JOHN GALT

THE LIFE OF LORD BYRON

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

My present task is one of considerable difficulty; but I have long had a notion that some time or another it would fall to my lot to perform it. I approach it, therefore, without apprehension, entirely in consequence of having determined, to my own satisfaction, the manner in which the biography of so singular and so richly endowed a character as that of the late Lord Byron should be treated, but still with no small degree of diffidence; for there is a wide difference between determining a rule for one's self, and producing, according to that rule, a work which shall please the public.

It has happened, both with regard to the man and the poet, that from the first time his name came before the public, there has been a vehement and continual controversy concerning him; and the chief difficulties of the task arise out of the heat with which the adverse parties have maintained their respective opinions. The circumstances in which he was placed, until his accession to the title and estates of his ancestors, were not such as to prepare a boy that would be father to a prudent or judicious man. Nor, according to the history of his family, was his blood without a taint of sullenness, which disqualified him from conciliating the good opinion of those whom his innate superiority must have often prompted him to desire for friends. He was branded, moreover, with a personal deformity; and the grudge against Nature for inflicting this defect not only deeply disturbed his happiness, but so generally affected his feelings as to embitter them with a vindictive sentiment, so strong as, at times, to exhibit the disagreeable energy of misanthropy. This was not all. He enjoyed high rank, and was conscious of possessing great talents; but his fortune was inadequate to his desires, and his talents were not of an order to redeem the deficiencies of fortune. It likewise so happened that while indulged by his only friend, his mother, to an excess that impaired the manliness of his character, her conduct was such as in no degree to merit the affection which her wayward fondness inspired.

It is impossible to reflect on the boyhood of Byron without regret. There is not one point in it all which could, otherwise than with pain, have affected a young mind of sensibility. His works bear testimony, that, while his memory retained the impressions of early youth, fresh and unfaded, there was a gloom and shadow upon them, which proved how little they had been really joyous.

The riper years of one so truly the nursling of pride, poverty, and pain, could only be inconsistent, wild, and impassioned, even had his temperament been moderate and well disciplined. But when it is considered that in addition to all the awful influences of these fatalities, for they can receive no lighter name, he possessed an imagination of unbounded capacity – was inflamed with those indescribable feelings which constitute, in the opinion of many, the very elements of genius – fearfully quick in the discernment of the darker qualities of character – and surrounded by temptation – his career ceases to surprise. It would have been more wonderful had he proved an amiable and well-conducted man, than the questionable and extraordinary being who has alike provoked the malice and interested the admiration of the world.

Posterity, while acknowledging the eminence of his endowments, and lamenting the habits which his unhappy circumstances induced, will regard it as a curious phenomenon in the fortunes of the individual, that the progress of his fame as a poet should have been so similar to his history as a man.

His first attempts, though displaying both originality and power, were received with a contemptuous disdain, as cold and repulsive as the penury and neglect which blighted the budding of his youth. The unjust ridicule in the review of his first poems, excited in his spirit a discontent as inveterate as the feeling which sprung from his deformity: it affected, more or less, all his conceptions to such a degree that he may be said to have hated the age which had joined in the derision, as he cherished an antipathy against those persons who looked curiously at his foot. *Childe Harold*, the most triumphant of his works, was produced when the world was kindliest disposed to set a just value on his talents; and his latter productions, in which the faults of his taste appear the broadest, were written when his errors as a man were harshest in the public voice.

These allusions to the incidents of a life full of contrarieties, and a character so strange as to be almost mysterious, sufficiently show the difficulties of the task I have undertaken. But the course I intend to pursue will relieve me from the necessity of entering, in any particular manner, upon those debatable points of his personal conduct which have been so much discussed. I shall consider him, if I can, as his character will be estimated when contemporary surmises are forgotten, and when the monument he has raised to himself is contemplated for its beauty and magnificence, without suggesting recollections of the eccentricities of the builder.

JOHN GALT.

CHAPTER I

Ancient Descent—Pedigree—Birth—Troubles of his Mother—Early Education—Accession to the Title

The English branch of the family of Byron came in with William the Conqueror; and from that era they have continued to be reckoned among the eminent families of the kingdom, under the names of Buron and Biron. It was not until the reign of Henry II. that they began to call themselves Byron, or de Byron.

Although for upwards of seven hundred years distinguished for the extent of their possessions, it docs not appear, that, before the time of Charles I., they ranked very highly among the heroic families of the kingdom.

Erneis and Ralph were the companions of the Conqueror; but antiquaries and genealogists have not determined in what relation they stood to each other. Erneis, who appears to have been the more considerable personage of the two, held numerous manors in the counties of York and Lincoln. In the Domesday Book, Ralph, the direct ancestor of the poet, ranks high among the tenants of the Crown, in Notts and Derbyshire; in the latter county he resided at Horestan Castle, from which he took his title. One of the lords of Horestan was a hostage for the payment of the ransom of Richard Cœur de Lion; and in the time of Edward I., the possessions of his descendants were augmented by the addition of the Manor of Rochdale, in Lancashire. On what account this new grant was given has not been ascertained; nor is it of importance that it should be.

In the wars of the three Edwards, the de Byrons appeared with some distinction; and they were also of note in the time of Henry V. Sir John Byron joined Henry VII. on his landing at Milford, and fought gallantly at the battle of Bosworth, against Richard III., for which he was afterwards appointed Constable of Nottingham Castle and Warden of Sherwood Forest. At his death, in 1488, he was succeeded by Sir Nicholas, his brother, who, at the marriage of Arthur, Prince of Wales, in 1501, was made one of the Knights of the Bath.

Sir Nicholas died in 1540, leaving an only son, Sir John Byron, whom Henry VIII. made Steward of Manchester and Rochdale, and Lieutenant of the Forest of Sherwood. It was to him that, on the dissolution of the monasteries, the church and priory of Newstead, in the county of Nottingham, together with the manor and rectory of Papelwick, were granted. The abbey from that period became the family seat, and continued so until it was sold by the poet.

Sir John Byron left Newstead and his other possessions to John Byron, whom Collins and other writers have called his fourth, but who was in fact his illegitimate son. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1579, and his eldest son, Sir Nicholas, served with distinction in the wars of the Netherlands. When the great rebellion broke out against Charles I., he was one of the earliest who armed in his defence. After the battle of Edgehill, where he courageously distinguished himself, he was made Governor of Chester, and gallantly defended that city against the Parliamentary army. Sir John Byron, the brother and heir of Sir Nicholas, was, at the coronation of James I., made a Knight of the Bath. By his marriage with Anne, the eldest daughter of Sir Richard Molyneux, he had eleven sons and a daughter. The eldest served under his uncle in the Netherlands; and in the year 1641 was appointed by King Charles I., Governor of the Tower of London. In this situation he became obnoxious to the refractory spirits in the Parliament, and was in consequence ordered by the Commons to answer at the bar of their House certain charges which the sectaries alleged against him. But he refused to leave his post without the king's command; and upon' this the Commons applied to the Lords to join them in a petition to the king to remove him. The Peers rejected the proposition.

On the 24th October, 1643, Sir John Byron was created Lord Byron of Rochdale, in the county of Lancaster, with remainder of the title to his brothers, and their male issue, respectively. He was also made Field-Marshal-General of all his Majesty's forces in Worcestershire, Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales: nor were these trusts and honours unwon, for the Byrons, during the Civil War, were eminently distinguished. At the battle of Newbury, seven of the brothers were in the field, and all actively engaged.

Sir Richard, the second brother of the first lord, was knighted by Charles I. for his conduct at the battle of Edgehill, and appointed Governor of Appleby Castle, in Westmorland, and afterwards of Newark, which he defended with great honour. Sir Richard, on the death of his brother, in 1652, succeeded to the peerage, and died in 1679.

His eldest son, William, the third lord, married Elizabeth, the daughter of Viscount Chaworth, of Ireland, by whom he had five sons, four of whom died young. William, the fourth lord, his son, was Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Prince George of Denmark, and married, for his first wife, a daughter of the Earl of Bridgewater, who died eleven weeks after their nuptials. His second wife was the daughter of the Earl of Portland, by whom he had three sons, who all died before their father. His third wife was Frances, daughter of Lord Berkley, of Stratton, from whom the poet was descended. Her eldest son, William, born in 1722, succeeded to the family honours on the death of his father in 1736. He entered the naval service, and became a lieutenant under Admiral Balchen. In the year 1763 he was made Master of the Staghounds; and in 1765, he was sent to the Tower, and tried before the House of Peers, for killing his relation and neighbour, Mr Chaworth, in a duel fought at the Star and Garter Tavern, in Pall-mall.

This Lord William was naturally boisterous and vindictive. It appeared in evidence that he insisted on fighting with Mr Chaworth in the room where the quarrel commenced. They accordingly fought without seconds by the dim light of a single candle; and, although Mr Chaworth was the more skilful swordsman of the two, he received a mortal wound; but he lived long enough to disclose some particulars of the rencounter, which induced the coroner's jury to return a verdict of wilful murder, and Lord Byron was tried for the crime.

The trial took place in Westminster Hall, and the public curiosity was so great that the Peers' tickets of admission were publicly sold for six guineas each. It lasted two days, and at the conclusion he was unanimously pronounced guilty of manslaughter. On being brought up for judgment he pleaded his privilege and was discharged. It was to this lord that the poet succeeded, for he died without leaving issue.

His brother, the grandfather of the poet, was the celebrated "Hardy Byron"; or, as the sailors called him, "Foulweather Jack," whose adventures and services are too well known to require any notice here. He married the daughter of John Trevannion, Esq., of Carhais, in the county of Cornwall, by whom he had two sons and three daughters. John, the eldest, and the father of the poet, was born in 1751, educated at Westminster School, and afterwards placed in the Guards, where his conduct became so irregular and profligate that his father, the admiral, though a good-natured man, discarded him long before his death. In 1778 he acquired extraordinary *éclat* by the seduction of the Marchioness of Caermarthen, under circumstances which have few parallels in the licentiousness of fashionable life. The meanness with which he obliged his wretched victim to supply him with money would have been disgraceful to the basest adulteries of the cellar or garret. A divorce ensued, the guilty parties married; but, within two years after, such was the brutal and vicious conduct of Captain Byron, that the ill-fated lady died literally of a broken heart, after having given birth to two daughters, one of whom still survives.

Captain Byron then married Miss Catharine Gordon, of Gight, a lady of honourable descent, and of a respectable fortune for a Scottish heiress, the only motive which this Don Juan had for forming the connection. She was the mother of the poet.

Although the Byrons have for so many ages been among the eminent families of the realm, they have no claim to the distinction which the poet has set up for them as warriors in Palestine, even though he says —

Near Ascalon's tow'rs John of Horestan slumbers;

for unless this refers to the Lord of Horestan, who was one of the hostages for the ransom of Richard I., it will not be easy to determine to whom he alludes; and it is possible that the poet has no other authority for this legend than the tradition which he found connected with two groups of heads on the old panels of Newstead. Yet the account of them is vague and conjectural, for it was not until ages after the Crusades that the abbey came into the possession of the family; and it is not probable that the figures referred to any transactions in Palestine, in which the Byrons were engaged, if they were put up by the Byrons at all. They were probably placed in their present situation while the building was in possession of the Churchmen.

One of the groups, consisting of a female and two Saracens, with eyes earnestly fixed upon her, may have been the old favourite ecclesiastical story of Susannah and the elders; the other, which represents a Saracen with a European female between him and a Christian soldier, is, perhaps, an ecclesiastical allegory, descriptive of the Saracen and the Christian warrior contending for the liberation of the Church. These sort of allegorical stories were common among monastic ornaments, and the famous legend of St George and the Dragon is one of them.

Into the domestic circumstances of Captain and Mrs Byron it would be impertinent to institute any particular investigation. They were exactly such as might be expected from the sins and follies of the most profligate libertine of the age.

The fortune of Mrs Byron, consisting of various property, and amounting to about £23,500, was all wasted in the space of two years; at the end of which the unfortunate lady found herself in possession of only £150 per annum.

Their means being thus exhausted she accompanied her husband in the summer of 1786 to France, whence she returned to England at the close of the year 1787, and on the 22nd of January, 1788, gave birth, in Holles Street, London, to her first and only child, the poet. The name of Gordon was added to that of his family in compliance with a condition imposed by will on whomever should become the husband of the heiress of Gight. The late Duke of Gordon and Colonel Duff, of Fetteresso, were godfathers to the child.

In the year 1790 Mrs Byron took up her residence in Aberdeen, where she was soon after joined by Captain Byron, with whom she lived in lodgings in Queen Street; but their reunion was comfortless, and a separation soon took place. Still their rupture was not final, for they occasionally visited and drank tea with each other. The Captain also paid some attention to the boy, and had him, on one occasion, to stay with him for a night, when he proved so troublesome that he was sent home next day.

