanging first, and trial afterwards.

28. **Lewis Goldsmith.** His works have fallen into merited oblivion.

31. **The military school.** Napoleon was educated first at Brienne; then at the military school at Paris, from which he received his commission as a lieutenant of artillery in 1785.

31. **Dessaix.** Accompanied Napoleon in his Egyptian campaign; turned the fortunes of the day at Marengo, 1800, but was mortally wounded.



at Marengo, that he filled St. Cloud with all the pollutions of Capreæ. There was a time when anecdotes like these obtained some credence from persons who, hating the French emperor, without knowing why, were eager to believe anything which might justify their hatred. Lord Byron fared in the same way. His countrymen were in a bad humor with him. His writings and his character had lost the charm of novelty. He had been guilty of the offense which, of all offenses, is punished most severely; he had been overpraised; he had excited too warm an interest, and the public, with its usual justice, chastised him for its own folly. The attachments of the multitude bear no small resemblance to those of the wanton enchantress in the Arabian Tales, who, when the forty days of her fondness were over, was not content with dismissing her lovers, but condemned them to expiate, in loathsome shapes, and under cruel penances, the crime of having once pleased her too well.

The obloquy which Byron had to endure was such as might well have shaken a more constant mind. The newspapers were filled with lampoons. The theaters shook with execrations. He was excluded from circles where he had lately been the observed of all observers. All those creeping things that riot in the decay of nobler natures hastened to their repast; and they were right; they did after their kind. It is not every day that the savage envy of aspiring dunces is gratified by the agonies of such a spirit and the degradation of such a name.

The unhappy man left his country forever. The howl of contumely followed him across the sea, up the Rhine, over the Alps; it gradually waxed fainter; it died away; those who had raised it began to ask each other, what, after all, was the

1. **Marengo.** In northwestern Italy. Here Napoleon conquered the Austrians, June 14, 1800.

1. **St. Cloud.** A suburb of Paris, where was a palace of the kings of France.

2. **Capreæ.** An island at the entrance of the Bay of Naples. Here the Roman Emperor Tiberius lived, for several years, a gloomy and wicked life.

3. **The wanton enchantress.** "A magic queen, ruling over the City of Enchantments in the Story of Bedr Bâsim, King of Persia, in the "Arabian Nights," who, by her art, transformed men into horses and other animals.

matter about which they had been so clamorous, and wished to invite back the criminal whom they had just chased from them. His poetry became more popular than it had ever been; and his complaints were read with tears by thousands and 5 tens of thousands who had never seen his face.

He had fixed his home on the shores of the Adriatic, in the most picturesque and interesting of cities, beneath the brightest of skies, and by the brightest of seas. Censoriousness was not the vice of the neighbors whom he had chosen. They 10 were a race corrupted by a bad government and a bad religion, long renowned for skill in the arts of voluptuousness, and tolerant of all the caprices of sensuality. From the public opinion of the country of his adoption, he had nothing to dread. With the public opinion of the country of his birth 15 he was at open war. He plunged into wild and desperate excesses, ennobled by no generous or tender sentiment. From his Venetian harem he sent forth volume after volume, full of eloquence, of wit, of pathos, of ribaldry, and of bitter disdain. His health sank under the effects of his intemperance. His 20 hair turned gray. His food ceased to nourish him. A hectic fever withered him up. It seemed that his body and mind were about to perish together.

From this wretched degradation he was in some measure rescued by a connection, culpable indeed, yet such as, if it 25 were judged by the standard of morality established in the country where he lived, might be called virtuous. But an imagination polluted by vice, a temper embittered by misfortune, and a frame habituated to the fatal excitement of intoxication, prevented him from fully enjoying the happiness 30 which he might have derived from the purest and most tranquil of his many attachments. Midnight draughts of ardent spirits and Rhenish wines had begun to work the ruin of his fine intellect. His verse lost much of the energy and condensation which had distinguished it. But he would not resign,

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6. He had fixed his home. He took up his abode in Venice in November, 1816.

24. A connection, etc. In the beginning of 1820, he was domesticated with the Countess Guiccioli.

without a struggle, the empire which he had exercised over the men of his generation. A new dream of ambition arose before him : to be the chief of a literary party ; to be the great mover of an intellectual revolution ; to guide the public mind of England from his Italian retreat, as Voltaire had 5 guided the public mind of France from the villa of Ferney. With this hope, as it should seem, he established the Liberal. But, powerfully as he had affected the imaginations of his contemporaries, he mistook his own powers if he hoped to direct their opinions ; and he still more grossly mistook his 10 own disposition, if he thought that he could long act in concert with other men of letters. The plan failed, and failed ignominiously. Angry with himself, angry with his coadjutors, he relinquished it, and turned to another project, the last and noblest of his life.

A nation, once the first among the nations, pre-eminent in 15 knowledge, pre-eminent in military glory, the cradle of philosophy, of eloquence, and of the fine arts, had been for ages bowed down under a cruel yoke. All the vices which oppression generates, the abject vices which it generates in those 20 who submit to it, the ferocious vices which it generates in

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5. **Voltaire.** François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778). A great French writer and satirist. From youth upward Voltaire ranged himself in opposition to the French Government and the accepted religious teachings of the day. He was an intimate friend of Frederick the Great of Prussia, who admired both his genius and the audacity with which he had assailed the government and clergy of France. At different times he was greatly honored in France, but again he would have to flee for his life. His chief claim to literary fame rests in his satires, tales, letters, and epigrams, in which the whole spirit of the age saw itself expressed with inimitable vivacity, grace, point, and agreeableness. Voltaire was a decided Theist, and he rebuked the philosophy of his age, which tried to banish God from the universe. His last words were: "I die, worshipping God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, but detesting superstition."

6. **Ferney.** A small town five miles north of Geneva, the residence of Voltaire from 1758 to 1778.

7. **The Liberal.** The *Liberal* was started by Leigh Hunt in 1822, at the suggestion of Shelley and Byron. . . . The paper was never popular, and lived only a few months.

14. **Angry with his coadjutors.** The ill success of the paper produced a coolness between Byron and Hunt. Hunt, the prototype of Harold Skimpole in Dickens' *Bleak House*, was the most amiable, but at the same time the most unbusiness-like and recklessly improvident, of men.

16. **A nation,** etc. On the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, Greece came under the Moslem yoke. In 1821 the war of independence began, and in 1832 Greece was formally acknowledged independent, although she was practically independent from 1828.

those who struggle against it, had deformed the character of that miserable race. The valor which had won the great battle of human civilization, which had saved Europe, which had subjugated Asia, lingered only among pirates and robbers.

5 The ingenuity, once so conspicuously displayed in every department of physical and moral science, had been depraved into a timid and servile cunning. On a sudden this degraded people had risen on their oppressors. Discouraged or betrayed by the surrounding potentates, they had found in

10 themselves something of that which might well supply the place of all foreign assistance, something of the energy of their fathers.

As a man of letters, Lord Byron could not but be interested in the event of this contest. His political opinions, though,

15 like all his opinions, unsettled, leaned strongly towards the side of liberty. He had assisted the Italian insurgents with his purse, and, if their struggle against the Assyrian Government had been prolonged, would probably have assisted them with his sword. But to Greece he was attached by peculiar

20 ties. He had when young resided in that country. Much of his most splendid and popular poetry had been inspired by its scenery and by its history. Sick of inaction, degraded in his own eyes by his private vices and by his literary failures, pining for untried excitement and honorable distinction, he

25 carried his exhausted body and his wounded spirit to the Grecian camp.

His conduct in his new situation showed so much vigor and good sense as to justify us in believing that, if his life had been prolonged, he might have distinguished himself as a

30 soldier and a politician. But pleasure and sorrow had done

16. **He had assisted the Italian insurgents.** In 1814 the Venetian dominions were joined to Austria. In 1819 Lord Byron first associated himself with the conspiracy which was brewing against the Austrian Government.

20. **He had when young, etc.** In 1810 he made a tour of the Morea, and in 1811 he took up his residence at the Franciscan convent at Athens.

21. **Much of his most splendid and popular poetry.** *Childe Harold*, Canto II. *The Giaour*.

26. **The Grecian camp.** He sailed for Greece July 14, 1823, and reached Missolonghi Jan. 5, 1824.

the work of seventy years upon his delicate frame. The hand of death was upon him : he knew it ; and the only wish which he uttered was, that he might die sword in hand.

This was denied to him. Anxiety, exertion, exposure, and those fatal stimulants which had become indispensable to him, 5 soon stretched him on a sick-bed, in a strange land, amidst strange faces, without one human being that he loved near him. There, at thirty-six, the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century closed his brilliant and miserable career.

We cannot even now retrace those events without feeling 10 something of what was felt by the nation, when it was first known that the grave had closed over so much sorrow and so much glory ; something of what was felt by those who saw the hearse, with its long train of coaches, turn slowly northward, leaving behind it that cemetery which had been consecrated 15 by the dust of so many great poets, but of which the doors were closed against all that remained of Byron. We well remember that on that day rigid moralists could not refrain from weeping for one so young, so illustrious, so unhappy, gifted with such rare gifts, and tried by such strong tempta- 20 tions. It is unnecessary to make any reflections. The history carries its moral with it. Our age has indeed been fruitful of warnings to the eminent, and of consolations to the obscure. Two men have died within our recollection, who, at a time of life at which many people have hardly completed their educa- 25 tion, had raised themselves, each in his own department, to the height of glory. One of them died at Longwood ; the other at Missolonghi.

