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ART. X. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. A Romance.* By Lord Byron. 4to. pp. 230. London, 1812.

LORD BYRON has improved marvellously since his last appearance at our tribunal;—and this, though it bear a very affected title, is really a volume of very considerable power, spirit and originality—which not only atones for the evil works of his nonage, but gives promise of a further excellence hereafter; to which it is quite comfortable to look forward.

The most surprising thing about the present work, indeed, is, that it should please and interest so much as it does, with so few of the ordinary ingredients of interest or poetical delight. There is no story or adventure—and, indeed, no incident of any kind; the whole poem—to give a very short account of it—consisting of a series of reflections made in travelling through a part of Spain and Portugal, and in sailing up the Mediterranean to the shores of Greece. These reflections, too, and the descriptions out of which they arise, are presented without any regular order or connexion—being sometimes strung upon the slender thread of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and sometimes held together by the still slighter tie of the author's local situation at the time of writing. As there are no incidents, there cannot well be any characters;—and accordingly, with the exception of a few national sketches, which form part of the landscape of his pilgrimage, that of the hero himself is the only delineation of the kind that is offered to the reader of this volume;—and this hero, we must say, appears to us as oddly chosen as he is imperfectly employed. *Childe Harold* is a sated epicure—sickened with the very fulness of prosperity—oppressed with ennui, and stung with occasional remorse;—his heart hardened by a long course of sensual indulgence, and his opinion of mankind degraded by his acquaintance with the baser part of them. In this state he wanders over the fairest and most interesting parts of Europe, in the vain hope of stimulating his palsied sensibility by novelty, or at least of occasionally forgetting his mental anguish in the toils and perils of his journey. Like Milton's fiend, however, he 'sees undelighted all delight,' and passes on through the great wilderness of the world with a heart shut to all human sympathy,—sullenly despising the stir both of its business and its pleasures—but hating and despising himself most of all, for beholding it with so little emotion.

Lord Byron takes the trouble to caution his readers against supposing that he meant to shadow out his own character under the dark and repulsive traits of that which we have just exhibited; a caution which was surely unnecessary—though it is impossible

not to observe, that the mind of the noble author has been so far tinged by his strong conception of this Satanic personage, that the sentiments and reflections which he delivers in his own name, have all received a shade of the same gloomy and misanthropic colouring which invests those of his imaginary hero. The general strain of those sentiments, too, is such as we should have thought very little likely to attract popularity, in the present temper of this country. They are not only complexionally dark and disdainful, but run directly counter to very many of our national passions, and most favoured propensities. Lord Byron speaks with the most unbounded contempt of the Portuguese—with despondence of Spain—and in a very slighting and sarcastic manner of wars, and victories, and military heroes in general. Neither are his religious opinions more orthodox, we apprehend, than his politics; for he not only speaks without any respect of priests, and creeds, and dogmas of all descriptions, but doubts very freely of the immortality of the soul, and other points as fundamental.

Such are some of the disadvantages under which this poem lays claim to the public favour; and it will be readily understood that we think it has no ordinary merit, when we say, that we have little doubt that it will find favour, in spite of these disadvantages. Its chief excellence is a singular freedom and boldness, both of thought and expression, and a great occasional force and felicity of diction, which is the more pleasing that it does not appear to be the result either of long labour or humble imitation. There is, indeed, a tone of self-willed independence and originality about the whole composition—a certain plain manliness and strength of manner, which is infinitely refreshing after the sickly affectations of so many modern writers; and reconciles us not only to the asperity into which it sometimes degenerates, but even in some degree to the unamiableness upon which it constantly borders. We do not know, indeed, whether there is not something *piquant* in the very novelty and singularity of that cast of misanthropy and universal scorn, which we have already noticed as among the repulsive features of the composition. It excites a kind of curiosity, at least, to see how objects, which have been usually presented under so different an aspect, appear through so dark a medium; and undoubtedly gives great effect to the flashes of emotion and suppressed sensibility that occasionally burst through the gloom. The best parts of the poem, accordingly, are those which embody those stern and disdainful reflexions, to which the author seems to recur with unfeigned cordiality and eagerness—and through which we think we can sometimes discern the strugglings of a gentler feeling, to
which