Byron himself has said that he passed his boyhood at Marlodge, near Aberdeen; but the statement is not correct; he visited, with his mother, occasionally among their friends, and among other places passed some time at Fetteresso, the seat of his godfather, Colonel Duff. In 1796, after an attack of the scarlet fever, he passed some time at Ballater, a summer resort for health and gaiety, about forty miles up the Dee from Aberdeen. Although the circumstances of Mrs Byron were at this period exceedingly straitened, she received a visit from her husband, the object of which was to extort more money; and he was so far successful, that she contrived to borrow a sum, which enabled him to proceed to Valenciennes, where in the following year he died, greatly to her relief and the gratification of all who were connected with him.

By her advances to Captain Byron, and the expenses she incurred in furnishing the flat of the house she occupied after his death, Mrs Byron fell into debt to the amount of £300, the interest on which reduced her income to £135; but, much to her credit, she contrived to live without increasing her embarrassments until the death of her grandmother, when she received £1122, a sum which had been set apart for the old gentlewoman's jointure, and which enabled her to discharge her pecuniary obligations.

Notwithstanding the manner in which this unfortunate lady was treated by her husband, she always entertained for him a strong affection insomuch that, when the intelligence of his death arrived, her grief was loud and vehement. She was indeed a woman of quick feelings and strong passions; and probably it was by the strength and sincerity of her sensibility that she retained so long the affection of her son, towards whom it cannot be doubted that her love was unaffected. In the midst of the neglect and penury to which she was herself subjected, she bestowed upon him all the care, the love and watchfulness of the tenderest mother.

In his fifth year, on the 19th of November, 1792, she sent him to a day-school, where she paid about five shillings a quarter, the common rate of the respectable day-schools at that time in Scotland. It was kept by a Mr Bowers, whom Byron has described as a dapper, spruce person, with whom he made no progress. How long he remained with Mr Bowers is not mentioned, but by the day-book of the school it was at least twelve months; for on the 19th of November of the following year there is an entry of a guinea having been paid for him.

From this school he was removed and placed with a Mr Ross, one of the ministers of the city churches, and to whom he formed some attachment, as he speaks of him with kindness, and describes him as a devout, clever little man of mild manners, good-natured, and painstaking. His third instructor was a serious, saturnine, kind young man, named Paterson, the son of a shoemaker, but a good scholar and a rigid Presbyterian. It is somewhat curious in the record which Byron has made of his early years to observe the constant endeavour with which he, the descendant of such a limitless pedigree and great ancestors, attempts to magnify the condition of his mother's circumstances.

Paterson attended him until he went to the grammar-school, where his character first began to be developed; and his schoolfellows, many of whom are alive, still recollect him as a lively, warm-hearted, and high-spirited boy, passionate and resentful, but withal affectionate and companionable; this, however, is an opinion given of him after he had become celebrated; for a very different impression has unquestionably remained among some who carry their recollections back to his childhood. By them he has been described as a malignant imp: was often spoken of for his pranks by the worthy housewives of the neighbourhood, as "Mrs Byron's crockit deevil," and generally disliked for the deep vindictive anger he retained against those with whom he happened to quarrel.

By the death of William, the fifth lord, he succeeded to the estates and titles in the year 1798; and in the autumn of that year, Mrs Byron, with her son and a faithful servant of the name of Mary Gray, left Aberdeen for Newstead. Previously to their departure, Mrs Byron sold the furniture of her humble lodging, with the exception of her little plate and scanty linen, which she took with her, and the whole amount of the sale did not yield SEVENTY-FIVE POUNDS.

CHAPTER II

Moral Effects of local Scenery; a Peculiarity in Taste—Early Love—Impressions and Traditions

Before I proceed to the regular narrative of the character and adventures of Lord Byron, it seems necessary to consider the probable effects of his residence, during his boyhood, in Scotland. It is generally agreed, that while a schoolboy in Aberdeen, he evinced a lively spirit, and sharpness enough to have equalled any of his schoolfellows, had he given sufficient application. In the few reminiscences preserved of his childhood, it is remarkable that he appears in this period, commonly of innocence and playfulness, rarely to have evinced any symptom of generous feeling. Silent rages, moody sullenness, and revenge are the general characteristics of his conduct as a boy.

He was, undoubtedly, delicately susceptible of impressions from the beauties of nature, for he retained recollections of the scenes which interested his childish wonder, fresh and glowing, to his latest days; nor have there been wanting plausible theories to ascribe the formation of his poetical character to the contemplation of those romantic scenes. But, whoever has attended to the influential causes of character will reject such theories as shallow, and betraying great ignorance of human nature. Genius of every kind belongs to some innate temperament; it does not necessarily imply a particular bent, because that may possibly be the effect of circumstances: but, without question, the peculiar quality is inborn, and particular to the individual. All hear and see much alike; but there is an undefinable though wide difference between the ear of the musician, or the eye of the painter, compared with the hearing and seeing organs of ordinary men; and it is in something like that difference in which genius consists. Genius is, however, an ingredient of mind more easily described by its effects than by its qualities. It is as the fragrance, independent of the freshness and complexion of the rose; as the light on the cloud; as the bloom on the cheek of beauty, of which the possessor is unconscious until the charm has been seen by its influence on others; it is the internal golden flame of the opal; a something which may be abstracted from the thing in which it appears, without changing the quality of its substance, its form, or its affinities. I am not, therefore, disposed to consider the idle and reckless childhood of Byron as unfavourable to the development of his genius; but, on the contrary, inclined to think, that the indulgence of his mother, leaving him so much to the accidents of undisciplined impression, was calculated to cherish associations which rendered them, in the maturity of his powers, ingredients of spell that ruled his memory.

It is singular, and I am not aware it has been before noticed, that with all his tender and impassioned apostrophes to beauty and love, Byron has in no instance, not even in the freest passages of *Don Juan*, associated either the one or the other with sensual images. The extravagance of Shakespeare's Juliet, when she speaks of Romeo being cut after his death into stars, that all the world may be in love with night, is flame and ecstasy compared to the icy metaphysical glitter of Byron's amorous allusions. The verses beginning with

She walks in beauty like the light
Of eastern climes and starry skies,

are a perfect example of what I have conceived of his bodiless admiration of beauty, and objectless enthusiasm of love. The sentiment itself is unquestionably in the highest mood of the intellectual sense of beauty; the simile is, however, anything but such an image as the beauty of woman would suggest. It is only the remembrance of some impression or imagination of the loveliness of a twilight applied to an object that awakened the same abstract general idea of beauty. The fancy which could conceive in its passion the charms of a female to be like the glow of the evening, or the general effect of the midnight stars, must have been enamoured of some beautiful abstraction, rather than aught of flesh and blood. Poets and lovers have compared the complexion of their mistresses to the hues of the morning or of the evening, and their eyes to the dewdrops and the stars; but it has no place in the feelings of man to think of female charms in the sense of admiration which the beauties of the morning or the evening awaken. It is to make the simile the principal. Perhaps, however, it may be as well to defer the criticism to which this peculiar characteristic of Byron's amatory effusions gives rise, until we shall come to estimate his general powers as a poet. There is upon the subject of love, no doubt, much beautiful composition. throughout his works; but not one line in all the thousands which shows a sexual feeling of female attraction – all is vague and passionless, save in the delicious rhythm of the verse.

But these remarks, though premature as criticisms, are not uncalled for here, even while we are speaking of a child not more than ten years old. Before Byron had attained that age, he describes himself as having felt the passion. Dante is said as early as nine years old to have fallen in love with Beatrice; Alfieri, who was himself precocious in the passion, considered such early sensibility to be an unerring sign of a soul formed for the fine arts; and Canova used to say that he was in love when but five years old. But these instances, however, prove nothing. Calf-love, as it is called in the country, is common; and in Italy it may arise earlier than in the bleak and barren regions of Lochynagar. This movement of juvenile sentiment is not, however, love – that strong masculine avidity, which, in its highest excitement, is unrestrained, by the laws alike of God and man. In truth, the feeling of this kind of love is the very reverse of the irrepressible passion it is a mean shrinking, stealthy awe, and in no one of its symptoms, at least in none of those which Byron describes, has it the slightest resemblance to that bold energy which has prompted men to undertake the most improbable adventures.

He was not quite eight years old, when, according to his own account, he formed an impassioned attachment to Mary Duff; and he gives the following account of his recollection of her, nineteen years afterwards.

"I have been thinking lately a good deal of Mary Duff. How very odd that I should have been so devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word and the effect! My mother used always to rally me about this childish amour, and at last, many years after, when I was sixteen, she told me one day, 'O Byron, I have had a letter from Edinburgh, and your old sweetheart, Mary Duff, is married to Mr C***.' And what was my answer? I really cannot explain or account for my feelings at that moment, but they nearly threw me into convulsions, and alarmed my mother so much, that after I grew better she generally avoided the subject – to *me*– and contented herself with telling it to all her acquaintance." But was this agitation the effect of natural feeling, or of something in the manner in which his mother may have told the news? He proceeds to inquire. "Now what could this be? I had never seen her since her mother's *faux pas* at Aberdeen had been the cause of her removal to her grandmother's at Banff. We were both the merest children. I had, and have been, attached fifty times since that period; yet I recollect all we said to each other, all our caresses, her features, my restlessness, sleeplessness, my tormenting my mother's maid to write for me to her, which she at last did to quiet me. Poor Nancy thought I was wild, and, as I could not write for myself, became my secretary. I remember too our walks, and the happiness of sitting by Mary, in the children's apartment, at their house, not far from the Plainstones, at Aberdeen, while her lesser sister, Helen, played with the doll, and we sat gravely making love in our own way.

"How the deuce did all this occur so early? Where could it originate? I certainly had no sexual ideas for years afterward, and yet my misery, my love for that girl, were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. Be that as it may, hearing of her marriage, several years afterward, was as a thunderstroke. It nearly choked me, to the horror of my mother, and the astonishment and almost incredulity of everybody; and it is a phenomenon in my existence, for I was not eight years old, which has puzzled and will puzzle me to the latest hour of it. And, lately, I know not why, the *recollection* (*not* the attachment) has recurred as forcibly as ever: I wonder if she can have the least remembrance of it or me, or remember pitying her sister Helen, for not having an admirer too. How very pretty is the perfect image of her in my memory. Her dark brown hair and hazel eyes, her very dress – I should be quite grieved to see her now. The reality, however beautiful, would destroy, or at least confuse, the features of the lovely Peri, which then existed in her, and still lives in my imagination, at the distance of more than sixteen years."

Such precocious and sympathetic affections are, as I have already mentioned, common among children, and is something very different from the love of riper years; but the extract is curious, and shows how truly little and vague Byron's experience of the passion must have been. In his recollection of the girl, be it observed, there is no circumstance noticed which shows, however strong the mutual sympathy, the slightest influence of particular attraction. He recollects the colour of her hair, the hue of her eyes, her very dress, and he remembers her as a Peri, a spirit; nor does it appear that his sleepless restlessness, in which the thought of her was ever uppermost, was produced by jealousy, or doubt, or fear, or any other concomitant of the passion.

There is another most important circumstance in what may be called the Aberdonian epoch of Lord Byron's life.

That Byron, in his boyhood, was possessed of lively sensibilities, is sufficiently clear; that he enjoyed the advantage of indulging his humour and temper without restraint, is not disputable; and that his natural temperament made him sensible, in no ordinary degree, to the beauties of nature, is also abundantly manifest in all his productions; but it is surprising that this admiration of the beauties of Nature is but an ingredient in Byron's poetry, and not its most remarkable characteristic. Deep feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment are far more obvious; they constitute, indeed, the very spirit of his works, and a spirit of such qualities is the least of all likely to have arisen from the contemplation of magnificent Nature, or to have been inspired by studying her storms or serenity; for dissatisfaction and disappointment are the offspring of moral experience, and have no natural association with the forms of external things. The habit of associating morose sentiments with any particular kind of scenery only shows that the sources of the sullenness arose in similar visible circumstances. It is from these premises I would infer, that the seeds of Byron's misanthropic tendencies were implanted during the "silent rages" of his childhood, and that the effect of mountain scenery, which continued so strong upon him after he left Scotland, producing the sentiments with which he has imbued his heroes in the wild circumstances in which he places them, was mere reminiscence and association. For although the sullen tone of his mind was not fully brought out until he wrote *Childe Harold*, it is yet evident from his *Hours of Idleness* that he was tuned to that key before he went abroad. The dark colouring of his mind was plainly imbibed in a mountainous region, from sombre heaths, and in the midst of rudeness and grandeur. He had no taste for more cheerful images, and there are neither rural objects nor villagery in the scenes he describes, but only loneness and the solemnity of mountains.