It is always difficult to separate the literary character of a man who lives in our own time from his personal character. 30 It is peculiarly difficult to make this separation in the case of Lord Byron. For it is scarcely too much to say, that Lord Byron never wrote without some reference, direct or indirect, to himself. The interest excited by the events of his life mingles itself in our minds, and probably in the minds of 35

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27. Napoleon.

28. Byron.

almost all our readers, with the interest which properly belongs to his works. A generation must pass away before it will be possible to form a fair judgment of his books, considered merely as books. At present they are not only books, 5 but relies. We will however venture, though with unfeigned diffidence, to offer some desultory remarks on his poetry.

His lot was cast in the time of a great literary revolution. That poetical dynasty which had dethroned the successors of Shakespeare and Spenser was, in its turn, dethroned by a race 10 who represented themselves as heirs of the ancient line, so long dispossessed by usurpers. The real nature of this revolution has not, we think, been comprehended by the great majority of those who concurred in it.

Wherein especially does the poetry of our times differ from 15 that of the last century? Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would answer that the poetry of the last century was correct, but cold and mechanical, and that the poetry of our time, though wild and irregular, presented far more vivid images, and excited the passions far more strongly than that 20 of Parnell, of Addison, or of Pope. In the same manner we constantly hear it said, that the poets of the age of Elizabeth had far more genius, but far less correctness, than those of the age of Anne. It seems to be taken for granted, that there is some incompatibility, some antithesis, between correct- 25 ness and creative power. We rather suspect that this notion arises merely from an abuse of words, and that it has been the parent of many of the fallacies which perplex the science of criticism.

What is meant by correctness in poetry? If by correctness

8. **That poetical dynasty, etc.** As a rough outline of the history of English poetry from the times of Elizabeth, we may set down five dynasties or schools, adding the most distinguished name in each. (1) The so-called Metaphysical school—Cowley; (2) The poets of the Civil War and Commonwealth—Milton; (3) The poets of the Restoration—Dryden; (4) The Augustan Age—Pope; (5) The poets of our own century.

20. **Parnell.** The Rev. Thos. P.; 1679-1717. Best known by his *Hermit*.

20. **Addison.** The most elegant prose-writer of the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson has said of him: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."



be meant the conforming to rules which have their foundation in truth and in the principles of human nature, then correctness is only another name for excellence. If by correctness be meant the conforming to rules purely arbitrary, correctness may be another name for dullness and absurdity. 5

A writer who describes visible objects falsely and violates the propriety of character, a writer who makes the mountains "nod their drowsy heads" at night, or a dying man take leave of the world with a rant like that of Maximin, may be said, in the high and just sense of the phrase, to write incorrectly. 10 He violates the first great law of his art. His imitation is altogether unlike the thing imitated. The four poets who are most eminently free from incorrectness of this description are Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. They are therefore, in one sense, and that the best sense, the most correct of poets. 15

When it is said that Virgil, though he had less genius than Homer, was a more correct writer, what sense is attached to the word correctness? Is it meant that the story of the *Æneid*

8. **Mountains nod**, etc. From Dryden's *Indian Emperor*.

9. **A rant like that of Maximin**. Maximin, the principal character in Dryden's *Tyrant Love*; or, *The Royal Martyr*. He is made to exclaim:

"Bring me Porphyrion and my Empress dead;  
I will brave heaven, in my each hand a head!"

And again when dying:

"And shoving back the earth on which I sit,  
I'll mount and scatter all the gods I hit."

11. **Homer**. Author of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The greatest name in the history of epic poetry. Supposed to be an Asiatic Greek.

12. **Dante**. One of the greatest poets of all time. His greatest work is *The Divine Comedy*. (Italian.)

13. **Milton**. Author of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

Dryden says of these poets:

"Three poets in three distant ages born,  
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.  
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;  
The next, in majesty; in both, the last.  
The force of nature could no further go—  
To make a third, she joined the former two."

15. Note the many illustrations and allusions in this and the succeeding paragraphs. Is this a merit or a defect?

16. **Virgil**. Author of *Æneid*, etc. After Homer, the greatest epic poet of antiquity. Born in Mantua, Italy. 70 B.C.—19 B.C.

18. **Æneid**. An epic poem by Virgil. In this poem Virgil celebrates the adventures of Æneas, a Trojan prince. When Troy fell, Æneas left the city, accompanied by his father, his son, and many followers. He visited various countries and settled in Latium. To him tradition ascribes the commencement of the Roman Empire.

is developed more skillfully than that of the *Odyssey*? that the Roman describes the face of the external world, or the emotions of the mind, more accurately than the Greek? that the characters of Achates and Mnestheus are more nicely discrimi-  
 5 nated, and more consistently supported, than those of Achilles, of Nestor, and of Ulysses? The fact incontestably is that, for every violation of the fundamental laws of poetry which can be found in Homer, it would be easy to find twenty in Virgil.

Troilus and Cressida is, perhaps, of all the plays of Shake-  
 10 speare, that which is commonly considered as the most incorrect. Yet it seems to us infinitely more correct, in the sound sense of the term, than what are called the most correct plays of the most correct dramatists. Compare it, for example, with the *Iphigénie* of Racine. We are sure that the Greeks of  
 15 Shakespeare bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine to the real Greeks who besieged Troy; and for this reason, that the Greeks of Shakespeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine are mere names, mere words printed in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation. Racine, it  
 20 is true, would have shuddered at the thought of making a warrior at the siege of Troy to quote Aristotle. But of what use is it to avoid a single anachronism, when the whole play is one anachronism, the sentiments and phrases of Versailles in the camp of Aulis?

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1. **Odyssey.** Great epic poem, attributed to Homer. It celebrates the adventures of Ulysses after the Trojan War, and of his son Telemachus, who went in search of Ulysses. (Ulysses: Gk., Odysseus).

4. **Achates and Mnestheus.** Two of Æneas' companions.

5. **Achilles.** The hero of the *Iliad*, and especially famous as the most valiant of all the Greek chiefs at the siege of Troy. Was killed by Paris, who shot him in the heel—his only vulnerable part.

6. **Nestor.** A Greek hero. He distinguished himself among the leaders at the siege of Troy by his commanding eloquence and wisdom.

6. **Ulysses.** The great Greek hero. His achievements at Troy most materially assisted the success of the expedition.

14. **Iphigénie of Racine.** Racine, the most admired of all the French dramatists. Iphigenia was daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and was offered as a sacrifice to Diana; but the goddess spared her life and made her a priestess. Hallam has said of this and other of Racine's female characters, that they bear the same analogy to Shakespeare's that sculpture does to painting.

21. **Making a warrior, etc.** In *Troilus and Cressida*, ii. 2, Agamemnon quotes Aristotle.

24. **In the camp of Aulis.** Where the scene of the *Iphigénie* is laid. "Aulis, a seaport of Bœotia, where Agamemnon assembled the Greek fleet intended to sail against Troy."



In the sense in which we are now using the word correctness, we think that Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, are far more correct poets than those who are commonly extolled as the models of correctness, Pope, for example, and Addison. The single description of a moonlight night in 5 Pope's *Iliad* contains more inaccuracies than can be found in all the *Excursion*. There is not a single scene in *Cato* in which all that conduces to poetical illusion, all the propriety of character, of language, of situation, is not more grossly violated than in any part of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. No 10 man can possibly think that the Romans of Addison resemble the real Romans so closely as the moss-troopers of Scott resemble the real moss-troopers. *Wat Tinlinn* and *William of Deloraine* are not, it is true, persons of so much dignity as *Cato*. But the dignity of the persons represented has as little 15 to do with the correctness of poetry as with the correctness of painting. We prefer a gypsy by Reynolds to his Majesty's

2. **Scott.** Poet and Novelist; 1771-1832. Regarding Scott both as a poet and as a writer of fiction he must be reckoned beyond question the greatest which this century has yet produced.

2. **Wordsworth.** One of the so-called Lake Poets; 1770-1850. His poems are all marked by purity of language, originality of thought—the product of his own meditation,—wonderful strength and beauty in occasional lines, almost perfect knowledge of nature, and high moral aim. “To console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to lead the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, to feel, and to become more actively and securely virtuous—this is their office.”

3. **Coleridge.** One of the Lake Poets; 1772-1834. Coleridge says, “Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward; it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.”

6. ***Iliad.*** One of the so-called Homeric poems. It commemorates the deeds of Achilles and other Greek heroes at siege of Troy. (Troy; *Ilium* or *Ilion*.) Pope translated the *Iliad*.

7. ***Excursion.*** Wordsworth's great poem.

7. ***Cato.*** Tragedy by Addison.

10. ***Lay of Last Minstrel.*** Poem by Scott.

12. ***Moss-trooper.*** A marauder of the border country between England and Scotland.

14. ***Wat Tinlinn and William of Deloraine.*** Two moss-troopers in *Lay of Last Minstrel*.