which he is afraid to abandon himself. There is much strength; in short, and some impetuous feeling in this poem—but very little softness; some pity for mankind—but very little affection; and no enthusiasm in the cause of any living men, or admiration of their talents or virtues. The author's inspiration does not appear to have brought him any beatific visions, nor to have peopled his fancy with any forms of loveliness; and though his lays are often both loud and lofty, they neither 'lap us in Elysium,' nor give us any idea that it was in Elysium that they were framed.

The descriptions are often exceedingly good; and the diction, though unequal and frequently faulty, has on the whole a freedom, copiousness and vigour, which we are not sure that we could match in any cotemporary poet. Scott alone, we think, possesses a style equally strong and natural; but Scott's is more made up of imitations, and indeed is frequently a mere cento of other writers—while Lord Byron's has often a nervous simplicity and manly freshness which reminds us of Dryden, and an occasional force and compression, in some of the smaller pieces especially, which afford no unfavourable resemblance of Crabbe.

The versification is in the stanza of Spencer; and none of all the imitators of that venerable bard have availed themselves more extensively of the great range of tones and manners in which his example entitles them to indulge. Lord Byron has accordingly given us descriptions in all their extremes;—sometimes compressing into one stanza the whole characteristic features of a country, and sometimes expanding into twenty the details of a familiar transaction;—condescending, for pages together, to expatiate in minute and ludicrous representations,—and mingling long apostrophes, execrations, and the expression of personal emotion, with the miscellaneous picture which it is his main business to trace on the imagination of his readers. Not satisfied even with this license of variety, he has passed at will, and entirely, from the style of Spencer, to that of his own age,—and intermingled various lyrical pieces with the solemn stanza of his general measure.

The poem begins with an account of Childe Harold's early profligacy, and the joyless riot in which he wasted his youthful days.—At last,

‘Worse than adversity the Childe befell;

He felt the fullness of satiety:

Then loathed he in his native land to dwell.’

So he sets sail for Lisbon; and amuses himself on the way with inditing a sort of farewell ballad to his native country, in which there are some strong and characteristic stanzas. The

view of Lisbon, and the Portuguese landscape, is given with considerable spirit;—the marking features of the latter are well summed up in the following lines.

'The horrid crags, by toppling convent crown'd,
The cork trees hoar that clothe the shaggy steep,
The mountain moss by scorching skies imbrown'd,
The sunken glen, whose sunless shrubs must weep,
The tender azure of the unruffled deep,
The orange tints that gild the greenest bough,
The torrents that from cliff to valley leap,
The vine on high, the willow branch below,
Mix'd in one mighty scene, with varied beauty glow.' p. 17.

There is then a digression, half in the style of invective and half of derision, on the Convention of Cintra; after which the *Childe* proceeds for Spain. The description of the upland frontier by which he enters, is striking and vigorous.

'More bleak to view the hills at length recede,
And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend:
Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed!
Far as the eye discerns, withouten end,
Spain's realms appear whereon her shepherds tend
Flocks, whose rich fleece right well the trader knows.
Now must the pastor's arm his lambs defend:
For Spain is compass'd by unyielding foes,
And all must shield their all, or share subjection's woes.' p. 23.

After this comes a spirited invocation to the genius of Spain, and her ancient idol of Chivalry; followed by a rapid view of her present state of devastation; which concludes with a bold personification of Battle.

'Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon.' p. 27.

The following passage affords a good specimen of the force of Lord Byron's style; as well as of that singular turn of sentiment which we have doubted whether to rank among the defects or the attractions of this performance.