To those who are acquainted with the Scottish character, it is unnecessary to suggest how very probable it is that Mrs Byron and her associates were addicted to the oral legends of the district and of her ancestors, and that the early fancy of the poet was nourished with the shadowy descriptions in the tales o' the olden time; – at last this is manifest, that although Byron shows little of the melancholy and mourning of Ossian, he was yet evidently influenced by some strong bias and congeniality of taste to brood and cogitate on topics of the same character as those of that bard. Moreover, besides the probability of his imagination having been early tinged with the sullen hue of the local traditions, it is remarkable, that the longest of his juvenile poems is an imitation of the manner of the Homer of Morven.

In addition to a natural temperament, kept in a state of continual excitement, by unhappy domestic incidents, and the lurid legends of the past, there were other causes in operation around the young poet that could not but greatly affect the formation of his character.

Descended of a distinguished family, counting among its ancestors the fated line of the Scottish kings, and reduced almost to extreme poverty, it is highly probable, both from the violence of her temper, and the pride of blood, that Mrs Byron would complain of the almost mendicant condition to which she was reduced, especially so long as there was reason to fear that her son was not likely to succeed to the family estates and dignity. Of his father's lineage few traditions were perhaps preserved, compared with those of his mother's family; but still enough was known to impress the imagination. Mr Moore, struck with this circumstance, has remarked, that "in reviewing the ancestors, both near and remote, of Lord Byron, it cannot fail to be remarked how strikingly he combined in his own nature some of the best, and perhaps worst qualities that lie scattered through the various characters of his predecessors." But still it is to his mother's traditions of her ancestors that I would ascribe the conception of the dark and guilty beings which he delighted to describe. And though it may be contended that there was little in her conduct to exalt poetical sentiment, still there was a great deal in her condition calculated to affect and impel an impassioned disposition. I can imagine few situations more likely to produce lasting recollections of interest and affection, than that in which Mrs Byron, with her only child, was placed in Aberdeen. Whatever might have been the violence of her temper, or the improprieties of her after-life, the fond and mournful caresses with which she used to hang over her lame and helpless orphan, must have greatly contributed to the formation of that morbid sensibility which became the chief characteristic of his life. At the same time, if it did contribute to fill his days with anguish and anxieties, it also undoubtedly assisted the development of his powers; and I am therefore disposed to conclude, that although, with respect to the character of the man, the time he spent in Aberdeen can only be contemplated with pity, mingled with sorrow, still it must have been richly fraught with incidents of inconceivable value to the genius of the poet.

CHAPTER III

Arrival at Newstead—Find it in Ruins—The old Lord and his Beetles—The Earl of Carlisle becomes the Guardian of Byron—The Poet's acute Sense of his own deformed Foot—His Mother consults a Fortune-teller

Mrs Byron, on her arrival at Newstead Abbey with her son, found it almost in a state of ruin. After the equivocal affair of the duel, the old lord lived in absolute seclusion, detested by his tenantry, at war with his neighbours, and deserted by all his family. He not only suffered the abbey to fall into decay, but, as far as lay in his power, alienated the land which should have kept it in repair, and denuded the estate of the timber. Byron has described the conduct of the morose peer in very strong terms: – "After his trial he shut himself up at Newstead, and was in the habit of feeding crickets, which were his only companions. He made them so tame that they used to crawl over him, and, when they were too familiar, he whipped them with a wisp of straw: at his death, it is said, they left the house in a body."

However this may have been, it is certain that Byron came to an embarrassed inheritance, both as respected his property and the character of his race; and, perhaps, though his genius suffered nothing by the circumstance, it is to be regretted that he was still left under the charge of his mother: a woman without judgment or self-command; alternately spoiling her child by indulgence, irritating him by her self-willed obstinacy, and, what was still worse, amusing him by her violence, and disgusting him by fits of inebriety. Sympathy for her misfortunes would be no sufficient apology for concealing her defects; they undoubtedly had a material influence on her son, and her appearance was often the subject of his childish ridicule. She was a short and corpulent person. She rolled in her gait, and would, in her rage, sometimes endeavour to catch him for the purpose of inflicting punishment, while he would run round the room, mocking her menaces and mimicking her motion.

The greatest weakness in Lord Byron's character was a morbid sensibility to his lameness. He felt it with as much vexation as if it had been inflicted ignominy. One of the most striking passages in some memoranda which he has left of his early days, is where, in speaking of his own sensitiveness on the subject of his deformed foot, he described the feeling of horror and humiliation that came over him when his mother, in one of her fits of passion, called him a "lame brat."

The sense which Byron always retained of the innocent fault in his foot was unmanly and excessive; for it was not greatly conspicuous, and he had a mode of walking across a room by which it was scarcely at all perceptible. I was several days on board the same ship with him before I happened to discover the defect; it was indeed so well concealed, that I was in doubt whether his lameness was the effect of a temporary accident, or a malformation, until I asked Mr Hobhouse.

On their arrival from Scotland, Byron was placed by his mother under the care of an empirical pretender of the name of Lavender, at Nottingham, who professed the cure of such cases; and that he might not lose ground in his education, he was attended by a respectable schoolmaster, Mr Rodgers, who read parts of Virgil and Cicero with him. Of this gentleman he always entertained a kind remembrance. Nor was his regard in this instance peculiar; for it may be said to have been a distinguishing trait in his character, to recollect with affection all who had been about him in his youth. The quack, however, was an exception; whom (from having caused him to suffer much pain, and whose pretensions, even young as he then was, he detected) he delighted to expose. On one occasion, he scribbled down on a sheet of paper, the letters of the alphabet at random, but in the form of words and sentences, and placing them before Lavender, asked him gravely, what language it was. "Italian," was the reply, to the infinite amusement of the little satirist, who burst into a triumphant laugh at the success of his stratagem.

It is said that about this time the first symptom of his predilection for rhyming showed itself. An elderly lady, a visitor to his mother, had been indiscreet enough to give him some offence, and slights he generally resented with more energy than they often deserved. This venerable personage entertained a singular notion respecting the soul, which she believed took its flight at death to the moon. One day, after a repetition of her original contumely, he appeared before his nurse in a violent rage, and complained vehemently of the old lady, declaring that he could not bear the sight of her, and then he broke out into the following doggerel, which he repeated over and over, crowing with delight.

In Nottingham county, there lives at Swan-green,
As curs'd an old lady as ever was seen;
And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
She firmly believes she will go to the moon.

Mrs Byron, by the accession of her son to the family honours and estate, received no addition to her small income; and he, being a minor, was unable to make any settlement upon her. A representation of her case was made to Government, and in consequence she was placed on the pension-list for £300 a-year.

Byron not having received any benefit from the Nottingham quack, was removed to London, put under the care of Dr Bailey, and placed in the school of Dr Glennie, at Dulwich; Mrs Byron herself took a house on Sloan Terrace. Moderation in all athletic exercises was prescribed to the boy, but Dr Glennie had some difficulty in restraining his activity. He was quiet enough while in the house with the Doctor, but no sooner was he released to play, than he showed as much ambition to excel in violent exercises as the most robust youth of the school; an ambition common to young persons who have the misfortune to labour under bodily defects.

While under the charge of Dr Glennie, he was playful, good-humoured, and beloved by his companions; and addicted to reading history and poetry far beyond the usual scope of his age. In these studies he showed a predilection for the Scriptures; and certainly there are many traces in his works which show that, whatever the laxity of his religious principles may have been in after-life, he was not unacquainted with the records and history of our religion.

During this period, Mrs Byron often indiscreetly interfered with the course of his education; and if his classical studies were in consequence not so effectually conducted as they might have been, his mind derived some of its best nutriment from the loose desultory course of his reading.

Among the books to which the boys at Dr Glennie's school had access was a pamphlet containing the narrative of a shipwreck on the coast of Arracan, filled with impressive descriptions. It had not attracted much public attention, but it was a favourite with the pupils, particularly with Byron, and furnished him afterwards with the leading circumstances in the striking description of the shipwreck in *Don Juan.*

Although the rhymes upon the lunar lady of Notts are supposed to have been the first twitter of his muse, he has said himself, "My first dash into poetry was as early as 1800. It was the ebullition of a passion for my first cousin, Margaret Parker. I was then about twelve, she rather older, perhaps a year." And it is curious to remark, that in his description of this beautiful girl there is the same lack of animal admiration which we have noticed in all his loves; he says of her: —

"I do not recollect scarcely anything equal to the transparent beauty of my cousin, or to the sweetness of her temper, during the short period of our intimacy: she looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow, all beauty and peace." This is certainly poetically expressed; but there was more true love in Pygmalion's passion for his statue, and in the Parisian maiden's adoration of the Apollo.

When he had been nearly two years under the tuition of Dr Glennie, he was removed to Harrow, chiefly in consequence of his mother's interference with his studies, and especially by withdrawing him often from school.

During the time he was under the care of Dr Glennie, he was more amiable than at any other period of his life, a circumstance which justifies the supposition, that, had he been left more to the discipline of that respectable person, he would have proved a better man; for, however much his heart afterwards became incrusted with the leprosy of selfishness, at this period his feelings were warm and kind. Towards his nurse he evinced uncommon affection, which he cherished as long as she lived. He presented her with his watch, the first he possessed, and also a full-length miniature of himself, when he was only between seven and eight years old, representing him with a profusion of curling locks, and in his hands a bow and arrow. The sister of this woman had been his first nurse, and after he had left Scotland he wrote to her, in a spirit which betokened a gentle and sincere heart, informing her with much joy of a circumstance highly important to himself. It was to tell her that at last he had got his foot so far restored as to be able to put on a common boot, an event which he was sure would give her great pleasure; to himself it is difficult to imagine any incident which could have been more gratifying.

I dwell with satisfaction on these descriptions of his early dispositions; for, although there are not wanting instances of similar warm-heartedness in his later years, still he never formed any attachments so pure and amiable after he went to Harrow. The change of life came over him, and when the vegetable period of boyhood was past, the animal passions mastered all the softer affections of his character.

In the summer of 1801 he accompanied his mother to Cheltenham, and while he resided there the views of the Malvern hills recalled to his memory his enjoyments amid the wilder scenery of Aberdeenshire. The recollections were reimpressed on his heart and interwoven with his strengthened feelings. But a boy gazing with emotion on the hills at sunset, because they remind him of the mountains where he passed his childhood, is no proof that he is already in heart and imagination a poet. To suppose so is to mistake the materials for the building.

The delight of Byron in contemplating the Malvern hills, was not because they resembled the scenery of Lochynagar, but because they awoke trains of thought and fancy, associated with recollections of that scenery. The poesy of the feeling lay not in the beauty of the objects, but in the moral effect of the traditions, to which these objects served as talismans of the memory. The scene at sunset reminded him of the Highlands, but it was those reminiscences which similar scenes recalled, that constituted the impulse which gave life and elevation to his reflections. There is not more poesy in the sight of mountains than of plains; it is the local associations that throw enchantment over all scenes, and resemblance that awakens them, binding them to new connections: nor does this admit of much controversy; for mountainous regions, however favourable to musical feeling, are but little to poetical.

The Welsh have no eminent bard; the Swiss have no renown as poets; nor are the mountainous regions of Greece, nor of the Apennines, celebrated for poetry. The Highlands of Scotland, save the equivocal bastardy of Ossian, have produced no poet of any fame, and yet mountainous countries abound in local legends, which would seem to be at variance with this opinion, were it not certain, though I cannot explain the cause, that local poetry, like local language or local melody, is in proportion to the interest it awakens among the local inhabitants, weak and ineffectual in its influence on the sentiments of the general world. The "Rans de Vaches," the most celebrated of all local airs, is tame and commonplace, – unmelodious, to all ears but those of the Swiss "forlorn in a foreign land."

While in Cheltenham, Mrs Byron consulted a fortune-teller respecting the destinies of her son, and according to her feminine notions, she was very cunning and guarded with the sybil, never suspecting that she might have been previously known, and, unconscious to herself, an object of interest to the spaewife. She endeavoured to pass herself off as a maiden lady, and regarded it as no small testimony of the wisdom of the oracle, that she declared her to be not only a married woman, but the mother of a son who was lame. After such a marvellous proof of second-sightedness, it may easily be conceived with what awe and faith she listened to the prediction, that his life should be in danger from poison before he was of age, and that he should be twice married; the second time to a foreign lady. Whether it was this same fortune-teller who foretold that he would, in his twenty-seventh year, incur some great misfortune, is not certain; but, considering his unhappy English marriage, and his subsequent Italian *liaison* with the Countess Guiccioli, the marital prediction was not far from receiving its accomplishment. The fact of his marriage taking place in his twenty-seventh year, is at least a curious circumstance, and has been noticed by himself with a sentiment of superstition.