17. **Reynolds.** “Sir Joshua Reynolds, generally placed at the head of the English School of painting, was born in England in 1723. His portraits were of unsurpassed merit, eclipsing everything that had been executed since the time of the celebrated Flemish artist Van Dyke (died in 1641). He was the companion and friend of Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick, the famous actor, and other literary men of the time. He died in 1792” (Andersons' *History of England*).

head on a sign-post, and a Borderer by Scott to a Senator by Addison.

In what sense, then, is the word correctness used by those who say, with the author of the Pursuits of Literature, that Pope was the most correct of English poets, and that next to Pope came the late Mr. Gifford? What is the nature and value of that correctness, the praise of which is denied to Macbeth, to Lear, and to Othello, and given to Hoole's translations, and to all the Seatonian prize-poems? We can discover no eternal rule, no rule founded in reason and in the nature of things, which Shakespeare does not observe much more strictly than Pope. But if by correctness be meant the conforming to a narrow legislation which, while lenient to the *mala in se*, multiplies, without the shadow of a reason, the *mala prohibita*, if by correctness be meant a strict attention to certain ceremonious observances, which are no more essential to poetry than etiquette to good government, or than the washings of a Pharisee to devotion, then, assuredly, Pope may be a more correct poet than Shakespeare; and, if the code were a little altered, Colley Cibber might be a more correct poet than Pope. But it may well be doubted whether this kind of correctness be a merit, nay, whether it be not an absolute fault.

It would be amusing to make a digest of the irrational laws which bad critics have framed for the government of poets. First in celebrity and absurdity stand the dramatic unities of place and time. No human being has ever been able to find

6. **Mr. Gifford.** First editor of the *Quarterly Review*. Author of "two of the most bitter, powerful, and resistless literary satires which modern times have produced. His translation of *Juvenal* is one of the most perfect versions of an ancient author in the English language."

8. **Macbeth; Lear; Othello.** Plays of Shakespeare.

8. **Hoole's translations.** Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and a work of Tasso.

9. **Seatonian prize poems.** "An annual prize given for the best poem on a religious subject written by a graduate of Cambridge."

20. **Colley Cibber** (1671-1757). Poet Laureate from 1730-1757. He is best known for his comedies, *The Nonjuror* and *The Careless Husband*.

23. **Digest.** See dictionary.

25. **Dramatic unities.** The three unities of action, of time, and of place are generally attributed to Aristotle. These are the rules: (1) There should be a distinct plot with one main action, to which all the minor parts of the play should contribute; (2) The incidents of the play should naturally come within one day; (3) The entire action should naturally occur in one place.

anything that could, even by courtesy, be called an argument for these unities, except that they have been deduced from the general practice of the Greeks. It requires no very profound examination to discover that the Greek dramas, often admirable as compositions, are, as exhibitions of human character and human life, far inferior to the English plays of the age of Elizabeth. Every scholar knows that the dramatic part of the Athenian tragedies was at first subordinate to the lyrical part. It would, therefore, have been little less than a miracle if the laws of the Athenian stage had been found to suit plays in which there was no chorus. All the greatest masterpieces of the dramatic art have been composed in direct violation of the unities, and could never have been composed if the unities had not been violated. It is clear, for example, that such a character as that of Hamlet could never have been developed within the limits to which Alfieri confined himself. Yet such was the reverence of literary men during the last century for these unities, that Johnson, who, much to his honor, took the opposite side, was, as he says, "frightened at his own temerity," and "afraid to stand against the authorities which might be produced against him."

There are other rules of the same kind without end. "Shakespeare," says Rymer, "ought not to have made Othello black; for the hero of a tragedy ought always to be white." "Milton," says another critic, "ought not to have taken Adam for his hero; for the hero of an epic poem ought always to be victorious." "Milton," says another, "ought not to have put so many similes into his first book; for the first book of an epic poem ought always to be the most unadorned. There are no similes in the first book of the *Iliad*." "Milton," says another, "ought not to have placed in an epic poem such lines as these:

'While thus I called, and strayed I knew not whither.'

8. **Lyrical.** See rhetoric or dictionary for definition of Epic, Dramatic, and Lyric poetry.

16. **Alfieri.** Italian dramatist; 1749-1803.

18. **Johnson** (1709-1784). Essayist, lexicographer, poet. Wrote *Lives of the Poets*.

23. **Rymer.** An indifferent critic, but a careful compiler of records; 1650-1713.

And why not? The critic is ready with a reason, a lady's reason. "Such lines," says he, "are not, it must be allowed, unpleasing to the ear; but the redundant syllable ought to be confined to the drama, and not admitted into epic poetry." 5 As to the redundant syllable in heroic rhyme on serious subjects, it has been, from the time of Pope downward, proscribed by the general consent of all the correct school. No magazine would once have admitted so incorrect a couplet as that of Drayton:

10 "As when we lived untouched with these disgraces,  
When as our kingdom was our dear embraces."

Another law of heroic rhyme, which fifty years ago was considered as fundamental, was, that there should be a pause, a comma at least, at the end of every couplet. It was also pro- 15 vided that there should never be a full stop except at the end of a line. Well do we remember to have heard a most correct judge of poetry revile Mr. Rogers for the incorrectness of that most sweet and graceful passage,

20 "Such grief was ours,—it seems but yesterday,—  
When in thy prime, wishing so much to stay,  
'Twas thine, Maria, thine without a sigh  
At midnight in a sister's arms to die.  
Oh thou wert lovely; lovely was thy frame,  
And pure thy spirit as from heaven it came:  
And when recalled to join the blest above  
25 Thou diedst a victim to exceeding love,  
Nursing the young to health. In happier hours,  
When idle Fancy wove luxuriant flowers,  
Once in thy mirth thou badst me write on thee;  
And now I write what thou shalt never see."

Sir Roger Newdigate is fairly entitled, we think, to be ranked 30 among the great critics of this school. He made a law that none of the poems written for the prize which he established at Oxford should exceed fifty lines. This law seems to us to have at least as much foundation in reason as any of those which we have mentioned; nay, much more; for the world,

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9. **Drayton.** Poet; 1563-1631.

17. **Rogers.** London banker, poet, and wit; 1763-1855. The quotation is from *Human Life*.

we believe, is pretty well agreed in thinking that the shorter a prize-poem is the better.

We do not see why we should not make a few more rules of the same kind ; why we should not enact that the number of scenes in every act shall be three or some multiple of three, 5 that the number of lines in every scene shall be an exact square, that the *dramatis personæ* shall never be more or fewer than sixteen, and that, in heroic rhymes, every thirty-sixth line shall have twelve syllables. If we were to lay down these canons, and to call Pope, Goldsmith, and Addison incor- 10 rect writers for not having complied with our whims, we should act precisely as those critics act who find incorrectness in the magnificent imagery and the varied music of Coleridge and Shelley.

The correctness which the last century prized so much 15 resembles the correctness of those pictures of the Garden of Eden which we see in old Bibles. We have an exact square, enclosed by the rivers Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates, each with a convenient bridge in the center, rectangular beds of flowers, a long canal, neatly bricked and railed in, the tree 20 of knowledge, clipped like one of the limes behind the Tuileries, standing in the center of the grand alley, the snake twined round it, the man on the right hand, the woman on the left, and the beasts drawn up in an exact circle round them. In one sense the picture is correct enough. That is to 25 say, the squares are correct ; the circles are correct ; the man

3. **We do not see why**, etc. Macaulay has borrowed a hint from Schlegel's *Dramatic Literature*: "Three unities, five acts: why not seven persons? These rules seem to proceed according to odd numbers."

8. **Heroic rhymes**. Iambic pentameter constitutes what is called the Heroic line.

10. **Goldsmith** (1728-1774). He is best known to us as a novelist and a poet. As a writer, perfect ease is his characteristic, and nothing could be more natural, simple, and graceful than his style.

14. **Shelley**. Poet; 1792-1822. "A cloud, a plant, a sunrise—these are his characters: they were those of the primitive poets, when they took the lightning for a bird of fire, and the clouds for the flocks of heaven. But what a secret ardor beyond these splendid images, and how we feel the heat of the furnace beyond the colored phantoms which it sets afloat over the horizon! Has any one since Shakespeare and Spenser lighted on such tender and such grand ecstasies?" (*Taine*).

22. **Tuileries**. Royal palace in Paris. Burned by the mob in 1871.

and the woman are in a most correct line with the tree ; and the snake forms a most correct spiral.

But if there were a painter so gifted that he could place on the canvas that glorious paradise, seen by the interior eye of  
 5 him whose outward sight had failed with long watching and laboring for liberty and truth, if there were a painter who could set before us the mazes of the sapphire brook, the lake with its fringe of myrtles, the flowery meadows, the grottoes overhung by vines, the forests shining with Hesperian fruit  
 10 and with the plumage of gorgeous birds, the massy shade of that nuptial bower which showered down roses on the sleeping lovers, what should we think of a connoisseur who should tell us that this painting, though finer than the absurd picture in the old Bible, was not so correct ? Surely we should answer,  
 15 It is both finer and more correct ; and it is finer because it is more correct. It is not made up of correctly drawn diagrams ; but it is a correct painting, a worthy representation of that which it is intended to represent.