'Three hosts combine to offer sacrifice;
Three tongues prefer strange orisons on high;
Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies;
The shouts are, France, Spain, Albion, Victory!
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but ever fights in vain,
Are met—as if at home they could not die—
To feed the crow on Talavera's plain,
And fertilize the field that each pretends to gain.

There shall they rot—Ambition's honour'd fools !
 Yes—honour decks the turf that wraps their clay !
 Vain sophistry !—In these behold the tools,
 The broken tools, that tyrants cast away
 By myriads, when they dare to pave their way
 With human hearts—to what ?—a dream alone, &c.

Enough of Battle's minions ! let them play
 Their game of lives, and barter breath for fame ;
 Fame, that will scarce reanimate their clay,
 Though thousands fall to deck some single name.
 In sooth 'twere sad to thwart their noble aim
 Who strike, blest hirelings ! for their country's good,
 And die, that living might have prov'd her shame ;
 Perished perchance in some domestic feud,

Or in a narrower sphere wild rapine's path pursu'd.' p. 28-30.

The following is in a more relenting mood.

' Not so the rustic—with his trembling mate
 He lurks, nor casts his heavy eye afar,
 Lest he should view his vineyard desolate,
 Blasted below the dun hot breath of war.
 No more beneath soft eve's consenting star
 Fandango twirls his jocund castanet :
 Ah, monarchs ! could ye taste the mirth ye mar,
 Not in the toils of glory would ye fret ;

The hoarse dull drum would sleep, and man be happy yet !' p. 31.

After this, there is a transition to the maid of Saragoza, and a rapturous encomium on the beauty of the Spanish women ; in the very middle of which, the author, who wrote this part of his work in Greece, happens to lift up his eyes to the celebrated peak of Parnassus—and immediately, and without the slightest warning, bursts out into the following rapturous invocation, which is unquestionably among the most spirited passages of the poem.

' Oh, thou Parnassus ! whom I now survey,
 Not in the phrenzy of a dreamer's eye,
 Not in the fabled landscape of a lay,
 But soaring snow-clad through thy native sky
 In the wild pomp of mountain majesty !
 What marvel if I thus essay to sing ?
 The humblest of thy pilgrims passing by
 Would gladly woo thine echoes with his string,

Though from thy heights no more one Muse will wave her wing.

' Oft have I dream'd of thee ! whose glorious name
 Who knows not, knows not man's divinest lore ;
 And now I view thee, 'tis, alas ! with shame
 That I in feeblest accents must adore.

When

When I recount thy worshippers of yore
 I tremble, and can only bend the knee ;
 Nor raise my voice, nor vainly dare to soar,
 But gaze beneath thy cloudy canopy
 In silent joy to think at last I look on Thee !

Though here no more Apollo haunts his grot,
 And thou, the Muses' seat, art now their grave !
 Some gentle Spirit still pervades the spot,
 Sighs in the gale, keeps silence in the cave,
 And glides with glassy foot o'er yon melodious Wave. ' p. 38-39.

The author then finds his way back to his subject; and gives us an animated picture of the loose and wanton gayeties of Cadiz, and the diversions of her Sabbath, as contrasted with the sober enjoyments of a London Sunday. This introduces a very long and minute description of a bull-fight, which is executed, however, with great spirit and dignity; and then there is a short return upon Childe Harold's gloom and misery, which he explains in a few energetic stanzas addressed 'To Inez.' They exemplify that strength of writing and power of versification with which we were so much struck in some of Mr Crabbe's smaller pieces, and seem to us to give a very true and touching view of the misery that frequently arises in a soul surfeited with enjoyment.

• Nay, smile not at my sullen brow,
 Alas ! I cannot smile again ;
 Yet heaven avert that ever thou
 Should'st weep, and haply weep in vain.

It is not love, it is not hate,
 Nor low ambition's honours lost,
 That bids me loathe my present state,
 And fly from all I priz'd the most.