CHAPTER IV

Placed at Harrow—Progress there—Love for Miss Chaworth—His Reading—Oratorical Powers

In passing from the quiet academy of Dulwich Grove to the public school of Harrow, the change must have been great to any boy – to Byron it was punishment; and for the first year and a half he hated the place. In the end, however, he rose to be a leader in all the sports and mischiefs of his schoolfellows; but it never could be said that he was a popular boy, however much he was distinguished for spirit and bravery; for if he was not quarrelsome, he was sometimes vindictive. Still it could not have been to any inveterate degree; for, undoubtedly, in his younger years, he was susceptible of warm impressions from gentle treatment, and his obstinacy and arbitrary humour were perhaps more the effects of unrepressed habit than of natural bias; they were the prickles which surrounded his genius in the bud.

At Harrow he acquired no distinction as a student; indeed, at no period was he remarkable for steady application. Under Dr Glennie he had made but little progress; and it was chiefly in consequence of his backwardness that he was removed from his academy. When placed with Dr Drury, it was with an intimation that he had a cleverness about him, but that his education had been neglected.

The early dislike which Byron felt towards the Earl of Carlisle is abundantly well known, and he had the magnanimity to acknowledge that it was in some respects unjust. But the antipathy was not all on one side; nor will it be easy to parallel the conduct of the Earl with that of any guardian. It is but justice, therefore, to Byron, to make the public aware that the dislike began on the part of Lord Carlisle, and originated in some distaste which he took to Mrs Byron's manners, and at the trouble she sometimes gave him on account of her son.

Dr Drury, in his communication to Mr Moore respecting the early history of Byron, mentions a singular circumstance as to this subject, which we record with the more pleasure, because Byron has been blamed, and has blamed himself, for his irreverence towards Lord Carlisle, while it appears that the fault lay with the Earl.

"After some continuance at Harrow," says Dr Drury, "and when the powers of his mind had begun to expand, the late Lord Carlisle, his relation, desired to see me in town. I waited on his Lordship. His object was to inform me of Lord Byron's expectations of property when he came of age, which he represented as contracted, and to inquire respecting his abilities. On the former circumstance I made no remark; as to the latter, I replied, 'He has talents, my Lord, which will add lustre to his rank.' 'Indeed,' said his Lordship, with a degree of surprise, that, according to my feelings, did not express in it all the satisfaction I expected."

Lord Carlisle had, indeed, much of the Byron humour in him. His mother was a sister of the homicidal lord, and possessed some of the family peculiarity: she was endowed with great talent, and in her latter days she exhibited great singularity. She wrote beautiful verses and piquant epigrams among others, there is a poetical effusion of her pen addressed to Mrs Greville, on her *Ode to Indifference*, which, at the time, was much admired, and has been, with other poems of her Ladyship's, published in Pearch's collection. After moving, for a long time, as one of the most brilliant orbs in the sphere of fashion, she suddenly retired, and like her morose brother, shut herself up from the world. While she lived in this seclusion, she became an object of the sportive satire of the late Mr Fox, who characterized her as

Carlisle, recluse in pride and rags.

I have heard a still coarser apostrophe by the same gentleman. It seems they had quarrelled, and on his leaving her in the drawing-room, she called after him, that he might go about his business, for she did not care two skips of a louse for him. On coming to the hall, finding paper and ink on the table, he wrote two lines in answer, and sent it up to her Ladyship, to the effect that she always spoke of what was running in her head.

Byron has borne testimony to the merits of his guardian, her son, as a tragic poet, by characterizing his publications as paper books. It is, however, said that they nevertheless showed some talent, and that *The Father's Revenge*, one of the tragedies, was submitted to the judgment of Dr Johnson, who did not despise it.

But to return to the progress of Byron at Harrow; it is certain that notwithstanding the affectionate solicitude of Dr Drury to encourage him, he never became an eminent scholar; at least, we have his own testimony to that effect, in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*; the lines, however, in which that testimony stands recorded, are among the weakest he ever penned.

May he who will his recollections rake
And quote in classic raptures, and awake
The hills with Latin echoes: I abhorr'd
Too much to conquer, for the poet's sake,
The drill'd, dull lesson forced down word by word,
In my repugnant youth with pleasure to record.

And, as an apology for the defect, he makes the following remarks in a note subjoined: —

"I wish to express that we become tired of the task before we can comprehend the beauty; that we learn by rote before we can get by heart; that the freshness is worn away, and the future pleasure and advantage deadened and destroyed by the didactic anticipation, at an age when we can neither feel nor understand the power of compositions, which it requires an acquaintance with life, as well as Latin and Greek, to relish or to reason upon. For the same reason, we never can be aware of the fulness of some of the finest passages of Shakspeare ('To be, or not to be,' for instance), from the habit of having them hammered into us at eight years old, as an exercise not of mind but of memory; so that when we are old enough to enjoy them, the taste is gone, and the appetite palled. In some parts of the Continent, young persons are taught from mere common authors, and do not read the best classics until their maturity. I certainly do not speak on this point from any pique or aversion towards the place of my education. I was not a slow or an idle boy; and I believe no one could be more attached to Harrow than I have always been, and with reason: a part of the time passed there was the happiest of my life; and my preceptor, the Rev. Dr Joseph Drury, was the best and worthiest friend I ever possessed; whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred; and whose counsels I have but followed when I have done well and wisely. If ever this imperfect record of my feelings towards him should reach his eyes, let it remind him of one who never thinks of him but with gratitude and veneration; of one who would more gladly boast of having been his pupil if, by more closely following his injunctions, he could reflect any honour upon his instructor."

Lord Byron, however, is not singular in his opinion of the inutility of premature classical studies; and notwithstanding the able manner in which the late Dean Vincent defended public education, we have some notion that his reasoning upon this point will not be deemed conclusive. Milton, says Dr Vincent, complained of the years that were wasted in teaching the dead languages. Cowley also complained that classical education taught words only and not things; and Addison deemed it an inexpiable error, that boys with genius or without were all to be bred poets indiscriminately. As far, then, as respects the education of a poet, we should think that the names of Milton, Cowley, Addison, and Byron would go well to settle the question; especially when it is recollected how little Shakspeare was indebted to the study of the classics, and that Burns knew nothing of them at all. I do not, however, adopt the opinion as correct; neither do I think that Dean Vincent took a right view of the subject; for, as discipline, the study of the classics may be highly useful, at the same time, the mere hammering of Greek and Latin into English cannot be very conducive to the refinement of taste or the exaltation of sentiment. Nor is there either common sense or correct logic in the following observations made on the passage and note, quoted by the anonymous author of *Childe Harold's Monitor*.

"This doctrine of antipathies, contracted by the impatience of youth against the noblest authors of antiquity, from the circumstance of having been made the vehicle of early instruction, is a most dangerous doctrine indeed; since it strikes at the root, not only of all pure taste, but of all praiseworthy industry. It would, if acted upon (as Harold by the mention of the Continental practice of using inferior writers in the business of tuition would seem to recommend), destroy the great source of the intellectual vigour of our countrymen."

This is, undoubtedly, assuming too much; for those who have objected to the years "wasted" in teaching the dead languages, do not admit that the labour of acquiring them either improves the taste or adds to the vigour of the understanding; and, therefore, before the soundness of the opinion of Milton, of Cowley, of Addison, and of many other great men can be rejected, it falls on those who are of Dean Vincent's opinion, and that of *Childe Harold's Monitor*, to prove that the study of the learned languages is of so much primary importance as they claim for it.

But it appears that Byron's mind, during the early period of his residence at Harrow, was occupied with another object than his studies, and which may partly account for his inattention to them. He fell in love with Mary Chaworth. "She was," he is represented to have said, "several years older than myself, but at my age boys like something older than themselves, as they do younger later in life. Our estates adjoined, but owing to the unhappy circumstances of the feud (the affair of the fatal duel), our families, as is generally the case with neighbours, who happen to be near relations, were never on terms of more than common civility, scarcely those. She was the beau ideal of all that my youthful fancy could paint of the beautiful! and I have taken all my fables about the celestial nature of women from the perfection my imagination created in her. I say created, for I found her, like the rest of the sex, anything but angelic. I returned to Harrow, after my trip to Cheltenham, more deeply enamoured than ever, and passed the next holidays at Newstead. I now began to fancy myself a man, and to make love in earnest. Our meetings were stolen ones, and my letters passed through the medium of a confidant. A gate leading from Mr Chaworth's grounds to those of my mother, was the place of our interviews, but the ardour was all on my side; I was serious, she was volatile. She liked me as a younger brother, and treated and laughed at me as a boy; she, however, gave me her picture, and that was something to make verses upon. Had I married Miss Chaworth, perhaps the whole tenor of my life would have been different; she jilted me, however, but her marriage proved anything but a happy one." It is to this attachment that we are indebted for the beautiful poem of *The Dream*, and the stanzas beginning

Oh, had my fate been joined to thine!

Although this love affair a little interfered with his Greek and Latin, his time was not passed without some attention to reading. Until he was eighteen years old, he had never seen a review; but his general information was so extensive on modern topics, as to induce a suspicion that he could only have collected so much information from reviews, as he was never seen reading, but always idle, and in mischief, or at play. He was, however, a devourer of books; he read eating, read in bed, read when no one else read, and had perused all sorts of books from the time he first could spell, but had never read a review, and knew not what the name implied.

It should be here noticed, that while he was at Harrow, his qualities were rather oratorical than poetical; and if an opinion had then been formed of the likely result of his character, the prognostication would have led to the expectation of an orator. Altogether, his conduct at Harrow indicated a clever, but not an extraordinary boy. He formed a few friendships there, in which his attachment appears to have been, in some instances, remarkable. The late Duke of Dorset was his fag, and he was not considered a very hard taskmaster. He certainly did not carry with him from Harrow any anticipation of that splendid career he was destined to run as a poet.

CHAPTER V

Character at Harrow—Poetical Predilections—Byron at Cambridge—His "Hours of Idleness"

In reconsidering the four years which Byron spent at Harrow, while we can clearly trace the development of the sensibilities of his character, and an increased tension of his susceptibility, by which impressions became more acute and delicate, it seems impossible not to perceive by the records which he has himself left of his feelings, that something morbid was induced upon them. Had he not afterwards so magnificently distinguished himself as a poet, it is not probable that he would have been recollected by his schoolfellows as having been in any respect different from the common herd. His activity and spirit, in their controversies and quarrels, were but the outbreakings of that temperament which the discipline of riper years, and the natural awe of the world, afterward reduced into his hereditary cast of character, in which so much of sullenness and misanthropy was exhibited. I cannot, however, think that there was anything either in the nature of his pastimes, or his studies, unfavourable to the formation of the poetical character. His amusements were active; his reading, though without method, was yet congenial to his impassioned imagination; and the phantom of an enthusiastic attachment, of which Miss Chaworth was not the only object (for it was altogether intellectual, and shared with others), were circumstances calculated to open various sources of reflection, and to concentrate the elements of an energetic and original mind.

But it is no easy matter to sketch what may have been the outline of a young poet's education. The supposition that poets must be dreamers, because there is often much dreaminess in poesy, is a mere hypothesis. Of all the professors of metaphysical discernment, poets require the finest tact; and contemplation is with them a sign of inward abstract reflection, more than of any process of mind by which resemblance is traced, and associations awakened. There is no account of any great poet, whose genius was of that dreamy cartilaginous kind, which hath its being in haze, and draws its nourishment from lights and shadows; which ponders over the mysteries of trees, and interprets the oracles of babbling waters. They have all been men – worldly men, different only from others in reasoning more by feeling than induction. Directed by impulse, in a greater degree than other men, poets are apt to be betrayed into actions which make them singular, as compared by those who are less imaginative; but the effects of earnestness should never be confounded with the qualities of talent.

No greater misconception has ever been obtruded upon the world as philosophic criticism, than the theory of poets being the offspring of "capering lambkins and cooing doves"; for they differ in no respect from other men of high endowment, but in the single circumstance of the objects to which their taste is attracted. The most vigorous poets, those who have influenced longest and are most quoted, have indeed been all men of great shrewdness of remark, and anything but your chin-on-hand contemplators. To adduce many instances is unnecessary. Are there any symptoms of the gelatinous character of the effusions of the Lakers in the compositions of Homer? The *London Gazette* does not tell us things more like facts than the narratives of Homer, and it often states facts that are much more like fictions than his most poetical inventions. So much is this the case with the works of all the higher poets, that as they recede from that worldly standard which is found in the Epics of Homer, they sink in the scale of poets. In what does the inferiority of Virgil, for example, consist, but in his having hatched fancies in his contemplations which the calm mind rejects as absurdities. Then Tasso, with his enchanted forests and his other improbabilities; are they more than childish tales? tales, too, not in fancy to be compared with those of that venerable dry-nurse, Mother Bunch. Compare the poets that babble of green fields with those who deal in the actions and passions of men, such as Shakspeare, and it must be confessed that it is not those who have looked at external nature who are the true poets, but those who have seen and considered most about the business and bosom of man.