It is not in the fine arts alone that this false correctness is  
 20 prized by narrow-minded men, by men who cannot distinguish means from ends, or what is accidental from what is essential. M. Jourdain admired correctness in fencing. “ You had no business to hit me then. You must never thrust in quart till you have thrust in tierce.” M. Tomès liked correctness in  
 25 medical practice. “ I stand up for Artemius. That he killed his patient is plain enough. But still he acted quite according to rule. A man dead is a man dead ; and there is an end of the matter. But if rules are to be broken, there is no saying what consequences may follow.” We have heard of an old  
 30 German officer who was a great admirer of correctness in military operations. He used to revile Bonaparte for spoiling the science of war, which had been carried to such exquisite

3. **But if there were a painter**, etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iv. 210, seq., and 773.

22. **M. Jourdain**. From Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*; but the words in the text do not occur in the play.

24. **Quart ; tierce**. Two of the eight thrusts and parries in fencing.

24. **M. Tomès**. From Molière's *L'Amour Medecin*, Act ii. sc. 3.



perfection by Marshal Daun. "In my youth we used to march and countermarch all the summer without gaining or losing a square league, and then we went into winter quarters. And now comes an ignorant hot-headed young man, who flies about from Boulogne to Ulm, and from Ulm to the middle of 5 Moravia, and fights battles in December. The whole system of his tactics is monstrously incorrect." The world is of opinion, in spite of eritics like these, that the end of fencing is to hit, that the end of medicine is to cure, that the end of war is to conquer, and that those means are the most correct which best accomplish the ends. 10

And has poetry no end, no eternal and immutable principles? Is poetry, like heraldry, mere matter of arbitrary regulation? The heralds tell us that certain scutcheons and bearings denote certain conditions, and that to put colors on colors, or metals on metals, is false blazonry. If all this were 15 reversed, if every coat-of-arms in Europe were new-fashioned, if it were decreed that or should never be placed but on argent, or argent but on or, that illegitimacy should be denoted by a lozenge, and widowhood by a bend, the new science would be just as good as the old science, because both the new 20 and the old would be good for nothing. The mummery of Portcullis and Rouge Dragon, as it has no other value than that which caprice has assigned to it, may well submit to any laws which caprice may impose on it. But it is not so with that great imitative art, to the power of which all ages, the 25 rudest and the most enlightened, bear witness. Since its first great masterpieces were produced, everything that is changeable in this world has been changed. Civilization has been

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1. **Marshal Daun** (1705-1766). Field-marshal of Austria, Generalissimo of the Imperial troops in the Seven Years' War.

5. **Who flies about**, etc. Disappointed of the arrival of the French fleet under Villeneuve, Napoleon determined to break up the camp he had formed at Boulogne for the invasion of England, Aug. 29, 1805. Crossing the Rhine at the head of his army, he followed the line of the Suabian Alps so as to turn the position of General Mack, who had occupied Ulm on the Danube. Mack capitulated with 80,000 men, Oct. 17. Napoleon shortly after marched on Vienna through the Tyrol, and ended the campaign by crushing the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz, Dec. 2.

14. **Escutcheons, bearings, etc.** See dictionary; *pictures* in back of dictionary will be helpful. See also Bontell's *Heraldry*.



gained, lost, gained again. Religion, and languages, and forms of government, and usages of private life, and modes of thinking, all have undergone a succession of revolutions. Everything has passed away but the great features of nature, 5 and the heart of man, and the miracles of that art of which it is the office to reflect back the heart of man and the features of nature. Those two strange old poems, the wonder of ninety generations, still retain all their freshness. They still command the veneration of minds enriched by the literature 10 of many nations and ages. They are still, even in wretched translations, the delight of schoolboys. Having survived ten thousand capricious fashions, having seen successive codes of criticism become obsolete, they still remain to us, immortal with the immortality of truth, the same when perused in the 15 study of an English scholar, as when they were first chanted at the banquets of the Ionian princes.

Poetry is, as was said more than two thousand years ago, imitation. It is an art analogous in many respects to the art of painting, sculpture, and acting. The imitations of the 20 painter, the sculptor, and the actor, are indeed, within certain limits, more perfect than those of the poet. The machinery which the poet employs consists merely of words; and words cannot, even when employed by such an artist as Homer or Dante, present to the mind images of visible objects quite so 25 lively and exact as those which we carry away from looking on the works of the brush and the chisel. But, on the other hand, the range of poetry is infinitely wider than that of any other imitative art, or than that of all the other imitative arts together. The sculptor can imitate only form; the painter 30 only form and color; the actor, until the poet supplies him with words, only form, color, and motion. Poetry holds the outer world in common with the other arts. The heart of

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16. Comment upon the *diction* of this paragraph.

17. **Poetry is, as was said, etc.** By Aristotle.

18. **It is an art analogous, etc.** "The following paragraphs are a brief summary of the conclusions arrived at by Lessing in his famous treatise on the limits and respective relations of poetry, painting, and sculpture—the *Laocoon*. The pupil should read, in Mr. Matthew Arnold's poem, the Epilogue to *Laocoon*."

man is the province of poetry, and of poetry alone. The painter, the sculptor, and the actor can exhibit no more of human passion and character than that small portion which overflows into the gesture and the face, always an imperfect, often a deceitful, sign of that which is within. The deeper 5 and more complex parts of human nature can be exhibited by means of words alone. Thus the objects of the imitation of poetry are the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the vicissitudes of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things which really 10 exist, all things of which we can form an image in our minds by combining together parts of things which really exist. The domain of this imperial art is commensurate with the imaginative faculty.

An art essentially imitative ought not surely to be subjected 15 to rules which tend to make its imitations less perfect than they otherwise would be; and those who obey such rules ought to be called, not correct, but incorrect artists. The true way to judge of the rules by which English poetry was governed during the last century is to look at the effects which 20 they produced.

It was in 1780 that Johnson completed his *Lives of the Poets*. He tells us in that work that, since the time of Dryden, English poetry had shown no tendency to relapse into its original savageness, that its language had been refined, its 25 numbers tuned, and its sentiments improved. It may perhaps be doubted whether the nation had any great reason to exult in the refinements and improvements which gave it Douglas for *Othello*, and the *Triumphs of Temper* for the *Fairy Queen*.

It was during the thirty years which preceded the appear- 30

23. **Dryden.** Poet: 1631-1700. "I admire Dryden's talents and genius highly; but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are essentially poetical are a certain ardor and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. . . . There is not a single image from nature in the whole of his works" (*William Wordsworth*).

28. **Douglas.** Tragedy by Home. "The play is now almost forgotten, save for the quotation 'My name is Norval,' etc."

29. **Othello.** Tragedy by Shakespeare.

29. **Triumphs of Temper.** By Hayley. Cf. Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

29. **Fairy Queen.** By Spenser.

ance of Johnson's Lives that the diction and versification of English poetry were, in the sense in which the word is commonly used, most correct. Those thirty years are, as respects poetry, the most deplorable part of our literary history. They have indeed bequeathed to us scarcely any poetry which deserves to be remembered. Two or three hundred lines of Gray, twice as many of Goldsmith, a few stanzas of Beattie and Collins, a few strophes of Mason, and a few clever prologues and satires were the masterpieces of this age of consummate excellence. They may all be printed in one volume, and that volume would be by no means a volume of extraordinary merit. It would contain no poetry of the very highest class, and little which could be placed very high in the second class. The *Paradise Regained* or *Comus* would outweigh it all.

At last, when poetry had fallen into such utter decay that Mr. Hayley was thought a great poet, it began to appear that the excess of the evil was about to work the cure. Men became tired of an insipid conformity to a standard which derived no authority from nature or reason. A shallow criticism had taught them to ascribe a superstitious value to the spurious correctness of poetasters. A deeper criticism brought them back to the true correctness of the first great masters. The eternal laws of poetry regained their power, and the temporary fashions which had superseded those laws went after the wig of Lovelace and the hoop of *Clarissa*.

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7. **Gray.** Poet; 1716-1771. The poetry of Gray, with the exception of the elegy—which everybody knows—has never become popular; yet in its own sphere it is very perfect; delicately if not richly imaginative, curiously studded with imagery; exquisitely finished, like miniatures painted on ivory.

7. **Beattie.** Poet and miscellaneous writer; 1735-1803.

8. **Collins.** Poet; 1721-1759.

8. **Strophes.** "In Greek choruses and dances, the movement of the chorus while turning from the right to the left of the orchestra; hence the strain or part of the choral ode, sung during this movement. Also sometimes used of a stanza of modern verse." (See etymology of word.)

8. **Mason.** Poet; 1725-1797.

9. **Prologue.** Greek προ'λογος, to say beforehand.

14. **Paradise Regained.** Poem by Milton.

14. **Comus.** Poem by Milton.

22. **Poetasters.** Dabblers in poetry.

26. **Lovelace.** Hero in Richardson's novel, *Clarissa Harlowe*, published 1749.