It is that weariness which springs
 From all I meet, or hear, or see :
 To me no pleasure beauty brings ;
 Thine eyes have scarce a charm for me.

It is that settled, ceaseless gloom
 The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore ;
 That will not look beyond the tomb,
 But cannot hope for rest before. ' p. 50-52.

There are more of those verses; but we cannot now make room for them. The canto ends with a view of the atrocities of the French; the determined valour of the Spanish peasantry; and some reflections on the extraordinary condition of that people,

• Where all are noble, save Nobility ;
 None hug a conqueror's chain, save fallen Chivalry !'

H h 2

• They

' They fight for freedom who were never free ;
A kingless people for a nerveless state,
The vassals combat when their chieftains flee,
True to the veriest slaves of Treachery.'

The second canto conducts us to Greece and Albania ; and opens with a solemn address to Athens—which leads again to those gloomy and uncomfortable thoughts which seem but too familiar to the mind of the author.

' Ancient of days ! august Athena ! where,
Where are thy men of might ? thy grand in soul ?
Gone---glimmering through the dream of things that were.
First in the race that led to glory's goal,
They won, and pass'd away---is this the whole ?
A school-boy's tale, the wonder of an hour !

Son of the morning, rise ! approach you here !
Come---but molest not yon defenceless urn :
Look on this spot---a nation's sepulchre !
Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.
Even gods must yield---religions take their turn :
'Twas Jove's---'tis Mahomet's---and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds ;

Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds.

Bound to the earth, he lifts his eye to heaven---
Is't not enough, unhappy thing ! to know
Thou art ? Is this a boon so kindly given,
That being, thou would'st be again, and go,
Thou know'st not, reck'st not to what region, so
On earth no more, but mingled with the skies ?
Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe ?' &c. p. 62-63.

The same train of contemplation is pursued through several stanzas : one of which consists of the following moralization on a skull which he gathers from the ruins—and appears to us to be written with great force and originality.

' Look on its broken arch, its ruin'd wall,
Its chambers desolate, and portals foul :
Yes, this was once Ambition's airy hall,
The dome of Thought, the palace of the Soul :
Behold through each lack-lustre, eyeless hole,
The gay recess of Wisdom and of Wit,
And Passion's host, that never brook'd control :
Can all, saint, sage, or sophist ever writ,
People this lonely tower, this tenement reft ?' p. 64.

There is then a most furious and unmeasured invective on Lord Elgin, for his spoliation of the fallen city ; and when this is exhausted, we are called upon to accompany Harold in his
voyage

voyage along the shores of Greece. His getting under way is described with great truth and spirit.

' He that has sail'd upon the dark blue sea,
Has view'd at times, I ween, a full fair sight ;
When the fresh breeze is fair as breeze may be,
The white sail set, the gallant frigate tight ;
Masts, spires, and strand retiring to the right,
The glorious main expanding o'er the bow,
The convoy spread like wild swans in their flight,
The dullest sailer wearing bravely now,
So gaily curl the waves before each dashing prow.' p. 69.

The quiet of the still and lonely night, however, draws the author back again to his gloomy meditations. There is great power, we think, and great bitterness of soul, in the following stanzas.

' To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal foot hath ne'er, or rarely been ;
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold ;
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean ;
This is not solitude ; 'tis but to hold
Converse with nature's charms, and see her stores unroll'd.
But midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
And roam along, the world's tir'd denizen,
With none who bless us, none whom we can bless ;
Minions of splendour shrinking from distress !
None that, with kindred consciousness endued,
If we were not, would seem to smile the less
Of all that flatter'd, follow'd, sought, and sued :
This is to be alone ; this, this is solitude !' p. 73-74.

Childe Harold cares little for scenes of battle ; and passes *Actium* and *Lepanto* with indifference.