It may be an advantage that a poet should have the benefit of landscapes and storms, as children are the better for country air and cow's milk; but the true scene of their manly work and business is in the populous city. Inasmuch as Byron was a lover of solitude, he was deficient as an observer of men.

The barrenest portion, as to materials for biography, in the life of this interesting man, is the period he spent at the University of Cambridge. Like that of most young men, it is probable the major part of his time was passed between the metropolis and the university. Still it was in that period he composed the different poems which make up the little volume of *The Hours of Idleness*; a work which will ever be regarded, more by its consequences than its importance, as of great influence on the character and career of the poet.

It has been supposed, I see not how justly, that there was affectation in the title. It is probable that Byron intended no more by it than to imply that its contents were sketches of leisure. This is the less doubtful, as he was at that period particularly sensitive concerning the opinion that might be entertained of his works. Before he made the collection, many of the pieces had been circulated, and he had gathered opinions as to their merits with a degree of solicitude that can only be conceived by those who were acquainted with the constantly excited sensibility of his mind. When he did publish the collection, nothing appeared in the style and form of the publication that indicated any arrogance of merit. On the contrary, it was brought forward with a degree of diffidence, which, if it did not deserve the epithet of modesty, could incur nothing harsher than that of bashfulness. It was printed at the obscure market-town press of Newark, was altogether a very homely, rustic work, and no attempt was made to bespeak for it a good name from the critics. It was truly an innocent affair and an unpretending performance. But notwithstanding these, at least seeming, qualities of young doubtfulness and timidity, they did not soften the austere nature of the bleak and blighting criticism which was then characteristic of Edinburgh.

A copy was somehow communicated to one of the critics in that city, and was reviewed by him in the *Edinburgh Review* in an article replete with satire and insinuations calculated to prey upon the author's feelings, while the injustice of the estimate which was made of his talent and originality, could not but be as iron in his heart. Owing to the deep and severe impression which it left, it ought to be preserved in every memoir which treats of the development of his genius and character; and for this reason I insert it entire, as one of the most influential documents perhaps in the whole extent of biography.

CHAPTER VI

Criticism of the "Edinburgh Review"

"The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither God nor man are said to permit. Indeed we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his style. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface; and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written. Now, the law upon the point of minority we hold to be perfectly clear. It is a plea available only to the defendant; no plaintiff can offer it as a supplementary ground of action. Thus, if any suit could be brought against Lord Byron, for the purpose of compelling him to put into court a certain quantity of poetry, and if judgment were given against him, it is highly probable that an exception would be taken, were he to deliver *for poetry* the contents of this volume. To this he might plead *minority*; but as he now makes voluntary tender of the article, he hath no right to sue on that ground for the price in good current praise, should the goods be unmarketable. This is our view of the law on the point; and we dare to say, so will it be ruled. Perhaps, however, in reality, all that he tells us about his youth is rather with a view to increase our wonder, than to soften our censures. He possibly means to say, 'See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen! and this by one of only sixteen!' But, alas, we all remember the poetry of Cowley at ten, and Pope at twelve; and, so far from hearing with any degree of surprise that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college inclusive, we really believe this to be the most common of all occurrences; – that it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England, and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

"His other plea of privilege our author brings forward to waive it. He certainly, however, does allude frequently to his family and ancestors, sometimes in poetry, sometimes in notes; and while giving up his claim on the score of rank, he takes care to remind us of Dr Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our Review, besides our desire to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.

"With this view we must beg leave seriously to assure him, that the mere rhyming of the final syllable, even when accompanied by the presence of a certain number of feet; nay, although (which does not always happen) these feet should scan regularly, and have been all counted upon the fingers, is not the whole art of poetry. We would entreat him to believe that a certain portion of liveliness, somewhat of fancy, is necessary to constitute a poem; and that a poem in the present day, to be read, must contain at least one thought, even in a little degree different from the ideas of former writers, or differently expressed. We put it to his candour, whether there is anything so deserving the name of poetry, in verses like the following, written in 1806, and whether, if a youth of eighteen could say anything so uninteresting to his ancestors, a youth of nineteen should publish it:

Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you adieu;
Abroad or at home, your remembrance imparting
New courage, he'll think upon glory and you.

Though a tear dim his eye at this sad separation,
’Tis nature, not fear, that excites his regret;
Far distant he goes with the same emulation,
The fame of his fathers he ne’er can forget.

That fame and that memory still will he cherish,
He vows that he ne’er will disgrace your renown;
Like you will he live, or like you will he perish,
When decay’d, may he mingle his dust with your own.

“Now, we positively do assert, that there is nothing better than these stanzas in the whole compass of the noble minor’s volume.

“Lord Byron should also have a care of attempting what the greatest poets have done before him, for comparisons (as he must have had occasion to see at his writing-master’s) are odious. Gray’s *Ode to Eton College* should really have kept out the ten hobbling stanzas on a distant view of the village and school at Harrow.

Where fancy yet joys to trace the resemblance
Of comrades in friendship or mischief allied,
How welcome to me your ne’er-fading remembrance,
Which rests in the bosom, though hope is denied.

“In like manner, the exquisite lines of Mr Rogers, *On a Tear*, might have warned the noble author of these premises, and spared us a whole dozen such stanzas as the following:

Mild charity’s glow,
To us mortals below,
Shows the soul from barbarity clear;
Compassion will melt
Where the virtue is felt.
And its dew is diffused in a tear.

The man doom’d to sail
With the blast of the gale,
Through billows Atlantic to steer,
As he bends o’er the wave,
Which may soon be his grave,
The green sparkles bright with a tear.

“And so of instances in which former poets had failed. Thus, we do not think Lord Byron was made for translating, during his nonage, Adrian’s *Address to his Soul*, when Pope succeeded indifferently in the attempt. If our readers, however, are of another opinion, they may look at it.

Ah! gentle, fleeting, wav’ring sprite,
Friend and associate of this clay,
To what unknown region borne
Wilt thou now wing thy distant flight?
No more with wonted humour gay,
But pallid, cheerless, and forlorn.

“However, be this as it may, we fear his translations and imitations are great favourities with Lord Byron. We have them of all kinds, from Anacreon to Ossian; and, viewing them as school-exercises, they may pass. Only, why print them after they have had their day and served their turn? And why call the thing in p. 79 a translation, where *two* words (θελο λεγειν) of the original are expanded into four lines, and the other thing in p. 81, where μεσονυκτικις ποθ’ οραις is rendered by means of six hobbling verses. As to his Ossian poesy, we are not very good judges; being, in truth, so moderately skilled in that species of composition, that we should, in all probability, be criticising some bit of genuine Macpherson itself, were we to express our opinion of Lord Byron’s rhapsodies. If, then, the following beginning of a Song of Bards is by his Lordship, we venture to object to it, as far as we can comprehend it; ‘What form rises on the roar of clouds, whose dark ghost gleams on the red stream of tempests? His voice rolls on the thunder; ’tis Oila, the brown chief of Otchona. He was,’ etc. After detaining this ‘brown chief’ some time, the bards conclude by giving him their advice to ‘raise his fair locks’; then to ‘spread them on the arch of the rainbow’; and to ‘smile through the tears of the storm.’ Of this kind of thing there are no less than nine pages: and we can so far venture an opinion in their favour, that they look very like Macpherson; and we are positive they are pretty nearly as stupid and tiresome.

“It is some sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should ‘use it as not abusing it’; and particularly one who piques himself (though, indeed, at the ripe age of nineteen) on being an infant bard —

The artless Helicon I boast is youth —

should either not know, or should seem not to know, so much about his own ancestry. Besides a poem, above cited, on the family-seat of the Byrons, we have another of eleven pages on the selfsame subject, introduced with an apology, ‘he certainly had no intention of inserting it,’ but really ‘the particular request of some friends,’ etc. etc. It concludes with five stanzas on himself, ‘the last and youngest of the noble line.’ There is also a good deal about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachion-y-Gair, a mountain, where he spent part of his youth, and might have learned that *pibroach* is not a bagpipe, any more than a duet means a fiddle.

“As the author has dedicated so large a part of his volume to immortalize his employments at school and college, we cannot possibly dismiss it without presenting the reader with a specimen of these ingenious effusions.

“In an ode, with a Greek motto, called *Granta*, we have the following magnificent stanzas: —

There, in apartments small and damp,
The candidate for college prizes
Sits poring by the midnight lamp,
Goes late to bed, yet early rises:

Who reads false quantities in Seale,
Or puzzles o’er the deep triangle,
Depriv’d of many a wholesome meal,
In barbarous Latin doomed to wrangle.

Renouncing every pleasing page
From authors of historic use;
Preferring to the letter’d sage
The square of the hypotenuse.
Still harmless are these occupations,

That hurt none but the hapless student,
Compared with other recreations
Which bring together the imprudent.

“We are sorry to hear so bad an account of the college-psalmody, as is contained in the following attic stanzas

Our choir could scarcely be excused,
Even as a band of raw beginners;
All mercy now must be refused
To such a set of croaking sinners.

If David, when his toils were ended,
Had heard these blockheads sing before him,
To us his psalms had ne’er descended —
In furious mood he would have tore ’em.

“But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thoroughbred poets, and though he once roved a careless mountaineer in the Highlands of Scotland, he has not of late enjoyed this advantage. Moreover, he expects no profit from his publication; and whether it succeeds or not, it is highly improbable, from his situation and pursuits, that he should again condescend to become an author. Therefore, let us take what we get and be thankful. What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this lord’s station, who does not live in a garret, but has got the sway of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, let us be thankful; and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift-horse in the mouth.”

The criticism is ascribed to Mr Francis Jeffrey, an eloquent member of the Scottish bar, and who was at that time supposed to be the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. That it was neither just nor fair is sufficiently evident, by the degree of care and artificial point with which it has been drawn up. Had the poetry been as insignificant as the critic affected to consider it, it would have argued little for the judgment of Mr Jeffrey, to take so much pains on a work which he considered worthless. But the world has no cause to repine at the severity of his strictures, for they unquestionably had the effect of kindling the indignation of Byron, and of instigating him to that retaliation which he so spiritedly inflicted in his satire of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

It is amusing to compare the respective literary reputation of the poet and the critic, as they are estimated by the public, now that the one is dead, and the other dormant. The voice of all the age acknowledges Byron to have been the greatest poetical genius of his time. Mr Jeffrey, though still enjoying the renown of being a shrewd and intelligent critic of the productions of others, has established no right to the honour of being an original or eminent author.

At the time when Byron published the satire alluded to, he had obtained no other distinction than the college reputation of being a clever, careless, dissipated student. But his dissipation was not intense, nor did it ever become habitual. He affected to be much more so than he was: his pretensions were moderated by constitutional incapacity. His health was not vigorous; and his delicacy defeated his endeavours to show that he inherited the recklessness of his father. He affected extravagance and eccentricity of conduct, without yielding much to the one, or practising a great deal of the other. He was seeking notoriety; and his attempts to obtain it gave more method to his pranks and follies than belonged to the results of natural impulse and passion. He evinced occasional instances of the generous spirit of youth; but there was in them more of ostentation than of that discrimination which dignifies kindness, and makes prodigality munificence. Nor were his attachments towards those with whom he preferred to associate, characterised by any nobler sentiment than self-indulgence; he was attached, more from the pleasure he himself received in their society, than from any reciprocal enjoyment they had with him. As he became a man of the world, his early friends dropped from him; although it is evident, by all the contemporary records of his feelings, that he cherished for them a kind, and even brotherly, affection. This secession, the common effect of the new cares, hopes, interests, and wishes, which young men feel on entering the world, Byron regarded as something analogous to desertion; and the notion tainted his mind, and irritated that hereditary sullenness of humour, which constituted an ingredient so remarkable in the composition of his more mature character.

An anecdote of this period, characteristic of his eccentricity, and the means which he scrupled not to employ in indulging it, deserves to be mentioned.

In repairing Newstead Abbey, a skull was found in a secret niche of the walls. It might have been that of the monk who haunted the house, or of one of his own ancestors, or of some victim of the morose race. It was converted into a goblet, and used at Odin-like orgies. Though the affair was but a whim of youth, more odious than poetical, it caused some talk, and raised around the extravagant host the haze of a mystery, suggesting fantasies of irreligion and horror. The inscription on the cup is not remarkable either for point or poetry.

Start not, nor deem my spot fled;
In me behold the only skull
From which, unlike a living head,
Whatever flows is never dull.