26. **Clarissa.** Heroine in *Clarissa Harlowe*,

It was in a cold and barren season that the seeds of that rich harvest which we have reaped were first sown. While poetry was every year becoming more feeble and more mechanical, while the monotonous versification which Pope had introduced, no longer redeemed by his brilliant wit and his compactness of expression, palled on the ear of the public, the great works of the old masters were every day attracting more and more of the admiration which they deserved. The plays of Shakespeare were better acted, better edited, and better known than they had ever been. Our fine ancient ballads were again read with pleasure, and it became a fashion to imitate them. Many of the imitations were altogether contemptible. But they showed that men had at least begun to admire the excellence which they could not rival. A literary revolution was evidently at hand. There was a ferment in the minds of men, a vague craving for something new, a disposition to hail with delight anything which might at first sight wear the appearance of originality. A reforming age is always fertile of impostors. The same excited state of public feeling which produced the great separation from the see of Rome produced also the excesses of the Anabaptists. The same stir in the public mind of Europe which overthrew the abuses of the old French government, produced the Jacobins and Theophilanthropists. Macpherson and

9. **The plays of Shakespeare**, etc. Acted by Garrick and Foote: edited by Pope, Warburton, Johnson, Stevens, Malone.

10. **Our fine ancient ballads**. Addison first pointed out the literary merits of English ballads by his criticism in the *Spectator* of *Chevy Chase* and of *The Children in the Wood*. In 1765 Bishop Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

21. **See of Rome**. The Pope or his court at Rome.

21. **Anabaptists**. A religious sect founded by Nicholas Storch, first the disciple, and then the bitter enemy, of Luther. The *rebaptizers*. They deny the validity of infant baptism.

24. **Jacobins**. The name was originally given (during the French Revolution) to a revolutionary club whose meetings were held in a house in the Rue St. Honoré, this house having formerly been a convent of the Jacobins or Dominicans. There questions were discussed before being proposed in the National Assembly. The name has been since applied to any who hold extreme democratic principles.

24. **Theophilanthropists**. Friends of God and man; one of the numerous sects which sprang up at the time of the French Revolution.

24. **Macpherson** (1738-1796). Translated a mass of fragments of ancient poetry composed in the Gaelic or Erse dialect, and accumulated by him in his travels through the Highlands of Scotland. These fragments purported to have been written by Ossian, a Celtic bard. They were pretty conclusively proved to be forgeries.

Della Crusca were to the true reformers of English poetry what Knipperdoling was to Luther, or Clootz to Turgot. The success of Chatterton's forgeries, and of the far more contemptible forgeries of Ireland, showed that people had begun 5 to love the old poetry well, though not wisely. The public was never more disposed to believe stories without evidence, and to admire books without merit. Anything which could break the dull monotony of the correct school was acceptable.

The forerunner of the great restoration of our literature was 10 Cowper. His literary career began and ended at nearly the same time with that of Alfieri. A comparison between Alfieri and Cowper may, at first sight, appear as strange as that which a loyal Presbyterian minister is said to have made in 1745 between George the Second and Enoch. It may seem 15 that the gentle, shy, melancholy Calvinist, whose spirit had been broken by fagging at school, who had not courage to

1. **Della Crusca.** (Academy of the Sieve.) A celebrated literary association in Florence, Italy, founded in the 16th century, for the purpose of purifying and refining the Italian language and style. The name is better known, probably, to English readers as a designation applied to a class of sentimental writers in England during the last century, distinguished by their affected style of expression.

2. **Knipperdoling.** The most fanatical of the Anabaptists, appointed headman by John of Leyden.

2. **Luther.** One of the greatest of church Reformers.

2. **Clootz.** A Prussian baron, who, as a Paris student, espoused in their wildest and most grotesque form the principles of the French Revolution.

2. **Turgot.** One of the ministers of Louis XVI. of France. An eminent statesman and political economist.

3. **Chatterton.** Poet (1752-1770). His name has become famous both by his extraordinary literary forgeries of so-called Old English poems, and by his sad fate. Stung to the core of his proud heart by neglect and increasing want, he took arsenic and died amid the fragments of his torn papers. Picturesque description is the leading charm of his poems.

4. **Ireland.** Deserves mention only on account of his Shakespearean forgeries, imposed upon the public while he was yet a boy.

9. (a) Find examples of the *balanced sentence* in this paragraph.

(b) Are there examples of the figure Antithesis?

(c) Have you seen any examples in preceding paragraphs?

10. **Cowper.** See p. 21.

14. 1745. The year of Culloden (defeat of the Young Pretender). Cf. Cowper, *Winter Walk at Noon*, l. 658.

14. **Enoch.** Gen. v.; Enoch, one of the apocryphal books of the Old Testament.

15. **Calvinist.** Cowper. *Calvinists*, followers of John Calvin, the great French Protestant Reformer (1509-1564).

15. **Whose spirit, etc.** Of one bully in particular he tells us in his autobiography: "I had such a dread of him that I did not dare lift my eyes to his face. I knew him best by his shoe-buckle."

16. **Fagging.** A fag is a school-boy who is obliged to do menial services for another boy of a higher form or class in English schools.

16. **Who had not the courage.** To qualify himself for a clerkship in

earn a livelihood by reading the titles of bills in the House of Lords, and whose favorite associates were a blind old lady and an evangelical divine, could have nothing in common with the haughty, ardent, and voluptuous nobleman, the horse-jockey, the libertine, who fought Lord Ligonier in Hyde Park, and 5 robbed the Pretender of his queen. But though the private lives of these remarkable men present scarcely any points of resemblance, their literary lives bear a close analogy to each other. They both found poetry in its lowest state of degrada- 10 tion, feeble, artificial, and altogether nerveless. They both possessed precisely the talents which fitted them for the task of raising it from that deep abasement. They cannot, in strictness, be called great poets. They had not in any very high degree the creative power,

“The vision and the faculty divine ;”

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but they had great vigor of thought, great warmth of feeling, and what, in their circumstances, was above all things important, a manliness of taste which approached to roughness. They did not deal in mechanical versification and conventional phrases. They wrote concerning things the thoughts of 20 which set their hearts on fire ; and thus what they wrote, even when it wanted every other grace, had that inimitable grace which sincerity and strong passion impart to the rudest and most homely compositions. Each of them sought for inspiration in a noble and affecting subject, fertile of images which 25 had not yet been hackneyed. Liberty was the muse of Alfieri, religion was the muse of Cowper. The same truth is found

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the House of Lords he had to present himself at the bar of the House, and his first attack of madness was consequent on his morbid nervousness at appearing in public.

2. **A blind old lady.** Mrs. Unwin. She befriended Cowper, and, with her husband, did more than any other to make his life happy. He often speaks of her in his poems and letters.

3. **An evangelical divine.** The Rev. William Unwin.

4. **The voluptuous nobleman,** etc. Alfieri was a Piedmontese count of ancient family. He passed a dissipated youth in travel and adventure till the age of twenty-five. The duel with Lord Ligonier was in consequence of an intrigue with his wife. The wife of Charles Edward, the last of the Stuarts, deserted him for Alfieri, whom she afterwards married.

15. **The vision and the faculty divine.** Wordsworth's *Excursion*, bk. 1.

26. **Liberty,** etc. Alfieri was an ardent Republican.



in their lighter pieces. They were not among those who deprecated the severity, or deplored the absence of an unreal mistress in melodious commonplaces. Instead of raving about imaginary Chloes and Sylvias, Cowper wrote of Mrs. Unwin's  
 5 knitting-needles. The only love-verses of Alfieri were addressed to one whom he truly and passionately loved. "Tutte le rime amorose che seguono," says he, "tutte sono per essa, e ben sue, e di lei solamente; poichè mai d'altra donna per certo non canterò."

10 These great men were not free from affectation. But their affectation was directly opposed to the affectation which generally prevailed. Each of them expressed, in strong and bitter language, the contempt which he felt for the effeminate poetasters who were in fashion both in England and in Italy.

15 Cowper complains that

"Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ.  
 The substitute for genius, taste, and wit."

He praised Pope; yet he regretted that Pope had

20 "Made poetry a mere mechanic art,  
 And every warbler had his tune by heart."

Alfieri speaks with similar scorn of the tragedies of his predecessors. "Mi cadevano dalle mani per la languidezza, trivialità e prolissità dei modi e del verso, senza parlare poi della snervatezza dei pensieri. Or perchè mai questa nostra divina  
 25 lingua, sì maschia anco, ed energica, e feroce, in bocca di Dante, dovra ella farsi così sbiadata ed eunuca nel dialogo tragico?"

To men thus sick of the languid manner of their contemporaries ruggedness seemed a venial fault, or rather a positive  
 30 merit. In their hatred of meretricious ornament, and of what

5. *Mrs. Unwin's knitting-needles.* Cowper's *Lines to Mary*.

7. *Tutte le rime*, etc. "All the poems of love that follow are due to her, all are hers and of her only; for assuredly I shall never hereafter sing of another lady."

22. *Mi cadevano*, etc. "They fell from my hands by reason of the languidness, the triviality, and the prolixity of the style and versification, to say nothing of feebleness of thought. Now why should our divine tongue, still so masculine, so energetic, so vigorous in the mouth of a Dante, become so colorless and emasculated in tragic dialogue?"



Cowper calls "creamy smoothness," they erred on the opposite side. Their style was too austere, their versification too harsh. It is not easy, however, to overrate the service which they rendered to literature. The intrinsic value of their poems is considerable. But the example which they set of 5 mutiny against an absurd system was invaluable. The part which they performed was rather that of Moses than that of Joshua. They opened the house of bondage; but they did not enter the promised land.