' 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.
Morn dawns ; and with it stern *Albania's* hills
Dark *Sulis'* rocks, and *Pindus'* inland peak,

Rob'd half in mist, bedew'd with snowy rills,
 Array'd in many a dun and purple streak,
 Arise ; and as the clouds along them break,
 Disclose the dwelling of the mountaineer :
 Here roams the wolf, the eagle whets his beak,
 Birds, beasts of prey, and wilder men appear,

And gathering storms around convulse the closing year.' p. 81.

This is powerful description ;—and so is a great deal of what follows, as to the aspect of the Turkish cities, the costume of their warriors, and the characters and occupations of their women. But we must draw to a close with our extracts ; and we prefer the commemoration of classic glories. After a solemn and touching exposition of the degraded and hopeless state of modern Greece, Lord Byron proceeds—

' Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild,
 Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
 Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smil'd ;
 And still his honied wealth Hymettus yields :
 There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
 The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air ;
 Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
 Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare :
 Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

' Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground,
 No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mould ;
 But one vast realm of wonder spreads around,
 And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,
 Till the sense aches with gazing to behold
 The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon :
 Each hill and dale, each deepening glen and wold
 Defies the power which crush'd thy temples gone :
 Age shakes Athena's tower, but spares gray Marathon.'

p. 104, 105.

The poem closes with a few pathetic stanzas to the memory of a beloved object, who appears to have died during the author's wanderings among the Grecian cities.

The extracts we have now made, will enable our readers to judge of this poem for themselves ; nor have we much to add to the general remarks which we took the liberty of offering at the beginning. Its chief fault is the want of story, or object ; and the dark, and yet not tender spirit which breathes through almost every part of it. The general strain of the composition, we have already said, appears to us remarkably good ; but it is often very diffuse, and not unfrequently tame and prosaic. We can scarcely conceive any thing more mean and flat, for instance, than this encomium on the landscapes of Illyria.

' Yet in fam'd Attica such lovely dales
Are rarely seen ; nor can fair Tempe boast
A charm they know not ; lov'd Parnassus fails,
Though classic ground and consecrated most,
To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast.' p. 83.

Though even this is more tolerable to our taste than such a line as the following—

' Death rides upon the sulphury Siroc ;'

and several others that might be collected with no great trouble.

The work, in short, bears considerable marks of haste and carelessness ; and is rather a proof of the author's powers, than an example of their successful exertion. It shows the compass of his instrument, and the power of his hand ; though we cannot say that we are very much delighted either with the air he has chosen, or the style in which it is executed. The Notes are written in a flippant, lively, *tranchant* and assuming style—neither very deep nor very witty ; though rather entertaining, and containing some curious information as to the character and qualifications of the modern Greeks ; of whom, as well as of the Portuguese, Lord Byron seems inclined to speak much more favourably in prose than in verse.

The smaller pieces that conclude the volume, are in general spirited and well versified. The three last, which are all a kind of elegies in honour of the same lady whose loss is deplored in the concluding stanzas of the Pilgrimage, are decidedly the best ; and appear to us to be written with great beauty and feeling, though not in the most difficult style of composition. The reader may take the following specimens.

- ' One struggle more, and I am free
From pangs that rend my heart in twain ;
One last long sigh to love and thee,
Then back to busy life again,
It suits me well to mingle now
With things that never pleas'd before ;
Though every joy is fled below,
What future grief can touch me more ?
- ' In vain my lyre would lightly breathe !
The smile that sorrow fain would wear
But mocks the woe that lurks beneath,
Like roses o'er a sepulchre,
Though gay companions o'er the bow
Dispel awhile the sense of ill ;
Though pleasure fires the madd'ning soul ;
The heart---the heart is lonely still !
- ' My Thyrza's pledge in better days,
When love and life alike were new !
How different now thou meet'st my gaze !
How ting'd by time with sorow's hue !

The heart that gave itself with thee
 Is silent---ah, were mine as still !
 Though cold as e'en the dead can be,
 It feels, it sickens with the chill.' p. 197---200.