I liv’d, I lov’d, I quaff’d like thee;
I died, but earth my bones resign:
Fill up – thou canst not injure me,
The worm hath fouler lips than thine.

Better to hold the sparkling grape
Than nurse the earth-worm’s slimy brood,
And circle in the goblet’s shape
The drink of gods than reptile’s food.

Where once my wit perchance hath shone,
In aid of others let me shine;
And when, alas, our brains are gone,
What nobler substitute than wine?

Quaff while thou canst – another race,
When thou and thine like me are sped,
May rescue thee from earth’s embrace,
And rhyme and revel with the dead.

Why not? since through life’s little day,
Our heads such sad effects produce;
Redeem’d from worms and wasting clay,
This chance is theirs, to be use.

CHAPTER VII

Effect of the Criticism in the "Edinburgh Review" – "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" —His Satiety—Intention to Travel—Publishes his Satire—Takes his Seat in the House of Lords—Departs for Lisbon; thence to Gibraltar

The impression which the criticism of the *Edinburgh Review* produced upon the juvenile poet was deep and envenomed. It stung his heart, and prompted him to excess. But the paroxysms did not endure long; strong volitions of revenge succeeded, and the grasps of his mind were filled, as it were, with writhing adders. All the world knows, that this unquenchable indignation found relief in the composition of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*; a satire which, in many passages, equals, in fervour and force, the most vigorous in the language.

It was during the summer of 1808, while the poet was residing at Newstead, that *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was principally written. He bestowed more pains upon it than perhaps on any other of his works; and, though different from them all, it still exhibits strong indications of the misanthropy with which, after quitting Cambridge, he became more and more possessed. It is painful to reflect, in considering the splendid energy displayed in the poem, that the unprovoked malice which directed him to make the satire so general, was, perhaps, the main cause of that disposition to wither his reputation, which was afterwards so fervently roused. He could not but expect, that, in stigmatising with contempt and ridicule so many persons by name, some of them would retaliate. Nor could he complain of injustice if they did; for his attack was so wilful, that the rage of it can only be explained by supposing he was instigated to "the one fell swoop," by a resentful conviction, that his impillory in the *Edinburgh Review* had amused them all.

I do not conceive, that the generality of the satire can be well extenuated; but I am not inclined to regard it as having been a very heinous offence. The ability displayed in it is a sufficient compensation. The beauty of the serpent's skin appeases the aversion to its nature. Moreover, a toothless satire is verse without poetry – the most odious of all respectable things.

But, without regard to the merits or delinquency of the poem, to the acumen of its animadversions, or to the polish of the lines, it possesses, in the biography of the author, a value of the most interesting kind. It was the first burst of that dark, diseased ichor, which afterwards coloured his effusions; the overflowing suppuration of that satiety and loathing, which rendered *Childe Harold*, in particular, so original, incomprehensible, and antisocial; and bears testimony to the state of his feelings at that important epoch, while he was yet upon the threshold of the world, and was entering it with a sense of failure and humiliation, and premature disgust. For, notwithstanding his unnecessary expositions concerning his dissipation, it is beyond controversy, that at no time could it be said he was a dissipated young man. That he indulged in occasional excesses is true; but his habits were never libertine, nor did his health or stamina permit him to be distinguished in licentiousness. The declaration in which he first discloses his sobriety, contains more truth than all his pretensions to his father's qualities. "I took my gradations in the vices," says he, in that remarkable confession, "with great promptitude, but they were not to my taste; for my early passions, though violent in the extreme, were concentrated, and hated division or spreading abroad. I could have left or lost the whole world with or for that which I loved; but, though my temperament was naturally burning, I could not share in the common libertinism of the place and time without disgust; and yet this very disgust, and my heart thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrunk, as fixing upon one at a time the passions, which, spread among many, would have hurt only myself." This is vague and metaphysical enough; but it bears corroborative intimations, that the impression which he early made upon me was not incorrect. He was vain of his experiments in profligacy, but they never grew to habitude.

While he was engaged in the composition of his satire, he formed a plan of travelling; but there was a great shortcoming between the intention and the performance. He first thought of Persia; he afterwards resolved to sail for India; and had so far matured this project, as to write for information to the Arabic professor at Cambridge; and to his mother, who was not then with him at Newstead, to inquire of a friend, who had resided in India, what things would be necessary for the voyage. He formed his plan of travelling upon different reasons from those which he afterward gave out, and which have been imputed to him. He then thought that all men should in some period of their lives travel; he had at that time no tie to prevent him; he conceived that when he returned home he might be induced to enter into political life, to which his having travelled would be an advantage; and he wished to know the world by sight, and to judge of men by experience.

When his satire was ready for the press, he carried it with him to London. He was then just come of age, or about to be so; and one of his objects in this visit to the metropolis was, to take his seat in the House of Lords before going abroad; but, in advancing to this proud distinction, so soothing to the self-importance of youth, he was destined to suffer a mortification which probably wounded him as deeply as the sarcasms of the *Edinburgh Review*. Before the meeting of Parliament, he wrote to his relation and guardian, the Earl of Carlisle, to remind him that he should be of age at the commencement of the Session, in the natural hope that his Lordship would make an offer to introduce him to the House: but he was disappointed. He only received a formal reply, acquainting him with the technical mode of proceeding, and the etiquette to be observed on such occasions. It is therefore not wonderful that he should have resented such treatment; and he avenged it by those lines in his satire, for which he afterwards expressed his regret in the third canto of *Childe Harold.*

Deserted by his guardian at a crisis so interesting, he was prevented for some time from taking his seat in Parliament; being obliged to procure affidavits in proof of his grandfather's marriage with Miss Trevannion, which having taken place in a private chapel at Carhais, no regular certificate of the ceremony could be produced. At length, all the necessary evidence having been obtained, on the 13th of March, 1809, he presented himself in the House of Lords alone – a proceeding consonant to his character, for he was not so friendless nor unknown, but that he might have procured some peer to have gone with him. It, however, served to make his introduction remarkable.

On entering the House, he is described to have appeared abashed and pale: he passed the woolsack without looking round, and advanced to the table where the proper officer was attending to administer the oaths. When he had gone through them, the chancellor quitted his seat, and went towards him with a smile, putting out his hand in a friendly manner to welcome him, but he made a stiff bow, and only touched with the tip of his fingers the chancellor's hand, who immediately returned to his seat. Such is the account given of this important incident by Mr Dallas, who went with him to the bar; but a characteristic circumstance is wanting. When Lord Eldon advanced with the cordiality described, he expressed with becoming courtesy his regret that the rules of the House had obliged him to call for the evidence of his grandfather's marriage. – "Your Lordship has done your duty, and no more," was the cold reply, in the words of Tom Thumb, and which probably was the cause of the marked manner of the chancellor's cool return to his seat.

The satire was published anonymously, and immediately attracted attention; the sale was rapid, and a new edition being called for, Byron revised it. The preparations for his travels being completed, he then embarked in July of the same year, with Mr Hobhouse, for Lisbon, and thence proceeded by the southern provinces of Spain to Gibraltar.

In the account of his adventures during this journey, he seems to have felt, to an exaggerated degree, the hazards to which he was exposed. But many of his descriptions are given with a bright pen. That of Lisbon has always been admired for its justness, and the mixture of force and familiarity.

What beauties doth Lisboa's port unfold!
Her image floating on that noble tide,

Which poets vainly pave with sands of gold,
But now whereon a thousand keels did ride,
Of mighty strength since Albion was allied,
And to the Lusians did her aid afford.
A nation swoln with ignorance and pride,
Who lick, yet loathe, the hand that waves the sword
To save them from the wrath of Gaul's unsparing lord.

But whoso entereth within this town,
That sheening for celestial seems to be,
Disconsolate will wander up and down,
'Mid many things unsightly strange to see,
For hut and palace show like filthily;
The dingy denizens are reared in dirt;
No personage of high or mean degree
Doth care for cleanness of surtout and shirt,
Though shent with Egypt's plague, unkempt, unwash'd, unhurt.

Considering the interest which he afterwards took in the affairs of Greece, it is remarkable that he should have passed through Spain, at the period he has described, without feeling any sympathy with the spirit which then animated that nation. Intent, however, on his travels, pressing onward to an unknown goal, he paused not to inquire as to the earnestness of the patriotic zeal of the Spaniards, nor once dreamed, even for adventure, of taking a part in their heroic cause.

CHAPTER VIII

First Acquaintance with Byron—Embark together—The Voyage

It was at Gibraltar that I first fell in with Lord Byron. I had arrived there in the packet from England, in indifferent health, on my way to Sicily. I had then no intention of travelling. I only went a trip, intending to return home after spending a few weeks in Malta, Sicily, and Sardinia; having, before my departure, entered into the Society of Lincoln's Inn, with the design of studying the law.

At this time, my friend, the late Colonel Wright, of the artillery, was secretary to the Governor; and during the short stay of the packet at the Rock, he invited me to the hospitalities of his house, and among other civilities gave me admission to the garrison library.

The day, I well remember, was exceedingly sultry. The air was sickly; and if the wind was not a sirocco, it was a withering levanter – oppressive to the functions of life, and to an invalid denying all exercise. Instead of rambling over the fortifications, I was, in consequence, constrained to spend the hottest part of the day in the library; and, while sitting there, a young man came in and seated himself opposite to me at the table where I was reading. Something in his appearance attracted my attention. His dress indicated a Londoner of some fashion, partly by its neatness and simplicity, with just so much of a peculiarity of style as served to show, that although he belonged to the order of metropolitan beaux, he was not altogether a common one.

I thought his face not unknown to me; I began to conjecture where I could have seen him; and, after an unobserved scrutiny, to speculate both as to his character and vocation. His physiognomy was prepossessing and intelligent, but ever and anon his brows lowered and gathered; a habit, as I then thought, with a degree of affectation in it, probably first assumed for picturesque effect and energetic expression; but which I afterwards discovered was undoubtedly the occasional scowl of some unpleasant reminiscence: it was certainly disagreeable – forbidding – but still the general cast of his features was impressed with elegance and character.

At dinner, a large party assembled at Colonel Wright's; among others the Countess of Westmorland, with Tom Sheridan and his beautiful wife; and it happened that Sheridan, in relating the local news of the morning, mentioned that Lord Byron and Mr Hobhouse had come in from Spain, and were to proceed up the Mediterranean in the packet. He was not acquainted with either.

Hobhouse had, a short time before I left London,, published certain translations and poems rather respectable in their way, and I had seen the work, so that his name was not altogether strange to me. Byron's was familiar – the *Edinburgh Review* had made it so, and still more the satire of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, but I was not conscious of having seen the persons of either.

On the following evening I embarked early, and soon after the two travellers came on board; in one of whom I recognised the visitor to the library, and he proved to be Lord Byron. In the little bustle and process of embarking their luggage, his Lordship affected, as it seemed to me, more aristocracy than befitted his years, or the occasion; and I then thought of his singular scowl, and suspected him of pride and irascibility. The impression that evening was not agreeable, but it was interesting; and that forehead mark, the frown, was calculated to awaken curiosity, and beget conjectures.

Hobhouse, with more of the commoner, made himself one of the passengers at once; but Byron held himself aloof, and sat on the rail, leaning on the mizzen shrouds, inhaling, as it were, poetical sympathy, from the gloomy Rock, then dark and stern in the twilight. There was in all about him that evening much waywardness; he spoke petulantly to Fletcher, his valet; and was evidently ill at ease with himself, and fretful towards others. I thought he would turn out an unsatisfactory shipmate; yet there was something redeeming in the tones of his voice, when, some time after he had indulged his sullen meditation, he again addressed Fletcher; so that, instead of finding him ill-natured, I was soon convinced he was only capricious.

Our passage to Sardinia was tardy, owing to calms; but, in other respects, pleasant. About the third day Byron relented from his rapt mood, as if he felt it was out of place, and became playful, and disposed to contribute his fair proportion to the general endeavour to wile away the tediousness of the dull voyage. Among other expedients for that purpose, we had recourse to shooting at bottles. Byron, I think, supplied the pistols, and was the best shot, but not very pre-eminently so. In the calms, the jolly-boat was several times lowered; and, on one of those occasions, his Lordship, with the captain, caught a turtle – I rather think two – we likewise hooked a shark, part of which was dressed for breakfast, and tasted, without relish; your shark is but a cannibal dainty.

As we approached the gulf, or bay, of Cagliari, in Sardinia, a strong north wind came from the shore, and we had a whole disagreeable day of tacking, but next morning, it was Sunday, we found ourselves at anchor near the mole, where we landed. Byron, with the captain, rode out some distance into the country, while I walked with Mr Hobhouse about the town: we left our cards for the consul, and Mr Hill, the ambassador, who invited us to dinner. In the evening we landed again, to avail ourselves of the invitation; and, on this occasion, Byron and his Pylades dressed themselves as aides-de-camp – a circumstance which, at the time, did not tend to improve my estimation of the solidity of the character of either. But such is the force of habit: it appeared a less exceptionable affectation in the young peer than in the commoner.