During the twenty years which followed the death of Cow- 10 per, the revolution in English poetry was fully consummated. None of the writers of this period, not even Sir Walter Scott, contributed so much to the consummation as Lord Byron. Yet Lord Byron contributed to it unwillingly, and with constant self-reproach and shame. All his tastes and inclina- 15 tions led him to take part with the school of poetry which was going out against the school which was coming in. Of Pope himself he spoke with extravagant admiration. He did not venture directly to say that the little man of Twickenham was a greater poet than Shakespeare or Milton; but he hinted pretty 20 clearly that he thought so. Of his contemporaries, scarcely any had so much of his admiration as Mr. Gifford, who, considered as a poet, was merely Pope, without Pope's wit and fancy, and whose satires are decidedly inferior in vigor and poignancy to the very imperfect juvenile performance of Lord Byron 25 himself. He now and then praised Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Coleridge, but ungraciously and without cordiality. When he attacked them, he brought his whole soul to the work. Of the most elaborate of Mr. Wordsworth's poems he could find nothing to say, but that it was "clumsy, and frowsy, and his 30 aversion." Peter Bell excited his spleen to such a degree that he evoked the shades of Pope and Dryden, and demanded of them whether it were possible that such trash could evade contempt? In his heart he thought his own Pilgrimage of Har-

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10. Do you notice any *mannerisms* in this paragraph?

19. **Twickenham.** Pope was called the wicked wasp of Twickenham.

31. **Peter Bell.** Poem by Wordsworth.

old inferior to his Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, a feeble echo of Pope and Johnson. This insipid performance he repeatedly designed to publish, and was withheld only by the solicitations of his friends. He has distinctly declared his  
 5 approbation of the unities, the most absurd laws by which genius was ever held in servitude. In one of his works, we think in his letter to Mr. Bowles, he compares the poetry of the eighteenth century to the Parthenon, and that of the nineteenth to a Turkish mosque, and boasts that, though he had  
 10 assisted his contemporaries in building their grotesque and barbarous edifice, he had never joined them in defacing the remains of a chaster and more graceful architecture. In another letter he compares the change which had recently passed on English poetry to the decay of Latin poetry after the Au-  
 15 gustan age. In the time of Pope, he tells his friend, it was all Horace with us. It is all Claudian now.

For the great old masters of the art he had no very enthusiastic veneration. In his letter to Mr. Bowles he uses expressions which clearly indicate that he preferred Pope's Iliad to  
 20 the original. Mr. Moore confesses that his friend was no very fervent admirer of Shakespeare. Of all the poets of the first class, Lord Byron seems to have admired Dante and Milton most. Yet in the fourth canto of Childe Harold he places Tasso, a writer not merely inferior to them, but of quite a  
 25 different order of mind, on at least a footing of equality with them. Mr. Hunt is, we suspect, quite correct in saying that Lord Byron could see little or no merit in Spenser.

But Byron the critic and Byron the poet were two very different men. The effects of the noble writer's theory may indeed often be traced in his practice. But his disposition led  
 30 him to accommodate himself to the literary tastes of the age in which he lived; and his talents would have enabled him to accommodate himself to the taste of any age. Though he said much of his contempt for mankind, and though he boasted  
 35 that amidst the inconstancy of fortune and of fame he was all-

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16. **Claudian** (365?-408?). The last of the Latin classic poets.

24. **Tasso** (1544-1595). An eminent Italian poet.

sufficient to himself, his literary career indicated nothing of that lonely and unsocial pride which he affected. We cannot conceive him, like Milton or Wordsworth, defying the criticism of his contemporaries, retorting their scorn, and laboring on a poem in the full assurance that it would be unpopular, 5 and in the full assurance that it would be immortal. He has said, by the mouth of ones of his heroes, in speaking of political greatness, that "he must serve who fain would sway;" and this he assigns as a reason for not entering into political life. He did not consider that the sway which he had exercised in literature had been purchased by servitude, by the sacrifice of his own taste to the taste of the public.

He was the creature of his age; and whenever he had lived he would have been the creature of his age. Under Charles the First, Byron would have been more quaint than Donne. 15 Under Charles the Second the rants of Byron's rhyming plays would have pitted it, boxed it, and galleried it, with those of any Bayes or Bilboa. Under George the First the monotonous smoothness of Byron's versification and the terseness of his expression would have made Pope himself envious. 20

As it was, he was the man of the last thirteen years of the eighteenth century, and of the first twenty-three years of the nineteenth century. He belonged half to the old, and half to the new school of poetry. His personal taste led him to the former; his thirst of praise to the latter; his talents were 25 equally suited to both. His fame was a common ground on which the zealots of both sides, Gifford, for example, and Shelley, might meet. He was the representative, not of either literary party, but of both at once, and of their conflict, and

15. **Donne** (1753-1631). He is classed among the metaphysical poets.

16. **Rants of Byron's rhyming plays.** Alluding in particular to Dryden, nearly all of whose plays are written in rhyme.

18. **Bayes or Bilboa.** Dryden was satirized under the name of Mr. Bayes in the famous burlesque of *The Rehearsal*, written by the Duke of Buckingham, with the assistance of the author of *Hudibras* and others. Bayes first appeared under the title of *Bilboa*, as a satire on that mediocre dramatist Sir Robert Howard. Afterwards, however, the conception was so far corrected and altered as to form a caricature of Dryden.

21. **It.** For what noun does this pronoun stand?

21. (a) What is the cause of the *abruptness* of this paragraph?

(b) Have you noticed the same thing in any other paragraph?

of the victory by which that conflict was terminated. His poetry fills and measures the whole of the vast interval through which our literature has moved since the time of Johnson. It touches the *Essay on Man* at the one extremity, and the *Excursion* at the other.

There are several parallel instances in literary history. Voltaire, for example, was the connecting link between the France of Lewis the Fourteenth and the France of Lewis the Sixteenth, between Racine and Boileau on the one side, and Condorcet and Beaumarchais on the other. He, like Lord Byron, put himself at the head of an intellectual revolution, dreading it all the time, murmuring at it, sneering at it, yet choosing rather to move before his age in any direction than to be left behind and forgotten. Dryden was the connecting link between the literature of the age of James the First, and the literature of the age of Anne. Oromasdes and Arimanes fought for him. Arimanes carried him off. But his heart was to the last with Oromasdes. Lord Byron was, in the same manner, the mediator between two generations, between two hostile poetical sects. Though always sneering at Mr. Wordsworth, he was yet, though perhaps unconsciously, the interpreter between Mr. Wordsworth and the multitude. In the *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Excursion*, Mr. Wordsworth appeared

4 **Essay on Man**, By Pope.

6. (a) Are there "real" or figurative comparisons in this paragraph?

(b) What evidence does this paragraph give of Macaulay's range of reading?

(c) What example of climax in this paragraph?

9. **Racine** (1639-1699). A great French dramatist and poet.

9. **Boileau**. A celebrated French poet and critic. He attacked the false taste of his age.

10. **Condorcet**. Admirer and biographer of Voltaire; the philosopher who claimed the perfectibility of the human race.

10. **Beaumarchais** (1732-1799). Geruzey calls his *Figaro* at once the signal and the programme of the Revolution.

14. **Dryden was the connecting link**, etc.

(a) *Did* the literature of James I.'s reign have any distinctive character?

(b) Has Macaulay heretofore praised the poets of Queen Anne's reign? (Anne, 1702-1714.)

(c) Note that Queen Anne's age is typified by Oromasdes, the good genius.

16. **Oromasdes**,

16. **Arimanes**,

} Ahriman or Arimanes was the evil Principle or Being of the ancient Persians; the Prince of Darkness, as opposed to Ormuzd or Oromasdes, the King of Light.

as the high-priest of a worship of which nature was the idol. No poems have ever indicated a more exquisite perception of the beauty of the outer world, or a more passionate love and reverence for that beauty. Yet they were not popular; and it is not likely that they ever will be popular as the poetry of 5 Sir Walter Scott is popular. The feeling which pervaded them was too deep for general sympathy. Their style was often too mysterious for general comprehension. They made a few esoteric disciples, and many scoffers. Lord Byron founded what may be called an exoteric Lake school; and all the read- 10 ers of verse in England, we might say in Europe, hastened to sit at his feet. What Mr. Wordsworth had said like a recluse, Lord Byron said like a man of the world, with less profound feeling, but with more perspicuity, energy, and conciseness. We would refer our readers to the last two cantos of Childe 15 Harold and to Manfred in proof of these observations.

Lord Byron, like Mr. Wordsworth, had nothing dramatic in his genius. He was indeed the reverse of a great dramatist, the very antithesis to a great dramatist. All his characters, Harold looking on the sky, from which his country and the 20 sun are disappearing together; the Giaour, standing apart in the gloom of the side aisle, and casting a haggard scowl from under his long hood at the crucifix and the censor; Conrad leaning on his sword by the watch-tower, Lara smiling on the dancers, Alp gazing steadily on the fatal cloud as it passes 25 before the moon, Manfred wandering among the precipices of Berne, Azzo on the judgment-seat, Ugo at the bar, Lambro

9. **Esoteric.** } Note etymology and meaning.

10. **Exoteric.** }

10. **Lake School.** The Lake School derived its name from the fact that its three most conspicuous members, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, lived near the English lakes. Originally a contemptuous name, it has gradually come to be the recognized title of Wordsworth and his disciples.