' Ours too the glance none saw beside ;
 The smile none else might understand ;
 The whisper'd thought of hearts allied,
 The pressure of the thrilling hand ;
 The kiss so guiltless and refin'd
 That Love each warmer wish forbore----
 Those eyes proclaim'd so pure a mind,
 Ev'n passion blush'd to plead for more----
 The tone, that taught me to rejoice,
 When prone, unlike thee, to repine ;
 The song, celestial from thy voice,
 But sweet to me from none but thine.' p. 193---194.

' The voice that made those sounds more sweet
 Is hush'd, and all their charms are fled ;
 And now their softest notes repeat
 A dirge, an anthem o'er the dead !
 Yes, Thyrsa ! yes, they breathe of thee,
 Beloved dust ! since dust thou art ;
 And all that once was harmony
 Is worse than discord to my heart !' p. 195---196.

The Appendix contains some account of Romaic, or modern Greek authors, with a very few specimens of their language and literary attainments. There is a long note upon the same subject, at p. 149, in which Lord Byron does us the honour to controvert some opinions which are expressed in our Thirty-First Number ; and to correct some mistakes into which he thinks we have there fallen. To these strictures of the noble author we feel no inclination to trouble our readers with any reply.—But there is one paragraph, in which he not only disclaims any wish to conciliate our favour—but speaks of his ' private resentments ' against us ; and declares, that he has no wish to cancel the remembrance of any syllable he has formerly published—upon which we will confess that we have been sorely tempted to make some observations. Our sense of propriety, however, has determined us to resist this temptation ; and we shall merely observe, therefore, that if we viewed with astonishment the immeasurable fury with which the minor poet received the innocent pleasantry and moderate castigation of our remarks on his first publication, we now feel nothing but pity for the strange irritability of temperament which can still cherish a private resentment for such a cause

cause—or wish to perpetuate the memory of personalities so outrageous as to have been injurious only to their author. For our own parts, when we speak in our collective and public capacity, we have neither resentments nor predilections; and take no merit to ourselves for having spoken of Lord Byron's present publication exactly as we should have done, had we never heard of him before as an author.

ART. XI. *ÆSCHYLI TRAGÆDIÆ, ex Editione THOMÆ STANLEII. Accedunt Notæ VV. DD. quibus suas intertexuit SAMUEL BUTLER, S. T. P. Cantabrigiæ, Typis et Sumptibus Academicis. Tom. II. 4to. Tom. III. & IV. 8vo. 1811.*

WE reviewed the former volumes of this learned and laborious work with the freedom that is indispensable, both to the fairness and the effect of our criticisms; and, we hope, without any violation of the respect that is due to the skill and diligence of the Editor. Dr Butler, however, while he took benefit from several of our remarks, thought fit to take offence at them also; and put forth an epistolary diatribe on the subject, to which, we are persuaded, he is now aware it would not be very difficult to reply. As we discharge the functions of Judges, however, we hope we shall not be found wanting in their temper: and neither the example of Dr Butler, nor the obvious advantages we should have in such a contest, shall tempt us into a war of personalities. We shall proceed, therefore, to examine the volumes before us with the same calmness and the same freedom, as if we were ignorant of the effect of our former animadversions; and, entertaining the most sincere respect for the industry and attainments of that reverend person, shall continue to think we do a service to the cause of good learning, to which his labours and ours are equally devoted, if we are enabled to correct any errors, or to supply any omissions with which he may be chargeable.

The two massy volumes before us contain only two plays; "The Seven Chiefs against Thebes," and the "Agamemnon." For the satisfaction of Dr Butler, who complained of our want of specification on a former occasion, we shall go through these plays somewhat minutely; though the classical reader will easily see, that it is upon the tenor of these particular observations that we are to ground the character which we propose ultimately to give of this interesting publication. The words in inverted commas, immediately following what is cited from the text, are Dr Butler's.

SEPTEMBER