Had we parted at Cagliari, it is probable that I should have retained a much more favourable recollection of Mr Hobhouse than of Lord Byron; for he was a cheerful companion, full of odd and droll stories, which he told extremely well; he was also good-humoured and intelligent – altogether an advantageous specimen of a well-educated English gentleman. Moreover, I was at the time afflicted with a nervous dejection, which the occasional exhilaration produced by his anecdotes and college tales often materially dissipated, though, for the most part, they were more after the manner and matter of Swift than of Addison.

Byron was, during the passage, in delicate health, and upon an abstemious regimen. He rarely tasted wine, nor more than half a glass, mingled with water, when he did. He ate little; no animal food, but only bread and vegetables. He reminded me of the ghoul that picked rice with a needle; for it was manifest, that he had not acquired his knowledge of the world by always dining so sparely. If my remembrance is not treacherous, he only spent one evening in the cabin with us – the evening before we came to anchor at Cagliari; for, when the lights were placed, he made himself a man forbid, took his station on the railing between the pegs on which the sheets are belayed and the shrouds, and there, for hours, sat in silence, enamoured, it may be, of the moon. All these peculiarities, with his caprices, and something inexplicable in the cast of his metaphysics, while they served to awaken interest, contributed little to conciliate esteem. He was often strangely rapt – it may have been from his genius; and, had its grandeur and darkness been then divulged, susceptible of explanation; but, at the time, it threw, as it were, around him the sackcloth of penitence. Sitting amid the shrouds and rattlins, in the tranquillity of the moonlight, churming an inarticulate melody, he seemed almost apparitional, suggesting dim reminiscences of him who shot the albatross. He was as a mystery in a winding-sheet, crowned with a halo.

The influence of the incomprehensible phantasma which hovered about Lord Byron has been more or less felt by all who ever approached him. That he sometimes came out of the cloud, and was familiar and earthly, is true; but his dwelling was amid the murk and the mist, and the home of his spirit in the abysm of the storm, and the hiding-places of guilt. He was, at the time of which I am speaking, scarcely two-and-twenty, and could claim no higher praise than having written a clever worldly-minded satire; and yet it was impossible, even then, to reflect on the bias of his mind, as it was revealed by the casualties of conversation, without experiencing a presentiment, that he was destined to execute some singular and ominous purpose. The description he has given of Manfred in his youth was of himself.

My spirit walk’d not with the souls of men,
Nor look’d upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine;
The aim of their existence was not mine.
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger. Though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh.
My joy was in the wilderness – to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain’s top.
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect’s wing
Flit o’er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave
Of river, stream, or ocean, in their flow —
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars, and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look listening on the scatter’d leaves,
While autumn winds were at their evening song; —
These were my pastimes – and to be alone.
For if the beings, of whom I was one —
Hating to be so – cross’d me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again.

CHAPTER IX

Dinner at the Ambassador's—Opera—Disaster of Byron at Malta—Mrs Spencer Smith

I shall always remember Cagliari with particular pleasure; for it so happened that I formed there three of the most agreeable acquaintances of my life, and one of them was with Lord Byron; for although we had been eight days together, I yet could not previously have accounted myself acquainted with his Lordship.

After dinner, we all went to the theatre, which was that evening, on account of some Court festival, brilliantly illuminated. The Royal Family were present, and the opera was performed with more taste and execution than I had expected to meet with in so remote a place, and under the restrictions which rendered the intercourse with the Continent then so difficult. Among other remarkable characters pointed out to us was a nobleman in the pit, actually under the ban of outlawry for murder. I have often wondered if the incident had any effect on the creation of *Lara*; for we know not in what small germs the conceptions of genius originate.

But the most important occurrence of that evening arose from a delicate observance of etiquette on the part of the ambassador. After carrying us to his box, which was close to that of the Royal Family, in order that we might see the members of it properly, he retired with Lord Byron to another box, an inflection of manners to propriety in the best possible taste – for the ambassador was doubtless aware that his Lordship's rank would be known to the audience, and I conceive that this little arrangement was adopted to make his person also known, by showing him with distinction apart from the other strangers.

When the performance was over, Mr Hill came down with Lord Byron to the gate of the upper town, where his Lordship, as we were taking leave, thanked him with more elocution than was precisely requisite. The style and formality of the speech amused Mr Hobhouse, as well as others; and, when the minister retired, he began to rally his Lordship on the subject. But Byron really fancied that he had acquitted himself with grace and dignity, and took the jocularity of his friend amiss – a little banter ensued – the poet became petulant, and Mr Hobhouse walked on; while Byron, on account of his lameness, and the roughness of the pavement, took hold of my arm, appealing to me, if he could have said less, after the kind and hospitable treatment we had all received. Of course, though I thought pretty much as Mr Hobhouse did, I could not do otherwise than civilly assent, especially as his Lordship's comfort, at the moment, seemed in some degree dependent on being confirmed in the good opinion he was desirous to entertain of his own courtesy. From that night I evidently rose in his good graces; and, as he was always most agreeable and interesting when familiar, it was worth my while to advance, but by cautious circumvallations, into his intimacy; for his uncertain temper made his favour precarious.

The next morning, either owing to the relaxation of his abstinence, which he could not probably well avoid amid the good things of the ambassadorial table; or, what was, perhaps, less questionable, some regret for his petulance towards his friend, he was indisposed, and did not make his appearance till late in the evening. I rather suspect, though there was no evidence of the fact, that Hobhouse received any concession which he may have made with indulgence; for he remarked to me, in a tone that implied both forbearance and generosity of regard, that it was necessary to humour him like a child. But, in whatever manner the reconciliation was accomplished, the passengers partook of the blessings of the peace. Byron, during the following day, as we were sailing along the picturesque shores of Sicily, was in the highest spirits overflowing with glee, and sparkling with quaint sentences. The champagne was uncorked and in the finest condition.

Having landed the mail at Girgenti, we stretched over to Malta, where we arrived about noon next day – all the passengers, except Orestes and Pylades, being eager to land, went on shore with the captain. They remained behind for a reason – which an accidental expression of Byron let out – much to my secret amusement; for I was aware they would be disappointed, and the anticipation was relishing. They expected – at least he did – a salute from the batteries, and sent ashore notice to Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor, of his arrival; but the guns were sulky, and evinced no respect of persons; so that late in the afternoon, about the heel of the evening, the two magnates were obliged to come on shore, and slip into the city unnoticed and unknown.

At this time Malta was in great prosperity. Her commerce was flourishing; and the goodly clusters of its profits hung ripe and rich at every door. The merchants were truly hospitable, and few more so than Mr Chabot. As I had letters to him, he invited me to dinner, along with several other friends previously engaged. In the cool of the evening, as we were sitting at our wine, Lord Byron and Mr Hobhouse were announced. His Lordship was in better spirits than I had ever seen him. His appearance showed, as he entered the room, that they had met with some adventure, and he chuckled with an inward sense of enjoyment, not altogether without spleen – a kind of malicious satisfaction – as his companion recounted with all becoming gravity their woes and sufferings, as an apology for begging a bed and morsel for the night. God forgive me! but I partook of Byron's levity at the idea of personages so consequential wandering destitute in the streets, seeking for lodgings, as it were, from door to door, and rejected at all.

Next day, however, they were accommodated by the Governor with an agreeable house in the upper part of Valetta; and his Lordship, as soon as they were domiciled, began to take lessons in Arabic from a monk – I believe one of the librarians of the public library. His whole time was not, however, devoted to study; for he formed an acquaintance with Mrs Spencer Smith, the lady of the gentleman of that name, who had been our resident minister at Constantinople: he affected a passion for her; but it was only Platonic. She, however, beguiled him of his valuable yellow diamond ring. She is the Florence of *Childe Harold*, and merited the poetical embalmment, or rather the amber immortalisation, she possesses there – being herself a heroine. There was no exaggeration in saying that many incidents of her life would appear improbable in fiction. Her adventures with the Marquis de Salvo form one of the prettiest romances in the Italian language; everything in her destiny was touched with adventure: nor was it the least of her claims to sympathy that she had incurred the special enmity of Napoleon.

After remaining about three weeks at Malta, Byron embarked with his friend in a brig of war, appointed to convoy a fleet of small merchantmen to Prevesa. I had, about a fortnight before, passed over with the packet on her return from Messina to Girgenti, and did not fall in with them again till the following spring, when we met at Athens. In the meantime, besides his Platonic dalliance with Mrs Spencer Smith, Byron had involved himself in a quarrel with an officer; but it was satisfactorily settled.

His residence at Malta did not greatly interest him. The story of its chivalrous masters made no impression on his imagination – none that appears in his works – but it is not the less probable that the remembrance of the place itself occupied a deep niche in his bosom: for I have remarked, that he had a voluntary power of forgetfulness, which, on more than one occasion, struck me as singular: and I am led in consequence to think, that something unpleasant, connected with this quarrel, may have been the cause of his suppression of all direct allusion to the island. It was impossible that his imagination could avoid the impulses of the spirit which haunts the walls and ramparts of Malta; and the silence of his muse on a topic so rich in romance, and so well calculated to awaken associations concerning the knights, in unison with the ruminations of *Childe Harold*, persuades me that there must have been some specific cause for the omission. If it were nothing in the duel, I should be inclined to say, notwithstanding the seeming improbability of the notion, that it was owing to some curious modification of vindictive spite. It might not be that Malta should receive no celebrity from his pen; but assuredly he had met with something there which made him resolute to forget the place. The question as to what it was, he never answered the result would throw light into the labyrinths of his character.

CHAPTER X

Sails from Malta to Prevesa—Lands at Patras—Sails again—Passes Ithaca—Arrival at Prevesa

It was on the 19th of September, 1809, that Byron sailed in the *Spider* brig from Malta for Prevesa, and on the morning of the fourth day after, he first saw the mountains of Greece; next day he landed at Patras, and walked for some time among the currant grounds between the town and the shore. Around him lay one of the noblest landscapes in the world, and afar in the north-east rose the purple summits of the Grecian mountains.

Having re-embarked, the *Spider* proceeded towards her destination; the poet not receiving much augmentation to his ideas of the grandeur of the ancients, from the magnitude of their realms and states. Ithaca, which he doubtless regarded with wonder and disappointment, as he passed its cliffy shores, was then in the possession of the French. In the course of a month after, the kingdom of Ulysses surrendered to a British serjeant and seven men.

Childe Harold sail'd, and pass'd the barren spot,
Where sad Penelope o'erlook'd the wave;
And onward view'd the mount, not yet forgot.
The lover's refuge, and the Lesbian's grave.
But when he saw the evening star above
Leucadia's far-projecting rock of woe,
And hail'd the last resort of fruitless love,
He felt, or deem'd he felt, no common glow;
And as the stately vessel glided slow
Beneath the shadow of that ancient mount,
He watch'd the billows' melancholy flow,
And, sunk albeit in thought as he was wont —
More placid seem'd his eye, and smooth his pallid front.

At seven in the evening, of the same day on which he passed Leucadia, the vessel came to anchor off Prevesa. The day was wet and gloomy, and the appearance of the town was little calculated to bespeak cheerfulness. But the novelty in the costume and appearance of the inhabitants and their dwellings, produced an immediate effect on the imagination of Byron, and we can trace the vivid impression animating and adorning his descriptions.

The wild Albanian, kirtled to his knee,
With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun,
And gold-embroider'd garments, fair to see;
The crimson-scarfed men of Macedon;
The Delhi with his cap of terror on,
And crooked glaive; the lively, supple Greek,
And swarthy Nubia's mutilated son;
The bearded Turk, that rarely deigns to speak,
Master of all around, too potent to be meek.

Having partaken of a consecutive dinner, dish after dish, with the brother of the English consul, the travellers proceeded to visit the Governor of the town: he resided within the enclosure of a fort, and they were conducted towards him by a long gallery, open on one side, and through several large unfurnished rooms. In the last of this series, the Governor received them with the wonted solemn civility of the Turks, and entertained them with pipes and coffee. Neither his appearance, nor the style of the entertainment, were distinguished by any display of Ottoman grandeur; he was seated on a sofa in the midst of a group of shabby Albanian guards, who had but little reverence for the greatness of the guests, as they sat down beside them, and stared and laughed at their conversation with the Governor.

But if the circumstances and aspect of the place derived no importance from visible splendour, every object around was enriched with stories and classical recollections. The battle of Actium was fought within the gulf.