12. **What Mr. Wordsworth had said like a recluse.** The difference lies deeper than this. Wordsworth loved Nature for herself, as a sharer of his joys and sorrows, as at once reflecting and suggesting his deepest thoughts and feelings. Byron loves Nature not so much for herself as for the associations she suggests.

16. **Manfred.** A drama by Byron.

17. (a) Are the sentences in this paragraph *periodic* or *loose*?

(b) Note the *long* sentence. Is it clear, despite its length?

(c) Why?

23. **Conrad, etc.** All are characters in Byron's poems.

frowning on the siesta of his daughter and Juan, Cain presenting his unacceptable offering, are essentially the same. The varieties are varieties merely of age, situation, and outward show. If ever Lord Byron attempted to exhibit men of a different kind, he always made them either insipid or unnatural. Selim is nothing. Bonnivart is nothing. Don Juan, in the first and best cantos, is a feeble copy of the Page in the Marriage of Figaro. Johnson, the man whom Juan meets in the slave-market, is a most striking failure. How differently would Sir Walter Scott have drawn a bluff, fearless Englishman, in such a situation! The portrait would have seemed to walk out of the canvas.

Sardanapalus is more coarsely drawn than any dramatic personage that we can remember. His heroism and his effeminaey, his contempt of death and his dread of a weighty helmet, his kingly resolution to be seen in the foremost ranks, and the anxiety with which he calls for a looking-glass, that he may be seen to advantage, are contrasted, it is true, with all the point of Juvenal. Indeed the hint of the character seems to have been taken from what Juvenal says of Otho :

" Speculum civilis sarcina belli.

Nimirum summi ducis est occidere Galbam,

Et curare cutem summi constantia civis,

Bedriaci in campo spoliū affectare Palati,

25

Et pressum in faciem digitis extendere panem."

These are excellent lines in a satire. But it is not the business of the dramatist to exhibit characters in this sharp antithetical way. It is not thus that Shakespeare makes Prince Hal rise from the rake of Eastcheap into the hero of Shrewsbury, and sink again into the rake of Eastcheap. It is not thus that Shakespeare has exhibited the union of effeminacy and valor in Antony. A dramatist cannot commit a greater error than that of following those pointed descriptions of

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25. Juvenal, ii. 86-90. Translation by Gifford:

A Mirror, midst the arms of civil rage!—

To murder Galba, was—a general's part!

A stern republican's—to dress with art!

The empire of the world in arms to seek,

And spread—a softening poultice o'er the cheek!



character in which satirists and historians indulge so much. It is by rejecting what is natural that satirists and historians produce these striking characters. Their great object generally is to ascribe to every man as many contradictory qualities as possible : and this is an object easily attained. By judicious 5 selection and judicious exaggeration, the intellect and the disposition of any human being might be described as being made up of nothing but startling contrasts. If the dramatist attempts to create a being answering to one of these descriptions, he fails, because he reverses an imperfect analytical 10 process. He produces not a man, but a personified epigram. Very eminent writers have fallen into this snare. Ben Jonson has given us a Hermogenes, taken from the lively lines of Horace; but the inconsistency which is so amusing in the satire appears unnatural and disgusts us in the play. Sir 15 Walter Scott has committed a far more glaring error of the same kind in the novel of the Peveril. Admiring, as every judicious reader must admire, the keen and vigorous lines in which Dryden satirized the Duke of Buckingham, Sir Walter attempted to make a Duke of Buckingham to suit them, a real 20 living Zimri; and he made, not a man, but the most grotesque of all monsters. A writer who should attempt to introduce into a play or a novel, such a Wharton as the Wharton of

6. **By judicious selection and judicious exaggeration.** Is this a clause or a phrase? What does it modify?

10. **He reverses,** etc. He tries to construct a character from the materials presented him by the satirist, materials from which all the common stuff of human nature has been excluded.

12. **Ben Jonson** (1573-1637). The greatest dramatist of England after Shakespeare. "Many were the wit combats betwixt him (Shakespeare) and Ben Jonson; which two I beheld like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."—*Thomas Fuller*, 1662.

13. **Hermogenes.** In Horace, H. is a tasteless fop. He is one of the characters in Jonson's *Poetaster*.

17. **Admiring.** Part of speech? What does it modify?

21. **Zimri.** The name under which the Duke of Buckingham was satirized by Dryden.

23. **Wharton** (1669-1731). Son of the great Whig Marquis of Wharton. Abandoned public life, and assumed the habit of a Capuchin. See Pope's *Moral Essays*, Ep. 1.



Pope, or a Lord Hervey answering to Sporus, would fail in the same manner.

But to return to Lord Byron; his women, like his men, are all of one breed. Haidee is a half-savage and girlish Julia; 5 Julia is a civilized and matronly Haidee. Leila is a wedded Zuleika, Zuleika a virgin Leila. Gulnare and Medora appear to have been intentionally opposed to each other. Yet the difference is a difference of situation only. A slight change of circumstances would, it should seem, have sent Gulnare to 10 the lute of Medora, and armed Medora with the dagger of Gulnare.

It is hardly too much to say, that Lord Byron could exhibit only one man and only one woman, a man proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, a 15 scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection: a woman all softness and gentleness, loving to caress and to be caressed, but capable of being transformed by passion into a tigress.

Even these two characters, his only two characters, he could 20 not exhibit dramatically. He exhibited them in the manner, not of Shakespeare, but of Clarendon. He analyzed them; he made them analyze themselves; but he did not make them show themselves. We are told, for example, in many lines of great force and spirit, that the speech of Lara was bitterly 25 sarcastic, that he talked little of his travels, that if he was much questioned about them, his answers became short, and his brow gloomy. But we have none of Lara's sarcastic speeches or short answers. It is not thus that the great masters of human nature have portrayed human beings. 30 Homer never tells us that Nestor loved to relate long stories about his youth. Shakespeare never tells us that in the mind of Iago everything that is beautiful and endearing was associated with some filthy and debasing idea.

1. **Lord Hervey**, etc. Eldest son of the first Earl of Bristol. See Prologue to *Satires*, lines 305-360, Pope.

24. **Lara**; **Marino Faliero**. Characters in Byron's poems.

32. **Iago**. Character in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

It is curious to observe the tendency which the dialogue of Lord Byron always has to lose the character of dialogue, and to become a soliloquy. The scenes between Manfred and the Chamois-hunter, between Manfred and the Witch of the Alps, between Manfred and the Abbot, are instances of this tendency. 5 Manfred, after a few unimportant speeches, has all the talk to himself. The other interlocutors are nothing more than good listeners. They drop an occasional question or ejaculation which sets Manfred off again on the inexhaustible topic of his personal feelings. If we examine the fine passages in Lord 10 Byron's dramas, the description of Rome, for example, in Manfred, the description of a Venetian revel in Marino Faliero, the concluding invective which the old doge pronounces against Venice, we shall find that there is nothing dramatic in these speeches, that they derive none of their effect from 15 the character or situation of the speaker, and that they would have been as fine, or finer, if they had been published as fragments of blank verse by Lord Byron. There is scarcely a speech in Shakespeare of which the same could be said. No skillful reader of the plays of Shakespeare can endure to see 20 what are called the fine things taken out, under the name of " Beauties " or of " Elegant Extracts," or to hear any single passage " To be or not to be," for example, quoted as a sample of the great poet. " To be or not to be " has merit undoubtedly as a composition. It would have merit if put 25 into the mouth of a chorus. But its merit as a composition vanishes when compared with its merit as belonging to Hamlet. It is not too much to say that the great plays of Shakespeare would lose less by being deprived of all the passages which are commonly called the fine passages, than those passages lose by 30 being read separately from the play. This is perhaps the highest praise which can be given to a dramatist.

On the other hand it may be doubted whether there is, in all Lord Byron's plays, a single remarkable passage which owes

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13. **Doge.** Chief magistrate in the republics of Venice and Genoa.

33. What do you consider the most forcible passage in this paragraph?

33. **It.** For what noun does it stand?

any portion of its interest or effect to its connection with the characters of the action. He has written only one scene, as far as we can recollect, which is dramatic even in manner, the scene between Lucifer and Cain. The conference is animated, and each of the interlocutors has a fair share of it. But this scene, when examined, will be found to be a confirmation of our remarks. It is a dialogue only in form. It is a soliloquy in essence. It is in reality a debate carried on within one unquiet and skeptical mind. The questions and the answers, the objections and the solutions, all belong to the same character.

A writer who showed so little dramatic skill in works professedly dramatic was not likely to write narrative with dramatic effect. Nothing could indeed be more rude and careless than the structure of his narrative poems. He seems to have thought, with the hero of the *Rehearsal*, that the plot was good for nothing but to bring in fine things. His two longest works, *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, have no plan whatever. Either of them might have been extended to any length, or cut short at any point. The state in which the *Giaour* appears illustrates the manner in which all Byron's poems were constructed. They are all, like the *Giaour*, collections of fragments; and, though there may be no empty spaces marked by asterisks, it is still easy to perceive, by the clumsiness of the joining, where the parts for the sake of which the whole was composed end and begin.