Ambracia's gulf behold, where once was lost
A world for woman – lovely, harmless thing!
In yonder rippling bay, their naval host
Did many a Roman chief and Asian king
To doubtful conflict, certain slaughter bring.
Look where the second Cæsar's trophies rose!
Now, like the lands that rear'd them, withering;
Imperial monarchs doubling human woes!
God! was Thy globe ordained for such to win and lose?

Having inspected the ruins of Nicopolis, which are more remarkable for their desultory extent and scattered remnants, than for any remains of magnificence or of beauty,

Childe Harold pass'd o'er many a mount sublime,
Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales.
Yet in famed Attica such lovely dales
Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast
A charm they know not; loved Parnassus fails,
Though classic ground and consecrated most,
To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast.

In this journey he was still accompanied by Mr Hobhouse. They had provided themselves with a Greek to serve as a dragoman. With this person they soon became dissatisfied, in consequence of their general suspicion of Greek integrity, and because of the necessary influence which such an appendage acquires in the exercise of his office. He is the tongue and purse-bearer of his master; he procures him lodging, food, horses, and all conveniences; must support his dignity with the Turks – a difficult task in those days for a Greek – and his manifold trusts demand that he should be not only active and ingenious, but prompt and resolute. In the qualifications of this essential servant, the travellers were not fortunate – he never lost an opportunity of pilfering; – he was, however, zealous, bustling, and talkative, and withal good-humoured; and, having his mind intent on one object – making money – was never lazy nor drunken, negligent nor unprepared.

On the 1st of October they embarked, and sailed up the Gulf of Salona, where they were shown into an empty barrack for lodgings. In this habitation twelve Albanian soldiers and an officer were quartered, who behaved towards them with civility. On their entrance, the officer gave them pipes and coffee, and after they had dined in their own apartment, he invited them to spend the evening with him, and they condescended to partake of his hospitality.

Such instances as these in ordinary biography would be without interest; but when it is considered how firmly the impression of them was retained in the mind of the poet, and how intimately they entered into the substance of his reminiscences of Greece, they acquire dignity, and become epochal in the history of the development of his intellectual powers.

"All the Albanians," says Mr Hobhouse, "strut very much when they walk, projecting their chests, throwing back their heads, and moving very slowly from side to side. Elmas (as the officer was called) had this strut more than any man perhaps we saw afterwards; and as the sight was then quite new to us, we could not help staring at the magisterial and superlatively dignified air of a man with great holes in his elbows, and looking altogether, as to his garment, like what we call a bull-beggar." Mr Hobhouse describes him as a captain, but by the number of men under him, he could have been of no higher rank than serjeant. Captains are centurions.

After supper, the officer washed his hands with soap, inviting the travellers to do the same, for they had eaten a little with him; he did not, however, give the soap, but put it on the floor with an air so remarkable, as to induce Mr Hobhouse to inquire the meaning of it, and he was informed that there is a superstition in Turkey against giving soap: it is thought it will wash away love.

Next day it rained, and the travellers were obliged to remain under shelter. The evening was again spent with the soldiers, who did their utmost to amuse them with Greek and Albanian songs and freaks of jocularity.

In the morning of the 3rd of October they set out for Arta, with ten horses; four for themselves and servants, four for their luggage, and two for two soldiers whom they were induced to take with them as guards. Byron takes no notice of his visit to Arta in *Childe Harold*; but Mr Hobhouse has given a minute account of the town. They met there with nothing remarkable.

The remainder of the journey to Joannina, the capital then of the famous Ali Pasha, was rendered unpleasant by the wetness of the weather; still it was impossible to pass through a country so picturesque in its features, and rendered romantic by the traditions of robberies and conflicts, without receiving impressions of that kind of imagery which constitutes the embroidery on the vestment of poetry.

The first view of Joannina seen in the morning light, or glittering in the setting sun, is lively and alluring. The houses, domes, and minarets, shining through gardens of orange and lemon trees and groves of cypresses; the lake, spreading its broad mirror at the foot of the town, and the mountains rising abrupt around, all combined to present a landscape new and beautiful. Indeed, where may be its parallel? the lake was the Acherusian, Mount Pindus was in sight, and the Elysian fields of mythology spread in the lovely plains over which they passed in approaching the town.

On entering Joannina, they were appalled by a spectacle characteristic of the country. Opposite a butcher's shop, they beheld hanging from the boughs of a tree a man's arm, with part of the side torn from the body. How long is it since Temple Bar, in the very heart of London, was adorned with the skulls of the Scottish noblemen who were beheaded for their loyalty to the son and representative of their ancient kings!

The object of the visit to Joannina was to see Ali Pasha, in those days the most celebrated Vizier in all the western provinces of the Ottoman empire; but he was then at Tepellené. The luxury of resting, however, in a capital, was not to be resisted, and they accordingly suspended their journey until they had satisfied their curiosity with an inspection of every object which merited attention. Of Joannina, it may be said, they were almost the discoverers, so little was known of it in England – I may say in Western Europe – previous to their visit.

The palace and establishment of Ali Pasha were of regal splendour, combining with Oriental pomp the elegance of the Occident, and the travellers were treated by the Vizier's officers with all the courtesy due to the rank of Lord Byron, and every facility was afforded them to prosecute their journey. The weather, however – the season being far advanced – was wet and unsettled, and they suffered more fatigue and annoyance than travellers for information or pleasure should have had to encounter.

The journey from Joannina to Zitza is among the happiest sketches in the *Pilgrimage of Childe Harold.*

He pass'd bleak Pindus, Acherusia's lake,
And left the primal city of the land,
And onwards did his farther journey take
To greet Albania's chief, whose dread command
Is lawless law; for with a bloody hand
He sways a nation, turbulent and bold:
Yet here and there some daring mountain-band
Disdain his power, and from their rocky hold
Hurl their defiance far, nor yield unless to gold.

Monastic Zitza! from thy shady brow,
Thou small, but favour'd spot of holy ground!
Where'er we gaze, above, around, below,
What rainbow tints, what magic charms are found;
Rock, river, forest, mountain, all abound;
And bluest skies that harmonize the whole.
Beneath, the distant torrent's rushing sound
Tells where the volumed cataract doth roll
Between those hanging rocks that shock yet please the soul.

In the course of this journey the poet happened to be alone with his guides, when they lost their way during a tremendous thunderstorm, and he has commemorated the circumstance in the spirited stanzas beginning —

Chill and mink is the nightly blast.

CHAPTER XI

Halt at Zitza—The River Acheron—Greek Wine—A Greek Chariot—Arrival at Tepellené—The Vizier's Palace

The travellers, on their arrival at Zitza, went to the monastery to solicit accommodation; and after some parley with one of the monks, through a small grating in a door plated with iron, on which marks of violence were visible, and which, before the country had been tranquillised under the vigorous dominion of Ali Pasha, had been frequently battered in vain by the robbers who then infested the neighbourhood. The prior, a meek and lowly man, entertained them in a warm chamber with grapes and a pleasant white wine, not trodden out by the feet, as he informed them, but expressed by the hand. To this gentle and kind host Byron alludes in his description of "Monastic Zitza."

Amid the grove that crowns yon tufted hill,
Which, were it not for many a mountain nigh
Rising in lofty ranks, and loftier still,
Might well itself be deem'd of dignity;
The convent's white walls glisten fair on high:
Here dwells the caloyer, nor rude is he,
Nor niggard of his cheer; the passer-by
Is welcome still; nor heedless will he flee
From hence, if he delight kind Nature's sheen to see.

Having halted a night at Zitza, the travellers proceeded on their journey next morning, by a road which led through the vineyards around the villages, and the view from a barren hill, which they were obliged to cross, is described with some of the most forcible touches of the poet's pencil.

Dusky and huge, enlarging on the sight,
Nature's volcanic amphitheatre,
Chimera's Alps, extend from left to right;
Beneath, a living valley seems to stir.
Flocks play, trees wave, streams flow, the mountain fir
Nodding above; behold Black Acheron!
Once consecrated to the sepulchre.
Pluto! if this be hell I look upon,
Close shamed Elysium's gates; my shade shall seek for none!

The Acheron, which they crossed in this route, is now called the Kalamas, a considerable stream, as large as the Avon at Bath but towards the evening they had some cause to think the Acheron had not lost all its original horror; for a dreadful thunderstorm came on, accompanied with deluges of rain, which more than once nearly carried away their luggage and horses. Byron himself does not notice this incident in *Childe Harold*, nor even the adventure more terrific which he met with alone in similar circumstances on the night before their arrival at Zitza, when his guides lost their way in the defiles of the mountains – adventures sufficiently disagreeable in the advent, but full of poesy in the remembrance.

The first halt, after leaving Zitza, was at the little village of Mosure, where they were lodged in a miserable cabin, the residence of a poor priest, who treated them with all the kindness his humble means afforded. From this place they proceeded next morning through a wild and savage country, interspersed with vineyards, to Delvinaki, where it would seem they first met with genuine Greek wine, that is, wine mixed with resin and lime – a more odious draught at the first taste than any drug the apothecary mixes. Considering how much of allegory entered into the composition of the Greek mythology, it is probable that in representing the infant Bacchus holding a pine, the ancient sculptors intended an impersonation of the circumstance of resin being employed to preserve new wine.

The travellers were now in Albania, the native region of Ali Pasha, whom they expected to find at Libokavo; but on entering the town, they were informed that he was further up the country at Tepellené, or Tepalen, his native place. In their route from Libokavo to Tepalen they met with no adventure, nor did they visit Argyro-castro, which they saw some nine or ten miles off – a large city, supposed to contain about twenty thousand inhabitants, chiefly Turks. When they reached Cezarades, a distance of not more than nine miles, which had taken them five hours to travel, they were agreeably accommodated for the night in a neat cottage; and the Albanian landlord, in whose demeanour they could discern none of that cringing, downcast, sinister look which marked the degraded Greek, received them with a hearty welcome.

Next morning they resumed their journey, and halted one night more before they reached Tepellené, in approaching which they met a carriage, not inelegantly constructed after the German fashion, with a man on the box driving four-in-hand, and two Albanian soldiers standing on the footboard behind. They were floundering on at a trot through mud and mire, boldly regardless of danger; but it seemed to the English eyes of the travellers impossible that such a vehicle should ever be able to reach Libokavo, to which it was bound. In due time they crossed the river Laos, or Voioutza, which was then full, and appeared both to Byron and his friend as broad as the Thames at Westminster; after crossing it on a stone bridge, they came in sight of Tepellené, when

The sun had sunk behind vast Tomerit,
And Laos, wide and fierce, came roaring by;
The shades of wonted night were gathering yet,
When down the steep banks, winding warily,
Childe Harold saw, like meteors in the sky,
The glittering minarets of Tepalen,
Whose walls o’erlook the stream; and drawing nigh,
He heard the busy hum of warrior-men
Swelling the breeze that sigh’d along the lengthening glen.

On their arrival, they proceeded at once to the residence of Ali Pasha, an extensive rude pile, where they witnessed a scene, not dissimilar to that which they might, perhaps, have beheld some hundred years ago, in the castle-yard of a great feudal baron. Soldiers, with their arms piled against the wall, were assembled in different parts of the court, several horses, completely caparisoned, were led about, others were neighing under the hands of the grooms; and for the feast of the night, armed cooks were busy dressing kids and sheep. The scene is described with the poet’s liveliest pencil.

Richly caparison’d a ready row
Of armed horse, and many a warlike store,
Circled the wide extending court below;
Above, strange groups adorn’d the corridor,
And ofttimes through the area’s echoing door,
Some high-capp’d Tartar spurr’d his steed away.
The Turk, the Greek, the Albanian, and the Moor
Here mingled in their many-hued array,
While the deep war-drum’s sound announced the close of day.

Some recline in groups,
Scanning the motley scene that varies round.
There some grave Moslem to devotion stoops,
And some that smoke, and some that play, are found.
Here the Albanian proudly treads the ground
Half-whispering, there the Greek is heard to prate.
Hark! from the mosque the nightly solemn sound;
The Muezzin's call doth shake the minaret.
"There is no god but God! – to prayer – lo, God is great!"

The peculiar quietness and ease with which the Mahommedans say their prayers, struck the travellers as one of the most peculiar characteristics which they had yet witnessed of that people. Some of the graver sort began their devotions in the places where they were sitting, undisturbed and unnoticed by those around them who were otherwise engaged. The prayers last about ten minutes they are not uttered aloud, but generally in a low voice, sometimes with only a motion of the lips; and, whether performed in the public street or in a room, attract no attention from the bystanders. Of more than a hundred of the guards in the gallery of the Vizier's mansion at Tepellené, not more than five or six were seen at prayers. The Albanians are not reckoned strict Mahommedans; but no Turk, however irreligious himself, ever disturbs the devotion of others.

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