It was in description and meditation that Byron excelled. "Description," as he said in *Don Juan*, "was his forte." His manner is indeed peculiar, and is almost unequalled; rapid, sketchy, full of vigor; the selection happy; the strokes few and bold. In spite of the reverence which we feel for the genius of Mr. Wordsworth, we cannot but think that the minuteness of his descriptions often diminishes their effect. He has accustomed himself to gaze on nature with the eye of a lover, to dwell on every feature, and to mark every change of aspect. Those beauties which strike the most negligent ob-

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15. *Rehearsal*. See previous note on *Bayes*, p. 51.

server, and those which only a close attention discovers, are equally familiar to him and are equally prominent in his poetry. The proverb of old Hesiod, that half is often more than the whole, is eminently applicable to description. The policy of the Dutch who cut down most of the precious trees in the Spice Islands, in order to raise the value of what remained, was a policy which poets would do well to imitate. It was a policy which no poet understood better than Lord Byron. Whatever his faults might be, he was never, while his mind retained its vigor, accused of prolixity. 10

His descriptions, great as was their intrinsic merit, derived their principal interest from the feeling which always mingled with them. He was himself the beginning, the middle, and the end of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a 15 crowd of other characters, were universally considered merely as loose incognitos of Byron; and there is every reason to believe that he meant them to be so considered. The wonders of the outer world, the Tagus, with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom, the towers of Cintra overhanging the 20 shaggy forest of corktrees and willows, the glaring marble of Pentelicus, the banks of the Rhine, the glaciers of Clarens, the sweet Lake of Lemán, the dell of Egeria with its summer-birds and rustling lizards, the shapeless ruins of Rome overgrown with ivy and wall-flowers, the stars, the sea, the mountains, all 25 were mere accessories, the background to one dark and melancholy figure.

Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair. That Marah was never dry. No art could sweeten, no draughts could exhaust, 30 its perennial waters of bitterness. Never was there such

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3. **Hesiod.** Greek epic poet (800 B.C.).  
 19. **Tagus.** River in Portugal; rises in Spain.  
 20. **Cintra.** Town in Portugal.  
 22. **Pentelicus.** Mountain in Attica, Greece.  
 22. **Clarens.** Village of Switzerland, canton of Vaud.  
 23. **Leman.** Lake Geneva.  
 23. **Egeria.** Egeri, a small lake in Switzerland.  
 28. Find an Epigram in this paragraph.  
 29. **Marah.** Exodus xv. 22-24; Numbers xxiii. 8.

variety in monotony as that of Byron. From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat that to be wretched is the destiny of all ; that to be eminently wretched is the destiny of the eminent ; that all the desires by which we are cursed lead alike to misery;—if they are not gratified, to the misery of disappointment ; if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. His heroes are men who have arrived by different roads at the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock, or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven. He always described himself as a man of the same kind with his favorite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone and could not be restored, but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befall him here or hereafter.

How much of this morbid feeling sprang from an original disease of the mind, how much from real misfortune, how much from the nervousness of dissipation, how much was fanciful, how much was merely affected, it is impossible for us, and would probably have been impossible for the most intimate friends of Lord Byron, to decide. Whether there ever existed, or can ever exist, a person answering to the description which he gave of himself may be doubted ; but that he was not such a person is beyond all doubt. It is ridiculous to imagine that a man whose mind was really imbued with scorn of his fellow-creatures would have published three or four books every year in order to tell them so ; or that a man who could say with truth that he neither sought sympathy nor

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4. What are the objects of *repeat*? How connected with it?

7. What is the subject of *lead*?

16. **He always described**, etc. See lines "*On my Thirty-third Birthday*."

needed it would have admitted all Europe to hear his farewell to his wife, and his blessings on his child. In the second canto of *Childe Harold* he tells us that he is insensible to fame and obloquy :

“ Ill may such contest now the spirit move,  
Which heeds nor keen reproof nor partial praise.”

5

Yet we know on the best evidence, that, a day or two before he published these lines, he was greatly, indeed childishly, elated by the compliments paid to his maiden speech in the House of Lords.

10

We are far, however, from thinking that his sadness was altogether feigned. He was naturally a man of great sensibility ; he had been ill educated ; his feelings had been early exposed to sharp trials ; he had been crossed in his boyish love ; he had been mortified by the failure of his first literary efforts ; he was straitened in pecuniary circumstances ; he was 15  
unfortunate in his domestic relations ; the public treated him with cruel injustice ; his health and spirits suffered from his dissipated habits of life ; he was, on the whole, an unhappy man. He early discovered that by parading his unhappiness 20  
before the multitude he produced an immense sensation. The world gave him every encouragement to talk about his mental sufferings. The interest which his first confessions excited induced him to affect much that he did not feel ; and the affectation probably reacted on his feelings. How far the 25  
character in which he exhibited himself was genuine, and how far theatrical, it would probably have puzzled himself to say.

There can be no doubt that this remarkable man owed the vast influence which he exercised over his contemporaries at least as much to his gloomy egotism as to the real power of 30

2. **His farewell to his wife.** The lines “Fare thee well, and if for ever.” Moore says that Lord Byron had no intention of making them public, and that it was through the injudicious zeal of a friend, whom he had allowed to take a copy, that they appeared in the papers.

2. **His blessings on his child.** See beginning and end of canto iii., *Childe Harold*.

10. **His maiden speech in the House of Lords.** Feb. 27, 1812.

28. **There.** Part of speech?



his poetry. We never could very clearly understand how it is that egotism, so unpopular in conversation, should be so popular in writing; or how it is that men who affect in their compositions qualities and feelings which they have not, impose so much more easily on their contemporaries than on posterity. The interest which the loves of Petrarch excited in his own time, and the pitying fondness with which half Europe looked upon Rousseau, are well known. To readers of our age, the love of Petrarch seems to have been love of that kind which  
 10 breaks no hearts, and the sufferings of Rousseau to have deserved laughter rather than pity, to have been partly counterfeited, and partly the consequences of his own perverseness and vanity.

What our grandchildren may think of the character of Lord  
 15 Byron, as exhibited in his poetry, we will not pretend to guess. It is certain, that the interest which he excited during his life is without a parallel in literary history. The feelings with which young readers of poetry regarded him can be conceived only by those who have experienced it. To people who are  
 20 unacquainted with real calamity, "nothing is so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy." This faint image of sorrow has in all ages been considered by young gentlemen as an agreeable excitement. Old gentlemen and middle-aged gentlemen have so many real causes of sadness that they are rarely inclined "to  
 25 be as sad as night only for wantonness." Indeed, they want

6. **Loves of Petrarch.** His hopeless attachment to Laura de Noves, the mistress of his sonnets. Petrarch (1304-1374), an illustrious Italian poet.

8. **Rousseau** (1712-1778). A celebrated Swiss philosopher and writer. His early career presents a series of bizarre adventures, absurd vagaries, and surprising vicissitudes, of which he gave an extremely candid and unreserved account in his *Confessions*. He produced in 1753 the discourse on the origin of inequality among men, in which he maintains that all men are born with equal rights. "He was the father of modern democracy," says Professor Lowell, "and without him our Declaration of Independence would have wanted some of those sentences in which the immemorial longings of the poor and the dreams of solitary enthusiasts were at last affirmed in the manifesto of a nation, so that all the world might hear."

14. **What.** Construction?

21. **Nothing is so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.** From Fletcher.

25. **To be sad as night only for wantonness.** Shakespeare's *King John*, iv. 1.



the power almost as much as the inclination. We know very few persons engaged in active life who, even if they were to procure stools to be melancholy upon, and were to sit down with all the premeditation of Master Stephen, would be able to enjoy much of what somebody calls the "ecstasy of woe." 5

Among that large class of young persons whose reading is almost entirely confined to works of imagination, the popularity of Lord Byron was unbounded. They bought pictures of him; they treasured up the smallest relics of him; they learned his poems by heart, and did their best to write like 10 him, and to look like him. Many of them practiced at the glass in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip, and the scowl of the brow, which appear in some of his portraits. A few discarded their neckcloths in imitation of their great leader. For some years the Minerva press sent forth no novel 15 without a mysterious, unhappy, Lara-like peer. The number of hopeful undergraduates and medical students who became things of dark imaginings, on whom the freshness of the heart ceased to fall like dew, whose passions had consumed themselves to dust, and to whom the relief of tears was denied, 20 passes all calculation. This was not the worst. There was created in the minds of many of these enthusiasts a pernicious and absurd association between intellectual power and moral depravity. From the poetry of Lord Byron they drew a system of ethics, compounded of misanthropy and voluptuousness, 25 a system in which the two great commandments were, to hate your neighbor and to love your neighbor's wife.

This affectation has passed away; and a few more years will destroy whatever yet remains of that magical potency which once belonged to the name of Byron. To us he is still a man, 30 young, noble, and unhappy. To our children he will be merely a writer; and their impartial judgment will appoint his place among writers, without regard to his rank or to his

15. **Minerva Press.** A sobriquet for fashionable novels, such as *Lady Blessington's*, etc.

18. **On whom the freshness of the heart.** *Don Juan*, canto i. cciv.

29. **Potency.** Etymology? Kindred words in our language?

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private history. That his poetry will undergo a severe sifting, that much of what has been admired by his contemporaries will be rejected as worthless, we have little doubt. But we have as little doubt, that, after the closest scrutiny, there will  
5 still remain much that can only perish with the English language.

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